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Portrait Edition

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY

JOHN MORLEY

III.

DRYDEN. By G. SAINTSBURY

POPE. By LESLIE STEPHEN

SIDNEY. By JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

GEORGE N. MORANG & COMPANY

(Limited)

TORONTO, CANADA

1900

ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS.

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY.

Portrait Edition.

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| I. | IV. | VII. | X. |
| MILTON. | BENTLEY. | SCOTT. | COLERIDGE. |
| GIBBON. | COWPER. | DICKENS. | WORDSWORTH. |
| SHELLEY. | LANDOR. | SPENSER. | BURNS. |
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| | KEATS. HAWTHORNE. CARLYLE. | | |

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DRYDEN

BY

G. SAINTSBURY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

A WRITER on Dryden is more especially bound to acknowledge his indebtedness to his predecessors, because, so far as matters of fact are concerned, that indebtedness must necessarily be greater than in most other cases. There is now little chance of fresh information being obtained about the poet, unless it be in a few letters hitherto undiscovered or withheld from publication. I have, therefore, to acknowledge my debt to Johnson, Malone, Scott, Mitford, Bell, Christie, the Rev. R. Hooper, and the writer of an article in the *Quarterly Review* for 1878. Murray's "Guide to Northamptonshire" has been of much use to me in the visits I have made to Dryden's birthplace, and the numerous other places associated with his memory in his native county. To Mr. J. Churton Collins I owe thanks for pointing out to me a Dryden house which, so far as he and I know, has escaped the notice of previous biographers. Mr. W. Noel Sainsbury, of the Record Office, has supplied me with some valuable information. My friend Mr. Edmund W. Gosse has not only read the proof-sheets of this book with the greatest care, suggesting many things of value, but has also kindly allowed me the use of original editions of many late seventeenth-century works, including most of the rare pamphlets against the poet in reply to his satires.

Except Scott's excellent but costly and bulky edition, there is, to the disgrace of English booksellers or book-buyers, no complete edition of Dryden. The first issue of this in 1808 was reproduced in 1821 with no material alterations, but both are very expensive, especially the second. A tolerably complete and not unsatisfactory Dryden may, however, be got together without much outlay by any one who waits till he can pick up at the bookshops copies of Malone's edition of the prose works, and of Congreve's original edition (duodecimo or folio) of the plays. By adding to these Mr. Christie's admirable Globe edition of the poems, very little, except the translations, will be left out, and not too much obtained in duplicate. This, of course, deprives the reader of Scott's life and notes, which are very valuable. The life, however, has been reprinted, and is easily accessible.

In the following pages a few passages from a course of lectures on "Dryden and his Period," delivered by me at the Royal Institution in the spring of 1880, have been incorporated.

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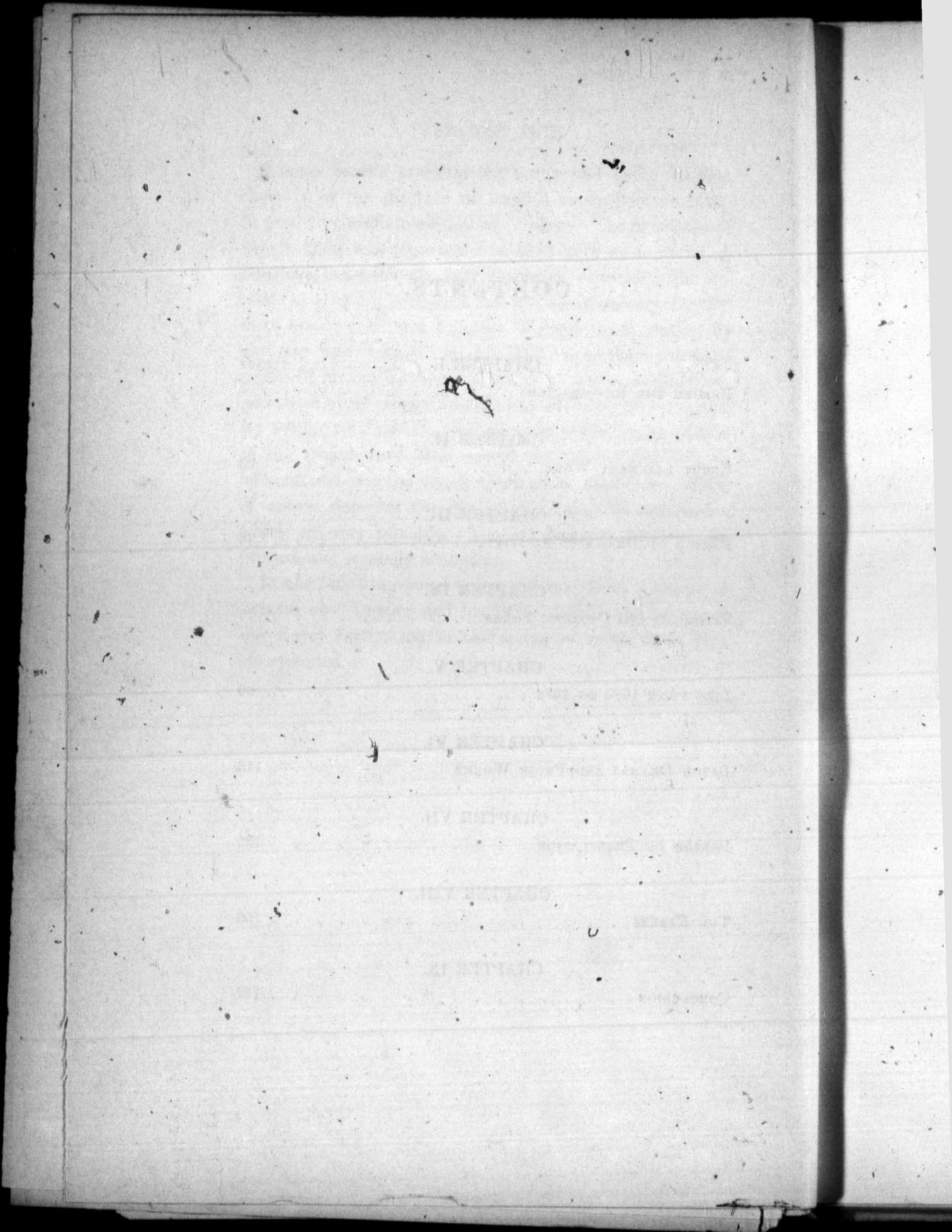
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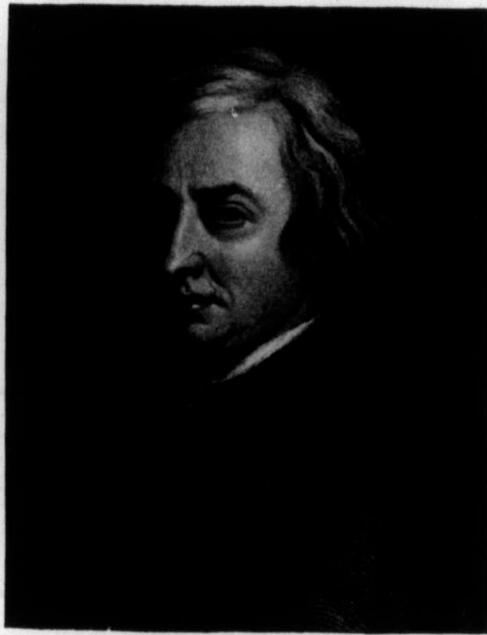
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CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE RESTORATION.

JOHN DRYDEN was born on the 9th of August, 1631, at the Vicarage of Aldwinkle All Saints, between Thrapston and Oundle. Like other small Northamptonshire villages, Aldwinkle is divided into two parishes, All Saints and St. Peter's, the churches and parsonage-houses being within bowshot of each other, and some little confusion has arisen from this. It has, however, been cleared up by the industrious researches of various persons, and there is now no doubt about the facts. The house in which the poet was born (and which still exists, though altered to some extent internally) belonged at the time to his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Henry Pickering. The Drydens and the Pickerings were both families of some distinction in the county, and both of decided Puritan principles; but they were not, properly speaking, neighbours. The Drydens originally came from the neighbourhood of the border, and a certain John Dryden, about the middle of the sixteenth century, married the daughter and heiress of Sir John Cope, of Canons Ashby, in the county of Northampton.

Erasmus, the son of this John Dryden—the name is spelt as usual at the time in half-a-dozen different ways, and there is no reason for supposing that the poet invented the *y*, though before him it seems to have been usually Driden—was created a baronet, and his third son, also an Erasmus, was the poet's father. Before this Erasmus married Mary Pickering the families had already been connected, but they lived on opposite sides of the county, Canons Ashby being in the hilly district which extends to the borders of Oxfordshire on the south-west, while Tichmarsh, the headquarters of the Pickerings, lies on the extreme east on high ground, overlooking the flats of Huntingdon. The poet's father is described as "of Tichmarsh," and seems to have usually resided in that neighbourhood. His property, however, which descended to our poet, lay in the neighbourhood of Canons Ashby at the village of Blakesley, which is not, as the biographers persistently repeat after one another, "near Tichmarsh," but some forty miles distant to the straightest flying crow. Indeed, the connexion of the poet with the seat of his ancestors, and of his own property, appears to have been very slight. There is no positive evidence that he was ever at Canons Ashby at all, and this is a pity. For the house—still in the possession of his collateral descendants in the female line—is a very delightful one, looking like a miniature college quadrangle set down by the side of a country lane, with a background of park in which the deer wander, and a fringe of formal garden, full of the trimmest of yew-trees. All this was there in Dryden's youth, and, moreover, the place was the scene of some stirring events. Sir John Driden was a staunch parliamentarian, and his house lay obnoxious to the royalist garrisons of Towcester on the one side, and Banbury on the other. On at least one

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occasion a great fight took place, the parliamentarians barricading themselves in the church of Canons Ashby, within stone's throw of the house, and defending it and its tower for several hours before the royalists forced the place and carried them off prisoners. This was in Dryden's thirteenth year, and a boy of thirteen would have rejoiced not a little in such a state of things.

But, as has been said, the actual associations of the poet lie elsewhere. They are all collected in the valley of the Nene, and a well-girt man can survey the whole in a day's walk. It is remarkable that Dryden's name is connected with fewer places than is the case with almost any other English poet, except, perhaps, Cowper. If we leave out of sight a few visits to his father-in-law's seat at Charlton, in Wiltshire, and elsewhere, London and twenty miles of the Nene valley exhaust the list of his residences. This valley is not an inappropriate *locale* for the poet who in his faults, as well as his merits, was perhaps the most English of all English writers. It is not grand, or epic, or tragical; but, on the other hand, it is sufficiently varied, free from the monotony of the adjacent fens, and full of historical and architectural memories. The river in which Dryden acquired, beyond doubt, that love of fishing which is his only trait in the sporting way known to us, is always present in long, slow reaches, thick with water plants. The remnants of the great woods which once made Northamptonshire the rival of Nottingham and Hampshire are close at hand, and luckily the ironstone workings which have recently added to the wealth, and detracted from the beauty of the central district of the county, have not yet invaded Dryden's region. Tichmarsh and Aldwinkle, the places of his birth and education, lie on opposite sides of the river, about two miles from Thrapston. Aldwinkle is

sheltered and low, and looks across to the rising ground on the summit of which Tichmarsh church rises, flanked hard by with a huge cedar-tree on the rectory lawn, a cedar-tree certainly coeval with Dryden, since it was planted two years before his birth. A little beyond Aldwinkle, following the course of the river, is the small church of Pilton, where Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering were married on October 21, 1630. All these villages are embowered in trees of all kinds, elms and walnuts especially, and the river banks slope in places with a pleasant abruptness, giving good views of the magnificent woods of Lilford, which, however, are new-comers, comparatively speaking. Another mile or two beyond Pilton brings the walker to Oundle, which has some traditional claim to the credit of teaching Dryden his earliest humanities; and the same distance beyond Oundle is Cotterstock, where a house, still standing, but altered, was the poet's favourite sojourn in his later years. Long stretches of meadows lead thence across the river into Huntingdonshire, and there, just short of the great north road, lies the village of Chesterton, the residence, in the late days of the seventeenth century, of Dryden's favourite cousins, and frequently his own. All these places are intimately connected with his memory, and the last named is not more than twenty miles from the first. Between Cotterstock and Chesterton, where lay the two houses of his kinsfolk which we know him to have most frequented, lies, as it lay then, the grim and shapeless mound studded with ancient thorn-trees, and looking down upon the silent Nene, which is all that remains of the castle of Fotheringhay. Now, as then, the great lantern of the church, with its flying buttresses and tormented tracery, looks out over the valley. There is no allusion that I know of to Fotheringhay in Dryden's

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works, and, indeed, there seems to have been a very natural feeling among all seventeenth century writers on the court side that the less said about Mary Stuart the better. Fotheringhay waits until Mr. Swinburne shall complete the trilogy begun in *Chastelard* and continued in *Bothwell*, for an English dramatic poet to tread worthily in the steps of Montchrestien, of Vondel, and of Schiller. But Dryden must have passed it constantly; when he was at Cotterstock he must have had it almost under his eyes, and we know that he was always brooding over fit historical subjects in English history for the higher poetry. Nor is it, I think, an unpardonable conceit to note the dominance in the haunts of this intellectually greatest among the partisans of the Stuarts, of the scene of the greatest tragedy, save one, that befell even that house of the furies.

There is exceedingly little information obtainable about Dryden's youth. The inscription in Tichmarsh Church, the work of his cousin Mrs. Creed, an excellent person whose needle and pencil decorated half the churches and half the manor-houses in that part of the country, boasts that he had his early education in that village, while Oundle, as has been said, has some traditional claims to a similar distinction. From the date of his birth to his entry at Westminster School we have no positive information whatever about him, and even the precise date of the latter is unknown. He was a king's scholar, and it seems that the redoubtable Busby took pains with him—doubtless in the well-known Busbeian manner—and liked his verse translations. From Westminster he went to Cambridge, where he was entered at Trinity on May 18th, 1650, matriculated on July 16th, and on October 2nd was elected to a Westminster scholarship. He was then nine-

teen, an instance, be it observed, among many, of the complete mistake of supposing that very early entrance into the universities was the rule before our own days. Of Dryden's Cambridge sojourn we know little more than of his sojourn at Westminster. He was in trouble on July 19th, 1652, when he was discomfited and gated for a fortnight for disobedience and contumacy. Shadwell also says that while at Cambridge he "scurrilously traduced a nobleman," and was "rebuked on the head" therefor. But Shadwell's unsupported assertions about Dryden are unworthy of the slightest credence. He took his degree in 1654, and though he gained no fellowship, seems to have resided for nearly seven years at the university. There has been a good deal of controversy about the feelings with which Dryden regarded his *alma mater*. It is certainly curious that, except a formal acknowledgment of having received his education from Trinity, there is to be found in his works no kind of affectionate reference to Cambridge, while there is to be found an extremely unkind reference to her in his very best manner. In one of his numerous prologues to the University of Oxford—the University of Cambridge seems to have given him no occasion of writing a prologue—occur the famous lines,

"Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own mother university;
Thebes did his green unknowing youth engage,
He chooses Athens in his riper age."

It has been sought to diminish the force of this very left-handed compliment to Cambridge by quoting a phrase of Dryden's concerning the "gross flattery that universities will endure." But I am inclined to think that most university men will agree with me that this is probably a

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unique instance of a member of the one university going out of his way to flatter the other at the expense of his own. Dryden was one of the most accomplished flatterers that ever lived, and certainly had no need save of deliberate choice to resort to the vulgar expedient of insulting one person or body by way of praising another. What his cause of dissatisfaction was it is impossible to say, but the trivial occurrence already mentioned certainly will not account for it.

If, however, during these years we have little testimony about Dryden, we have three documents from his own hand which are of no little interest. Although Dryden was one of the most late-writing of English poets, he had got into print before he left Westminster. A promising pupil of that school, Lord Hastings, had died of small-pox, and, according to the fashion of the time, a *tombeau*, as it would have been called in France, was published, containing elegies by a very large number of authors, ranging from Westminster boys to the already famous names of Waller and Denham. Somewhat later an epistle commendatory was contributed by Dryden to a volume of religious verse by his friend John Hoddesdon. Later still, and probably after he had taken his degree, he wrote a letter to his cousin, Honor Driden, daughter of the reigning baronet of Canons Ashby, which the young lady had the grace to keep. All these juvenile productions have been very severely judged. As to the poems, the latest writer on the subject, a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, whom I certainly do not name otherwise than *honoris causâ*, pronounces the one execrable, and the other inferior to the juvenile productions of that miserable poetaster, Kirke White. It seems to this reviewer that Dryden had at this time "no ear for verse, no command of poetic diction,

no sense of poetic taste." As to the letter, even Scott describes it as "alternately coarse and pedantic." I am in hopeless discord with these authorities, both of whom I respect. Certainly neither the elegy on Lord Hastings, nor the complimentary poem to Hoddesdon, nor the letter to Honor Driden, is a masterpiece. But all three show, as it seems to me, a considerable literary faculty, a remarkable feeling after poetic style, and above all the peculiar virtue which was to be Dryden's own. They are all saturated with conceits, and the conceit was the reigning delicacy of the time. Now, if there is one thing more characteristic and more honourably characteristic of Dryden than another, it is that he was emphatically of his time. No one ever adopted more thoroughly and more unconsciously the motto as to *Spartam nactus es*. He tried every fashion, and where the fashion was capable of being brought *sub specie æternitatis* he never failed so to bring it. Where it was not so capable he never failed to abandon it and to substitute something better. A man of this temperament (which it may be observed is a mingling of the critical and the poetical temperaments) is not likely to find his way early or to find it at all without a good many preliminary wanderings. But the two poems so severely condemned, though they are certainly not good poems, are beyond all doubt possessed of the elements of goodness. I doubt myself whether any one can fairly judge them who has not passed through a novitiate of careful study of the minor poets of his own day. By doing this one acquires a certain faculty of distinguishing, as Théophile Gautier once put it in his own case, "the sheep of Hugo from the goats of Scribe." I do not hesitate to say that an intelligent reviewer in the year 1650 would have ranked Dryden, though perhaps with some misgivings, among

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the sheep. The faults are simply an exaggeration of the prevailing style, the merits are different.

As for the epistle to Honor Driden, Scott must surely have been thinking of the evil counsellors who wished him to bowdlerise glorious John, when he called it "coarse." There is nothing in it but the outspoken gallantry of an age which was not afraid of speaking out, and the prose style is already of no inconsiderable merit. It should be observed, however, that a most unsubstantial romance has been built up on this letter, and that Miss Honor's father, Sir John Driden, has had all sorts of anathemas launched at him, in the Locksley Hall style, for damming the course of true love. There is no evidence whatever to prove this crime against Sir John. It is in the nature of mankind almost invariably to fall in love with its cousins, and—fortunately according to some physiologists—by no means invariably to marry them. That Dryden seriously aspired to his cousin's hand there is no proof, and none that her father refused to sanction the marriage. On the contrary, his foes accuse him of being a dreadful flirt, and of making "the young blushing virgins die" for him in a miscellaneous but probably harmless manner. All that is positively known on the subject is that Honor never married, that the cousins were on excellent terms some half-century after this fervent epistle, and that Miss Driden is said to have treasured the letter and shown it with pride, which is much more reconcilable with the idea of a harmless flirtation than of a great passion tragically cut short.

At the time of the writing of this epistle Dryden was, indeed, not exactly an eligible suitor. His father had just died—1654—and had left him two-thirds of the Blakesley estates, with a reversion to the other third at the death of his mother. The land extended to a couple of hundred

acres or thereabouts, and the rent, which with characteristic generosity Dryden never increased, though rents went up in his time enormously, amounted to 60*l.* a year. Dryden's two-thirds were estimated by Malone at the end of the last century to be worth about 120*l.* income of that day, and this certainly equals at least 200*l.* to-day. With this to fall back upon, and with the influence of the Driden and Pickering families, any bachelor in those days might be considered provided with prospects; but exacting parents might consider the total inadequate to the support of a wife and family. Sir John Driden is said, though a fanatical Puritan, to have been a man of no very strong intellect, and he certainly did not feather his nest in the way which was open to any defender of the liberties of the people. Sir Gilbert Pickering, who, in consequence of the intermarriages before alluded to, was doubly Dryden's cousin, was wiser in his generation. He was one of the few members of the Long Parliament who judiciously attached themselves to the fortunes of Cromwell, and was plentifully rewarded with fines, booty, places, and honours, by the Protector. When Dryden finally left Cambridge in 1657, he is said to have attached himself to this kinsman. And at the end of the next year he wrote his remarkable Heroic Stanzas on Cromwell's death. This poem must have at once put out of doubt his literary merits. There was assuredly no English poet then living, except Milton and Cowley, who could possibly have written it, and it was sufficiently different from the style of either of those masters. Taking the four-line stanza, which Davenant had made popular, the poet starts with a bold opening, in which the stately march of the verse is not to be disguised by all the frippery of erudition which loads it:

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“And now 'tis time; for their officious haste,
 Who would before have borne him to the sky,
 Like eager Romans, ere all rites were past,
 Did let too soon the sacred eagle fly.”

The whole poem contains but thirty-seven of these stanzas, but it is full of admirable lines and thoughts. No doubt there are plenty of conceits as well, and Dryden would not have been Dryden if there had not been. But at the same time the singular justness which always marked his praise, as well as his blame, is as remarkable in the matter of the poem, as the force and vigour of the diction and versification are in its manner. To this day no better eulogy of the Protector has been written, and the poet with a remarkable dexterity evades, without directly denying, the more awkward points in his hero's career and character. One thing which must strike all careful readers of the poem is the entire absence of any attack on the royalist party. To attempt, as Shadwell and other libellers attempted a quarter of a century later, to construe a famous couplet—

“He fought to end our fighting, and essayed
 To staunch the blood by breathing of the vein—”

into an approval of the execution of Charles I., is to wrest the sense of the original hopelessly and unpardonably. Cromwell's conduct is contrasted with that of those who “the quarrel loved, but did the cause abhor,” who “first sought to inflame the parties, then to poise,” &c., *i. e.*, with Essex, Manchester, and their likes; and it need hardly be said that this contrast was ended years before there was any question of the king's death. Indeed, to a careful reader nowadays the Heroic Stanzas read much more like an elaborate attempt to hedge between the parties than

like an attempt to gain favour from the roundheads by uncompromising advocacy of their cause. The author is one of those "sticklers of the war" that he himself describes.

It is possible that a certain half-heartedness may have been observed in Dryden by those of his cousin's party. It is possible, too, that Sir Gilbert Pickering, like Thackeray's Mr. Scully, was a good deal more bent on making use of his young kinsman than on rewarding him in any permanent manner. At any rate, no kind of preferment fell to his lot, and the anarchy of the "foolish Ishbosheth" soon made any such preferment extremely improbable. Before long it would appear that Dryden had definitely given up whatever position he held in Sir Gilbert Pickering's household, and had betaken himself to literature. The fact of his so betaking himself almost implied adherence to the royalist party. In the later years of the Commonwealth, English letters had rallied to a certain extent from the disarray into which they were thrown by the civil war, but the centres of the rally belonged almost exclusively to the royalist party. Milton had long forsworn pure literature, to devote himself to official duties with an occasional personal polemic as a relief. Marvell and Wither, the two other chief lights of the Puritan party, could hardly be regarded by any one as men of light and leading, despite the really charming lyrics which both of them had produced. All the other great literary names of the time were, without exception, on the side of the exile. Hobbes was a royalist, though a somewhat singular one; Cowley was a royalist; Herrick was a royalist, so was Denham; so was, as far as he was anything, the unstable Waller. Moreover, the most practically active author of the day, the one man of letters who combined the power

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of organizing literary effort with the power of himself producing literary work of merit, was one of the staunchest of the king's friends. Sir William Davenant, without any political concession, had somehow obtained leave from the republican government to reintroduce theatrical entertainments of a kind, and moderate royalists, like Evelyn, with an interest in literature and the arts and sciences, were returning to their homes and looking out for the good time coming. That Dryden, under these circumstances, having at the time a much more vivid interest in literature than in politics, and belonging as he did rather to the Presbyterian faction, who were everywhere returning to the royalist political faith, than to the Independent republicans, should become royalist in principle, was nothing surprising. Those who reproach him with the change (if change it was) forget that he shared it with the immense majority of the nation. For the last half-century the literary current has been so entirely on the Puritan side that we are probably in danger of doing at least as much injustice to the royalists as was at one time done to their opponents. One thing in particular I have never seen fairly put as accounting for the complete royalization of nearly the whole people, and it is a thing which has a special bearing on Dryden. It has been said that his temperament was specially and exceptionally English. Now one of the most respectable, if not the most purely rational features of the English character, is its objection to wanton bloodshed for political causes, without form of law. It was this, beyond all question, that alienated the English from James the Second; it was this that in the heyday of Hanoverian power made them turn a cold shoulder on the Duke of Cumberland; it was this which enlisted them almost as one man against the French revolutionists; it was this

which brought about in our own days a political movement to which there is no need to refer more particularly. Now, it must be remembered that, either as the losing party or for other reasons, the royalists were in the great civil war almost free from the charge of reckless bloodshedding. Their troops were disorderly, and given to plunder, but not to cruelty. No legend even charges against Astley or Goring, against Rupert or Lunsford, anything like the Drogheda massacre—the effect of which on the general mind Defoe, an unexceptionable witness, has preserved by a chance phrase in *Robinson Crusoe*—or the hideous bloodbath of the Irishwomen after Naseby, or the brutal butchery of Dr. Hudson at Woodcroft, in Dryden's own county, where the soldiers chopped off the priest's fingers as he clung to the gurgoyles of the tower, and thrust him back with pikes into the moat which, mutilated as he was, he had managed to swim. A certain humanity and absence of bloodthirstiness are among Dryden's most creditable characteristics,¹ and these excesses of fanaticism are not at all unlikely to have had their share in determining him to adopt the winning side when at last it won. But it is perhaps more to the purpose that his literary leanings must of themselves have inevitably inclined him in the same direction. There was absolutely no opening for literature on the republican side, a fact of which no better

¹ The too famous Political Prologues may, perhaps, be quoted against me here. I have only to remark: first, that, bad as they are, they form an infinitesimal portion of Dryden's work, and are in glaring contrast with the sentiments pervading that work as a whole; secondly, that they were written at a time of political excitement unparalleled in history, save once at Athens and once or twice at Paris. But I cannot help adding that their denouncers usually seem to me to be at least partially animated by the notion that Dryden wished the wrong people to be hanged.

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proof can be afforded than the small salary at which the first man of letters then living was hired by a government which, whatever faults it had, certainly did not sin by rewarding its other servants too meagrely. That Dryden at this time had any deep-set theological or political prejudices is very improbable. He certainly had not, like Butler, noted for years the faults and weaknesses of the dominant party, so as to enshrine them in immortal ridicule when the time should come. But he was evidently an ardent devotee of literature; he was not averse to the pleasures of the town, which if not so actively interfered with by the Commonwealth as is sometimes thought, were certainly not encouraged by it; and his friends and associates must have been royalists almost to a man. So he threw himself at once on that side when the chance came, and had probably thrown himself there in spirit some time before. The state of the literature in which he thus took service must be described before we go any farther.

The most convenient division of literature is into poetry, drama, and prose. With regard to poetry, the reigning style at the advent of Dryden was, as everybody knows, the peculiar style unfortunately baptized as "metaphysical." The more catholic criticism of the last 100 years has disembarassed this poetry of much of the odium which once hung round it, without, however, doing full justice to its merits. In Donne, especially, the king of the school, the conceits and laboured fancies which distinguish it frequently reach a hardly surpassed height of poetical beauty. When Donne speculates as to the finding on the body of his dead lover

"A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,"

when he tells us how—

"I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,
Who died before the god of love was born;"

the effect is that of summer lightning on a dark night suddenly exposing unsuspected realms of fantastic and poetical suggestion. But at its worst the school was certainly bad enough, and its badness had already been exhibited by Dryden with considerable felicity in his poem on Lord Hastings and the small-pox. I really do not know that in all Johnson's carefully picked specimens in his life of Cowley, a happier absurdity is to be found than

"Each little pimple had a tear in it,
To wail the fault its rising did commit."

Of such a school as this, though it lent itself more directly than is generally thought to the unequalled oddities of Butler, little good in the way of serious poetry could come. On the other hand, the great romantic school was practically over, and Milton, its last survivor, was, as has been said, in a state of poetical eclipse. There was, therefore growing up a kind of school of good sense in poetry, of which Waller, Denham, Cowley, and Davenant were the chiefs. Waller derives most of his fame from his lyrics, inferior as these are to those of Herrick and Carew. Cowley was a metaphysician with a strong hankering after something different. Denham, having achieved one admirable piece of versification, had devoted himself chiefly to doggrel; but Davenant, though perhaps not so good a poet as any of the three, was a more living influence. His early works, especially his dirge on Shakspeare and his exquisite lines to the Queen, are of the best stamp of the older school. His *Gondibert*, little as it is now read, and unsuccessful as the quatrain in which it is written must always be for a very long work, is better than any long nar-

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rative poem, for many a year before and after. * Both his poetical and his dramatic activity (of which more anon) were incessant, and were almost always exerted in the direction of innovation. But the real importance of these four writers was the help they gave to the development of the heroic couplet, the predestined common form of poetry of the more important kind for a century and a half to come. The heroic couplet was, of course, no novelty in English; but it had hitherto been only fitfully patronized for poems of length, and had not been adapted for general use. The whole structure of the decasyllabic line before the middle of the seventeenth century was ill calculated for the perfecting of the couplet. Accustomed either to the stately plainness of blank verse, or to the elaborate intricacies of the stanza, writers had got into the habit of communicating to their verse a slow and somewhat languid movement. The satiric poems in which the couplet had been most used were, either by accident or design, couched in the roughest possible verse, so rough that in the hands of Marston and Donne it almost ceased to be capable of scansion. In general, the couplet had two drawbacks. Either it was turned by means of *enjambements* into something very like rhythmic prose, with rhymes straying about at apparently indefinite intervals, or it was broken up into a *staccato* motion by the neglect to support and carry on the rhythm at the termination of the distichs. All the four poets mentioned, especially the three first, did much to fit the couplet for miscellaneous work. All of them together, it is hardly needful to say, did not do so much as the young Cambridge man who, while doing bookseller's work for Herringman the publisher, hanging about the coffee-houses, and planning plays with Davenant and Sir Robert Howard, was wait-

ing for opportunity and impulse to help him to make his way.

The drama was in an even more critical state than poetry pure and simple, and here Davenant was the important person. All the giant race except Shirley were dead, and Shirley had substituted a kind of *tragédie bourgeoise* for the work of his masters. Other practitioners chiefly favoured the example of one of the least imitable of those masters, and out-forded Ford in horrors of all kinds, while the comedians clung still more tightly to the humour-comedy of Jonson. Davenant himself had made abundant experiments—experiments, let it be added, sometimes of no small merit—in both these styles. But the occupations of tragedy and comedy were gone, and the question was how to find a new one for them. Davenant succeeded in procuring permission from the Protector, who, like most Englishmen of the time, was fond of music, to give what would now be called entertainments; and the entertainments soon developed into something like regular stage plays. But Shakspeare's godson, with his keen manager's appreciation of the taste of the public, and his travelled experience, did not content himself with deviating cautiously into the old paths. He it was who, in the *Siege of Rhodes*, introduced at once into England the opera, and a less long-lived but, in a literary point of view, more important variety, the heroic play, the latter of which always retained some tinge of the former. There are not many subjects on which, to put it plainly, more rubbish has been talked than the origin of the heroic play. Very few Englishmen have ever cared to examine accurately the connexion between this singular growth and the classical tragedy already flourishing in France; still fewer have ever cared to investigate the origins of that classical tragedy itself.

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The blundering attribution of Dryden and his rivals to Corneille and Racine, the more blundering attribution of Corneille and Racine to the Scudéry romance (as if somebody should father Shelley on Monk Lewis), has been generally accepted without much hesitation, though Dryden himself has pointed out that there is but little connexion between the French and the English drama; and though the history of the French drama itself is perfectly intelligible, and by no means difficult to trace. The French classical drama is the direct descendant of the drama of Seneca, first imitated by Jodelle and Garnier in the days of the *Pléiade*; nor did it ever quit that model, though in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century something was borrowed from Spanish sources. The English heroic drama, on the other hand, which Davenant invented, which Sir Robert Howard and Lord Orrery made fashionable, and for which Dryden achieved a popularity of nearly twenty years, was one of the most cosmopolitan—I had almost said the most mongrel—of literary productions. It adopted the English freedom of action, multiplicity of character, and licence of stirring scenes acted *coram populo*. It borrowed lyrical admixture from Italy; exaggerated and bombastic language came to it from Spain; and to France it owed little more than its rhymed dialogue, and perhaps something of its sighs and flames. The disadvantages of rhyme in dramatic writing seem to modern Englishmen so great, that they sometimes find it difficult to understand how any rational being could exchange the blank verse of Shakspeare for the rhymes of Dryden, much more for the rhymes of his contemporaries and predecessors. But this omits the important consideration that it was not the blank verse of Shakspeare or of Fletcher that was thus exchanged. In the three-quarters of a century, or there-

abouts, which elapsed between the beginning of the great dramatic era and the Restoration, the chief vehicle of the drama had degenerated full as much as the drama itself; and the blank verse of the plays subsequent to Ford is of anything but Shakspearian quality — is, indeed, in many cases such as is hardly to be recognised for verse at all. Between this awkward and inharmonious stuff and the comparatively polished and elegant couplets of the innovators there could be little comparison, especially when Dryden had taken up the couplet himself.

Lastly, in prose the time was pretty obviously calling for a reform. There were great masters of English prose living when Dryden joined the literary world of London, but there was no generally accepted style for the journey-work of literature. Milton and Taylor could arrange the most elaborate symphonies; Hobbes could write with a crabbed clearness as lucid almost as the flowing sweetness of Berkeley; but these were exceptions. The endless sentences out of which Clarendon is wont just to save himself, when his readers are wondering whether breath and brain will last out their involution; the hopeless coils of parenthesis and afterthought in which Cromwell's speech lay involved, till Mr. Carlyle was sent on a special mission to disentangle them, show the dangers and difficulties of the ordinary prose style of the day. It was terribly cumbered about quotations, which it introduced with merciless frequency. It had no notion of a unit of style in the sentence. It indulged, without the slightest hesitation, in every *détour* and involution of second thoughts and by-the-way qualifications. So far as any models were observed, those models were chiefly taken from the inflected languages of Greece and Rome, where the structural alterations of the words according to their grammatical con-

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nexion are for the most part sufficient to make the meaning tolerably clear. Nothing so much as the lack of inflexions saved our prose at this time from sharing the fate of German, and involving itself almost beyond the reach of extrication. The common people, when not bent upon fine language, could speak and write clearly and straightforwardly, as Bunyan's works show to this day to all who care to read. But scholars and divines deserved much less well of their mother tongue. It may, indeed, be said that prose was infinitely worse off than poetry. In the latter there had been an excellent style, if not one perfectly suited for all ends, and it had degenerated. In the former, nothing like a general prose style had ever yet been elaborated at all; what had been done had been done chiefly in the big-bow-wow manner, as Dryden's editor might have called it. For light miscellaneous work, neither fantastic nor solemn, the demand was only just being created. Cowley, indeed, wrote well, and, comparatively speaking, elegantly, but his prose work was small in extent and little read in comparison to his verse. Tillotson was Dryden's own contemporary, and hardly preceded him in the task of reform.

From this short notice it will be obvious that the general view, according to which a considerable change took place and was called for at the Restoration, is correct, notwithstanding the attempts recently made to prove the contrary by a learned writer. Professor Masson's lists of men of letters and of the dates of their publication of their works prove, if he will pardon my saying so, nothing. The actual spirit of the time is to be judged not from the production of works of writers who, as they one by one dropped off, left no successors, but from those who struck root downwards and blossomed upwards in the general

literary soil. Milton is not a writer of the Restoration, though his greatest works appeared after it, and though he survived it nearly fifteen years. Nor was Taylor, nor Clarendon, nor Cowley: hardly even Davenant, or Waller, or Butler, or Denham. The writers of the Restoration are those whose works had the seeds of life in them; who divined, or formed the popular tastes of the period, who satisfied that taste, and who trained up successors to prosecute and modify their own work. The interval between the prose and the poetry of Dryden and the prose and the poetry of Milton is that of an entire generation, notwithstanding the manner in which, chronologically speaking, they overlap. The objects which the reformer, consciously or unconsciously, set before him have been sufficiently indicated. It must be the task of the following chapters to show how and to what extent he effected a reform; what the nature of that reform was; what was the value of the work which in effecting it he contributed to the literature of his country.

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CHAPTER II.

EARLY LITERARY WORK.

THE foregoing chapter will have already shown the chief difficulty of writing a life of Dryden—the almost entire absence of materials. At the Restoration the poet was nearly thirty years old; and of positive information as to his life during these thirty years we have half-a-dozen dates, the isolated fact of his mishap at Trinity, a single letter and three poems, not amounting in all to three hundred lines. Nor can it be said that even subsequently, during his forty years of fame and literary activity, positive information as to his life is plentiful. His works are still the best life of him, and in so far as a biography of Dryden is filled with any matter not purely literary, it must for the most part be filled with controversy as to his political and religious opinions and conduct rather than with accounts of his actual life and conversation. Omitting for the present literary work, the next fact that we have to record after the Restoration is one of some importance, though as before the positive information obtainable in connexion with it is but scanty. On the 1st of December, 1663, Dryden was married at St. Swithin's Church to Lady Elizabeth Howard, eldest daughter of the Earl of Berkshire.

This marriage, like most of the scanty events of Dry-

den's life, has been made the occasion of much and unnecessary controversy. The libellers of the Popish Plot disturbances twenty years later declared that the character of the bride was doubtful, and that her brothers had acted towards Dryden in somewhat the same way as the Hamiltons did towards Grammont. A letter of hers to the Earl of Chesterfield, which was published about half a century ago, has been used to support the first charge, besides abundant arguments as to the unlikelihood of an earl's daughter marrying a poor poet for love. It is one of the misfortunes of prominent men that when fact is silent about their lives fiction is always busy. If we brush away the cobwebs of speculation, there is nothing in the least suspicious about this matter. Lord Berkshire had a large family and a small property. Dryden himself was, as we have seen, well born and well connected. That some of his sisters had married tradesmen seems to Scott likely to have been shocking to the Howards; but he must surely have forgotten the famous story of the Earl of Bedford's objection to be raised a step in the peerage because it would make it awkward for the younger scions of the house of Russell to go into trade. The notion of an absolute severance between Court and City at that time is one of the many unhistorical fictions which have somehow or other obtained currency. Dryden was already an intimate friend of Sir Robert Howard, if not also of the other brother, Edward, and perhaps it is not unnoteworthy that Lady Elizabeth was five-and-twenty, an age in those days somewhat mature, and one at which a young lady would be thought wise by her family in accepting any creditable offer. As to the Chesterfield letter, the evidence it contains can only satisfy minds previously made up. It testifies certainly to something like a flirtation, and suggests

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an interview, but there is nothing in it at all compromising. The libels already mentioned are perfectly vague and wholly untrustworthy.

It seems, though on no very definite evidence, that the marriage was not altogether a happy one. Dryden appears to have acquired some small property in Wiltshire; perhaps also a royal grant which was made to Lady Elizabeth in recognition of her father's services; and Lord Berkshire's Wiltshire house of Charlton became a country retreat for the poet. But his wife was, it is said, ill-tempered and not overburdened with brains, and he himself was probably no more a model of conjugal propriety than most of his associates. I say probably, for here, too, it is astonishing how the evidence breaks down when it is examined, or rather how it vanishes altogether into air. Mr. J. R. Green has roundly informed the world that "Dryden's life was that of a libertine, and his marriage with a woman who was yet more dissolute than himself only gave a new spur to his debaucheries." We have seen what foundation there is for this gross charge against Lady Elizabeth; now let us see what ground there is for the charge against Dryden. There are the libels of Shadwell and the rest of the crew, to which not even Mr. Christie, a very severe judge of Dryden's moral character, assigns the slightest weight; there is the immorality ascribed to Bayes in the *Rehearsal*, a very pretty piece of evidence indeed, seeing that Bayes is a confused medley of half-a-dozen persons; there is a general association by tradition of Dryden's name with that of Mrs. Reeve, a beautiful actress of the day; and finally there is a tremendous piece of scandal which is the battle-horse of the devil's advocates. A curious letter appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1745, the author of which is unknown, though conjectures, as to which

there are difficulties, identify him with Dryden's youthful friend Southern. "I remember," says this person, "plain John Dryden, before he paid his court with success to the great, in one uniform clothing of Norwich druggot. I have ate tarts with him and Madam Reeve at the Mulberry Garden, when our author advanced to a sword and a Chedreux wig." Perhaps there is no more curious instance of the infinitesimal foundation on which scandal builds than this matter of Dryden's immorality. Putting aside mere vague libellous declamation, the one piece of positive information on the subject that we have is anonymous, was made at least seventy years after date, and avers that John Dryden, a dramatic author, once ate tarts with an actress and a third person. This translated into the language of Mr. Green becomes the dissoluteness of a libertine, spurred up to new debaucheries.

It is immediately after the marriage that we have almost our first introduction to Dryden as a live man seen by live human beings. And the circumstances of this introduction are characteristic enough. On the 3rd of February, 1664, Pepys tells us that he stopped, as he was going to fetch his wife, at the great coffee-house in Covent Garden, and there he found "Dryden, the poet I knew at Cambridge," and all the wits of the town. The company pleased Pepys, and he made a note to the effect that "it will be good coming thither." But the most interesting thing is this glimpse, first, of the associates of Dryden at the university; secondly, of his installation at Will's, the famous house of call, where he was later to reign as undisputed monarch; and, thirdly, of the fact that he was already recognised as "Dryden the poet." The remainder of the present chapter will best be occupied by pointing out what he had done, and in brief space afterwards did

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do, to earn that title, reserving the important subject of his dramatic activity, which also began about this time, for separate treatment.

The lines on the death of Lord Hastings, and the lines to Hoddesdon, have, it has been said, a certain promise about them to experienced eyes, but it is of that kind of promise which, as the same experience teaches, is at least as often followed by little performance as by much. The lines on Cromwell deserve less faint praise. The following stanzas exhibit at once the masculine strength and originality which were to be the poet's great sources of power, and the habit of conceited and pedantic allusion which he had caught from the fashions of the time :

" Swift and resistless through the land he passed,
Like that bold Greek who did the East subdue,
And made to battle such heroic haste
As if on wings of victory he flew.

" He fought secure of fortune as of fame,
Till by new maps the island might be shown
Of conquests, which he strewed where'er he came,
Thick as the galaxy with stars is sown.

" His palms, though under weights they did not stand,
Still thrived ; no winter did his laurels fade.
Heaven in his portrait showed a workman's hand,
And drew it perfect, yet without a shade.

" Peace was the prize of all his toil and care,
Which war had banished, and did now restore :
Bologna's walls so mounted in the air
To seat themselves more surely than before."

An impartial contemporary critic, if he could have anticipated the methods of a later school of criticism, might have had some difficulty in deciding whether the masterly plainness, directness, and vigour of the best lines here ought

or ought not to excuse the conceit about the palms and the weights, and the fearfully far-fetched piece of fancy history about Bologna. Such a critic, if he had had the better part of discretion, would have decided in the affirmative. There were not three poets then living who could have written the best lines of the Heroic Stanzas, and what is more, those lines were not in the particular manner of either of the poets who, as far as general poetical merit goes, might have written them. But the Restoration, which for reasons given already I must hold to have been genuinely welcome to Dryden, and not a mere occasion of profitable coat-turning, brought forth some much less ambiguous utterances. *Astræa Redux* (1660), a panegyric on the coronation (1661), a poem to Lord Clarendon (1662), a few still shorter pieces of the complimentary kind to Dr. Charleton (1663), to the Duchess of York (1665), and to Lady Castlemaine (166-?), lead up to *Annus Mirabilis* at the beginning of 1667, the crowning effort of Dryden's first poetical period, and his last before the long absorption in purely dramatic occupations which lasted till the Popish Plot and its controversies evoked from him the expression of hitherto unsuspected powers.

These various pieces do not amount in all to more than two thousand lines, of which nearly two-thirds belong to *Annus Mirabilis*. But they were fully sufficient to show that a new poetical power had arisen in the land, and their qualities, good and bad, might have justified the anticipation that the writer would do better and better work as he grew older. All the pieces enumerated, with the exception of *Annus Mirabilis*, are in the heroic couplet, and their versification is of such a kind that the relapse into the quatrain in the longer poem is not a little surprising. But nothing is more characteristic of Dryden than the extreme-

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ly tentative character of his work, and he had doubtless not yet satisfied himself that the couplet was suitable for narrative poems of any length, notwithstanding the mastery over it which he must have known himself to have attained in his short pieces. The very first lines of *Astræa Redux* show this mastery clearly enough.

“Now with a general peace the world was blest,
While ours, a world divided from the rest,
A dreadful quiet felt, and worsèd far
Than arms, a sullen interval of war.”

Here is already the energy divine for which the author was to be famed, and, in the last line at least, an instance of the varied cadence and subtly-disposed music which were, in his hands, to free the couplet from all charges of monotony and tameness. But almost immediately there is a falling off. The poet goes off into an unnecessary simile preceded by the hackneyed and clumsy “thus,” a simile quite out of place at the opening of a poem, and disfigured by the too famous, “an horrid stillness first invades the ear,” which if it has been extravagantly blamed—and it seems to me that it has—certainly will go near to be thought a conceit. But we have not long to wait for another chord that announces Dryden :

“For his long absence Church and State did groan,
Madness the pulpit, faction seized the throne.
Experienced age in deep despair was lost
To see the rebel thrive, the loyal crost.
Youth, that with joys had unacquainted been,
Envied grey hairs that once good days had seen.
We thought our sires, not with their own content,
Had, ere we came to age, our portion spent.”

Whether the matter of this is suitable for poetry or not is

one of those questions on which doctors will doubtless disagree to the end of the chapter. But even when we look back through the long rows of practitioners of the couplet who have succeeded Dryden, we shall, I think, hardly find one who is capable of such masterly treatment of the form, of giving to the phrase a turn at once so clear and so individual, of weighting the verse with such dignity, and at the same time winging it with such lightly flying speed. The poem is injured by numerous passages introduced by the usual "as" and "thus" and "like," which were intended for ornaments, and which in fact simply disfigure. It is here and there charged, after the manner of the day, with inappropriate and clumsy learning, and with doubtful Latinisms of expression. But it is redeemed by such lines as—

"When to be God's anointed was his crime;"

as the characteristic gibe at the Covenant insinuated by the description of the Guisean League—

"As holy and as Catholic as ours;"

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Whence legion twice before was dispossesed;"

as the splendid couplet on the British Amphitrite—

"Proud her returning prince to entertain
With the submitted fasces of the main."

Such lines as these must have had for the readers of 1660 the attraction of a novelty which only very careful students of the literature of the time can understand now. The merits of *Astræa Redux* must of course not be judged by the reader's acquiescence in its sentiments. But let

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any one read the following passage without thinking of the treaty of Dover and the closed exchequer, of Madam Carwell's twelve thousand a year, and Lord Russell's scaffold, and he assuredly will not fail to recognise their beauty :

“Methinks I see those crowds on Dover's strand,
 Who in their haste to welcome you to land
 Choked up the beach with their still-growing store,
 And made a wilder torrent on the shore :
 While, spurred with eager thoughts of past delight,
 Those who had seen you court a second sight,
 Preventing still your steps, and making haste
 To meet you often wheresoe'er you past.
 How shall I speak of that triumphant day
 When you renewed the expiring pomp of May ?
 A month that owns an interest in your name ;
 You and the flowers are its peculiar claim.
 That star, that at your birth shone out so bright
 It stained the duller sun's meridian light,
 Did once again its potent fires renew,
 Guiding our eyes to find and worship you.”

The extraordinary art with which the recurrences of the *you* and *your*—in the circumstances naturally recited with a little stress of the voice—are varied in position so as to give a corresponding variety to the cadence of the verse, is perhaps the chief thing to be noted here. But a comparison with even the best couplet verse of the time will show many other excellences in it. I am aware that this style of minute criticism has gone out of fashion, and that the variations of the position of a pronoun have terribly little to do with “criticism of life;” but as I am dealing with a great English author whose main distinction is to have reformed the whole formal part of English prose and English poetry, I must, once for all, take leave to follow the only road open to me to show what he actually did.

The other smaller couplet-poems which have been mentioned are less important than *Astræa Redux*, not merely in point of size, but because they are later in date. The piece on the coronation, however, contains lines and passages equal to any in the longer poem, and it shows very happily the modified form of conceit which Dryden, throughout his life, was fond of employing, and which, employed with his judgment and taste, fairly escapes the charges usually brought against "Clevelandisms," while it helps to give to the heroic the colour and picturesqueness which after the days of Pope it too often lacked. Such is the fancy about the postponement of the ceremony—

"Had greater haste these sacred rites prepared,
Some guilty months had in our triumph shared.
But this untainted year is all your own,
Your glories may without our crimes be shown."

And such an exceedingly fine passage in the poem to Clarendon, which is one of the most finished pieces of Dryden's early versification—

"Our setting sun from his declining seat
Shot beams of kindness on you, not of heat :
And, when his love was bounded in a few
That were unhappy that they might be true,
Made you the favourite of his last sad times ;
That is, a sufferer in his subjects' crimes :
Thus those first favours you received were sent,
Like Heaven's rewards, in earthly punishment.
Yet Fortune, conscious of your destiny,
Even then took care to lay you softly by,
And wrapt your fate among her precious things,
Kept fresh to be unfolded with your King's.
Shown all at once, you dazzled so our eyes
As new-born Pallas did the god's surprise ;

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When, springing forth from Jove's new-closing wound,
 She struck the warlike spear into the ground;
 Which sprouting leaves did suddenly enclose,
 And peaceful olives shaded as they rose."

For once the mania for simile and classical allusion has not led the author astray here, but has furnished him with a very happy and legitimate ornament. The only fault in the piece is the use of "did," which Dryden never wholly discarded, and which is perhaps occasionally allowable enough.

The remaining poems require no very special remark, though all contain evidence of the same novel and unmatched mastery over the couplet and its cadence. The author, however, was giving himself more and more to the dramatic studies which will form the subject of the next chapter, and to the prose criticisms which almost from the first he associated with those studies. But the events of the year 1666 tempted him once more to indulge in non-dramatic work, and the poem of *Annus Mirabilis* was the result. It seems to have been written, in part at least, at Lord Berkshire's seat of Charlton, close to Malmesbury, and was prefaced by a letter to Sir Robert Howard. Dryden appears to have lived at Charlton during the greater part of 1665 and 1666, the plague and fire years. He had been driven from London, not merely by dread of the pestilence, but by the fact that his ordinary occupation was gone, owing to the closing of the play-houses, and he evidently occupied himself at Charlton with a good deal of literary work, including his essay on dramatic poetry, his play of the *Maiden Queen*, and *Annus Mirabilis* itself. This last was published very early in 1667, and seems to have been successful. Pepys bought it on the 2nd of February, and was fortunately able to like it better than he did

Hudibras. "A very good poem," the Clerk of the Acts of the Navy writes it down. It may be mentioned in passing that during this same stay at Charlton Dryden's eldest son Charles was born.

Annus Mirabilis consists of 304 quatrains on the *Gondibert* model, reasons for the adoption of which Dryden gives (not so forcibly, perhaps, as is usual with him) in the before-mentioned letter to his brother-in-law. He speaks of rhyme generally with less respect than he was soon to show, and declares that he has adopted the quatrain because he judges it "more noble and full of dignity" than any other form he knows. The truth seems to be that he was still to a great extent under the influence of Davenant, and that *Gondibert* as yet retained sufficient prestige to make its stanza act as a not unfavourable advertisement of poems written in it. With regard to the nobility and dignity of this stanza, it may safely be said that *Annus Mirabilis* itself, the best poem ever written therein, killed it by exposing its faults. It is, indeed, at least when the rhymes of the stanzas are unconnected, a very bad metre for the purpose; for it is chargeable with more than the disjointedness of the couplet, without the possibility of relief; while, on the other hand, the quatrains have not, like the Spenserian stave or the *ottava rima*, sufficient bulk to form units in themselves, and to include within them varieties of harmony. Despite these drawbacks, however, Dryden produced a very fine poem in *Annus Mirabilis*, though I am not certain that even its best passages equal those cited from the couplet pieces. At any rate, in this poem the characteristics of the master in what may be called his poetical adolescence are displayed to the fullest extent. The weight and variety of his line, his abundance of illustration and fancy, his happy turns of separate phrase, and

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his singular faculty of bending to poetical uses the most refractory names and things, all make themselves fully felt here. On the other hand, there is still an undue tendency to conceit and exuberance of simile. The famous lines—

“These fight like husbands, but like lovers those;
These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy;”

are followed in the next stanza by a most indubitably “metaphysical” statement that

“Some preciously by shattered porcelain fall,
And some by aromatic splinters die.”

This cannot be considered the happiest possible means of informing us that the Dutch fleet was laden with spices and *magots*. Such puerile fancies are certainly unworthy of a poet who could tell how

“The mighty ghosts of our great Harrys rose
And armèd Edwards looked with anxious eyes;”

and who, in the beautiful simile of the eagle, has equalled the Elizabethans at their own weapons. I cannot think, however, admirable as the poem is in its best passages (the description of the fire, for instance), that it is technically the equal of *Astræa Redux*. The monotonous recurrence of the same identical cadence in each stanza—a recurrence which even Dryden’s art was unable to prevent, and which can only be prevented by some such interlacements of rhymes and *enjambements* of sense as those which Mr. Swinburne has successfully adopted in *Laus Veneris*—injures the best passages. The best of all is undoubtedly the following:

“In this deep quiet, from what source unknown,
Those seeds of fire their fatal birth disclose;
And first few scattering sparks about were blown,
Big with the flames that to our ruin rose.

"Then in some close-pent room it crept along,
And, smouldering as it went, in silence fed;
Till the infant monster, with devouring strong,
Walked boldly upright with exalted head.

"Now, like some rich and mighty murderer,
Too great for prison which he breaks with gold,
Who fresher for new mischiefs does appear,
And dares the world to tax him with the old.

"So 'scapes the insulting fire his narrow jail,
And makes small outlets into open air;
There the fierce winds his tender force assail,
And beat him downward to his first repair.

"The winds, like crafty courtesans, withheld
His flames from burning but to blow them more;
And, every fresh attempt, he is repelled
With faint denials, weaker than before.

"And now, no longer letted of his prey,
He leaps up at it with enraged desire,
O'erlooks the neighbours with a wide survey,
And nods at every house his threatening fire.

"The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge descend,
With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice;
About the fire into a dance they bend
And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice."

The last stanza, indeed, contains a fine image finely expressed, but I cannot but be glad that Dryden tried no more experiments with the recalcitrant quatrain.

Annus Mirabilis closes the series of early poems, and for fourteen years from the date of its publication Dryden was known, with insignificant exceptions, as a dramatic writer only. But his efforts in poetry proper, though they had not as yet resulted in any masterpiece, had, as I have

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endeavoured to point out, amply entitled him to the position of a great and original master of the formal part of poetry, if not of a poet who had distinctly found his way. He had carried out a conception of the couplet which was almost entirely new, having been anticipated only by some isolated and ill-sustained efforts. He had manifested an equal originality in the turn of his phrase, an extraordinary command of poetic imagery, and, above all, a faculty of handling by no means promising subjects in an indisputably poetical manner. Circumstances which I shall now proceed to describe called him away from the practice of pure poetry, leaving to him, however, a reputation, amply deserved and acknowledged even by his enemies, of possessing unmatched skill in versification. Nor were the studies upon which he now entered wholly alien to his proper function, though they were in some sort a by-work. They strengthened his command over the language, increased his skill in verse, and, above all, tended by degrees to reduce and purify what was corrupt in his phraseology and system of ornamentation. Fourteen years of dramatic practice did more than turn out some admirable scenes and some even more admirable criticism. They acted as a filtering reservoir for his poetical powers, so that the stream which, when it ran into them, was the turbid and rubbish-laden current of *Annus Mirabilis*, flowed out as impetuous, as strong, but clear and without base admixture, in the splendid verse of *Absalom and Achitophel*.

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CHAPTER III.

PERIOD OF DRAMATIC ACTIVITY.

THERE are not many portions of English literature which have been treated with greater severity by critics than the Restoration drama, and of the Restoration dramatists few have met with less favour, in proportion to their general literary eminence, than Dryden. Of his comedies, in particular, few have been found to say a good word. His sturdiest champion, Scott, dismisses them as "heavy;" Hazlitt, a defender of the Restoration comedy in general, finds little in them but "ribaldry and extravagance;" and I have lately seen them spoken of with a shudder as "horrible." The tragedies have fared better, but not much better; and thus the remarkable spectacle is presented of a general condemnation, varied only by the faintest praise, of the work to which an admitted master of English devoted, almost exclusively, twenty years of the flower of his manhood. So complete is the oblivion into which these dramas have fallen, that it has buried in its folds the always charming and sometimes exquisite songs which they contain. Except in Congreve's two editions, and in the bulky edition of Scott, Dryden's theatre is unattainable, and thus the majority of readers have but little opportunity of correcting, from individual study, the unfavourable impressions derived from the verdicts of the critics. For myself, I am

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very far from considering Dryden's dramatic work as on a level with his purely poetical work. But, as nearly always happens, and as happened, by a curious coincidence, in the case of his editor, the fact that he did something else much better has obscured the fact that he did this thing in not a few instances very well. Scott's poems as poems are far inferior to his novels as novels; Dryden's plays are far inferior as plays to his satires and his fables as poems. But both the poems of Scott and the plays of Dryden are a great deal better than the average critic admits.

That dramatic work went somewhat against the grain with Dryden, is frequently asserted on his own authority, and is perhaps true. He began it, however, tolerably early, and had finished at least the scheme of a play (on a subject which he afterwards resumed) shortly after the Restoration. As soon as that event happened, a double incentive to play-writing began to work upon him. It was much the most fashionable of literary occupations, and also much the most lucrative. Dryden was certainly not indifferent to fame, and, though he was by no means a covetous man, he seems to have possessed at all times the perfect readiness to spend whatever could be honestly got which frequently distinguishes men of letters. He set to work accordingly, and produced in 1663 the *Wild Gallant*. We do not possess this play in the form in which it was first acted and damned. Afterwards Lady Castlemaine gave it her protection; the author added certain attractions according to the taste of the time, and it was both acted and published. It certainly cannot be said to be a great success even as it is. Dryden had, like most of his fellows, attempted the Comedy of Humours, as it was called at the time, and as it continued to be, and to be called, till the more polished comedy of manners, or artificial comedy,

succeeded it, owing to the success of Wycherley, and still more of Congreve. The number of comedies of this kind written after 1620 is very large, while the fantastic and poetical comedy of which Shakspeare and Fletcher had almost alone the secret had almost entirely died out. The merit of the Comedy of Humours is the observation of actual life which it requires in order to be done well, and the consequent fidelity with which it holds up the muses' looking-glass (to use the title of one of Randolph's plays) to nature. Its defects are its proneness to descend into farce, and the temptation which it gives to the writer to aim rather at mere fragmentary and sketchy delineations than at finished composition. At the Restoration this school of drama was vigorously enough represented by Davenant himself, by Sir Aston Cokain, and by Wilson, a writer of great merit who rather unaccountably abandoned the stage very soon, while in a year or two Shadwell, the actor Lacy, and several others were to take it up and carry it on. It had frequently been combined with the embroiled and complicated plots of the Spanish comedy of intrigue, the adapters usually allowing these plots to conduct themselves much more irregularly than was the case in the originals, while the deficiencies were made up, or supposed to be made up, by a liberal allowance of "humours." The danger of this sort of work was perhaps never better illustrated than by Shadwell, when he boasted in one of his prefaces that "four of the humours were entirely new," and appeared to consider this a sufficient claim to respectful reception. Dryden in his first play fell to the fullest extent into the blunder of this combined Spanish-English style, though on no subsequent occasion did he repeat the mistake. By degrees the example and influence of Molière sent complicated plots and "humours" alike out

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of fashion, though the national taste and temperament were too strongly in favour of the latter to allow them to be totally banished. In our very best plays of the so-called artificial style, such as *Love for Love*, and the masterpieces of Sheridan, character sketches to which Ben Jonson himself would certainly not refuse the title of humours appear, and contribute a large portion of the interest. Dryden, however, was not likely to anticipate this better time, or even to distinguish himself in the older form of the humour-comedy. He had little aptitude for the odd and quaint, nor had he any faculty of devising or picking up strokes of extravagance, such as those which his enemy Shadwell could command, though he could make no very good use of them. The humours of Trice and Bibber and Lord Nonsuch in the *Wild Gallant* are forced and too often feeble, though there are flashes here and there, especially in the part of Sir Timorous, a weakling of the tribe of Aguecheek; but in this first attempt, the one situation and the one pair of characters which Dryden was to treat with tolerable success are already faintly sketched. In Constance and Loveby, the pair of light-hearted lovers who carry on a flirtation without too much modesty certainly, and with a remarkable absence of refinement, but at the same time with some genuine affection for one another, and in a hearty, natural manner, make their first appearance. It is to be noted in Dryden's favour that these lovers of his are for the most part free from the charge of brutal heartlessness and cruelty, which has been justly brought against those of Etherege, of Wycherley, and, at least in the case of the *Old Bachelor*, of Congreve. The men are rakes, and rather vulgar rakes, but they are nothing worse. The women have too many of the characteristics of Charles the Second's maids of

honour; but they have at the same time a certain healthiness and sweetness of the older days, which bring them, if not close to Rosalind and Beatrice, at any rate pretty near to Fletcher's heroines, such as Dorothea and Mary. Still, the *Wild Gallant* can by no possibility be called a good play. It was followed at no long interval by the *Rival Ladies*, a tragicomedy, which is chiefly remarkable for containing some heroic scenes in rhyme, for imitating closely the tangled and improbable plot of its Spanish original, for being tolerably decent, and I fear it must be added, for being intolerably dull. The third venture was in every way more important. The *Indian Emperor* (1665) was Dryden's first original play, his first heroic play, and indirectly formed part of a curious literary dispute, one of many in which he was engaged, but which in this case proved fertile in critical studies of his best brand. Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law, had, with the assistance of Dryden himself, produced a play called the *Indian Queen*, and to this the *Indian Emperor* was nominally a sequel. But as Dryden remarks, with a quaintness which may or may not be satirical, the conclusion of the *Indian Queen* "left but little matter to build upon, there remaining but two of the considerable characters alive." The good Sir Robert had indeed heaped the stage with dead in his last act in a manner which must have confirmed any French critic who saw or read the play in his belief of the bloodthirstiness of the English drama. The field was thus completely clear, and Dryden, retaining only Montezuma as his hero, used his own fancy and invention without restraint in constructing the plot and arranging the characters. The play was extremely popular, and it divides with *Tyrannic Love* and the *Conquest of Granada* the merit of being the best of all

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English heroic plays. The origin of that singular growth has been already given, and there is no need to repeat the story, while the *Conquest of Granada* is so much more the model play of the style, that anything like an analysis of a heroic play had better be reserved for this. The *Indian Emperor* was followed, in 1667, by the *Maiden Queen*, a tragicomedy. The tragic or heroic part is very inferior to its predecessor, but the comic part has merits which are by no means inconsiderable. *Celadon and Florimel* are the first finished specimens of that pair of practitioners of light o' love flirtation which was Dryden's sole contribution of any value to the comic stage. Charles gave the play particular commendation, and called it "his play," as Dryden takes care to tell us. Still, in the same year came *Sir Martin Marall*, Dryden's second pure comedy. But it is in no sense an original play, and Dryden was not even the original adapter. The Duke of Newcastle, famous equally for his own gallantry in the civil war, and for the oddities of his second duchess, Margaret Lucas, translated *l'Etourdi*, and gave it to Dryden, who perhaps combined with it some things taken from other French plays, added not a little of his own, and had it acted. It was for those days exceedingly successful, running more than thirty nights at its first appearance. It is very coarse in parts, but amusing enough. The English blunderer is a much more contemptible person than his French original. He is punished instead of being rewarded, and there is a great deal of broad farce brought in. Dryden was about this time frequently engaged in this doubtful sort of collaboration, and the very next play which he produced, also a result of it, has done his reputation more harm than any other. This was the disgusting burlesque of the *Tempest*, which, happily, there is much reason for thinking belongs

almost wholly to Davenant. Besides degrading in every way the poetical merit of the poem, Sir William, from whom better things might have been expected, got into his head what Dryden amiably calls the "excellent contrivance" of giving Miranda a sister, and inventing a boy (Hippolito) who has never seen a woman. The excellent contrivance gives rise to a good deal of extremely characteristic wit. But here, too, there is little reason for giving Dryden credit or discredit for anything more than a certain amount of arrangement and revision. His next appearance, in 1668, with the *Mock Astrologer* was a more independent one. He was, indeed, as was very usual with him, indebted to others for the main points of his play, which comes partly from Thomas Corneille's *Feint Astrologue*, partly from the *Dépit Amoureux*. But the play, with the usual reservations, may be better spoken of than any of Dryden's comedies, except *Marriage à la Modé* and *Amphitryon*. Wildblood and Jacintha, who play the parts of Celadon and Florimel in the *Maiden Queen*, are a very lively pair. Much of the dialogue is smart, and the incidents are stirring, while the play contains no less than four of the admirable songs which Dryden now began to lavish on his audiences. In the same year, or perhaps in 1669, appeared the play of *Tyrannic Love*, or the *Royal Martyr*, a compound of exquisite beauties and absurdities of the most frantic description. The part of St. Catherine (very inappropriately allotted to Mrs. Eleanor Gwyn) is beautiful throughout, and that of Maximin is quite captivating in its outrageousness. The Astral spirits who appear gave occasion for some terrible parody in the *Rehearsal*, but their verses are in themselves rather attractive. An account of the final scene of the play will perhaps show better than anything else the rant and folly in which authors

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indulged, and which audiences applauded in these plays. The Emperor Maximin is dissatisfied with the conduct of the upper powers in reference to his domestic peace. He thus expresses his dissatisfaction :

“ What had the gods to do with me or mine ?
 Did I molest your heaven ?
 Why should you then make Maximin your foe,
 Who paid you tribute, which he need not do ?
 Your altars I with smoke of rams did crown,
 For which you leaned your hungry nostrils down,
 All daily gaping for my incense there,
 More than your sun could draw you in a year.
 And you for this these plagues have on me sent.
 But, by the gods (by Maximin, I meant),
 Henceforth I and my world
 Hostility with you and yours declare.
 Look to it, gods ! for you the aggressors are,
 Keep you your rain and sunshine in your skies,
 And I'll keep back my flame and sacrifice.
 Your trade of heaven shall soon be at a stand,
 And all your goods lie dead upon your hand.”

Thereupon an aggrieved and possibly shocked follower, of the name of Placidius, stabs him, but the Emperor wrests the dagger from him and returns the blow. Then follows this stage direction: “ Placidius falls, and the Emperor staggers after him and sits down upon him.” From this singular throne his guards offer to assist him. But he declines help, and, having risen once, sits down again upon Placidius, who, despite the stab and the weight of the Emperor, is able to address an irreproachable decasyllabic couplet to the audience. Thereupon Maximin again stabs the person upon whom he is sitting, and they both expire as follows :

"Plac. Oh! I am gone. Max. And after thee I go,
 Revenging still and following ev'n to the other world my blow,
 And shoving back this earth on which I sit,
 I'll mount and scatter all the gods I hit."

[Stabs him again.]

Tyrannic Love was followed by the two parts of *Almanzor and Almahide*, or the *Conquest of Granada*, the triumph and at the same time the *reductio ad absurdum* of the style. I cannot do better than give a full argument of this famous production, which nobody now reads, and which is full of lines that everybody habitually quotes.

The kingdom of Granada under its last monarch, Boabdalin, is divided by the quarrels of factions, or rather families—the Abencerrages and the Zegrys. At a festival held in the capital this dissension breaks out. A stranger interferes on what appears to be the weaker side, and kills a prominent leader of the opposite party, altogether disregarding the king's injunctions to desist. He is seized by the guards and ordered for execution, but is then discovered to be Almanzor, a valiant person lately arrived from Africa, who has rendered valuable assistance to the Moors in their combat with the Spaniards. The king thereupon apologizes, and Almanzor addresses much outrageous language to the factions. This is successful, and harmony is apparently restored. Then there enters the Duke of Arcos, a Spanish envoy, who propounds hard conditions; but Almanzor remarks that "the Moors have Heaven and me," and the duke retires. Almahide, the king's betrothed, sends a messenger to invite him to a dance; but Almanzor insists upon a sally first, and the first act ends with the acceptance of this order of amusement. The second opens with the triumphant return of the Moors, the ever-victorious Almanzor having captured

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the Duke of Arcos. Then is introduced the first female character of importance, Lyndaraxa, sister of Zulema, the Zegry chief, and representative throughout the drama of the less amiable qualities of womankind. Abdalla, the king's brother, makes love to her, and she very plainly tells him that if he were king she might have something to say to him. Zulema's factiousness strongly seconds his sister's ambition and her jealousy of Almahide, and the act ends by the formation of a conspiracy against Boabdelin, the conspirators resolving to attach the invincible Almanzor to their side. The third act borrows its opening from the incident of Hotspur's wrath, Almanzor being provoked with Boabdelin for the same cause as Harry Percy with Henry IV. Thus he is disposed to join Abdalla, while Abdelmelech, the chief of the Abencerrages, is introduced in a scene full of "sighs and flames," as the prince's rival for the hand of Lyndaraxa. The promised dance takes place with one of Dryden's delightful, and, alas! scarcely ever wholly quotable lyrics. The first two stanzas may however be given :

"Beneath a myrtle's shade,
Which love for none but happy lovers made,
I slept, and straight my love before me brought
Phyllis, the object of my waking thought.
Undressed she came my flame to meet,
While love strewed flowers beneath her feet,
Flowers which, so pressed by her, became more sweet.

"From the bright vision's head
A careless veil of lawn was loosely shed,
From her white temples fell her shaded hair,
Like cloudy sunshine, not too brown nor fair.
Her hands, her lips, did love inspire,
Her every grace my heart did fire,
But most her eyes, which languished with desire."

It is a thousand pities that the quotation cannot be continued; but it cannot, though the verse is more artfully beautiful even than here.

While, however, the king and his court are listening and looking, mischief is brewing. Almanzor, Abdalla, and the Zegrysts are in arms. The king is driven in; Almahide is captured. Then a scene takes place between Almanzor and Almahide in the full spirit of the style. Almanzor sues for Almahide as a prisoner that he may set her at liberty; but a rival appears in the powerful Zulema. Almanzor is disobliged by Abdalla, and at once makes his way to the citadel, whither Boabdelin has fled, and offers him his services. At the beginning of the fourth act they are of course accepted with joy, and equally of course effectual. Almanzor renews his suit, but Almahide refers him to her father. The fifth act is still fuller of extravagances. Lyndaraxa holds a fort which has been committed to her against both parties, and they discourse with her from without the walls. The unlucky Almanzor prefers his suit to the king and to Almahide's father; has recourse to violence on being refused, and is overpowered—for a wonder—and bound. His life is, however, spared, and after a parting scene with Almahide he withdraws from the city.

The second part opens in the Spanish camp, but soon shifts to Granada, where the unhappy Boabdelin has to face the mutinies provoked by the expulsion of Almanzor. The king has to stoop to entreat Almahide, now his queen, to use her influence with her lover to come back. An act of fine confused fighting follows, in which Lyndaraxa's castle is stormed, the stormers in their turn driven out by the Duke of Arcos and Abdalla, who has joined the Spaniards, and a general *imbroglio* created. But Almanzor

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obeys Almahide's summons, with the result of more sighs and flames. The conduct of Almahide is unexceptionable; but Boabdelin's jealousy is inevitably aroused, and this in its turn mortally offends the queen, which again offends Almanzor. More inexplicable embroilment follows, and Lyndaraxa tries her charms vainly on the champion. The war once more centres round the Albayzin, Lyndaraxa's sometime fortress, and it is not flippant to say that every one fights with every one else; after which the hero sees the ghost of his mother, and addresses it *more suo*. Yet another love-scene follows, and then Zulema, who has not forgotten his passion for Almahide, brings a false accusation against her, the assumed partner of her guilt being, however, not Almanzor, but Abdelmelech. This leaves the hero free to undertake the wager of battle for his mistress, though he is distracted with jealous fear that Zulema's tale is true. The result of the ordeal is a foregone conclusion; but Almahide, though her innocence is proved, is too angry with her husband for doubting her to forgive him, and solemnly forswears his society. She and Almanzor meet once more, and by this time even the conventionalities of the heroic play allow him to kiss her hand. The king is on the watch, and breaks in with fresh accusations; but the Spaniards at the gates cut short the discussion, and (at last) the embroilment and suffering of true love. The catastrophe is arrived at in the most approved manner. Boabdelin dies fighting; Lyndaraxa, who has given traitorous help with her Zegrays, is proclaimed queen by Ferdinand, but almost immediately stabbed by Abdelmelech. Almanzor turns out to be the long-lost son of the Duke of Arcos; and Almahide, encouraged by Queen Isabella, owns that when her year of widowhood is up she may possibly be induced to crown his flames.

Such is the barest outline of this famous play, and I fear that as it is it is too long, though much has been omitted, including the whole of a pleasing underplot of love between two very creditable lovers, Osmyn and Benzayda. Its preposterous "revolutions and discoveries," the wild bombast of Almanzor and others, the apparently purposeless embroilment of the action in ever-new turns and twists are absurd enough; but there is a kind of generous and noble spirit animating it which could not fail to catch an audience blinded by fashion to its absurdities. There is a skilful sequence even in the most preposterous events, which must have kept up the interest unfalteringly; and all over the dialogue are squandered and lavished flowers of splendid verse. Many of its separate lines are, as has been said, constantly quoted without the least idea on the quoter's part of their origin, and many more are quotable. Everybody, for instance, knows the vigorous couplet:

"Forgiveness to the injured does belong,
But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong;"

but everybody does not know the preceding couplet, which is, perhaps, better still:

"A blush remains in a forgiven face;
It wears the silent tokens of disgrace."

Almanzor's tribute to Lyndaraxa's beauty, at the same time that he rejects her advances, is in little, perhaps, as good an instance as could be given of the merits of the poetry and of the stamp of its spirit, and with this I must be content:

"Fair though you are
As summer mornings, and your eyes more bright
Than stars that twinkle on a winter's night;

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Though you have eloquence to warm and move
 Cold age and fasting hermits into love ;
 Though Almahide with scorn rewards my care,
 Yet than to change 'tis nobler to despair.
 My love's my soul, and that from fate is free—
 'Tis that unchanged and deathless part of me."

The audience that cheered this was not wholly vile.

The *Conquest of Granada* appeared in 1670, and in the following year the famous *Rehearsal* was brought out at the King's Theatre. The importance of this event in Dryden's life is considerable, but it has been somewhat exaggerated. In the first place, the satire, keen as much of it is, is only half directed against himself. The original Bayes was beyond all doubt Davenant, to whom some of the jokes directly apply, while they have no reference to Dryden. In the second place, the examples of heroic plays selected for parody and ridicule are by no means exclusively drawn from Dryden's theatre. His brothers-in-law, Edward and Robert Howard, and others, figure beside him, and the central character is, on the whole, as composite as might be expected from the number of authors whose plays are satirized. Although fathered by Buckingham, it seems likely that not much of the play is actually his. His coadjutors are said to have been Butler, Sprat, and Martin Clifford, Master of the Charterhouse, author of some singularly ill-tempered if not very pointed remarks on Dryden's plays, which were not published till long afterwards. Butler's hand is, indeed, traceable in many of the parodies of heroic diction, none of which are so good as his acknowledged "Dialogue of Cat and Puss." The wit and, for the most part, the justice of the satire are indisputable; and if it be true, as I am told, that the *Rehearsal* does not now make a good acting play, the fact

does not bear favourable testimony to the culture and receptive powers of modern audiences. But there were many reasons why Dryden should take the satire very coolly, as in fact he did. As he says, with his customary proud humility, "his betters were much more concerned than himself;" and it seems highly probable that Buckingham's coadjutors, confiding in his good nature or his inability to detect the liberty, had actually introduced not a few traits of his own into this singularly composite portrait. In the second place, the farce was what would be now called an advertisement, and a very good one. Nothing can be a greater mistake than to say or to think that the *Rehearsal* killed heroic plays. It did nothing of the kind, Dryden himself going on writing them for some years until his own fancy made him cease, and others continuing still longer. There is a play of Crowne's, *Caligula*, in which many of the scenes are rhymed, dating as late as 1698, and the general character of the heroic play, if not the rhymed form, continued almost unaltered. Certainly Dryden's equanimity was very little disturbed. Buckingham he paid off in kind long afterwards, and his Grace immediately proceeded, by his answer, to show how little he can have had to do with the *Rehearsal*. To Sprat and Clifford no allusions that I know of are to be found in his writings. As for Butler, an honourable mention in a letter to Lawrence Hyde shows how little acrimony he felt towards him. Indeed, it may be said of Dryden that he was at no time touchy about personal attacks. It was only when, as Shadwell subsequently did, the assailants became outrageous in their abuse, and outstepped the bounds of fair literary warfare, or when, as in Blackmore's case there was some singular ineptitude in the fashion of the attack, that he condescended to reply.

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It is all the more surprising that he should, at no great distance of time, have engaged gratuitously in a contest which brought him no honour, and in which his allies were quite unworthy of him. Elkanah Settle was one of Rochester's innumerable led-poets, and was too utterly beneath contempt to deserve even Rochester's spite. The character of Doeg, ten years later, did Settle complete justice. He had a "blundering kind of melody" about him, but absolutely nothing else. However, a heroic play of his, the *Empress of Morocco*, had considerable vogue for some incomprehensible reason. Dryden allowed himself to be drawn by Crowne and Shadwell into writing with them a pamphlet of criticisms on the piece. Settle replied by a study, as we should say nowadays, of the very vulnerable *Conquest of Granada*. This is the only instance in which Dryden went out of his way to attack any one; and even in this instance Settle had given some cause by an allusion of a contemptuous kind in his preface. But as a rule the laureate showed himself proof against much more venomous criticisms than any that Elkanah was capable of. It is perhaps not uncharitable to suspect that the preface of the *Empress of Morocco* bore to some extent the blame of the *Rehearsal*, which it must be remembered was for years amplified and re-edited with parodies of fresh plays of Dryden's as they appeared. If this were the case it would not be the only instance of such a transference of irritation, and it would explain Dryden's otherwise inexplicable conduct. His attack on Settle is, from a strictly literary point of view, one of his most unjustifiable acts. The pamphlet, it is true, is said to have been mainly "Starch Johnny" Crowne's, and the character of its strictures is quite different from Dryden's broad and catholic manner of censuring. But the adage, "tell me

with whom you live," is peculiarly applicable in such a case, and Dryden must be held responsible for the assault, whether its venom be really due to himself, to Crowne, or to the foul-mouthed libeller of whose virulence the laureate himself was in years to come to have but too familiar experience.

A very different play in 1672 gave Dryden almost as much credit in comedy as the *Conquest of Granada* in tragedy. There is, indeed, a tragic or serious underplot (and a very ridiculous one, too) in *Marriage à la Mode*. But its main interest, and certainly its main value, is comic. It is Dryden's only original excursion into the realms of the higher comedy. For his favourite pair of lovers he here substitutes a quartette. Rhodophil and Doralice are a fashionable married pair, who, without having actually exhausted their mutual affection, are of opinion that their character is quite gone if they continue faithful to each other any longer. Rhodophil accordingly lays siege to Melantha, a young lady who is intended, though he does not know this, to marry his friend Palamede, while Palamede, deeply distressed at the idea of matrimony, devotes himself to Doralice. The cross purposes of this quartette are admirably related, and we are given to understand that no harm comes of it all. But in Doralice and Melantha Dryden has given studies of womankind quite out of his usual line. Melantha is, of course, far below Millamant, but it is not certain that that delightful creation of Congreve's genius does not owe something to her. Doralice, on the other hand, has ideas as to the philosophy of flirtation which do her no little credit. It is a thousand pities that the play is written in the language of the time, which makes it impossible to revive and difficult to read without disgust.

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Nothing of this kind can or need be said about the play which followed, the *Assignation*. It is vulgar, coarse, and dull; it was damned, and deserved it; while its successor, *Amboyna*, is also deserving of the same epithets, though being a mere play of ephemeral interest, and serving its turn, it was not damned. The old story of the Amboyna massacre—a bad enough story, certainly—was simply revived in order to excite the popular wrath against the Dutch.

The dramatic production which immediately succeeded these is one of the most curious of Dryden's performances. A disinclination to put himself to the trouble of designing a wholly original composition is among the most noteworthy of his literary characteristics. No man followed or copied in a more original manner, but it always seems to have been a relief to him to have something to follow or to copy. Two at least of his very best productions—*All for Love* and *Palamon and Arcite*—are specially remarkable in this respect. We can hardly say that the *State of Innocence* ranks with either of these; yet it has considerable merits—merits of which very few of those who repeat the story about "tagging Milton's verses" are aware. As for that story itself, it is not particularly creditable to the good manners of the elder poet. "Ay, young man, you may tag my verses if you will," is the traditional reply which Milton is said to have made to Dryden's request for permission to write the opera. The question of Dryden's relationship to Milton and his early opinion of *Paradise Lost* is rather a question for a Life of Milton than for the present pages: it is sufficient to say that, with his unflinching recognition of good work, Dryden undoubtedly appreciated Milton to the full long before Addison, as it is vulgarly held, taught the British public

to admire him. As for the *State of Innocence* itself, the conception of such an opera has sometimes been derided as preposterous—a derision which seems to overlook the fact that Milton was himself, in some degree, indebted to an Italian dramatic original. The piece is not wholly in rhyme, but contains some very fine passages.

The time was approaching, however, when Dryden was to quit his “long-loved mistress Rhyme,” as far as dramatic writing was concerned. These words occur in the prologue to *Aurengzebe*, which appeared in 1675. It would appear, indeed, that at this time Dryden was thinking of deserting not merely rhymed plays, but play-writing altogether. The dedication to Mulgrave contains one of several allusions to his well-known plan of writing a great heroic poem. Sir George Mackenzie had recently put him upon the plan of reading through most of the earlier English poets, and he had done so attentively, with the result of aspiring to the epic itself. But he still continued to write dramas, though *Aurengzebe* was his last in rhyme, at least wholly in rhyme. It is in some respects a very noble play, free from the rants, the preposterous bustle, and the still more preposterous length of the *Conquest of Granada*, while possessing most of the merits of that singular work in an eminent degree. Even Dryden hardly ever went farther in cunning of verse than in some of the passages of *Aurengzebe*, such as that well-known one which seems to take up an echo of *Macbeth* :

“When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat.
 Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit,
 Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay.
 To-morrow's falser than the former day,
 Lies worse, and while it says, we shall be blest
 With some new joys, cuts off what we possest.

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Strange cozenage! none would live past years again,
 Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain,
 And from the dregs of life think to receive
 What the first sprightly running could not give.
 I'm tired with waiting for this chemic gold
 Which fools us young and beggars us when old."

There is a good deal of moralizing of this melancholy kind in the play, the characters of which are drawn with a serious completeness not previously attempted by the author. It is perhaps the only one of Dryden's which, with very little alteration, might be acted, at least as a curiosity, at the present day. It is remarkable that the structure of the verse in the play itself would have led to the conclusion that Dryden was about to abandon rhyme. There is in *Aurengzebe* a great tendency towards *enjambement*; and as soon as this tendency gets the upper hand, a recurrence to blank verse is, in English dramatic writing, tolerably certain. For the intonation of English is not, like the intonation of French, such that rhyme is an absolute necessity to distinguish verse from prose; and where this necessity does not exist, rhyme must always appear to an intelligent critic a more or less impertinent intrusion in dramatic poetry. Indeed, the main thing which had for a time converted Dryden and others to the use of the couplet in drama was a curious notion that blank verse was too easy for long and dignified compositions. It was thought by others that the secret of it had been lost, and that the choice was practically between bad blank verse and good rhyme. In *All for Love* Dryden very shortly showed, *ambulando*, that this notion was wholly groundless. From this time forward he was faithful to the model he had now adopted, and—which was of the greatest importance—he induced others to be faithful too. Had it

not been for this, it is almost certain that *Venice Preserved* would have been in rhyme; that is to say, that it would have been spoilt. In this same year, 1675, a publisher, Bentley (of whom Dryden afterwards spoke with considerable bitterness), brought out a play called *The Mistaken Husband*, which is stated to have been revised, and to have had a scene added to it by Dryden. Dryden, however, definitely disowned it, and I cannot think that it is in any part his; though it is fair to say that some good judges, notably Mr. Swinburne, think differently.¹ Nearly three years passed without anything of Dryden's appearing, and at last, at the end of 1677, or the beginning of 1678, appeared a play as much better than *Aurengzebe* as *Aurengzebe* was better than its forerunners. This was *All for Love*, his first drama, in blank verse, and his "only play written for himself." More will be said later on the curious fancy which made him tread in the very steps of Shakspeare. It is sufficient to say now that the attempt, apparently foredoomed to hopeless failure, is, on the contrary, a great success. *Antony and Cleopatra* and *All for*

¹ The list of Dryden's spurious or doubtful works is not large or important. But a note of Pepys, mentioning a play of Dryden entitled *Ladies à la Mode*, which was acted and damned in 1668, has puzzled the commentators. There is no trace of this *Ladies à la Mode*. But Mr. E. W. Gosse has in his collection a play entitled *The Mall*, or *The Modish Lovers*, which he thinks may possibly be the very "mean thing" of Pepys' scornful mention. The difference of title is not fatal, for Samuel was not over-accurate in such matters. The play is anonymous, but the preface is signed J. D. The date is 1674, and the printing is execrable, and evidently not revised by the author, whoever he was. Notwithstanding this, the prologue, the epilogue, and a song contain some vigorous verse and phrase sometimes not a little suggestive of Dryden. In the entire absence of external evidence connecting him with it, the question, though one of much interest, is perhaps not one to be dealt with at any length here.

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Love, when they are contrasted, only show by the contrast the difference of kind, not the difference of degree, between their writers. The heroic conception has here, in all probability, as favourable exposition given to it as it is capable of, and it must be admitted that it makes a not unfavourable show even without the "dull sweets of rhyme" to drug the audience into good humour with it. The famous scene between Antony and Ventidius divides with the equally famous scene in *Don Sebastian* between Sebastian and Dorax the palm among Dryden's dramatic efforts. But as a whole the play is, I think, superior to *Don Sebastian*. The blank verse, too, is particularly interesting, because it was almost its author's first attempt at that *crux*; and because, for at least thirty years, hardly any tolerable blank verse—omitting of course Milton's—had been written by any one. The model is excellent, and it speaks Dryden's unerring literary sense, that, fresh as he was from the study of *Paradise Lost*, and great as was his admiration for its author, he does not for a moment attempt to confuse the epic and the tragic modes of the style. *All for Love* was, and deserved to be, successful. The play which followed it, *Limberham*, was, and deserved to be, damned. It must be one of the most astonishing things to any one who has not fully grasped the weakness as well as the strength of Dryden's character, that the noble matter and manner of *Aurengzebe* and *All for Love* should have been followed by this filthy stuff. As a play, it is by no means Dryden's worst piece of work; but, in all other respects, the less said about it the better. During the time of its production the author collaborated with Lee in writing the tragedy of *Ædipus*, in which both the friends are to be seen almost at their best. On Dryden's part, the lyric incantation scenes are perhaps most noticeable, and

Lee mingles throughout his usual bombast with his usual splendid poetry. If any one thinks this expression hyperbolic, I shall only ask him to read *Œdipus*, instead of taking the traditional witticisms about Lee for gospel. There is of course plenty of—

“Let gods meet gods and jostle in the dark,”

and the other fantastic follies, into which “metaphysical” poetry and “heroic” plays had seduced men of talent, and sometimes of genius; but these can be excused when they lead to such a passage as that where *Œdipus* cries—

“Thou coward! yet

Art living? canst not, wilt not find the road
To the great palace of magnificent death,
Though thousand ways lead to his thousand doors
Which day and night are still unbarred for all.”

Œdipus led to a quarrel with the players of the King's Theatre, of the merits of which, as we only have a one-sided statement, it is not easy to judge. But Dryden seems to have formed a connexion about this time with the other or Duke's company, and by them (April, 1679) a “potboiling” adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* was brought out, which might much better have been left unattempted. Two years afterwards appeared the last play (leaving operas and the scenes contributed to the *Duke of Guise* out of the question) that Dryden was to write for many years. This was *The Spanish Friar*, a popular piece, possessed of a good deal of merit, from the technical point of view of the play-wright, but which I think has been somewhat over-rated, as far as literary excellence is concerned. The principal character is no doubt amusing, but he is heavily indebted to Falstaff on the one hand, and to Fletcher's Lopez on the other; and he reminds the reader

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of both his ancestors in a way which cannot but be unfavourable to himself. The play is to me most interesting because of the light it throws on Dryden's grand characteristic, the consummate craftsmanship with which he could throw himself into the popular feeling of the hour. This "Protestant play" is perhaps his most notable achievement of the kind in drama, and it may be admitted that some other achievements of the same kind are less creditable.

Allusion has more than once been made to the very high quality, from the literary point of view, of the songs which appear in nearly all the plays of this long list. They constitute Dryden's chief title to a high rank as a composer of strictly lyrical poetry; and there are indeed few things which better illustrate the range of his genius than these exquisite snatches. At first sight, it would not seem by any means likely that a poet whose greatest triumphs were won in the fields of satire and of argumentative verse should succeed in such things. Ordinary lyric, especially of the graver and more elaborate kind, might not surprise us from such a man. But the song-gift is something distinct from the faculty of ordinary lyrical composition; and there is certainly nothing which necessarily infers it in the pointed declamation and close-ranked argument with which the name of Dryden is oftenest associated. But the later seventeenth century had a singular gift for such performance—a kind of swan-song, it might be thought, before the death-like slumber which, with few and brief intervals, was to rest upon the English lyric for a hundred years. Dorset, Rochester, even Mulgrave, wrote singularly fascinating songs, as smooth and easy as Moore's, and with far less of the commonplace and vulgar about them. Aphra Behn was an admirable, and Tom Duffey a far from des-

picable, songster. Even among the common run of playwrights, who have left no lyrical and not much literary reputation, scraps and snatches which have the true song stamp are not unfrequently to be found. But Dryden excelled them all in the variety of his cadences and the ring of his lines. Nowhere do we feel more keenly the misfortune of his licence of language, which prevents too many of these charming songs from being now quoted or sung. Their abundance may be illustrated by the fact that a single play, *The Mock Astrologer*, contains no less than four songs of the very first lyrical merit. "You charmed me not with that fair face," is an instance of the well-known common measure which is so specially English, and which is poetry or doggerel according to its cadence. "After the pangs of a desperate lover" is one of the rare examples of a real dactylic metre in English, were the dactyls are not, as usual, equally to be scanned as anapæsts. "Calm was the even, and clear was the sky," is a perfect instance of what may be called archness in song; and "Celimena of my heart," though not much can be said for the matter of it, is at least as much a metrical triumph as any of the others. Nor are the other plays less rich in similar work. The song beginning "Farewell, ungrateful traitor," gives a perfect example of a metre which has been used more than once in our own days with great success; and "Long between Love and Fear Phyllis tormented," which occurs in *The Assignment*, gives yet another example of the singular fertility with which Dryden devised and managed measures suitable for song. His lyrical faculty impelled him also—especially in his early plays—to luxuriate in incantation scenes, lyrical dialogues, and so forth. These have been ridiculed, not altogether unjustly, in *The Rehearsal*; but the incan-

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tation scene in *Ædipus* is very far above the average of such things; and of not a few passages in *King Arthur* at least as much may be said.

Dryden's energy was so entirely occupied with play-writing during this period that he had hardly, it would appear, time or desire to undertake any other work. Towards the middle of it, however, when he had, by poems and plays, already established himself as the greatest living poet—Milton being out of the question—he began to be asked for prologues and epilogues by other poets, or by the actors on the occasion of the revival of old plays. These prologues and epilogues have often been commented upon as one of the most curious literary phenomena of the time. The custom is still, on special occasions, sparingly kept up on the stage; but the prologue, and still more the epilogue, to the Westminster play are the chief living representatives of it. It was usual to comment in these pieces on circumstances of the day, political and other. It was also usual to make personal appeals to the audience for favour and support very much in the manner of the old Trouvères when they commended their wares. But more than all, and worst of all, it was usual to indulge in the extremest licence both of language and meaning. The famous epilogue—one of Dryden's own—to *Tyrannic Love*, in which Mrs. Eleanor Gwyn, being left for dead on the stage, in the character of St. Catherine, and being about to be carried out by the scene-shifters, exclaims—

“Hold! are you mad? you damned confounded dog,
I am to rise and speak the epilogue,”

is only a very mild sample of these licences, upon which Macaulay has commented with a severity which is for once absolutely justifiable. There was, however, no poet

who had the knack of telling allusion to passing events as Dryden had, and he was early engaged as a prologue writer. The first composition that we have of this kind written for a play not his own is the prologue to *Albumazar*, a curious piece, believed, but not known, to have been written by a certain Tomkis in James the First's reign, and ranking among the many which have been attributed with more or less (generally less) show of reason to Shakespeare. Dryden's knowledge of the early English drama was not exhaustive, and he here makes a charge of plagiarism against Ben Jonson, for which there is in all probability not the least ground. The piece contains, however, as do most of these vigorous, though unequal compositions, many fine lines. The next production of the kind not intended for a play of his own is the prologue to the first performance of the king's servants, after they had been burnt out of their theatre, and this is followed by many others. In 1673 a prologue to the University of Oxford, spoken when the *Silent Woman* was acted, is the first of many of the same kind. It has been mentioned that Dryden speaks slightly of these University prologues, but they are among his best pieces of the class, and are for the most part entirely free from the ribaldry with which he was but too often wont to alloy them. In these years pieces intended to accompany Carlell's *Arviragus and Philicia*, Etherege's *Man of Mode*, Charles Davenant's *Circe*, Lee's *Mithridates*, Shadwell's *True Widow*, Lee's *Cæsar Borgia*, Tate's *Loyal General*, and not a few others occur. A specimen of the style in which Dryden excelled so remarkably, and which is in itself so utterly dead, may fairly be given here, and nothing can be better for the purpose than the most famous prologue to the University of Oxford. This is the prologue in which the poet at

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once displays his exquisite capacity for flattery, his command over versification, and his singular antipathy to his own Alma Mater; an antipathy which, it may be pointed out, is confirmed by the fact of his seeking his master's degree rather at Lambeth than at Cambridge. Whether any solution to the enigma can be found in Dennis's remark that the "younger fry" at Cambridge preferred Settle to their own champion, it would be vain to attempt to determine. The following piece, however, may be taken as a fair specimen of the more decent prologue of the later seventeenth century:

"Though actors cannot much of learning boast,
Of all who want it, we admire it most:
We love the praises of a learned pit,
As we remotely are allied to wit.
We speak our poet's wit, and trade in ore,
Like those who touch upon the golden shore;
Betwixt our judges can distinction make,
Discern how much, and why, our poems take;
Mark if the fools, or men of sense, rejoice;
Whether the applause be only sound or voice.
When our fop gallants, or our city folly,
Clap over-loud, it makes us melancholy:
We doubt that scene which does their wonder raise,
And, for their ignorance, condemn their praise.
Judge, then, if we who act, and they who write,
Should not be proud of giving you delight.
London likes grossly; but this nicer pit
Examines, fathoms all the depths of wit;
The ready finger lays on every blot;
Knows what should justly please, and what should not.
Nature herself lies open to your view,
You judge, by her, what draught of her is true,
Where outlines false, and colours seem too faint,
Where bunglers daub, and where true poets paint.

But by the sacred genius of this place,
 By every Muse, by each domestic grace,
 Be kind to wit, which but endeavours well,
 And, where you judge, presumes not to excel.
 Our poets hither for adoption come,
 As nations sued to be made free of Rome;
 Not in the suffragating tribes to stand,
 But in your utmost, last, provincial band.
 If his ambition may those hopes pursue,
 Who with religion loves your arts and you,
 Oxford to him a dearer name shall be,
 Than his own mother-university.
 Thebes did his green, unknowing youth engage;
 He chooses Athens in his riper age."

During this busy period, Dryden's domestic life had been comparatively uneventful. His eldest son had been born either in 1665 or in 1666, it seems not clear which. His second son, John, was born a year or two later; and the third, Erasmus Henry, in May, 1669. These three sons were all the children Lady Elizabeth brought him. The two eldest went, like their father, to Westminster, and had their schoolboy troubles there, as letters of Dryden still extant show. During the whole period, except in his brief visits to friends and patrons in the country, he was established in the house in Gerrard Street, which is identified with his name.¹ While the children were young, his means must have been sufficient, and, for those days, con-

¹ A house in Fetter Lane, now divided into two, bears a plate stating that Dryden lived there. The plate, as I was informed by the present occupiers, replaces a stone slab or inscription which was destroyed in some alterations not very many years ago. I know of no reference to this house in any book, nor does Mr. J. C. Collins, who called my attention to it. If Dryden ever lived here, it must have been between his residence with Herringman and his marriage.

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siderable. With his patrimony included, Malone has calculated that for great part of the time his income must have been fully 700*l.* a year, equal in purchasing power to 2000*l.* a year in Malone's time, and probably to nearer 3000*l.* now. In June, 1668, the degree of Master of Arts, to which, for some reason or other, Dryden had never proceeded at Cambridge, was, at the recommendation of the king, conferred upon him by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Two years later, in the summer of 1670, he was made poet laureate and historiographer royal.¹ Davenant, the last holder of the laureateship, had died two years previously, and Howell, the well-known author of the *Epistole Ho-Elianae*, and the late holder of the historiographership, four years before. When the two appointments were conferred on Dryden, the salary was fixed in the patent at 200*l.* a year, besides the butt of sack which the economical James afterwards cut off, and arrears since Davenant's death were to be paid. In the same year, 1670, the death of his mother increased his income by the 20*l.* a year which had been payable to her from the Northamptonshire property. From 1667, or thereabouts, Dryden had been in possession of a valuable partnership with the players of the king's house, for whom he contracted to write three plays a year in consideration of a share and a quarter of the profits. Dryden's part of the contract was not performed, it seems; but the actors declare that, at any rate for some years, their part was, and that the poet's receipts averaged from 300*l.* to 400*l.* a year, besides which he had (sometimes, at any rate) the third night, and (we

¹ The patent, given by Malone, is dated Aug. 18. Mr. W. Noel Sainsbury, of the Record Office, has pointed out to me a preliminary warrant to "our Attorney or Solicitor Generall" to "prepare a Bill" for the purpose dated April 13.

may suppose always) the bookseller's fee for the copyright of the printed play, which together averaged 100*l.* a play or more. Lastly, at the extreme end of the period most probably, but certainly before 1679, the king granted him an additional pension of 100*l.* a year. The importance of this pension is more than merely pecuniary, for this is the grant, the confirmation of which, after some delay, by James, was taken by Macaulay as the wages of apostasy.

The pecuniary prosperity of this time was accompanied by a corresponding abundance of the good things which generally go with wealth. Dryden was familiar with most of the literary nobles and gentlemen of Charles's court, and Dorset, Etherege, Mulgrave, Sedley, and Rochester were among his special intimates or patrons, whichever word may be preferred. The somewhat questionable boast which he made of this familiarity Nemesis was not long in punishing, and the instrument which Nemesis chose was Rochester himself. It might be said of this famous person, whom Etherege has hit off so admirably in his *Dorimant*, that he was, except in intellect, the worst of all the courtiers of the time, because he was one of the most radically unamiable. It was truer of him even than of Pope, that he was sure to play some monkey trick or other on those who were unfortunate enough to be his intimates. He had relations with most of the literary men of his time, but those relations almost always ended badly. Sometimes he set them at each other like dogs, or procured for one some court favour certain to annoy a rival; sometimes he satirized them coarsely in his foul-mouthed poems; sometimes, as we shall see, he forestalled the Chevalier de Rohan in his method of repartee. As early as 1675 Rochester had disobliterated Dryden, though the exact amount of the injury has certainly been exaggerated

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by Maloné, whom most biographers, except Mr. Christie, have followed. There is little doubt (though Mr. Christie thinks otherwise) that one of the chief functions of the poet laureate was to compose masques and such like pieces to be acted by the court; indeed, this appears to have been the main regular duty of the office at least in the seventeenth century. That Crowne should have been charged with the composition of *Calisto* was, therefore, a slight to Dryden. Crowne was not a bad play-wright. He might perhaps, by a plagiarism from Lamb's criticism on Heywood, be called a kind of prose Dryden, and a characteristic saying of Dryden's, which has been handed down, seems to show that the latter recognized the fact. But the addition to the charge against Rochester that he afterwards interfered to prevent an epilogue, which Dryden wrote for Crowne's piece, from being recited, rests upon absolutely no authority, and it is not even certain that the epilogue referred to was actually written by Dryden.

In the year 1679, however, Dryden had a much more serious taste of Rochester's malevolence. He had recently become very intimate with Lord Mulgrave, who had quarrelled with Rochester. Personal courage was not Rochester's forte, and he had shown the white feather when challenged by Mulgrave. Shortly afterwards there was circulated in manuscript an *Essay on Satire*, containing virulent attacks on the king, on Rochester, and the Duchesses of Cleveland and Portsmouth. How any one could ever have suspected that the poem was Dryden's it is difficult to understand. To begin with, he never at any time in his career lent himself as a hired literary bravo to any private person. In the second place, that he should attack the king, from whom he derived the greatest part of his income, was inconceivable. Thirdly, no literary judge

could for one moment connect him with the shambling doggerel lines which distinguish the *Essay on Satire* in its original form. A very few couplets have some faint ring of Dryden's verse, but not more than is perceivable in the work of many other poets and poetasters of the time. Lastly, Mulgrave, who, with some bad qualities, was truthful and fearless enough, expressly absolves Dryden as being not only innocent, but ignorant of the whole matter. However, Rochester chose to identify him as the author, and in letters still extant almost expressly states his belief in the fact, and threatens to "leave the repartee to Black Will with a cudgel." On the 18th December, as Dryden was going home at night, through Rose Alley, Covent Garden, he was attacked and beaten by masked men. Fifty pounds reward (deposited at what is now called Childs' Bank) was offered for the discovery of the offenders, and afterwards a pardon was promised to the actual criminals if they would divulge the name of their employer, but nothing came of it. The intelligent critics of the time affected to consider the matter a disgrace to Dryden, and few of the subsequent attacks on him fail to notice it triumphantly. How frequent those attacks soon became the next chapter will show.

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CHAPTER IV.

SATIRICAL AND DIDACTIC POEMS.

In the year 1680 a remarkable change came over the character of Dryden's work. Had he died in this year (and he had already reached an age at which many men's work is done) he would not at the present time rank very high even among the second class of English poets. In pure poetry he had published nothing of the slightest consequence for fourteen years, and though there was much admirable work in his dramas, they could as wholes only be praised by allowance. Of late years, too, he had given up the style—rhymed heroic drama—which he had specially made his own. He had been for some time casting about for an opportunity of again taking up strictly poetical work; and, as usually happens with the favourites of fortune, a better opportunity than any he could have elaborated for himself was soon presented to him. The epic poem which, as he tells us, he intended to write would doubtless have contained many fine passages and much splendid versification; but it almost certainly would not have been the best thing in its kind even in its own language. The series of satirical and didactic poems which, in the space of less than seven years, he was now to produce, occupies the position which the epic would almost to a certainty have failed to attain. Not only is there nothing better

of their own kind in English, but it may almost be said that there is nothing better in any other literary language. Satire, argument, and exposition may possibly be half-spurious kinds of poetry—that is a question which need not be argued here. But among satirical and didactic poems *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal*, *Macflecknoe*, *Religio Laici*, *The Hind and the Panther*, hold the first place in company with very few rivals. In a certain kind of satire to be defined presently they have no rival at all; and in a certain kind of argumentative exposition they have no rival except in Lucretius.

It is probable that, until he was far advanced in middle life, Dryden had paid but little attention to political and religious controversies, though he was well enough versed in their terms, and had a logical and almost scholastic mind. I have already endeavoured to show the unlikeliness of his ever having been a very fervent Roundhead, and I do not think that there is much more probability of his having been a very fervent Royalist. His literary work, his few friendships, and the tavern-coffeehouse life which took up so much of the time of the men of that day, probably occupied him sufficiently in the days of his earlier manhood. He was loyal enough, no doubt, not merely in lip-loyalty, and was perfectly ready to furnish an *Amboyna* or anything else that was wanted; but for the first eighteen years of Charles the Second's reign, the nation at large felt little interest, of the active kind, in political questions. Dryden almost always reflected the sympathies of the nation at large. The Popish Plot, however, and the dangerous excitement which the misgovernment of Charles, on the one hand, and the machinations of Shaftesbury, on the other, produced, found him at an age when serious subjects are at any rate, by courtesy, supposed to

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possess greater attractions than they exert in youth. Tradition has it that he was more or less directly encouraged by Charles to write one, if not two, of the poems which in a few months made him the first satirist in Europe. It is possible, for Charles had a real if not a very lively interest in literature, was a sound enough critic in his way, and had ample shrewdness to perceive the advantage to his own cause which he might gain by enlisting Dryden. However this may be, *Absalom and Achitophel* was published about the middle of November, 1681, a week or so before the grand jury threw out the bill against Shaftesbury on a charge of high treason. At no time before, and hardly at any time since, did party-spirit run higher; and though the immediate object of the poem was defeated by the fidelity of the brisk boys of the city to their leader, there is no question that the poem worked powerfully among the influences which after the most desperate struggle, short of open warfare, in which any English sovereign has ever been engaged, finally won for Charles the victory over the Exclusionists, by means at least ostensibly constitutional and legitimate. It is, however, with the literary rather than with the political aspect of the matter that we are here concerned.

The story of *Absalom and Achitophel* has obvious capacities for political adaptation, and it had been more than once so used in the course of the century, indeed (it would appear), in the course of the actual political struggle in which Dryden now engaged. Like many other of the greatest writers, Dryden was wont to carry out Molière's principle to the fullest, and to care very little for technical originality of plan or main idea. The form which his poem took was also in many ways suggested by the prevailing literary tastes of the day. Both in France and in

England the character or portrait, a set description of a given person in prose or verse, had for some time been fashionable. Clarendon in the one country, Saint Evremond in the other, had in particular composed prose portraits which have never been surpassed. Dryden, accordingly, made his poem little more than a string of such portraits, connected together by the very slenderest thread of narrative, and interspersed with occasional speeches in which the arguments of his own side were put in a light as favourable, and those of the other in a light as unfavourable, as possible. He was always very careless of anything like a regular plot for his poems—a carelessness rather surprising in a practised writer for the stage. But he was probably right in neglecting this point. The subjects with which he dealt were of too vital an interest to his readers to allow them to stay and ask the question, whether the poems had a beginning, a middle, and an end. Sharp personal satire and biting political denunciation needed no such setting as this—a setting which to all appearance Dryden was as unable as he was unwilling to give. He could, however, and did, give other things of much greater importance. The wonderful command over the couplet of which he had displayed the beginnings in his early poems, and which had in twenty years of play-writing been exercised and developed till its owner was in as thorough training as a professional athlete, was the first of these. The second was a faculty of satire, properly so called, which was entirely novel. The third was a faculty of specious argument in verse, which, as has been said, no one save Lucretius has ever equalled; and which, if it falls short of the great Roman's in logical exactitude, hardly falls short of it in poetical ornament, and excels it in a sort of triumphant vivacity which hurries the reader along,

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whether he will or no. All these three gifts are almost indifferently exemplified in the series of poems now under discussion, and each of them may deserve a little consideration before we proceed to give account of the poems themselves.

The versification of English satire before Dryden had been almost without exception harsh and rugged. There are whole passages of Marston and of Donne, as well as more rarely of Hall, which can only be recognised for verse by the rattle of the rhymes and by a diligent scansion with the finger. Something the same, allowing for the influence of Waller and his school, may be said of Marvell and even of Oldham. Meanwhile, the octosyllabic satire of Cleveland, Butler, and others, though less violently uncouth than the decasyllables, was purposely grotesque. There is some difference of opinion as to how far the heroic satirists themselves were intentionally rugged. Donne, when he chose, could write with perfect sweetness, and Marston could be smooth enough in blank verse. It has been thought that some mistaken classical tradition made the early satirists adopt their jaw-breaking style, and there may be something to be said for this; but I think that regard must, in fairness, also be had to the very imperfect command of the couplet which they possessed. The languid cadence of its then ordinary form was unsuited for satire, and the satirists had not the art of quickening and varying it. Hence the only resource was to make it as like prose as possible. But Dryden was in no such case; his native gifts and his enormous practice in play-writing had made the couplet as natural a vehicle to him for any form of discourse as blank verse or as plain prose. The form of it, too, which he had most affected, was specially suited for satire. In the first place, this form had, as has already

been noted, a remarkably varied cadence; in the second, its strong antitheses and smart telling hits lent themselves to personal description and attack with consummate ease. There are passages of Dryden's satires in which every couplet has not only the force but the actual sound of a slap in the face. The rapidity of movement from one couplet to the other is another remarkable characteristic. Even Pope, master as he was of verse, often fell into the fault of isolating his couplets too much, as if he expected applause between each, and wished to give time for it. Dryden's verse, on the other hand, strides along with a careless Olympian motion, as if the writer were looking at his victims rather with a kind of good-humoured scorn than with any elaborate triumph.

This last remark leads us naturally to the second head, the peculiar character of Dryden's satire itself. In this respect it is at least as much distinguished from its predecessors as in the former. There had been a continuous tradition among satirists that they must affect immense moral indignation at the evils they attacked. Juvenal and still more Persius are probably responsible for this; and even Dryden's example did not put an end to the practice, for in the next century it is found in persons upon whom it sits with singular awkwardness—such as Churchill and Lloyd. Now, this moral indignation, apt to be rather tiresome when the subject is purely ethical—Marston is a glaring example of this—becomes quite intolerable when the subject is political. It never does for the political satirist to lose his temper, and to rave and rant and denounce with the air of an inspired prophet. Dryden, and perhaps Dryden alone, has observed this rule. As I have just observed, his manner towards his subjects is that of a cool and not ill-humoured scorn. They are great scoundrels certainly,

but they are vicious.

expresses the turn explained in his of this satirists are usual types, or equals. The French satirist first case the and the satirist in the at personal pique art, the discus- sional instance, happens only in this Scylla and her falls into types and in the idle gratifying; Achitodor; Shindriguer; Shind of all days. satirical portraits in selecting compared with the ticeable. Shind scurrilous libel accuses Drydenings, most of

but they are probably even more contemptible than they are vicious. The well-known line—

“They got a villain, and we lost a fool,”

expresses this attitude admirably, and the attitude in its turn explains the frantic rage which Dryden's satire produced in his opponents. There is yet another peculiarity of this satire in which it stands almost alone. Most satirists are usually prone to the error of attacking either mere types, or else individuals too definitely marked as individuals. The first is the fault of Regnier and all the minor French satirists; the second is the fault of Pope. In the first case the point and zest of the thing are apt to be lost, and the satire becomes a declamation against vice and folly in the abstract; in the second case a suspicion of personal pique comes in, and it is felt that the requirement of art, the disengagement of the general law from the individual instance, is not sufficiently attended to. Regnier perhaps only in *Macette*, Pope perhaps only in *Atticus*, escape this Scylla and this Charybdis; but Dryden rarely or never falls into either's grasp. His figures are always at once types and individuals. Zimri is at once Buckingham and the idle grand seigneur who plays at politics and at learning; Achitophel at once Shaftesbury and the abstract intriguer; Shiinei at once Bethel and the sectarian politician of all days. It is to be noticed, also, that in drawing these satirical portraits the poet has exercised a singular judgment in selecting his traits. If *Absalom and Achitophel* be compared with the replies it called forth, this is especially noticeable. Shadwell, for instance, in the almost incredibly scurrilous libel which he put forth in answer to the *Medal*, accuses Dryden of certain definite misdoings and missayings, most of which are unbelievable, while others are in-

conclusive. Dryden, on the other hand, in the character of Og, confines himself in the adroitest way to generalities. These generalities are not only much more effective, but also much more difficult of disproof. When, to recur to the already quoted and typical line attacking the unlucky Johnson, Dryden says—

“They got a villain, and we lost a fool,”

it is obviously useless for the person assailed to sit down and write a rejoinder tending to prove that he is neither one nor the other. He might clear himself from the charge of villainy, but only at the inevitable cost of establishing that of folly. But when Shadwell, in unquotable verses, says to Dryden, on this or that day you did such and such a discreditable thing, the reply is obvious. In the first place the charge can be disproved; in the second it can be disdained. When Dryden himself makes such charges, it is always in a casual and allusive way, as if there were no general dissent as to the truth of his allegation, while he takes care to be specially happy in his language. The disgraceful insinuation against Forbes, the famous if irreverent dismissal of Lord Howard of Escrick—

“And canting Nadab let oblivion damn,
Who made new porridge for the paschal lamb,”

justify themselves by their form if not by their matter. It has also to be noted that Dryden's facts are rarely disputable. The famous passage in which Settle and Shadwell are yoked in a sentence of discriminating damnation is an admirable example of this. It is absolutely true that Settle had a certain faculty of writing, though the matter of his verse was worthless; and it is absolutely true that

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Shadwell wrote worse, and was in some respects a duller man, than any person of equal talents placed among English men of letters. There could not possibly be a more complete justification of *Macflecknoe* than the victim's complaint that "he had been represented as an Irishman, though Dryden knew perfectly well that he had only once been in Ireland, and that was but for a few hours."

Lastly has to be noticed Dryden's singular faculty of verse argument. He was, of course, by no means the first didactic poet of talent in England. Sir John Davies is usually mentioned specially as his forerunner, and there were others who would deserve notice in a critical history of English poetry. But Dryden's didactic poems are quite unlike anything which came before them, and have never been approached by anything that has come after them. Doubtless they prove nothing; indeed, the chief of them, *The Hind and the Panther*, is so entirely desultory that it could not prove anything; but at the same time they have a remarkable air of proving something. Dryden had, in reality, a considerable touch of the scholastic in his mind. He delights at all times in the formulas of the schools, and his various literary criticisms are frequently very fair specimens of deductive reasoning. The bent of his mind, moreover, was of that peculiar kind which delights in arguing a point. Something of this may be traced in the singular variety, not to say inconsistency, even of his literary judgments. He sees, for the time being, only the point which he has set himself to prove, and is quite careless of the fact that he has proved something very different yesterday, and is very likely to prove something different still to-morrow. But for the purposes of didactic poetry he had special equipments unconnected with his merely logi-

cal power. He was at all times singularly happy and fertile in the art of illustration, and of concealing the weakness of an argument in the most convincing way, by a happy simile or jest. He steered clear of the rock on which Lucretius has more than once gone nigh to split—the repetition of dry formulas and professional terms. In the *Hind and Panther*, indeed, the argument is, in great part, composed of narrative and satirical portraiture. The Fable of the Pigeons, the Character of the Buzzard, and a dozen more such things, certainly prove as little as the most determined enemy of the *belles lettres* could wish. But *Religio Laici*, which is our best English didactic poem, is not open to this charge, and is really a very good piece of argument. Weaknesses here and there are, of course, adroitly patched over with ornament, but still the whole possesses a very fair capacity of holding water. Here, too, the peculiar character of Dryden's poetic style served him well. He speaks with surely affected depreciation of the style of the *Religio* as "unpolished and rugged." In reality, it is a model of the plainer sort of verse, and nearer to his own admirable prose than anything else that can be cited.

One thing more, and a thing of the greatest importance, has to be said about Dryden's satirical poems. There never, perhaps, was a satirist who less abused his power for personal ends. He only attacked Settle and Shadwell after both had assailed him in the most virulent and unprovoked fashion. Many of the minor assailants whom, as we shall see, *Absalom and Achitophel* raised up against him, he did not so much as notice. On the other hand, no kind of personal grudge can be traced in many of his most famous passages. The character of Zimri was not only perfectly true and just, but was also a fair literary

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tit-for-tat in return for the *Rehearsal*; nor did Buckingham's foolish rejoinder provoke the poet to say another word. Last of all, in no part of his satires is there the slightest reflection on Rochester, notwithstanding the disgraceful conduct of which he had been guilty. Rochester was dead, leaving no heirs and very few friends, so that at any time during the twenty years which Dryden survived him satirical allusion would have been safe and easy. But Dryden was far too manly to war with the dead, and far too manly even to indulge, as his great follower did, in vicious flings at the living.

Absalom and Achitophel is perhaps, with the exception of the St. Cecilia ode, the best known of all Dryden's poems to modern readers, and there is no need to give any very lengthy account of it, or of the extraordinary skill with which Monmouth is treated. The sketch, even now about the best existing in prose or verse, of the Popish Plot, the character and speeches of Achitophel, the unapproached portrait of Zimri, and the final harangue of David, have for generations found their places in every book of elegant extracts, either for general or school use. But perhaps the most characteristic passage of the whole, as indicating the kind of satire which Dryden now introduced for the first time, is the passage descriptive of Shimei—Slingsby Bethel—the Republican sheriff of the city:

“But he, though bad, is followed by a worse,
The wretch, who heaven's anointed dared to curse;
Shimei—whose youth did early promise bring
Of zeal to God, and hatred to his King—
Did wisely from expensive sins refrain,
And never broke the Sabbath but for gain:
Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,
Or curse, unless against the government.

Thus heaping wealth, by the most ready way
Among the Jews, which was to cheat and pray;
The City, to reward his pious hate
Against his master, chose him magistrate.
His hand a vane of justice did uphold,
His neck was loaded with a chain of gold.
During his office no person was no crime,
The sons of Belial had a glorious time:
For Shimei, though not prodigal of pelf,
Yet loved his wicked neighbour as himself.
When two or three were gathered to declaim
Against the monarch of Jerusalem,
Shimei was always in the midst of them:
And, if they cursed the King when he was by,
Would rather curse than break good company.
If any durst his factious friends accuse,
He packed a jury of dissenting Jews,
Whose fellow-feeling in the godly cause
Would free the suffering saint from human laws:
For laws are only made to punish those
Who serve the King, and to protect his foes.
If any leisure time he had from power,
Because 'tis sin to misemploy an hour,
His business was, by writing to persuade,
That kings were useless, and a clog to trade:
And that his noble style he might refine,
No Rechabite more shunned the fumes of wine.
Chaste were his cellars, and his shrieval board
The grossness of a city feast abhorred:
His cooks with long disuse their trade forgot;
Cool was his kitchen, though his brains were hot.
Such frugal virtue malice may accuse,
But sure 'twas necessary to the Jews:
For towns, once burnt, such magistrates require,
As dare not tempt God's providence by fire.
With spiritual food he fed his servants well,
But free from flesh, that made the Jews rebel:
And Moses' laws he held in more account,
For forty days of fasting in the mount."

There had been nothing in the least like this before. The prodigality of irony, the sting in the tail of every couplet, the ingenuity by which the odious charges are made against the victim in the very words almost of the phrases which his party were accustomed to employ, and above all the polish of the language and the verse, and the tone of half-condescending banter, were things of which that time had no experience. The satire was as bitter as Butler's, but less grotesque and less laboured.

It was not likely that at a time when pamphlet-writing was the chief employment of professional authors, and when the public mind was in the hottest state of excitement, such an onslaught as *Absalom and Achitophel* should remain unanswered. In three weeks from its appearance a parody, entitled *Towser the Second*, attacking Dryden, was published, the author of which is said to have been Henry Care. A few days later Buckingham proved, with tolerable convincingness, how small had been his own share in the *Rehearsal*, by putting forth some *Poetical Reflections* of the dreariest kind. Him followed an anonymous Nonconformist with *A Whip for the Fool's Back*, a performance which exposed his own back to a much more serious flagellation in the preface to the *Medal*. Next came Samuel Pordage's *Azaria and Hushai*. This work of "Lame Mephibosheth, the wizard's son," is weak enough in other respects, but shows that Dryden had already taught several of his enemies how to write. Lastly, Settle published *Absalom Senior*, perhaps the worst of all the replies, though containing evidences of its author's faculty for "rhyming and rattling." Of these and of subsequent replies Scott has given ample selections, ample, that is to say, for the general reader. But the student of Dryden can hardly appreciate his author fully, or estimate

the debt which the English language owes to him, unless he has read at last some of them in full.

The popularity of *Absalom and Achitophel* was immense, and its sale rapid; but the main object, the overthrowing of Shaftesbury, was not accomplished, and a certain triumph was even gained for that turbulent leader by the failure of the prosecution against him. This failure was celebrated by the striking of a medal with the legend *Laetamur*. Thereupon Dryden wrote the *Medal*. A very precise but probably apocryphal story is told by Spence of its origin. Charles, he says, was walking with Dryden in the Mall, and said to him, "If I were a poet, and I think I am poor enough to be one, I would write a poem on such a subject in such a manner," giving him at the same time hints for the *Medal*, which, when finished, was rewarded with a hundred broad pieces. The last part of the story is not very credible, for the king was not extravagant towards literature. The first is unlikely, because he was, in the first place, too much of a gentleman to reproach a man to whom he was speaking with the poverty of his profession; and, in the second, too shrewd not to see that he laid himself open to a damaging repartee. However, the story is not impossible, and that is all that can be said of it. The *Medal* came out in March, 1682. It is a much shorter and a much graver poem than *Absalom and Achitophel*, extending to little more than 300 lines, and containing none of the picturesque personalities which had adorned its predecessor. Part of it is a bitter invective against Shaftesbury, part an argument as to the unfitness of republican institutions for England, and the rest an "Address to the Whigs," as the prose preface is almost exclusively. The language of the poem is nervous, its versification less lively than that of *Absalom and Achitophel*, but not less care-

ful. It is noticeable, too, that the *Medal* contains a line of fourteen syllables,

“Thou leap'st o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way.”

The Alexandrine was already a favourite device of Dryden's, but he has seldom elsewhere tried the seven-foot verse as a variation. Strange to say, it is far from inharmonious in its place, and has a certain connexion with the sense, though the example certainly cannot be recommended for universal imitation. I cannot remember any instance in another poet of such a licence except the well-known three in the *Revolt of Islam*, which may be thought to be covered by Shelley's prefatory apology.

The direct challenge to the Whigs which the preface contained was not likely to go unanswered; and, indeed, Dryden had described in it with exact irony the character of the replies he received. Pordage returned to the charge with the *Medal Reversed*; the admirers of Somers hope that he did not write *Dryden's Satire to his Muse*; and there were many others. But one of them, the *Medal of John Bayes*, is of considerably greater importance. It was written by Thomas Shadwell, and is perhaps the most scurrilous piece of ribaldry which has ever got itself quoted in English literature. The author gives a life of Dryden, accusing him pell-mell of all sorts of disgraceful conduct and unfortunate experiences. His adulation of Oliver, his puritanic relations, his misfortunes at Cambridge, his marriage, his intrigues with Mrs. Reeve, &c., &c., are all raked up or invented for the purpose of throwing obloquy on him. The attack passed all bounds of decency, especially as it had not been provoked by any personality towards Shadwell, and for once Dryden resolved to make an example of his assailant.

Thomas Shadwell was a Norfolk man, and about ten years Dryden's junior. Ever since the year 1668 he had been writing plays (chiefly comedies) and hanging about town, and Dryden and he had been in a manner friends. They had joined Crowne in the task of writing down the *Empress of Morocco*, and it does not appear that Dryden had ever given Shadwell any direct cause of offence. Shadwell, however, who was exceedingly arrogant, and apparently jealous of Dryden's acknowledged position as leader of the English drama, took more than one occasion of sneering at Dryden, and especially at his critical prefaces. Not long before the actual declaration of war Shadwell had received a prologue from Dryden, and the outbreak itself was due to purely political causes, though no doubt Shadwell, who was a sincere Whig and Protestant, was very glad to pour out his pent-up literary jealousy at the same time. The personality of his attack on Dryden was, however, in the last degree unwise; for the house in which he lived was of glass almost all over. His manners are admitted to have been coarse and brutal, his conversation unclean, his appearance uninviting; nor was his literary personality safer from attack. He had taken Ben Jonson for his model, and any reader of his comedies must admit that he had a happy knack of detecting or imagining the oddities which, after Ben's example, he called "humours." The *Sullen Lovers* is in this way a much more genuinely amusing play than any of Dryden's, and the *Squire of Alsatia*, *Bury Fair*, *Epsom Wells*, the *Virtuoso*, &c., are comedies of manners by no means unimportant for the social history of the time. But whether it was owing to haste, as Rochester pretended, or, as Dryden would have it, to certain intellectual incapacities, there can be no doubt that nobody ever made less use of his faculties than Shadwell. His

work is always disgraceful as writing; he seems to have been totally destitute of any critical faculty, and he mixes up what is really funny with the dullest and most wearisome folly and ribaldry. He was thus given over entirely into Dryden's hands, and the unmatched satire of *MacFlecknoe* was the result.

Flecknoe, whom but for this work no one would ever have inquired about, was, and had been for some time, a stock-subject for allusive satire. He was an Irish priest who had died not long before, after writing a little good verse and a great deal of bad. He had paid compliments to Dryden, and there is no reason to suppose that Dryden had any enmity towards him; his part, indeed, is simply representative, and the satire is reserved for Shadwell. Well as they are known, the first twenty or thirty lines of the poem must be quoted once more, for illustration of Dryden's satirical faculty is hardly possible without them :

“ All human things are subject to decay,
 And, when fate summons, monarchs must obey.
 This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
 Was called to empire, and had governed long;
 In prose and verse was owned without dispute,
 Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute.
 This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
 And blessed with issue of a large increase,
 Worn out with business, did at length debate
 To settle the succession of the state;
 And, pondering which of all his sons was fit
 To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
 Cried—'Tis resolved! for nature pleads, that he
 Should only rule, who most resembles me.
 Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
 Mature in dulness from his tender years;
 Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he

Who stands confirmed in full stupidity,
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
 But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
 Strike through and make a lucid interval;
 But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
 His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
 Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
 And seems designed for thoughtless majesty;
 Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
 And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign."

MacFlecknoe was published in October, 1682, but Dryden had not done with Shadwell. A month later came out the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, in which Nahum Tate took up the story. Tate copied the versification of his master with a good deal of success, though, as it is known that Dryden gave strokes almost all through the poem, it is difficult exactly to apportion the other laureate's part. But the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* would assuredly never be opened were it not for a long passage of about 200 lines, which is entirely Dryden's, and which contains some of his very best work. Unluckily it contains also some of his greatest licences of expression, to which he was probably provoked by the unparalleled language which, as has been said, Shadwell and others had used to him. The 200 lines which he gave Tate are one string of characters, each more savage and more masterly than the last. Ferguson, Forbes, and Johnson are successively branded; Pordage has his ten syllables of immortalizing contempt; and then come the famous characters of Doeg (Settle) and Og (Shadwell)—

"Two fools that crutch their feeble sense on verse,
 Who by my muse to all succeeding times
 Shall live, in spite of their own doggrel rhymes."

The coarseness of speech before alluded to makes it impossible to quote these characters as a whole, but a *cento* is fortunately possible with little loss of vigour.

“Doeg, though without knowing how or why,
 Made still a blundering kind of melody ;
 Spurred boldly on, and dashed through thick and thin,
 Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in ;
 Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,
 And, in one word, heroically mad,
 He was too warm on picking-work to dwell,
 But fagoted his notions as they fell,
 And, if they rhymed and rattled, all was well.
 Railing in other men may be a crime,
 But ought to pass for mere instinct in him ;
 Instinct he follows, and no farther knows,
 For, to write verse with him is to *transprose* ;
 'Twere pity treason at his door to lay,
 Who makes *heaven's gate a lock to its own key* ;
 Let him rail on, let his invective muse
 Have four-and-twenty letters to abuse.
 Which, if he jumbles to one line of sense,
 Indict him of a capital offence.
 In fire-works give him leave to vent his spite,
 Those are the only serpents he can write ;
 The height of his ambition is, we know,
 But to be master of a puppet-show ;
 On that one stage his works may yet appear,
 And a month's harvest keep him all the year.
 “Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
 For here's a tun of midnight work to come,
 Og from a treason-tavern rolling home.
 Round as a globe, and liquored every chink,
 Goodly and great he sails behind his link.
 With all this bulk there's nothing lost in Og,
 For every inch, that is not fool, is rogue.
 The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
 With this prophetic blessing—Be thou dull !

Drink, swear, and roar; forbear no lewd delight
 Fit for thy bulk, do anything but write.
 Thou art of lasting make, like thoughtless men,
 A strong nativity—but for the pen;
 Eat opium, mingle arsenic in thy drink,
 Still thou mayest live, avoiding pen and ink.
 I see, I see, 'tis counsel given in vain,
 For treason, botched in rhyme, will be thy bane;
 Rhyme is the rock on which thou art to wreck,
 'Tis fatal to thy fame and to thy neck.
 Why should thy metre good King David blast?
 A psalm of his will surely be thy last.
 A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull
 For writing treason, and for writing dull;
 To die for faction is a common evil,
 But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.
 Hadst thou the glories of thy king exprest,
 Thy praises had been satire at the best;
 But thou in clumsy verse, unlickt, unpointed,
 Hast shamefully defied the Lord's anointed:
 I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
 For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes?
 But of King David's foes, be this the doom,
 May all be like the young man Absalom;
 And for my foes may this their blessing be,
 To talk like Doeg, and to write like thee."

No one, I think, can fail to recognise here the qualities which have already been set forth as specially distinguishing Dryden's satire, the fund of truth at the bottom of it, the skilful adjustment of the satire so as to make faults of the merits which are allowed, the magnificent force and variety of the verse, and the constant maintenance of a kind of superior contempt never degenerating into mere railing, or losing its superiority in petty spite. The last four verses in especial might almost be taken as a model of satirical verse.

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These verses were the last that Dryden wrote, in the directly satirical way. His four great poems—the two parts of *Absalom and Achitophel*, the *Medal*, and *Mac-Flecknoe*, had been produced in rather more than a year, and, high as was his literary position before, had exalted him infinitely higher. From this time forward there could be no doubt at all of his position, with no second at any moderate distance, at the head of living English men of letters. He was now to earn a new title to this position. Almost simultaneously with the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared *Religio Laici*.

Scott has described *Religio Laici* as one of the most admirable poems in the language, which in some respects it undoubtedly is; but it is also one of the most singular. That a man who had never previously displayed any particular interest in theological questions, and who had reached the age of fifty-one, with a reputation derived, until quite recently, in the main from the composition of loose plays, should appear before his public of pleasure-seekers with a serious argument in verse on the credibility of the Christian religion, and the merits of the Anglican form of doctrine and church government, would nowadays be something more than a nine days' wonder. In Dryden's time it was somewhat less surprising. The spirit of theological controversy was bred in the bone of the seventeenth century. It will always remain an instance of the subordination in Macaulay of the judicial to the advocating faculty, that he who knew the time so well should have adduced the looseness of Dryden's plays as an argument against the sincerity of his conversion. It is quite certain that James the Second was both a man of loose life and of thoroughly sincere religious belief; it is by no means certain that his still more profligate brother's unbelief was

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not a mere assumption, and generally it may be noted that the biographies of the time never seem to infer any connexion between irregularity of life and unsoundness of religious faith. I have already shown some cause for disbelieving the stories, or rather the assertions, of Dryden's profligacy, though even these would not be conclusive against his sincerity; but I believe that it would be difficult to trace any very active concern in him for things religious before the Popish Plot. Various circumstances already noticed may then have turned his mind to the subject, and that active and vigorous mind when it once attacked a subject rarely deserted it. Consistency was in no matter Dryden's great characteristic, and the arguments of *Religio Laici* are not more inconsistent with the arguments of *The Hind and the Panther* than the handling of the question of rhymed plays in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is with the arguments against them in the prefaces and dissertations subsequent to *Aurengzebe*.

It has sometimes been sought to give *Religio Laici* a political as well as a religious sense, and to connect it in this way with the series of political satires, with the *Duke of Guise*, and with the subsequent *Hind and Panther*. The connexion, however, seems to me to be faint. The struggles of the Popish Plot had led to the contests on the Exclusion Bill on the one hand, and they had reopened the controversial question between the Churches of England and Rome on the other. They had thus in different ways given rise to *Absalom and Achitophel* and to *Religio Laici*, but the two poems have no community but a community of origin. Indeed, the suspicion of any political design in *Religio Laici* is not only groundless but contradictory. The views of James on the subject were known to every one, and those of Charles himself are not likely to have

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been wholly hidden from an assiduous follower of the court, and a friend of the king's greatest intimates, like Dryden. Still less is it necessary to take account of the absurd suggestion that Dryden wrote the poem as a stepping-stone to orders and to ecclesiastical preferment. He has definitely denied that he had at any time thoughts of entering the church, and such thoughts are certainly not likely to have occurred to him at the age of fifty. The poem, therefore, as it seems to me, must be regarded as a genuine production, expressing the author's first thoughts on a subject which had just presented itself to him as interesting and important. Such first thoughts in a mind like Dryden's, which was by no means a revolutionary mind, and which was disposed to accept the church as part and parcel of the Tory system of principles, were pretty certain to take the form of an apologetic harmonizing of difficulties and doubts. The author must have been familiar with the usual objections of the persons vaguely called Hobbists, and with the counter-objections of the Romanists. He takes them both, and he makes the best of them.

In its form and arrangement *Religio Laici* certainly deserves the praise which critics have given it. Dryden's overtures are very generally among the happiest parts of his poems, and the opening ten or twelve lines of this poem are among his very best. The bold *enjambement* of the first two couplets, with the striking novelty of cadence given by the sharply cut *cæsura* of the third line, is one of his best metrical effects, and the actual picture of the cloudy night-sky and the wandering traveller matches the technical beauty of the verse. The rest of the poem is studiously bare of ornament, and almost exclusively argumentative. There is and could be nothing specially novel or extraordinarily forcible in the arguments; but they are

put with that ease and apparent cogency which have been already remarked upon as characterizing all Dryden's didactic work. The poem is not without touches of humour, and winds up with a characteristic but not ill-humoured fling at the unhappy Shadwell.

Dryden's next productions of importance were two odes of the so-called Pindaric kind. The example of Cowley had made this style very popular; but Dryden himself had not practised it. The years 1685-6 gave him occasion to do so. His *Threnodia Augustalis*, or funeral poem on Charles the Second, may be taken as the chief official production of his laureateship. The difficulties of such performances are well known, and the reproaches brought against their faults are pretty well stereotyped. *Threnodia Augustalis* is not exempt from the faults of its kind; but it has merits which for that kind are decidedly unusual. The stanza which so adroitly at once praises and satirizes Charles's patronage of literary men is perhaps the best, and certainly the best known; but the termination is also fine. Of very different merit, however, is the *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killegrew*. This elegy is among the best of many noble funeral poems which Dryden wrote. The few lines on the Marquis of Winchester, the incomparable address to Oldham—"Farewell, too little and too lately known"—and at a later date the translated epitaph on Claverhouse, are all remarkable; but the Killegrew elegy is of far greater importance. It is curious that in these days of selections no one has attempted a collection of the best regular and irregular odes in English. There are not many of them, but a small anthology could be made, reaching from Milton to Mr. Swinburne, which would contain some remarkable poetry. Among these the ode to Anne Killegrew would assuredly hold a high

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place. Johnson pronounced it the noblest in the language, and in his time it certainly was, unless *Lycidas* be called an ode. Since its time there has been Wordsworth's great immortality ode, and certain beautiful but fragmentary pieces of Shelley which might be so classed; but till our own days nothing else which can match this. The first stanza may be pronounced absolutely faultless, and incapable of improvement. As a piece of concerted music in verse it has not a superior, and Warton's depreciation of it is a curious instance of the lack of catholic taste which has so often marred English criticism of poetry:

“Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,
 Made in the last promotion of the blessed;
 Whose palms, new plucked from Paradise,
 In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
 Rich with immortal green above the rest:
 Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star,
 Thou rollest above us, in thy wandering race,
 Or, in procession fixed and regular,
 Movest with the heaven's majestic pace;
 Or, called to more superior bliss,
 Thou treadest with seraphims the vast abyss:
 Whatever happy region is thy place,
 Cease thy celestial song a little space;
 Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,
 Since Heaven's eternal year is thine.
 Hear, then, a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,
 In no ignoble verse;
 But such as thy own voice did practise here,
 When thy first fruits of Poesy were given,
 To make thyself a welcome inmate there;
 While yet a young probationer,
 And candidate of heaven.”

These smaller pieces were followed at some interval by the remarkable poem which is Dryden's chief work, if

bulk and originality of plan are taken into consideration. There is a tradition as to the place of composition of *The Hind and the Panther*, which in many respects deserves to be true, though there is apparently no direct testimony to its truth. It is said to have been written at Rushton not far from Kettering, in the poet's native county. Rushton had been (though it had passed from them at this time) the seat of the Treshams, one of the staunchest families to the old faith which Dryden had just embraced. They had held another seat in Northamptonshire—Lyveden, within a few miles of Aldwinkle and of all the scenes of the poet's youth; and both at Lyveden and Rushton, architectural evidences of their devotion to the cause survive in the shape of buildings covered with symbolical carvings. The neighbourhood of Rushton, too, is singularly consonant to the scenery of the poem. It lay just on the southern fringe of the great forest of Rockingham, and the neighbourhood is still wonderfully timbered, though most of the actual wood owes its existence to the planting energy of Duke John of Montagu, half a century after Dryden's time. It would certainly not have been easy to conceive a better place for the conception and execution of this sylvan poem; but, as a matter of fact, it seems impossible to obtain any definite evidence of the connexion between the two.

The Hind and the Panther is in plan a sort of combination of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and of *Religio Laici*, but its three parts are by no means homogeneous. The first part, which is perhaps, on the whole, the best, contains the well-known apportionment of the characters of different beasts to the different churches and sects; the second contains the major part of the controversy between the Hind and the Panther; the third, which is as long as the other

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two put together, continues this controversy, but before very long diverges into allegorical and personal satire. The story of the Swallows, which the Panther tells, is one of the liveliest of all Dryden's pieces of narration, and it is not easy to give the palm between it and the Hind's retort, the famous fable of the Doves, in which Burnet is caricatured with hardly less vigour and not much less truth than Buckingham and Shadwell in the satires proper. This told, the poem ends abruptly.

The Hind and the Panther was certain to provoke controversy, especially from the circumstances, presently to be discussed, under which it was written. Dryden had two points especially vulnerable, the one being personal, the other literary. It was inevitable that his argument in *Religio Laici* should be contrasted with his argument in *The Hind and the Panther*. It was inevitable, on the other hand, that the singularities of construction in the latter poem should meet with animadversion. No defender of *The Hind and the Panther*, indeed, has ever attempted to defend it as a regular or classically proportioned piece of work. Its main theme is, as always with Dryden, merely a canvas whereon to embroider all sorts of episodes, digressions, and ornaments. Yet his adversaries, in their blind animosity, went a great deal too far in the matter of condemnation, and showed themselves entirely ignorant of the history and requirements of allegory in general, and the beast-fable in particular. Dryden, like many other great men of letters, had an admiration for the incomparable story of Reynard the fox. It is characteristic, both of his enemies and of the age, that this was made a serious argument against him. This is specially done in a celebrated little pamphlet which has perhaps had the honour of being more overpraised than anything else

of its kind in English literature. If any one wishes to appraise the value of the story that Dryden was seriously vexed by *The Hind and the Panther transversed to the Story of the City and Country Mouse*, he cannot do better than read that production. It is difficult to say what was or was not unworthy of Montague, whose published poems certainly do not authorize us to say that he wrote below himself on this occasion, but it assuredly is in the highest degree unworthy of Prior. Some tolerable parody of Dryden's own work, a good deal of heavy joking closely modelled on the *Rehearsal*, and assigning to Mr. Bayes plenty of "i'gads" and the like catchwords, make up the staple of this piece, in which Mr. Christie has discovered "true wit," and the Quarterly Reviewer already cited, "exquisite satire." Among the severest of Messrs. Montague and Prior's strictures is a sarcastic reference to Reynard the fox. What was good enough for Dryden, for Goethe, and for Mr. Carlyle was childish rubbish to these brisk young critics. The story alluded to says that Dryden wept at the attack, and complained that two young fellows to whom he had been civil should thus have treated an old man. Now Dryden certainly did not consider himself an old man at this time, and he had "seen many others," as an admirable Gallicism has it, in the matter of attacks.

One more poem, and one only, remains to be noticed in this division. This was the luckless *Britannia Rediviva*, written on the birth of the most ill-starred of all Princes of Wales, born in the purple. It is in couplets, and as no work of Dryden's written at this time could be worthless, it contains some vigorous verse, but on the whole it is by far the worst of his serious poems; and it was no misfortune for his fame that the Revolution left it out of print for the rest of the author's life.

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CHAPTER V.

LIFE FROM 1680 TO 1688.

THAT portion of Dryden's life which extends from the Popish Plot to the Revolution is of so much more importance for the estimate of his personal character, as well as for that of his literary genius, than any other period of equal length, that it has seemed well to devote a separate chapter to the account and discussion of it. The question of Dryden's conversion, its motives and its sincerity, has of itself been more discussed than any other point in his life, and on the opinions to be formed of it must depend the opinion which, on the whole, we form of him as a man. According to one view his conduct during these years places him among the class which paradox delights to describe as the "greatest and meanest of mankind," the men who compensate for the admirable qualities of their heads by the despicable infirmities of their hearts. According to another, his conduct, if not altogether wise, contains nothing discreditable to him, and some things which may be reasonably described as very much the contrary. Twenty years of play-writing had, in all probability, somewhat disgusted Dryden with the stage, and his Rose-Alley misfortune had shown him that even a scrupulous abstinence from meddling in politics or in personal satire would not save him from awkward consequences.

His lucrative contract with the players had, beyond all doubt, ceased, and his official salaries, as we shall see, were paid with the usual irregularity. At the same time, as has been already pointed out, his turn of thought probably led him to take more interest in practical politics and in religious controversy than had been previously the case. The additional pension, which as we have seen he had received, made his nominal income sufficient, and instead of writing plays *invitâ Minervâ* he took to writing satires and argumentative pieces to please himself. Other crumbs of royal favour fell to his lot from time to time. The broad pieces received for the *Medal* are very probably apocryphal, but there is no doubt that his youngest son received, in February, 1683, a presentation to the Charterhouse from the king. This presentation it was which he was said to have received from Shaftesbury, as the price of the mitigating lines ("Yet fame deserved—easy of access") inserted in the later edition of *Absalom and Achitophel*. He was also indefatigable in undertaking and performing minor literary work of various kinds, which will be noticed later. Nor, indeed, could he afford to be idle; his pensions were often unpaid, and it is just after the great series of his satires closed that we get a glimpse of this fact. A letter is extant to Rochester—Hyde, not Wilmot—complaining of long arrears, and entreating some compensation in the shape of a place in the Customs, or the Excise, besides an instalment at least of the debt. It is this letter which contains the well-known phrase, "It is enough for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler." As far as documentary evidence goes, the answer to the appeal was a Treasury warrant for 75*l.*, the arrears being over 1000*l.*, and an appointment to a collectorship of Customs in the port of London, with unknown emoluments. The

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only definite sum mentioned is a nominal one of 5*l.* a year as collector of duties on cloth. But it is not likely that cloth was the only subject of Dryden's labours, and in those days the system of fees and perquisites flourished. This Customs appointment was given in 1683.

To the condition of Dryden's sentiments in the last years of Charles' reign *Religio Laici* must be taken as the surest, and, indeed, as the only clue. There is no proof that this poem was composed to serve any political purpose, and indeed it could not have served any, neither James nor Charles being likely to be propitiated by a defence, however moderate and rationalizing, of the Church of England. It is not dedicated to any patron, and seems to have been an altogether spontaneous expression of what was passing in the poet's mind. A careful study of the poem, instead of furnishing arguments against the sincerity of his subsequent conduct, furnishes, I think, on the contrary, arguments which are very strongly in its favour. It could have, as has just been said, no purpose of pleasing a lay patron, for there was none to be pleased by it. It is not at all likely to have commended itself to a clerical patron, because of its rationalizing tone, its halting adoption of the Anglican Church as a kind of makeshift, and its heterodox yearnings after infallibility. These last, indeed, are among the most strongly-marked features of the piece, and point most clearly in the direction which the poet afterwards took.

“Such an omniscient church we wish indeed,
’Twere worth both Testaments, cast in the Creed,”

is an awkward phrase for a sound divine, or a dutifully acquiescing layman; but it is exactly the phrase which might be expected from a man who was on the slope from

placid caring for none of these things to a more or less fervent condition of membership of an infallible church. The tenor of the whole poem, as it seems to me, is the same. The author, in his character of high Tory and orthodox Englishman, endeavours to stop himself at the point which the Anglican Church marks with a thus far and no farther; but, in a phrase which has no exact English equivalent, *nous le voyons venir*. It is quite evident that if he continues to feel anything like a lively interest in the problems at stake, he will go farther still. He did go farther, and has been accordingly railed against for many generations. But I do not hesitate to put the question to the present generation in a very concrete form. Is Dryden's critic nowadays prepared to question the sincerity of Cardinal Newman? If he is, I have no objection to his questioning the sincerity of Dryden. But what is sauce for the nineteenth-century goose is surely sauce for the seventeenth-century gander. The post-conversion writings of the Cardinal are not less superficially inconsistent with the *Tracts for the Times* and the *Oxford Sermons*, than the *Hind and the Panther* is with *Religio Laici*.

A hyperbole has been in some sort necessary in order to rebut the very unjust aspersions which two of the most popular historians of the last thirty years have thrown on Dryden. But I need hardly say, that though the glory of Oxford in the first half of the nineteenth century is a fair argumentative parallel to the glory of Cambridge in the second half of the seventeenth, the comparison is not intended to be forced. I believe Dryden to have been, in the transactions of the years 1685-7, thoroughly sincere as far as conscious sincerity went, but of a certain amount of unconscious insincerity I am by no means disposed to

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acquit him. If I judge his character aright, no English man of letters was ever more thoroughly susceptible to the spirit and influence of his time. Dryden was essentially a literary man, and was disposed rather to throw himself into the arms of any party than into those of one so hopelessly unliterary as the ultra-Liberal and ultra-Protestant party of the seventeenth century was. He was, moreover, a professed servant of the public, or as we should put it in these days, he had the journalist spirit. Fortunately—and it is for everybody who has to do with literature the most fortunate sign of the times—it is not now necessary for any one to do violence to a single opinion, even to a single crotchet of his own, in order to make his living by his pen. It was not so in Dryden's days, and it is fully believable that a sense that he was about to be on the winning side may have assisted his rapid determination from Hobbism or Halifaxism to Romanist orthodoxy. I am the more disposed to this allowance because it seems to me that Dryden's principal decier was in need of a similar charity. Lord Macaulay is at present a glory of the Whigs. If there had been an equal opening when he was a young man for distinction and profit as a Tory, for early retirement on literary pursuits with a competence, and for all the other things which he most desired, is it quite so certain that he would not have been of the other persuasion? I have heard persons much more qualified than I am to decide on the characteristics of pure Liberalism energetically repudiate Macaulay's claim to be an apostle thereof. Yet I, for my part, have not the least idea of challenging his sincerity. It seems to me that he would have been at least wise if he had refrained, considering the insufficiency of his knowledge, from challenging the sincerity of Dryden.

How insufficient the knowledge was the labours of subsequent investigators have sufficiently shown. Mr. Bell proved that the pension supposed to be conferred by James as a reward for Dryden's apostasy was simply a renewal of the pension granted by Charles years before; that it preceded instead of following the conversion; and that the sole reason of its having to be renewed at all was technical merely. As for the argument about Dryden's being previously indifferent to religion, and having written indecent plays, the arguer has himself demolished his argument in a famous passage about James's own morals, and the conduct of the non-resistance doctors of the Anglican Church. Burnet's exaggerated denunciations of Dryden as a "monster of impurity of all sorts," &c., are sufficiently traceable to Shadwell's shameless libels and to the Character of the Buzzard. It is true that the allegations of Malone and Scott, to the effect that Lady Elizabeth had been already converted, and Charles Dryden likewise, rest on a very slender foundation; but these are matters which have very little to do with the question in any case. The real problem can be very easily stated. Given a man to the general rectitude of whose private conduct all qualified witnesses testify, while it is only questioned by unscrupulous libellers—who gained, as can be proved, not one penny by his conversion, and though he subsequently lost heavily by it, maintained it unswervingly—who can be shown, from the most unbiassed of his previous writings, to have been in exactly the state of mind which was likely to result in such a proceeding, and of whose insincerity there is no proof of the smallest value—what reason is there for suspecting him? The literary greatness of the man has nothing to do with the question. The fact is that he has been convicted, or rather sentenced, on

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evidence which would not suffice to convict Elkanah Settle or Samuel Pordage.

In particular, we have a right to insist upon the absolute consistency of Dryden's subsequent conduct. Mr. Christie, who, admirably as for the most part he judges Dryden's literary work, was steeled against his personal character by the fact that Dryden attacked his idol, Shaftesbury, thinks that a recantation would have done him no good had he tried it. The opinion is, to say the least, hasty. Had Dryden proffered the oaths to William and Mary, as poet laureate and historiographer, it is very hard to see what power could have deprived him of his two hundred a year. The extra hundred of pension might have been forfeited, but the revenues of these places and of that in the Customs must have been safe, unless the new Government chose to incur what it was of all things desirous to prevent, the charge of persecution and intolerance. When the Whigs were so desperately hard up for literary talent that Dorset, in presenting Shadwell for the laureateship, had to pay him the very left-handed compliment of saying that, if he was not the best poet, he was at least the honestest—*i. e.*, the most orthodoxly Whiggish—man, when hardly a single distinguished man of letters save Locke, who was nothing of a pamphleteer, was on their side, is it to be supposed for a moment that Dryden would not have been welcome? The argument against him recalls a curious and honourable story which Johnson tells of Smith, the Bohemian author of *Phædra and Hippolytus*. Addison, who, as all the world knows, was a friend of Smith's, and who was always ready to do his friends good turns, procured for Smith, from some Whig magnates, a commission for a History of the Revolution. To the disgust of the mediator, Smith demurred. "What," he said, "am I

to do with the character of Lord Sunderland?" Addison is said to have replied, in deep but illogical wrath, "When were you drunk last?" I feel extremely inclined to put Smith's query to the persons who maintain that it would have been impossible for Dryden to turn his coat at the Revolution. What are they going to do with the character of Lord Sunderland? In the age not merely of Sunderland, but of Marlborough, of Godolphin, of Russell, of a hundred other treble-dyed traitors, it surely cannot be contended that the first living writer of English would have been rejected by those who had need of his services. Now we know that, so far from making any overtures of submission, Dryden was stiff in his Jacobitism and in his faith. Nothing in his life is more celebrated than his persistent refusal to give way to Tonson's entreaties to dedicate the *Virgil* to William, and his whole post-Revolution works may be searched in vain for a single stroke intended to curry favour with the powers that were. If, as he puts it in a letter still extant, they would take him on his literary merits, he would not refuse their offers; but as to yielding an inch of his principles, he would not. And his works amply justify the brave words. It is surely hard measure to go out of one's way to upbraid with wanton or venal apostasy one to whose sincerity there is such complete testimony, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*, as this.

Except the *Hind and the Panther*, no work inspired by his new religious sentiments did Dryden much credit, or, it would appear, brought him much profit. James was not a particularly generous master, though it is probable that the laureate-historiographer-collector received his dues much more punctually under his orderly administration than in the days of his spendthrift brother. The works upon which the court put Dryden were not very happily

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chosen, nor in all cases very happily executed. His defence of the reasons which had converted Anne Hyde is about the worst of his prose works, and was handled (in the rough controversial fashion of the day) very damagingly by Stillingfleet. A translation of a work of Varillas' on ecclesiastical history was announced but never published; and, considering the worthlessness of Varillas as a historian, it is just as well. The *Life of St. Francis Xavier*, dedicated to the queen, was better worth doing, and was well done. It is curious that in this dedication occurs one of those confident anticipations of the birth of the young Pretender, which after the event were used by zealous Protestants as arguments for the spuriousness of the child. These and minor works show that Dryden, as indeed might be expected, was in favour at court, and was made use of by the economical and pious rulers of England. But of any particular benefit reaped by him from his conversion there is no hint whatever; in some respects, indeed, it did him harm. His two youngest sons, who had followed their father's change of faith, were elected about this time to scholarships at the universities, but were prevented, apparently by their religion, from going into residence.

The mere loss of education and prospects for his children was, however, a trifle to what Dryden had to undergo at the Revolution. It is probable that this event was almost as much a surprise to him as to James himself. But however severe the blow might be, it was steadily borne. The period at which the oaths had to be taken to the new Government came, and Dryden did not take them. This vacated at once his literary posts and his place in the Customs, if, as there seems every reason to believe, he held it up to the time. His position was now exceedingly serious. He was nearly sixty years of age. His patrimony was

but small, and such addition to it as he had received with Lady Elizabeth did not exceed a few scores of pounds annually. He had three sons grown to man's estate, and all the more difficult to provide for that their religion incapacitated them from almost every profitable pursuit in their native country. He himself had long, save in one trifling instance, broken his relation with the stage, the most lucrative opening for literary work. He was a marked man, far more obnoxious personally to many of the ruling party than Milton had been thirty years before, when he thought it necessary to go into "abscondence." The very gains of the theatre were not what they had been, unless they were enhanced by assiduous visits to patrons and dedicatees, a degrading performance to which Dryden never would consent. Loss of fortune, of prospects, and of powerful friends was accompanied in Dryden's case by the most galling annoyances to his self-love. His successor in the laureateship was none other than Shadwell, whom he had so bitterly satirized, whom he had justly enough declared able to do anything but write, and who was certain to exult over him with all the triumph of a coarse and vindictive nature. Dryden, however, came out of the trial admirably. He had, indeed, some staunch friends in both political parties—the Dorsets and the Leveson-Gowers being as true to him as the Rochesters and the Ormonds. But his main resource now, as all through his life, was his incomparable literary faculty, his splendid capacity for work, and his dogged opposition to the assaults of fortune. In the twelve years of life which remained to him he built up his fortune and maintained it anew, not merely by assiduous practice of those forms of literature in which he had already won renown, but by exercising yet again his marvellous talent for guessing the taste of the time, and striking out new

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lines to please it. Just as no one from *Annus Mirabilis* and *Aurengzebe* could have divined *Absalom and Achitophel* and the *Hind and the Panther*, so no one, except on the principle that all things were now possible to Dryden, could have divined from *Absalom and Achitophel* and the *Hind and the Panther* either *Palamon and Arcite* or the translation of Virgil.

Some minor works of Dryden's not mentioned in the last chapter, nor falling under the heads to be noticed in subsequent chapters, may here deserve notice. Some time or other in the reign of James the Second, Dryden wrote to Etherege a poetical epistle, which is its author's only attempt in the easy octosyllabic verse, which Butler had just used with such brilliant success, and which Prior was in a more polished if less vigorous form to use with success almost equally brilliant a few years later. "Gentle George" Etherege deserved the compliments which Dryden paid him more than once, and it is only to be wished that the poet's communications with him, whether in verse or prose, had been more frequent. Had they been so, we might have been able to solve what is now one of the most curious problems of English literary history. Though Etherege was a man of fashion, of literary importance, and of a distinguished position in diplomacy—he was English minister at Ratisbon, where Dryden addresses him—only the circumstances and not the date of his death are known. It is said that in seeing his friends downstairs he overbalanced himself and was taken up dead; but when this happened no one seems to know.¹ A line in the epistle

¹ In reply to a request of mine, Mr. W. Noel Sainsbury has brought to my notice letters of Etherege in the Record Office and in the Reports of the Historical MSS. Commission. In January, 1688-9, Etherege wrote to Lord Preston from Ratisbon. The first letter from his

seems to show that Etherege had been obliged to take to heavy drinking as a compliment to his German friends, and thus indirectly prophesies the circumstances of his death. But the author of *Sir Fopling Flutter*, and *She would if she could* hardly deserved such a hugger-mugger end.

To this time, too, belongs the first *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*. It is not a great production, and cannot pretend comparison with the second and more famous piece composed on a later occasion. But it is curious how many lines and phrases it has contributed to the list of stock quotations—especially curious when it is remembered that the whole piece is only sixty-three lines long. "A heap of jarring atoms," "the diapason closing full in man," "the double, double, double beat of the thundering drum," and several other phrases, survive. The thing was set to music by an Italian composer named Draghi, and seems to have been popular. Besides these and other tasks, Dryden began at this time a curious work or series of works, which was continued at intervals till his death, which was imitated afterwards by many others, and which in some sort was an ancestor of the modern literary magazine or review. This was the *Miscellany*, the first volume of which appeared in the beginning of 1684, and the second in the beginning of 1685, though a considerable interval occurred before a third volume was brought out. These volumes contained both old and new poems, mostly of the occasional kind, by Dryden himself, besides many of his

successor is dated April, 1689. If, then, he died at Ratisbon, this brings the date between narrow limits. There is, however, a rival legend that he followed James into exile. Since this note was written more letters have, I hear, been found in the British Museum, and Mr. Gosse has the whole subject under treatment.

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translations. But they were by no means limited to his own productions. Many other authors, old and new, were admitted, and to the second volume Charles Dryden, his eldest son, was a contributor. These two years (1684 and 1685), it will be observed, were not merely those in which, owing to the non-payment of his appointments, his pecuniary straits must have been considerable, but they were also years in which there was a kind of lull between the rapid series of his great satirical works and the collection of verse and prose productions which owe their birth to his conversion. It is somewhat remarkable that Dryden's abstinence from the stage during this time—which was broken only by the *Duke of Guise* and by the production of the rather unsuccessful opera, *Albion and Albanius*—seems to have been accompanied by a cessation also in his activity as a prologue writer. Both before and after this period prologue writing was a regular source of income and employment to him. There is a famous story of Southern and Dryden which is often quoted, both for its intrinsic interest, and because the variety with which its circumstances are related is rather an instructive comment on the trustworthiness of such stories. Every one is supposed to know Pope's reference to the author of *Oroonoko* as—

“Tom, whom heaven sent down to raise
The price of prologues and of plays.”

The story is that Southern in 1682 applied to Dryden for a prologue (which is extant), and was told that the tariff had gone up from two guineas to three—“Not out of any disrespect to you, young man, but the players have had my goods too cheap.” The figures two and three are replaced in some versions by four and six, in others by

five and ten. This story gives the date of 1682, and it is remarkable that until 1690, when Dryden once more came on the stage himself with a new play, his prologues and epilogues are very few. Possibly the increased price was prohibitive, but it is more likely that the political struggles of the time put all but political verse out of fashion. These compositions had always been famous, or rather infamous, for their licence of language, and the political excesses of some of Dryden's few utterances of the kind at this time are not creditable to his memory. Hallam's phrase of "virulent ribaldry" is absurd as applied to *Abalom and Achitophel*, or to the *Medal*. It is only too well in place as applied to the stuff put in the mouth of the actress who spoke the epilogue to the *Duke of Guise*. The truth is that if they be taken as a whole these prologues and epilogues could be better spared by lovers of Dryden from his works than any other section thereof; and it is particularly to be regretted that Mr. Christie, in his excellent Globe edition of the poems, has admitted them, while excluding the always melodious, and sometimes exquisitely poetical songs from the plays, which certainly do not exceed the prologues in licence of language, while their literary merit is incomparably greater.

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CHAPTER VI.

LATER DRAMAS AND PROSE WORKS.

It might have seemed, at first sight, that the Revolution would be a fatal blow to Dryden. Being unwilling to take the oaths to the new Government, he lost at once the places and the pensions which, irregularly as they had been paid, had made up, since he ceased to write constantly for the stage, by far the greater part of his income. He was nearly sixty years old, his private fortune was, if not altogether insignificant, quite insufficient for his wants, and he had three sons to maintain and set out in the world. But he faced the ruin of his fortunes, and, what must have been bitterer to him, the promotion of his enemies into his own place, with the steady courage and practical spirit of resource which were among his most creditable characteristics. Not all his friends deserted him, and from Dorset in particular he received great and apparently constant assistance. The story that this generous patron actually compensated Dryden by an annuity equal in value to his former appointments seems to rest on insufficient foundation. The story that when Dryden and Tom Brown dined with Dorset the one found a hundred-pound note and the other a fifty-pound note under his cover, does not do much credit to Dorset's powers of literary arithmetic, nor, even allowing for the simpler manners of the time, to his deli-

cacy of feeling. But Dryden's own words are explicit on the point of his having received assistance from this old friend, and it is said that in certain letters preserved at Knole, and not yet given to the world, there are still more definite acknowledgments. Dryden, however, was never disposed to depend on patrons, even though, like Corneille, he did not think it necessary to refuse their gifts when they presented themselves. Theatrical gains had, it has been said, decreased, unless dramatists took pains to increase them by dedication or by the growing practice of placing subscription copies among wealthy friends. Still, a hundred pounds could be depended upon from a good third night and from the bookseller's fee for the book, and a hundred pounds was a matter of considerable importance to Dryden just now. For full seven years he had all but abandoned dramatic composition. His contributions to Lee's *Duke of Guise*, which probably brought him no money, and certainly brought him a troublesome controversy, and the opera of *Albion and Albanus* had been his only attempts on the stage since the *Spanish Friar*. The *Duke of Guise*, though Dryden's part in it is of no little merit, hardly needs notice here, and *Albion and Albanus* was a failure. It was rather a masque than an opera, and depended, though there is some good verse in it, rather on elaborate and spiteful gibbeting of the enemies of the court than on poetical or dramatic merits. But Dryden's dramatic reputation was by no means impaired. The first play ordered to be performed by Queen Mary was the *Spanish Friar*, and this Protestant drama proved a most unfortunate one for her Majesty; for the audience at that time were extraordinarily quick to seize any kind of political allusion, and, as it happened, there were in the *Spanish Friar* many allusions of an acciden-

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tal but unmistakable kind to ungrateful children, banished monarchs, and so forth. The eyes of the whole audience were fixed on Mary, and she probably repented of her choice. But Dryden did not long depend on revivals of his old plays. The second year of the new régime saw the production of *Don Sebastian*, a tragi-comedy, one scene of which, that between Sebastian and Dorax, is famous in literature, and which as a whole is often ranked above all Dryden's other dramas, though for my own part I prefer *All for Love*. The play, though at first received with a certain lukewarmness, which may have been due to various causes, soon became very popular. It was dedicated to Lord Leicester, Algernon Sidney's eldest brother, a very old man, who was probably almost alone among his contemporaries (with the exception of Dryden himself) in being an ardent admirer of Chaucer. In the preface to the *Fables* the poet tells us that he had postponed his translation of the elder bard out of deference to Lord Leicester's strongly expressed opinion that the text should be left alone. In the same year was produced a play less original, but perhaps almost better, and certainly more popular. This was *Amphitryon*, which some critics have treated most mistakenly as a mere translation of Molière. The truth is, that the three plays of Plautus, Molière, and Dryden are remarkable examples of the power which great writers have of treading in each other's steps without servile imitation. In a certain dry humour Dryden's play is inferior to Plautus, but, as compared with Molière, it has two features which are decided improvements—the introduction of the character of Judge Gripus and the separation of the part of the Soubrette into two. As *Don Sebastian* had been dedicated to Lord Leicester, an old Cromwellian, so *Amphitryon* was dedicated to Sir William

Leveson Gower, a prominent Williamite. Neither dedication contains the least truckling to the powers that were, but Dryden seems to have taken a pleasure in showing that men of both parties were sensible of his merit and of the hardship of his position. Besides these two plays an alteration of *The Prophetess* was produced in 1690, in which Dryden is said to have assisted Betterton. In 1691 appeared *King Arthur*, a masque-opera on the plan of *Albion and Albanus*. Unlike the latter, it has no political meaning; indeed, Dryden confesses to having made considerable alterations in it, in order to make it non-political. The former piece had been set by a Frenchman, Grabut, and the music had been little thought of. Purcell undertook the music for *King Arthur* with much better success. Allowing for a certain absurdity which always besets the musical drama, and which is particularly apparent in that of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, *King Arthur* is a very good piece; the character of Emmeline is attractive, the supernatural part is managed with a skill which would have been almost proof against the wits of the *Rehearsal*, and many of the lyrics are excellent. Dryden was less fortunate with his two remaining dramas. In writing the first, he showed himself, for so old a craftsman and courtier, very unskilful in the choice of a subject. *Cleomenes*, the banished King of Sparta, could not but awaken the susceptibilities of zealous revolution censors. After some difficulties, in which Laurence Hyde once more did Dryden a good turn, the piece was licensed, but it was not very successful. It contains some fine passages, but the most remarkable thing about it is that there is a considerable relapse into rhyme, which Dryden had abandoned for many years. It contains, also, one of the last, not the least beautiful, and fortunately almost the

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most quotable of the exquisite lyrics which, while they prove, perhaps, more fully than anything else, Dryden's almost unrivalled command of versification, disprove at the same time his alleged incapacity to express true feeling. Here it is :

"No, no, poor suffering heart, no change endeavour,
Choose to sustain the smart, rather than leave her ;
My ravished eyes behold such charms about her,
I can die with her, but not live without her ;
One tender sigh of hers to see me languish,
Will more than pay the price of my past anguish :
Beware, O cruel fair, how you smile on me,
'Twas a kind look of yours that has undone me.

"Love has in store for me one happy minute,
And she will end my pain who did begin it ;
Then no day void of bliss, of pleasure, leaving,
Ages shall slide away without perceiving :
Cupid shall guard the door, the more to please us,
And keep out time and death, when they would seize us :
Time and death shall depart, and say, in flying,
Love has found out a way to live by dying."

Last of all the long list came *Love Triumphant*, a tragedy, in 1694, which failed completely ; why, it is not very easy to say. It is probable that these four plays and the opera did not by any means requite Dryden for his trouble in writing them. The average literary worth of them is, however, superior to that of his earlier dramas. The remarkable thing, indeed, about this portion of his work is not that it is not better, but that it is so good. He can scarcely be said to have had *la tête dramatique*, and yet in the *Conquest of Granada*, in *Marriage à la Mode*, in *Aurengzebe*, in *All for Love*, in the *Spanish Friar*, in *Don Sebastian*, and in *Amphitryon* he produced

plays which are certainly worthy of no little admiration. For the rest, save in isolated scenes and characters, little can be said, and even those just specified have to be praised with not a little allowance.

Nevertheless, great as are the drawbacks of these plays, their position in the history of English dramatic literature is still a high and remarkable one. It was Dryden who, if he for the moment headed the desertion of the purely English style of drama, authoritatively and finally ordered and initiated the return to a saner tradition. Even in his period of aberration he produced on his faulty plan such work as few other men have produced on the best plans yet elaborated. The reader who, ignorant of the English heroic play, goes to Dryden for information about it, may be surprised and shocked at its inferiority to the drama of the great masters. But he who goes to it knowing the contemporary work of Davenant and Boyle, of Howard and Settle, will rather wonder at the unmatched literary faculty which from such data could evolve such a result. The one play in which he gave himself the reins remains, as far as it appears to me, the only play, with the exception of *Venice Preserved*, which was written so as to be thoroughly worth reading now for 150, I had almost said for 200 years. The *Mourning Bride* and the *Fair Penitent* are worthless by the side of it, and to them may be added at one sweep every tragedy written during the whole eighteenth century. Since the beginning of the nineteenth we have indeed improved the poetical standard of this most difficult, not to say hopeless, form of composition; but at the same time we have in general lowered the dramatic standard. Half the best plays written since the year 1800 have been avowedly written with hardly a thought of being acted; I should be sorry to say

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how many of the other half have either failed to be acted at all, or, having been acted, have proved dead failures. Now Dryden did so far manage to conciliate the gifts of the play-wright and the poet, that he produced work which was good poetry and good acting material. It is idle to dispute the deserts of his success, the fact remains.

Most, however, of his numerous hostile critics would confess and avoid the tragedies, and would concentrate their attention on the comedies. It is impossible to help, in part, imitating and transferring their tactics. No apology for the offensive characteristics of these productions is possible, and, if it were possible, I for one have no care to attempt it. The coarseness of Dryden's plays is unpardonable. It does not come under any of the numerous categories of excuse which can be devised for other offenders in the same kind. It is deliberate, it is unnecessary, it is a positive defect in art. When the culprit, in his otherwise dignified and not unsuccessful *confiteor* to Collier, endeavours to shield himself by the example of the elder dramatists, the shield is seen at once, and, what is more, we know that he must have seen it himself to be a mere shield of paper. But in truth the heaviest punishment that Dryden could possibly have suffered, the punishment which Diderot has indicated as inevitably imminent on this particular offence, has come upon him. The fouler parts of his work have simply ceased to be read, and his most thorough defenders can only read them for the purpose of appreciation and defence at the price of being queasy and qualmish. He has exposed his legs to the arrows of any criticaster who chooses to aim at him, and the criticasters have not failed to jump at the chance of so noble a quarry. Yet I, for my part, shall still maintain that the merits of Dryden's comedies are by no means incon-

siderable ; indeed that, when Shakspeare, and Jonson, and Fletcher, and Etherege, and Wycherley, and Congreve, and Vanbrugh, and Sheridan have been put aside, he has few superiors. The unfailling thoroughness with which he did every description of literary work has accompanied him even here, where he worked, according to his own confession, against the grain, and where he was less gifted by nature than scores of other facile workers who could be named. The one situation which he could manage has been already indicated, and it is surely not a thing to be wholly neglected that his handlings of this situation undoubtedly preceded and probably suggested the crowning triumph of English comedy—the sublime apotheosis of the coquette in *Millamant*. To produce that triumph Dryden himself was indeed unable. But from sheer literary skill (the dominant faculty in him) he produced in *Doralice*, and in *Melantha*, and in *Florimel*, something not wholly unlike it. So, too, in the central figure of the *Spanish Friar* he achieved in the same way, by sheer literary faculty and by the skilful manipulation of his predecessors, something like an independent and an original creation. The one disqualification under which Dryden laboured, the disqualification to create a character, would have been in any lesser man a hopeless bar even to the most moderate dramatic success. But the superhuman degree in which he possessed the other and strictly literary gift of adoption and arrangement almost supplied the place of what was wanting, and almost made him the equal of the more facile makers. So close was his study, so untiring his experiments, so sure his command, by dint of practice, of language, and metre, and situation, that he could, like the magicians of Egypt, make serpents almost like, or quite like those of the true dramatic Moses.

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Shakspeare's serpents have eaten his up in time, and the retribution is just, but the credit of the original feat is hardly the less for that. In short, all, or almost all, Dryden's dramatic work is a *tour de force*, but then it is such a *tour de force* as the world has hardly elsewhere seen. He was "bade to toil on to make them sport," and he obeyed the bidding with perhaps less reluctance than he should have shown. But he managed, as genius always does manage, to turn the hack-work into a possession for ever here and there. Unluckily it was only here and there, and no more can be claimed for it by any rational critic.

The subject of Dryden's prose work is intimately connected with that of his dramatic performances. Had it not been for the interest he felt in matters dramatic, he might never have ventured into anything longer than a preface; and his prefaces would certainly have lacked the remarkable interest in the history of style and in the history of criticism which they now possess. At the time when he first began to write, the accepted prose style of English was in much greater need of reform and reinforcement than the accepted poetical style; or, to speak more properly, there was no accepted prose style at all. Great masters — Bacon, Hooker, Clarendon, Milton, Taylor, Hobbes, Bunyan, and some others—may be quoted from the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century; but their excellences, like the excellences of the writers of French prose somewhat earlier, were almost wholly individual, and provided in no way a model whereby the average writer might form himself for average purposes. Now, prose is above all things the instrument of the average purpose. Poetry is more or less intolerable if it be not intrinsically and peculiarly good; prose is the necessary vehicle of thought. Up to Dryden's time no such generally avail-

able vehicle had been attempted or achieved by any one. Clarendon had shown how genius can make the best of the worst style, which from any general point of view his must probably be pronounced to be. In his hands it is alternately delightful or tolerable; in the hands of anybody else it would be simply frightful. His parentheses, his asides, his endless involutions of phrase and thought, save themselves as if by miracle, and certainly could not be trusted so to save themselves in any less favoured hands. Bacon and Hooker, the former in an ornate, the latter in a simple style, reproduce classical constructions and forms in English. Taylor and Milton write poetry in prose. Quaintness and picturesque matter justify, and more than justify, Fuller and Browne. Bunyan puts the vernacular into print with a sublime assurance and success. Hobbes, casting off all ornament and all pretence of ornament, clothes his naked strength in the simplest garment of words competent to cover its nakedness. But none of these had elaborated, or aimed at elaborating, a style suited for every-day use—for the essayist and the pamphleteer, the preacher and the lay orator, the historian and the critic. This was what Dryden did with little assistance from any forerunner, if it were not Tillotson, to whom, as we know from Congreve, he acknowledged his indebtedness. But Tillotson was not a much older man than Dryden himself, and at least when the latter began to write prose, his work was neither bulky nor particularly famous. Nor in reading Tillotson, though it is clear that he and Dryden were in some sort working on the same lines, is it possible to trace much indebtedness on the part of the poet. The sometime archbishop's sermons are excellent in their combination of simplicity with a certain grace, but they are much less remarkable than Dryden's own work for the union of the two. The great

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fault of the elders had been, first, the inordinate length of their sentences; secondly—and this was rather a cause of the first fault than an additional error—their indulgence in parenthetical quotations, borrowed arguments, and other strengtheners of the position of the man who has to rely on authority; thirdly, the danger to which they were always exposed, of slipping into clumsy classicisms on one side, or inelegant vernacular on the other. Dryden avoided all these faults, though his avoidance was not a matter of a day or a year, nor was it, as far as can be made out, altogether an avoidance of malice prepense. Accident favoured him in exactly the reverse way to that in which it had favoured the reformer of French prose half a century or so before. Balzac had nothing to say, and therefore was extremely careful and exquisite in his manner of saying it. Dryden had a great deal to say, and said it in the plain, straightforward fashion which was of all things most likely to be useful for the formation of a workman-like prose style in English.

The influences of the post-Restoration period which, by their working, produced the splendid variety and efficiency of prose in the eighteenth century—the century, *par excellence*, of prose in English—were naturally numerous; but there were four which had an influence far surpassing that of the rest. These four were the influences of the pulpit, of political discussion, of miscellaneous writing—partly fictitious, partly discursive—and lastly, of literary criticism. In this last Dryden himself was the great authority of the period, and for many years it was in this form that he at once exercised himself and educated his age in the matter of prose writing. Accident and the circumstances of the time helped to give him a considerable audience, and an influence of great width, the critical spirit being extensive-

ly diffused at the time. This critical spirit was to a great extent a reflection of that which, beginning with Malherbe, and continuing with the institution and regulation of the Academy, had for some time been remarkable in France. Not long after the Restoration one of the subtlest and most accomplished of all French critics took up his residence in England, and gave further impulse to the fashion which Charles himself and many other cavaliers had already picked up. Saint Evremond lived in England for some forty years, and during the greater part of that time was an oracle of the younger men of wit and pleasure about London. Now Saint Evremond was a remarkable instance of that rare animal, the born critic; even nowadays his critical dicta are worthy of all attention. He had a kind of critical intuition, which is to be paralleled only by the historical and scientific intuition which some of the greatest historians and men of science have had. With national and characteristic indolence he never gave himself the trouble to learn English properly, and it is doubtful whether he could have read a single English play. Yet his critical remarks on some English poets, not borrowed from his friends, but constructed from their remarks, as a clever counsel would construct a pleading out of the information furnished him, are extraordinarily acute and accurate. The relish for literary discussion which Saint Evremond shows was no peculiarity of his, though he had it in super-eminent measure. It was fashionable in France, and he helped to make it fashionable in England.

I have seen this style of criticism dismissed contemptuously as "trifling;" but this is only an instance of the strange power of reaction. Because for many years the plan of criticising by rule and line was almost exclusively pursued, and, as happens in the case of almost all exclusive

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pursuits, was followed too far, it seems to some people nowadays, that criticism ought to be confined to the expression, in more or less elegant language, of the feelings of admiration or dislike which the subject criticised may excite in the critic's mind. The critic ought to give this impression, but he ought not to leave the other task unattempted, and the result of leaving it unattempted is to be found in the loose and haphazard judgments which now too often compose what is called criticism. The criticism of the Gallic School, which Dryden and Saint Evremond helped so much to naturalize in England, was at least not afraid of giving a reason for the faith that was in it. The critics strove to examine the abstract value of this or that literary form, the propriety of this or that mode of expression, the limits to be imposed on the choice and disposition of this or that subject. No doubt this often resulted in looking merely at the stopwatch, as Sterne's famous phrase has it. But it often resulted in something better, and it at least produced something like reasonable uniformity of judgment.

Dryden's criticisms took, as a rule, the form of prefaces to his plays, and the reading of the play ensured, to some considerable extent, the reading of the preface. Probably the pattern may be found in Corneille's *Examens*. Nor must it be forgotten that the questions attacked in these disquisitions were of real interest at the time to a large number of persons; to a very much larger number relatively, perhaps even to a much larger number absolutely, than would now be the case. The first instance of a considerable piece of prose written by Dryden was not, indeed, a preface, though it was of the nature of one. The *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* was written, according to its own showing, in the summer of 1665, and published two or three

years later. It takes the form of a dialogue between interlocutors, who are sufficiently identified with Dorset, Sedley, Sir Robert Howard, and Dryden himself. The argument turns on various questions of comparison between classical French and English dramas, and especially between English dramas of the old and of the newer type, the latter of which Dryden defends. It is noticeable, however, that this very essay contained one of the best worded and best thought-out of the author's many panegyrics upon Shakspeare. Viewed simply from the point of view of style this performance exhibits Dryden as already a considerable master of prose, though, so far as we know, he had had no practice in it beyond a few Prefaces and Dedications, if we except the unacknowledged hackwork which he is sometimes said to have performed for the bookseller Herringman. There is still something of the older, lengthy sentence, and of the tendency to elongate it by joint on joint as fresh thoughts recur to the writer. But these elongations rarely sacrifice clearness, and there is an almost total absence, on the one hand, of the cumbrous classical constructions of the elders; on the other, of the quaint colloquialisms which generally make their appearance when this more ambitious style is discarded. The Essay was quickly followed by a kind of reply from Sir Robert Howard, and Dryden made a somewhat sharp rejoinder to his brother-in-law in the defence of the Essay which he prefixed to his play of *The Indian Emperor*. He was evidently very angry with Sir Robert, who had, indeed, somewhat justified Shadwell's caricature of him as "Sir Positive At-All;" and this anger is not without effects on the style of the defence. Its sentences are sharper, shorter, more briskly and flippantly moulded than those of the Essay. Indeed, about this time—the time of his greatest prosperity—Dryden

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seems to have passed, somewhat late in life, through a period of flippancy. He was for a few years decidedly prosperous, and his familiarity with men of rank and position seems a little to have turned his head. It was at this time, and at this time only, that he spoke disrespectfully of his great predecessors, and insinuated, in a manner which, I fear, must be called snobbish, that his own familiarity with such models of taste and deportment as Rochester put him in a very superior position for the drawing of character to such humble and home-keeping folks as the old dramatists. These prefaces and dedications, however, even where their matter is scarcely satisfactory, show an ever-growing command of prose style, and very soon the resipiscence of Dryden's judgment, and the result of his recently renewed study of the older writers. The Preface to *All for Love*, though short, and more familiar in style than the earlier work, is of excellent quality; and the same may be said of those to *Troilus and Cressida* and the *Spanish Friar*, the latter of which is especially characteristic, and contains some striking remarks on the old dramatists. The great poetical works of the period between 1680 and 1687 are also attended by prose introductions, and some of these are exceedingly well done. The *Epistle to the Whigs*, which forms the preface to the *Medal*, is a piece of political writing such as there had been hitherto but very little in English, and it was admirably followed up by the *Vindication of the Duke of Guise*. On the other hand, the preface to *Religio Laici*, though partly also polemical, is a model of what may be called the expository style. Dryden obtained no great credit for his controversy with Stillingfleet, his *Life of St. Francis Xavier*, or his *History of the League*, all of which were directly or indirectly controversial, and concerned with the political

events of the time. As his lengthiest prose works, however, they can hardly be passed over without notice.

The Revolution, in throwing Dryden back upon purely literary pursuits, did him no more harm in the way of prose than of poetical composition. Not a few of his Translations have prose prefaces of peculiar excellence prefixed. The sketch of Satire which forms the preface to the *Juvenal* is one of the best of its author's performances. The *Aeneid* is introduced by an admirable dedication to Mulgrave; but the essay on the *Georgics*, though it is not, indeed, Dryden's own, is almost more interesting in this connexion than if it were; for this essay came from the pen of no less a person than Addison, then a young man of five-and-twenty, and it enables us to judge of the indebtedness of the Queen Anne men to Dryden, in prose as well as in poetry. It would be a keen critic who, knowing Addison only from the *Spectator*, could detect his hand in this performance. But it does not require much keenness in any one who knows Dryden's prose and Addison's, to trace the link of connexion which this piece affords. It lies much nearer to the former than the latter, and it shows clearly how the writer must have studied those "prefaces of Dryden" which Swift chose to sneer at. As in poetry, however, so in prose, Dryden's best, or almost his best work, was his last. The dedication of the *Fables* to the Duke of Ormond is the last and the most splendid of his many pieces of polished flattery. The preface which follows it is the last and one of the best examples of his literary criticism.

It has been justly observed of Dryden's prose style that it is, for the style of so distinguished a writer, singularly destitute of mannerism. If we father any particular piece upon him without knowing it to be his, it is not, as in the

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case of most writers, because of some obvious trick of arrangement or phraseology. The truth is, or at least the probability, that Dryden had no thought of inventing or practising a definite prose style, though he had more than once a very definite intention in his practice of matters poetical. Poetry was with him, as, indeed, it should be, an end in itself; prose, as perhaps it should also be for the most part, only a means to an end. He wanted, from time to time, to express his ideas on certain points that interested him; to answer accusations which he thought unjust; to propitiate powerful patrons; sometimes, perhaps, merely to discharge commissions with which he had been intrusted. He found no good instrument ready to his hand for these purposes, and so, with that union of the practical and literary spirit which distinguished him so strongly, he set to work to make one. But he had no special predilection for the instrument, except in so far as it served its turn, and he had, therefore, no object in preserving any special peculiarities in it except for the same reason. His poetical and dramatic practice, and the studies which that practice implied, provided him with an ample vocabulary, a strong, terse method of expression, and a dislike to archaism, vulgarity, or want of clearness. He therefore let his words arrange themselves pretty much as they would, and probably saw no object in such devices as the balancing of one part of a sentence by another, which attracted so many of his successors. The long sentence, with its involved clauses, was contrary to his habit of thought, and would have interfered with his chief objects—clearness and precision. Therefore he, in the main, discarded it; yet if at any time a long and somewhat complicated sentence seemed to him to be appropriate, he did not hesitate to write one. Slipshod diction and cant vulgarities revolted

his notions of correctness and elegance, and therefore he seldom uses them; yet there are not very many writers in whom colloquialisms occasionally occur with happier effect. If a fault is to be found with his style, it probably lies in a certain abuse of figures and of quotation, for both of which his strong tincture of the characteristics of the first half of the century may be responsible, while the former, at least, is natural to a poet. Yet, on the whole, his style, if compared either with Hooker and Clarendon, Bacon and Milton, on the one hand, or with Addison, and still more the later eighteenth century writers, on the other, is a distinctly plain and homely style. It is not so vernacular as Bunyan or Defoe, and not quite so perfect in simplicity as Swift. Yet with the work of these three writers it stands at the head of the plainer English prose styles, possessing at the same time a capacity of magnificence to which the others cannot pretend. As there is no original narrative of any length from Dryden's hand in prose, it is difficult to say whether he could have discharged satisfactorily this part of the prose-writer's functions. The *Life of Xavier* is good, but not of the best. For almost any other function, however, the style seems to be well adapted.

Now this, it must be remembered, was the great want of the day in matter of prose style—a style, namely, that should be generally flexible and capable of adaptation, not merely to the purposes of the erudite and ambitious, but to any purpose for which it might be required, and in which the vernacular and the literary elements should be properly blended and adjusted. It is scarcely too much to say that if, as some critics have inclined to think, the influence of Dryden tended to narrow the sphere and cramp the efforts of English poetry, it tended equally to enlarge the sphere and develop the energies of English

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prose. It has often been noticed that poets, when they have any faculty for prose writing, are among the best of prose writers, and of no one is this more true than it is of Dryden.

Set prose passages of laboured excellence are not very common with Dryden. But the two following, the first being the famous character of Shakspeare from the *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, the second an extract from the preface to the *Fables*, will give some idea of his style at periods separated by more than thirty years. The one was his first work of finished prose, the other his last :

“As Neander was beginning to examine ‘The Silent Woman,’ Eugenius, earnestly regarding him ; I beseech you, Neander, said he, gratify the company, and me in particular, so far, as before you speak of the play, to give us a character of the author ; and tell us frankly your opinion, whether you do not think all writers, both French and English, ought to give place to him. I fear, replied Neander, that in obeying your commands I shall draw some envy on myself. Besides, in performing them, it will be first necessary to speak somewhat of Shakspeare and Fletcher, his rivals in poesy ; and one of them, in my opinion, at least his equal, perhaps his superior. To begin then with Shakspeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily ; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation : he was naturally learned ; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature ; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike ; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid—his comick wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him ; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

‘Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.’

The consideration of this made Mr. Hales of Eton say, that there was no subject of which any poet ever writ but he would produce it much better done in Shakspeare; and however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him, Fletcher and Jonson, never equalled them to him in their esteem; and in the last king's court, when Ben's reputation was at highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakspeare far above him."

"As for the religion of our poet,¹ he seems to have some little bias towards the opinions of Wickliffe, after John of Gaunt, his patron; somewhat of which appears in the 'Tale of Pierce Plowman;' yet I cannot blame him for inveighing so sharply against the vices of the clergy in his age: their pride, their ambition, their pomp, their avarice, their worldly interest, deserved the lashes which he gave them, both in that and in most of his Canterbury Tales. Neither has his contemporary, Boccace, spared them. Yet both those poets lived in much esteem with good and holy men in orders; for the scandal which is given by particular priests reflects not on the sacred function. Chaucer's Monk, his Canon, and his Friar took not from the character of his Good Parson. A satirical poet is the check of the laymen on bad priests. We are only to take care that we involve not the innocent with the guilty in the same condemnation. The good cannot be too much honoured, nor the bad too coarsely used; for the corruption of the best becomes the worst. When a clergyman is whipped, his gown is first taken off, by which the dignity of his order is secured. If he be wrongfully accused, he has his action of slander: and it is at the poet's peril if he transgress the law. But they will tell us that all kind of satire, though never so well deserved by particular priests, yet brings the whole order into contempt. Is then the peerage of England anything dishonoured when a peer suffers for his treason? If he be libelled, or any way defamed, he has his *scandalum magnatum* to punish the offender. They who use this kind of argument seem to be conscious to themselves of somewhat which has deserved the poet's lash, and are less

¹ Chaucer.

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concerned for their publick capacity than for their private; at least, there is pride at the bottom of their reasoning. If the faults of men in orders are only to be judged among themselves, they are all in some sort parties; for, since they say the honour of their order is concerned in every member of it, how can we be sure that they will be impartial judges? How far I may be allowed to speak my opinion in this case, I know not; but I am sure a dispute of this nature caused mischief in abundance betwixt a King of England and an Archbishop of Canterbury, one standing up for the laws of his land, and the other for the honour (as he called it) of God's church; which ended in the murder of the Prelate, and in the whipping of his Majesty from post to pillar for his penance. The learned and ingenious Dr. Drake has saved me the labour of enquiring into the esteem and reverence which the priests have had of old; and I would rather extend than diminish any part of it; yet I must needs say that, when a priest provokes me without any occasion given him, I have no reason, unless it be the charity of a Christian, to forgive him: *prior læsit* is justification sufficient in the civil law. If I answer him in his own language, self-defence, I am sure, must be allowed me; and if I carry it farther, even to a sharp recrimination, somewhat may be indulged to human frailty. Yet my resentment has not wrought so far, but that I have followed Chaucer in his character of a holy man, and have enlarged on that subject with some pleasure, reserving to myself the right, if I shall think fit hereafter, to describe another sort of priests, such as are more easily to be found than the Good Parson; such as have given the last blow to Christianity in this age, by a practice so contrary to their doctrine. But this will keep cold till another time. In the mean while I take up Chaucer where I left him."

These must suffice for examples of the matter as well as of the manner of the literary criticism which forms the chief and certainly the most valuable part of Dryden's prose works. The great value of that criticism consists in its extremely appreciative character, and in its constant connexion with the poet's own constructive work. There is much in it which might seem to expose Dryden to the charge of inconsistency. But the truth is, that his literary

opinions were in a perpetual state of progress, and therefore of apparent flux. Sometimes he wrote with defective knowledge, sometimes, though not often, without thinking the subject out, sometimes (and this very often) with a certain one-sidedness of view having reference rather to the bearing of the point on experiments he was then trying or about to try, than to any more abstract considerations. He never aimed at paradox for its own sake, but he never shrank from it; and, on the whole, his criticisms, though perhaps nowadays they appeal rather to the expert and the student than to the general reader, are at least as interesting for their matter as for their form. The importance of the study of that form in the cultivation of a robust English style has never been denied.

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CHAPTER VII.

PERIOD OF TRANSLATION.

It is in most cases a decidedly difficult problem to settle the exact influence which any writer's life and circumstances have upon his literary performances and career. Although there are probably few natures so absolutely self-sufficing and so imperial in their individuality that they take no imprint from the form and pressure of the time, the exact force which that pressure exercises is nearly always very hard to calculate. In the case of Dryden, however, the difficulty is fortunately minimized. There was never, it may safely be said, so great a writer who was so thoroughly occasional in the character of his greatness. The one thing which to all appearance he could not do, was to originate a theme. His second best play, according to the general judgment, his best as I venture to think, is built, with an audacity to which only great genius or great folly could lead, on the lines of Shakspeare. His longest and most ambitious poem follows, with a surprising faithfulness, the lines of Chaucer. His most effective piece of tragic description is a versified paraphrase—the most magnificent paraphrase, perhaps, ever written—of the prose of Boccaccio. Even in his splendid satires he is rarely successful, unless he has what is called in modern literary slang a very definite "peg" given him to hang his

verse upon. *Absalom and Achitophel* is little more than a loosely connected string of characters, each owing no doubt something, and what is more, a great deal, to the poet, but originally given to, and not invented by him. No fashion of poetry can be farther aloof from Dryden's than that which, as in the case of Shelley, spins great poems purely out of its own brain. His strong and powerful mind could grind the corn supplied to it into the finest flour, but the corn must always be supplied. The exquisite perfection of his smaller lyrics forbids us to set this down as in any sense a drawback. It was rather a strong inclination to the one office than an incapacity for the other. What is more to the purpose, this peculiarity is very closely connected with Dryden's fitness for the position which he held. The man who is to control the peaceable revolution of a literature, who is to shape a language to new uses, and help writers for a century after his death to vocabulary, rhythm, and style, in prose as well as in verse, is perhaps all the better off for not being too spontaneous or original in his choice of subjects. But however this may be, there is no doubt that outward circumstances always had a great, and the greatest, influence upon the development of Dryden's genius. There was in some respects a quality about this genius for which it would be hard to find an appropriate name. To call such a mind and such a talent as Dryden's parasitic would be ridiculous. Yet in any lesser man the same characteristics would undoubtedly receive that appellation. It seems always to have been, if not necessary, at any rate satisfactory to him, to follow some lines which had been already laid down, to accept a departure from some previous work, to match himself closely with some existing performance. It appears almost as if, in his extraordinary care for the manner of his poetical work, he

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felt it an advantage to be relieved of much trouble about the matter. The accusations of plagiarism which his frantic enemies constantly brought against him were, in any discreditable sense, as idle as accusations of plagiarism usually are; but they had considerably more foundation in literal fact than is usual with such accusations. He had a habit of catching up phrases sometimes from the works of men to whom he was anything but complimentary, and inserting them, much improved, it is true, for the most part, in his own work. I have come across a curious instance of this, which I do not remember to have seen anywhere noticed. One of the most mortifying incidents in Dryden's literary career was the already mentioned composition by his rival, though not exactly enemy, Crowne, of the Masque of *Calisto*. There seems to be little doubt, though the evidence is not entirely conclusive, that Crowne's share in this work was due to Rochester, who afterwards made himself obnoxious to Dryden's wrath in a still more unpardonable manner. Under these circumstances we certainly should not expect to find Dryden borrowing from *Calisto*. Yet a whole line in *Macflecknoe*, "The fair Augusta much to fears inclined," is taken, with the addition of the adjective and the adverb, from a song of Crowne's: "Augusta is to fears inclined." This temperament made the work of translation one peculiarly suitable to Dryden. He had, as early as 1684, included several translations in his first volume of *Miscellanies*, and he soon perceived that there was plenty of demand for more of the same ware. Except his great editor, it is doubtful whether any man of letters ever knew the public taste better than Dryden. The call for translations of the ancients was quite natural and intelligible. Direct classical study was considerably on the wane. So far, in-

deed, as one sex was concerned, it had practically gone out of fashion altogether, and women of the accomplishments of Lady Jane Grey or Queen Elizabeth were now thought monsters. Even as regards men, a much smaller proportion of the upper classes were able to read the classics in the original than had once been the case. Business, court life, employment in a standing army and navy, and many other distractions called men early away from their studies. Yet the interest felt, or supposed to be felt, in classical literature was at least as great as ever. The classics were still considered as literary models and patterns; and the famous controversy between the ancients and the moderns which arose about this time helped to inspire a desire for some acquaintance with the former in the easy, fashionable verse which Dryden had himself created. In 1693 he gave to the world the whole of Persius and much of Juvenal, the latter being completed by his sons and some friends. In the same year some more versions of Ovid and a little of Homer appeared; and in 1693 also his greatest work of translation, the Virgil, was begun. This was the only one of Dryden's works for which he received not wholly inadequate remuneration, and this remuneration was attained chiefly by the method of subscription. Besides these authors, his translations include extracts from Theocritus and Lucretius, a very few Odes of Horace, and a considerable portion of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, which appeared last of all in the well-known volume of *Fables*. The merits and peculiarities of Dryden's translation are easily estimated. It has been excellently remarked in the Preface of a recent prose translation of the *Odyssey*, that there can be no final translation of Homer, because the taste and literary habits of each age demand different qualities in poetry. There is no need to

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limit this remark to Homer, or indeed to poetry. The work of the translator is to bridge over the interval between his author and his public, and therefore the construction and character of the bridge must necessarily differ, according to the instruction and demands of the public. Dryden could not give exact accuracy, though he was by no means such a bad scholar as Pope. But his public did not want exact accuracy, and would not have been grateful for it. He did not—whether he was or was not able—give them classical flavour and local colour, but for these they would have been still less grateful. What they wanted, and what he could give them as no other man then living could, was the matter of the original, tolerably unadulterated, and dressed up in the splendid diction and nervous verse which he had himself taught them to love. The parallel between the characteristics of the translation and the simple device whereby Jacob Tonson strove to propitiate the ruling powers in the illustrations to the *Virgil* is indeed obvious enough. Those illustrations displayed “old Nassau’s hook-nosed head on pious Æneas’ shoulders.” The text itself displayed the head of Dryden on the shoulders of Virgil.

Even before the Miscellany of 1684, translations from Dryden’s hands had been published. There appeared in 1680 a version of Ovid’s *Heroides*, to which he gave a preface and a translation of two epistles, besides collaborating with Mulgrave in a third. The preface contains some good criticism of Ovid, and a defence of the manner of translation which with little change Dryden himself constantly employed. This he defines as being equally remote from verbal fidelity and from mere imitation. He also lays down a canon as to the necessary equipment of a translator, which, if it could be despotically enforced,

would be a remarkable boon to reviewers. "No man is capable of translating poetry who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of his author's language and of his own. Nor must we understand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts and expressions, which are the characters that distinguish, and as it were individuate him from all other writers." These first translations are interesting because they are the first, and for the sake of contrast with the later and more perfect work of the same kind. In some respects Ovid was an unfortunate author for Dryden to select, because his peculiarities tempted a relapse into the faults of the heroic-play style. But, on the other hand, Dryden's practice in the heroic play fitted him very well to translate Ovid. A few lines from the close of *Canace to Macareus* may be given as an instance—

"And now appeared the messenger of death ;
 Sad were his looks, and scarce he drew his breath,
 To say, 'Your father sends you' (with that word
 His trembling hands presented me a sword ;)
 'Your father sends you this ; and lets you know
 That your own crimes the use of it will show.'
 Too well I know the sense those words impart ;
 His present shall be treasured in my heart.
 Are these the nuptial gifts a bride receives ?
 And this the fatal dower a father gives ?
 Thou God of marriage, shun thy own disgrace,
 And take thy torch from this detested place !
 Instead of that, let furies light their brands,
 And fire my pile with their infernal hands !
 With happier fortune may my sisters wed,
 Warned by the dire example of the dead.
 For thee, poor babe, what crime could they pretend ?
 How could thy infant innocence offend ?

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A guilt there was ; but, oh, that guilt was mine !
Thou suffer'st for a sin that was not thine.
Thy mother's grief and crime ! but just enjoyed,
Shewn to my sight, and born to be destroyed !
Unhappy offspring of my teeming womb !
Dragged headlong from thy cradle to thy tomb !
Thy unoffending life I could not save,
Nor weeping could I follow to thy grave ;
Nor on thy tomb could offer my shorn hair,
Nor shew the grief which tender mothers bear.
Yet long thou shalt not from my arms be lost ;
For soon I will o'ertake thy infant ghost.
But thou, my love, and now my love's despair,
Perform his funerals with paternal care ;
His scattered limbs with my dead body burn,
And once more join us in the pious urn.
If on my wounded breast thou droppest a tear,
Think for whose sake my breast that wound did bear ;
And faithfully my last desires fulfil,
As I perform my cruel father's will."

The Miscellanies of 1684 and 1685 contained a considerable number of translations from many different authors, and those of 1693 and 1694 added yet more. Altogether, besides Ovid and Virgil, specimens of Horace, Homer, Theocritus, and Lucretius are in these translations, while the more ambitious and complete versions of Juvenal and Virgil swell the total (in Scott's edition) to four volumes, containing perhaps some 30,000 lines.

It could hardly be expected that in translating authors of such different characters, and requiring in a poetical translator so many different gifts, Dryden should be altogether and equally successful. The *Juvenal* and the *Virgil* deserve separate notice ; the others may be briefly reviewed. All of them are, according to the general conception of translation which Dryden had formed, decidedly

loose, and by no means adhere to the original. Indeed, Dryden not unfrequently inserts whole lines and passages of his own, a proceeding scarcely to be reconciled with the just-mentioned conception. On the whole, he is perhaps most successful with Ovid. The versions of Horace are few, and by no means excessively Horatian, but they are almost all good poems in Dryden's statelier rhythm. The version into a kind of Pindaric of the twenty-ninth ode of the third book is particularly good, and contains the well-known paraphrase of *resigno quæ dedit* ("I puff the prostitute away"), which was such a favourite with Thackeray that he puts it into the mouth, if I remember rightly, of more than one of his characters. Indeed, the three last stanzas of this are well worth quotation—

VIII.

"Happy the man, and happy he alor/
 He, who can call to-day his own ;
 He who, secure within, can say,
 To-morrow do thy worst, for I have lived to-day ;
 Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
 The joys I have possessed, in spite of fate, are mine :
 Not heaven itself upon the past has power,
 But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.

IX.

"Fortune, that with malicious joy
 Does man, her slave, oppress,
 Proud of her office to destroy,
 Is seldom pleased to bless :
 Still various and unconstant still,
 But with an inclination to be ill,
 Promotes, degrades, delights in strife,
 And makes a lottery of life.
 I can enjoy her while she's kind ;
 But when she dances in the wind,

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And shakes the wings and will not stay,
I puff the prostitute away :
The little or the much she gave is quietly resigned ;
Content with poverty, my soul I arm,
And virtue, though in rags, will keep me warm.

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“ What is't to me,
Who never sail in her unfaithful sea,
If storms arise and clouds grow black,
If the mast split, and threaten wreck ?
Then let the greedy merchant fear
For his ill-gotten gain ;
And pray to gods that will not hear,
While the debating winds and billows bear
His wealth into the main.
For me, secure from fortune's blows,
Secure of what I cannot lose,
In my small pinnace I can sail,
Contemning all the blustering roar ;
And running with a merry gale,
With friendly stars my safety seek,
Within some little winding creek,
And see the storm ashore.”

Least successful of all, perhaps, are the Theocritean translations. The idyllic spirit was not one of the many which would come at Dryden's call, and certain peculiarities of Theocritus, harmless enough in the original, are accentuated and magnified in the copy in a manner by no means pleasant. A thing more unfortunate still was the selection made from Lucretius. No one was ever better qualified to translate the greatest of Roman poets than Dryden ; and had he given us the whole, it would probably have been the best verse translation in the language. As it is, he has done few things better than the selections from the second and third books ; but that from the fourth

has, justly or unjustly, tainted the whole in the eyes of most critics. It reproduces only too nakedly the original where it would be better left alone, and it fails almost entirely even to attempt the sombre fury of sentiment, the inexpressible agony of regret, which transfuse and redeem that original itself. The first book of Homer and part of the sixth were avowedly done as an experiment, and it is difficult to be very sorry that the experiment was not pursued farther. But the versions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are very good. They, however, belong more properly to the next period, that of the *Fables*.

Dryden's *Juvenal* is not the least remarkable, and has been in some ways among the most fortunate of his works. It is still, if there be any such, the standard verse translation of the great Roman satirist, and this although much of it is not Dryden's. His two elder sons assisted him in the work, as well as some friends. But the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires are his own, as well as the whole of the *Persius*. The book was published in 1693, addressed to Dorset, with a prefatory essay or discourse on satire, which is of great interest and value. It is somewhat discursive, as is Dryden's wont, and the erudition which it contains is, as is also his wont, anything but invariably accurate. But it contains some precious autobiographic information, much capital criticism, and some of the best passages of its author's prose. He distinguishes between his own idea of satire and Juvenal's, approaching the former to that of Horace, which, however, is scarcely a tenable position. But, as has been sufficiently pointed out already, there are actually many and grave differences between the satire of Dryden and that of Juvenal. The former rarely or never even simulates indignation; the latter constantly and invariably expresses

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it. Still, the poetical resemblances between the two men are sufficiently close to make the expectation of a valuable version pretty confident, nor is that expectation disappointed. For a wonder Dryden resists, for the most part, his unhappy tendency to exaggerate the coarseness of his subjects, and to choose their coarsest parts in preference to others. No version of Juvenal could be other than shocking to those accustomed only to modern standards of literary language; but this version is perhaps less so than might be expected. The vigorous stamp of Dryden's verse is, moreover, admirably suited to represent the original, and the chief fault noticeable in it—a fault not uncommon with Dryden in translating—is an occasional lapse into an unpoetical vernacular, with the object, doubtless, of representing the text more vividly to English readers. The *Persius* is in this respect better than the *Juvenal*, though the peculiar dryness of flavour of the singular original is scarcely retained.

It is not known exactly when Dryden first conceived the idea of working up the scattered fragments of Virgilian translation which he had as yet attempted into a whole. The task, however, was regularly begun either at the end of 1693 or the beginning of 1694, and it occupied the best part of three years. A good deal of interest was generally felt in the proceeding, and many friends helped the poet with books or literary assistance of one kind or another. A great deal of it, too, was written during visits to hospitable acquaintances in the country. Much of it was doubtless done in Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, at the houses of Mrs. Creed and of Dryden of Chesterton. There is, indeed, a universally repeated tradition that the first lines were written with a diamond on a window in this latter mansion. The house was pulled

down some seventy years ago, and a curious argument against the truth of the legend has been made out of the fact that the pane was not preserved. Demolition, however, is not usually careful of its prey. Much was certainly written at Denham Court, in Buckinghamshire, the seat of Sir William Bowyer, whose gardens are commemorated in a note on the *Georgics*. The seventh book of the *Æneid* was done at Burleigh, Dryden having long had some connexion with the Exeter family. He had, it may be mentioned, always been fond of writing in the country. Tonsen, the publisher, was exceedingly anxious that the book should be dedicated to William III., and Dryden speaks as if certain anticipations of gain had been held out to him in such a case. But he was unfalteringly determined to do nothing that would look like an abandonment of his principles. No single person received the honor of the dedication; but each division of the work was inscribed to a separate patron. The *Eclogues* fell to the lot of Lord Clifford, Dryden's co-religionist, and son of the "fierce and brave" if not very high-principled member of the Cabal to whom *Amboyna* had been dedicated long before. The *Georgics* were inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, a dedication which, with Dryden's subsequent reception and acknowledgment of a present from Chesterfield, is at least decisive against the supposed connexion between Lady Elizabeth and the Earl having been known to the poet. Mulgrave, now Marquis of Normanby, had the *Æneid*. The book was published in July, 1697, and the edition was sold off almost within the year. Dryden speaks to his sons, who were now at Rome, where they had employment in the Pope's household, with great pleasure of its success. It is, in truth, a sufficiently remarkable book. It was, no doubt, rather ironical of fate to assign Homer to Pope,

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who was of all poets the least Homeric, and Virgil to Dryden, than whom not many poets have been more un-Virgilian. Pope would have done the Mantuan, whom in many things he resembles, excellently. Dryden has done him excellently too, only that the spirit of the translation is entirely different from that of the original. To say after Wordsworth that Dryden "spoils" all the best passages is quite unfair. But Wordsworth had no special faculty of criticism in the classical languages, and was of all recorded poets the most niggardly of praise, and the most prone to depreciation of others. Of the three parts as wholes the Georgics are perhaps done best, the Eclogues worst, the *Æneid* with most inequality. Yet the best passages of the epic are the best, beyond all doubt, of the whole version. A certain delicacy of touch, which Virgil especially requires, and of which Dryden was sufficiently master in his more original work, has often failed him here, but the bolder and more masculine passages are represented with a great deal of success. Those who believe, as I confess I myself believe, that all translation is unsatisfactory, and that poetical translation of poetry is nearly impossible, must of course always praise such work as this with a very considerable reservation. But when that reservation is made, there remains plenty of fairly disposable praise for this, Dryden's most considerable undertaking of a single and complete kind. The older translations have so far gone out of general reading in England that citation is in this case almost indispensable, as well for the purpose of showing what Dryden actually did give his readers in this famous book, as for that of exhibiting the progress he had made since the *Ovid* of sixteen years before. The passage I have chosen is the well-known opening of the descent into hell in the sixth book, which has

not many superiors either in the original or in the version. The subject was one that Dryden could handle well, whereas his *Dido* sometimes shows traces of incongruity—

“She said, and passed along the gloomy space;
 The prince pursued her steps with equal pace.
 Ye realms, yet unrevealed to human sight!
 Ye gods, who rule the regions of the night!
 Ye gliding ghosts! permit me to relate
 The mystic wonders of your silent state.
 Obscure they went through dreary shades, that led
 Along the waste dominions of the dead.
 Thus wander travellers in woods by night,
 By the moon's doubtful and malignant light,
 When Jove in dusky clouds involves the skies,
 And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes.
 Just in the gate, and in the jaws of hell,
 Revengeful Cares and sullen Sorrows dwell,
 And pale Diseases and repining Age,
 Want, Fear, and Famine's unresisted rage;
 Here Toils, and Death, and Death's half-brother Sleep,
 (Forms terrible to view) their centry keep;
 With anxious Pleasures of a guilty mind,
 Deep Frauds before, and open Force behind;
 The Furies' iron beds; and Strife, that shakes
 Her hissing tresses, and unfolds her snakes.
 Full in the midst of this infernal road,
 An elm displays her dusky arms abroad:
 The god of sleep there hides his heavy head,
 And empty dreams on every leaf are spread.
 Of various forms unnumbered spectres more,
 Centaurs, and double shapes, besiege the door.
 Before the passage, horrid Hydra stands,
 And Briareus with all his hundred hands;
 Gorgons, Geryon with his triple frame;
 And vain Chimæra vomits empty flame.
 The chief unsheathed his shining steel, prepared,
 Though seized with sudden fear, to force the guard,

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Offering his brandished weapon at their face ;
Had not the Sibyl stopped his eager pace,
And told him what those empty phantoms were—
Forms without bodies, and impassive air."

Owing to the existence of some letters to Tonson, Walsh, and others, more is known about the pecuniary side of this transaction than about most of Dryden's money affairs. Tonson was an exceedingly hard bargain-driver, and there is extant a curious letter of his, in which he complains of the number of verses he has for his money, a complaint which, as we shall see when we come to the *Fables*, was at any rate in that case grossly unjust. The book was published by subscription, as Pope's *Homer* was subsequently, but the terms were not nearly so profitable to the poet. A hundred and two five-guinea subscribers had each his arms printed at the foot of one of the hundred and two plates. Others who subscribed only two guineas merely figured in a list of names. But except a statement by Dryden in a letter that "the thirty shillings upon every book remains with me," the proportion in which the subscriptions were divided between author and publisher is unknown. He had, however, as Malone thinks, 50*l.* for each book of the *Æneid*—as Mr. Christie and Mr. Hooper think, 50*l.* for each two books—and no doubt there was some similar payment for the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. Altogether Pope heard that he made 1200*l.* by the *Virgil*. Presents too were doubtless sent him by Clifford and Mulgrave, as well as by Chesterfield. But Tonson's payments were anything but satisfactory, and Lord Macaulay has extracted much evidence as to the state of the coinage from Dryden's indignant letters on the subject. At one time he complains that in some money changed for Lady Elizabeth by Tonson, "besides the clipped money

there were at least forty shillings brass." Then he expects "good silver, not such as he had formerly," and will not take gold, of course because of the renewed risk of bad money in change. Then complaints are made of Tonson for refusing subscriptions (which shows that a considerable portion of the subscription-money must have gone to the poet), for declining to pay anything for notes, and so on. The most complimentary thing to Tonson in the correspondence is the remark, "All of your trade are sharpers, and you not more than others." In the next letter, however, the suspicion as to the goodness of Tonson's money returns—"If you have any silver *which will go*, my wife will be glad of it." Elsewhere there is a half-apologetic allusion to a "sharp" letter which seems not to have been preserved. But Dryden had confidence enough in his publisher to make him do various pieces of fiduciary business for him, such as to receive his rents which had been brought up from Northamptonshire by the Towcester carrier, to get bills to pay a suspicious watchmaker who would not take gold, and the like. He, too, was the intermediary by which Dryden sent letters to his sons who were now in Rome, and he is accused of great carelessness and perhaps something worse in connexion with these letters. In another epistle we hear that "the printer is a beast," an accusation which it is to be feared has been repeated frequently since by impatient authors. Afterwards, in rather Landorian style—indeed, there are resemblances more than one between the two, and Landor was a constant admirer of Dryden—he "vows to God that if Everingham, the printer, takes not care of this impression, he shall never print anything more for him." These letters to Tonson about the *Virgil* and the *Fables* are among the most interesting memorials of Dryden that we

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possess, and they are, with those to Mrs. Steward, almost the only letters of his which give much personal detail.¹ Perhaps it is not superfluous to say that allusions in them to his wife are frequent, and show nothing either of any ill-feeling between the two, or of any neglect of household duty on her part. To one of the letters to his sons is a long postscript from Lady Elizabeth, in perhaps the most remarkable orthography that even English epistolary history has to show, but affectionate and motherly enough.

During the period which the last two chapters cover, Dryden had as usual not failed to undertake several minor and miscellaneous literary tasks. *Eleonora*, in 1692, was one of his least successful pieces in a literary point of view, but perhaps the most successful of all as a piece of journey-work. The poem is an elegy on the Countess of Abingdon; it was ordered by her husband, and paid for munificently. There are but 377 verses, and the fee was five hundred guineas, or on Touson's method of calculation some seven or eight-and-twenty shillings a line—a rate which would have seemed to Jacob sinful, as encouraging poets to be extortionate with honest tradesmen. The piece is laboured and ill-sustained. If it deserved five hundred guineas, the Anne Killigrew ode would certainly have been cheap at five thousand. But not long afterwards a poem to Sir Godfrey Kneller, which may or may not have been exchanged for something of the other artist's craft, showed that Dryden had in no way lost his faculty of splendid flattery. Perhaps before and perhaps after this came the incomparable address to Congreve on the

¹ As, for instance, how (he is writing from Northamptonshire) a party of benighted strangers came in, and he had to give up his bed to them, to which bed they would have gone supperless, had he not "taken a very lusty pike that day."

failure of the *Double Dealer*, which is and deserves to be one of Dryden's best-known works. Congreve and Southern, the leading comic writer and the leading tragic writer of the younger generation, were among the principal of the band of sons (in Ben Jonson's phrase) whom Dryden had now gathered round him. In one of his letters there is a very pleasant picture of the two young men coming out four miles to meet the coach as he returned from one of his Northamptonshire visits, and escorting him to his house. This was in 1695, and in the same year Dryden brought out a prose translation of Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*, with a prefatory essay called a "Parallel of Poetry and Painting." There is not very much intrinsic value in this parallel, but it has an accidental interest of a curious kind. Dryden tells us that it occupied him for twelve mornings, and we are therefore able to calculate his average rate of working, since neither the matter nor the manner of the work betokens any extraordinary care, nor could it have required extraordinary research. The essay would fill between thirty and forty pages of the size of this present. Either in 1695 or in 1696 the poet also wrote a life of Lucian, intended to accompany a translation of the Dialogues made by various hands. This too, which did not appear till after the author's death, was something of a "pot-boiler;" but the character of Dryden's prose work was amply redeemed by the "Discourse on Epic Poetry," which was the form that the dedication of the *Aeneid* to Mulgrave took. This is not unworthy to rank with the "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" and the "Discourse on Satire."

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE FABLES.

It was beyond a doubt his practice in translation, and the remarkable success that attended it, which suggested to Dryden the last, and one of the most singular, but at the same time the most brilliantly successful of all his poetical experiments. His translations themselves were in many cases rather paraphrases than translations. He now conceived the idea of a kind of composition which was to be avowedly paraphrase. With the unfailing catholicity of taste which is one of his finest literary characteristics, he had always avoided the ignorant contempt with which the age was wont to look on mediæval literature. Even Cowley, we are told, when requested by one of his patrons to give an opinion on Chaucer, confessed that he could not relish him. If, when he planned an Arthurian epic, Dryden had happened to hit on the idea of "transversing" Mallory, we might have had an additional star of the first magnitude in English literature, though his ability to produce a wholly original epic may be doubted. At sixty-seven, writing hard for subsistence, he could not think of any such mighty attempt as this. But he took certain tales of Chaucer, and certain novels of Chaucer's master, Boccaccio, and applied his system to them. The result was the book of poems to which, including as it did many

Ovidian translations, and much other verse, he gave the name of *Fables*, using that word in its simple sense of stories. It is not surprising that this book took the town by storm. Enthusiastic critics, even at the beginning of the present century, assigned to *Theodore and Honoria* "a place on the very topmost shelf of English poetry." Such arrangements depend, of course, upon the definition of poetry itself. But I venture to think that it would be almost sufficient case against any such definition, that it should exclude the finest passages of the *Fables* from a position a little lower than that which Ellis assigned to them. It so happens that we are, at the present day, in a position to put Dryden to a specially crucial test which his contemporaries were unable to apply. To us Chaucer is no longer an ingenious and intelligent but illegible barbarian. We read the *Canterbury Tales* with as much relish, and with nearly as little difficulty, as we read Spenser, or Milton, or Pope, or Byron, or our own living poets. *Palamon and Arcite* has, therefore, to us the drawback—if drawback it be—of being confronted on equal terms with its original. Yet I venture to say that, except in the case of those unfortunate persons whose only way of showing appreciation of one thing is by depreciation of something else, an acquaintance with the *Knight's Tale* injures Dryden's work hardly at all. There could not possibly be a severer test of at least formal excellence than this.

The *Fables* were published in a folio volume which, according to the contract with Tonson, was to contain 10,000 verses. The payment was 300*l.*, of which 250 guineas were paid down at the time of agreement, when three-fourths of the stipulated number of lines were actually handed over to the publisher. On this occasion, at least, Jacob had not to complain of an unduly small considera-

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tion. For Dryden gave him not 2500, but nearly 5000 verses more, without, as far as is known, receiving any increase of his fee. The remainder of the 300*l.* was not to be paid till the appearance of a second edition, and this did not actually take place until some years after the poet's death. Pope's statement, therefore, that Dryden received "sixpence a line" for his verses, though not formally accurate, was sufficiently near the truth. It is odd that one of the happiest humours of Tom the First (Shadwell) occurring in a play written long before he quarrelled with Dryden, concerns this very practice of payment by line. In the *Sullen Lovers* one of the characters complains that his bookseller has refused him twelvecpence a line, when the intrinsic worth of some verses is at least ten shillings, and all can be proved to be worth three shillings "to the veriest Jew in Christendom." So that Tonson was not alone in the adoption of the method. As the book finally appeared, the *Fables* contained, besides prefatory matter and dedications, five pieces from Chaucer (*Palamon and Arcite*, the *Cock and the Fox*, the *Flower and the Leaf*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Character of a Good Parson*), three from Boccaccio (*Sigismonda and Guiscardo*, *Theodore and Honoria*, *Cymon and Iphigenia*), the first book of the *Iliad*, some versions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in continuation of others previously published, an *Epistle to John Dryden*, the second *St. Cecilia Ode*, commonly called *Alexander's Feast*, and an *Epitaph*.

The book was dedicated to the Duke of Ormond in a prose epistle, than which even Dryden never did anything better. It abounds with the fanciful expressions, just stopping short of conceit, which were such favourites with him, and which he managed perhaps better than any other writer. He holds of the Ormond family, he tells the Duke,

by a tenure of dedications, having paid that compliment to his Grace's grandfather, the great Duke of Ormond, and having celebrated Ossory in memorial verses. Livy, Publicola, and the history of Peru are brought in perhaps somewhat by the head and shoulders; but this was simply the fashion of the time, and the manner of the doing fully excused it. Even this piece, however, falls short, in point of graceful flattery, of the verse dedication of *Palamon and Arcite* to the Duchess. Between the two is the preface, which contains a rather interesting history of the genesis of the *Fables*. After doing the first book of Homer "as an essay to the whole work," it struck Dryden that he would try some of the passages on Homeric subjects in the *Metamorphoses*, and these in their turn led to others. When he had sufficiently extracted the sweets of Ovid, "it came into my mind that our old English poet Chaucer in many things resembled him;" and then, "as thoughts, according to Mr. Hobbes, have always some connexion," he was led to think of Boccaccio. The preface continues with critical remarks upon all three authors and their position in the history of their respective literatures, remarks which, despite some almost unavoidable ignorance on the writer's part as to the early condition and mutual relationship of modern languages, are still full of interest and value. It ends a little harshly, but naturally enough, in a polemic with Blackmore, Milbourn, and Collier. Not much need be said about the causes of either of these debates. Macaulay has told the Collier story well, and, on the whole, fairly enough, though he is rather too complimentary to the literary value of Collier's work. That redoubtable divine had all the right on his side, beyond a doubt, but he sometimes carried his argument a good deal too far. Dryden, however, could not defend himself, and

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he knew this, and did not attempt it, though he could not always refrain, now and afterwards, from indulging in little flings at Collier. Blackmore had two causes of quarrel with Dryden—one the same as Collier's, the other a political one, the poetical knight being a staunch Whig. Milbourn was an obscure country clergyman, who had at one time been a great admirer of Dryden, as a letter of his still extant, in which he orders the poet's works to be sent to him, shows. He had, however, fallen foul of the *Virgil*, for which he received from Dryden due and perhaps more than due castigation.

Enough has been already said of the translations of Homer and Ovid. The latter, however, are, as far as mere verse goes, among the best of all the translations. *Palamon and Arcite*, however, and all the other contents of the book are of a very different order of interest. Dryden had an extreme admiration for this story, which as the subject for an epic he thought as good as either Homer's or Virgil's. Nowadays most people have left off considering the technical value of different subjects, which is no doubt a misfortune. But it is easy to see that the legend, with its interesting incidents, its contrast of character, its revolutions, and so forth, does actually come very near to the perfect idea of the artificial epic. The comparative nullity of the heroine would have been thought no drawback in ancient art. Dryden has divided the story into three books, and has, as usual, paraphrased with the utmost freedom, but he has kept closer to the dimensions of the original than is his wont. His three books do not much exceed the length of the original tale. In the different parts, however, he has used his own discretion in amplifying or contracting exactly as he thinks proper, and the comparison of different passages with the original thus

brings out in a manifold way the idiosyncrasies of the two writers. Perhaps this is nowhere more marked than in the famous description of the Temple of Mars. As far as the temple itself goes, Dryden has the upper hand, but he is beaten when it comes to "the portraiture which was upon the wall." Sometimes he has simply adopted Chaucer's very words, sometimes he has done otherwise, and then he has almost always done worse. The "smiler with the knife under the cloak" is very inadequately replaced by three whole lines about hypocrisy. If the couplet—

"Amiddes of the temple sate Mischance,
And Discomfort and sory Countenance,"

be contrasted with

"In midst of all the dome Misfortune sate,
And gloomy Discontent and fell Debate,"

the comparatively otiose epithets which in the next century were to be the curse of the style, strike the eye and ear very forcibly. Indeed, in this most finished work of Dryden's nothing is easier than to see the strength and the weakness of the method he had introduced. In his hands it turns almost always to strength. But in thus boldly bringing his work side by side with Chaucer's, he had indicated the divergence which was to be carried farther and farther by his followers, until the *mot propre* was lost altogether in a washy sea of elegant epithets and flowing versification. That time, however, was far off, or might have seemed to be far off, to a reader of the *Fables*. It is only when Chaucer is actually compared that the defects, or rather the possibilities of defect, rise to the eye. If *Palamon and Arcite* be read by itself, it is almost entirely delightful, and, as has been said already, it will even bear the strain of comparison. For the loss is counterbalanced

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by gain, gain of sustained strength and greater perfection of workmanship, even though we may know well enough that Dryden's own idea of Chaucer's shortcomings in versification was a mere delusion.

The *Nun's Priest's Tale* was also not very much extended, though it was considerably altered in Dryden's version, entitled *The Cock and the Fox*. Dryden's fondness for the beast-story had, as we have seen already, drawn upon him the reprehension of Messrs. Prior and Montague, critics of severe and cultivated taste. It has just been suggested that a great loss has been sustained by his not having taken the fancy to transverse some Arthurian stories. In the same way, if he had known the original *Roman de Renart*, he would doubtless have made good use of it. *The Cock and the Fox* itself is inferior to many of the branches of the old tree, but it has not a few merits, and the story of the two friends is one of the very best things of the kind. To this Dryden has done ample justice. But in the original not the least attractive part is the solemn profusion of learned names and citations characteristic of the fourteenth century, which the translator has in some cases thought it better to omit. It may not be quite clear whether Chaucer, who generally had a kind of satirical undercurrent of intention in him, was serious in putting these into the mouths of Partlet and Chanticleer or not, but still one misses them. On the other hand, Dryden has made the most of the astrological allusions; for it must be remembered that he had a decided hankering after astrology, like many of the greatest men of his century. Of this there is evidence quite apart from Mrs. Thomas's stories, which also deal with the point.

The third of Dryden's Chaucerian versions is one of the most charming of all, and this, though the variations from

the original are considerable, and though that original is itself one of the most delightful works of the kind.¹ I have read, perhaps as much as most Englishmen, the French fourteenth-century poetry on which so much of Chaucer's is modelled, but I hardly know either in French or English a poem more characteristic, and more delightfully characteristic of the fourteenth century than the *Flower and the Leaf*. The delight in a certain amiable kind of natural beauty, the transference of the signs and symbols of that beauty to the service of a fantastic and yet not unnatural poetry of love, the introduction of abstract and supernatural beings to carry out, sometimes by allegory and sometimes by personification, the object of the poet, are all exemplified in this little piece of some 500 or 600 lines, in a manner which it would be hard to match in Froissart or Guillaume de Machault. Yet Dryden has asserted his power of equalling the virtue of the original in what may be called an original translation. The two poems differ from one another considerably in details of machinery and imagery. Chaucer is happier in his descriptions of nature, Dryden in the representation of the central personages. But both alike have the power of transporting. Even now, when so much of his language and machinery have become hackneyed, Dryden can exert this power on those who are well acquainted with mediæval literature, who have felt its strange fascination, and the ease with which it carries off the reader into unfamiliar and yet delightful lands, where nothing is disturbing and unreasonable, and yet everything is surprising and unhackneyed. How much more strongly this power must have been exerted on a singularly prosaic age, in which the majority of persons would, like Prior

¹ I do not here concern myself with the hypothesis of the spuriousness of this poem.

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and Montague, have cast aside as nonsense worthy only of children the gracious, shadowy imaginations of mediæval thought, we in the nineteenth century can hardly put ourselves in the condition to estimate. But it must always remain one of Dryden's highest titles to fame that he was able thus to make extremes meet. He seems, indeed, to have had not only the far from ordinary faculty of recognising good literature wherever he met it, but the quite extraordinary faculty of making other people recognise it too by translating it into the language which they were capable of comprehending. A passage may be worth quoting :

“To this the dame replied : ‘Fair daughter, know
That what you saw was all a fairy show ;
And all those airy shapes you now behold
Were human bodies once, and clothed with earthly mould.
Our souls, not yet prepared for upper light,
Till doomsday wander in the shades of night ;
This only holiday of all the year,
We, privileged, in sunshine may appear ;
With songs and dance we celebrate the day,
And with due honours usher in the May.
At other times we reign by night alone,
And posting through the skies pursue the moon ;
But when the morn arises, none are found,
For cruel Demogorgon walks the round,
And if he finds a fairy lag in light,
He drives the wretch before, and lashes into night.

“All courteous are by kind ; and ever proud
With friendly offices to help the good.
In every land we have a larger space
Than what is known to you of mortal race ;
Where we with green adorn our fairy bowers,
And even this grove, unseen before, is ours.
Know farther, every lady clothed in white,
And crowned with oak and laurel every knight,

Are servants to the Leaf, by liveries known
 Of innocence; and I myself am one.
 Saw you not her so graceful to behold,
 In white attire, and crowned with radiant gold?
 The sovereign lady of our land is she,
 Diana called, the queen of chastity;
 And, for the spotless name of maid she bears,
 That *Agnus castus* in her hand appears;
 And all her train, with leafy chaplets crowned,
 Were for unblamed virginity renowned;
 But those the chief and highest in command
 Who bear those holy branches in their hand,
 The knights adorned with laurel crowns are they,
 Whom death nor danger ever could dismay,
 Victorious names, who made the world obey:
 Who, while they lived, in deeds of arms excelled,
 And after death for deities were held.
 But those who wear the woodbine on their brow,
 Were knights of love, who never broke their vow;
 Firm to their plighted faith, and ever free
 From fears, and fickle chance, and jealousy.
 The lords and ladies, who the woodbine bear,
 As true as Tristram and Isotta were."

Why Dryden selected the *Wife of Bath's Tale* among his few translations from Chaucer, it is not very easy to say. It is a sufficiently harmless *fabliau*, but it cannot be said to come up in point of merit to many others of the *Canterbury Tales*. The enemies of our poet would doubtless say that he selected it because of the unfavourable opinions as to womankind which it contains. But then those same enemies would find it difficult to say why he did not choose instead the scandalous prologue which unites opinions of womankind at least as unfavourable with other matter of the sort which hostile criticism supposes to have been peculiarly tempting to Dryden. In the actual tale as given in the *Fables* there is some alloy of

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this kind, but nothing that could be at all shocking to the age. The length of the story is in proportion more amplified than is the case with the others. Probably the argumentative gifts of the old hag who turned out not to be an old hag attracted Dryden, for he was always at his best, and must have known that he was always at his best, in passages of the kind. The pleading of the crone is one of his best efforts. A certain desultoriness which is to be found in Chaucer is changed into Dryden's usual chain of serried argument, and it is much less surprising in the translation than in the original that the knight should have decided to submit at once to such a she-lawyer. But the "wife" herself has something to complain of Dryden. Her fancy for widowhood is delicately enough put in the original:

"[Sende] grace to overlive them that we wed."

Dryden makes it much blunter:

"May widows wed as often as they can,
And ever for the better change their man."

The Character of a Good Parson admits itself to be "enlarged" from Chaucer, and, indeed, the termination, to the extent of some forty lines, is wholly new, and written with special reference to the circumstances of the time. To this character there is a pleasant little story attached. It seems from a letter to Pepys that the diarist had himself recommended the character in the original to Dryden's notice. When the verses were done, the poet told Pepys of the fact, and proposed to bring them for his inspection. The answer contained a sentence which displays a much greater antipathy to parsons than that which, if we may believe Lord Macaulay, who perhaps

borrowed the idea from Stillingfleet or Collier, Dryden himself felt. Pepys remarks that he hopes "from your copy of this good parson to fancy some amends made me for the hourly offence I bear with from the sight of so many lewd originals." What particular trouble Pepys had to bear at the hands of the lewd originals it would be hard to say. But—time-server as he had once been—he was in all probability sufficiently Jacobite at heart to relish the postscript in Dryden's version. This transfers the circumstances of the expulsion of the Nonjurors to the days of Richard the Second and Henry of Bolingbroke. Nor, had there still been a censorship of the press, is it at all probable that this postscript would have been passed for publication. The following verses are sufficiently pointed:

"Conquest, an odious name, was laid aside;
When all submitted, none the battle tried.
The senseless plea of right by providence
Was by a flattering priest invented since,
And lasts no longer than the present sway,
But justifies the next which comes in play.
The people's right remains; let those who dare
Dispute their power when they the judges are."

The character itself is also very much enlarged; so much so that the original can only be said to have furnished the heads for it. Dryden has done few better things.

The selections from Boccaccio, like those from Chaucer, may or may not have been haphazard. The first, at any rate, which has been, as a rule, the worst thought of, explains itself sufficiently. The story of *Tancred and Sigismunda*, perhaps, afforded room for "loose descriptions;" it certainly afforded room for the argument in verse of which Dryden was so great a master. Although the hints of the original have been somewhat coarsely amplified, the

speech of Sigismunda is still a very noble piece of verse, and her final address to her husband's heart almost better. Here is a specimen :

“Thy praise (and thine was then the public voice)
First recommended Guiscard to my choice :
Directed thus by thee, I looked, and found
A man I thought deserving to be crowned ;
First by my father pointed to my sight,
Nor less conspicuous by his native light ;
His mind, his mien, the features of his face,
Excelling all the rest of human race :
These were thy thoughts, and thou couldst judge aright,
Till interest made a jaundice in thy sight.
Or, should I grant thou didst not rightly see,
Then thou wert first deceived, and I deceived by thee.
But if thou shalt allege, through pride of mind,
Thy blood with one of base condition joined,
'Tis false, for 'tis not baseness to be poor :
His poverty augments thy crime the more ;
Upbraids thy justice with the scant regard
Of worth ; whom princes praise, they should reward.
Are these the kings intrusted by the crowd
With wealth, to be dispensed for common good ?
The people sweat not for their king's delight,
To enrich a pimp, or raise a parasite ;
Theirs is the toil ; and he who well has served
His country, has his country's wealth deserved.
Even mighty monarchs oft are meanly born,
And kings by birth to lowest rank return ;
All subject to the power of giddy chance,
For fortune can depress or can advance ;
But true nobility is of the mind,
Not given by chance, and not to chance resigned.

“For the remaining doubt of thy decree,
What to resolve, and how dispose of me ;
Be warned to cast that useless care aside—
Myself alone will for myself provide.

If, in thy doting and decrepit age,
 Thy soul, a stranger in thy youth to rage,
 Begins in cruel deeds to take delight,
 Gorge with my blood thy barbarous appetite ;
 For I so little am disposed to pray
 For life, I would not cast a wish away.
 Such as it is, the offence is all my own ;
 And what to Guiscard is already done,
 Or to be done, is doomed, by thy decree,
 That, if not executed first by thee,
 Shall on my person be performed by me.
 "Away! with women weep, and leave me here,
 Fixed, like a man, to die without a tear ;
 Or save, or slay us both this present hour,
 'Tis all that fate has left within thy power.'"

The last of the three, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, has been a great favourite. In the original it is one of the most uninteresting stories of the *Decameron*, the single incident of Cymon's falling in love, of which not very much is made, being the only relief to a commonplace tale of violence and treachery, in which neither the motives nor the characters of the actors sufficiently justify them. The Italian, too, by making Iphigenia an unwilling captive, takes away from Cymon the only excuse he could have had. The three charming lines with which Dryden's poem opens—

"Old as I am, for lady's love unfit,
 The power of beauty I remember yet,
 Which once inflamed my soul, and still inspires my wit,"

have probably bribed a good many readers, and certainly the whole volume of the *Fables* is an ample justification of the poet's boast, not only as regards beauty of one kind, but of all. The opening triplet is followed by a diatribe against Collier, which at first seems in very bad taste; but it is made, with excellent art, to lead on to a description of

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the power of love, to which the story yokes itself most naturally. Nor is any praise too high for the description of the actual scene in which Cymon is converted from his brutishness by the sight of Iphigenia, an incident of which, as has been said, the original takes small account. But even with the important alterations which Dryden has introduced into it, the story, as a story, remains of but second-rate interest.

Nothing of this sort can be said of *Theodore and Honoria*. I have said that Ellis's commendation of it may be excessive; but that it goes at the head of all the poetry of the school of which Dryden was a master is absolutely certain. The original here is admirably suggestive: the adaptation is more admirable in its obedience to the suggestions. It has been repeatedly noticed with what art Dryden has gradually led up to the horror of the phantom lady's appearance, which is in the original introduced in an abrupt and casual way; while the matter-of-factness of the spectre's address, both to Theodore himself and to the friends who wish afterwards to interfere in his victim's favour, is most happily changed in the English poem. Boccaccio, indeed, master as he was of a certain kind of pathos, did not, at least in the *Decameron*, succeed with this particular sort of tragedy. His narrative has altogether too much of the chronicle in it to be fully impressive. Here, Dryden's process of amplification has been of the utmost service. At almost every step of the story he has introduced new touches which transform it altogether, and leave it, at the close, a perfect piece of narrative of the horrible kind. The same abruptness which has been noticed in the original version of the earlier part of the story appears in the later. In Dryden, Honoria, impressed with the sight, and with Theodore's subsequent neglect of

her, dreams of what she has seen, and thinks over what she has dreamt, at last, and only at last, resolving to subdue her pride and consent to Theodore's suit. Boccaccio's heroine goes straight home in a business-like manner, and sends "a trusty damsel" that very evening to inform her lover that she surrenders. This is, to say the least, sudden. In short, the comparison is here wholly in favour of the English poet. Nor, if we drop the parallel, and look at *Theodore and Honoria* merely by itself, is it less admirable.

The purely original poems remain to be noticed. Of the *Epistle to John Driden* we know that Dryden himself thought highly, while the person to whom it was addressed was so pleased with it that he gave him "a noble present," said by family tradition to have been 500*l.*, but which Malone, *ex sua conjectura*, reduces to 100*l.* John Driden was the poet's cousin, and his frequent host at Chesterton. He was a bachelor, his house being kept by his sister Honor; he was a member of Parliament, and an enthusiastic sportsman. Chesterton had come into the Dryden family by marriage, and John Driden inherited it as the second son. The poem contains, in allusion to Driden's bachelorhood, one of those objurgations on matrimony which have been interpreted in a personal sense, but which are, in all probability, merely the commonplaces of the time. Besides wives, physicians were a frequent subject of Dryden's satire; and the passage in this poem about the origin of medicine has been learnt by almost every one. It might not have been written but for Blackmore's sins, for Dryden had, in the postscript to his *Virgil*, paid an elaborate compliment to two ornaments of the profession. But it is naturally enough connected with a compliment to his cousin's sportsmanship. Then there is

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what might be called a "Character of a good Member of Parliament," fashioned, of course, to suit the case of the person addressed, who, though not exactly a Jacobite, was a member of the Opposition. The poem ends with a most adroit compliment at once to the subject and to the writer. These complimentary pieces always please posterity with a certain drawback, unless, like the lines to Congreve, and the almost more beautiful lines on Oldham, they deal with merits which are still in evidence, and are not merely personal. But the judgment of Dorset and Montague, who thought of this piece and of the exquisite verses to the Duchess of Ormond that he "never writ better," was not far wrong.

The only piece that remains to be noticed is better known even than the *Epistle to John Dryden*. *Alexander's Feast* was the second ode which Dryden wrote for the "Festival of St. Cecilia." He received for it 40*l.*, which, as he tells his sons that the writing of it "would be noways beneficial," was probably unexpected, if the statement as to the payment is true. There are other legendary contradictions about the time occupied in writing it, one story saying that it was done in a single night, while another asserts that he was a fortnight in composing or correcting it. But, as has been frequently pointed out, the two statements are by no means incompatible. Another piece of gossip about this famous ode is that Dryden at first wrote *Lais* instead of *Thais*, which "small mistake" he bids Tonson in a letter to remember to alter. Little criticism of *Alexander's Feast* is necessary. Whatever drawbacks its form may have (especially the irritating chorus), it must be admitted to be about the best thing of its kind, and nothing more can be demanded of any poetry than to be excellent in its kind. Dryden himself thought

it the best of all his poetry, and he had a remarkable faculty of self-criticism.

This volume of poems was not only the last that Dryden produced, but it also exhibits his poetical character in its very best and most perfect form. He had, through all his long literary life, been constantly a student, always his own scholar, always correcting, varying, re-arranging, and refining. The citations already given will have shown at what perfection of metre he had by this time arrived. Good as his early (if not his earliest) works are in this respect, it must be remembered that it was long before he attained his greatest skill. Play-writing in rhyme and blank verse, practice in stanzas, and Pindarics, and irregular lyrical measures, all went to furnish him with the experience he required, and which certainly was not in his case the school of a fool.

Beginning with a state of pupilage to masters who were none of the best, he subsequently took little instruction, except of a fragmentary kind, from any living man except Milton in poetry, and, as he told Congreve, Tillotson in prose. But he was none the less constantly teaching himself. His vocabulary is naturally a point of great importance in any consideration of his influence on our literature. His earliest work exhibits many traces of the scholastic and pedantic phraseology of his immediate forerunners. It is probable that in his second period, when his activity was chiefly dramatic, he might have got rid of this, had not the tendency been strengthened by the influence of Milton. At one period, again, the Gallicizing tendencies of the time led him to a very improper and inexcusable importation of French words. This, however, he soon dropped. In the meridian of his powers, when his great satires were produced, these tendencies, the classical and

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the Gallican, in action and re-action with his full command of English, vernacular and literary, produced a dialect which, if not the most graceful that the language has ever known, is perhaps the strongest and most nervous. Little change takes place in the last twenty years, though the tendency to classicism and archaism, strengthened it may be by the work of translation, not unfrequently reappears. In versification the great achievement of Dryden was the alteration of what may be called the balance of the line, causing it to run more quickly, and to strike its rhymes with a sharper and less prolonged sound. One obvious means of obtaining this end was, as a matter of course, the isolation of the couplet, and the avoidance of overlapping the different lines one upon the other. The effect of this overlapping, by depriving the eye and voice of the expectation of rest at the end of each couplet, is always one of two things. Either the lines are converted into a sort of rhythmic prose, made musical by the rhymes rather than divided by them, or else a considerable pause is invited at the end of each, or of most lines, and the cadence of the whole becomes comparatively slow and languid. Both these forms, as may be seen in the works of Mr. Morris, as well as in the older writers, are excellently suited for narration of some considerable length. They are less well suited for satire, for argument, and for the moral reflections which the age of Dryden loved. He, therefore, set himself to elaborate the couplet with its sharp point, its quick delivery, and the pistol-like detonation of its rhyme. But there is an obvious objection, or rather there are several obvious objections which present themselves to the couplet. It was natural that to one accustomed to the more varied range of the older rhythm and metre, there might seem to be a danger of the snip-snap monotony

into which, as we know, it did actually fall when it passed out of the hands of its first great practitioners. There might also be a fear that it would not always be possible to compress the sense of a complete clause within the narrow limits of twenty syllables. To meet these difficulties Dryden resorted to three mechanical devices—the hemistich, the Alexandrine, and the triplet; all three of which could be used indifferently to eke out the space or to give variety of sound. The use of the hemistich, or fragmentary line, appears to have been based partly on the well-known practice of Virgil, partly on the necessities of dramatic composition where the unbroken English couplet is to English ears intolerable. In poetry proper the hemistich is anything but pleasing, and Dryden, becoming convinced of the fact, almost discarded it. The Alexandrine and the triplet he always continued to use, and they are to this day the most obvious characteristics, to a casual observer, of his versification. To the Alexandrine, judiciously used, and limited to its proper acceptation of a verse of twelve syllables, I can see no objection. The metre, though a well-known English critic has maltreated it of late, is a very fine one; and some of Dryden's own lines are unmatched examples of that "energy divine" which has been attributed to him. In an essay on the Alexandrine in English poetry, which yet remains to be written, and which would be not the least valuable of contributions to poetical criticism, this use of the verse would have to be considered, as well as its regular recurrent employment at the close of the Spenserian stanza, and its continuous use, of which not many poets besides Drayton and Mr. Browning have given us considerable examples. An examination of the *Polyolbion* and of *Fifne at the Fair*, side by side, would, I think, reveal capacities some-

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what unexpected even in this form of arrangement. But so far as the occasional Alexandrine is concerned, it is not a hyperbole to say that a number, out of all proportion, of the best lines in English poetry may be found in the closing verses of the Spenserian stave as used by Spenser himself, by Shelley, and by the present Laureate, and in the occasional Alexandrines of Dryden. The only thing to be said against this latter use is, that it demands a very skilful ear and hand to adjust the cadence. So much for the Alexandrine.

For the triplet I must confess myself to be entirely without affection. Except in the very rare cases when its contents come in, in point of sense, as a kind of parenthesis or aside, it seems to me to spoil the metre, if anything could spoil Dryden's verse. That there was some doubt about it even in the minds of those who used it, may be inferred from the care they generally took to accompany it in print with the bracket indicator, as if to invite the eye to break it gently to the ear. So strong was Dryden's verse, so well able to subdue all forms to its own measure, that in him it mattered but little; in his followers its drawbacks at once appeared.

A few personal details not already alluded to remain as to Dryden's life at this time. To this period belongs the second and only other considerable series of his letters. They are addressed to Mrs. Steward, a cousin of his, though of a much younger generation. Mrs. Steward was the daughter of Mrs. Creed, the already-mentioned indefatigable decorator of Northamptonshire churches and halls, and she herself was given to the arts of painting and poetry. She had married Mr. Elmes Steward, a mighty sportsman, whose house at Cotterstock still exists by the roadside from Oundle to Peterborough. The correspond-

ence extends over the last eighteen months of the poet's life, beginning in October, 1698, and not ending till a week or two before his death in the spring of 1700. Mrs. Steward is said to have been about eight-and-twenty at the time, and beautiful. The first letter speaks of a visit soon to be paid to Cotterstock after many invitations, and is rather formal in style. Thenceforward, however, the epistles, sometimes addressed to Mr. Steward (Dryden not infrequently spells it Stewart and Stuart), and sometimes to his wife, are very cordial, and full of thanks for presents of country produce. On one occasion Dryden "intends" that Lady Elizabeth should "taste the plover he had received," an incident upon which, if I were a commentator, I should build a legend of conjugal happiness quite as plausible, and probably quite as well founded, as the legend of conjugal unhappiness which has actually been constructed. Then there are injurious allusions to a certain parson's wife at Tichmarsh, who is "just the contrary" of Mrs. Steward. Marrow puddings are next acknowledged, which it seems were so good that they had quite spoiled Charles Dryden's taste for any other. Then comes that sentence; "Old men are not so insensible of beauty as, it may be, you young ladies think," which was elsewhere translated into eloquent verse, and the same letter describes the writer as passing his time "sometimes with Ovid, sometimes with our old English poet Chaucer." More acknowledgments of presents follow, and then a visit is promised, with the prayer that Mrs. Steward will have some small beer brewed for him without hops, or with a very inconsiderable quantity, because the bitter beer at Tichmarsh had made him very ill. The visit came off in August, 1699, and it is to be hoped that the beer was not bitter. After his return the poet sends, in the pleasant old

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fashion, a history of his journey back to London, whither the stage coach took him out of his way, whereby, not passing certain friends' houses, he missed "two couple of rabbits, and Mr. Cole's Ribadavia wine," a stirrup cup of the latter being probably intended. In November occurs the famous description of himself as "a man who has done his best to improve the language, and especially the poetry," with much literary and political gossip, and occasional complaints of bad health. This letter may perhaps be quoted as a specimen:

"Nov. 7, 1699.

"MADAM,—Even your expostulations are pleasing to me; for though they show you angry, yet they are not without many expressions of your kindness; and therefore I am proud to be so chidden. Yet I cannot so far abandon my own defence, as to confess any idleness or forgetfulness on my part. What has hind'ed me from writing to you was neither ill health, nor, a worse thing, ingratitude; but a flood of little businesses, which yet are necessary to my subsistence, and of which I hop'd to have given you a good account before this time: but the Court rather speaks kindly of me, than does anything for me, though they promise largely; and perhaps they think I will advance as they go backward, in which they will be much deceiv'd; for I can never go an inch beyond my conscience and my honour. If they will consider me as a man who has done my best to improve the language, and especially the poetry, and will be content with my acquiescence under the present government, and forbearing satire on it, that I can promise, because I can perform it; but I can neither take the oaths, nor forsake my religion; because I know not what church to go to, if I leave the Catholique; they are all so divided amongst themselves in matters of faith necessary to salvation, and yet all assumeing the name of Protestants. May God be pleased to open your eyes, as he has open'd mine! Truth is but one; and they who have once heard of it can plead no excuse if they do not embrace it. But these are things too serious for a trifling letter. If you desire to hear anything more of my affairs, the Earl of Dorset and your cousin Montague have both seen the two poems to the Duchess of Ormond and my worthy cousin Driden; and are of opin-

ion that I never writt better. My other friends are divided in their judgments which to preferr; but the greater part are for those to my dear kinsman; which I have corrected with so much care, that they will now be worthy of his sight, and do neither of us any dishonour after our death.

“There is this day to be acted a new tragedy, made by Mr. Hopkins, and, as I believe, in rhyme. He has formerly written a play in verse, called *Boadicea*, which you fair ladies lik'd; and is a poet who writes good verses, without knowing how or why; I mean, he writes naturally well, without art, or learning, or good sence. Congreve is ill of the gout at Barnet Wells. I have had the honour of a visite from the Earl of Dorsett, and din'd with him. Matters in Scotland are in a high ferment, and next door to a breach betwixt the two nations; but they say from court that France and we are hand and glove. 'Tis thought the king will endeavour to keep up a standing army, and make the stirr in Scotland his pretence for it; my cousin Driden and the country party, I suppose, will be against it; for when a spirit is raised, 'tis hard conjuring him down again. You see I am dull by my writeing news; but it may be my cousin Creed may be glad to hear what I believe is true, though not very pleasing. I hope he recovers health in the country, by his staying so long in it. My service to my cousin Stuart, and all at Oundle.

“I am, faire Cousine,

“Your most obedient servant,

“JOHN DRYDEN.

“For Mrs. Stewart, Att

Cotterstock, near Oundle,

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To be left at the Post-house in Oundle.”

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CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

DRYDEN'S life lasted but a very short time after the publication of the *Fables*. He was, if not a very old man, close upon his seventieth year. He had worked hard, and had probably lived no more carefully than most of the men of his time. Gout, gravel, and other disorders tormented him sorely. The *Fables* were published in November, 1699, and during the winter he was more or less ill. As has been mentioned, many letters of his exist in reference to this time, more in proportion than for any other period of his life. Besides those to Mrs. Steward, there are some addressed to Mrs. Thomas, a young and pretty literary lady, who afterwards fell among the Philistines, and who made use of her brief intimacy with the Dryden family to romance freely about it, when in her later days she was indigent, in prison, and, what was worse, in the employ of Curll. One of these letters contains the frankest and most graceful of Dryden's many apologies for the looseness of his writings, accompanied by a caution to "Corinna" against following the example of the illustrious Aphra Behn, a caution which was a good deal needed, though unfortunately fruitless. In the early spring of 1700, or, according to the calendar of the day, in the last months of 1699, some of Dryden's admirers got up a benefit per-

formance for him at the Duke's Theatre. Fletcher's *Pilgrim* was selected for the occasion, revised by Vanbrugh, and with the addition of a lyrical scene by Dryden himself. He also wrote for the occasion a secular masque to celebrate the opening of a new century: the controversy on the point whether 1700 belonged to the seventeenth century or the eighteenth not having, it seems, arisen. The performance took place, but the date of it is uncertain, and it has been thought that it was not till after Dryden's death. This happened in the following wise: During the months of March and April Dryden was very ill with gout. One toe became much inflamed, and not being properly attended to, it mortified. Hobbs, the surgeon, was then called in, and advised amputation, but Dryden refused on the score of his age, and the inutility of prolonging a maimed existence. The mortification spreading farther, it was a case for amputation of the entire leg, with probably dubious results, or else for certain death. On the 30th of April the *Postboy* announced that "John Dryden, Esq., the famous poet, lies a-dying," and at three o'clock the next morning he died very quietly and peacefully.

His funeral was sufficiently splendid. Halifax is said to have at first offered to discharge the whole cost himself, but other friends were anxious to share it, among whom Dorset and Lord Jeffreys, the Chancellor's son, are specially mentioned. The body was embalmed, and lay in state at the College of Physicians for some days. On the 13th of May the actual funeral took place at Westminster Abbey, with a great procession, preceded at the College by a Latin oration from Garth, the President, and by the singing of *Exegi Monumentum* to music. Years afterwards "Corinna" forged for Curll a wild account of

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the matter, of which it is sufficient to say that it lacks the slightest corroboration, and is intrinsically improbable, if not impossible. It may be found in most of the biographies, and Malone has devoted his usual patient industry to its demolition. Some time passed before any monument was erected to Dryden in Poet's Corner, where he had been buried by Chaucer and Cowley. Pepys tells us that Dorset and Montague were going to do it. But they did not. Some time later Congreve complimented the Duke of Newcastle on having given order for a monument, a compliment which his Grace obtained at a remarkably cheap rate, for the order, if given, was never executed. Finally, twenty years after his death, the Duke of Buckinghamshire, better known under his former title of Lord Mulgrave, came to the rescue, it is said, owing to a reflection of Pope's on Dryden's "rude and nameless stone." The monument was not magnificent, but at any rate it saves the poet from such dishonour as there may be in a nameless grave. The hymn sung at his funeral probably puts that matter most sensibly.

Dryden's wife lived until 1714, and died a very old woman and insane. Her children, like her husband, had died before her. Charles, the eldest, was drowned in the Thames near Datchet, in 1704; John, the second, hardly outlived his father a year, and died at Rome in 1701; the third, Erasmus Henry, succeeded, in 1710, to the family honours, but died in the same year. The house of Canons Ashby is still held by descendants of the family, but in the female line; though the name has been unbroken, and the title has been continued.

Something has already been said about the character of Lady Elizabeth Dryden. It has to be added here that the stories about her temper and relations with her husband

and his friends, bear investigation as little as those about her maidenly conduct. Most of them are mere hearsays, and some not even that. Dryden, it is said, must have lived unhappily with his wife, for he is always sneering at matrimony. It is sufficient to say that much the same might be said of every writer (at least for the stage) between the Restoration and the accession of Anne. Even the famous line in *Absalom and Achitophel*, which has caused such scandal, is a commonplace as old at least as Jean de Meung and the *Roman de la Rose*. When Malone, on the authority of a Lady Dryden who lived a hundred years later, but without a tittle of documentary evidence, tells us that Lady Elizabeth was a shrew, we really must ask what is the value of such testimony? There is one circumstantial legend which has been much relied on. Dryden, it is said, was at work one day in his study, when his wife came in, and could not make him listen to something she had to say. Thereupon said she, in a pet, "I wish I were a book, and then perhaps you would pay me some attention." "Then, my dear," replied this graceless bard, "pray be an almanac, that I may change you at the end of the year." The joke cannot be said to be brilliant; but, taking it as a true story, the notion of founding a charge of conjugal unhappiness thereon is sufficiently absurd. Mrs. Thomas's romancings are worthy of no credit, and even if they were worthy of any, do not bear much upon the question. All that can be said is, that the few allusions to Lady Elizabeth in the poet's letters are made in all propriety, and tell no tale of disunion. Of his children it is allowed that he was excessively fond, and his personal amiability is testified to with one consent by all his friends who have left testimonies on the subject. Congreve and "Granville the Polite" both mention his modest

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and unassuming demeanour, and the obligingness of his disposition. Pope, it is true, has brought against him the terrible accusation that he was "not a genteel man," being "intimate with none but poetical men." The fact on which the charge seems to be based is more than dubious, and Pope was evidently transferring his own conception of Grub Street to the times when to be a poetical man certainly was no argument against gentility. Rochester, Mulgrave, Dorset, Sedley, Etherege, Roscommon, make a very odd assortment of ungentle poetical friends.

It is astonishing, when one comes to examine the matter, how vague and shadowy our personal knowledge of Dryden is. A handful of anecdotes, many of them undated and unauthenticated except at third and fourth hand, furnish us with almost all that we do know. That he was fond of fishing, and prided himself upon being a better fisherman than Durfey; that he took a good deal of snuff; and that he did not drink much until Addison, in the last years of his life, induced him to do so, almost exhausts the lists of such traits which are recorded by others. His "down look," his plumpness, his fresh colour are points in which tradition is pretty well supported by the portraits which exist, and by such evidence as can be extracted from the libels against him. The famous picture of him at Will's, which every one repeats, and which Scott has made classical in the *Pirate*, is very likely true enough to fact, and there is no harm in thinking of Dryden in the great coffee-house, with his chair in the balcony in summer, by the fire in winter, passing criticisms and paying good-natured compliments on matters literary. He had, he tells Mrs. Steward, a very vulgar stomach—thus partially justifying Pope's accusations—and liked a chine of bacon better than marrow puddings. He dignified Sam-

uel Pepys with the title of *Padron Mio*, and was invited by Samuel to eat a cold chicken and a salad with him in return. According to one of the aimless gossiping stories, which are almost all we possess, he once stayed with Mulgrave at the great Yorkshire domain whence the title was derived, and was cheated by Mulgrave at bowls—a story not so unbelievable as Mr. Bell seems to think, for everybody cheated at play in those days; and Mulgrave's disinclination to pay his tradesmen, or in any other way to get rid of money, was notorious. But even the gossip which has come down to us is almost entirely literary. Thus we are told that when he allowed certain merits to "starch Johnny Crowne"—so called because of the unalterable stiffness and propriety of his collar and cravat—he used to add that "his father and Crowne's mother had been great friends." It is only fair to the reputation of Erasmus Dryden and of Mrs. Crowne to add that this must have been pure mischief, inasmuch as it is always said that the author of *Sir Courtly Nice* was born in Nova Scotia. His well-feigned denunciation of Smith and Johnson, his tormentors, or rather the tormentors of his Eidolon Bayes, as "the coolest and most insignificant fellows" he had ever seen on the stage, may be also recalled. Again, there is a legend that Bolingbroke, when a young man, came in one morning to see him, and found that he had been sitting up all night writing the ode on St. Cecilia's Day. Another time Bolingbroke called on him, and was asked to outstay Jacob Tonson, so as to prevent some apprehended incivility from the truculent Jacob. The story of his vexation at the liberty taken with him by Prior and Montague has been already mentioned more than once, but may be regarded with very considerable suspicion. Most famous perhaps of all such legends is that which tells of the

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unlucky speech, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet," than which never was there anything more true or more unfortunate. Yet the enmity which, though it has been exaggerated, the greatest English man of letters in the next generation felt towards his kinsman ought not to be wholly regretted, because it has produced one of the most touching instances of literal devotion which even a commentator ever paid to his idol. Swift, it must be remembered, has injuriously stigmatized Dryden's prefaces as being

"Merely writ at first for filling,
To raise the volume's price a shilling."

Hereupon Malone has set to, and has gravely demonstrated that, as the price at which plays were then issued was fixed and constant, the insertion of a long preface instead of a short one, or indeed of any preface at all, could not have raised the volume's price a penny. Next to Shadwell's criticism on *Macflecknoe*, I think this may be allowed to be the happiest example recorded in connexion with the life of Dryden of the spirit of literalism.

Such idle stuff as these legends mostly are is indeed hardly worth discussion, hardly even worth mentioning. The quiet scenery of the Nene Valley, in which Dryden passed all the beginning and not a little of the close of his life; the park at Charlton; the river (an imaginary association perhaps, but too striking a one to be lost) on which Crites and Eugenius and Neander rowed down past the "great roar of waters" at London Bridge, and heard the Dutch guns as they talked of dramatic poesy; the house in Gerrard Street; the balcony and coffee-room at Will's; the park where the king walked with the poet; and, last of all, the Abbey: these are the only scenes in which Dryden can be pictured even by the most imaginative lover

of the concrete picturesque. Very few days of his life of nearly seventy years emerge for us from the mass by virtue of any definite and detailed incident, the account of which we have on trustworthy authority. It is a commonplace to say that an author's life is in his works. But in Dryden's case it is a simple fact, and therefore a biography of him, let it be repeated at the close as it was asserted at the beginning, must consist of little but a discussion and running comment on those works, and on the characteristics, literary and personal, which are discoverable in them.

It only now remains to sum up these characteristics, which it must never be forgotten are of even more value because of the representative character of Dryden than because of his individual eminence. Many as are the great men of letters who have illustrated English literature from the beginning to the present day, it may safely be said that no one so represented his time and so influenced it as the man of letters whom we have been discussing. There are greater names in our literature, no doubt; there are others as great or nearly so. But at no time that I can think of was there any Englishman who, for a considerable period, was so far in advance of his contemporaries in almost every branch of literary work as Dryden was during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. To turn a satiric couplet of his own, by the alteration of a single word, from an insult to a compliment, we may say that he, at any rate during his last decade,

"In prose and verse was owned without dispute
Within the realms of *English* absolute."

But his representative character in relation to the men of his time was almost more remarkable than his intellectual

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and artistic superiority to them. Other great men of letters, with perhaps the single exception of Voltaire, have usually, when they represented their time at all, represented but a small part of it. With Dryden this was not the case. Not only did the immense majority of men of letters in his later days directly imitate him, but both then and earlier most literary Englishmen, even when they did not imitate him, worked on the same lines and pursued the same objects. The eighteen volumes of his works contain a faithful representation of the whole literary movement in England for the best part of half a century, and what is more, they contain the germs and indicate the direction of almost the whole literary movement for nearly a century more.

But Dryden was not only in his literary work a typical Englishman of his time, and a favourably typical one; he was almost as representative in point of character. The time was not the most showy or attractive in the moral history of the nation, though perhaps it looks to us not a little worse than it was. But it must be admitted to have been a time of shameless coarseness in language and manners; of virulent and bloodthirsty party-spirit; of almost unparalleled self-seeking and political dishonesty; and of a flattering servility to which, in the same way, hardly any parallel can be found. Its chief redeeming features were, that it was not a cowardly age, and, for the most part, not a hypocritical one. Men seem frequently to have had few convictions, and sometimes to have changed them with a somewhat startling rapidity; but when they had them, they had also the courage of them. They hit out with a vigour and a will which to this day is refreshing to read of; and when, as sometimes happened, they lost the battle, they took their punishment,

as with perhaps some arrogance we are wont to say, like Englishmen. Dryden had the merits and the defects eminently; but the defects were, after all, in a mild and by no means virulent form. His character has had exceedingly hard measure since. During the last ten years of his life, and for the most part of the half-century succeeding his death, his political principles were out of favour, and this naturally prejudiced many persons against his conduct even at the time when his literary eminence was least questioned. In Johnson and in Scott, Dryden found a brace of the doughtiest champions, as heartily prepossessed in his favour as they were admirably armed to fight his battles. But of late years he has again fallen among the Philistines. It was obviously Lord Macaulay's game to blacken the greatest literary champion of the cause he had set himself to attack; and I need not say with what zest and energy Macaulay was wont to wield the tar-brush. Some years later Dryden had the good fortune to meet with an admirable editor of his poems. I venture to think the late Mr. Christie's Globe edition of our poet one of the very best things of the kind that has ever been produced. From the purely literary point of view there is scarcely a fault to be found with it. But the editor unfortunately seems to have sworn allegiance to Shaftesbury before he swore allegiance to Dryden. He reconciled these jarring fealties by sacrificing the character of the latter, while admitting his intellectual greatness. An article to which I have more than once referred in the *Quarterly Review* puts the facts once more in a clear and fair light. But Mr. Green's twice-published history has followed in the old direction, and has indeed out-Macaulayed Macaulay in reckless abuse. I believe that I have put the facts at least so that any reader who takes

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the trouble may judge for himself of the private conduct of Dryden. His behaviour as a public man has also been dealt with pretty fully; and I think we may safely conclude that in neither case can the verdict be a really unfavourable one. Dryden, no doubt, was not austere virtuous. He was not one of the men who lay down a comprehensive scheme of moral, political, and intellectual conduct, and follow out that scheme, come wind, come weather. It is probable that he was quite aware of the existence and alive to the merits of cakes and ale. He was not an economical man, and he had no scruple in filling up gaps in his income with pensions and presents. But all these things were the way of his world, and he was not excessive in following it. On the other hand, all trustworthy testimony concurs in praising his amiable and kindly disposition, his freedom from literary arrogance, and his willingness to encourage and assist youthful aspirants in literature. Mercilessly hard as he hit his antagonists, it must be remembered that he was rarely the first to strike. On the whole, putting aside his licence of language, which is absolutely inexcusable, but for which it must be remembered he not only made an ample apology, but such amends as were possible by earnestly dissuading others from following his example, we shall be safe in saying that, though he was assuredly no saint, there were not so very many better men then living than John Dryden.

A shorter summary will suffice for the literary aspect of the matter; for Dryden's peculiarities in this respect have already been treated fully enough. In one of his own last letters he states that his life-object had been to improve the language, and especially the poetry. He had accomplished it. With our different estimate of the value of old English literature, we cannot, indeed, adopt Johnson's

famous metaphor, and say that "he found English of brick and left it of marble." The comparison of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* to "brick," with *Don Sebastian* and the *Spanish Friar* for "marble," would be absurd. But in truth the terms of the comparison are inappropriate. English as Dryden found it—and it must be remembered that he found it not the English of Shakspeare and Bacon, not even the English of such survivals as Milton and Taylor, but the English of persons like Cowley, Davenant, and their likes—was not wholly marble or wholly brick. No such metaphor can conveniently describe it. It was rather an instrument or machine which had in times past turned out splendid work, but work comparatively limited in kind, and liable to constant flaws and imperfections of more or less magnitude. In the hands of the men who had lately worked it, the good work had been far less in quantity and inferior in quality; the faults and flaws had been great and numerous. Dryden so altered the instrument and its working that, at its best, it produced a less splendid result than before, and became less suited for some of the highest applications, but at the same time became available for a far greater variety of ordinary purposes, was far surer in its working, without extraordinary genius on the part of the worker, and was almost secure against the grosser imperfections. The forty years' work which is at once the record and the example of this accomplishment is itself full of faults and blemishes, but they are always committed in the effort to improve. Dryden is always striving, and consciously striving, to find better literary forms, a better vocabulary, better metres, better constructions, better style. He may in no one branch have attained the entire and flawless perfection which distinguishes Pope as far as he goes; but the range of Dryden is to the range of Pope as

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that of a forest to a shrubbery, and in this case priority is everything, and the priority is on the side of Dryden. He is not our greatest poet; far from it. But there is one point in which the superlative may safely be applied to him. Considering what he started with, what he accomplished, and what advantages he left to his successors, he must be pronounced, without exception, the greatest craftsman in English letters, and as such he ought to be regarded with peculiar veneration by all who, in however humble a capacity, are connected with the craft.

This general estimate, as well as much of the detailed criticism on which it is based, and which will be found in the preceding chapters, will no doubt seem exaggerated to not a few persons, to the judgment of some at least of whom I should be sorry that it should seem so. The truth is, that while the criticism of poetry is in such a disorderly state as it is at present in regard to general principles, it cannot be expected that there should be any agreement between individual practitioners of it on individual points. So long as any one holds a definition of poetry which regards it wholly or chiefly from the point of view of its subject-matter, wide differences are unavoidable. But if we hold what I venture to think the only Catholic faith with regard to it, that it consists not in a selection of subjects, but in a method of treatment, then it seems to me that all difficulty vanishes. We get out of the hopeless and sterile controversies as to whether Shelley was a greater poet than Dryden, or Dryden a greater poet than Shelley. For my part, I yield to no man living in rational admiration for either, but I decline altogether to assign marks to each in a competitive examination. There are, as it seems to me, many mansions in poetry, and the great poets live apart in them. What constitutes a great poet is su-

premac^y in his own line of poetical expression. Such supremacy must of course be shown in work of sufficient bulk and variety, on the principle that one swallow does not make a summer. We cannot call Lovelace a great poet, or Barnabe Barnes; perhaps we cannot give the name to Collins or to Gray. We must be satisfied that the poet has his faculty of expression well at command, not merely that it sometimes visits him in a casual manner; and we must know that he can apply it in a sufficient number of different ways. But when we see that he can under these conditions exhibit pretty constantly the poetical *differentia*, the power of making the common uncommon by the use of articulate language in metrical arrangement so as to excite indefinite suggestions of beauty, then he must be acknowledged a master.

When we want to see whether a man is a great poet or not, let us take him in his commonplaces, and see what he does with them. Here are four lines which are among the last that Dryden wrote; they occur in the address to the Duchess of Ormond, who was, it must be remembered, by birth Lady Margaret Somerset:

“O daughter of the rose, whose cheeks unite
The differing titles of the red and white,
Who heaven’s alternate beauty well display,
The blush of morning and the milky way.”

The ideas contained in these lines are as old, beyond all doubt, as the practice of love-making between persons of the Caucasian type of physiognomy, and the images in which those ideas are expressed are in themselves as well worn as the stones of the Pyramids. But I maintain that any poetical critic worth his salt could, without knowing who wrote them, but merely from the arrangement of the

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words, the rhythm and cadence of the line, and the manner in which the images are presented, write "This is a poet, and probably a great poet," across them, and that he would be right in doing so. When such a critic, in reading the works of the author of these lines, finds that the same touch is, if not invariably, almost always present; that in the handling of the most unpromising themes, the *mots rayonnants*, the *mots de lumière* are never lacking; that the suggested images of beauty never fail for long together; then he is justified in striking out the "probably," and writing "This is a great poet." If he tries to go farther, and to range his great poets in order of merit, he will almost certainly fail. He cannot count up the beauties in one, and then the beauties in the other, and strike the balance accordingly. He can only say, "There is the faculty of producing those beauties; it is exercised under such conditions, and with such results, that there is no doubt of its being a native and resident faculty, not a mere casual inspiration of the moment; and this being so, I pronounce the man a poet, and a great one." This can be said of Dryden, as it can be said of Shelley, or Spenser, or Keats, to name only the great English poets who are most dissimilar to him in subject and in style. All beyond this is treacherous speculation. The critic quits the assistance of a plain and catholic theory of poetry, and develops all sorts of private judgments, and not improbably private crotchets. The ideas which this poet works on are more congenial to his ideas than the ideas which that poet works on; the dialect of one is softer to his ear than the dialect of another; very frequently some characteristic which has not the remotest connexion with his poetical merits or demerits makes the scale turn. Of only one poet can it be safely said that he is greater than the other great poets,

for the reason that in Dryden's own words he is larger and more comprehensive than any of them. But with the exception of Shakspeare, the greatest poets in different styles are, in the eyes of a sound poetical criticism, very much on an equality. Dryden's peculiar gift, in which no poet of any language has surpassed him, is the faculty of treating any subject which he does treat poetically. His range is enormous, and wherever it is deficient, it is possible to see that external circumstances had to do with the apparent limitation. That the author of the tremendous satire of the political pieces should be the author of the exquisite lyrics scattered about the plays; that the special pleader of *Religio Laici* should be the tale-teller of *Palamon and Arcite*, are things which, the more carefully I study other poets and their comparatively limited perfection, astonish me the more. My natural man may like *Kubla Khan*, or the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, or the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, or *O World! O Life! O Time!* with an intenser liking than that which it feels for anything of Dryden's. But that arises from the pure accident that I was born in the first half of the nineteenth century, and Dryden in the first half of the seventeenth. The whirligig of time has altered and is altering this relation between poet and reader in every generation. But what it cannot alter is the fact that the poetical virtue which is present in Dryden is the same poetical virtue that is present in Lucretius and in Æschylus, in Shelley and in Spenser, in Heine and in Hugo.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE life and writings of Pope have been discussed in a literature more voluminous than that which exists in the case of almost any other English man of letters. No biographer, however, has produced a definitive or exhaustive work. It seems, therefore, desirable to indicate the main authorities upon which such a biographer would have to rely, and which have been consulted for the purpose of the following necessarily brief and imperfect sketch.

The first life of Pope was a catchpenny book, by William Ayre, published in 1745, and remarkable chiefly as giving the first version of some demonstrably erroneous statements, unfortunately adopted by later writers. In 1751, Warburton, as Pope's literary executor, published the authoritative edition of the poet's works, with notes containing some biographical matter. In 1769 appeared a life by Owen Ruffhead, who wrote under Warburton's inspiration. This is a dull and meagre performance, and much of it is devoted to an attack—partly written by Warburton himself—upon the criticisms advanced in the first volume of Joseph Warton's *Essay on Pope*. Warton's first volume was published in 1756; and it seems that the dread of Warburton's wrath counted for something in the delay of the second volume, which did not appear till 1782. The *Essay* contains a good many anecdotes of interest. Warton's edition of Pope—the notes in which are chiefly drawn from the *Essay*—was published in 1797. The *Life* by Johnson appeared in 1781; it is admirable in many ways; but Johnson had taken the least possible trouble in ascertaining facts. Both Warton and Johnson had before them the manuscript collections of Joseph Spence, who had known Pope personally during the last twenty years of his life, and wanted nothing but literary ability to have become an efficient Bos-

well. Spence's anecdotes, which were not published till 1820, give the best obtainable information upon many points, especially in regard to Pope's childhood. This ends the list of biographers who were in any sense contemporary with Pope. Their statements must be checked and supplemented by the poet's own letters, and innumerable references to him in the literature of the time. In 1806 appeared the edition of Pope by Bowles, with a life prefixed. Bowles expressed an unfavourable opinion of many points in Pope's character, and some remarks by Campbell, in his specimens of English poets, led to a controversy (1819-1826) in which Bowles defended his views against Campbell, Byron, Roscoe, and others, and which incidentally cleared up some disputed questions. Roscoe, the author of the life of Leo X., published his edition of Pope in 1824. A life is contained in the first volume, but it is a feeble performance; and the notes, many of them directed against Bowles, are of little value. A more complete biography was published by R. Carruthers (with an edition of the works), in 1854. The second, and much improved, edition appeared in 1857, and is still the most convenient life of Pope, though Mr. Carruthers was not fully acquainted with the last results of some recent investigations, which have thrown a new light upon the poet's career.

The writer who took the lead in these inquiries was the late Mr. Dilke. Mr. Dilke published the results of his investigations (which were partly guided by the discovery of a previously unpublished correspondence between Pope and his friend Caryll), in the *Athenæum* and *Notes and Queries*, at various intervals, from 1854 to 1860. His contributions to the subject have been collated in the first volume of the *Papers of a Critic*, edited by his grandson, the present Sir Charles W. Dilke, in 1875. Meanwhile Mr. Croker had been making an extensive collection of materials for an exhaustive edition of Pope's works, in which he was to be assisted by Mr. Peter Cunningham. After Croker's death these materials were submitted by Mr. Murray to Mr. Whitwell Elwin, whose own researches have greatly extended our knowledge, and who had also the advantage of Mr. Dilke's advice. Mr. Elwin began, in 1871, the publication of the long-promised edition. It was to have occupied ten volumes—five of poems and five of correspondence, the latter of which was to include a very large proportion of previously unpublished matter. Unfortunately for all students of English literature, only two volumes of poetry

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and three of correspondence have appeared. The notes and prefaces, however, contain a vast amount of information, which clears up many previously disputed points in the poet's career; and it is to be hoped that the materials collected for the remaining volumes will not be ultimately lost. It is easy to dispute some of Mr. Elwin's critical opinions, but it would be impossible to speak too highly of the value of his investigations of facts. Without a study of his work, no adequate knowledge of Pope is attainable.

The ideal biographer of Pope, if he ever appears, must be endowed with the qualities of an acute critic and a patient antiquarian; and it would take years of labour to work out all the minute problems connected with the subject. All that I can profess to have done is to have given a short summary of the obvious facts, and of the main conclusions established by the evidence given at length in the writings of Mr. Dilke and Mr. Elwin. I have added such criticisms as seemed desirable in a work of this kind, and I must beg pardon by anticipation if I have fallen into inaccuracies in relating a story so full of pitfalls for the unwary.

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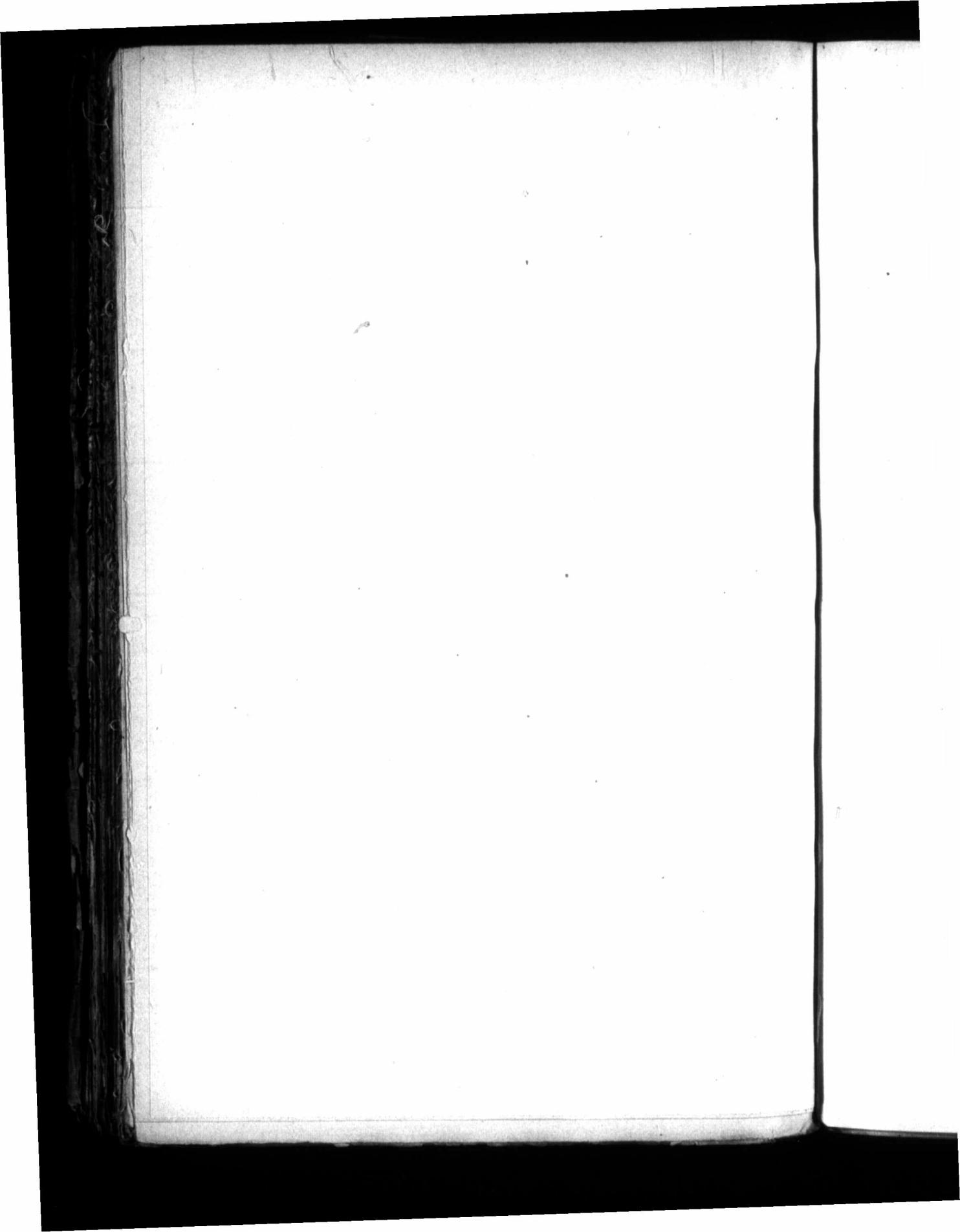
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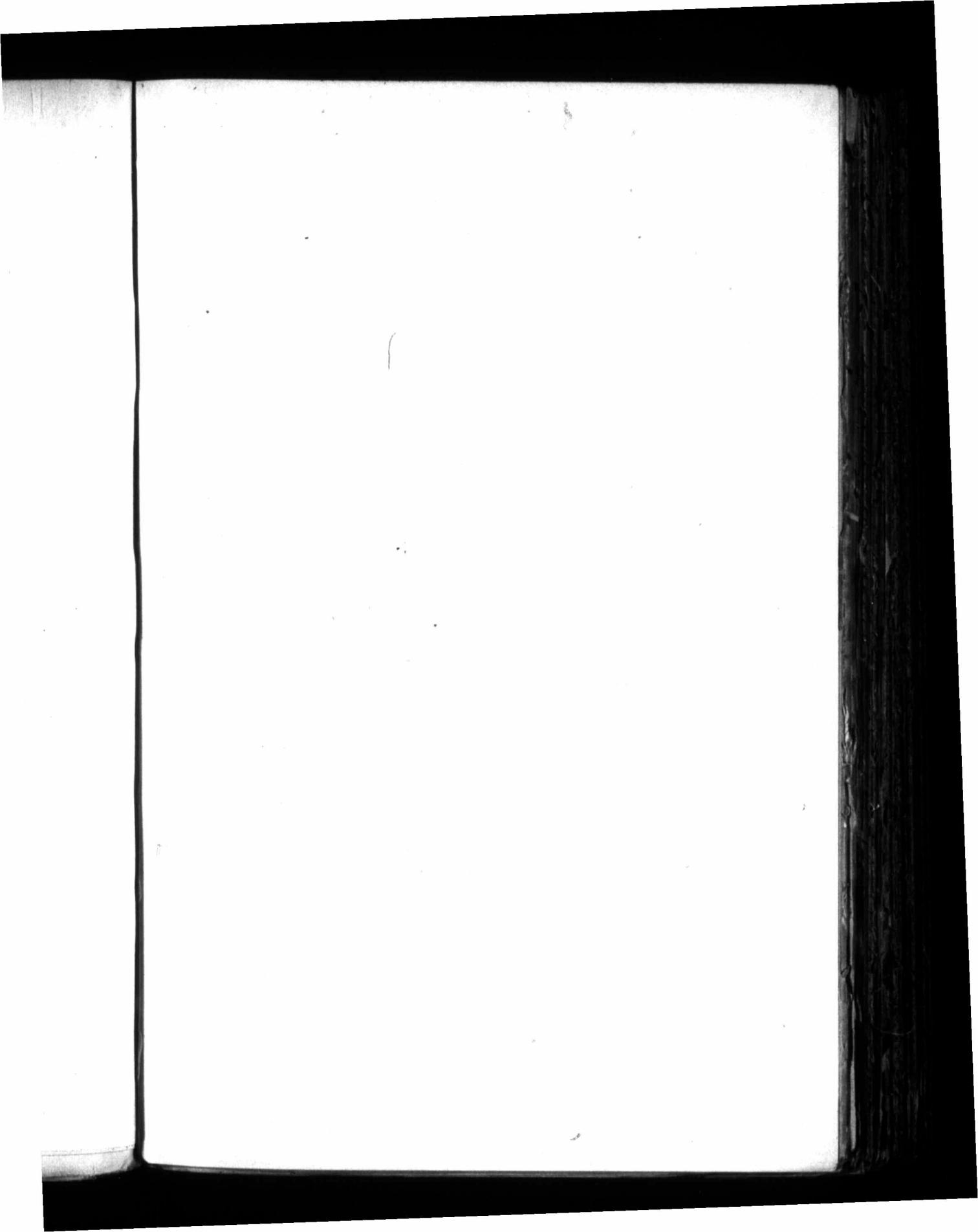
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CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

THE father of Alexander Pope was a London merchant, a devout Catholic, and not improbably a convert to Catholicism. His mother was one of seventeen children of William Turner, of York; one of her sisters was the wife of Cooper, the well-known portrait-painter. Mrs. Cooper was the poet's godmother; she died when he was five years old, leaving to her sister, Mrs. Pope, "a grinding-stone and muller," and their mother's "picture in limning;" and to her nephew, the little Alexander, all her "books, pictures, and medals set in gold or otherwise."

In after-life the poet made some progress in acquiring the art of painting; and the bequest suggests the possibility that the precocious child had already given some indications of artistic taste. Affectionate eyes were certainly on the watch for any symptoms of developing talent. Pope was born on May 21, 1688 — the *annus mirabilis* which introduced a new political era in England, and was fatal to the hopes of ardent Catholics. About the same

time, partly, perhaps, in consequence of the catastrophe, Pope's father retired from business, and settled at Binfield, a village two miles from Wokingham and nine from Windsor. It is near Bracknell, one of Shelley's brief perching places, and in such a region as poets might love, if poetic praises of rustic seclusion are to be taken seriously. To the east were the "forests and green retreats" of Windsor; and the wild heaths of Bagshot, Chobham, and Aldershot stretched for miles to the south. Some twelve miles off in that direction, one may remark, lay Moor Park, where the sturdy pedestrian, Swift, was living with Sir W. Temple during great part of Pope's childhood; but it does not appear that his walks ever took him to Pope's neighbourhood, nor did he see, till some years later, the lad with whom he was to form one of the most famous of literary friendships. The little household was presumably a very quiet one, and remained fixed at Binfield for twenty-seven years, till the son had grown to manhood and celebrity. From the earliest period he seems to have been a domestic idol. He was not an only child, for he had a half-sister, by his father's side, who must have been considerably older than himself, as her mother died nine years before the poet's birth. But he was the only child of his mother, and his parents concentrated upon him an affection which he returned with touching ardour and persistence. They were both forty-six in the year of his birth. He inherited headaches from his mother, and a crooked figure from his father. A nurse who shared their care lived with him for many years, and was buried by him, with an affectionate epitaph, in 1725. The family tradition represents him as a sweet-tempered child, and says that he was called the "little nightingale" from the beauty of his voice. As the sickly, solitary, and pre-co-

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scious infant of elderly parents, we may guess that he was not a little spoilt, if only in the technical sense.

The religion of the family made their seclusion from the world the more rigid, and by consequence must have strengthened their mutual adhesiveness. Catholics were then harassed by a legislation which would be condemned by any modern standard as intolerably tyrannical. Whatever apology may be urged for the legislators on the score of contemporary prejudices or special circumstances, their best excuse is that their laws were rather intended to satisfy constituents, and to supply a potential means of defence, than to be carried into actual execution. It does not appear that the Popes had to fear any active molestation in the quiet observance of their religious duties. Yet a Catholic was not only a member of a hated minority, regarded by the rest of his countrymen as representing the evil principle in politics and religion, but was rigorously excluded from a public career, and from every position of honour or authority. In times of excitement the severer laws might be put in force. The public exercise of the Catholic religion was forbidden, and to be a Catholic was to be predisposed to the various Jacobite intrigues which still had many chances in their favour. When the Pretender was expected in 1744, a proclamation, to which Pope thought it decent to pay obedience, forbade the appearance of Catholics within ten miles of London; and in 1730 we find him making interest on behalf of a nephew, who had been prevented from becoming an attorney because the judges were rigidly enforcing the oaths of supremacy and allegiance.

The Catholics had to pay double taxes, and were prohibited from acquiring real property. The elder Pope, according to a certainly inaccurate story, had a conscien-

tious objection to investing his money in the funds of a Protestant government, and, therefore, having converted his capital into coin, put it in a strong-box, and took it out as he wanted it. The old merchant was not quite so helpless, for we know that he had investments in the French *rentes*, besides other sources of income; but the story probably reflects the fact that his religious disqualifications hampered even his financial position.

Pope's character was affected in many ways by the fact of his belonging to a sect thus harassed and restrained. Persecution, like bodily infirmity, has an ambiguous influence. If it sometimes generates in its victims a heroic hatred of oppression, it sometimes predisposes them to the use of the weapons of intrigue and falsehood, by which the weak evade the tyranny of the strong. If under that discipline Pope learnt to love toleration, he was not untouched by the more demoralizing influences of a life passed in an atmosphere of incessant plotting and evasion. A more direct consequence was his exclusion from the ordinary schools. The spirit of the rickety lad might have been broken by the rough training of Eton or Westminster in those days; as, on the other hand, he might have profited by acquiring a livelier perception of the meaning of that virtue of fair-play, the appreciation of which is held to be a set-off against the brutalizing influences of our system of public education. As it was, Pope was condemned to a desultory education. He picked up some rudiments of learning from the family priest; he was sent to a school at Twyford, where he is said to have got into trouble for writing a lampoon upon his master; he went for a short time to another in London, where he gave a more creditable if less characteristic proof of his poetical precoc-

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ity. Like other lads of genius, he put together a kind of play—a combination, it seems, of the speeches in Ogilby's Iliad—and got it acted by his schoolfellows. These brief snatches of schooling, however, counted for little. Pope settled at home at the early age of twelve, and plunged into the delights of miscellaneous reading with the ardour of precocious talent. He read so eagerly that his feeble constitution threatened to break down, and when about seventeen, he despaired of recovery, and wrote a farewell to his friends. One of them, an Abbé Southcote, applied for advice to the celebrated Dr. Radcliffe, who judiciously prescribed idleness and exercise. Pope soon recovered, and, it is pleasant to add, showed his gratitude long afterwards by obtaining for Southcote, through Sir Robert Walpole, a desirable piece of French preferment. Self-guided studies have their advantages, as Pope himself observed, but they do not lead a youth through the dry places of literature, or stimulate him to severe intellectual training. Pope seems to have made some hasty raids into philosophy and theology; he dipped into Locke, and found him "insipid;" he went through a collection of the controversial literature of the reign of James II., which seems to have constituted the paternal library, and was alternately Protestant and Catholic, according to the last book which he had read. But it was upon poetry and pure literature that he flung himself with a genuine appetite. He learnt languages to get at the story, unless a translation offered an easier path, and followed wherever fancy led, "like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods."

It is needless to say that he never became a scholar in the strict sense of the term. Voltaire declared that he could hardly read or speak a word of French; and his

knowledge of Greek would have satisfied Bentley as little as his French satisfied Voltaire. Yet he must have been fairly conversant with the best known French literature of the time, and he could probably stumble through Homer with the help of a crib and a guess at the general meaning. He says himself that at this early period he went through all the best critics; all the French, English and Latin poems of any name; "Homer and some of the greater Greek poets in the original," and Tasso and Ariosto in translations.

Pope, at any rate, acquired a wide knowledge of English poetry. Waller, Spenser, and Dryden were, he says, his great favourites in the order named, till he was twelve. Like so many other poets, he took infinite delight in the *Faery Queen*; but Dryden, the great poetical luminary of his own day, naturally exercised a predominant influence upon his mind. He declared that he had learnt versification wholly from Dryden's works, and always mentioned his name with reverence. Many scattered remarks reported by Spence, and the still more conclusive evidence of frequent appropriation, show him to have been familiar with the poetry of the preceding century, and with much that had gone out of fashion in his time, to a degree in which he was probably excelled by none of his successors, with the exception of Gray. Like Gray, he contemplated at one time the history of English poetry, which was in some sense executed by Warton. It is characteristic, too, that he early showed a critical spirit. From a boy, he says, he could distinguish between sweetness and softness of numbers—Dryden exemplifying softness, and Waller sweetness; and the remark, whatever its value, shows that he had been analysing his impressions and reflecting upon the technical secrets of his art.

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Such study naturally suggests the trembling aspiration, "I, too, am a poet." Pope adopts with apparent sincerity the Ovidian phrase,

"As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came."

His father corrected his early performances, and, when not satisfied, sent him back with the phrase, "These are not good rhymes." He translated any passages that struck him in his reading, excited by the examples of Ogilby's Homer and Sandys' Ovid. His boyish ambition prompted him, before he was fifteen, to attempt an epic poem; the subject was Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, driven from his home by Deucalion, father of Minos, and the work was modestly intended to emulate in different passages the beauties of Milton, Cowley, Spenser, Statius, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Claudian. Four books of this poem survived for a long time, for Pope had a more than parental fondness for all the children of his brain, and always had an eye to possible reproduction. Scraps from this early epic were worked into the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Dunciad*. This couplet, for example, from the last work comes straight, we are told, from Alcander,—

"As man's Mæanders to the vital spring
Roll all their tides, then back their circles bring."

Another couplet, preserved by Spense, will give a sufficient taste of its quality:—

"Shields, helms, and swords all jangle as they hang,
And sound formidinous with angry clang."

After this we shall hardly censure Atterbury for approving (perhaps suggesting) its destruction in later years.

Pope long meditated another epic, relating the foundation of the English government by Brutus of Troy, with a superabundant display of didactic morality and religion. Happily this dreary conception, though it occupied much thought, never came to the birth.

The time soon came when these tentative flights were to be superseded by more serious efforts. Pope's ambition was directed into the same channel by his innate propensities, and by the accidents of his position. No man ever displayed a more exclusive devotion to literature, or was more tremblingly sensitive to the charm of literary glory. His zeal was never distracted by any rival emotion. Almost from his cradle to his grave his eye was fixed unremittingly upon the sole purpose of his life. The whole energies of his mind were absorbed in the struggle to place his name as high as possible in that temple of fame, which he painted after Chaucer in one of his early poems. External conditions pointed to letters as the sole path to eminence, but it was precisely the path for which he had admirable qualifications. The sickly son of the Popish tradesman was cut off from the Bar, the Senate, and the Church. Physically contemptible, politically ostracized, and in a humble social position, he could yet win this dazzling prize and force his way with his pen to the highest pinnacle of contemporary fame. Without adventitious favour, and in spite of many bitter antipathies, he was to become the acknowledged head of English literature, and the welcome companion of all the most eminent men of his time. Though he could not foresee his career from the start, he worked as vigorously as if the goal had already been in sight; and each successive victory in the field of letters was realized the more keenly from his sense of the disadvantages in face of

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which it had been won. In tracing his rapid ascent, we shall certainly find reason to doubt his proud assertion,—

“That, if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways;”

but it is impossible for any lover of literature to grudge admiration to this singular triumph of pure intellect over external disadvantages, and the still more depressing influences of incessant physical suffering.

Pope had, indeed, certain special advantages which he was not slow in turning to account. In one respect even his religion helped him to emerge into fame. There was naturally a certain free-masonry amongst the Catholics allied by fellow-feeling under the general antipathy. The relations between Pope and his co-religionists exercised a material influence upon his later life. Within a few miles of Binfield lived the Blounts of Mapledurham, a fine old Elizabethan mansion on the banks of the Thames, near Reading, which had been held by a royalist Blount in the civil war against a parliamentary assault. It was a more interesting circumstance to Pope that Mr. Lister Blount, the then representative of the family, had two fair daughters, Teresa and Martha, of about the poet's age. Another of Pope's Catholic acquaintances was John Caryll, of West Grinstead in Sussex, nephew of a Caryll who had been the representative of James II. at the Court of Rome, and who, following his master into exile, received the honours of a titular peerage and held office in the melancholy court of the Pretender. In such circles Pope might have been expected to imbibe a Jacobite and Catholic horror of Whigs and freethinkers. In fact, however, he belonged from his youth to the followers of Gallio, and seems to have paid to religious duties just as much attention as would satisfy his parents. His mind was really given to

literature; and he found his earliest patron in his immediate neighbourhood. This was Sir W. Trumbull, who had retired to his native village of Easthampstead in 1697, after being ambassador at the Porte under James II., and Secretary of State under William III. Sir William made acquaintance with the Popes, praised the father's artichokes, and was delighted with the precocious son. The old diplomatist and the young poet soon became fast friends, took constant rides together, and talked over classic and modern poetry. Pope made Trumbull acquainted with Milton's juvenile poems, and Trumbull encouraged Pope to follow in Milton's steps. He gave, it seems, the first suggestion to Pope that he should translate Homer; and he exhorted his young friend to preserve his health by flying from tavern company—*tanquam ex incendio*. Another early patron was William Walsh, a Worcestershire country gentleman of fortune and fashion, who condescended to dabble in poetry after the manner of Waller, and to write remonstrances upon Celia's cruelty, verses to his mistress against marriage, epigrams, and pastoral eclogues. He was better known, however, as a critic, and had been declared by Dryden to be, without flattery, the best in the nation. Pope received from him one piece of advice which has become famous. We had had great poets—so said the "knowing Walsh," as Pope calls him—"but never one great poet that was correct;" and he accordingly recommended Pope to make correctness his great aim. The advice doubtless impressed the young man as the echo of his own convictions. Walsh died (1708) before the effect of his suggestion had become fully perceptible.

The acquaintance with Walsh was due to Wycherley, who had submitted Pope's Pastorals to his recognized critical authority. Pope's intercourse with Wycherley and

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another early friend, Henry Cromwell, had a more important bearing upon his early career. He kept up a correspondence with each of these friends, whilst he was still passing through his probationary period; and the letters, published long afterwards under singular circumstances to be hereafter related, give the fullest revelation of his character and position at this time. Both Wycherley and Cromwell were known to the Englefields of Whiteknights, near Reading, a Catholic family, in which Pope first made the acquaintance of Martha Blount, whose mother was a daughter of the old Mr. Englefield of the day. It was possibly, therefore, through this connexion that Pope owed his first introduction to the literary circles of London. Pope, already thirsting for literary fame, was delighted to form a connexion which must have been far from satisfactory to his indulgent parents, if they understood the character of his new associates.

Henry Cromwell, a remote cousin of the Protector, is known to other than minute investigators of contemporary literature by nothing except his friendship with Pope. He was nearly thirty years older than Pope, and, though heir to an estate in the country, was at this time a gay, though rather elderly, man about town. Vague intimations are preserved of his personal appearance. Gay calls him "honest, hatless Cromwell with red breeches;" and Johnson could learn about him the single fact that he used to ride a-hunting in a tie-wig. The interpretation of these outward signs may not be very obvious to modern readers; but it is plain from other indications that he was one of the frequenters of coffee-houses, aimed at being something of a rake and a wit, was on speaking terms with Dryden, and familiar with the smaller celebrities of literature, a regular attendant at theatres, a friend of actresses, and able

to present himself in fashionable circles and devote complimentary verses to the reigning beauties at the Bath. When he studied the *Spectator* he might recognize some of his features reflected in the portrait of Will Honeycomb. Pope was proud enough for the moment at being taken by the hand by this elderly buck, though, as Pope himself rose in the literary scale and could estimate literary reputations more accurately, he became, it would seem, a little ashamed of his early enthusiasm, and, at any rate, the friendship dropped. The letters which passed between the pair during four or five years, down to the end of 1711, show Pope in his earliest manhood. They are characteristic of that period of development in which a youth of literary genius takes literary fame in the most desperately serious sense. Pope is evidently putting his best foot forward, and never for a moment forgets that he is a young author writing to a recognized critic—except, indeed, when he takes the airs of an experienced rake. We might speak of the absurd affectation displayed in the letters, were it not that such affectation is the most genuine nature in a clever boy. Unluckily, it became so ingrained in Pope as to survive his youthful follies. Pope complacently indulges in elaborate paradoxes and epigrams of the conventional epistolary style; he is painfully anxious to be alternately sparkling and playful; his head must be full of literature; he indulges in an elaborate criticism of Statius, and points out what a sudden fall that author makes at one place from extravagant bombast; he communicates the latest efforts of his muse, and tries, one regrets to say, to get more credit for precocity and originality than fairly belongs to him; he accidentally alludes to his dog that he may bring in a translation from the *Odyssey*, quote Plutarch, and introduce an anecdote which he has heard from

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Trumbull about Charles I.; he elaborately discusses Cromwell's classical translations, adduces authorities, ventures to censure Mr. Rowe's amplifications of Lucan, and, in this respect, thinks that Brebœuf, the famous French translator, is equally a sinner, and writes a long letter as to the proper use of the cæsura and the hiatus in English verse. There are signs that the mutual criticisms became a little trying to the tempers of the correspondents. Pope seems to be inclined to ridicule Cromwell's pedantry, and when he affects satisfaction at learning that Cromwell has detected him in appropriating a rondeau from Voiture, we feel that the tension is becoming serious. Probably he found out that Cromwell was not only a bit of a prig, but a person not likely to reflect much glory upon his friends, and the correspondence came to an end, when Pope found a better market for his wares.

Pope speaks more than once in these letters of his country retirement, where he could enjoy the company of the muses, but where, on the other hand, he was forced to be grave and godly, instead of drunk and scandalous as he could be in town. The jolly hunting and drinking squires round Binfield thought him, he says, a well-disposed person, but unluckily disqualified for their rough modes of enjoyment by his sickly health. With them he has not been able to make one Latin quotation, but has learnt a song of Tom Durfey's, the sole representative of literature, it appears, at the "topping-tables" of these thick-witted fox-hunters. Pope naturally longed for the more refined, or at least more fashionable indulgences of London life. Besides the literary affectation, he sometimes adopts the more offensive affectation—unfortunately not peculiar to any period—of the youth who wishes to pass himself off as deep in the knowledge of the world.

Pope, as may be here said once for all, could be at times grossly indecent; and in these letters there are passages offensive upon this score, though the offence is far graver when the same tendency appears, as it sometimes does, in his letters to women. There is no proof that Pope was ever licentious in practice. He was probably more temperate than most of his companions, and could be accused of fewer lapses from strict morality than, for example, the excellent but thoughtless Steele. For this there was the very good reason that his "little, tender, crazy carcass," as Wycherley calls it, was utterly unfit for such excesses as his companions could practise with comparative impunity. He was bound under heavy penalties to be through life a valetudinarian, and such doses of wine as the respectable Addison used regularly to absorb would have brought speedy punishment. Pope's loose talk probably meant little enough in the way of actual vice, though, as I have already said, Trumbull saw reasons for friendly warning. But some of his writings are stained by pruriency and downright obscenity; whilst the same fault may be connected with a painful absence of that chivalrous feeling towards women which redeems Steele's errors of conduct in our estimate of his character. Pope always takes a low, sometimes a brutal view of the relation between the sexes.

Enough, however, has been said upon this point. If Pope erred, he was certainly unfortunate in the objects of his youthful hero-worship. Cromwell seems to have been but a pedantic hanger-on of literary circles. His other great friend, Wycherley, had stronger claims upon his respect, but certainly was not likely to raise his standard of delicacy. Wycherley was a relic of a past literary epoch. He was nearly fifty years older than Pope. His

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last play, the *Plain Dealer*, had been produced in 1677, eleven years before Pope's birth. The *Plain Dealer* and the *Country Wife*, his chief performances, are conspicuous amongst the comedies of the Restoration dramatists for sheer brutality. During Pope's boyhood he was an elderly rake about town, having squandered his intellectual as well as his pecuniary resources, but still scribbling bad verses and maxims on the model of Rochefoucauld. Pope had a very excusable, perhaps we may say creditable, enthusiasm for the acknowledged representatives of literary glory. Before he was twelve years old he had persuaded some one to take him to Will's, that he might have a sight of the venerable Dryden; and in the first published letter¹ to Wycherley he refers to this brief glimpse, and warmly thanks Wycherley for some conversation about the elder poet. And thus, when he came to know Wycherley, he was enraptured with the honour. He followed the great man about, as he tells us, like a dog; and, doubtless, received with profound respect the anecdotes of literary life which fell from the old gentleman's lips. Soon a correspondence began, in which Pope adopts a less jaunty air than that of his letters to Cromwell, but which is conducted on both sides in the laboured complimentary style which was not unnatural in the days when Congreve's comedy was taken to represent the conversation of fashionable life. Presently, however, the letters began to turn upon an obviously dangerous topic. Pope was only seventeen when it occurred to his friend to turn him to account as a literary assistant. The lad had already shown considerable powers of versification, and was soon employing them in the revision of some of the numerous composi-

¹ The letter is, unluckily, of doubtful authenticity; but it represents Pope's probable sentiments.

tions which amused Wycherley's leisure. It would have required, one might have thought, less than Wycherley's experience to foresee the natural end of such an alliance. Pope, in fact, set to work with great vigour in his favourite occupation of correcting. He hacked and hewed right and left; omitted, compressed, rearranged, and occasionally inserted additions of his own devising. Wycherley's memory had been enfeebled by illness, and now played him strange tricks. He was in the habit of reading himself to sleep with Montaigne, Rochefoucauld, and Racine. Next morning he would, with entire unconsciousness, write down as his own the thoughts of his author, or repeat almost word for word some previous composition of his own. To remove such repetitions thoroughly would require a very free application of the knife, and Pope would not be slow to discover that he was wasting talents fit for original work in botching and tinkering a mass of rubbish.

Any man of ripe years would have predicted the obvious consequences; and, according to the ordinary story, those consequences followed. Pope became more plain-speaking, and at last almost insulting in his language. Wycherley ended by demanding the return of his manuscripts, in a letter showing his annoyance under a veil of civility; and Pope sent them back with a smart reply, recommending Wycherley to adopt a previous suggestion and turn his poetry into maxims after the manner of Rochefoucauld. The "old scribbler," says Johnson, "was angry to see his pages defaced, and felt more pain from the criticism than content from the amendment of his faults." The story is told at length, and with his usual brilliance, by Macaulay, and has hitherto passed muster with all Pope's biographers; and, indeed, it is so natural

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a story, and is so far confirmed by other statements of Pope, that it seems a pity to spoil it. And yet it must be at least modified, for we have already reached one of those perplexities which force a biographer of Pope to be constantly looking to his footsteps. So numerous are the contradictions which surround almost every incident of the poet's career, that one is constantly in danger of stumbling into some pitfall, or bound to cross it in gingerly fashion on the stepping-stone of a cautious "perhaps." The letters which are the authority for this story have undergone a manipulation from Pope himself, under circumstances to be hereafter noticed; and recent researches have shown that a very false colouring has been put upon this as upon other passages. The nature of this strange perversion is a curious illustration of Pope's absorbing vanity.

Pope, in fact, was evidently ashamed of the attitude which he had not unnaturally adopted to his correspondent. The first man of letters of his day could not bear to reveal the full degree in which he had fawned upon the decayed dramatist, whose inferiority to himself was now plainly recognized. He altered the whole tone of the correspondence by omission, and still worse by addition. He did not publish a letter in which Wycherley gently remonstrates with his young admirer for excessive adulation; he omitted from his own letters the phrase which had provoked the remonstrance; and, with more daring falsification, he manufactured an imaginary letter to Wycherley out of a letter really addressed to his friend Caryll. In this letter Pope had himself addressed to Caryll a remonstrance similar to that which he had received from Wycherley. When published as a letter to Wycherley, it gives the impression that Pope, at the age of seventeen, was al-

ready rejecting excessive compliments addressed to him by his experienced friend. By these audacious perversions of the truth, Pope is enabled to heighten his youthful independence, and to represent himself as already exhibiting a graceful superiority to the reception or the offering of incense; whilst he thus precisely inverts the relation which really existed between himself and his correspondent.

The letters, again, when read with a due attention to dates, shows that Wycherley's proneness to take offence has at least been exaggerated. Pope's services to Wycherley were rendered on two separate occasions. The first set of poems were corrected during 1706 and 1707; and Wycherley, in speaking of this revision, far from showing symptoms of annoyance, speaks with gratitude of Pope's kindness, and returns the expressions of good-will which accompanied his criticisms. Both these expressions, and Wycherley's acknowledgment of them, were omitted in Pope's publication. More than two years elapsed, when (in April, 1710) Wycherley submitted a new set of manuscripts to Pope's unflinching severity; and it is from the letters which passed in regard to this last batch that the general impression as to the nature of the quarrel has been derived. But these letters, again, have been mutilated, and so mutilated as to increase the apparent tartness of the mutual retorts; and it must therefore remain doubtful how far the coolness which ensued was really due to the cause assigned. Pope, writing at the time to Cromwell, expresses his vexation at the difference, and professes himself unable to account for it, though he thinks that his corrections may have been the cause of the rupture. An alternative rumour,¹ it seems, accused Pope of having written some

¹ See Elwin's Pope, vol. ii., cxxxv.

satirical verses upon his friend. To discover the rights and wrongs of the quarrel is now impossible, though, unfortunately, one thing is clear, namely, that Pope was guilty of grossly sacrificing truth in the interests of his own vanity. We may, indeed, assume, without much risk of error, that Pope had become too conscious of his own importance to find pleasure or pride in doctoring another man's verses. It must remain uncertain how far he showed this resentment to Wycherley openly, or gratified it by some covert means; and how far, again, he succeeded in calming Wycherley's susceptibility by his compliments, or aroused his wrath by more or less contemptuous treatment of his verses.

A year after the quarrel, Cromwell reported that Wycherley had again been speaking in friendly terms of Pope, and Pope expressed his pleasure with eagerness. He must, he said, be more agreeable to himself when agreeable to Wycherley, as the earth was brighter when the sun was less overcast. Wycherley, it may be remarked, took Pope's advice by turning some of his verses into prose maxims; and they seem to have been at last upon more or less friendly terms. The final scene of Wycherley's questionable career, some four years later, is given by Pope in a letter to his friend, Edward Blount. The old man, he says, joined the sacraments of marriage and extreme unction. By one he supposed himself to gain some advantage of his soul; by the other, he had the pleasure of saddling his hated heir and nephew with the jointure of his widow. When dying, he begged his wife to grant him a last request, and, upon her consent, explained it to be that she would never again marry an old man. Sickness, says Pope in comment, often destroys wit and wisdom, but has seldom the power to remove humour. Wycherley's joke, re-

plies a critic, is contemptible; and yet one feels that the death scene, with this strange mixture of cynicism, spite, and superstition, half redeemed by imperturbable good temper, would not be unworthy of a place in Wycherley's own school of comedy. One could wish that Pope had shown a little more perception of the tragic side of such a conclusion.

Pope was still almost a boy when he broke with Wycherley; but he was already beginning to attract attention, and within a surprisingly short time he was becoming known as one of the first writers of the day. I must now turn to the poems by which this reputation was gained, and the incidents connected with their publication. In Pope's life, almost more than in that of any other poet, the history of the author is the history of the man.

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CHAPTER II.

FIRST PERIOD OF POPE'S LITERARY CAREER.

POPE'S rupture with Wycherley took place in the summer of 1710, when Pope, therefore, was just twenty-two. He was at this time only known as the contributor of some small poems to a Miscellany. Three years afterwards (1713) he was receiving such patronage in his great undertaking, the translation of Homer, as to prove conclusively that he was regarded by the leaders of literature as a poet of very high promise; and two years later (1715) the appearance of the first volume of his translation entitled him to rank as the first poet of the day. So rapid a rise to fame has had few parallels, and was certainly not approached until Byron woke and found himself famous at twenty-four. Pope was eager for the praise of remarkable precocity, and was weak and insincere enough to alter the dates of some of his writings in order to strengthen his claim. Yet, even when we accept the corrected accounts of recent enquirers, there is no doubt that he gave proofs at a very early age of an extraordinary command of the resources of his art. It is still more evident that his merits were promptly and frankly recognized by his contemporaries. Great men and distinguished authors held out friendly hands to him; and he never had to undergo, even for a brief period, the dreary ordeal of neglect through

which men of loftier but less popular genius, have been so often compelled to pass. And yet it unfortunately happened that, even in this early time, when success followed success, and the young man's irritable nerves might well have been soothed by the general chorus of admiration, he excited and returned bitter antipathies, some of which lasted through his life.

Pope's works belong to three distinct periods. The translation of Homer was the great work of the middle period of his life. In his later years he wrote the moral and satirical poems by which he is now best known. The earlier period, with which I have now to deal, was one of experimental excursions into various fields of poetry, with varying success and rather uncertain aim. Pope had already, as we have seen, gone through the process of "filling his basket." He had written the epic poem which happily found its way into the flames. He had translated many passages that struck his fancy in the classics, especially considerable fragments of Ovid and Statius. Following Dryden, he had turned some of Chaucer into modern English; and, adopting a fashion which had not as yet quite died of inanition, he had composed certain pastorals in the manner of Theocritus and Virgil. These early productions had been written under the eye of Trumbull; they had been handed about in manuscript; Wycherley, as already noticed, had shown them to Walsh, himself an offender of the same class. Granville, afterwards Lord Lansdowne, another small poet, read them, and professed to see in Pope another Virgil; whilst Congreve, Garth, Somers, Halifax, and other men of weight condescended to read, admire, and criticise. Old Tonson, who had published for Dryden, wrote a polite note to Pope, then only seventeen, saying that he had seen one of the

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Pastorals in the hands of Congreve and Walsh, "which was extremely fine," and requesting the honour of printing it. Three years afterwards it accordingly appeared in Tonson's Miscellany, a kind of annual, of which the first numbers had been edited by Dryden. Such miscellanies more or less discharged the function of a modern magazine. The plan, said Pope to Wycherley, is very useful to the poets, "who, like other thieves, escape by getting into a crowd." The volume contained contributions from Buckingham, Garth, and Rowe; it closed with Pope's Pastorals, and opened with another set of pastorals by Ambrose Philips—a combination which, as we shall see, led to one of Pope's first quarrels.

The Pastorals have been seriously criticised; but they are, in truth, mere school-boy exercises; they represent nothing more than so many experiments in versification. The pastoral form had doubtless been used in earlier hands to embody true poetic feeling; but in Pope's time it had become hopelessly threadbare. The fine gentlemen in wigs and laced coats amused themselves by writing about nymphs and "conscious swains," by way of asserting their claims to elegance of taste. Pope, as a boy, took the matter seriously, and always retained a natural fondness for a juvenile performance upon which he had expended great labour, and which was the chief proof of his extreme precocity. He invites attention to his own merits, and claims especially the virtue of propriety. He does not, he tells us, like some other people, make his roses and daffodils bloom in the same season, and cause his nightingales to sing in November; and he takes particular credit for having remembered that there were no wolves in England, and having accordingly excised a passage in which Alexis prophesied that those animals would grow milder as they

listened to the strains of his favourite nymph. When a man has got so far as to bring to England all the pagan deities, and rival shepherds contending for bowls and lambs in alternate strophes, these niceties seem a little out of place. After swallowing such a camel of an anachronism as is contained in the following lines, it is ridiculous to pride oneself upon straining at a gnat:—

Inspire me, says Strephon,

“Inspire me, Phœbus, in my Delia’s praise
With Waller’s strains or Granville’s moving lays.
A milk-white bull shall at your altars stand,
That threatens a fight, and spurns the rising sand.”

Granville would certainly not have felt more surprised at meeting a wolf than at seeing a milk-white bull sacrificed to Phœbus on the banks of the Thames. It would be a more serious complaint that Pope, who can thus admit anachronisms as daring as any of those which provoked Johnson in *Lycidas*, shows none of that exquisite feeling for rural scenery which is one of the superlative charms of Milton’s early poems. Though country-bred, he talks about country sights and sounds as if he had been brought up at Christ’s Hospital, and read of them only in Virgil. But, in truth, it is absurd to dwell upon such points. The sole point worth notice in the *Pastorals* is the general sweetness of the versification. Many corrections show how carefully Pope had elaborated these early lines, and by what patient toil he was acquiring the peculiar qualities of style in which he was to become pre-eminent. We may agree with Johnson that Pope performing upon a pastoral pipe is rather a ludicrous person, but for mere practice even nonsense verses have been found useful.

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acteristic specimen of his peculiar powers. Poets, according to the ordinary rule, should begin by exuberant fancy, and learn to prune and refine as the reasoning faculties develop. But Pope was from the first a conscious and deliberate artist. He had read the fashionable critics of his time, and had accepted their canons as an embodiment of irrefragable reason. His head was full of maxims, some of which strike us as palpable truisms, and others as typical specimens of wooden pedantry. Dryden had set the example of looking upon the French critics as authoritative lawgivers in poetry. Boileau's art of poetry was carefully studied, as bits of it were judiciously appropriated, by Pope. Another authority was the great Bossu, who wrote in 1675 a treatise on epic poetry; and the modern reader may best judge of the doctrines characteristic of the school by the naïve pedantry with which Addison, the typical man of taste of his time, invokes the authority of Bossu and Aristotle, in his exposition of *Paradise Lost*.¹ English writers were treading in the steps of Boileau and Horace. Roscommon selected for a poem the lively topic of "translated verse;" and Sheffield had written with Dryden an essay upon satire, and afterwards a more elaborate essay upon poetry. To these masterpieces, said Addison, another masterpiece was now added by Pope's *Essay upon Criticism*. Not only did Addison applaud, but later critics have spoken of their wonder at the penetration, learning, and taste exhibited by so young a man. The essay was carefully finished. Written apparently in 1709, it was published in 1711. This was as short a time, said Pope to Spence, as he ever let anything of his lie by him; he no doubt em-

¹ Any poet who followed Bossu's rules, said Voltaire, might be certain that no one would read him; happily it was impossible to follow them.

ployed it, according to his custom, in correcting and revising, and he had prepared himself by carefully digesting the whole in prose. It is, however, written without any elaborate logical plan, though it is quite sufficiently coherent for its purpose. The maxims on which Pope chiefly dwells are, for the most part, the obvious rules which have been the common property of all generations of critics. One would scarcely ask for originality in such a case, any more than one would desire a writer on ethics to invent new laws of morality. We require neither Pope nor Aristotle to tell us that critics should not be pert nor prejudiced; that fancy should be regulated by judgment; that apparent facility comes by long training; that the sound should have some conformity to the meaning; that genius is often envied; and that dulness is frequently beyond the reach of reproof. We might even guess, without the authority of Pope, backed by Bacon, that there are some beauties which cannot be taught by method, but must be reached "by a kind of felicity." It is not the less interesting to notice Pope's skill in polishing these rather rusty sayings into the appearance of novelty. In a familiar line Pope gives us the view which he would himself apply in such cases.

"True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

The only fair question, in short, is whether Pope has managed to give a lasting form to some of the floating commonplaces which have more or less suggested themselves to every writer. If we apply this test, we must admit that if the essay upon criticism does not show deep thought, it shows singular skill in putting old truths. Pope undeniably succeeded in hitting off many phrases of marked felicity. He already showed the power, in

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which he was probably unequalled, of coining aphorisms out of commonplace. Few people read the essay now, but everybody is aware that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and has heard the warning—

"A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:"

maxims which may not commend themselves as strictly accurate to a scientific reasoner, but which have as much truth as one can demand from an epigram. And besides many sayings which share in some degree their merit, there are occasional passages which rise, at least, to the height of graceful rhetoric if they are scarcely to be called poetical. One simile was long famous, and was called by Johnson the best in the language. It is that in which the sanguine youth, overwhelmed by a growing perception of the boundlessness of possible attainments, is compared to the traveller crossing the mountains, and seeing—

"Hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise."

The poor simile is pretty well forgotten, but is really a good specimen of Pope's brilliant declamation.

The essay, however, is not uniformly polished. Between the happier passages we have to cross stretches of flat prose twisted into rhyme; Pope seems to have intentionally pitched his style at a prosaic level as fitter for didactic purposes; but besides this we here and there come upon phrases which are not only elliptical and slovenly, but defy all grammatical construction. This was a blemish to which Pope was always strangely liable. It was perhaps due in part to over-correction, when the context was forgotten and the subject had lost its freshness. Critics, again, have remarked upon the poverty of the

rhymes, and observed that he makes ten rhymes to "wit" and twelve to "sense." The frequent recurrence of the words is the more awkward because they are curiously ambiguous. "Wit" was beginning to receive its modern meaning; but Pope uses it vaguely as sometimes equivalent to intelligence in general, sometimes to the poetic faculty, and sometimes to the erratic fancy, which the true poet restrains by sense. Pope would have been still more puzzled if asked to define precisely what he meant by the antithesis between nature and art. They are somehow opposed, yet art turns out to be only "nature methodized." We have, indeed, a clue for our guidance; to study nature, we are told, is the same thing as to study Homer, and Homer should be read day and night, with Virgil for a comment and Aristotle for an expositor. Nature, good sense, Homer, Virgil, and the Stagyrice all, it seems, come to much the same thing.

It would be very easy to pick holes in this very loose theory. But it is better to try to understand the point of view indicated; for, in truth, Pope is really stating the assumptions which guided his whole career. No one will accept his position at the present time; but any one who is incapable of, at least, a provisional sympathy, may as well throw Pope aside at once, and with Pope most contemporary literature.

The dominant figure in Pope's day was the Wit. The wit—taken personally—was the man who represented what we now describe by culture or the spirit of the age. Bright, clear, common sense was for once having its own way, and tyrannizing over the faculties from which it too often suffers violence. The favoured faculty never doubted its own qualification for supremacy in every department. In metaphysics it was triumphing

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with Hobbes and Locke over the remnants of scholasticism; under Tillotson, it was expelling mystery from religion; and in art it was declaring war against the extravagant, the romantic, the mystic, and the Gothic—a word then used as a simple term of abuse. Wit and sense are but different avatars of the same spirit; wit was the form in which it showed itself in coffee-houses, and sense that in which it appeared in the pulpit or parliament. When Walsh told Pope to be correct, he was virtually advising him to carry the same spirit into poetry. The classicism of the time was the natural corollary; for the classical models were the historical symbols of the movement which Pope represented. He states his view very tersely in the essay. Classical culture had been overwhelmed by the barbarians, and the monks “finished what the Goths began.” Letters revived when the study of classical models again gave an impulse and supplied a guidance.

“At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
The glory of the priesthood and their shame,
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barbarous age,
And drove these holy Vandals off the stage.”

The classicism of Pope's time was no doubt very different from that of the period of Erasmus; but in his view it differed only because the contemporaries of Dryden had more thoroughly dispersed the mists of the barbarism which still obscured the Shakspearean age, and from which even Milton or Cowley had not completely escaped. Dryden and Boileau and the French critics, with their interpreters, Roscommon, Sheffield, and Walsh, who found rules in Aristotle, and drew their precedents from Homer, were at last stating the pure canons of unadulterated sense. To this school wit, and sense, and nat-

ure, and the classics, all meant pretty much the same. That was pronounced to be unnatural which was too silly, or too far-fetched, or too exalted, to approve itself to the good sense of a wit; and the very incarnation and eternal type of good sense and nature was to be found in the classics. The test of thorough polish and refinement was the power of ornamenting a speech with an appropriate phrase from Horace or Virgil, or prefixing a Greek motto to an essay in the *Spectator*. If it was necessary to give to any utterance an air of philosophical authority, a reference to Longinus or Aristotle was the natural device. Perhaps the acquaintance with classics might not be very profound; but the classics supplied at least a convenient symbol for the spirit which had triumphed against Gothic barbarism and scholastic pedantry.

Even the priggish wits of that day were capable of being bored by didactic poetry, and especially by such didactic poetry as resolved itself too easily into a string of maxims not more poetical in substance than the immortal "Tis a sin to steal a pin." The essay—published anonymously—did not make any rapid success till Pope sent round copies to well-known critics. Addison's praise and Dennis's abuse helped, as we shall presently see, to give it notoriety. Pope, however, returned from criticism to poetry, and his next performance was in some degree a fresh, but far less puerile, performance upon the pastoral pipe.¹ Nothing could be more natural than for the young poet to take for a text the forest in which he lived. Dull as the natives might be, their dwelling-place was historical,

¹ There is the usual contradiction as to the date of composition of *Windsor Forest*. Part seems to have been written early (Pope says 1704), and part certainly not before 1712.

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and there was an excellent precedent for such a performance. Pope, as we have seen, was familiar with Milton's juvenile poems; but such works as the *Allegro* and *Penseroso* were too full of the genuine country spirit to suit his probable audience. Wycherley, whom he frequently invited to come to Binfield, would undoubtedly have found Milton a bore. But Sir John Denham, a thoroughly masculine, if not, as Pope calls him, a majestic poet, was a guide whom the Wycherleys would respect. His *Cooper's Hill* (in 1642) was the first example of what Johnson calls local poetry—poetry, that is, devoted to the celebration of a particular place; and, moreover, it was one of the early models of the rhythm which became triumphant in the hands of Dryden. One couplet is still familiar:

"Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

The poem has some vigorous descriptive touches, but is in the main a forcible expression of the moral and political reflections which would be approved by the admirers of good sense in poetry.

Pope's *Windsor Forest*, which appeared in the beginning of 1713, is closely and avowedly modelled upon this original. There is still a considerable infusion of the puerile classicism of the Pastorals, which contrasts awkwardly with Denham's strength, and a silly episode about the nymph Lodona changed into the river Loddon by Diana, to save her from the pursuit of Pan. But the style is animated, and the descriptions, though seldom original, show Pope's frequent felicity of language. Wordsworth, indeed, was pleased to say that Pope had here introduced almost the only "new images of internal nature" to be

found between Milton and Thomson. Probably the good Wordsworth was wishing to do a little bit of excessive candour. Pope will not introduce his scenery without a turn suited to the taste of the town:—

“Here waving groves a chequer’d scene display,
And part admit and part exclude the day;
As some coy nymph her lover’s fond address,
Nor quite indulges nor can quite repress.”

He has some well-turned lines upon the sports of the forest, though they are clearly not the lines of a sportsman. They betray something of the sensitive lad’s shrinking from the rough squires whose only literature consisted of Durfey’s songs, and who would have heartily laughed at his sympathy for a dying pheasant. I may observe in passing that Pope always showed the true poet’s tenderness for the lower animals, and disgust at bloodshed. He loved his dog, and said that he would have inscribed over his grave, “O rare Bounce,” but for the appearance of ridiculing “rare Ben Jonson.” He spoke with horror of a contemporary dissector of live dogs, and the pleasantest of his papers in the *Guardian* is a warm remonstrance against cruelty to animals. He “dares not” attack hunting, he says—and, indeed, such an attack requires some courage even at the present day—but he evidently has no sympathy with huntsmen, and has to borrow his description from Statius, which was hardly the way to get the true local colour. *Windsor Forest*, however, like *Cooper’s Hill*, speedily diverges into historical and political reflections. The barbarity of the old forest laws, the poets Denham and Cowley and Surrey, who had sung on the banks of the Thames, and the heroes who made Windsor illustrious, suggest obvious thoughts, put into verses often brilliant,

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though sometimes affected, varied by a compliment to Trumbull and an excessive eulogy of Granville, to whom the poem is inscribed. The whole is skilfully adapted to the time by a brilliant eulogy upon the peace which was concluded just as the poem was published. The Whig poet Tickell, soon to be Pope's rival, was celebrating the same "lofty theme" on his "artless reed," and introducing a pretty little compliment to Pope. To readers who have lost the taste for poetry of this class one poem may seem about as good as the other; but Pope's superiority is plain enough to a reader who will condescend to distinguish. His verses are an excellent specimen of his declamatory style—polished, epigrammatic, and well expressed; and, though keeping far below the regions of true poetry, preserving just that level which would commend them to the literary statesmen and the politicians at Will's and Button's. Perhaps some advocate of Free Trade might try upon a modern audience the lines in which Pope expresses his aspiration in a foot-note that London may one day become a "FREE PORT." There is at least not one antiquated or obscure phrase in the whole. Here are half a dozen lines:—

"The time shall come, when, free as seas and wind,
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,
Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,
And seas but join the regions they divide;
Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,
And the new world launch forth to seek the old."

In the next few years Pope found other themes for the display of his declamatory powers. Of the *Temple of Fame* (1715), a frigid imitation of Chaucer, I need only say that it is one of Pope's least successful performances; but I must notice more fully two rhetorical poems which

appeared in 1717. These were the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and the *Eloisa to Abelard*. Both poems, and especially the last, have received the warmest praises from Pope's critics, and even from critics who were most opposed to his school. They are, in fact, his chief performances of the sentimental kind. Written in his youth, and yet when his powers of versification had reached their fullest maturity, they represent an element generally absent from his poetry. Pope was at the period in which, if ever, a poet should sing of love, and in which we expect the richest glow and fervour of youthful imagination. Pope was neither a Burns, nor a Byron, nor a Keats; but here, if anywhere, we should find those qualities in which he has most affinity to the poets of passion, or of sensuous emotion, not soured by experience or purified by reflection. The motives of the two poems were skilfully chosen. Pope—as has already appeared to some extent—was rarely original in his designs; he liked to have the outlines at least drawn for him, to be filled with his own colouring. The *Eloisa to Abelard* was founded upon a translation from the French, published in 1714 by Hughes (author of the *Siege of Damascus*), which is itself a manipulated translation from the famous Latin originals. Pope, it appears, kept very closely to the words of the English translation, and in some places has done little more than versify the prose, though, of course, it is compressed, rearranged, and modified. The *Unfortunate Lady* has been the cause of a good deal of controversy. Pope's elegy implies, vaguely enough, that she had been cruelly treated by her guardians, and had committed suicide in some foreign country. The verses, as commentators decided, showed such genuine feeling, that the story narrated in them must have been authentic, and one of his own

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correspondents (Caryll) begged him for an explanation of the facts. Pope gave no answer, but left a posthumous note to an edition of his letters calculated, perhaps intended, to mystify future inquirers. The lady, a Mrs. Weston, to whom the note pointed, did not die till 1724, and could therefore not have committed suicide in 1717. The mystification was childish enough, though, if Pope had committed no worse crime of the kind, one would not consider him to be a very grievous offender. The inquiries of Mr. Dilke, who cleared up this puzzle, show that there were, in fact, two ladies—Mrs. Weston and a Mrs. Cope—known to Pope about this time, both of whom suffered under some domestic persecution. Pope seems to have taken up their cause with energy, and sent money to Mrs. Cope when, at a later period, she was dying abroad in great distress. His zeal seems to have been sincere and generous, and it is possible enough that the elegy was a reflection of his feelings, though it suggested an imaginary state of facts. If this be so, the reference to the lady in his posthumous note contained some relation to the truth, though if taken too literally it would be misleading.

The poems themselves are, beyond all doubt, impressive compositions. They are vivid and admirably worked. "Here," says Johnson of the *Eloisa to Abelard*, the most important of the two, "is particularly observable the *curiosa felicitas*, a fruitful soil and careful cultivation. Here is no crudeness of sense, nor asperity of language." So far there can be no dispute. The style has the highest degree of technical perfection, and it is generally added that the poems are as pathetic as they are exquisitely written. Bowles, no hearty lover of Pope, declared the *Eloisa* to be "infinitely superior to everything of the kind, ancient or modern." The tears shed, says Hazlitt of the same poem,

“are drops gushing from the heart; the words are burning sighs breathed from the soul of love.” And De Quincy ends an eloquent criticism by declaring that the “lyrical tumult of the changes, the hope, the tears, the rapture, the penitence, the despair, place the reader in tumultuous sympathy with the poor distracted nun.” The pathos of the *Unfortunate Lady* has been almost equally praised, and I may quote from it a famous passage which Mackintosh repeated with emotion to repel a charge of coldness brought against Pope:—

“By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd and by strangers mourn'd!
 What though no friends in sable weeds appear,
 Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
 And bear about the mockery of woe
 To midnight dances and the public show?
 What though no weeping loves thy ashes grace,
 Nor polish'd marble emulate thy face?
 What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
 Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb?
 Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be dress'd,
 And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast;
 There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
 There the first roses of the year shall blow;
 While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
 The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made.”

The more elaborate poetry of the *Eloisa* is equally polished throughout, and too much praise cannot easily be bestowed upon the skill with which the romantic scenery of the convent is indicated in the background, and the force with which Pope has given the revulsions of feeling of his unfortunate heroine from earthly to heavenly love, and

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from keen remorse to renewed gusts of overpowering passion. All this may be said, and without opposing high critical authority. And yet, I must also say, whether with or without authority, that I, at least, can read the poems without the least "disposition to cry," and that a single pathetic touch of Cowper or Wordsworth strikes incomparably deeper. And if I seek for a reason, it seems to be simply that Pope never crosses the undefinable, but yet ineffaceable, line which separates true poetry from rhetoric. The *Eloisa* ends rather flatly by one of Pope's characteristic aphorisms. "He best can paint them (the woes, that is, of *Eloisa*) who shall feel them most;" and it is characteristic, by the way, that even in these his most impassioned verses, the lines which one remembers are of the same epigrammatic stamp, *e. g.* :

"A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art and all the proud shall be!

"I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

"How happy is the blameless vestal's lot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

The worker in moral aphorisms cannot forget himself even in the full swing of his fervid declamation. I have no doubt that Pope so far exemplified his own doctrine that he truly felt whilst he was writing. His feelings make him eloquent, but they do not enable him to "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art," to blind us for a moment to the presence of the consummate workman, judiciously blending his colours, heightening his effects, and skilfully managing his transitions or consciously introducing an abrupt outburst of a new mood. The smoothness of the verses imposes monotony even upon the varying passions which are supposed to struggle in *Eloisa's* breast. It is

not merely our knowledge that Pope is speaking dramatically which prevents us from receiving the same kind of impressions as we receive from poetry—such, for example, as some of Cowper's minor pieces—into which we know that a man is really putting his whole heart. The comparison would not be fair, for in such cases we are moved by knowledge of external facts as well as by the poetic power. But it is simply that Pope always resembles an orator whose gestures are studied, and who thinks, while he is speaking, of the fall of his robes and the attitude of his hands. He is throughout academical; and though knowing with admirable nicety how grief should be represented, and what have been the expedients of his best predecessors, he misses the one essential touch of spontaneous impulse.

One other blemish is perhaps more fatal to the popularity of the *Eloisa*. There is a taint of something unwholesome and effeminate. Pope, it is true, is only following the language of the original in the most offensive passages; but we see too plainly that he has dwelt too fondly upon those passages, and worked them up with especial care. We need not be prudish in our judgment of impassioned poetry; but when the passion has this false ring, the ethical coincides with the æsthetic objection.

I have mentioned these poems here, because they seem to be the development of the rhetorical vein which appeared in the earlier work. But I have passed over another work which has sometimes been regarded as his masterpiece. A Lord Petre had offended a Miss Fermor by stealing a lock of her hair. She thought that he showed more gallantry than courtesy, and some unpleasant feeling resulted between the families. Pope's friend, Caryll, thought that it might be appeased if the young

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poet would turn the whole affair into friendly ridicule. Nobody, it might well be supposed, had a more dexterous touch; and a brilliant trifle from his hands, just fitted for the atmosphere of drawing-rooms, would be a convenient peace-offering, and was the very thing in which he might be expected to succeed. Pope accordingly set to work at a dainty little mock-heroic, in which he describes, in playful mockery of the conventional style, the fatal coffee-drinking at Hampton, in which the too daring peer appropriated the lock. The poem received the praise which it well deserved; for certainly the young poet had executed his task to a nicety. No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle is to be found in our literature than the *Rape of the Lock*, even in this early form. Pope received permission from the lady to publish it in *Lintot's Miscellany* in 1712, and a wider circle admired it, though it seems that the lady and her family began to think that young Mr. Pope was making rather too free with her name. Pope meanwhile, animated by his success, hit upon a singularly happy conception, by which he thought that the poem might be rendered more important. The solid critics of those days were much occupied with the machinery of epic poems; the machinery being composed of the gods and goddesses who, from the days of Homer, had attended to the fortunes of heroes. He had hit upon a curious French book, the *Comte de Gabalis*, which professes to reveal the mysteries of the Rosicrucians, and it occurred to him that the elemental sylphs and gnomes would serve his purpose admirably. He spoke of his new device to Addison, who administered—and there is not the slightest reason for doubting his perfect sincerity and good meaning—a little dose of cold water. The poem, as it stood, was a “delicious little thing”—*merum sal—*

and it would be a pity to alter it. Pope, however, adhered to his plan, made a splendid success, and thought that Addison must have been prompted by some mean motive. The *Rape of the Lock* appeared in its new form, with sylphs and gnomes, and an ingenious account of a game at cards and other improvements, in 1714. Pope declared, and critics have agreed, that he never showed more skill than in the remodelling of this poem; and it has ever since held a kind of recognized supremacy amongst the productions of the drawing-room muse.

The reader must remember that the so-called heroic style of Pope's period is now hopelessly effete. No human being would care about machinery and the rules of Bossu, or read without utter weariness the mechanical imitations of Homer and Virgil which were occasionally attempted by the Blackmores and other less ponderous versifiers. The shadow grows dim with the substance. The burlesque loses its point when we care nothing for the original; and, so far, Pope's bit of filigree-work, as Hazlitt calls it, has become tarnished. The very mention of beaux and belles suggests the kind of feeling with which we disinter fragments of old-world finery from the depths of an ancient cabinet, and even the wit is apt to sound wearisome. And further, it must be allowed to some hostile critics that Pope has a worse defect. The poem is, in effect, a satire upon feminine frivolity. It continues the strain of mockery against hoops and patches and their wearers, which supplied Addison and his colleagues with the materials of so many *Spectators*. I think that even in Addison there is something which rather jars upon us. His persiflage is full of humour and kindness, but underlying it there is a tone of superiority to women which is sometimes offensive. It is taken for granted that a wom-

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an is a fool, or at least should be flattered if any man condescends to talk sense to her. With Pope this tone becomes harsher, and the merciless satirist begins to show himself. In truth, Pope can be inimitably pungent, but he can never be simply playful. Addison was too condescending with his pretty pupils; but under Pope's courtesy there lurks contempt, and his smile has a disagreeable likeness to a sneer. If Addison's manner sometimes suggests the blandness of a don who classes women with the inferior beings unworthy of the Latin grammar, Pope suggests the brilliant wit whose contempt has a keener edge from his resentment against fine ladies blinded to his genius by his personal deformity.

Even in his dedication, Pope, with unconscious impertinence, insults his heroine for her presumable ignorance of his critical jargon. His smart epigrams want but a slight change of tone to become satire. It is the same writer who begins an essay on women's characters by telling a woman that her sex is a compound of

"Matter too soft a lasting mask to bear;
And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair,"

and communicates to her the pleasant truth that

"Every woman is at heart a rake."

Women, in short, are all frivolous beings, whose one genuine interest is in love-making. The same sentiment is really implied in the more playful lines in the *Rape of the Lock*. The sylphs are warned by omens that some misfortune impends; but they don't know what.

"Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade,
Forget her prayers or miss a masquerade;

Or lose her heart or necklace at a ball,
Or whether heaven has doom'd that Shock must fall."

We can understand that Miss Fermor would feel such raillery to be equivocal. It may be added, that an equal want of delicacy is implied in the mock-heroic battle at the end, where the ladies are gifted with an excess of screaming power:—

"'Restore the lock!' she cries, and all around
'Restore the lock,' the vaulted roofs rebound—
Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
Roar'd for the handkerchief that caused his pain."

These faults, though far from trifling, are yet felt only as blemishes in the admirable beauty and brilliance of the poem. The successive scenes are given with so firm and clear a touch—there is such a sense of form, the language is such a dexterous elevation of the ordinary social twaddle into the mock-heroic, that it is impossible not to recognize a consummate artistic power. The dazzling display of true wit and fancy blinds us for the time to the want of that real tenderness and humour which would have softened some harsh passages, and given a more enduring charm to the poetry. It has, in short, the merit that belongs to any work of art which expresses in the most finished form the sentiment characteristic of a given social phase; one deficient in many of the most ennobling influences, but yet one in which the arts of converse represent a very high development of shrewd sense refined into vivid wit. And we may, I think, admit that there is some foundation for the genealogy that traces Pope's Ariel back to his more elevated ancestor in the *Tempest*. The later Ariel, indeed, is regarded as the soul of a coquette, and is almost an allegory of the spirit of poetic fancy in slavery to polished society.

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"Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain
While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain."

Pope's *Ariel* is a parody of the ethereal being into whom Shakspeare had refined the ancient fairy; but it is a parody which still preserves a sense of the delicate and graceful. The ancient race, which appeared for the last time in this travesty of the fashion of Queen Anne, still showed some touch of its ancient beauty. Since that time no fairy has appeared without being hopelessly childish or affected.

Let us now turn from the poems to the author's personal career during the same period. In the remarkable autobiographic poem called the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, Pope speaks of his early patrons and friends, and adds—

"Soft were my numbers; who could take offence
When pure description held the place of sense?
Like gentle Fanny's was my flow'ry theme,
A painted mistress or a purling stream.
Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill—
I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.
Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
I never answer'd,—I was not in debt."

Pope's view of his own career suggests the curious problem: how it came to pass that so harmless a man should be the butt of so many hostilities? How could any man be angry with a writer of gentle pastorals and versified love-letters? The answer of Pope was, that this was the normal state of things. "The life of a wit," he says, in the preface to his works, "is a warfare upon earth;" and the warfare results from the hatred of men of genius natural to the dull. Had any one else made such a statement, Pope would have seen its resemblance to the complaint of the one reasonable juryman overpow-

ered by eleven obstinate fellows. But we may admit that an intensely sensitive nature is a bad qualification for a public career. A man who ventures into the throng of competitors without a skin will be tortured by every touch, and suffer the more if he turns to retaliate.

Pope's first literary performances had not been so harmless as he suggests. Amongst the minor men of letters of the day was the surly John Dennis. He was some thirty years Pope's senior; a writer of dreary tragedies which had gained a certain success by their Whiggish tendencies, and of ponderous disquisitions upon critical questions, not much cruder in substance though heavier in form than many utterances of Addison or Steele. He could, however, snarl out some shrewd things when provoked, and was known to the most famous wits of the day. He had corresponded with Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherley, and published some of their letters. Pope, it seems, had been introduced to him by Cromwell, but they had met only two or three times. When Pope had become ashamed of following Wycherley about like a dog, he would soon find out that a Dennis did not deserve the homage of a rising genius. Possibly Dennis had said something of Pope's Pastorals, and Pope had probably been a witness, perhaps more than a mere witness, to some passage of arms in which Dennis lost his temper. In mere youthful impertinence he introduced an offensive touch in the *Essay upon Criticism*. It would be well, he said, if critics could advise authors freely,—

“But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threatening eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry.”

The name Appius referred to Dennis's tragedy of *Ap-*

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pius and Virginia, a piece now recollected solely by the fact that poor Dennis had invented some new thunder for the performance; and by his piteous complaint against the actors for afterwards "stealing his thunder," had started a proverbial expression. Pope's reference stung Dennis to the quick. He replied by a savage pamphlet, pulling Pope's essay to pieces, and hitting some real blots, but diverging into the coarsest personal abuse. Not content with saying in his preface that he was attacked with the utmost falsehood and calumny by a little affected hypocrite, who had nothing in his mouth but truth, candour, and good-nature, he reviled Pope for his personal defects; insinuated that he was a hunch-backed toad; declared that he was the very shape of the bow of the god of love; that he might be thankful that he was born a modern, for, had he been born of Greek parents, his life would have been no longer than that of one of his poems, namely, half a day; and that his outward form, however like a monkey's, could not deviate more from the average of humanity than his mind. These amenities gave Pope his first taste of good, savage, slashing abuse. The revenge was out of all proportion to the offence. Pope, at first, seemed to take the assault judiciously. He kept silence, and simply marked some of the faults exposed by Dennis for alteration. But the wound rankled, and when an opportunity presently offered itself, Pope struck savagely at his enemy. To show how this came to pass, I must rise from poor old Dennis to a more exalted literary sphere.

The literary world, in which Dryden had recently been, and Pope was soon to be, the most conspicuous figure, was for the present under the mild dictatorship of Addison. We know Addison as one of the most kindly and delicate of humourists, and we can perceive the gentleness

which made him one of the most charming of companions in a small society. His sense of the ludicrous saved him from the disagreeable ostentation of powers which were never applied to express bitterness of feeling or to edge angry satire. The reserve of his sensitive nature made access difficult, but he was so transparently modest and unassuming that his shyness was not, as is too often the case, mistaken for pride. It is easy to understand the posthumous affection which Macaulay has so eloquently expressed, and the contemporary popularity which, according to Swift, would have made people unwilling to refuse him had he asked to be king. And yet I think that one cannot read Addison's praises without a certain recalcitration, like that which one feels in the case of the model boy who wins all the prizes, including that for good conduct. It is hard to feel very enthusiastic about a virtue whose dictates coincide so precisely with the demands of decorum, and which leads by so easy a path to reputation and success. Popularity is more often significant of the tact which makes a man avoid giving offence, than of the warm impulses of a generous nature. A good man who mixes with the world ought to be hated, if not to hate. But, whatever we may say against his excessive goodness, Addison deserved and received universal esteem, which in some cases became enthusiastic. Foremost amongst his admirers was the warm-hearted, reckless, impetuous Steele, the typical Irishman; and amongst other members of his little senate — as Pope called it — were Ambrose Philips and Tickell, young men of letters and sound Whig politics, and more or less competitors of Pope in literature. When Pope was first becoming known in London the Whigs were out of power; Addison and his friends were generally to be found at Button's Coffee-house in the af-

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ternoon, and were represented to the society of the time by the *Spectator*, which began in March, 1711, and appeared daily to the end of 1712. Naturally, the young Pope would be anxious to approach this famous clique, though his connexions lay, in the first instance, amongst the Jacobite and Catholic families. Steele, too, would be glad to welcome so promising a contributor to the *Spectator* and its successor, the *Guardian*.

Pope, we may therefore believe, was heartily delighted when, some months after Dennis's attack, a notice of his *Essay upon Criticism* appeared in the *Spectator*, December 20, 1711. The reviewer censured some attacks upon contemporaries—a reference obviously to the lines upon Dennis—which the author had admitted into his "very fine poem;" but there were compliments enough to overbalance this slight reproof. Pope wrote a letter of acknowledgment to Steele, overflowing with the sincerest gratitude of a young poet on his first recognition by a high authority. Steele, in reply, disclaimed the article, and promised to introduce Pope to its real author, the great Addison himself. It does not seem that the acquaintance thus opened with the Addisonians ripened very rapidly, or led to any considerable results. Pope, indeed, is said to have written some *Spectators*. He certainly sent to Steele his *Messiah*, a sacred eclogue in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*. It appeared on May 14, 1712, and is one of Pope's dexterous pieces of workmanship, in which phrases from Isaiah are so strung together as to form a good imitation of the famous poem which was once supposed to entitle Virgil to some place among the inspired heralds of Christianity. Pope sent another letter or two to Steele, which look very much like intended contributions to the *Spectator*, and a short letter about Hadrian's verses to his soul, which ap-

peared in November, 1712. When, in 1713, the *Guardian* succeeded the *Spectator*, Pope was one of Steele's contributors, and a paper by him upon dedications appeared as the fourth number. He soon gave a more remarkable proof of his friendly relations with Addison.

It is probable that no first performance of a play upon the English stage ever excited so much interest as that of Addison's *Cato*. It was not only the work of the first man of letters of the day, but it had, or was taken to have, a certain political significance. "The time was come," says Johnson, "when those who affected to think liberty in danger, affected likewise to think that a stage-play might preserve it." Addison, after exhibiting more than the usual display of reluctance, prepared his play for representation, and it was undoubtedly taken to be in some sense a Whig manifesto. It was, therefore, remarkable that he should have applied to Pope for a prologue, though Pope's connexions were entirely of the anti-Whiggish kind, and a passage in *Windsor Forest*, his last new poem (it appeared in March, 1713), indicated pretty plainly a refusal to accept the Whig shibboleths. In the *Forest* he was enthusiastic for the peace, and sneered at the Revolution. Pope afterwards declared that Addison had disavowed all party intentions at the time, and he accused him of insincerity for afterwards taking credit (in a poetical dedication of *Cato*) for the services rendered by his play to the cause of liberty. Pope's assertion is worthless in any case where he could exalt his own character for consistency at another man's expense, but it is true that both parties were inclined to equivocate. It is, indeed, difficult to understand how, if any "stage-play could preserve liberty," such a play as *Cato* should do the work. The polished declamation is made up of the platitudes common to Whigs and Tories;

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and Bolingbroke gave the cue to his own party when he presented fifty guineas to *Cato's* representatives for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs, said Pope, design a second present when they can contrive as good a saying. Bolingbroke was, of course, aiming at Marlborough, and his interpretation was intrinsically as plausible as any that could have been devised by his antagonists. Each side could adopt *Cato* as easily as rival sects can quote the Bible; and it seems possible that Addison may have suggested to Pope that nothing in *Cato* could really offend his principles. Addison, as Pope also tells us, thought the prologue ambiguous, and altered "*Britons, arise!*" to "*Britons, attend!*" lest the phrase should be thought to hint at a new revolution. Addison advised Pope about this time not to be content with the applause of "half the nation," and perhaps regarded him as one who, by the fact of his external position with regard to parties, would be a more appropriate sponsor for the play.

Whatever the intrinsic significance of *Cato*, circumstances gave it a political colour; and Pope, in a lively description of the first triumphant night to his friend Caryll, says, that as author of the successful and very spirited prologue, he was clapped into a Whig, sorely against his will, at every two lines. Shortly before, he had spoken in the warmest terms to the same correspondent of the admirable moral tendency of the work; and perhaps he had not realized the full party significance till he became conscious of the impression produced upon the audience. Not long afterwards (letter of June 12, 1713) we find him complaining that his connexion with Steele and the *Guardian* was giving offence to some honest Jacobites. Had they known the nature of the connexion, they need hardly have

grudged Steele his contributor. His next proceedings possibly suggested the piece of advice which Addison gave to Lady M. W. Montagu: "Leave Pope as soon as you can; he will certainly play you some devilish trick else."

His first trick was calculated to vex an editor's soul. Ambrose Philips, as I have said, had published certain pastorals in the same volume with Pope's. Philips, though he seems to have been less rewarded than most of his companions, was certainly accepted as an attached member of Addison's "little senate;" and that body was not more free than other mutual admiration societies from the desire to impose its own prejudices upon the public. When Philips's *Distressed Mother*, a close imitation of Racine's *Andromaque*, was preparing for the stage, the *Spectator* was taken by Will Honeycomb to a rehearsal (*Spectator*, January 31, 1712), and Sir Roger de Coverley himself attended one of the performances (*Ib.*, March 25), and was profoundly affected by its pathos. The last paper was of course by Addison, and is a real triumph of art as a most delicate application of humour to thé slightly unworthy purpose of puffing a friend and disciple. Addison had again praised Philips's Pastorals in the *Spectator* (October 30, 1712); and amongst the early numbers of the *Guardian* were a short series of papers upon pastoral poetry, in which the fortunate Ambrose was again held up as a model, whilst no notice was taken of Pope's rival performance. Pope, one may believe, had a contempt for Philips, whose pastoral inanities, whether better or worse than his own, had not the excuse of being youthful productions. Philips has bequeathed to our language the phrase "Nambypamby," imposed upon him by Henry Carey (author of *Sally in our Alley*, and the clever farce *Chrononhotontho-*

logos), and years after this he wrote a poem to Miss Pul-
tney in the nursery, beginning,—

“Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling,”

which may sufficiently interpret the meaning of his nick-
name. Pope's irritable vanity was vexed at the liberal
praises bestowed on such a rival, and he revenged himself
by an artifice more ingenious than scrupulous. He sent
an anonymous article to Steele for the *Guardian*. It is a
professed continuation of the previous papers on pastorals,
and is ostensibly intended to remove the appearance of
partiality arising from the omission of Pope's name. In
the first paragraphs the design is sufficiently concealed to
mislead an unwary reader into the belief that Philips is
preferred to Pope; but the irony soon becomes transpar-
ent, and Philips's antiquated affectation is contrasted with
the polish of Pope, who is said even to “deviate into down-
right poetry.” Steele, it is said, was so far mystified as to
ask Pope's permission to publish the criticism. Pope gen-
erously permitted, and, accordingly, Steele printed what he
must soon have discovered to be a shrewd attack upon his
old friend and ally. Some writers have found a difficul-
ty in understanding how Steele could have so blundered.
One might, perhaps, whisper in confidence to the discreet,
that even editors are mortal, and that Steele was conceiva-
bly capable of the enormity of reading papers carelessly.
Philips was furious, and hung up a birch in Button's Cof-
fee-house, declaring that he would apply it to his torment-
or should he ever show his nose in the room. As Philips
was celebrated for skill with the sword, the mode of ven-
geance was certainly unmanly, and stung the soul of his
adversary, always morbidly sensitive to all attacks, and es-
pecially to attacks upon his person. The hatred thus kin-

dled was never quenched, and breathes in some of Pope's bitterest lines.

If not a "devilish trick," this little performance was enough to make Pope's relations to the Addison set decidedly unpleasant. Addison is said (but the story is very improbable) to have enjoyed the joke. If so, a vexatious incident must have changed his view of Pope's pleasant-ries, though Pope professedly appeared as his defender. Poor old Thersites-Dennis published, during the summer, a very bitter attack upon Addison's *Cato*. He said afterwards—though, considering the relations of the men, some misunderstanding is probable—that Pope had indirectly instigated this attack through the bookseller, Lintot. If so, Pope must have deliberately contrived the trap for the unlucky Dennis; and, at any rate, he fell upon Dennis as soon as the trap was sprung. Though Dennis was a hot-headed Whig, he had quarrelled with Addison and Steele, and was probably jealous, as the author of tragedies intended, like *Cato*, to propagate Whig principles, perhaps to turn Whig prejudices to account. He writes with the bitterness of a disappointed and unlucky man, but he makes some very fair points against his enemy. Pope's retaliation took the form of an anonymous "Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis."¹ It is written in that style of coarse personal satire of which Swift was a master, but for which Pope was very ill fitted. All his neatness of style seems to desert him when he tries this tone, and nothing is left but a brutal explosion of contemptuous hatred. Dennis is described in his garret, pouring forth insane ravings prompted by his disgust at the success of

¹ Mr. Dilke, it is perhaps right to say, has given some reasons for doubting Pope's authorship of this squib, but the authenticity seems to be established, and Mr. Dilke himself hesitates.

Cato; but not a word is said in reply to Dennis's criticisms. It was plain enough that the author, whoever he might be, was more anxious to satisfy a grudge against Dennis than to defend Dennis's victim. It is not much of a compliment to Addison to say that he had enough good feeling to scorn such a mode of retaliation, and perspicuity enough to see that it would be little to his credit. Accordingly, in his majestic way, he caused Steele to write a note to Lintot (August 4, 1713), disavowing all complicity, and saying that if even he noticed Mr. Dennis's criticisms, it should be in such a way as to give Mr. Dennis no cause of complaint. He added that he had refused to see the pamphlet when it was offered for his inspection, and had expressed his disapproval of such a mode of attack. Nothing could be more becoming; and it does not appear that Addison knew, when writing this note, that Pope was the author of the anonymous assault. If, as the biographers say, Addison's action was not kindly to Pope, it was bare justice to poor Dennis. Pope undoubtedly must have been bitterly vexed at the implied rebuff, and not the less because it was perfectly just. He seems always to have regarded men of Dennis's type as outside the pale of humanity. Their abuse stung him as keenly as if they had been entitled to speak with authority, and yet he retorted it as though they were not entitled to common decency. He would, to all appearance, have regarded an appeal for mercy to a Grub-street author much as Dandie Dinmont regarded Brown's tenderness to a "brock"—as a proof of incredible imbecility, or, rather, of want of proper antipathy to vermin. Dennis, like Philips, was inscribed on the long list of his hatreds; and was pursued almost to the end of his unfortunate life. Pope, it is true, took great credit to himself for helping his miserable enemy when

dying in distress, and wrote a prologue to a play acted for his benefit. Yet even this prologue is a sneer, and one is glad to think that Dennis was past understanding it. We hardly know whether to pity or to condemn the unfortunate poet, whose unworthy hatreds made him suffer far worse torments than those which he could inflict upon their objects.

By this time we may suppose that Pope must have been regarded with anything but favour in the Addison circle; and, in fact, he was passing into the opposite camp, and forming a friendship with Swift and Swift's patrons. No open rupture followed with Addison for the present; but a quarrel was approaching which is, perhaps, the most celebrated in our literary history. Unfortunately, the more closely we look, the more difficult it becomes to give any definite account of it. The statements upon which accounts have been based have been chiefly those of Pope himself; and these involve inconsistencies and demonstrably inaccurate statements. Pope was anxious in later life to show that he had enjoyed the friendship of a man so generally beloved, and was equally anxious to show that he had behaved generously and been treated with injustice and, indeed, with downright treachery. And yet, after reading the various statements made by the original authorities, one begins to doubt whether there was any real quarrel at all; or rather, if one may say so, whether it was not a quarrel upon one side.

It is, indeed, plain that a coolness had sprung up between Pope and Addison. Considering Pope's offences against the senate, his ridicule of Philips, his imposition of that ridicule upon Steele, and his indefensible use of Addison's fame as a stalking-horse in the attack upon Dennis, it is not surprising that he should have been kept at arm's

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length. If the rod suspended by Philips at Button's be authentic (as seems probable), the talk about Pope, in the shadow of such an ornament, is easily imaginable. Some attempts seem to have been made at a reconciliation. Jervas, Pope's teacher in painting—a bad artist, but a kindly man—tells Pope on August 20, 1714, of a conversation with Addison. It would have been worth while, he says, for Pope to have been hidden behind a wainscot or a half-length picture to have heard it. Addison expressed a wish for friendly relations, was glad that Pope had not been "carried too far among the enemy" by Swift, and hoped to be of use to him at Court—for Queen Anne died on August 1st; the wheel had turned; and the Whigs were once more the distributors of patronage. Pope's answer to Jervas is in the dignified tone; he attributes Addison's coolness to the ill offices of Philips, and is ready to be on friendly terms whenever Addison recognises his true character and independence of party. Another letter follows, as addressed by Pope to Addison himself; but here, alas! if not in the preceding letters, we are upon doubtful ground. In fact, it is impossible to doubt that the letter has been manipulated after Pope's fashion, if not actually fabricated. It is so dignified as to be insulting. It is like a box on the ear administered by a pedagogue to a repentant but not quite pardoned pupil. Pope has heard (from Jervas, it is implied) of Addison's profession; he is glad to hope that the effect of some "late malevolences" is disappearing; he will not believe (that is, he is strongly inclined to believe) that the author of *Cato* could mean one thing and say another; he will show Addison his first two books of Homer as a proof of this confidence, and hopes that it will not be abused; he challenges Addison to point out the ill nature in the *Essay upon Criticism*;

and winds up by making an utterly irrelevant charge (as a proof, he says, of his own sincerity) of plagiarism against one of Addison's *Spectators*. Had such a letter been actually sent as it now stands, Addison's good nature could scarcely have held out. As it is, we can only assume that during 1714 Pope was on such terms with the clique at Button's, that a quarrel would be a natural result. According to the ordinary account the occasion presented itself in the next year.

A translation of the first Iliad by Tickell appeared (in June, 1715) simultaneously with Pope's first volume. Pope had no right to complain. No man could be supposed to have a monopoly in the translation of Homer. Tickell had the same right to try his hand as Pope; and Pope fully understood this himself. He described to Spence a conversation in which Addison told him of Tickell's intended work. Pope replied that Tickell was perfectly justified. Addison having looked over Tickell's translation of the first book, said that he would prefer not to see Pope's, as it might suggest double dealing; but consented to read Pope's second book, and praised it warmly. In all this, by Pope's own showing, Addison seems to have been scrupulously fair; and if he and the little senate preferred Tickell's work on its first appearance, they had a full right to their opinion, and Pope triumphed easily enough to pardon them. "He was meditating a criticism upon Tickell," says Johnson, "when his adversary sank before him without a blow." Pope's performance was universally preferred, and even Tickell himself yielded by anticipation. He said, in a short preface, that he had abandoned a plan of translating the whole Iliad on finding that a much abler hand had undertaken the work, and that he only published this specimen to bespeak favour for a

translation of the *Odyssey*. It was, say Pope's apologists, an awkward circumstance that Tickell should publish at the same time as Pope, and that is about all that they can say. It was, we may reply in Stephenson's phrase, very awkward — for Tickell. In all this, in fact, it seems impossible for any reasonable man to discover anything of which Pope had the slightest ground of complaint; but his amazingly irritable nature was not to be calmed by reason. The bare fact that a translation of Homer appeared contemporaneously with his own, and that it came from one of Addison's court, made him furious. He brooded over it, suspected some dark conspiracy against his fame, and gradually mistook his morbid fancies for solid inference. He thought that Tickell had been put up by Addison as his rival, and gradually worked himself into the further belief that Addison himself had actually written the translation which passed under Tickell's name. It does not appear, so far as I know, when or how this suspicion became current. Some time after Addison's death, in 1719, a quarrel took place between Tickell, his literary executor, and Steele. Tickell seemed to insinuate that Steele had not sufficiently acknowledged his obligations to Addison, and Steele, in an angry retort, called Tickell the "reputed translator" of the first *Iliad*, and challenged him to translate another book successfully. The innuendo shows that Steele, who certainly had some means of knowing, was willing to suppose that Tickell had been helped by Addison. The manuscript of Tickell's work, which has been preserved, is said to prove this to be an error, and in any case there is no real ground for supposing that Addison did anything more than he admittedly told Pope, that is, read Tickell's manuscript and suggest corrections.

To argue seriously about other so-called proofs would

be waste of time. They prove nothing except Pope's extreme anxiety to justify his wild hypothesis of a dark conspiracy. Pope was jealous, spiteful, and credulous. He was driven to fury by Tickell's publication, which had the appearance of a competition. But angry as he was, he could find no real cause of complaint, except by imagining a fictitious conspiracy; and this complaint was never publicly uttered till long after Addison's death. Addison knew, no doubt, of Pope's wrath, but probably cared little for it, except to keep himself clear of so dangerous a companion. He seems to have remained on terms of civility with his antagonist, and no one would have been more surprised than he to hear of the quarrel, upon which so much controversy has been expended.

The whole affair, so far as Addison's character is concerned, thus appears to be a gigantic mare's nest. There is no proof, or even the slightest presumption, that Addison or Addison's friends ever injured Pope, though it is clear that they did not love him. It would have been marvellous if they had. Pope's suspicions are a proof that in this case he was almost subject to the illusion characteristic of actual insanity. The belief that a man is persecuted by hidden conspirators is one of the common symptoms in such cases; and Pope would seem to have been almost in the initial stage of mental disease. His madness, indeed, was not such as would lead us to call him morally irresponsible, nor was it the kind of madness which is to be found in a good many people who well deserve criminal prosecution; but it was a state of mind so morbid as to justify some compassion for the unhappy offender.

One result besides the illustration of Pope's character remains to be noticed. According to Pope's assertion it

was a communication from Lord Warwick which led him to write his celebrated copy of verses upon Addison. Warwick (afterwards Addison's step-son) accused Addison of paying Gildon for a gross libel upon Pope. Pope wrote to Addison, he says, the next day. He said in this letter that he knew of Addison's behaviour—and that, unwilling to take a revenge of the same kind, he would rather tell Addison fairly of his faults in plain words. If he had to take such a step, it would be in some such way as followed, and he subjoined the first sketch of the famous lines. Addison, says Pope, used him very civilly ever afterwards. Indeed, if the account be true, Addison showed his Christian spirit by paying a compliment in one of his *Freeholders* (May 17, 1716) to Pope's Homer.

Macaulay, taking the story for granted, praises Addison's magnanimity, which, I must confess, I should be hardly Christian enough to admire. It was, however, asserted at the time that Pope had not written the verses which have made the quarrel memorable till after Addison's death. They were not published till 1723, and are not mentioned by any independent authority till 1722, though Pope afterwards appealed to Burlington as a witness to their earlier composition. The fact seems to be confirmed by the evidence of Lady M. W. Montagu, but it does not follow that Addison ever saw the verses. He knew that Pope disliked him; but he probably did not suspect the extent of the hostility. Pope himself appears not to have devised the worst part of the story—that of Addison having used Tickell's name—till some years later. Addison was sufficiently magnanimous in praising his spiteful little antagonist as it was; he little knew how deeply that antagonist would seek to injure his reputation.

And here, before passing to the work which afforded the main pretext of the quarrel, it may be well to quote once more the celebrated satire. It may be remarked that its excellence is due in part to the fact that, for once, Pope does not lose his temper. His attack is qualified and really sharpened by an admission of Addison's excellence. It is, therefore, a real masterpiece of satire, not a simple lampoon. That it is an exaggeration is undeniable, and yet its very keenness gives a presumption that it is not altogether without foundation.

“Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
 True genius kindles and fair fame inspires;
 Blest with each talent and each art to please,
 And born to write, converse, and live with ease;
 Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
 Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne:
 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
 And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
 Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
 And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike;
 Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;
 Alike reserved to praise or to commend,
 A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;
 Dreading ev'n fools, by flatterers besieged,
 And so obliging that he ne'er obliged;
 Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
 And sit attentive to his own applause;
 While wits and templars every sentence raise,
 And wonder with a foolish face of praise;
 Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
 Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?”

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CHAPTER III.

POPE'S HOMER.

POPE'S uneasy relations with the wits at Button's were no obstacle to his success elsewhere. Swift, now at the height of his power, was pleased by his *Windsor Forest*, recommended it to Stella, and soon made the author's acquaintance. The first letter in their long correspondence is a laboured but fairly successful piece of pleasantry from Pope, upon Swift's having offered twenty guineas to the young Papist to change his religion. It is dated December 8, 1713. In the preceding month Bishop Kennet saw Swift in all his glory, and wrote an often quoted description of the scene. Swift was bustling about in the royal antechamber, swelling with conscious importance, distributing advice, promising patronage, whispering to ministers, and filling the whole room with his presence. He finally "instructed a young nobleman that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, a Papist, who had begun a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe; 'for,' says he, 'the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him!'" Swift introduced Pope to some of the leaders of the ministry, and he was soon acquainted with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, and many other men of high position. Pope was not disinclined to pride himself upon his familiarity

with the great, though boasting at the same time of his independence. In truth, the morbid vanity which was his cardinal weakness seems to have partaken sufficiently of the nature of genuine self-respect to preserve him from any unworthy concessions. If he flattered, it was as one who expected to be repaid in kind; and though his position was calculated to turn the head of a youth of five-and-twenty, he took his place as a right without humiliating his own dignity. Whether from principle or prudence, he judiciously kept himself free from identification with either party, and both sides took a pride in supporting the great literary undertaking which he had now announced.

When Pope first circulated his proposals for translating Homer, Oxford and Bolingbroke were fellow-ministers, and Swift was their most effective organ in the press. At the time at which his first volume appeared, Bolingbroke was in exile, Oxford under impeachment, and Swift had retired, savagely and sullenly, to his deanery. Yet, through all the intervening political tempest, the subscription list grew and flourished. The pecuniary result was splendid. No author had ever made anything approaching the sum which Pope received, and very few authors, even in the present age of gold, would despise such payment. The details of the magnificent bargain have been handed down, and give the pecuniary measure of Pope's reputation.

The Iliad was to be published in six volumes. For each volume Lintot was to pay 200*l.*; and, besides this, he was to supply Pope gratuitously with the copies for his subscribers. The subscribers paid a guinea a volume, and, as 575 subscribers took 654 copies, Pope received altogether 5320*l.* 4*s.* at the regular price, whilst some royal and distinguished subscribers paid larger sums. By the publication of the Odyssey Pope seems to have made about 3500*l.*

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more,¹ after paying his assistants. The result was, there-
fore, a total profit at least approaching 9000*l*. The last
volume of the *Odyssey* did not appear till 1726, and the
payments were thus spread over eleven years. Pope, how-
ever, saved enough to be more than comfortable. In the
South Sea excitement he ventured to speculate; but though
for a time he fancied himself to have made a large sum, he
seems to have retired rather a loser than a gainer. But
he could say with perfect truth that, "thanks to Homer,"
he "could live and thrive, indebted to no prince or peer
alive." The money success is, however, of less interest to
us than the literary. Pope put his best work into the
translation of the *Iliad*. His responsibility, he said, weighed
upon him terribly on starting. He used to dream of being
on a long journey, uncertain which way to go, and doubt-
ing whether he would ever get to the end. Gradually
fell into the habit of translating thirty or forty verses be-
fore getting up, and then "piddling with it" for the rest
of the morning; and the regular performance of his task
made it tolerable. He used, he said at another time, to
take advantage of the "first heat," then correct by the
original and other translations; and finally to "give it a
reading for the versification only." The statement must
be partly modified by the suggestion that the translations
were probably consulted before the original. Pope's igno-
rance of Greek—an awkward qualification for a translator
of Homer—is undeniable. Gilbert Wakefield, who was, I
believe, a fair scholar, and certainly a great admirer of
Pope, declares his conviction to be, after a more careful
examination of the *Homer* than any one is now likely to
give, that Pope "collected the general purport of every

¹ See Elwin's *Pope, Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 129.

passage from some of his predecessors—Dryden” (who only translated the first Iliad), “Dacier, Chapman, or Ogilby.” He thinks that Pope would have been puzzled to catch at once the meaning even of the Latin translation, and points out proofs of his ignorance of both languages, and of “ignominious and puerile mistakes.”

It is hard to understand at the present day the audacity which could lead a man so ill qualified in point of classical acquirements to undertake such a task. And yet Pope undoubtedly achieved, in some true sense, an astonishing success. He succeeded commercially; for Lintot, after supplying the subscription copies gratuitously, and so losing the cream of the probable purchasers, made a fortune by the remaining sale. He succeeded in the judgment both of the critics and of the public of the next generation. Johnson calls the Homer “the noblest version of poetry the world has ever seen.” Gray declared that no other translation would ever equal it, and Gibbon that it had every merit except that of faithfulness to the original. This merit of fidelity, indeed, was scarcely claimed by any one. Bentley’s phrase—“a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer”—expresses the uniform view taken from the first by all who could read both. Its fame, however, survived into the present century. Byron speaks—and speaks, I think, with genuine feeling—of the rapture with which he first read Pope as a boy, and says that no one will ever lay him down except for the original. Indeed, the testimonies of opponents are as significant as those of admirers. Johnson remarks that the Homer “may be said to have tuned the English tongue,” and that no writer since its appearance has wanted melody. Coleridge virtually admits the fact, though drawing a different conclusion, when he says that the trans-

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lation of Homer has been one of the main sources of that "pseudo-poetic diction" which he and Wordsworth were struggling to put out of credit. Cowper, the earliest representative of the same movement, tried to supplant Pope's Homer by his own, and his attempt proved at least the position held in general estimation by his rival. If, in fact, Pope's Homer was a recognized model for near a century, we may dislike the style, but we must admit the power implied in a performance which thus became the accepted standard of style for the best part of a century. How, then, should we estimate the merits of this remarkable work? I give my own opinion upon the subject with diffidence, for it has been discussed by eminently qualified critics. The conditions of a satisfactory translation of Homer have been amply canvassed, and many experiments have been made by accomplished poets who have—what Pope certainly had not—a close acquaintance with the original, and a fine appreciation of its superlative beauties. From the point of view now generally adopted, the task even of criticism requires this double qualification. Not only can no man translate Homer, but no man can even criticise a translation of Homer, without being at once a poet and a fine classical scholar. So far as this is true, I can only apologize for speaking at all, and should be content to refer my readers to such able guides as Mr. Matthew Arnold and the late Professor Conington. And yet I think that something remains to be said which has a bearing upon Pope, however little it may concern Homer.

We—if "we" means modern writers of some classical culture—can claim to appreciate Homer far better than the contemporaries of Pope. But our appreciation involves a clear recognition of the vast difference between

ourselves and the ancient Greeks. We see the Homeric poems in their true perspective through the dim vista of shadowy centuries. We regard them as the growth of a long past stage in the historical evolution; implying a different social order—a different ideal of life—an archaic conception of the world and its forces, only to be reconstructed for the imagination by help of long training and serious study. The multiplicity of the laws imposed upon the translator is the consequence of this perception. They amount to saying that a man must manage to project himself into a distant period, and saturate his mind with the corresponding modes of life. If the feat is possible at all, it requires a great and conscious effort, and the attainment of a state of mind which can only be preserved by constant attention. The translator has to wear a mask which is always in danger of being rudely shattered. Such an intellectual feat is likely to produce what, in the most obvious sense, one would call highly artificial work. Modern classicism must be fine-spun, and smell rather of the hot-house than the open air. Undoubtedly some exquisite literary achievements have been accomplished in this spirit; but they are, after all, calculated for the small circle of cultivated minds, and many of their merits can be appreciated only by professors qualified by special training. Most frequently we can hope for pretty play-things, or, at best, for skilful restorations which show learning and taste far more distinctly than a glowing imagination. But even if an original poet can breathe some spirit into classical poems, the poor translator, with the dread of philologists and antiquarians in the background, is so fettered that free movement becomes almost impossible. No one, I should venture to prophesy, will really succeed in such work unless he frankly accepts the im-

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possibility of reproducing the original, and aims only at an equivalent for some of its aspects. The perception of this change will enable us to realize Pope's mode of approaching the problem. The condemnatory epithet most frequently applied to him is "artificial;" and yet, as I have just said, a modern translator is surely more artificial, so far as he is attempting a more radical transformation of his own thoughts into the forms of a past epoch. But we can easily see in what sense Pope's work fairly deserves the name. The poets of an older period frankly adopted the classical mythology without any apparent sense of incongruity. They mix heathen deities with Christian saints, and the ancient heroes adopt the manners of chivalrous romance without the slightest difficulty. The freedom was still granted to the writers of the renaissance. Milton makes Phœbus and St. Peter discourse in successive stanzas, as if they belonged to the same pantheon. For poetical purposes the old gods are simply canonized as Christian saints, as in a more theological frame of mind they are regarded as devils. In the reign of common sense this was no longer possible. The incongruity was recognized and condemned. The gods were vanishing under the clearer light, as modern thought began more consciously to assert its independence. Yet the unreality of the old mythology is not felt to be any objection to their use as conventional symbols. Homer's gods, says Pope in his preface, are still the gods of poetry. Their vitality was nearly extinct, but they were regarded as convenient personifications of abstract qualities, machines for epic poetry, or figures to be used in allegory. In the absence of a true historical perception, the same view was attributed to Homer. Homer, as Pope admits, did not invent the gods, but he was the "first who

brought them into a system of machinery for poetry," and showed his fertile imagination by clothing the properties of the elements, and the virtues and vices in forms and persons. And thus Pope does not feel that he is diverging from the spirit of the old mythology when he regards the gods, not as the spontaneous growth of the primitive imagination, but as deliberate contrivances intended to convey moral truth in allegorical fables, and probably devised by sages for the good of the vulgar.

The old gods, then, were made into stiff mechanical figures, as dreary as Justice with her scales, or Fame blowing a trumpet on a monument. They belonged to that family of dismal personifications which it was customary to mark with the help of capital letters. Certainly they are a dismal and frigid set of beings, though they still lead a shivering existence on the tops of public monuments, and hold an occasional wreath over the head of a British grenadier. To identify the Homeric gods with these wearisome constructions was to have a more serious disqualification for fully entering into Homer's spirit than even an imperfect acquaintance with Greek, and Pope is greatly exercised in his mind by their eating, and drinking, and fighting, and uncompromising anthropomorphism. He apologizes for his author, and tries to excuse him for unwilling compliance with popular prejudices. The Homeric theology, he urges, was still substantially sound, and Homer had always a distinct moral and political purpose. The *Iliad*, for example, was meant to show the wickedness of quarrelling, and the evil results of an insatiable thirst for glory, though shallow persons have thought that Homer only thought to please.

The artificial diction about which so much has been said is the natural vehicle of this treatment. The set of

phrases, and the peculiar mould into which his sentences were cast, was already the accepted type for poetry which aimed at dignity. He was following Dryden, as his own performance became the law for the next generation. The style in which a woman is called a nymph—and women generally are “the fair”—in which shepherds are conscious swains, and a poet invokes the muses and strikes a lyre, and breathes on a reed, and a nightingale singing becomes Philomel “pouring her throat,” represents a fashion as worn out as hoops and wigs. By the time of Wordsworth it was a mere survival—a dead form remaining after its true function had entirely vanished. The proposal to return to the language of common life was the natural revolt of one who desired poetry to be above all things the genuine expression of real emotion. Yet it is, I think, impossible to maintain that the diction of poetry should be simply that of common life.

The true principle would rather seem to be that any style becomes bad when it dies; when it is used merely as a tradition, and not as the best mode of producing the desired impression; and when, therefore, it represents a rule imposed from without, and is not an expression of the spontaneous working of minds in which the corresponding impulse is thoroughly incarnated. In such a case, no doubt, the diction becomes a burden, and a man is apt to fancy himself a poet because he is the slave of the external form, instead of using it as the most familiar instrument. By Wordsworth's time the Pope style was thus effete; what ought to be the dress of thought had become the rigid armour into which thought was forcibly compressed, and a revolt was inevitable. We may agree, too, that his peculiar style was in a sense artificial, even in the days of Pope. It had come into existence during

the reign of the Restoration wits, under the influence of foreign models, not as the spontaneous outgrowth of a gradual development, and had therefore something mechanical and conscious, even when it flourished most vigorously. It came in with the periwigs, to which it is so often compared, and, like the artificial head-gear, was an attempt to give a dignified or full-dress appearance to the average prosaic human being. Having this innate weakness of pomposity and exaggeration, it naturally expired, and became altogether ridiculous, with the generation to which it belonged. As the wit or man of the world had at bottom a very inadequate conception of epic poetry, he became inevitably strained and contorted when he tried to give himself the airs of a poet.

After making all such deductions, it would still seem that the bare fact that he was working in a generally accepted style gave Pope a very definite advantage. He spoke more or less in a falsetto, but he could at once strike a key intelligible to his audience. An earlier poet would simply annex Homer's gods and fix them with a mediæval framework. A more modern poet tries to find some style which will correspond to the Homeric as closely as possible, and feels that he is making an experiment beset with all manner of difficulties. Pope needed no more to bother himself about such matters than about grammatical or philological refinements. He found a ready-made style which was assumed to be correct; he had to write in regular rhymed couplets, as neatly rhymed and tersely expressed as might be; and the diction was equally settled. He was to keep to Homer for the substance, but he could throw in any little ornaments to suit the taste of his readers; and if they found out a want of scrupulous fidelity, he might freely say that he did not aim at such details.

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Working, therefore, upon the given data, he could enjoy a considerable amount of freedom, and throw his whole energy into the task of forcible expression without feeling himself trammelled at every step. The result would certainly not be Homer, but it might be a fine epic poem as epic poetry was understood in the days of Anne and George I.—a hybrid genus, at the best; something without enough constitutional vigour to be valuable when really original, but not without a merit of its own when modelled upon the lines laid down in the great archetype.

When we look at Pope's Iliad upon this understanding, we cannot fail, I think, to admit that it has merits which make its great success intelligible. If we read it as a purely English poem, the sustained vivacity and emphasis of the style give it a decisive superiority over its rivals. It has become the fashion to quote Chapman since the noble sonnet in which Keats, in testifying to the power of the Elizabethan translator, testifies rather to his own exquisite perception. Chapman was a poet worthy of our great poetic period, and Pope himself testifies to the "daring fiery spirit" which animates his translation, and says that it is not unlike what Homer himself might have written in his youth—surely not a grudging praise. But though this is true, I will venture to assert that Chapman also sins, not merely by his love of quaintness, but by constantly indulging in sheer doggerel. If his lines do not stagnate, they foam and fret like a mountain brook, instead of flowing continuously and majestically like a great river. He surpasses Pope chiefly, as it seems to me, where Pope's conventional verbiage smothers and conceals some vivid image from nature. Pope, of course, was a thorough man of forms, and when he has to speak of sea, or sky, or mountain, generally draws upon the current coin of poetic

phraseology, which has lost all sharpness of impression in its long circulation. Here, for example, is Pope's version of a simile in the fourth book:—

“As when the winds, ascending by degrees,
First move the whitening surface of the seas,
The billows float in order to the shore,
The waves behind roll on the waves before,
Till with the growing storm the deeps arise,
Foam o'er the rocks, and thunder to the skies.”

Each phrase is either wrong or escapes from error by vagueness, and one would swear that Pope had never seen the sea. Chapman says,—

“And as when with the west wind flaws, the sea thrusts up her
waves
One after other, thick and high, upon the groaning shores,
First in herself loud, but opposed with banks and rocks she roars,
And all her back in bristles set, spits every way her foam.”

This is both clumsy and introduces the quaint and unauthorized image of a pig, but it is unmistakably vivid. Pope is equally troubled when he has to deal with Homer's downright vernacular. He sometimes ventures apologetically to give the original word. He allows Achilles to speak pretty vigorously to Agamemnon in the first book:—

“O monster! mix'd of insolence and fear,
Thou dog in forehead, but in heart a deer!”

Chapman translates the phrase more fully, but adds a characteristic quibble:—

“Thou ever steep'd in wine,
Dog's face, with heart but of a hart.”

Tickell manages the imputation of drink, but has to slur over the dog and the deer:—

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"Valiant with wine and furious from the bowl,
Thou fierce-look'd talker, with a coward soul."

Elsewhere Pope hesitates in the use of such plain speaking. He allows Teucer to call Hector a dog, but apologises in a note. "This is literal from the Greek," he says, "and I have ventured it;" though he quotes Milton's "dogs of hell" to back himself with a precedent. But he cannot quite stand Homer's downright comparison of Ajax to an ass, and speaks of him in gingerly fashion as—

"The slow beast with heavy strength endued."

Pope himself thinks the passage "inimitably just and beautiful;" but on the whole, he says, "a translator owes so much to the taste of the age in which he lives as not to make too great a compliment to the former [age]; and this induced me to omit the mention of the word *ass* in the translation." Boileau and Longinus, he tells us, would approve the omission of mean and vulgar words. "Ass" is the vilest word imaginable in English or Latin, but of dignity enough in Greek and Hebrew to be employed "on the most magnificent occasions."

The Homeric phrase is thus often muffled and deadened by Pope's verbiage. Dignity of a kind is gained at the cost of energy. If such changes admit of some apology as an attempt to preserve what is undoubtedly a Homeric characteristic, we must admit that the "dignity" is often false; it rests upon mere mouthing instead of simplicity and directness, and suggests that Pope might have approved the famous emendation "he died in indigent circumstances," for "he died poor." The same weakness is perhaps more annoying when it leads to sins of commission. Pope never scruples to amend Homer by little epigrammatic amplifications, which are characteristic of the

contemporary rhetoric. A single illustration of a fault sufficiently notorious will be sufficient. When Nestor, in the eleventh book, rouses Diomed at night, Pope naturally smoothes down the testy remark of the sleepy warrior; but he tries to improve Nestor's directions. Nestor tells Diomed, in most direct terms, that the need is great, and that he must go at once and rouse Ajax. In Pope's translation we have—

“Each single Greek in this conclusive strife
Stands on the sharpest edge of death or life;
Yet if my years thy kind regard engage,
Employ thy youth as I employ my age;
Succeed to these my cares, and rouse the rest;
He serves me most who serves his country best.”

The false air of epigram which Pope gives to the fourth line is characteristic; and the concluding tag, which is quite unauthorized, reminds us irresistibly of one of the rhymes which an actor always spouted to the audience by way of winding up an act in the contemporary drama. Such embroidery is profusely applied by Pope wherever he thinks that Homer, like Diomed, is slumbering too deeply. And, of course, that is not the way in which Nestor roused Diomed or Homer keeps his readers awake.

Such faults have been so fully exposed that we need not dwell upon them further. They come to this, that Pope was really a wit of the days of Queen Anne, and saw only that aspect of Homer which was visible to his kind. The poetic mood was not for him a fine frenzy—for good sense must condemn all frenzy—but a deliberate elevation of the bard by high-heeled shoes and a full-bottomed wig. Seas and mountains, being invisible from Button's, could only be described by worn phrases from the Latin grammar. Even his narrative must be full of epigrams to avoid the

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one deadly sin of dulness, and his language must be decorous even at the price of being sometimes emasculated. But accept these conditions, and much still remains. After all, a wit was still a human being, and much more nearly related to us than an ancient Greek. Pope's style, when he is at his best, has the merit of being thoroughly alive; there are no dead masses of useless verbiage; every excrescence has been carefully pruned away; slovenly paraphrases and indistinct slurrings over of the meaning have disappeared. He corrected carefully and scrupulously, as his own statement implies, not with a view of transferring as large a portion as possible of his author's meaning to his own verses, but in order to make the versification as smooth and the sense as transparent as possible. We have the pleasure which we receive from really polished oratory; every point is made to tell; if the emphasis is too often pointed by some showy antithesis, we are at least never uncertain as to the meaning; and if the versification is often monotonous, it is articulate and easily caught at first sight. These are the essential merits of good declamation, and it is in the true declamatory passages that Pope is at his best. The speeches of his heroes are often admirable, full of spirit, well balanced and skilfully arranged pieces of rhetoric — not a mere inorganic series of observations. Undoubtedly the warriors are a little too epigrammatic and too consciously didactic; and we feel almost scandalized when they take to downright blows, as though Walpole and St. John were interrupting a debate in the House of Commons by fisticuffs. They would be better in the senate than the field. But the brilliant rhetoric implies also a sense of dignity which is not mere artificial mouthing. Pope, as it seems to me, rises to a level of sustained eloquence when he has to act as interpreter for the

direct expression of broad, magnanimous sentiment. Classical critics may explain by what shades of feeling the aristocratic grandeur of soul of an English noble differed from the analogous quality in heroic Greece, and find the difference reflected in the "grand style" of Pope as compared with that of Homer. But Pope could at least assume with admirable readiness the lofty air of superiority to personal fears, and patriotic devotion to a great cause, which is common to the type in every age. His tendency to didactic platitudes is at least out of place in such cases, and his dread of vulgarity and quaintness, with his genuine feeling for breadth of effect, frequently enables him to be really dignified and impressive. It will, perhaps, be sufficient illustration of these qualities if I conclude these remarks by giving his translation of Hector's speech to Polydamas in the twelfth book, with its famous *εἰς οἰωνός ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης*.

"To him then Hector with disdain return'd;
 (Fierce as he spoke, his eyes with fury burn'd)—
 Are these the faithful counsels of thy tongue?
 Thy will is partial, not thy reason wrong;
 Or if the purpose of thy heart thou sent,
 Sure Heaven resumes the little sense it lent—
 What coward counsels would thy madness move
 Against the word, the will reveal'd of Jove?
 The leading sign, the irrevocable nod
 And happy thunders of the favouring God?
 These shall I slight? And guide my wavering mind
 By wand'ring birds that flit with every wind?
 Ye vagrants of the sky! your wings extend
 Or where the suns arise or where descend;
 To right or left, unheeded take your way,
 While I the dictates of high heaven obey.
 Without a sigh his sword the brave man draws,
 And asks no omen but his country's cause.

But why should'st thou suspect the war's success?
None fears it more, as none promotes it less.
Tho' all our ships amid yon ships expire,
Trust thy own cowardice to escape the fire.
Troy and her sons may find a general grave,
But thou canst live, for thou canst be a slave.
Yet should the fears that wary mind suggests
Spread their cold poison through our soldiers' breasts,
My javelin can revenge so base a part,
And free the soul that quivers in thy heart."

The six volumes of the Iliad were published during the years 1715-1720, and were closed by a dedication to Congreve, who, as an eminent man of letters, not too closely connected with either Whigs or Tories, was the most appropriate recipient of such a compliment. Pope was enriched by his success, and no doubt wearied by his labours. But his restless intellect would never leave him to indulge in prolonged repose, and, though not avaricious, he was not more averse than other men to increasing his fortune. He soon undertook two sufficiently laborious works. The first was an edition of Shakspeare, for which he only received 217*l.* 10*s.*, and which seems to have been regarded as a failure. It led, like his other publications, to a quarrel to be hereafter mentioned, but need not detain us at present. It appeared in 1725, when he was already deep in another project. The success of the Iliad naturally suggested an attempt upon the Odyssey. Pope, however, was tired of translating, and he arranged for assistance. He took into alliance a couple of Cambridge men, who were small poets capable of fairly adopting his versification. One of them was William Broome, a clergyman who held several livings and married a rich widow. Unfortunately his independence did not restrain him from writing poetry, for want of means would have been

the only sufficient excuse. He was a man of some classical attainments, and had helped Pope in compiling notes to the Iliad from Eustathius, an author whom Pope would have been scarcely able to read without such assistance. Elijah Fenton, his other assistant, was a Cambridge man who had sacrificed his claims of preferment by becoming a non-juror, and picked up a living partly by writing and chiefly by acting as tutor to Lord Orrery, and afterwards in the family of Trumball's widow. Pope, who introduced him to Lady Trumball, had also introduced him to Craggs, who, when Secretary of State, felt his want of a decent education, and wished to be polished by some competent person. He seems to have been a kindly, idle, honourable man, who died, says Pope, of indolence, and more immediately, it appears, of the gout. The alliance thus formed was rather a delicate one, and was embittered by some of Pope's usual trickery. In issuing his proposals he spoke in ambiguous terms of two friends who were to render him some undefined assistance, and did not claim to be the translator, but to have undertaken the translation. The assistants, in fact, did half the work, Broome translating eight, and Fenton four, out of the twenty-four books. Pope was unwilling to acknowledge the full amount of their contributions; he persuaded Broome—a weak, good-natured man—to set his hand to a postscript to the Odyssey, in which only three books are given to Broome himself, and only two to Fenton. When Pope was attacked for passing off other people's verses as his own, he boldly appealed to this statement to prove that he had only received Broome's help in three books, and at the same time stated the whole amount which he had paid for the eight, as though it had been paid for the three. When Broome, in spite

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of his subservience, became a little restive under this treatment, Pope indirectly admitted the truth by claiming only twelve books in an advertisement to his works, and in a note to the *Dunciad*, but did not explicitly retract the other statement. Broome could not effectively rebuke his fellow-sinner. He had, in fact, conspired with Pope to attract the public by the use of the most popular name, and could not even claim his own afterwards. He had, indeed, talked too much, according to Pope; and the poet's morality is oddly illustrated in a letter, in which he complains of Broome's indiscretion for letting out the secret; and explains that, as the facts are so far known, it would now be "unjust and dishonourable" to continue the concealment. It would be impossible to accept more frankly the theory that lying is wrong when it is found out. Meanwhile Pope's conduct to his victims or accomplices was not over-generous. He made over 3500*l.* after paying Broome 500*l.* (including 100*l.* for notes) and Fenton 200*l.*—that is, 50*l.* a book. The rate of pay was as high as the work was worth, and as much as it would fetch in the open market. The large sum was entirely due to Pope's reputation, though obtained, so far as the true authorship was concealed, upon something like false pretences. Still, we could have wished that he had been a little more liberal with his share of the plunder. A coolness ensued between the principal and his partners in consequence of these questionable dealings. Fenton seems never to have been reconciled to Pope, though they did not openly quarrel, and Pope wrote a laudatory epitaph for him on his death in 1730. Broome—a weaker man—though insulted by Pope in the *Dunciad* and the *Miscellanies*, accepted a reconciliation, for which Pope seems to have been

eager, perhaps feeling some touch of remorse for the injuries which he had inflicted.

The shares of the three colleagues in the *Odyssey* are not to be easily distinguished by internal evidence. On trying the experiment by a cursory reading, I confess (though a critic does not willingly admit his fallibility) that I took some of Broome's work for Pope's, and, though closer study or an acuter perception might discriminate more accurately, I do not think that the distinction would be easy. This may be taken to confirm the common theory that Pope's versification was a mere mechanical trick. Without admitting this, it must be admitted that the external characteristics of his manner were easily caught; and that it was not hard for a clever versifier to produce something closely resembling his inferior work, especially when following the same original. But it may be added that Pope's *Odyssey* was really inferior to the *Iliad*, both because his declamatory style is more out of place in its romantic narrative, and because he was weary and languid, and glad to turn his fame to account without more labour than necessary. The *Odyssey*, I may say, in conclusion, led to one incidental advantage. It was criticised by Spence, a mild and cultivated scholar, who was professor of poetry at Oxford. His observations, according to Johnson, were candid, though not indicative of a powerful mind. Pope, he adds, had in Spence the first experience of a critic "who censured with respect and praised with alacrity." Pope made Spence's acquaintance, recommended him to patrons, and was repaid with warm admiration."

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CHAPTER IV.

POPE AT TWICKENHAM.

WHEN Pope finished his translation of the Iliad, he was congratulated by his friend Gay in a pleasant copy of verses marked by the usual *bonhomie* of the fat, kindly man. Gay supposes himself to be welcoming his friend on the return from his long expedition.

“Did I not see thee when thou first sett'st sail,
To seek adventures fair in Homer's land?
Did I not see thy sinking spirits fail,
And wish thy bark had never left the strand?
Even in mid ocean often didst thou quail,
And oft lift up thy holy eye and hand,
Praying to virgin dear and saintly choir
Back to the port to bring thy bark entire.”

And now the bark is sailing up the Thames, with bells ringing, bonfires blazing, and “bones and cleavers” clashing. — So splendid a show suggests Lord Mayor's Day, but, in fact, it is only the crowd of Pope's friends come to welcome him on his successful achievement; and a long catalogue follows, in which each is indicated by some appropriate epithet. The list includes some doubtful sympathizers, such as Gildon, who comes “hearing thou hast riches,” and even Dennis, who, in fact, continued to growl out criticisms against the triumphant poet. Steele, too, and Tickell,—

“ Whose skiff (in partnership they say)
Set forth for Greece but founder'd on the way,”

would not applaud very cordially. Addison, their common hero, was beyond the reach of satire or praise. Parnell, who had contributed a life of Homer, died in 1718; and Rowe and Garth, sound Whigs, but friends and often boon companions of the little papist, had followed. Swift was breathing “Bœotian air” in his deanery, and St. John was “confined to foreign climates” for very sufficient reasons. Any such roll-call of friends must show melancholy gaps, and sometimes the gaps are more significant than the names. Yet Pope could boast of a numerous body of men, many of them of high distinction, who were ready to give him a warm welcome. There were, indeed, few eminent persons of the time, either in the political or literary worlds, with whom this sensitive and restless little invalid did not come into contact, hostile or friendly, at some part of his career. His friendships were keen and his hostilities more than proportionally bitter. We see his fragile figure, glancing rapidly from one hospitable circle to another, but always standing a little apart; now paying court to some conspicuous wit, or philosopher, or statesman, or beauty; now taking deadly offence for some utterly inexplicable reason; writhing with agony under clumsy blows which a robuster nature would have met with contemptuous laughter; racking his wits to contrive exquisite compliments, and suddenly exploding in sheer Billingsgate; making a mountain of every mole-hill in his pilgrimage; always preoccupied with his last literary project; and yet finding time for innumerable intrigues, for carrying out schemes of vengeance for wounded vanity, and for introducing himself into every quarrel that was going on around him. In all his multifarious schemes

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and occupations he found it convenient to cover himself by elaborate mystifications, and was as anxious (it would seem) to deceive posterity as to impose upon contemporaries; and hence it is as difficult clearly to disentangle the twisted threads of his complex history as to give an intelligible picture of the result of the investigation. The publication of the *Iliad*, however, marks a kind of central point in his history. Pope has reached independence, and become the acknowledged head of the literary world; and it will be convenient here to take a brief survey of his position, before following out two or three different series of events, which can scarcely be given in chronological order. Pope, when he first came to town and followed Wycherley about like a dog, had tried to assume the airs of a rake. The same tone is adopted in many of his earlier letters. At Binfield he became demure, correct, and respectful to the religious scruples of his parents. In his visits to London and Bath he is little better than one of the wicked. In a copy of verses (not too decent) written in 1715, as a "Farewell to London," he gives us to understand that he has been hearing the chimes at midnight, and knows where the bona-robas dwell. He is forced to leave his jovial friends and his worrying publishers "for Homer (damn him!) calls." He is, so he assures us,

"Still idle, with a busy air
Deep whimsies to contrive;
The gayest valetudinaire,
Most thinking rake alive."

And he takes a sad leave of London pleasures.

"Luxurious lobster nights, farewell,
For sober, studious days!
And Burlington's delicious meal
For salads, tarts, and pease."

Writing from Bath a little earlier, to Teresa and Martha Blount, he employs the same jaunty strain. "Every one," he says, "values Mr. Pope, but every one for a different reason. One for his adherence to the Catholic faith, another for his neglect of Popish superstition; one for his good behaviour, another for his whimsicalities; Mr. Titcomb for his pretty atheistical jests; Mr. Caryll for his moral and Christian sentences; Mrs. Teresa for his reflections on Mrs. Patty; Mrs. Patty for his reflections on Mrs. Teresa." He is an "agreeable rattle;" the accomplished rake, drinking with the wits, though above boozing with the squire, and capable of alleging his drunkenness as an excuse for writing very questionable letters to ladies.

Pope was too sickly and too serious to indulge long in such youthful fopperies. He had no fund of high spirits to draw upon, and his playfulness was too near deadly earnest for the comedy of common life. He had too much intellect to be a mere fribble, and had not the strong animal passions of the thorough debauchee. Age came upon him rapidly, and he had sown his wild oats, such as they were, while still a young man. Meanwhile his reputation and his circle of acquaintances were rapidly spreading, and in spite of all his disqualifications for the coarser forms of conviviality, he took the keenest possible interest in the life that went on around him. A satirist may not be a pleasant companion, but he must frequent society; he must be on the watch for his natural prey; he must describe the gossip of the day, for it is the raw material from which he spins his finished fabric. Pope, as his writings show, was an eager recipient of all current rumours, whether they affected his aristocratic friends or the humble denizens of Grub-street. Fully to elucidate his poems, a commentator requires to have at his fingers' ends

the whole *chronique scandaleuse* of the day. With such tastes, it was natural that, as the subscriptions for his *Homer* began to pour in, he should be anxious to move nearer the great social centre. London itself might be too exciting for his health and too destructive of literary leisure. Accordingly, in 1716, the little property at Binfield was sold, and the Pope family moved to Mawson's New Buildings, on the bank of the river at Chiswick, and "under the wing of my Lord Burlington." He seems to have been a little ashamed of the residence; the name of it is certainly neither aristocratic nor poetical. Two years later, on the death of his father, he moved up the river to the villa at Twickenham, which has always been associated with his name, and was his home for the last twenty-five years of his life. There he had the advantage of being just on the boundary of the great world. He was within easy reach of Hampton Court, Richmond, and Kew; places which, during Pope's residence, were frequently glorified by the presence of George II. and his heir and natural enemy, Frederick, Prince of Wales. Pope, indeed, did not enjoy the honour of any personal interview with royalty. George is said to have called him a very honest man after reading his *Dunciad*; but Pope's references to his Sovereign were not complimentary. There was a report, referred to by Swift, that Pope had purposely avoided a visit from Queen Caroline. He was on very friendly terms with Mrs. Howard—afterwards Lady Suffolk—the powerless mistress, who was intimate with two of his chief friends, Bathurst and Peterborough, and who settled at Marble Villa, in Twickenham. Pope and Bathurst helped to lay out her grounds, and she stayed there to become a friendly neighbour of Horace Walpole, who, unluckily for lovers of gossip, did not become a Twickenhamite until

three years after Pope's death. Pope was naturally more allied with the Prince of Wales, who occasionally visited him, and became intimate with the band of patriots and enthusiasts who saw in the heir to the throne the coming "patriot king." Bolingbroke, too, the great inspirer of the opposition, and Pope's most revered friend, was for ten years at Dawley, within an easy drive. London was easily accessible by road and by the river which bounded his lawn. His waterman appears to have been one of the regular members of his household. There he had every opportunity for the indulgence of his favourite tastes. The villa was on one of the loveliest reaches of the Thames, not yet polluted by the encroachments of London. The house itself was destroyed in the beginning of this century; and the garden (if we may trust Horace Walpole) had been previously spoilt. This garden, says Walpole, was a little bit of ground of five acres, enclosed by three lanes. "Pope had twisted and twirled and rhymed and harmonized this, till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns, opening and opening beyond one another, and the whole surrounded with impenetrable woods." These, it appears, were hacked and hewed into mere desolation by the next proprietor. Pope was, indeed, an ardent lover of the rising art of landscape gardening; he was familiar with Bridgeman and Kent, the great authorities of the time, and his example and precepts helped to promote the development of a less formal style. His theories are partly indicated in the description of Timon's villa.

"His gardens next your admiration call,
On every side you look, behold the wall!
No pleasing intricacies intervene,
No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other."

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Pope's taste, indeed, tolerated various old-fashioned excrescences which we profess to despise. He admired mock classical temples and obelisks erected judiciously at the ends of vistas. His most famous piece of handiwork, the grotto at Twickenham, still remains, and is, in fact, a short tunnel under the high road to connect his grounds with the lawn which slopes to the river. He describes, in a letter to one of his friends, his "temple wholly comprised of shells in the rustic manner," and his famous grotto so provided with mirrors that when the doors are shut it becomes a camera obscura, reflecting hills, river, and boats, and when lighted up glitters with rays reflected from bits of looking-glass in angular form. His friends pleased him by sending pieces of spar from the mines of Cornwall and Derbyshire, petrifications, marble, coral, crystals, and humming-birds' nests. It was, in fact, a gorgeous example of the kind of architecture with which the cit delighted to adorn his country box. The hobby, whether in good taste or not, gave Pope never-ceasing amusement; and he wrote some characteristic verses in its praise.

In his grotto, as he declares in another place, he could sit in peace with his friends, undisturbed by the distant din of the world.

"There my retreat the best companions grace,
Chiefs out of war, and statesmen out of place;
There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
The feast of reason and the flow of soul;
And he whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines
Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines,
Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain
Almost as quickly as he conquer'd Spain."

The grotto, one would fear, was better fitted for frogs than for philosophers capable of rheumatic twinges. But de-

ducting what we please from such utterances on the score of affectation, the picture of Pope amusing himself with his grotto and his plantations, directing old John Searle, his gardener, and conversing with the friends whom he compliments so gracefully, is, perhaps, the pleasantest in his history. He was far too restless and too keenly interested in society and literature to resign himself permanently to any such retreat.

Pope's constitutional irritability kept him constantly on the wing. Though little interested in politics, he liked to be on the edge of any political commotion. He appeared in London on the death of Queen Caroline, in 1737; and Bathurst remarked that "he was as sure to be there in a bustle as a porpoise in a storm." "Our friend Pope," said Jervas not long before, "is off and on, here and there, everywhere and nowhere, *à son ordinaire*, and, therefore as well as we can hope for a carcase so crazy." The Twickenham villa, though nominally dedicated to repose, became, of course, a centre of attraction for the interviewers of the day. The opening lines of the Prologue to the Satires give a vivacious description of the crowds of authors who rushed to "Twitnam," to obtain his patronage or countenance, in a day when editors were not the natural scape-goats of such aspirants.

"What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide;
By land, by water, they renew the charge;
They stop the chariot and they board the barge:
No place is sacred, not the church is free,
E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me."

And even at an earlier period he occasionally retreated from the bustle to find time for his Homer. Lord Har-

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court, the Chancellor in the last years of Queen Anne, allowed him to take up his residence in his old house of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire. He inscribed on a pane of glass in an upper room, "In the year 1718 Alexander Pope finished here the fifth volume of Homer." In his earlier days he was often rambling about on horseback. A letter from Jervas gives the plan of one such jaunt (in 1715), with Arbuthnot and Disney for companions. Arbuthnot is to be commander-in-chief, and allows only a shirt and a cravat to be carried in each traveller's pocket. They are to make a moderate journey each day, and stay at the houses of various friends, ending ultimately at Bath. Another letter of about the same date describes a ride to Oxford, in which Pope is overtaken by his publisher, Lintot, who lets him into various secrets of the trade, and proposes that Pope should turn an ode of Horace whilst sitting under the trees to rest. "Lord, if you pleased, what a clever miscellany might you make at leisure hours!" exclaims the man of business; and though Pope laughed at the advice, we might fancy that he took it to heart. He always had bits of verse on the anvil, ready to be hammered and polished at any moment. But even Pope could not be always writing, and the mere mention of these rambles suggests pleasant lounging through old-world country lanes of the quiet century. We think of the roadside life seen by Parson Adams or Humphry Clinker, and of which Mr. Borrow caught the last glimpse when dwelling in the tents of the Romany. In later days Pope had to put his "crazy carcase" into a carriage, and occasionally came in for less pleasant experiences. Whilst driving home one night from Dawley, in Bolingbroke's carriage and six, he was upset in a stream. He escaped drowning, though the

water was "up to the knots of his periwig," but he was so cut by the broken glass that he nearly lost the use of his right hand. On another occasion Spence was delighted by the sudden appearance of the poet at Oxford, "dreadfully fatigued;" he had good-naturedly lent his own chariot to a lady who had been hurt in an upset, and had walked three miles to Oxford on a sultry day.

A man of such brilliant wit, familiar with so many social circles, should have been a charming companion. It must, however, be admitted that the accounts which have come down to us do not confirm such preconceived impressions. Like his great rival, Addison, though for other reasons, he was generally disappointing in society. Pope, as may be guessed from Spence's reports, had a large fund of interesting literary talk, such as youthful aspirants to fame would be delighted to receive with reverence; he had the reputation for telling anecdotes skilfully, and we may suppose that when he felt at ease, with a respectful and safe companion, he could do himself justice. But he must have been very trying to his hosts. He could seldom lay aside his self-consciousness sufficiently to write an easy letter; and the same fault probably spoilt his conversation. Swift complains of him as a silent and inattentive companion. He went to sleep at his own table, says Johnson, when the Prince of Wales was talking poetry to him—certainly a severe trial. He would, we may guess, be silent till he had something to say worthy of the great Pope, and would then doubt whether it was not wise to treasure it up for preservation in a couplet. His sister declared that she had never seen him laugh heartily; and Spence, who records the saying, is surprised, because Pope was said to have been very lively in his youth; but admits that in later years he never went beyond a "particular easy

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smile." A hearty laugh would have sounded strangely from the touchy, moody, intriguing little man, who could "hardly drink tea without a stratagem." His sensitiveness, indeed, appearing by his often weeping when he read moving passages; but we can hardly imagine him as ever capable of genial self-abandonment.

His unsocial habits, indeed, were a natural consequence of ill-health. He never seems to have been thoroughly well for many days together. He implied no more than the truth when he speaks of his Muse as helping him through that "long disease, his life." Writing to Bathurst in 1728, he says that he does not expect to enjoy any health for four days together; and, not long after, Bathurst remonstrates with him for his carelessness, asking him whether it is not enough to have the headache for four days in the week and be sick for the other three. It is no small proof of intellectual energy that he managed to do so much thorough work under such disadvantages, and his letters show less of the invalid's querulous spirit than we might well have pardoned. Johnson gives a painful account of his physical defects, on the authority of an old servant of Lord Oxford, who frequently saw him in his later years. He was so weak as to be unable to rise to dress himself without help. He was so sensitive to cold that he had to wear a kind of fur doublet under a coarse linen shirt; one of his sides was contracted, and he could scarcely stand upright till he was laced into a boddice made of stiff canvas; his legs were so slender that he had to wear three pairs of stockings, which he was unable to draw on and off without help. His seat had to be raised to bring him to a level with common tables. In one of his papers in the *Guardian* he describes himself apparently as Dick Distich: "a live-

ly little creature, with long legs and arms; a spider¹ is no ill emblem of him; he has been taken at a distance for a small windmill." His face, says Johnson, was "not displeasing," and the portraits are eminently characteristic. The thin, drawn features wear the expression of habitual pain, but are brightened up by the vivid and penetrating eye, which seems to be the characteristic poetical beauty.

• It was, after all, a gallant spirit which got so much work out of this crazy carcase, and kept it going, spite of all its feebleness, for fifty-six years. The servant whom Johnson quotes said that she was called from her bed four times in one night, "in the dreadful winter of Forty," to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought. His constitution was already breaking down, but the intellect was still striving to save every moment allowed to him. His friends laughed at his habit of scribbling upon odd bits of paper. "Paper-sparing" Pope is the epithet bestowed upon him by Swift, and a great part of the Iliad is written upon the backs of letters. The habit seems to have been regarded as illustrative of his economical habits; but it was also natural to a man who was on the watch to turn every fragment of time to account. If anything was to be finished, he must snatch at the brief intervals allowed by his many infirmities. Naturally, he fell into many of the self-indulgent and troublesome ways of the valetudinarian. He was constantly wanting coffee, which seems to have soothed his headaches; and for this and his other wants he used to wear out the servants in his friends' houses by "frequent and frivolous errands." Yet he was apparently a kind master. His servants lived with him

¹ The same comparison is made by Cibber in a rather unsavoury passage.

till they became friends, and he took care to pay so well the unfortunate servant whose sleep was broken by his calls, that she said that she would want no wages in a family where she had to wait upon Mr. Pope. Another form of self-indulgence was more injurious to himself. He pampered his appetite with highly-seasoned dishes, and liked to receive delicacies from his friends. His death was imputed by some of his friends, says Johnson, to "a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to eat potted lampreys." He would always get up for dinner, in spite of headache, when told that this delicacy was provided. Yet, as Johnson also observes, the excesses cannot have been very great, as they did not sooner cut short so fragile an existence. "Two bites and a sup more than your stint," says Swift, "will cost you more than others pay for a regular debauch."

At home, indeed, he appears to have been generally abstemious. Probably the habits of his parents' little household were very simple; and Pope, like Swift, knew the value of independence well enough to be systematically economical. Swift, indeed, had a more generous heart, and a lordly indifference to making money by his writings, which Pope, who owed his fortune chiefly to his Homer, did not attempt to rival. Swift alludes, in his letters to an anecdote, which we may hope does not represent his habitual practice. Pope, it appears, was entertaining a couple of friends, and when four glasses had been consumed from a pint, retired, saying, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine." "I tell that story to everybody," says Swift, "in commendation of Mr. Pope's abstemiousness;" but he tells it, one may guess, with something of a rueful countenance. At times, however, it seems that Pope could give a "splendid dinner," and show no want of the "skill and elegance

which such performances require." Pope, in fact, seems to have shown a combination of qualities which is not uncommon, though sometimes called inconsistent. He valued money as a man values it who has been poor and feels it essential to his comfort to be fairly beyond the reach of want, and was accordingly pretty sharp at making a bargain with a publisher or in arranging terms with a collaborator. But he could also be liberal on occasion. Johnson says that his whole income amounted to about 800*l.* a year, out of which he professed himself able to assign 100*l.* to charity; and though the figures are doubtful, and all Pope's statements about his own proceedings liable to suspicion, he appears to have been often generous in helping the distressed with money, as well as with advice or recommendations to his powerful friends. Pope, by his infirmities and his talents, belonged to the dependent class of mankind. He was in no sense capable of standing firmly upon his own legs. He had a longing, sometimes pathetic and sometimes humiliating, for the applause of his fellows and the sympathy of friends. With feelings so morbidly sensitive, and with such a lamentable incapacity for straightforward openness in any relation of life, he was naturally a dangerous companion. He might be brooding over some fancied injury or neglect, and meditating revenge, when he appeared to be on good terms; when really desiring to do a service to a friend, he might adopt some tortuous means for obtaining his ends, which would convert the service into an injury; and, if he had once become alienated, the past friendship would be remembered by him as involving a kind of humiliation, and therefore supplying additional keenness to his resentment. And yet it is plain that throughout life he was always anxious to lean upon some stronger nature; to have a sturdy supporter whom

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he was too apt to turn into an accomplice; or at least to have some good-natured, easy-going companion, in whose society he might find repose for his tortured nerves. And therefore, though the story of his friendships is unfortunately intertwined with the story of bitter quarrels and indefensible acts of treachery, it also reveals a touching desire for the kind of consolation which would be most valuable to one so accessible to the pettiest stings of his enemies. He had many warm friends, moreover, who, by good fortune or the exercise of unusual prudence, never excited his wrath, and whom he repaid by genuine affection. Some of these friendships have become famous, and will be best noticed in connexion with passages in his future career. It will be sufficient if I here notice a few names, in order to show that a complete picture of Pope's life, if it could now be produced, would include many figures of which we only catch occasional glimpses.

Pope, as I have said, though most closely connected with the Tories and Jacobites, disclaimed any close party connexion, and had some relations with the Whigs. Some courtesies even passed between him and the great Sir Robert Walpole, whose interest in literature was a vanishing quantity, and whose bitterest enemies were Pope's greatest friends. Walpole, however, as we have seen, asked for preferment for Pope's old friend, and Pope repaid him with more than one compliment. Thus, in the Epilogue to the Satires, he says,—

“Seen him I have, but in his happier hour
Of social pleasure, ill exchanged for power.
Seen him, encumber'd with the venal tribe,
Smile without art and win without a bribe.”

Another Whig statesman for whom Pope seems to have entertained an especially warm regard was James Craggs,

Addison's successor as Secretary of State, who died whilst under suspicion of peculation in the South Sea business (1721). The Whig connexion might have been turned to account. Craggs, during his brief tenure of office, offered Pope a pension of 300*l.* a year (from the secret service money), which Pope declined, whilst saying that, if in want of money, he would apply to Craggs as a friend. A negotiation of the same kind took place with Halifax, who aimed at the glory of being the great literary patron. It seems that he was anxious to have the *Homer* dedicated to him, and Pope, being unwilling to gratify him, or, as Johnson says, being less eager for money than Halifax for praise, sent a cool answer, and the negotiation passed off. Pope afterwards revenged himself for this offence by his bitter satire on Bufo in the *Prologue* to his *Satires*, though he had not the courage to admit its obvious application.

Pope deserves the credit of preserving his independence. He would not stoop low enough to take a pension at the price virtually demanded by the party in power. He was not, however, inaccessible to aristocratic blandishments, and was proud to be the valued and petted guest in many great houses. Through Swift he had become acquainted with Oxford, the colleague of Bolingbroke, and was a frequent and intimate guest of the second Earl, from whose servant Johnson derived the curious information as to his habits. Harcourt, Oxford's Chancellor, lent him a house whilst translating *Homer*. Sheffield, the Duke of Buckingham, had been an early patron, and after the duke's death, Pope, at the request of his eccentric duchess, the illegitimate daughter of James II., edited some of his works, and got into trouble for some Jacobite phrases contained in them. His most familiar friend among the opposition magnates was Lord Bathurst, a man of uncommon vivacity

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and good-humour. He was born four years before Pope, and died more than thirty years later, at the age of ninety-one. One of the finest passages in Burke's American speeches turns upon the vast changes which had taken place during Bathurst's lifetime. He lived to see his son Chancellor. Two years before his death the son left the father's dinner-table with some remark upon the advantage of regular habits. "Now the old gentleman's gone," said the lively youth of eighty-nine to the remaining guests, "let's crack the other bottle." Bathurst delighted in planting, and Pope in giving him advice, and in discussing the opening of vistas and erection of temples, and the poet was apt to be vexed when his advice was not taken.

Another friend, even more restless and comet-like in his appearances, was the famous Peterborough, the man who had seen more kings and postilions than any one in Europe; of whom Walsh injudiciously remarked that he had too much wit to be entrusted with the command of an army; and whose victories, soon after the unlucky remark had been made, were so brilliant as to resemble strategical epigrams. Pope seems to have been dazzled by the amazing vivacity of the man, and has left a curious description of his last days. Pope found him on the eve of the voyage in which he died, sick of an agonizing disease, crying out for pain at night, fainting away twice in the morning, lying like a dead man for a time, and in the intervals of pain giving a dinner to ten people, laughing, talking, declaiming against the corruption of the times, giving directions to his workmen, and insisting upon going to sea in a yacht without preparations for landing anywhere in particular. Pope seems to have been specially attracted by such men, with intellects as restless as his own, but with

infinitely more vitality to stand the consequent wear and tear.

We should be better pleased if we could restore a vivid image of the inner circle upon which his happiness most intimately depended. In one relation of life Pope's conduct was not only blameless, but thoroughly loveable. He was, it is plain, the best of sons. Even here, it is true, he is a little too consciously virtuous. Yet when he speaks of his father and mother there are tears in his voice, and it is impossible not to recognize genuine warmth of heart.

" Me let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of reposing age,
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and soothe the bed of death,
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep awhile one parent from the sky!"¹

Such verses are a spring in the desert, a gush of the true feeling, which contrasts with the strained and factitious sentiment in his earlier rhetoric, and almost forces us to love the writer. Could Pope have preserved that higher mood, he would have held our affections as he often delights our intellect.

Unluckily we can catch but few glimpses of Pope's family life; of the old mother and father and the affectionate nurse, who lived with him till 1721, and died during a dangerous illness of his mother's. The father, of whom we hear little after his early criticism of the son's bad "rhymes," died in 1717; and a brief note to Martha Blount gives Pope's feelings as fully as many pages: "My

¹ It is curious to compare these verses with the original copy contained in a letter to Aaron Hill. The comparison shows how skilfully Pope polished his most successful passages.

poor father died last night. Believe, since I don't forget you this moment, I never shall." The mother survived till 1733, tenderly watched by Pope, who would never be long absent from her, and whose references to her are uniformly tender and beautiful. One or two of her letters are preserved. "My Deare,—A letter from your sister just now is come and gone, Mr. Mennock and Charls Rackitt, to take his leve of us; but being nothing in it, doe not send it. . . . Your sister is very well, but your brother is not. There's Mr. Blunt of Maypell Durom is dead, the same day that Mr. Inglefield died. My servis to Mrs. Blounts, and all that ask of me. I hope to here from you, and that you are well, which is my dalye prayers; this with my blessing." The old lady had peculiar views of orthography; and Pope, it is said, gave her the pleasure of copying out some of his Homer, though the necessary corrections gave him and the printers more trouble than would be saved by such an amanuensis. Three days after her death he wrote to Richardson, the painter. "I thank God," he says, "her death was as easy as her life was innocent; and as it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh, there is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity, nay, almost of pleasure, that it is even enviable to behold it. It would afford the finest image of a saint expired that ever painter drew, and it would be the greatest obligation which ever that obliging art could ever bestow upon a friend, if you would come and sketch it for me. I am sure if there be no very prevalent obstacle, you will leave any common business to do this, and I shall hope to see you this evening as late as you will, or to-morrow morning as early, before this winter flower is faded." Swift's comment, on hearing the news, gives the only consolation which Pope could have felt. "She died in ex-

treme old age," he writes, "without pain, under the care of the most dutiful son I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million." And with her death, its most touching and ennobling influence faded from Pope's life. There is no particular merit in loving a mother, but few biographies give a more striking proof that the loving discharge of a common duty may give a charm to a whole character. It is melancholy to add that we often have to appeal to this part of his story, to assure ourselves that Pope was really deserving of some affection.

The part of Pope's history which naturally follows brings us again to the region of unsolved mysteries. The one prescription which a spiritual physician would have suggested in Pope's case would have been the love of a good and sensible woman. A nature so capable of tender feeling and so essentially dependent upon others, might have been at once soothed and supported by a happy domestic life; though it must be admitted that it would have required no common qualifications in a wife to calm so irritable and jealous a spirit. Pope was unfortunate in his surroundings. The bachelor society of that day, not only the society of the Wycherleys and Cromwells, but the more virtuous society of Addison and his friends, was certainly not remarkable for any exalted tone about women. Bolingbroke, Peterborough, and Bathurst, Pope's most admired friends, were all more or less flagrantly licentious; and Swift's mysterious story shows that if he could love a woman, his love might be as dangerous as hatred. In such a school, Pope, eminently malleable to the opinions of his companions, was not likely to acquire a high standard of sentiment. His personal defects were equally against him. His frame was not adapted for the robust gallantry of the

time. He wanted a nurse rather than a wife; and if his infirmities might excite pity, pity is akin to contempt as well as to love. The poor little invalid, brutally abused for his deformity by such men as Dennis and his friends, was stung beyond all self-control by their coarse laughter, and by the consciousness that it only echoed, in a more brutal shape, the judgment of the fine ladies of the time. His language about women, sometimes expressing coarse contempt and sometimes rising to ferocity, is the reaction of his morbid sensibility under such real and imagined scorn.

Such feelings must be remembered in speaking briefly of two love affairs, if they are such, which profoundly affected his happiness. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is amongst the most conspicuous figures of the time. She had been made a toast at the Kitcat Club at the age of eight, and she translated Epictetus (from the Latin) before she was twenty. She wrote verses, some of them amazingly coarse, though decidedly clever, and had married Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu in defiance of her father's will, though even in this, her most romantic proceeding, there are curious indications of a respect for prudential considerations. Her husband was a friend of Addison's, and a Whig; and she accompanied him on an embassy to Constantinople in 1716-17, where she wrote the excellent letters published after her death, and whence she imported the practice of inoculation, in spite of much opposition. A distinguished leader of society, she was also a woman of shrewd intellect and masculine character. In 1739 she left her husband, though no quarrel preceded or followed the separation, and settled for many years in Italy. Her letters are characteristic of the keen woman of the world, with an underlying vein of nobler feeling, per-

verted by harsh experience into a prevailing cynicism. Pope had made her acquaintance before she left England. He wrote poems to her and corrected her verses till she cruelly refused his services, on the painfully plausible ground that he would claim all the good for himself and leave all the bad for her. They corresponded during her first absence abroad. The common sense is all on the lady's side, whilst Pope puts on his most elaborate manners and addresses her in the strained compliments of old-fashioned gallantry. He acts the lover, though it is obviously mere acting, and his language is stained by indelicacies, which could scarcely offend Lady Mary, if we may judge her by her own poetical attempts. The most characteristic of Pope's letters related to an incident at Stanton Harcourt. Two rustic lovers were surprised by a thunderstorm in a field near the house; they were struck by lightning, and found lying dead in each other's arms. Here was an admirable chance for Pope, who was staying in the house with his friend Gay. He wrote off a beautiful letter to Lady Mary,¹ descriptive of the event—a true prose pastoral in the Strephon and Chloe style. He got Lord Harcourt to erect a monument over the common grave of the lovers, and composed a couple of epitaphs, which he submitted to Lady Mary's opinion. She replied by a cruel dose of common sense, and a doggerel epitaph, which turned his fine phrases into merciless ridicule. If the lovers had been spared, she suggests, the first year might

¹ Pope, after his quarrel, wanted to sink his previous intimacy with Lady Mary, and printed this letter as addressed by Gay to Fortescue, adding one to the innumerable mystifications of his correspondence. Mr. Moy Thomas doubts also whether Lady Mary's answer was really sent at the assigned date. The contrast of sentiment is equally characteristic in any case.

probably have seen a beaten wife and a deceived husband, cursing their marriage chain.

“Now they are happy in their doom,
For Pope has writ upon their tomb.”

On Lady Mary's return the intimacy was continued. She took a house at Twickenham. He got Kneller¹ to paint her portrait, and wrote letters expressive of humble adoration. But the tone which did well enough when the pair were separated by the whole breadth of Europe, was less suitable when they were in the same parish. After a time the intimacy faded and changed into mutual antipathy. The specific cause of the quarrel, if cause there was, has not been clearly revealed. One account, said to come from Lady Mary, is at least not intrinsically¹ improbable. According to this story, the unfortunate poet forgot for a moment that he was a contemptible cripple, and forgot also the existence of Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu, and a passionate declaration of love drew from the lady an “immoderate fit of laughter.” Ever afterwards, it is added, he was her implacable enemy. Doubtless, if the story be true, Lady Mary acted like a sensible woman of the world, and Pope was silly as well as immoral. And yet one cannot refuse some pity to the unfortunate wretch, thus roughly jerked back into the consciousness that a fine lady might make a pretty plaything of him, but could not seriously regard him with anything but scorn. Whatever the precise facts, a breach of some sort might have been antici-

¹ Mr. Moy Thomas, in his edition of Lady Mary's letters, considers this story to be merely an echo of old scandal, and makes a different conjecture as to the immediate cause of quarrel. His conjecture seems very improbable to me; but the declaration story is clearly of very doubtful authenticity.

pated. A game of gallantry in which the natural parts are inverted, and the gentleman acts the sentimentalist to the lady's performance of the shrewd cynic, is likely to have awkward results. Pope brooded over his resentment, and years afterwards took a revenge only too characteristic. The first of his imitations of Horace appeared in 1733. It contained a couplet, too gross for quotation, making the most outrageous imputation upon the character of "Sappho." Now, the accusation itself had no relation whatever either to facts or even (as I suppose) to any existing scandal. It was simply throwing filth at random. Thus, when Lady Mary took it to herself, and applied to Pope through Peterborough for an explanation, Pope could make a defence verbally impregnable. There was no reason why Lady Mary should fancy that such a cap fitted; and it was far more appropriate, as he added, to other women notorious for immorality as well as authorship. In fact, however, there can be no doubt that Pope intended his abuse to reach its mark. Sappho was an obvious name for the most famous of poetic ladies. Pope himself, in one of his last letters to her, says that fragments of her writing would please him like fragments of Sappho's; and their mediator, Peterborough, writes of her under the same name in some complimentary and once well-known verses to Mrs. Howard. Pope had himself alluded to her as Sappho in some verses addressed (about 1722) to another lady, Judith Cowper, afterwards Mrs. Madan, who was for a time the object of some of his artificial gallantry. The only thing that can be said is that his abuse was a sheer piece of Billingsgate, too devoid of plausibility to be more than an expression of virulent hatred. He was like a dirty boy who throws mud from

an ambush, and declares that he did not see the victim bespattered.¹

A bitter and humiliating quarrel followed. Lord Hervey, who had been described as "Lord Fanny," in the same satire, joined with his friend, Lady Mary, in writing lampoons upon Pope. The best known was a copy of verses, chiefly, if not exclusively, by Lady Mary, in which Pope is brutally taunted with the personal deformities of his "wretched little carcase," which, it seems, are the only cause of his being "unwhipt, unblanketed, unkick'd." One verse seems to have stung him more deeply, which says that his "crabbed numbers" are

"Hard as his heart and as his birth obscure."

To this and other assaults Pope replied by a long letter, suppressed, however, for the time, which, as Johnson says, exhibits to later readers "nothing but tedious malignity," and is, in fact, a careful raking together of everything likely to give pain to his victim. It was not published till 1751, when both Pope and Hervey were dead. In his later writings he made references to Sappho, which fixed the name upon her, and amongst other pleasant in-

¹ Another couplet in the second book of the *Dunciad* about "hapless Monsieur" and "Lady Maries," was also applied at the time to Lady M. W. Montagu: and Pope in a later note affects to deny, thus really pointing the allusion. But the obvious meaning of the whole passage is that "duchesses and Lady Maries" might be personated by abandoned women, which would certainly be unpleasant for them, but does not imply any imputation upon their character. If Lady Mary was really the author of a "Pop upon Pope"—a story of Pope's supposed whipping in the vein of his own attack upon Dennis, she already considered him as the author of some scandal. The line in the *Dunciad* was taken to allude to a story about a M. Rémond which has been fully cleared up.

sinuations, speaks of a weakness which she shared with Dr. Johnson—an inadequate appreciation of clean linen. More malignant accusations are implied both in his acknowledged and anonymous writings. The most ferocious of all his assaults, however, is the character of Sporus, that is, Lord Hervey, in the epistle to Arbuthnot, where he seems to be actually screaming with malignant fury. He returns the taunts as to effeminacy, and calls his adversary a “mere white curd of asses’ milk,”—an innocent drink, which he was himself in the habit of consuming.

We turn gladly from these miserable hostilities, disgraceful to all concerned. Were any excuse available for Pope, it would be in the brutality of taunts, coming not only from rough dwellers in Grub-street, but from the most polished representatives of the highest classes, upon personal defects, which the most ungenerous assailant might surely have spared. But it must also be granted that Pope was neither the last to give provocation, nor at all inclined to refrain from the use of poisoned weapons.

The other connexion of which I have spoken has also its mystery—like everything else in Pope’s career. Pope had been early acquainted with Teresa and Martha Blount. Teresa was born in the same year as Pope, and Martha two years later.¹ They were daughters of Lister Blount, of Mapledurham; and after his death, in 1710, and the marriage of their only brother, in 1711, they lived with

¹ The statements as to the date of the acquaintance are contradictory. Martha told Spence that she first knew Pope as a “very little girl,” but added that it was after the publication of the *Essay on Criticism*, when she was twenty-one; and at another time, that it was after he had begun the *Iliad*, which was later than part of the published correspondence.

their mother in London, and passed much of the summer near Twickenham. They seem to have been lively young women who had been educated at Paris. Teresa was the most religious, and the greatest lover of London society. I have already quoted a passage or two from the early letters addressed to the two sisters. It has also to be said that he was guilty of writing to them stuff which it is inconceivable that any decent man should have communicated to a modest woman. They do not seem to have taken offence. He professes himself the slave of both alternately or together. "Even from my infancy," he says (in 1714), "I have been in love with one or other of you week by week, and my journey to Bath fell out in the 376th week of the reign of my sovereign lady Sylvia. At the present writing hereof, it is the 389th week of the reign of your most serene majesty, in whose service I was listed some weeks before I beheld your sister." He had suggested to Lady Mary that the concluding lines of *Eloisa* contained a delicate compliment to her; and he characteristically made a similar insinuation to Martha Blount about the same passage. Pope was decidedly an economist even of his compliments. Some later letters are in less artificial language, and there is a really touching and natural letter to Teresa in regard to an illness of her sister's. After a time, we find that some difficulty has arisen. He feels that his presence gives pain; when he comes he either makes her (apparently Teresa) uneasy, or he sees her unkind. Teresa, it would seem, is jealous, and disapproves of his attentions to Martha. In the midst of this we find that in 1717 Pope settled an annuity upon Teresa of 40*l.* a year for six years, on condition of her not being married during that time. The fact has suggested various speculations, but was, perhaps, only a part of some

family arrangement, made convenient by the diminished fortunes of the ladies. Whatever the history, Pope gradually became attached to Martha, and simultaneously came to regard Teresa with antipathy. Martha, in fact, became by degrees almost a member of his household. His correspondents take for granted that she is his regular companion. He writes of her to Gay, in 1730, as "a friend—a woman friend, God help me!—with whom I have spent three or four hours a day these fifteen years." In his last years, when he was most dependent upon kindness, he seems to have expected that she should be invited to any house which he was himself to visit. Such a close connexion naturally caused some scandal. In 1725 he defends himself against "villanous lying tales" of this kind to his old friend Caryll, with whom the Blounts were connected. At the same time he is making bitter complaints of Teresa. He accused her afterwards (1729) of having an intrigue with a married man, of "striking, pinching, and abusing her mother to the utmost shamefulness." The mother, he thinks, is too meek to resent this tyranny, and Martha, as it appears, refuses to believe the reports against her sister. Pope audaciously suggests that it would be a good thing if the mother could be induced to retire to a convent, and is anxious to persuade Martha to leave so painful a home. The same complaints reappear in many letters, but the position remained unaltered. It is impossible to say with any certainty what may have been the real facts. Pope's mania for suspicion deprives his suggestions of the slightest value. The only inference to be drawn is, that he drew closer to Martha Blount as years went by, and was anxious that she should become independent of her family. This naturally led to mutual dislike and suspicion,

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but nobody can now say whether Teresa pinched her mother, nor what would have been her account of Martha's relations to Pope.

Johnson repeats a story that Martha neglected Pope "with shameful unkindness," in his later years. It is clearly exaggerated or quite unfounded. At any rate, the poor sickly man, in his premature and childless old age, looked up to her with fond affection, and left to her nearly the whole of his fortune. His biographers have indulged in discussions—surely superfluous—as to the morality of the connexion. There is no question of seduction, or of tampering with the affections of an innocent woman. Pope was but too clearly disqualified from acting the part of Lothario. There was not in his case any Vanessa to give a tragic turn to the connexion, which otherwise resembled Swift's connexion with Stella. Miss Blount, from all that appears, was quite capable of taking care of herself, and, had she wished for marriage, need only have intimated her commands to her lover. It is probable enough that the relations between them led to very unpleasant scenes in her family; but she did not suffer otherwise in accepting Pope's attentions. The probability seems to be that the friendship had become imperceptibly closer, and that what began as an idle affectation of gallantry was slowly changed into a devoted attachment, but not until Pope's health was so broken that marriage would then, if not always, have appeared to be a mockery.

Poets have a bad reputation as husbands. Strong passions and keen sensibilities may easily disqualify a man for domestic tranquillity, and prompt a revolt against rules essential to social welfare. Pope, like other poets from Shakspeare to Shelley, was unfortunate in his love affairs; but his ill-fortune took a characteristic shape. He was

not carried away, like Byron and Burns, by overpowering passions. Rather the emotional power which lay in his nature was prevented from displaying itself by his physical infirmities, and his strange trickiness and morbid irritability. A man who could not make tea without a stratagem, could hardly be a downright lover. We may imagine that he would at once make advances and retract them; that he would be intolerably touchy and suspicious; that every coolness would be interpreted as a deliberate insult, and that the slightest hint would be enough to set his jealousy in a flame. A woman would feel that, whatever his genius and his genuine kindness, one thing was impossible with him—that is, a real confidence in his sincerity; and therefore, on the whole, it may, perhaps, be reckoned as a piece of good fortune for the most wayward and excitable of sane mankind that, if he never fully gained the most essential condition of all human happiness, he yet formed a deep and lasting attachment to a woman who, more or less, returned his feeling. In a life so full of bitterness, so harassed by physical pain, one is glad to think, even whilst admitting that the suffering was in great part foolish self-torture, and in part inflicted as a retribution for injuries to others, that some glow of feminine kindness might enlighten the dreary stages of his progress through life. The years left to him after the death of his mother were few and evil, and it would be hard to grudge him such consolation as he could receive from the glances of Patty Blount's blue eyes—the eyes which, on Walpole's testimony, were the last remains of her beauty.

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CHAPTER V.

THE WAR WITH THE DUNCES.

IN the *Dunciad*, published soon after the *Odyssey*, Pope laments ten years spent as a commentator and translator. He was not without compensation. The drudgery—for the latter part of his task must have been felt as drudgery—once over, he found himself in a thoroughly independent position, still on the right side of forty, and able to devote his talents to any task which might please him. The task which he actually chose was not calculated to promote his happiness. We must look back to an earlier period to explain its history. During the last years of Queen Anne, Pope had belonged to a “little senate” in which Swift was the chief figure. Though Swift did not exercise either so gentle or so imperial a sway as Addison, the cohesion between the more independent members of this rival clique was strong and lasting. They amused themselves by projecting the Scriblerus Club, a body which never had, it would seem, any definite organization, but was held to exist for the prosecution of a design never fully executed. Martinus Scriblerus was the name of an imaginary pedant—a precursor and relative of Dr. Dryasdust—whose memoirs and works were to form a satire upon stupidity in the guise of learning. The various members of the club were to share in the compilation; and if such joint-stock undertakings were practicable in

literature, it would be difficult to collect a more brilliant set of contributors. After Swift—the terrible humourist of whom we can hardly think without a mixture of horror and compassion—the chief members were Atterbury, Arbuthnot, Gay, Parnell, and Pope himself. Parnell, an amiable man, died in 1717, leaving works which were edited by Pope in 1722. Atterbury, a potential Wolsey or Laud born in an uncongenial period, was a man of fine literary taste—a warm admirer of Milton (though he did exhort Pope to put *Samson Agonistes* into civilised costume—one of the most unlucky suggestions ever made by mortal man), a judicious critic of Pope himself, and one who had already given proofs of his capacity in literary warfare by his share in the famous controversy with Bentley. Though no one now doubts the measureless superiority of Bentley, the clique of Swift and Pope still cherished the belief that the wit of Atterbury and his allies had triumphed over the ponderous learning of the pedant. Arbuthnot, whom Swift had introduced to Pope as a man who could do everything but walk, was an amiable and accomplished physician. He was a strong Tory and High-Churchman, and retired for a time to France upon the death of Anne and the overthrow of his party. He returned, however, to England, resumed his practice, and won Pope's warmest gratitude by his skill and care. He was a man of learning, and had employed it in an attack upon Woodward's geological speculations, as already savouring of heterodoxy. He possessed also a vein of genuine humour, resembling that of Swift, though it has rather lost its savour, perhaps, because it was not salted by the Dean's misanthropic bitterness. If his good humour weakened his wit, it gained him the affections of his friends, and was never soured by the sufferings of his later years. Finally, John Gay, though

fat, lazy, and wanting in manliness of spirit, had an illimitable flow of good-tempered banter; and if he could not supply the learning of Arbuthnot, he could give what was more valuable, touches of fresh natural simplicity, which still explain the liking of his friends. Gay, as Johnson says, was the general favourite of the wits, though a play-fellow rather than a partner, and treated with more fondness than respect. Pope seems to have loved him better than any one, and was probably soothed by his easy-going, unsuspecting temper. They were of the same age; and Gay, who had been apprenticed to a linen-draper, managed to gain notice by his poetical talents, and was taken up by various great people. Pope said of him that he wanted independence of spirit, which is indeed obvious enough. He would have been a fitting inmate of Thomson's Castle of Indolence. He was one of those people who consider that Providence is bound to put food into their mouths without giving them any trouble; and, as sometimes happens, his draft upon the general system of things was honoured. He was made comfortable by various patrons; the Duchess of Queensberry petted him in his later years, and the duke kept his money for him. His friends chose to make a grievance of the neglect of Government to add to his comfort by a good place; they encouraged him to refuse the only place offered as not sufficiently dignified; and he even became something of a martyr when his *Polly*, a sequel to the *Beggars' Opera*, was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain, and a good subscription made him amply amends. Pope has immortalized the complaint by lamenting the fate of "neglected genius" in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, and declaring that the "sole return" of all Gay's "blameless life" was

"My verse and Queensberry weeping o'er thy urn."

Pope's alliance with Gay had various results. Gay continued the war with Ambrose Philips by writing burlesque pastorals, of which Johnson truly says that they show "the effect of reality and truth, even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded." They may still be glanced at with pleasure. Soon after the publication of the mock pastorals, the two friends, in company with Arbuthnot, had made an adventure more in the spirit of the Scriblerus Club. A farce called *Three Hours after Marriage* was produced and damned in 1717. It was intended (amongst other things) to satirize Pope's old enemy Dennis, called "Sir Tremendous," as an embodiment of pedantic criticism, and Arbuthnot's old antagonist Woodward. A taste for fossils, mummies or antiquities was at that time regarded as a fair butt for unsparing ridicule; but the three great wits managed their assault so clumsily as to become ridiculous themselves; and Pope, as we shall presently see, smarted as usual under failure.

After Swift's retirement to Ireland, and during Pope's absorption in Homer, the Scriblerus Club languished. Some fragments, however, of the great design were executed by the four chief members, and the dormant project was revived, after Pope had finished his Homer, on occasion of the last two visits of Swift to England. He passed six months in England, from March to August, 1726, and had brought with him the MS. of Gulliver's Travels, the greatest satire produced by the Scriblerians. He passed a great part of his time at Twickenham, and in rambling with Pope or Gay about the country. Those who do not know how often the encounter of brilliant wits tends to neutralize rather than stimulate their activity, may wish to have been present at a dinner which took place at Twickenham on July 6, 1726, when the party was made up of

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Pope, the most finished poet of the day; Swift, the deepest humourist; Bolingbroke, the most brilliant politician; Congreve, the wittiest writer of comedy; and Gay, the author of the most successful burlesque. The envious may console themselves by thinking that Pope very likely went to sleep, that Swift was deaf and overbearing, that Congreve and Bolingbroke were painfully witty, and Gay frightened into silence. When, in 1727, Swift again visited England, and stayed at Twickenham, the clouds were gathering. The scene is set before us in some of Swift's verses:—

“Pope has the talent well to speak,
But not to reach the ear;
His loudest voice is low and weak,
The dean too deaf to hear.

“Awhile they on each other look,
Then different studies choose;
The dean sits plodding o'er a book,
Pope walks and courts the muse.”

“Two sick friends,” says Swift in a letter written after his return to Ireland, “never did well together.” It is plain that their infirmities had been mutually trying, and on the last day of August Swift suddenly withdrew from Twickenham, in spite of Pope's entreaties. He had heard of the last illness of Stella, which was finally to crush his happiness. Unable to endure the company of friends, he went to London in very bad health, and thence, after a short stay, to Ireland, leaving behind him a letter which, says Pope, “affected me so much that it made me like a girl.” It was a gloomy parting, and the last. The stern Dean retired to die “like a poisoned rat in a hole,” after long years of bitterness, and finally of slow intellectual decay. He always retained perfect confidence in his friend's

affection. Poor Pope, as he says in the verses on his own death,—

"Will grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day;"

and they were the only friends to whom he attributes sincere sorrow.

Meanwhile two volumes of *Miscellanies*, the joint work of the four wits, appeared in June, 1727; and a third in March, 1728. A fourth, hastily got up, was published in 1732. They do not appear to have been successful. The copyright of the three volumes was sold for 225*l.*, of which Arbuthnot and Gay received each 50*l.*, whilst the remainder was shared between Pope and Swift; and Swift seems to have given his part, according to his custom, to the widow of a respectable Dublin bookseller. Pope's correspondence with the publisher shows that he was entrusted with the financial details, and arranged them with the sharpness of a practised man of business. The whole collection was made up in great part of old scraps, and savoured of book-making, though Pope speaks complacently of the joint volumes, in which he says to Swift, "We look like friends, side by side, serious and merry by turns, conversing interchangeably, and walking down, hand in hand, to posterity." Of the various fragments contributed by Pope, there is only one which need be mentioned here—the treatise on Bathos in the third volume, in which he was helped by Arbuthnot. He told Swift privately that he had "entirely methodized and in a manner written it all," though he afterwards chose to denounce the very same statement as a lie when the treatise brought him into trouble. It is the most amusing of his prose writings, consisting essentially of a collection of absurdities from various authors, with some apparently invented for the occasion, such as the familiar

“Ye gods, annihilate but space and time,
And make two lovers happy!”

and ending with the ingenious receipt to make an epic poem. Most of the passages ridiculed—and, it must be said, very deservedly—were selected from some of the various writers to whom, for one reason or another, he owed a grudge. Ambrose Philips and Dennis, his old enemies, and Theobald, who had criticised his edition of Shakespeare, supply several illustrations. Blackmore had spoken very strongly of the immorality of the wits in some prose essays; Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, and a parody of the first psalm, anonymously circulated, but known to be Pope's, had been severely condemned; and Pope took a cutting revenge by plentiful citations from Blackmore's most ludicrous bombast; and even Broome, his colleague in *Homer*, came in for a passing stroke, for Broome and Pope were now at enmity. Finally, Pope fired a general volley into the whole crowd of bad authors by grouping them under the head of various animals—tortoises, parrots, frogs, and so forth—and adding under each head the initials of the persons described. He had the audacity to declare that the initials were selected at random. If so, a marvellous coincidence made nearly every pair of letters correspond to the name and surname of some contemporary poetaster. The classification was rather vague, but seems to have given special offence.

Meanwhile Pope was planning a more elaborate campaign against his adversaries. He now appeared for the first time as a formal satirist, and the *Dunciad*, in which he came forward as the champion of Wit, taken in its broad sense, against its natural antithesis, Dulness, is in some respects his masterpiece. It is addressed to Swift, who probably assisted at some of its early stages. O thou, exclaims the poet—

“O thou, whatever title please thine ear,
Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver!
Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
Or laugh and shake in Rabelais's easy-chair—”

And we feel that Swift is present in spirit throughout the composition. “The great fault of the *Dunciad*,” says Warton, an intelligent and certainly not an over-severe critic, “is the excessive vehemence of the satire. It has been compared,” he adds, “to the geysers propelling a vast column of boiling water by the force of subterranean fire;” and he speaks of some one who, after reading a book of the *Dunciad*, always soothes himself by a canto of the *Faery Queen*. Certainly a greater contrast could not easily be suggested; and yet I think that the remark requires at least modification. The *Dunciad*, indeed, is, beyond all question, full of coarse abuse. The second book, in particular, illustrates that strange delight in the physically disgusting which Johnson notices as characteristic of Pope and his master, Swift. In the letter prefixed to the *Dunciad*, Pope tries to justify his abuse of his enemies by the example of Boileau, whom he appears to have considered as his great prototype. But Boileau would have been revolted by the brutal images which Pope does not hesitate to introduce; and it is a curious phenomenon that the poet who is pre-eminently the representative of polished society should openly take such pleasure in unmixed filth. Polish is sometimes very thin. It has been suggested that Swift, who was with Pope during the composition, may have been directly responsible for some of these brutalities. At any rate, as I have said, Pope has here been working in the Swift spirit, and this gives, I think, the key-note of his *Dunciad*.

The geyser comparison is so far misleading that Pope

is not in his most spiteful mood. There is not that infusion of personal venom which appears so strongly in the character of Sporus and similar passages. In reading them we feel that the poet is writhing under some bitter mortification, and trying with concentrated malice to sting his adversary in the tenderest places. We hear a tortured victim screaming out the shrillest taunts at his tormentor. The abuse in the *Dunciad* is by comparison broad and even jovial. The tone at which Pope is aiming is that suggested by the "laughing and shaking in Rabelais's easy-chair." It is meant to be a boisterous guffaw from capacious lungs, an enormous explosion of superlative contempt for the mob of stupid thick-skinned scribblers. They are to be overwhelmed with gigantic cachinnations, ducked in the dirtiest of drains, rolled over and over with rough horseplay, pelted with the least savoury of rotten eggs, not skilfully anatomized or pierced with dexterously directed needles. Pope has really stood by too long, watching their tiresome antics and receiving their taunts, and he must, once for all, speak out and give them a lesson.

"Out with it, Dunciad! let the secret pass,
That secret to each fool—that he's an ass!"

That is his account of his feelings in the prologue to the *Satires*, and he answers the probable remonstrance.

"You think this cruel? Take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool."

To reconcile us to such laughter, it should have a more genial tone than Pope could find in his nature. We ought to feel, and we certainly do not feel, that after the joke has been fired off there should be some possibility of reconciliation, or, at least, we should find some recognition of the

fact that the victims are not to be hated simply because they were not such clever fellows as Pope. There is something cruel in Pope's laughter, as in Swift's. The missiles are not mere filth, but are weighted with hard materials that bruise and mangle. He professes that his enemies were the first aggressors, a plea which can be only true in part; and he defends himself, feebly enough, against the obvious charge that he has ridiculed men for being obscure, poor, and stupid—faults not to be amended by satire, nor rightfully provocative of enmity. In fact, Pope knows in his better moments that a man is not necessarily wicked because he sleeps on a bulk, or writes verses in a garret; but he also knows that to mention those facts will give his enemies pain, and he cannot refrain from the use of so handy a weapon.

Such faults make one half ashamed of confessing to reading the *Dunciad* with pleasure; and yet it is frequently written with such force and freedom that we half pardon the cruel little persecutor, and admire the vigour with which he throws down the gauntlet to the natural enemies of genius. The *Dunciad* is modelled upon the *Mac Flecknoe*, in which Dryden celebrates the appointment of Elkanah Shadwell to succeed Flecknoe as monarch of the realms of Dulness, and describes the coronation ceremonies. Pope imitates many passages, and adopts the general design. Though he does not equal the vigour of some of Dryden's lines, and wages war in a more ungenerous spirit, the *Dunciad* has a wider scope than its original, and shows Pope's command of his weapons in occasional felicitous phrases, in the vigour of the versification, and in the general sense of form and clear presentation of the scene imagined. For a successor to the great empire of Dulness he chose (in the original form of

the poem) the unlucky Theobald, a writer to whom the merit is attributed of having first illustrated Shakspeare by a study of the contemporary literature. In doing this he had fallen foul of Pope, who could claim no such merit for his own editorial work, and Pope, therefore, regarded him as a grovelling antiquarian. As such, he was a fit pretender enough to the throne once occupied by Settle. The *Dunciad* begins by a spirited description of the goddess brooding in her cell upon the eve of a Lord Mayor's day, when the proud scene was o'er,

"But lived in Settle's numbers one day more."

The predestined hero is meanwhile musing in his Gothic library, and addresses a solemn invocation to Dulness, who accepts his sacrifice—a pile of his own works—transports him to her temple, and declares him to be the legitimate successor to the former rulers of her kingdom. The second book describes the games held in honour of the new ruler. Some of them are, as a frank critic observes, "beastly;" but a brief report of the least objectionable may serve as a specimen of the whole performance. Dulness, with her court descends

"To where Fleet Ditch with disemboing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The king of dykes than whom no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.—
Here strip, my children, here at once leap in;
Here prove who best can dash through thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel."

And, certainly by the poet's account, they all love it as well as their betters. The competitors in this contest are drawn from the unfortunates immersed in what Warburton calls "the common sink of all such writers (as

Ralph)—a political newspaper." They were all hateful, partly because they were on the side of Walpole, and therefore, by Pope's logic, unprincipled hirelings, and more, because in that cause, as others, they had assaulted Pope and his friend. There is Oldmixon, a hack writer employed in compilations, who accused Atterbury of falsifying Clarendon, and was accused of himself falsifying historical documents in the interests of Whiggism; and Smedley, an Irish clergyman, a special enemy of Swift's, who had just printed a collection of assaults upon the miscellanies called *Gulliveriana*; and Concanen, another Irishman, an ally of Theobald's, and (it may be noted) of Warburton's, who attacked the *Bathos*, and received—of course, for the worst services—an appointment in Jamaica; and Arnall, one of Walpole's most favoured journalists, who was said to have received for himself or others near 11,000*l.* in four years. Each dives in a way supposed to be characteristic, Oldmixon with the pathetic exclamation,

"And am I now threescore ?

Ah, why, ye gods, should two and two make four?"

Concanen, "a cold, long-winded native of the deep," dives perseveringly, but without causing a ripple in the stream :

"Not so bold Arnall—with a weight of skull

Furious he dives, precipitately dull,"

and ultimately emerges to claim the prize, "with half the bottom on his head." But Smedley, who has been given up for lost, comes up,

"Shaking the horrors of his sable brows,"

and relates how he has been sucked in by the mud-nymphs, and how they have shown him a branch of Styx which

here pours into the Thames, and diffuses its soporific vapours over the temple and its purlieus. He is solemnly welcomed by Milbourn (a reverend antagonist of Dryden), who tells him to "receive these robes which once were mine,"

"Dulness is sacred in a sound divine."

The games are concluded in the second book; and in the third the hero, sleeping in the Temple of Dulness, meets in a vision the ghost of Settle, who reveals to him the future of his empire; tells how Dulness is to overspread the world, and revive the triumphs of Goths and monks; how the hated Dennis, and Gildon, and others, are to overwhelm scorners, and set up at court, and preside over arts and sciences, though a fit of temporary sanity causes him to give a warning to the deists—

"But learn, ye dunces! not to scorn your God—"

and how posterity is to witness the decay of the stage, under a deluge of silly farce, opera, and sensation dramas; how bad architects are to deface the works of Wren and Inigo Jones; whilst the universities and public schools are to be given up to games and idleness, and the birch is to be abolished.

Fragments of the prediction have not been entirely falsified, though the last couplet intimates a hope:

"Enough! enough! the raptured monarch cries,
And through the ivory gate the vision flies."

The *Dunciad* was thus a declaration of war against the whole tribe of scribblers; and, like other such declarations, it brought more consequences than Pope foresaw. It introduced Pope to a very dangerous line of conduct. Swift had written to Pope in 1725: "Take care that the

bad poets do not outwit you, as they have served the good ones in every age, whom they have provoked to transmit their names to posterity;" and the *Dunciad* has been generally censured from Swift's point of view. Satire, it is said, is wasted upon such insignificant persons. To this Pope might have replied, with some plausibility, that the interest of satire must always depend upon its internal qualities, not upon our independent knowledge of its object. Though Gildon and Arnall are forgotten, the type "dunce" is eternal. The warfare, however, was demoralizing in another sense. Whatever may have been the injustice of Pope's attacks upon individuals, the moral standard of the Grub-street population was far from exalted. The poor scribbler had too many temptations to sell himself, and to evade the occasional severity of the laws of libel by humiliating contrivances. Moreover, the uncertainty of the law of copyright encouraged the lower class of booksellers to undertake all kinds of piratical enterprises, and to trade in various ways upon the fame of well-known authors, by attributing trash to them, or purloining and publishing what the authors would have suppressed. Dublin was to London what New York is now, and successful books were at once reproduced in Ireland. Thus the lower strata of the literary class frequently practised with impunity all manner of more or less discreditable trickery, and Pope, with his morbid propensity for mystification, was only too apt a pupil in such arts. Though the tone of his public utterances was always of the loftiest, he was like a civilized commander who, in carrying on a war with savages, finds it convenient to adopt the practices which he professes to disapprove.

The whole publication of the *Dunciad* was surrounded with tricks, intended partly to evade possible conse-

quences, and partly to excite public interest, or to cause amusement at the expense of the bewildered victims. Part of the plot was concerted with Swift, who, however, does not appear to have been quite in the secret. The complete poem was intended to appear with an elaborate mock commentary by Scriblerus, explaining some of the allusions, and with "proeme, prolegomena, testimonia scriptorum, index auctorum, and notæ variorum." In the first instance, however, it appeared in a mangled form without this burlesque apparatus or the lines to Swift. Four editions were issued in this form in 1728, and with a mock notice from the publisher, expressing a hope that the author would be provoked to give a more perfect edition. This, accordingly, appeared in 1729. Pope seems to have been partly led to this device by a principle which he avowed to Warburton. When he had anything specially sharp to say he kept it for a second edition, where it would, he thought, pass with less offence. But he may also have been under the impression that all the mystery of apparently spurious editions would excite public curiosity. He adopted other devices for avoiding unpleasant consequences. It was possible that his victims might appeal to the law. In order to throw dust in their eyes, two editions appeared in Dublin and London—the Dublin edition professing to be a reprint from a London edition, whilst the London edition professed in the same way to be the reprint of a Dublin edition. To oppose another obstacle to prosecutors, he assigned the *Dunciad* to three noblemen—Lords Bathurst, Burlington, and Oxford—who transferred their right to Pope's publisher. Pope would be sheltered behind these responsible persons, and an aggrieved person might be slower to attack persons of high position and property. By yet another device Pope ap-

plied for an injunction in Chancery to suppress a piratical London edition; but ensured the failure of his application by not supplying the necessary proofs of property. This trick, repeated, as we shall see, on another occasion, was intended either to shirk responsibility or to increase the notoriety of the book. A further mystification was equally characteristic. To the *Dunciad* in its enlarged form is prefixed a letter, really written by Pope himself, but praising his morality and genius, and justifying his satire in terms which would have been absurd in Pope's own mouth. He therefore induced a Major Cleland, a retired officer of some position, to put his name to the letter, which it is possible that he may have partly written. The device was transparent, and only brought ridicule upon its author. Finally, Pope published an account of the publication in the name of Savage, known by Johnson's biography, who seems to have been a humble ally of the great man—at once a convenient source of information and a tool for carrying on this underground warfare. Pope afterwards incorporated this statement—which was meant to prove, by some palpable falsehoods, that the dunces had not been the aggressors—in his own notes, without Savage's name. This labyrinth of unworthy devices was more or less visible to Pope's antagonists. It might in some degree be excusable as a huge practical joke, absurdly elaborate for the purpose, but it led Pope into some slippery ways, where no such excuse is available.

Pope, says Johnson, contemplated his victory over the dunces with great exultation. Through his mouth-piece, Savage, he described the scene on the day of publication; how a crowd of authors besieged the shop and threatened him with violence; how the booksellers and hawkers

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struggled with small success for copies; how the dunces formed clubs to devise measures of retaliation; how one wrote to ministers to denounce Pope as a traitor, and another brought an image in clay to execute him in effigy; and how successive editions, genuine and spurious, followed each other, distinguished by an owl or an ass on the frontispiece, and provoking infinite controversy amongst rival vendors. It is unpleasant to have ugly names hurled at one by the first writer of the day; but the abuse was for the most part too general to be libellous. Nor would there be any great interest now in exactly distributing the blame between Pope and his enemies. A word or two may be said of one of the most conspicuous quarrels.

Aaron Hill was a fussy and ambitious person, full of literary and other schemes; devising a plan for extracting oil from beech-nuts, and writing a Pindaric ode on the occasion; felling forests in the Highlands to provide timber for the navy; and, as might be inferred, spending instead of making a fortune. He was a stage-manager, translated Voltaire's *Merope*, wrote words for Handel's first composition in England, wrote unsuccessful plays, a quantity of unreadable poetry, and corresponded with most of the literary celebrities. Pope put his initials, A. H., under the head of "Flying Fishes," in the *Bathos*, as authors who now and then rise upon their fins and fly, but soon drop again to the profound. In the *Dunciad* he reappeared amongst the divers.

"Then * * tried, but hardly snatch'd from sight
Instant buoys up, and rises into light:
He bears no token of the sable streams,
And mounts far off amongst the swans of Thames."

A note applied the lines to Hill, with whom he had had a

former misunderstanding. Hill replied to these assaults by a ponderous satire in verse upon "tuneful Alexis;" it had, however, some tolerable lines at the opening, imitated from Pope's own verses upon Addison, and attributing to him the same jealousy of merit in others. Hill soon afterwards wrote a civil note to Pope, complaining of the passage in the *Dunciad*. Pope might have relied upon the really satisfactory answer that the lines were, on the whole, complimentary; indeed, more complimentary than true. But with his natural propensity for lying, he resorted to his old devices. In answer to this and a subsequent letter, in which Hill retorted with unanswerable force, Pope went on to declare that he was not the author of the notes, that the extracts had been chosen at random, that he would "use his influence with the editors of the *Dunciad* to get the notes altered;" and, finally, by an ingenious evasion, pointed out that the blank in the *Dunciad* required to be filled up by a dissyllable. This, in the form of the lines as quoted above, is quite true, but in the first edition of the *Dunciad* the first verse had been

"H—— tried the next, but hardly snatch'd from sight."

Hill did not detect this specimen of what Pope somewhere calls "pretty genteel equivocation." He was reconciled to Pope, and taught the poor poet by experience that his friendship was worse than his enmity. He wrote him letters of criticism; he forced poor Pope to negotiate for him with managers and to bring distinguished friends to the performances of his dreary plays; nay, to read through, or to say that he had read through, one of them in manuscript four times, and make corrections mixed with elaborate eulogy. No doubt Pope came to regard a letter from Hill with terror, though Hill compared him to Horace and

Juvenal, and hoped that he would live till the virtues which his spirit would propagate became as general as the esteem of his genius. In short, Hill, who was a florid flatterer, is so complimentary that we are not surprised to find him telling Richardson, after Pope's death, that the poet's popularity was due to a certain "bladdery swell of management." "But," he concludes, "rest his memory in peace! It will very rarely be disturbed by that time he himself is ashes."

The war raged for some time. Dennis, Smedley, Moore-Smythe, Welsted, and others, retorted by various pamphlets, the names of which were published by Pope in an appendix to future editions of the *Dunciad*, by way of proving that his own blows had told. Lady Mary was credited, perhaps unjustly, with an abusive performance called a "Pop upon Pope," relating how Pope had been soundly whipped by a couple of his victims—of course a pure fiction. Some such vengeance, however, was seriously threatened. As Pope was dining one day at Lord Bathurst's, the servant brought in the agreeable message that a young man was waiting for Mr. Pope in the lane outside, and that the young man's name was Dennis. He was the son of the critic, and prepared to avenge his father's wrongs; but Bathurst persuaded him to retire, without the glory of thrashing a cripple. Reports of such possibilities were circulated, and Pope thought it prudent to walk out with his big Danish dog Bounce and a pair of pistols. Spence tried to persuade the little man not to go out alone, but Pope declared that he would not go a step out of his way for such villains, and that it was better to die than to live in fear of them. He continued, indeed, to give fresh provocation. A weekly paper, called the *Grub-street Journal*, was started in January, 1730, and continued to appear till

the end of 1737. It included a continuous series of epigrams and abuse, in the Scriblerian vein, and aimed against the heroes of the *Dunciad*, amongst whom poor James Moore-Smythe seems to have had the largest share of abuse. It was impossible, however, for Pope, busied as he was in literature and society, and constantly out of health, to be the efficient editor of such a performance; but though he denied having any concern in it, it is equally out of the question that any one really unconnected with Pope should have taken up the huge burden of his quarrels in this fashion. Though he concealed, and on occasions denied his connexion, he no doubt inspired the editors and contributed articles to its pages, especially during its early years. It is a singular fact—or, rather, it would have been singular, had Pope been a man of less abnormal character—that he should have devoted so much energy to this paltry subterranean warfare against the objects of his complex antipathies. Pope was so anxious for concealment, that he kept his secret even from his friendly legal adviser, Fortescue; and Fortescue innocently requested Pope to get up evidence to support a charge of libel against his own organ. The evidence which Pope collected—in defence of a quack-doctor, Ward—was not, as we may suppose, very valuable. Two volumes of the *Grubstreet Journal* were printed in 1737, and a fragment or two was admitted by Pope into his works. It is said, in the preface to the collected pieces, that the journal was killed by the growing popularity of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which is accused of living by plunder. But in truth the reader will infer that, if the selection includes the best pieces, the journal may well have died from congenital weakness.

The *Dunciad* was yet to go through a transformation,

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and to lead to a new quarrel; and though this happened at a much later period, it will be most convenient to complete the story here. Pope had formed an alliance with Warburton, of which I shall presently have to speak; and it was under Warburton's influence that he resolved to add a fourth book to the *Dunciad*. This supplement seems to have been really made up of fragments provided for another scheme. The *Essay on Man*—to be presently mentioned—was to be followed by a kind of poetical essay upon the nature and limits of the human understanding, and a satire upon the misapplication of the serious faculties.¹ It was a design manifestly beyond the author's powers; and even the fragment which is turned into the fourth book of the *Dunciad* takes him plainly out of his depth. He was no philosopher, and therefore an incompetent assailant of the abuses of philosophy. The fourth book consists chiefly of ridicule upon pedagogues who teach words instead of things; upon the unlucky "virtuosos" who care for old medals, plants, and butterflies—pursuits which afforded an unceasing supply of ridicule to the essayists of the time; a denunciation of the corruption of modern youth, who learn nothing but new forms of vice in the grand tour; and a fresh assault upon Toland, Tindal, and other freethinkers of the day. There were some passages marked by Pope's usual dexterity, but the whole is awkwardly constructed, and has no very intelligible connexion with the first part. It was highly admired at the time, and, amongst others, by Gray. He specially praises a passage which has often been quoted as representing Pope's highest achievement in his art. At the conclusion the goddess Dulness yawns, and a blight falls

¹ See Pope to Swift, March 25, 1736.

upon art, science, and philosophy. I quote the lines, which Pope himself could not repeat without emotion, and which have received the highest eulogies from Johnson and Thackeray.

“In vain, in vain—the all-composing Hour
 Resistless falls; the Muse obeys the Power—
 She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
 Of night primeval and of chaos old!
 Before her Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
 And all its varying rainbows die away.
 Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires,
 As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
 The sickening stars fade off the ethereal plain;
 As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand oppress'd
 Closed one by one to everlasting rest;
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
 Art after art goes out, and all is night.
 See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
 Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head!
 Philosophy, that lean'd on heaven before,
 Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
 Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
 And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense!
 See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
 In vain! They gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
 Religion, blushing, veils her sacred fires,
 And unawares Morality expires.
 Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
 Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
 Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
 Light dies before thy uncreating word;
 Thy hand, great Anarch, lets the curtain fall,
 And universal darkness buries all.”

The most conspicuous figure in this new *Dunciad* (published March, 1742), is Bentley—taken as the representa-

tive of a pedant rampant. Bentley is, I think, the only man of real genius of whom Pope has spoken in terms implying gross misappreciation. With all his faults, Pope was a really fine judge of literature, and has made fewer blunders than such men as Addison, Gray, and Johnson, infinitely superior to him in generosity of feeling towards the living. He could even appreciate Bentley, and had written, in his copy of Bentley's Milton, "*Pulchre, bene, recte,*" against some of the happier emendations in the great critic's most unsuccessful performance. The assault in the *Dunciad* is not the less unsparing and ignorantly contemptuous of scholarship. The explanation is easy. Bentley, who had spoken contemptuously of Pope's Homer, said of Pope, "the portentous cub never forgives." But this was not all. Bentley had provoked enemies by his intense pugnacity almost as freely as Pope by his sneaking malice. Swift and Atterbury, objects of Pope's friendly admiration, had been his antagonists, and Pope would naturally accept their view of his merits. And, moreover, Pope's great ally of this period had a dislike of his own to Bentley. Bentley had said of Warburton that he was a man of monstrous appetite and bad digestion. The remark hit Warburton's most obvious weakness. Warburton, with his imperfect scholarship, and vast masses of badly assimilated learning, was jealous of the reputation of the thoroughly trained and accurate critic. It was the dislike of a charlatan for the excellence which he endeavoured to simulate. Bolingbroke, it may be added, was equally contemptuous in his language about men of learning, and for much the same reason. He depreciated what he could not rival. Pope, always under the influence of some stronger companions, naturally adopted their shallow prejudices, and recklessly abused a writer who should have

been recognized as amongst the most effective combatants against dulness.

Bentley died a few months after the publication of the *Dunciad*. But Pope found a living antagonist, who succeeded in giving him pain enough to gratify the vilified dunces. This was Colley Cibber—most lively and mercurial of actors—author of some successful plays, with too little stuff in them for permanence, and of an Apology for his own Life, which is still exceedingly amusing as well as useful for the history of the stage. He was now approaching seventy, though he was to survive Pope for thirteen years, and as good-tempered a specimen of the lively, if not too particular, old man of the world as could well have been found. Pope owed him a grudge. Cibber, in playing the *Rehearsal*, had introduced some ridicule of the unlucky *Three Hours after Marriage*. Pope, he says, came behind the scenes foaming and choking with fury, and forbidding Cibber ever to repeat the insult. Cibber laughed at him, said that he would repeat it as long as the *Rehearsal* was performed, and kept his word. Pope took his revenge by many incidental hits at Cibber, and Cibber made a good-humoured reference to this abuse in the Apology. Hereupon Pope, in the new *Dunciad*, described him as reclining on the lap of the goddess, and added various personalities in the notes. Cibber straightway published a letter to Pope, the more cutting because still in perfect good-humour, and told the story about the original quarrel. He added an irritating anecdote in order to provoke the poet still further. It described Pope as introduced by Cibber and Lord Warwick to very bad company. The story was one which could only be told by a graceless old representative of the old school of comedy, but it hit its mark. The two Richardsons 'once found Pope reading

one of Cibber's pamphlets. He said, "These things are my diversion;" but they saw his features writhing with anguish, and young Richardson, as they went home, observed to his father that he hoped to be preserved from such diversions as Pope had enjoyed. The poet resolved to avenge himself, and he did it to the lasting injury of his poem. He dethroned Theobald, who, as a plodding antiquarian, was an excellent exponent of dullness, and installed Cibber in his place, who might be a representative of folly, but was as little of a dullard as Pope himself. The consequent alterations make the hero of the poem a thoroughly incongruous figure, and greatly injure the general design. The poem appeared in this form in 1743, with a ponderous prefatory discourse by Ricardus Aristarchus, contributed by the faithful Warburton, and illustrating his ponderous vein of elephantine pleasantry.

Pope was nearing the grave, and many of his victims had gone before him. It was a melancholy employment for an invalid, breaking down visibly month by month; and one might fancy that the eminent Christian divine might have used his influence to better purpose than in fanning the dying flame, and adding the strokes of his bludgeon to the keen stabs of Pope's stiletto. In the fourteen years which had elapsed since the first *Dunciad*, Pope had found less unworthy employment for his pen; but, before dealing with the works produced at this time, which include some of his highest achievements, I must tell a story which is in some ways a natural supplement to the war with the dunces. In describing Pope's entangled history, it seems most convenient to follow each separate line of discharge of his multifarious energy, rather than to adhere to chronological order.

CHAPTER VI.¹

CORRESPONDENCE.

I HAVE now to describe one of the most singular series of transactions to be found in the annals of literature. A complete knowledge of their various details has only been obtained by recent researches. I cannot follow within my limits of space all the ins and outs of the complicated labyrinth of more than-diplomatic trickery which those researches have revealed, though I hope to render the main facts sufficiently intelligible. It is painful to track the strange deceptions of a man of genius as a detective unravels the misdeeds of an accomplished swindler; but without telling the story at some length, it is impossible to give a faithful exhibition of Pope's character.

In the year 1726, when Pope had just finished his labours upon Homer, Curll published the juvenile letters to Cromwell. There was no mystery about this transaction. Curll was the chief of all piratical booksellers, and versed in every dirty trick of the Grub-street trade. He is described in that mad book, Amory's *John Buncl*, as tall, thin, ungainly, white-faced, with light grey goggle eyes, purblind,

¹ The evidence by which the statements in this chapter are supported is fully set forth in Mr. Elwin's edition of Pope's Works, Vol. I., and in the notes to the Orrery Correspondence in the third volume of letters.

splay-footed, and "baker-kneed." According to the same queer authority, who professes to have lodged in Curll's house, he was drunk as often as he could drink for nothing, and intimate in every London haunt of vice. "His translators lay three in a bed at the Pewter Platter Inn in Holborn," and helped to compile his indecent, piratical, and catchpenny productions. He had lost his ears for some obscene publication; but Amory adds, "to his glory," that he died "as great a penitent as ever expired." He had one strong point as an antagonist. Having no character to lose, he could reveal his own practices without a blush, if the revelation injured others.

Pope had already come into collision with this awkward antagonist. In 1716 Curll threatened to publish the *Town Eclogues*, burlesques upon Ambrose Philips, written by Lady Mary, with the help of Pope and perhaps Gay. Pope, with Lintot, had a meeting with Curll in the hopes of suppressing a publication calculated to injure his friends. The party had some wine, and Curll, on going home, was very sick. He declared—and there are reasons for believing his story—that Pope had given him an emetic by way of coarse practical joke. Pope, at any rate, took advantage of the accident to write a couple of squibs upon Curll, recording the bookseller's ravings under the action of the drug, as he had described the ravings of Dennis provoked by Cato. Curll had his revenge afterwards; but meanwhile he wanted no extraneous motive to induce him to publish the Cromwell letters. Cromwell had given the letters to a mistress, who fell into distress and sold them to Curll for ten guineas.

The correspondence was received with some favour, and suggested to Pope a new mode of gratifying his vanity. An occasion soon offered itself. Theobald, the hero of

the *Dunciad*, edited in 1728 the posthumous works of Wycherley. Pope extracted from this circumstance a far-fetched excuse for publishing the Wycherley correspondence. He said that it was due to Wycherley's memory to prove, by the publication of their correspondence, that the posthumous publication of the works was opposed to their author's wishes. As a matter of fact, the letters have no tendency to prove anything of the kind, or, rather, they support the opposite theory; but poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth liar, and took the first pretext that offered, without caring for consistency or confirmation. His next step was to write to his friend, Lord Oxford, son of Queen Anne's minister. Oxford was a weak, good-natured man. By cultivating a variety of expensive tastes, without the knowledge to guide them, he managed to run through a splendid fortune and die in embarrassment. His famous library was one of his special hobbies. Pope now applied to him to allow the Wycherley letters to be deposited in the library, and further requested that the fact of their being in this quasi-public place might be mentioned in the preface as a guarantee of their authenticity. Oxford consented, and Pope quietly took a further step without authority. He told Oxford that he had decided to make his publishers say that copies of the letters had been obtained from Lord Oxford. He told the same story to Swift, speaking of the "connivance" of his noble friend, and adding that, though he did not himself "much approve" of the publication, he was not ashamed of it. He thus ingeniously intimated that the correspondence, which he had himself carefully prepared and sent to press, had been printed without his consent by the officious zeal of Oxford and the booksellers.

The book (which was called the second volume of Wych-

erley's works) has entirely disappeared. It was advertised at the time, but not a single copy is known to exist. One cause of this disappearance now appears to be that it had no sale at first, and that Pope preserved the sheets for use in a more elaborate device which followed. Oxford probably objected to the misuse of his name, as the fiction which made him responsible was afterwards dropped. Pope found, or thought that he had found, on the next occasion, a more convenient cat's-paw. Curll, it could not be doubted, would snatch at any chance of publishing more correspondence; and, as Pope was anxious to have his letters stolen and Curll was ready to steal, the one thing necessary was a convenient go-between, who could be disowned or altogether concealed. Pope went systematically to work. He began by writing to his friends, begging them to return his letters. After Curll's piracy, he declared, he could not feel himself safe, and should be unhappy till he had the letters in his own custody. Letters were sent in, though in some cases with reluctance; and Caryll, in particular, who had the largest number, privately took copies before returning them (a measure which ultimately secured the detection of many of Pope's manœuvres). This, however, was unknown to Pope. He had the letters copied out; after (according to his own stating) burning three-fourths of them, and (as we are now aware) carefully editing the remainder, he had the copy deposited in Lord Oxford's library. His object was, as he said, partly to have documents ready in case of the revival of scandals, and partly to preserve the memory of his friendships. The next point was to get these letters stolen. For this purpose he created a man of straw, a mysterious "P. T.," who could be personated on occasion by some of the underlings employed in the underground transactions connected with

the *Dunciad* and the *Grub-street Journal*. P. T. began by writing to Curll in 1733, and offering to sell him a collection of Pope's letters. The negotiation went off for a time, because P. T. insisted upon Curll's first committing himself by publishing an advertisement, declaring himself to be already in possession of the originals. Curll was too wary to commit himself to such a statement, which would have made him responsible for the theft; or, perhaps, have justified Pope in publishing the originals in self-defence. The matter slept till March, 1735, when Curll wrote to Pope proposing a cessation of hostilities, and as a proof of good-will sending him the old P. T. advertisement. This step fell in so happily with Pope's designs that it has been suggested that Curll was prompted in some indirect manner by one of Pope's agents. Pope, at any rate, turned it to account. He at once published an insulting advertisement. Curll (he said in this manifesto) had pretended to have had the offer from P. T. of a large collection of Pope's letters; Pope knew nothing of P. T., believed the letters to be forgeries, and would take no more trouble in the matter. Whilst Curll was presumably smarting under this summary slap on the face, the insidious P. T. stepped in once more. P. T. now said that he was in possession of the printed sheets of the correspondence, and the negotiation went on swimmingly. Curll put out the required advertisement; a "short, squat" man, in a clergyman's gown and with barrister's bands, calling himself Smythe, came to his house at night as P. T.'s agent, and showed him some printed sheets and original letters; the bargain was struck; 240 copies of the book were delivered, and it was published on May 12.

So far the plot had succeeded. Pope had printed his own correspondence, and had tricked Curll into publishing

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the book piratically, whilst the public was quite prepared to believe that Curll had performed a new piratical feat. Pope, however, was now bound to shriek as loudly as he could at the outrage under which he was suffering. He should have been prepared also to answer an obvious question. Every one would naturally inquire how Curll had procured the letters, which by Pope's own account were safely deposited in Lord Oxford's library. Without, as it would seem, properly weighing the difficulty of meeting this demand, Pope called out loudly for vengeance. When the *Dunciad* appeared, he had applied (as I have said) for an injunction in Chancery, and had at the same time secured the failure of his application. The same device was tried in a still more imposing fashion. The House of Lords had recently decided that it was a breach of privilege to publish a peer's letters without his consent. Pope availed himself of this rule to fire the most sounding of blank shots across the path of the piratical Curll. He was as anxious to allow the publication, as to demand its suppression in the most emphatic manner. Accordingly he got his friend, Lord Ilay, to call the attention of the peers to Curll's advertisement, which was so worded as to imply that there were in the book letters from, as well as to, peers. Pope himself attended the house "to stimulate the resentment of his friends." The book was at once seized by a messenger, and Curll ordered to attend the next day. But on examination it immediately turned out that it contained no letters from peers, and the whole farce would have ended at once but for a further trick. Lord Ilay said that a certain letter to Jervas contained a reflection upon Lord Burlington. Now the letter was found in a first batch of fifty copies sent to Curll, and which had been sold before the appearance of the Lords'

messenger. But the letter had been suppressed in a second batch of 190 copies, which the messenger was just in time to seize. Pope had of course foreseen and prepared this result.

The whole proceeding in the Lords was thus rendered abortive. The books were restored to Curll, and the sale continued. But the device meanwhile had recoiled upon its author; the very danger against which he should have guarded himself had now occurred. How were the letters procured? Not till Curll was coming up for examination does it seem to have occurred to Pope that the Lords would inevitably ask the awkward question. He then saw that Curll's answer might lead to a discovery. He wrote a letter to Curll (in Smythe's name) intended to meet the difficulty. He entreated Curll to take the whole of the responsibility of procuring the letters upon himself, and by way of inducement held out hopes of another volume of correspondence. In a second note he tried to throw Curll off the scent of another significant little fact. The sheets (as I have mentioned) were partly made up from the volume of Wycherley correspondence;¹ this would give a clue to further inquiries; P. T. therefore allowed Smythe to say (ostensibly to show his confidence in Curll) that he (P. T.) had been employed in getting up the former volume, and had had some additional sheets struck off for himself, to which he had added letters subsequently obtained. The letter was a signal blunder. Curll saw at once that it put the game in his hands. He was not going to tell lies to please the slippery P. T., or the short squat lawyer-clergyman. He had begun to see

¹ This is proved by a note referring to "the present edition of the posthumous works of Mr. Wycherley," which, by an oversight, was allowed to remain in the Curll volume.

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through the whole manœuvre. He went straight off to the Lords' committee, told the whole story, and produced as a voucher the letters in which P. T. begged for secrecy. Curll's word was good for little by itself, but his story hung together, and the letter confirmed it. And if, as now seemed clear, Curll was speaking the truth, the question remained, who was P. T., and how did he get the letters? The answer, as Pope must have felt, was only too clear.

But Curll now took the offensive. In reply to another letter from Smythe, complaining of his evidence, he went roundly to work; he said that he should at once publish all the correspondence. P. T. had prudently asked for the return of his letters; but Curll had kept copies, and was prepared to swear to their fidelity. Accordingly he soon advertised what was called the *Initial Correspondence*. Pope was now caught in his own trap. He had tried to avert suspicion by publicly offering a reward to Smythe and P. T., if they would "discover the whole affair." The letters, as he admitted, must have been procured either from his own library or from Lord Oxford's. The correspondence to be published by Curll would help to identify the mysterious appropriators, and whatever excuses could be made ought now to be forthcoming. Pope adopted a singular plan. It was announced that the clergyman concerned with P. T. and Curll had "discovered the whole transaction." A narrative was forthwith published to anticipate Curll and to clear up the mystery. If good for anything, it should have given, or helped to give, the key to the great puzzle—the mode of obtaining the letters. There was nothing else for Smythe or P. T. to "discover." Readers must have been strangely disappointed on finding not a single word to throw light upon this subject, and merely a long account of the negotiations between Curll

and P. T. The narrative might serve to distract attention from the main point, which it clearly did nothing to elucidate. But Curll now stated his own case. He reprinted the narrative with some pungent notes; he gave in full some letters omitted by P. T., and he added a story which was most unpleasantly significant. P. T. had spoken, as I have said, of his connexion with the Wycherley volume. The object of this statement was to get rid of an awkward bit of evidence. But Curll now announced, on the authority of Gilliver, the publisher of the volume, that Pope had himself bought up the remaining sheets. The inference was clear. Unless the story could be contradicted, and it never was, Pope was himself the thief. The sheets common to the two volumes had been traced to his possession. Nor was there a word in the P. T. narrative to diminish the force of these presumptions. Indeed it was curiously inconsistent, for it vaguely accused Curll of stealing the letters himself, whilst in the same breath it told how he had bought them from P. T. In fact, P. T. was beginning to resolve himself into thin air, like the phantom in the *Dunciad*. As he vanished, it required no great acuteness to distinguish behind him the features of his ingenious creator. It was already believed at the time that the whole affair was an elaborate contrivance of Pope's, and subsequent revelations have demonstrated the truth of the hypothesis. Even the go-between Smythe was identified as one James Worsdale, a painter, actor, and author, of the Bohemian variety.

Though Curll had fairly won the game, and Pope's intrigue was even at the time sufficiently exposed, it seems to have given less scandal than might have been expected. Probably it was suspected only in literary circles, and perhaps it might be thought that, silly as was the

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elaborate device, the disreputable Curll was fair game for his natural enemy. Indeed, such is the irony of fate, Pope won credit with simple people. The effect of the publication, as Johnson tells us, was to fill the nation with praises of the admirable moral qualities revealed in Pope's letters. Amongst the admirers was Ralph Allen, who had made a large fortune by farming the cross-posts. His princely benevolence and sterling worth were universally admitted, and have been immortalized by the best contemporary judge of character. He was the original of Fielding's Allworthy. Like that excellent person, he seems to have had the common weakness of good men in taking others too easily at their own valuation. Pope imposed upon him, just as Blifil imposed upon his representative. He was so much pleased with the correspondence, that he sought Pope's acquaintance, and offered to publish a genuine edition at his own expense. An authoritative edition appeared, accordingly, in 1737. Pope preferred to publish by subscription, which does not seem to have filled very rapidly, though the work ultimately made a fair profit. Pope's underhand manœuvres were abundantly illustrated in the history of this new edition. It is impossible to give the details; but I may briefly state that he was responsible for a nominally spurious edition which appeared directly after, and was simply a reproduction of, Curll's publication. Although he complained of the garbling and interpolations supposed to have been due to the wicked Curll or the phantom P. T., and although he omitted in his avowed edition certain letters which had given offence, he nevertheless substantially reproduced in it Curll's version of the letters. As this differs from the originals which have been preserved, Pope thus gave an additional proof that he was really responsible for Curll's

supposed garbling. This evidence was adduced with conclusive force by Bowles in a later controversy, and would be enough by itself to convict Pope of the imputed deception. Finally, it may be added that Pope's delay in producing his own edition is explained by the fact that it contained many falsifications of his correspondence with Caryl, and that he delayed the acknowledgment of the genuine character of the letters until Caryl's death removed the danger of detection.

The whole of this elaborate machinery was devised in order that Pope might avoid the ridicule of publishing his own correspondence. There had been few examples of a similar publication of private letters; and Pope's volume, according to Johnson, did not attract very much attention. This is, perhaps, hardly consistent with Johnson's other assertion that it filled the nation with praises of his virtue. In any case it stimulated his appetite for such praises, and led him to a fresh intrigue, more successful, and also more disgraceful. The device originally adopted in publishing the *Dunciad* apparently suggested part of the new plot. The letters hitherto published did not include the most interesting correspondence in which Pope had been engaged. He had been in the habit of writing to Swift since their first acquaintance, and Bolingbroke had occasionally joined him. These letters, which connected Pope with two of his most famous contemporaries, would be far more interesting than the letters to Cromwell or Wycherley, or even than the letters addressed to Addison and Steele, which were mere stilted fabrications. How could they be got before the world, and in such a way as to conceal his own complicity?

Pope had told Swift (in 1730) that he had kept some of the letters in a volume for his own secret satisfaction;

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and Swift had preserved all Pope's letters along with those of other distinguished men. Here was an attractive booty for such parties as the unprincipled Curll! In 1735 Curll had committed his wicked piracy, and Pope pressed Swift to return his letters, in order to "secure him against that rascal printer." The entreaties were often renewed, but Swift for some reason turned his deaf ear to the suggestion. He promised, indeed (September 3, 1735), that the letters should be burnt—a most effectual security against republication, but one not at all to Pope's taste. Pope then admitted that, having been forced to publish some of his other letters, he should like to make use of some of those to Swift, as none would be more honourable to him. Nay, he says, he meant to erect such a minute monument of their friendship as would put to shame all ancient memorials of the same kind.¹ This avowal of his intention to publish did not conciliate Swift. Curll next published, in 1736, a couple of letters to Swift, and Pope took advantage of this publication (perhaps he had indirectly supplied Curll with copies) to urge upon Swift the insecurity of the letters in his keeping. Swift ignored the request, and his letters about this time began to show that his memory was failing, and his intellect growing weak.

Pope now applied to their common friend, Lord Orrery. Orrery was the dull member of a family eminent for its talents. His father had left a valuable library to Christ Church, ostensibly because the son was not capable of profiting by books, though a less creditable reason has

¹ These expressions come from two letters of Pope to Lord Orrery in March, 1737, and may not accurately reproduce his statements to Swift; but they probably represent approximately what he had said.

been assigned.¹ The son, eager to wipe off the imputation, specially affected the society of wits, and was elaborately polite both to Swift and Pope. Pope now got Orrery to intercede with Swift, urging that the letters were no longer safe in the custody of a failing old man. Orrery succeeded, and brought the letters in a sealed packet to Pope in the summer of 1737. Swift, it must be added, had an impression that there was a gap of six years in the collection; he became confused as to what had or had not been sent, and had a vague belief in a "great collection" of letters "placed in some very safe hand."² Pope, being thus in possession of the whole correspondence, proceeded to perform a manœuvre resembling those already employed in the case of the *Dunciad* and of the P. T. letters. He printed the correspondence clandestinely. He then sent the printed volume to Swift, accompanied by an anonymous letter. This letter purported to come from some persons who, from admiration of Swift's private and public virtues, had resolved to preserve letters so creditable to him, and had accordingly put them in type. They suggested that the volume would be suppressed if it fell into the hands of Bolingbroke and Pope (a most audacious suggestion!), and intimated that Swift should himself publish it. No other copy, they said, was in existence. Poor Swift fell at once into the trap. He ought, of course, to have consulted Pope or Bolingbroke, and would probably have done so had his mind been sound. Seeing, however, a volume already printed, he might naturally suppose that, in spite of the anonymous assurance, it was already too

¹ It is said that the son objected to allow his wife to meet his father's mistress.

² See Elwin's edition of Pope's Correspondence, iii., 399, note.

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late to stop the publication. At any rate, he at once sent it to his publisher, Faulkner, and desired him to bring it out at once. Swift was in that most melancholy state in which a man's friends perceive him to be incompetent to manage his affairs, and are yet not able to use actual restraint. Mrs. Whiteway, the sensible and affectionate cousin who took care of him at this time, did her best to protest against the publication, but in vain. Swift insisted. So far Pope's device was successful. The printed letters had been placed in the hands of his bookseller by Swift himself, and publication was apparently secured. But Pope had still the same problem as in the previous case. Though he had talked of erecting a monument to Swift and himself, he was anxious that the monument should apparently be erected by some one else. His vanity could only be satisfied by the appearance that the publication was forced upon him. He had, therefore, to dissociate himself from the publication by some protest at once emphatic and ineffectual; and, consequently, to explain the means by which the letters had been surreptitiously obtained.

The first aim was unexpectedly difficult. Faulkner turned out to be an honest bookseller. Instead of sharing Curll's rapacity, he consented, at Mrs. Whiteway's request, to wait until Pope had an opportunity of expressing his wishes. Pope, if he consented, could no longer complain; if he dissented, Faulkner would suppress the letters. In this dilemma, Pope first wrote to Faulkner to refuse permission, and at the same time took care that his letter should be delayed for a month. He hoped that Faulkner would lose patience, and publish. But Faulkner, with provoking civility, stopped the press as soon as he heard of Pope's objection. Pope hereupon discovered

that the letters were certain to be published, as they were already printed, and doubtless by some mysterious "confederacy of people" in London. All he could wish was to revise them before appearance. Meanwhile he begged Lord Orrery to inspect the book, and say what he thought of it. "Guess in what a situation I must be," exclaimed this sincere and modest person, "not to be able to see what all the world is to read as mine!" Orrery was quite as provoking as Faulkner. He got the book from Faulkner, read it, and instead of begging Pope not to deprive the world of so delightful a treat, said, with dull integrity, that he thought the collection "unworthy to be published." Orrery, however, was innocent enough to accept Pope's suggestion, that letters which had once got into such hands would certainly come out sooner or later. After some more haggling, Pope ultimately decided to take this ground. He would, he said, have nothing to do with the letters; they would come out in any case; their appearance would please the Dean, and he (Pope) would stand clear of all responsibility. He tried, indeed, to get Faulkner to prefix a statement tending to fix the whole transaction upon Swift; but the bookseller declined, and the letters ultimately came out with a simple statement that they were a reprint.

Pope had thus virtually sanctioned the publication. He was not the less emphatic in complaining of it to his friends. To Orrery, who knew the facts, he represented the printed copy sent to Swift as a proof that the letters were beyond his power; and to others, such as his friend Allen, he kept silence as to this copy altogether; and gave them to understand that poor Swift—or some member of Swift's family—was the prime mover in the business. His mystification had, as before, driven

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him into perplexities upon which he had never calculated. In fact, it was still more difficult here than in the previous case to account for the original misappropriation of the letters. Who could the thief have been? Orrery, as we have seen, had himself taken a packet of letters to Pope, which would be of course the letters from Pope to Swift. The packet being sealed, Orrery did not know the contents, and Pope asserted that he had burnt it almost as soon as received. It was, however, true that Swift had been in the habit of showing the originals to his friends, and some might possibly have been stolen or copied by designing people. But this would not account for the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, which had never been out of Pope's possession. As he had certainly been in possession of the other letters, it was easiest, even for himself, to suppose that some of his own servants were the guilty persons; his own honour being, of course, beyond question.

To meet these difficulties, Pope made great use of some stray phrases dropped by Swift in the decline of his memory, and set up a story of his having himself returned some letters to Swift, of which important fact all traces had disappeared. One characteristic device will be a sufficient specimen. Swift wrote that a great collection of "*my* letters to *you*" is somewhere "in a safe hand." He meant, of course, "a collection of *your* letters to *me*"—the only letters of which he could know anything. Observing the slip of the pen, he altered the phrase by writing the correct words above the line. It now stood—
"your letters to ^{me}
my you." Pope laid great stress upon this, interpreting it to mean that the "great collection" included letters from each correspondent to the other—the fact be-
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ing that Swift had only the letters from Pope to himself. The omission of an erasure (whether by Swift or Pope) caused the whole meaning to be altered. As the great difficulty was to explain the publication of Swift's letters to Pope, this change supplied a very important link in the evidence. It implied that Swift had been at some time in possession of the letters in question, and had trusted them to some one supposed to be safe. The whole paragraph, meanwhile, appears, from the unimpeachable evidence of Mrs. Whiteway, to have involved one of the illusions of memory, for which he (Swift) apologizes in the letter from which this is extracted. By insisting upon this passage, and upon certain other letters dexterously confounded with those published, Pope succeeded in raising dust enough to blind Lord Orrery's not very piercing intelligence. The inference which he desired to suggest was that some persons in Swift's family had obtained possession of the letters. Mrs. Whiteway, indeed, met the suggestion so clearly, and gave such good reasons for assigning Twickenham as the probable centre of the plot, that she must have suspected the truth. Pope did not venture to assail her publicly, though he continued to talk of treachery or evil influence.

To accuse innocent people of a crime which you know yourself to have committed is bad enough. It is, perhaps, even baser to lay a trap for a friend, and reproach him for falling into it. Swift had denied the publication of the letters, and Pope would have had some grounds of complaint had he not been aware of the failure of Swift's mind, and had he not been himself the tempter. His position, however, forced him to blame his friend. It was a necessary part of his case to impute at least a breach of confidence to his victim. He therefore took the attitude

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—it must, one hopes, have cost him a blush—of one who is seriously aggrieved, but who is generously anxious to shield a friend in consideration of his known infirmity. He is forced, in sorrow, to admit that Swift has erred, but he will not allow himself to be annoyed. The most humiliating words ever written by a man not utterly vile, must have been those which Pope set down in a letter to Nugent, after giving his own version of the case: "I think I can make no reflections upon this strange incident but what are truly melancholy, and humble the pride of human nature. That the greatest of geniuses, though prudence may have been the companion of wit (which is very rare) for their whole lives past, may have nothing left them but their vanity. No decay of body is half so miserable." The most audacious hypocrite of fiction pales beside this. Pope, condescending to the meanest complication of lies to justify a paltry vanity, taking advantage of his old friend's dotage to trick him into complicity, then giving a false account of his error, and finally moralizing, with all the airs of philosophic charity, and taking credit for his generosity, is altogether a picture to set fiction at defiance.

I must add a remark not so edifying. Pope went down to his grave soon afterwards, without exciting suspicion except among two or three people intimately concerned. A whisper of doubt was soon hushed. Even the biographers who were on the track of his former deception did not suspect this similar iniquity. The last of them, Mr. Carruthers, writing in 1857, observes upon the pain given to Pope by the treachery of Swift—a treachery of course palliated by Swift's failure of mind. At last Mr. Dilke discovered the truth, which has been placed beyond doubt by the still later discovery of the letters to Orrery. The moral is, apparently, that it is better to cheat a respectable

man than a rogue; for the respectable tacitly form a society for mutual support of character, whilst the open rogue will be only too glad to show that you are even such an one as himself.

It was not probable that letters thus published should be printed with scrupulous accuracy. Pope, indeed, can scarcely have attempted to conceal the fact that they had been a good deal altered. And so long as the letters were regarded merely as literary compositions, the practice was at least pardonable. But Pope went further; and the full extent of his audacious changes was not seen until Mr. Dilke became possessed of the Caryll correspondence. On comparing the copies preserved by Caryll with the letters published by Pope, it became evident that Pope had regarded these letters as so much raw material, which he might carve into shape at pleasure, and with such alterations of date and address as might be convenient, to the confusion of all biographers and editors ignorant of his peculiar method of editing. The details of these very disgraceful falsifications have been fully described by Mr. Elwin,¹ but I turn gladly from this lamentable narrative to say something of the literary value of the correspondence. Every critic has made the obvious remark that Pope's letters are artificial and self-conscious. Pope claimed the opposite merit. "It is many years ago," he says to Swift in 1729, "since I wrote as a wit." He smiles to think "how Curll would be bit were our epistles to fall into his hands, and how gloriously they would fall short of every ingenious reader's anticipations." Warburton adds in a note that Pope used to "value himself upon this particular." It is indeed true that Pope had dropped the boyish affectation of his letters to Wycherley and Cromwell. But such

¹ Pope's Works, vol. i. p. cxxi.

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a statement in the mouth of a man who plotted to secure Curll's publication of his letters, with devices elaborate enough to make the reputation of an unscrupulous diplomatist, is of course only one more example of the superlative degree of affectation, the affectation of being unaffected. We should be, indeed, disappointed were we to expect in Pope's letters what we find in the best specimens of the art: the charm which belongs to a simple outpouring of friendly feeling in private intercourse; the sweet playfulness of Cowper, or the grave humour of Gray, or even the sparkle and brilliance of Walpole's admirable letters. Though Walpole had an eye to posterity, and has his own mode of affectation, he is for the moment intent on amusing, and is free from the most annoying blemish in Pope's writing, the resolution to appear always in full dress, and to mount as often as possible upon the stilts of moral self-approbation. All this is obvious to the hasty reader; and yet I must confess my own conviction that there is scarcely a more interesting volume in the language than that which contains the correspondence of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Pope. To enjoy it, indeed, we must not expect to be in sympathy with the writers. Rather we must adopt the mental attitude of spectators of a scene of high comedy—the comedy which is dashed with satire and has a tragical side to it. We are behind the scenes in *Vanity Fair*, and listening to the talk of three of its most famous performers, doubting whether they most deceive each other, or the public or themselves. The secret is an open one for us, now that the illusion which perplexed contemporaries has worn itself threadbare.

The most impressive letters are undoubtedly those of Swift—the stern, sad humourist, frowning upon the world which has rejected him, and covering his wrath with an

affectation, not of fine sentiment, but of misanthropy. A soured man prefers to turn his worst side outwards. There are phrases in his letters which brand themselves upon the memory like those of no other man; and we are softened into pity as the strong mind is seen gradually sinking into decay. The two other sharers in the colloquy are in effective contrast. We see through Bolingbroke's magnificent self-deceit; the flowing manners of the statesman who, though the game is lost, is longing for a favourable turn of the card, but still affects to solace himself with philosophy, and wraps himself in dignified reflections upon the blessings of retirement, contrast with Swift's downright avowal of indignant scorn for himself and mankind. And yet we have a sense of the man's amazing cleverness, and regret that he has no chance of trying one more fall with his antagonists in the open arena. Pope's affectation is perhaps the most transparent and the most gratuitous. His career had been pre-eminently successful; his talents had found their natural outlet; and he had only to be what he apparently persuaded himself that he was, to be happy in spite of illness. He is constantly flourishing his admirable moral sense in our faces, dilating upon his simplicity, modesty, fidelity to his friends, indifference to the charms of fame, till we are almost convinced that he has imposed upon himself. By some strange piece of legerdemain he must surely have succeeded in regarding even his deliberate artifices, with the astonishing masses of hypocritical falsehoods which they entailed, as in some way legitimate weapons against a world full of piratical Curlls and deep laid plots. And, indeed, with all his delinquencies, and with all his affectations, there are moments in which we forget to preserve the correct tone of moral indignation. Every now and then genuine feeling

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seems to come to the surface. For a time the superincumbent masses of hypocrisy vanish. In speaking of his mother or his pursuits he forgets to wear his mask. He feels a genuine enthusiasm about his friends; he believes with almost pathetic earnestness in the amazing talents of Bolingbroke, and the patriotic devotion of the younger men who are rising up to overthrow the corruptions of Walpole; he takes the affectation of his friends as seriously as a simple-minded man who has never fairly realized the possibility of deliberate hypocrisy; and he utters sentiments about human life and its objects which, if a little tainted with commonplace, have yet a certain ring of sincerity, and, as we may believe, were really sincere for the time. At such moments we seem to see the man behind the veil—the really loveable nature which could know as well as simulate feeling. And, indeed, it is this quality which makes Pope endurable. He was—if we must speak bluntly—a liar and a hypocrite; but the foundation of his character was not selfish or grovelling. On the contrary, no man could be more warmly affectionate or more exquisitely sensitive to many noble emotions. The misfortune was that his constitutional infirmities, acted upon by unfavourable conditions, developed his craving for applause and his fear of censure, till certain morbid tendencies in him assumed proportions which, compared to the same weaknesses in ordinary mankind, are as the growth of plants in a tropical forest to their stunted representatives in the North.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESSAY ON MAN.

It is a relief to turn from this miserable record of Pope's petty or malicious deceptions to the history of his legitimate career. I go back to the period when he was still in full power. Having finished the *Dunciad*, he was soon employed on a more ambitious task. Pope resembled one of the inferior bodies of the solar system, whose orbit is dependent upon that of some more massive planet; and having been a satellite of Swift, he was now swept into the train of the more imposing Bolingbroke. He had been originally introduced to Bolingbroke by Swift, but had probably seen little of the brilliant minister who, in the first years of their acquaintance, had too many occupations to give much time to the rising poet. Bolingbroke, however, had been suffering a long eclipse, whilst Pope was gathering fresh splendour. In his exile, Bolingbroke, though never really weaned from political ambition, had amused himself with superficial philosophical studies. In political life it was his special glory to extemporize statesmanship without sacrificing pleasure. He could be at once the most reckless of rakes and the leading spirit in the Cabinet or the House of Commons. He seems to have thought that philosophical eminence was obtainable in the same off-hand fashion, and that a brilliant style would jus-

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tify a man in laying down the law to metaphysicians as well as to diplomatists and politicians. His philosophical writings are equally superficial and arrogant, though they show here and there the practised debater's power of making a good point against his antagonist without really grasping the real problems at issue.

Bolingbroke received a pardon in 1723, and returned to England, crossing Atterbury, who had just been convicted of treasonable practices. In 1725 Bolingbroke settled at Dawley, near Uxbridge, and for the next ten years he was alternately amusing himself in playing the retired philosopher, and endeavouring, with more serious purpose, to animate the opposition to Walpole. Pope, who was his frequent guest, sympathized with his schemes, and was completely dazzled by his eminence. He spoke of him with bated breath, as a being almost superior to humanity. "It looks," said Pope once, "as if that great man had been placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared a month or two ago," he added, "I sometimes fancied that it might be come to carry him home, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." Of all the graceful compliments in Pope's poetry, none are more ardent or more obviously sincere than those addressed to this "guide, philosopher, and friend." He delighted to bask in the sunshine of the great man's presence. Writing to Swift in 1728, he (Pope) says that he is holding the pen "for my Lord Bolingbroke," who is reading your letter between two hay-cocks, with his attention occasionally distracted by a threatening shower. Bolingbroke is acting the temperate recluse, having nothing for dinner but mutton-broth, beans and bacon, and a barn-door fowl. Whilst his lordship is running after a cart, Pope snatches a moment to tell how the day before this noble farmer had engaged a

painter for 200*l.* to give the correct agricultural air to his country hall by ornamenting it with trophies of spades, rakes, and prongs. Pope saw that the zeal for retirement was not free from affectation, but he sat at the teacher's feet with profound belief in the value of the lessons which flowed from his lips.

The connexion was to bear remarkable fruit. Under the direction of Bolingbroke, Pope resolved to compose a great philosophical poem. "Does Pope talk to you," says Bolingbroke to Swift in 1731, "of the noble work which, at my instigation, he has begun in such a manner that he must be convinced by this time I judged better of his talents than he did?" And Bolingbroke proceeds to describe the *Essay on Man*, of which it seems that three (out of four) epistles were now finished. The first of these epistles appeared in 1733. Pope, being apparently nervous on his first appearance as a philosopher, withheld his name. The other parts followed in the course of 1733 and 1734, and the authorship was soon avowed. The *Essay on Man* is Pope's most ambitious performance, and the one by which he was best known beyond his own country. It has been frequently translated; it was imitated both in France and Germany, and provoked a controversy, not like others in Pope's history of the purely personal kind.

The *Essay on Man* professes to be a theodicy. Pope, with an echo of the Miltonic phrase, proposes to

"Vindicate the ways of God to man."

He is thus attempting the greatest task to which poet or philosopher can devote himself — the exhibition of an organic and harmonious view of the universe. In a time when men's minds are dominated by a definite religious

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creed, the poet may hope to achieve success in such an undertaking without departing from his legitimate method. His vision pierces to the world hidden from our senses, and realizes in the transitory present a scene in the slow development of a divine drama. To make us share his vision is to give his justification of Providence. When Milton told the story of the war in heaven and the fall of man, he gave implicitly his theory of the true relations of man to his Creator, but the abstract doctrine was clothed in the flesh and blood of a concrete mythology.

In Pope's day the traditional belief had lost its hold upon men's minds too completely to be used for imaginative purposes. The story of Adam and Eve would itself require to be justified or to be rationalized into thin allegory. Nothing was left possessed of any vitality but a bare skeleton of abstract theology dependent upon argument instead of tradition, and which might use or might dispense with a Christian phraseology. Its deity was not a historical personage, but the name of a metaphysical conception. For a revelation was substituted a demonstration. To vindicate Providence meant no longer to stimulate imagination by a pure and sublime rendering of accepted truths, but to solve certain philosophical problems, and especially the grand difficulty of reconciling the existence of evil with divine omnipotence and benevolence.

Pope might conceivably have written a really great poem on these terms, though deprived of the concrete imagery of a Dante or a Milton. If he had fairly grasped some definite conception of the universe, whether pantheistic or atheistic, optimist or pessimist, proclaiming a solution of the mystery, or declaring all solutions to be impossible, he might have given forcible expression to the corresponding emotions. He might have uttered the melan-

choly resignation and the confident hope incited in different minds by a contemplation of the mysterious world. He might again conceivably have written an interesting work, though it would hardly have been a poem—if he had versified the arguments by which a coherent theory might be supported. Unluckily, he was quite unqualified for either undertaking, and, at the same time, he more or less aimed at both. Anything like sustained reasoning was beyond his reach. Pope felt and thought by shocks and electric flashes. He could only obtain a continuous effect when working clearly upon lines already provided for him, or simulate one by fitting together fragments struck out at intervals. The defect was aggravated or caused by the physical infirmities which put sustained intellectual labour out of the question. The laborious and patient meditation which brings a converging series of arguments to bear upon a single point was to him as impossible as the power of devising an elaborate strategical combination to a dashing Prince Rupert. The reasonings in the *Essay* are confused, contradictory, and often childish. He was equally far from having assimilated any definite system of thought. Brought up as a Catholic, he had gradually swung into vague deistic belief. But he had never studied any philosophy or theology whatever, and he accepts in perfect unconsciousness fragments of the most heterogeneous systems.

Swift, in verses from which I have already quoted, describes his method of composition, which is characteristic of Pope's habits of work.

"Now backs of letters, though design'd
For those who more will need 'em,
Are fill'd with hints and interlined,
Himself can scarcely read 'em.

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“ Each atom by some other struck
All turns and motions tries ;
Till in a lump together stuck,
Behold a poem rise !”

It was strange enough that any poem should arise by such means ; but it would have been miraculous if a poem so constructed had been at once a demonstration and an exposition of a harmonious philosophical system. The confession which he made to Warburton will be a sufficient indication of his qualifications as a student. He says (in 1739) that he never in his life read a line of Leibnitz, nor knew, till he found it in a confutation of his *Essay*, that there was such a term as pre-established harmony. That is almost as if a modern reconciler of faith and science were to say that he had never read a line of Mr. Darwin, or heard of such a phrase as the struggle for existence. It was to pronounce himself absolutely disqualified to speak as a philosopher.

How, then, could Pope obtain even an appearance of success ? The problem should puzzle no one at the present day. Every smart essayist knows how to settle the most abstruse metaphysical puzzles after studies limited to the pages of a monthly magazine ; and Pope was much in the state of mind of such extemporizing philosophers. He had dipped into the books which everybody read ; Locke's *Essay*, and Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, and Wolston's *Religion of Nature*, and Clarke on the *Attributes*, and Archbishop King on the *Origin of Evil*, had probably amused his spare moments. They were all, we may suppose, in Bolingbroke's library ; and if that passing shower commemorated in Pope's letter drove them back to the house, Bolingbroke might discourse from the page which happened to be open, and Pope would try to

versify it on the back of an envelope.¹ Nor must we forget, like some of his commentators, that after all Pope was an exceedingly clever man. His rapidly perceptive mind was fully qualified to imbibe the crude versions of philosophic theories which float upon the surface of ordinary talk, and are not always so inferior to their prototypes in philosophic qualities as philosophers would have us believe. He could by snatches seize with admirable quickness the general spirit of a doctrine, though unable to sustain himself at a high intellectual level for any length of time. He was ready with abundance of poetical illustrations, not, perhaps, very closely adapted to the logic, but capable of being elaborated into effective passages; and, finally, Pope had always a certain number of more or less appropriate commonplaces or renderings into verse of some passages which had struck him in Pascal or Rochefoucauld, or Bacon, all of them favourite authors, and which could be wrought into the structure at a slight cost of coherence. By such means he could put together a poem, which was certainly not an organic whole, but which might contain many striking sayings and passages of great rhetorical effect.

The logical framework was, we may guess, supplied mainly by Bolingbroke. Bathurst told Warton that Bolingbroke had given Pope the essay in prose, and that Pope had only turned it into verse; and Mallet—a friend of both—is said to have seen the very manuscript from which Pope worked. Johnson, on hearing this from Boswell, remarked that it must be an overstatement. Pope might have had from Bolingbroke the “philosophical stamina” of the essay, but he must, at least, have con-

¹ “No letter with an envelope could give him more delight,” says Swift.

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tributed the "poetical imagery," and have had more independent power than the story implied. It is, indeed, impossible accurately to fix the relations of the teacher and his disciple. Pope acknowledged in the strongest possible terms his dependence upon Bolingbroke, and Bolingbroke claims with equal distinctness the position of instigator and inspirer. His more elaborate philosophical works are in the form of letters to Pope, and profess to be a redaction of the conversations which they had had together. These were not written till after the *Essay on Man*; but a series of fragments appear to represent what he actually set down for Pope's guidance. They are professedly addressed to Pope. "I write," he says (fragment 65), "to you and for you, and you would think yourself little obliged to me if I took the pains of explaining in prose what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse"—that is, the free-will puzzle. The manuscripts seen by Mallet may probably have been a commonplace book in which Bolingbroke had set down some of these fragments, by way of instructing Pope, and preparing for his own more systematic work. No reader of the fragments can, I think, doubt as to the immediate source of Pope's inspiration. Most of the ideas expressed were the common property of many contemporary writers, but Pope accepts the particular modification presented by Bolingbroke.¹ Pope's manipulation of these materials causes much of the *Essay on Man* to resemble (as Mr. Pattison puts it) an exquisite mosaic work. A detailed examination of his mode of transmutation would

¹ It would be out of place to discuss this in detail; but I may say that Pope's crude theory of the state of nature, his psychology as to reason and instinct, and self-love, and his doctrine of the scale of beings, all seem to have the specific Bolingbroke stamp.

be a curious study in the technical secrets of literary execution. A specimen or two will sufficiently indicate the general character of Pope's method of constructing his essay.

The forty-third fragment of Bolingbroke is virtually a prose version of much of Pope's poetry. A few phrases will exhibit the relation:—

“Through worlds unnumber'd, though the God be known,
 'Tis ours to *trace Him only in our own*.
 He who through vast immensity can pierce,
 See worlds on worlds *compose one universe*,
 Observe how *system into system runs*,
 What other planets circle other suns,
 What varied being peoples every star,
 May tell why Heaven has made us what we are.
 But of this frame, the bearings and *the ties*,
 The strong *connexions*, nice *dependencies*,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
 Looked through, or can a part contain the whole?”

“The universe,” I quote only a few phrases from Bolingbroke, “is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, *if we may judge by our own*, contains several; and every one of these again, *if we may judge by our own*, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking . . . but all concurring in one common system. . . . Just so it is with respect to the various systems and *systems of systems that compose the universe*. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all *tied* together by relations and *connexions*, *gradations*, and *dependencies*.” The verbal coincidence is here as marked as the coincidence in argument. Warton refers to an eloquent passage in Shaftesbury, which contains a similar

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thought; but one can hardly doubt that Bolingbroke was in this case the immediate source. A quaint passage a little farther on, in which Pope represents man as complaining because he has not "the strength of bulls or the fur of bears," may be traced with equal plausibility to Shaftesbury or to Sir Thomas Browne; but I have not noticed it in Bolingbroke.

One more passage will be sufficient. Pope asks whether we are to demand the suspension of laws of nature whenever they might produce a mischievous result? Is Etna to cease an eruption to spare a sage, or should "new motions be impressed upon sea and air" for the advantage of blameless Bethel?

"When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?"

Chartres is Pope's typical villain. This is a terse version, with concrete cases, of Bolingbroke's vaguer generalities. "The laws of gravitation," he says, "must sometimes be suspended (if special Providence be admitted), and sometimes their effect must be precipitated. The tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling, whilst innocent men lived in it or passed under it, and the fall of it must be as miraculously determined to crush the guilty inhabitant or passenger." Here, again, we have the alternative of Wollaston, who uses a similar illustration, and in one phrase comes nearer to Pope. He speaks of "new motions being impressed upon the atmosphere." We may suppose that the two friends had been dipping into Wollaston together. Elsewhere Pope seems to have stolen for himself. In the beginning of the second epis-

tle, Pope, in describing man as "the glory, jest, and riddle of the world," is simply versifying Pascal; and a little farther on, when he speaks of reason as the wind and passion as the gale on life's vast ocean, he is adapting his comparison from Locke's treatise on government.

If all such cases were adduced, we should have nearly picked the argumentative part of the essay to pieces; but Bolingbroke supplies throughout the most characteristic element. The fragments cohere by external cement, not by an internal unity of thought; and Pope too often descends to the level of mere satire, or indulges in a quaint conceit or palpable sophistry. Yet it would be very unjust to ignore the high qualities which are to be found in this incongruous whole. The style is often admirable. When Pope is at his best every word tells. His precision and firmness of touch enables him to get the greatest possible meaning into a narrow compass. He uses only one epithet, but it is the right one, and never boggles and patches, or, in his own phrase, "blunders round about a meaning." Warton gives, as a specimen of this power, the lines:—

"But errs not nature from this gracious end
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
When earthquakes swallow or when tempests sweep
Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?"

And Mr. Pattison reinforces the criticism by quoting Voltaire's feeble imitation:—

"Quand des vents du midi les funestes haleines
De semence de mort ont inondé nos plaines,
Direz-vous que jamais le ciel en son courroux
Ne laissa la santé séjourner parmi nous?"

It is true that, in the effort to be compressed, Pope has here and there cut to the quick and suppressed essential

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parts of speech, till the lines can only be construed by our independent knowledge of their meaning. The famous line—

“Man never is but always to be blest,”

is an example of defective construction, though his language is often tortured by more elliptical phrases.¹ This power of charging lines with great fulness of meaning enables Pope to soar for brief periods into genuine and impressive poetry. Whatever his philosophical weakness and his moral obliquity, he is often moved by genuine emotion. He has a vein of generous sympathy for human sufferings and of righteous indignation against bigots, and if he only half understands his own optimism, that “whatever is is right,” the vision, rather poetical than philosophical, of a harmonious universe lifts him at times into a region loftier than that of frigid and pedantic platitude. The most popular passages were certain purple patches, not arising very spontaneously or with much relevance, but also showing something more than the practised rhetorician. The “poor Indian” in one of the most highly-polished paragraphs—

“Who thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company,”

intrudes rather at the expense of logic, and is a decidedly conventional person. But this passage has a certain glow

¹ Perhaps the most curious example, too long for quotation, is a passage near the end of the last epistle, in which he sums up his moral system by a series of predicates for which it is impossible to find any subject. One couplet runs—

“Never elated whilst one man’s depress’d,
Never dejected whilst another’s blest.”

It is impressive, but it is quite impossible to discover by the rules of grammatical construction who is to be never elated and depressed.

of fine humanity, and is touched with real pathos. A further passage or two may sufficiently indicate his higher qualities. In the end of the third epistle Pope is discussing the origin of government and the state of nature, and discussing them in such a way as to show conclusively that he does not in the least understand the theories in question or their application. His state of Nature is a sham reproduction of the golden age of poets, made to do duty in a scientific speculation. A flimsy hypothesis learnt from Bolingbroke is not improved when overlaid with Pope's conventional ornamentation. The imaginary history proceeds to relate the growth of superstition, which destroys the primeval innocence; but why or when does not very clearly appear; yet, though the general theory is incoherent, he catches a distinct view of one aspect of the question, and expresses a tolerably trite view of the question with singular terseness. Who, he asks,—

“First taught souls enslaved and realms undone,
The enormous faith of many made for one?”

He replies,—

“Force first made conquest, and that conquest law;
Till Superstition taught the tyrant awe,
Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conquerors, slaves of subjects made;
She, 'mid the lightning's blaze and thunder's sound,
When rock'd the mountains and when groan'd the ground,—
She taught the weak to trust, the proud to pray
To Power unseen and mightier far than they;
She from the rending earth and bursting skies
Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
There fix'd the dreadful, there the blest abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;

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Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, framed like tyrants, tyrants would believe."

If the test of poetry were the power of expressing a theory more closely and pointedly than prose, such writing would take a very high place. Some popular philosophers would make a sounding chapter out of those sixteen lines.

The *Essay on Man* brought Pope into difficulties. The central thesis, "whatever is is right," might be understood in various senses, and in some sense it would be accepted by every theist. But, in Bolingbroke's teaching, it received a heterodox application, and in Pope's imperfect version of Bolingbroke the taint was not removed. The logical outcome of the rationalistic theory of the time was some form of pantheism, and the tendency is still more marked in a poetical statement, where it was difficult to state the refined distinctions by which the conclusion is averted. When theology is regarded as demonstrable by reason, the need of a revelation ceases to be obvious. The optimistic view, which sees the proof of divine order in the vast harmony of the whole visible world, throws into the background the darker side of the universe reflected in the theological doctrines of human corruption, and the consequent need of a future judgment in separation of good from evil. I need not inquire whether any optimistic theory is really tenable; but the popular version of the creed involved the attempt to ignore the evils under which all creation groans, and produced in different minds the powerful retort of Butler's *Analogy*, and the biting sarcasm of Voltaire's *Candide*. Pope, accepting the doctrine without any perception of these difficulties, unintentionally fell into sheer pantheism. He was not yielding to the logical instinct which carries out a theory to its legitimate development; but obeying the imaginative impulse which

cannot stop to listen to the usual qualifications and safeguards of the orthodox reasoner. The best passages in the essay are those in which he is frankly pantheistic, and is swept, like Shaftesbury, into enthusiastic assertion of the universal harmony of things.

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
That changed thro' all and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow's in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns;
To him, no high, no low, no great, no small,
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.”

In spite of some awkward phrases (hair and heart is a vile antithesis!), the passage is eloquent, but can hardly be called orthodox. And it was still worse when Pope undertook to show that even evil passions and vices were part of the harmony; that “a Borgia and a Catiline” were as much a part of the divine order as a plague or an earthquake, and that self-love and lust were essential to social welfare.

Pope's own religious position is characteristic and easily definable. If it is not quite defensible on the strictest principles of plain speaking, it is also certain that we could not condemn him without condemning many of the best and most catholic-spirited of men. The dogmatic system in which he had presumably been educated had softened under the influence of the cultivated thought of the day.

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Pope, as the member of a persecuted sect, had learnt to share that righteous hatred of bigotry which is the honourable characteristic of his best contemporaries. He considered the persecuting spirit of his own church to be its worst fault.¹ In the early *Essay on Criticism* he offended some of his own sect by a vigorous denunciation of the doctrine which promotes persecution by limiting salvation to a particular creed. His charitable conviction that a divine element is to be found in all creeds, from that of the "poor Indian" upwards, animates the highest passages in his works. But though he sympathizes with a generous toleration, and the specific dogmas of his creed sat very loosely on his mind, he did not consider that an open secession was necessary or even honourable. He called himself a true Catholic, though rather as respectfully sympathizing with the spirit of Fénelon than as holding to any dogmatic system. The most dignified letter that he ever wrote was in answer to a suggestion from Atterbury (1717), that he might change his religion upon the death of his father. Pope replies that his worldly interests would be promoted by such a step; and, in fact, it cannot be doubted that Pope might have had a share in the good things then obtainable by successful writers, if he had qualified by taking the oaths. But he adds that such a change would hurt his mother's feelings, and that he was more certain of his duty to promote her happiness than of any speculative tenet whatever. He was sure that he could mean as well in the religion he now professed as in any other; and that being so, he thought that a change even to an equally good religion could not be justified. A similar statement appears in a letter to Swift, in 1729. "I am of the religion of Erasmus, a Catholic. So I live, so

¹ Spence, p. 364.

shall I die, and hope one day to meet you, Bishop Atterbury, the younger Craggs, Dr. Garth, Dean Berkeley, and Mr. Hutchison in that place to which God of his infinite mercy bring us and everybody." To these Protestants he would doubtless have joined the freethinking Bolingbroke. At a later period he told Warburton, in less elevated language, that the change of his creed would bring him many enemies and do no good to any one.

Pope could feel nobly and act honourably when his morbid vanity did not expose him to some temptation; and I think that in this matter his attitude was in every way creditable. He showed, indeed, the prejudice entertained by many of the rationalist divines for the freethinkers who were a little more outspoken than himself. The deist whose creed was varnished with Christian phrases was often bitter against the deist who rejected the varnish; and Pope put Toland and Tindal into the *Dunciad* as scandalous assailants of all religion. From his point of view it was as wicked to attack any creed as to regard any creed as exclusively true; and certainly Pope was not disposed to join any party which was hated and maligned by the mass of the respectable world. For it must be remembered that, in spite of much that has been said to the contrary, and in spite of the true tendency of much so-called orthodoxy, the profession of open dissent from Christian doctrine was then regarded with extreme disapproval. It might be a fashion, as Butler and others declare, to talk infidelity in cultivated circles; but a public promulgation of unbelief was condemned as criminal, and worthy only of the Grub-street faction. Pope, therefore, was terribly shocked when he found himself accused of heterodoxy. His poem was at once translated, and, we are told, spread rapidly in France, where

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Voltaire and many inferior writers were introducing the contagion of English freethinking. A solid Swiss pastor and professor of philosophy, Jean Pierre Crousaz (1663–1750), undertook the task of refutation, and published an examination of Pope's philosophy in 1737 and 1738. A serious examination of this bundle of half-digested opinions was in itself absurd. Some years afterwards (1751) Pope came under a more powerful critic. The Berlin Academy of Sciences offered a prize for a similar essay, and Lessing published a short tract called *Pope ein Metaphysiker!* If any one cares to see a demonstration that Pope did not understand the system of Leibnitz, and that the bubble blown by a great philosopher has more apparent cohesion than that of a half-read poet, he may find a sufficient statement of the case in Lessing. But Lessing sensibly protests from the start against the intrusion of such a work into serious discussion; and that is the only ground which is worth taking in the matter.

The most remarkable result of the *Essay on Man*, it may be parenthetically noticed, was its effect upon Voltaire. In 1751 Voltaire wrote a poem on *Natural Law*, which is a comparatively feeble application of Pope's principles. It is addressed to Frederick instead of Bolingbroke, and contains a warm eulogy of Pope's philosophy. But a few years later the earthquake at Lisbon suggested certain doubts to Voltaire as to the completeness of the optimist theory; and, in some of the most impressive verses of the century, he issued an energetic protest against the platitudes applied by Pope and his followers to deaden our sense of the miseries under which the race suffers. Verbally, indeed, Voltaire still makes his bow to the optimist theory, and the two poems appeared together in 1756; but his noble outcry against the empty and complacent deduc-

tions which it covers, led to his famous controversy with Rousseau. The history of this conflict falls beyond my subject, and I must be content with this brief reference, which proves, amongst other things, the interest created by Pope's advocacy of the most characteristic doctrines of his time on the minds of the greatest leaders of the revolutionary movement.

Meanwhile, however, Crousaz was translated into English, and Pope was terribly alarmed. His "guide, philosopher, and friend" had returned to the Continent (in 1735), disgusted with his political failure, but was again in England from June, 1738, to May, 1739. We know not what comfort he may have given to his unlucky disciple, but an unexpected champion suddenly arose. William Warburton (born 1698) was gradually pushing his way to success. He had been an attorney's clerk, and had not received a university education; but his multifarious reading was making him conspicuous, helped by great energy, and by a quality which gave some plausibility to the title bestowed on him by Mallet, "The most impudent man living." In his humble days he had been intimate with Pope's enemies, Concanen and Theobald, and had spoken scornfully of Pope, saying, amongst other things, that he "borrowed for want of genius," as Addison borrowed from modesty, and Milton from pride. In 1736 he had published his first important work, the *Alliance between Church and State*; and in 1738 followed the first instalment of his principal performance, the *Divine Legation*. During the following years he was the most conspicuous theologian of the day, dreaded and hated by his opponents, whom he unsparingly bullied, and dominating a small clique of abject admirers. He is said to have condemned the *Essay on Man* when it first appeared. He called it a

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collection of the worst passages of the worst authors, and declared that it taught rank atheism. The appearance of Crousaz's book suddenly induced him to make a complete change of front. He declared that Pope spoke "truth uniformly throughout," and complimented him on his strong and delicate reasoning.

It is idle to seek motives for this proceeding. Warburton loved paradoxes, and delighted in brandishing them in the most offensive terms. He enjoyed the exercise of his own ingenuity, and therefore his ponderous writings, though amusing by their audacity and width of reading, are absolutely valueless for their ostensible purpose. The exposition of Pope (the first part of which appeared in December, 1738) is one of his most tiresome performances; nor need any human being at the present day study the painful wire-drawings and sophistries by which he tries to give logical cohesion and orthodox intention to the *Essay on Man*.

If Warburton was simply practising his dialectical skill, the result was a failure. But if he had an eye to certain lower ends, his success surpassed his expectations. Pope was in ecstasies. He fell upon Warburton's neck—or rather at his feet—and overwhelmed him with professions of gratitude. He invited him to Twickenham; met him with compliments which astonished a by-stander, and wrote to him in terms of surprising humility. "You understand me," he exclaims in his first letter, "as well as I do myself; but you express me much better than I could express myself." For the rest of his life Pope adopted the same tone. He sheltered himself behind this burly defender, and could never praise him enough. He declared Mr. Warburton to be the greatest general critic he ever knew, and was glad to instal him in the position of cham-

pion in ordinary. Warburton was consulted about new editions; annotated Pope's poems; stood sponsor to the last *Dunciad*, and was assured by his admiring friend that the comment would prolong the life of the poetry. Pope left all his copyrights to this friend, whilst his MSS. were given to Bolingbroke.

When the University of Oxford proposed to confer an honorary degree upon Pope, he declined to receive the compliment, because the proposal to confer a smaller honour upon Warburton had been at the same time thrown out by the University. In fact, Pope looked up to Warburton with a reverence almost equal to that which he felt for Bolingbroke. If such admiration for such an idol was rather humiliating, we must remember that Pope was unable to detect the charlatan in the pretentious but really vigorous writer; and we may perhaps admit that there is something pathetic in Pope's constant eagerness to be supported by some sturdier arm. We find the same tendency throughout his life. The weak and morbidly sensitive nature may be forgiven if its dependence leads to excessive veneration.

Warburton derived advantages from the connexion, the prospect of which, we may hope, was not the motive of his first advocacy. To be recognized by the most eminent man of letters of the day was to receive a kind of certificate of excellence, valuable to a man who had not the regular university hall-mark. More definite results followed. Pope introduced Warburton to Allen, and to Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield. Through Murray he was appointed preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and from Allen he derived greater benefits—the hand of his niece and heiress, and an introduction to Pitt, which gained for him the bishopric of Gloucester.

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Pope's allegiance to Bolingbroke was not weakened by this new alliance. He sought to bring the two together, when Bolingbroke again visited England in 1743. The only result was an angry explosion, as, indeed, might have been foreseen; for Bolingbroke was not likely to be well-disposed to the clever parson whose dexterous sleight-of-hand had transferred Pope to the orthodox camp; nor was it natural that Warburton, the most combative and insulting of controversialists, should talk on friendly terms to one of his natural antagonists—an antagonist, moreover, who was not likely to have bishoprics in his gift. The quarrel, as we shall see, broke out fiercely over Pope's grave.

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CHAPTER VIII.

EPISTLES AND SATIRES.

POPE had tried a considerable number of poetical experiments when the *Dunciad* appeared, but he had not yet discovered in what direction his talents could be most efficiently exerted. By-standers are sometimes acuter in detecting a man's true forte than the performer himself. In 1722 Atterbury had seen Pope's lines upon Addison, and reported that no piece of his writing was ever so much sought after. "Since you now know," he added, "in what direction your strength lies, I hope you will not suffer that talent to be unemployed." Atterbury seems to have been rather fond of giving advice to Pope, and puts on a decidedly pedagogic air when writing to him. The present suggestion was more likely to fall on willing ears than another made shortly before their final separation. Atterbury then presented Pope with a Bible, and recommended him to study its pages. If Pope had taken to heart some of St. Paul's exhortations to Christian charity, he would scarcely have published his lines upon Addison, and English literature would have lost some of its most brilliant pages.

Satire of the kind represented by those lines was so obviously adapted to Pope's peculiar talent, that we rather wonder at his having taken to it seriously at a compara-

tively late period, and even then having drifted into it by accident rather than by deliberate adoption. He had aimed, as has been said, at being a philosophic and didactic poet. The *Essay on Man* formed part of a much larger plan, of which two or three fragmentary sketches are given by Spence.¹ Bolingbroke and Pope wrote to Swift in November, 1729, about a scheme then in course of execution. Bolingbroke declares that Pope is now exerting what was eminently and peculiarly his talents above all writers, living or dead, without excepting Horace; whilst Pope explained that this was a "system of ethics in the Horatian way." The language seems to apply best to the poems afterwards called the *Ethic Epistles*, though at this time Pope, perhaps, had not a very clear plan in his head, and was working at different parts simultaneously. The *Essay on Man*, his most distinct scheme, was to form the opening book of his poem. Three others were to treat of knowledge and its limits, of government—ecclesiastical and civil—and of morality. The last book itself involved an elaborate plan. There were to be three epistles about each cardinal virtue—one, for example, upon avarice; another on the contrary extreme of prodigality; and a third upon the judicious mean of a moderate use of riches. Pope told Spence that he had dropped the plan chiefly because his third book would have provoked every Church on the face of the earth, and he did not care for always being in boiling water. The scheme, however, was far too wide and too systematic for Pope's powers. His spasmodic energy enabled him only to fill up corners of the canvas, and from what he did, it is sufficiently evident that his classification would have been incoherent and his philosophy unequal to the task. Part of his work was used for the fourth book of

¹ Spence, pp. 16, 48, 137, 315.

the *Dunciad*, and the remainder corresponds to what are now called the *Ethic Epistles*. These, as they now stand, include five poems. One of these has no real connexion with the others. It is a poem addressed to Addison, "occasioned by his dialogue on medals," written (according to Pope) in 1715, and first published in Tickell's edition of Addison's works in 1721. The epistle to Burlington on taste was afterwards called the *Use of Riches*, and appended to another with the same title, thus filling a place in the ethical scheme, though devoted to a very subsidiary branch of the subject. It appeared in 1731. The epistle "of the use of riches" appeared in 1732; that of the knowledge and characters of men in 1733; and that of the characters of women in 1735. The last three are all that would seem to belong to the wider treatise contemplated; but Pope composed so much in fragments that it is difficult to say what bits he might have originally intended for any given purpose.

Another distraction seems to have done more than his fear of boiling water to arrest the progress of the elaborate plan. Bolingbroke coming one day into his room, took up a Horace, and observed that the first satire of the second book would suit Pope's style. Pope translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press almost immediately (1733). The poem had a brilliant success. It contained, amongst other things, the couplet which provoked his war with Lady Mary and Lord Hervey. This, again, led to his putting together the epistle to Arbuthnot, which includes the bitter attack upon Hervey, as part of a general *apologia pro vita sua*. It was afterwards called the *Prologue to the Satires*. Of his other imitations of Horace, one appeared in 1734 (the second satire of the second book), and four more (the first and sixth epistles of the first book and the

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first and second of the second book) in 1738. Finally, in 1737, he published two dialogues, first called "1738," and afterwards *The Epilogue to the Satires*, which are in the same vein as the epistle to Arbuthnot. These epistles and imitations of Horace, with the so-called prologue and epilogue, took up the greatest part of Pope's energy during the years in which his intellect was at its best, and show his finest technical qualities. The *Essay on Man* was on hand during the early part of this period, the epistles and satires representing a ramification from the same inquiry. But the essay shows the weak side of Pope, whilst his most remarkable qualities are best represented by these subsidiary writings. The reason will be sufficiently apparent after a brief examination, which will also give occasion for saying what still remains to be said in regard to Pope as a literary artist.

The weakness already conspicuous in the *Essay on Man* mars the effect of the *Ethic Epistles*. His work tends to be rather an aggregation than an organic whole. He was (if I may borrow a phrase from the philologists) an agglutinative writer, and composed by sticking together independent fragments. His mode of composition was natural to a mind incapable of sustained and continuous thought. In the epistles he professes to be working on a plan. The first expounds his favourite theory (also treated in the essay) of a "ruling passion." Each man has such a passion, if only you can find it, which explains the apparent inconsistency of his conduct. This theory, which has exposed him to a charge of fatalism (especially from people who did not very well know what fatalism means), is sufficiently striking for his purpose; but it rather turns up at intervals than really binds the epistle into a whole. But the arrangement of his portrait gallery is really unsys-

tematic; the affectation of system is rather in the way. The most striking characters in the essay on women were inserted (whenever composed) some time after its first appearance, and the construction is too loose to make any interruption of the argument perceptible. The poems contain some of Pope's most brilliant bits, but we can scarcely remember them as a whole. The characters of Wharton and Villiers, of Atossa, of the Man of Ross, and Sir Balaam, stand out as brilliant passages which would do almost as well in any other setting. In the imitations of Horace he is, of course, guided by lines already laid down for him; and he has shown admirable skill in translating the substance as well as the words of his author by the nearest equivalents. This peculiar mode of imitation had been tried by other writers, but in Pope's hands it succeeded beyond all precedent. There is so much congeniality between Horace and Pope, and the social orders of which they were the spokesmen, that he can represent his original without giving us any sense of constraint. Yet even here he sometimes obscures the thread of connexion, and we feel more or less clearly that the order of thought is not that which would have spontaneously arisen in his own mind. So, for example, in the imitation of Horace's first epistle of the first book, the references to the Stoical and Epicurean morals imply a connexion of ideas to which nothing corresponds in Pope's reproduction. Horace is describing a genuine experience, while Pope is only putting together a string of commonplaces. The most interesting part of these imitations are those in which Pope takes advantage of the suggestions in Horace to be thoroughly autobiographical. He manages to run his own experience and feelings into the moulds provided for him by his predecessor. One

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of the happiest passages is that in which he turns the serious panegyric on Augustus into a bitter irony against the other Augustus, whose name was George, and who, according to Lord Hervey, was so contrasted with his prototype, that whereas personal courage was the one weak point of the emperor, it was the one strong point of the English king. As soon as Pope has a chance of expressing his personal antipathies or (to do him bare justice) his personal attachments, his lines begin to glow. When he is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing, and to lose his place; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete and personal instance, every word is alive. And it is this which makes the epilogues, and more especially the prologue to the satires, his most impressive performances. The unity, which is very ill supplied by some ostensible philosophical thesis, or even by the leading-strings of Horace, is given by his own intense interest in himself. The best way of learning to enjoy Pope is to get by heart the epistle to Arbuthnot. That epistle is, as I have said, his *Apologia*. In its some 400 lines he has managed to compress more of his feelings and thoughts than would fill an ordinary autobiography. It is true that the epistle requires a commentator. It wants some familiarity with the events of Pope's life, and many lines convey only a part of their meaning unless we are familiar not only with the events, but with the characters of the persons mentioned. Passages over which we pass carelessly at the first reading then come out with wonderful freshness, and single phrases throw a sudden light upon hidden depths of feeling. It is also true, unluckily, that parts of it must be read by the rule of contraries. They tell us not what Pope really was, but what he

wished others to think him, and what he probably endeavoured to persuade himself that he was. How far he succeeded in imposing upon himself is indeed a very curious question which can never be fully answered. There is the strangest mixture of honesty and hypocrisy. Let me, he says, live my own, and die so too—

“(To live and die is all I have to do)
Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,
And see what friends and read what books I please!”

Well, he was independent in his fashion, and we can at least believe that he so far believed in himself. But when he goes on to say that he “can sleep without a poem in his head,

‘Nor know if Dennis be alive or dead,’”

we remember his calling up the maid four times a night in the dreadful winter of 1740 to save a thought, and the features writhing in anguish as he read a hostile pamphlet. Presently he informs us that “he thinks a lie in prose or verse the same”—only too much the same! and that “if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways.” Alas! for the manliness. And yet again, when he speaks of his parents,

“Unspotted names and venerable long,
If there be force in virtue or in song,”

can we doubt that he is speaking from the heart? We should perhaps like to forget that the really exquisite and touching lines in which he speaks of his mother had been so carefully elaborated.

“Me let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of declining age,
With lenient acts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death,

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Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep awhile one parent from the sky!"

If there are more tender and exquisitely expressed lines in the language, I know not where to find them; and yet again I should be glad not to be reminded by a cruel commentator that poor Mrs. Pope had been dead for two years when they were published, and that even this touching effusion has, therefore, a taint of dramatic affectation.

To me, I confess, it seems most probable, though at first sight incredible, that these utterances were thoroughly sincere for the moment. I fancy that under Pope's elaborate masks of hypocrisy and mystification there was a heart always abnormally sensitive. Unfortunately it was as capable of bitter resentment as of warm affection, and was always liable to be misled by the suggestions of his strangely irritable vanity. And this seems to me to give the true key to Pope's poetical as well as to his personal characteristics.

To explain either, we must remember that he was a man of impulses; at one instant a mere incarnate thrill of gratitude or generosity, and in the next of spite or jealousy. A spasm of wounded vanity would make him for the time as mean and selfish as other men are made by a frenzy of bodily fear. He would instinctively snatch at a lie even when a moment's reflection would have shown that the plain truth would be more convenient, and therefore he had to accumulate lie upon lie, each intended to patch up some previous blunder. Though nominally the poet of reason, he was the very antithesis of the man who is reasonable in the highest sense; who is truthful in word and deed because his conduct is regulated by harmonious and invariable principles. Pope was governed by the instantaneous feeling. His emotion came in sudden jets

and gushes, instead of a continuous stream. The same peculiarity deprives his poetry of continuous harmony or profound unity of conception. His lively sense of form and proportion enables him, indeed, to fill up a simple framework (generally of borrowed design) with an eye to general effect, as in the *Rape of the Lock* or the first *Dunciad*. But even there his flight is short; and when a poem should be governed by the evolution of some profound principle or complex mood of sentiment, he becomes incoherent and perplexed. But, on the other hand, he can perceive admirably all that can be seen at a glance from a single point of view. Though he could not be continuous, he could return again and again to the same point; he could polish, correct, eliminate superfluities, and compress his meaning more and more closely, till he has constructed short passages of imperishable excellence. This microscopic attention to fragments sometimes injures the connexion, and often involves a mutilation of construction. He corrects and prunes too closely. He could, he says, in reference to the *Essay on Man*, put things more briefly in verse than in prose; one reason being that he could take liberties of this kind not permitted in prose writing. But the injury is compensated by the singular terseness and vivacity of his best style. Scarcely any one, as is often remarked, has left so large a proportion of quotable phrases,¹ and, indeed, to the present he survives chiefly by the current coinage of that kind which bears his image and superscription.

This familiar remark may help us to solve the old prob-

¹ To take an obviously uncertain test, I find that in Bartlett's dictionary of familiar quotations, Shakspeare fills 70 pages; Milton, 23; Pope, 18; Wordsworth, 16; and Byron, 15. The rest are nowhere.

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lem, whether Pope was, or rather in what sense he was, a poet. Much of his work may be fairly described as rhymed prose, differing from prose not in substance or tone of feeling, but only in the form of expression. Every poet has an invisible audience, as an orator has a visible one, who deserve a great part of the merit of his works. Some men may write for the religious or philosophic recluse, and therefore utter the emotions which come to ordinary mortals in the rare moments when the music of the spheres, generally drowned by the din of the commonplace world, becomes audible to their dull senses. Pope, on the other hand, writes for the wits who never listen to such strains, and moreover writes for their ordinary moods. He aims at giving us the refined and doubly distilled essence of the conversation of the statesmen and courtiers of his time. The standard of good writing always implicitly present to his mind is the fitness of his poetry to pass muster when shown by Gay to his duchess, or read after dinner to a party composed of Swift, Bolingbroke, and Congreve. That imaginary audience is always looking over his shoulder, applauding a good hit, chuckling over allusions to the last bit of scandal, and ridiculing any extravagance tending to romance or sentimentalism.

The limitations imposed by such a condition are obvious. As men of taste, Pope's friends would make their bow to the recognized authorities. They would praise *Paradise Lost*, but a new Milton would be as much out of place with them as the real Milton at the court of Charles II. They would really prefer to have his verses tagged by Dryden, or the *Samson* polished by Pope. They would have ridiculed Wordsworth's mysticism or Shelley's idealism, as they laughed at the religious "enthusiasm" of Law or Wesley, or the metaphysical subtle-

ties of Berkeley and Hume. They preferred the philosophy of the *Essay on Man*, which might be appropriated by a common-sense preacher, or the rhetoric of *Eloisa and Abelard*, bits of which might be used to excellent effect (as, indeed, Pope himself used the peroration) by a fine gentleman addressing his gallantry to a contemporary Sappho. It is only too easy to expose their shallowness, and therefore to overlook what was genuine in their feelings. After all, Pope's eminent friends were no mere tailor's blocks for the display of laced coats. Swift and Bolingbroke were not enthusiasts nor philosophers, but certainly they were no fools. They liked, in the first place, thorough polish. They could appreciate a perfectly turned phrase, an epigram which concentrated into a couplet a volume of quick observations, a smart saying from Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère, which gave an edge to worldly wisdom; a really brilliant utterance of one of those maxims, half true and not over profound, but still presenting one aspect of life as they saw it, which have since grown rather threadbare. This sort of moralizing, which is the staple of Pope's epistles upon the ruling passion or upon avarice, strikes us now as unpleasantly obvious. We have got beyond it, and want some more refined analysis and more complex psychology. Take, for example, Pope's epistle to Bathurst, which was in hand for two years, and is just 400 lines in length. The simplicity of the remarks is almost comic. Nobody wants to be told now that bribery is facilitated by modern system of credit.

"Blest paper-credit! last and best supply
That lends corruption lighter wings to fly!"

This triteness blinds us to the singular felicity with

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which the observations have been verified, a felicity which makes many of the phrases still proverbial. The mark is so plain that we do scant justice to the accuracy and precision with which it is hit. Yet when we notice how every epithet tells, and how perfectly the writer does what he tries to do, we may understand why Pope extorted contemporary admiration. We may, for example, read once more the familiar passage about Buckingham. The picture, such as it is, could not be drawn more strikingly with fewer lines.

“In the worst inn’s worst room, with mat half-hung,
The floors of plaister and the walls of dung,
On once a flock-bed, but repair’d with straw,
With tape-ty’d curtains never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed,
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies ! alas, how changed from him,
That life of pleasure and that soul of whim !
Gallant and gay in Cliveden’s proud alcove,
The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love ;
As great as gay, at council in a ring
Of mimick’d statesmen, and their merry king.
No wit to flatter left of all his store !
No fool to laugh at, which he valued more.
Thus, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
And fame, the lord of useless thousands ends.”

It is as graphic as a page of Dickens, and has the advantage of being less grotesque, if the sentiment is equally obvious. When Pope has made his hit, he does not blur the effect by trying to repeat it.

In these epistles, it must be owned that the sentiment is not only obvious but prosaic. The moral maxims are delivered like advice offered by one sensible man to another, not with the impassioned fervour of a prophet.

Nor can Pope often rise to that level at which alone satire is transmuted into the higher class of poetry. To accomplish that feat, if, indeed, it be possible, the poet must not simply ridicule the fantastic tricks of poor mortals, but show how they appear to the angels who weep over them. The petty figures must be projected against a background of the infinite, and we must feel the relations of our tiny eddies of life to the oceanic currents of human history. Pope can never rise above the crowd. He is looking at his equals, not contemplating them from the height which reveals their insignificance. The element, which may fairly be called poetical, is derived from an inferior source; but sometimes has passion enough in it to lift him above mere prose.

In one of his most animated passages, Pope relates his desire to

“Brand the bold front of shameless guilty men,
Dash the proud gamester in his gilded car,
Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star.”

For the moment he takes himself seriously; and, indeed, he seems to have persuaded both himself and his friends that he was really a great defender of virtue. Arbuthnot begged him, almost with his dying breath, to continue his “noble disdain and abhorrence of vice,” and, with a due regard to his own safety, to try rather to reform than chastise; and Pope accepts the office ostentatiously. His provocation is “the strong antipathy of good to bad,” and he exclaims,—

“Yes! I am proud—I must be proud—to see
Men not afraid of God afraid of me.
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
Yet touch’d and shamed by ridicule alone.”

If the sentiment provokes a slight incredulity, it is yet

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worth while to understand its real meaning; and the explanation is not very far to seek.

Pope's best writing, I have said, is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and brilliance, which we suppose to be the attributes of the best talk. Of course the apparent facility is due to conscientious labour. In the *Prologue* and *Epilogue* and the best parts of the imitations of Horace, he shows such consummate mastery of his peculiar style, that we forget the monotonous metre. The opening passage, for example, of the *Prologue* is written apparently with the perfect freedom of real dialogue; in fact, it is of course far more pointed and compressed than any dialogue could ever be. The dramatic vivacity with which the whole scene is given shows that he could use metre as the most skilful performer could command a musical instrument. Pope, indeed, shows, in the *Essay on Criticism*, that his views about the uniformity of sound and sense were crude enough; they are analogous to the tricks by which a musician might decently imitate the cries of animals or the murmurs of a crowd; and his art excludes any attempt at rivalling the melody of the great poets who aim at producing a harmony quite independent of the direct meaning of their words. I am only speaking of the felicity with which he can move in metre, without the slightest appearance of restraint, so as to give a kind of idealized representation of the tone of animated verbal intercourse. Whatever comes within this province he can produce with admirable fidelity. Now, in such talks as we imagine with Swift and Bolingbroke, we may be quite sure that there would be some very forcible denunciation of corruption—corruption being of course regarded as due to the diabolical agency of Walpole. During his later years, Pope became a friend

of all the Opposition clique, which was undermining the power of the great minister. In his last letters to Swift, Pope speaks of the new circle of promising patriots who were rising round him, and from whom he entertained hopes of the regeneration of this corrupt country. Sentiments of this kind were the staple talk of the circles in which he moved; and all the young men of promise believed, or persuaded themselves to fancy, that a political millennium would follow the downfall of Walpole. Pope, susceptible as always to the influences of his social surroundings, took in all this, and delighted in figuring himself as the prophet of the new era and the denouncer of wickedness in high places. He sees "old England's genius" dragged in the dust, hears the black trumpet of vice proclaiming that "not to be corrupted is the shame," and declares that he will draw the last pen for freedom, and use his "sacred weapon" in truth's defence.

To imagine Pope at his best, we must place ourselves in Twickenham on some fine day, when the long disease has relaxed its grasp for a moment; when he has taken a turn through his garden, and comforted his poor frame with potted lampreys and a glass or two from his frugal pint. Suppose two or three friends to be sitting with him, the stately Bolingbroke or the mercurial Bathurst, with one of the patriotic hopes of mankind, Marchmont or Lyttelton, to stimulate his ardour, and the amiable Spence, or Mrs. Patty Blount to listen reverentially to his morality. Let the conversation kindle into vivacity, and host and guests fall into a friendly rivalry, whetting each other's wits by lively repartee, and airing the little fragments of worldly wisdom which pass muster for profound observation at Court; for a time they talk platitudes, though striking out now and then brilliant flashes, as from the collision of pol-

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ished rapiers; they diverge, perhaps, into literature, and Pope shines in discussing the secrets of the art to which his whole life has been devoted with untiring fidelity. Suddenly the mention of some noted name provokes a startling outburst of personal invective from Pope; his friends judiciously divert the current of wrath into a new channel, and he becomes for the moment a generous patriot declaiming against the growth of luxury; the mention of some sympathizing friend brings out a compliment, so exquisitely turned, as to be a permanent title of honour, conferred by genius instead of power; or the thought of his parents makes his voice tremble, and his eyes shine with pathetic softness; and you forgive the occasional affectation which you can never quite forget, or even the occasional grossness or harshness of sentiment which contrasts so strongly with the superficial polish. A genuine report of even the best conversation would be intolerably prosy and unimaginative. But imagine the very pith and essence of such talk brought to a focus, concentrated into the smallest possible space with the infinite dexterity of a thoroughly trained hand, and you have the kind of writing in which Pope is unrivalled; polished prose with occasional gleams of genuine poetry—the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and the *Epilogue to the Satires*.

One point remains to be briefly noticed. The virtue on which Pope prided himself was correctness; and I have interpreted this to mean the quality which is gained by incessant labour, guided by quick feeling, and always under the strict supervision of common-sense. The next literary revolution led to a depreciation of this quality. Warton (like Macaulay long afterwards) argued that in a higher sense, the Elizabethan poets were really as correct as Pope. Their poetry embodied a higher and more complex law,

though it neglected the narrow cut-and-dried precepts recognized in the Queen Anne period. The new school came to express too indiscriminating a contempt for the whole theory and practice of Pope and his followers. Pope, said Cowper, and a thousand critics have echoed his words,

“Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler had his tune by heart.”

Without discussing the wider question, I may here briefly remark that this judgment, taken absolutely, gives a very false impression of Pope's artistic quality. Pope is undoubtedly monotonous. Except in one or two lyrics, such as the *Ode on St. Celia's Day*, which must be reckoned amongst his utter failures, he invariably employed the same metre. The discontinuity of his style, and the strict rules which he adopted, tend to disintegrate his poems. They are a series of brilliant passages, often of brilliant couplets, stuck together in a conglomerate; and as the inferior connecting matter decays, the interstices open and allow the whole to fall into ruin. To read a series of such couplets, each complete in itself, and each so constructed as to allow of a very small variety of form, is naturally to receive an impression of monotony. Pope's antitheses fall into a few common forms, which are repeated over and over again, and seem copy to each other. And, in a sense, such work can be very easily imitated. A very inferior artist can obtain most of his efforts, and all the external qualities of his style. One ten-syllabled rhyming couplet, with the whole sense strictly confined within its limits, and allowing only of such variety as follows from changing the pauses, is undoubtedly very much like another. And accordingly one may read in any collection of British poets innumerable pages of versification

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which—if you do not look too close—are exactly like Pope. All poets who have any marked style are more or less imitable; in the present age of revivals, a clever versifier is capable of adopting the manners of his leading contemporaries, or that of any poet from Spenser to Shelley or Keats. The quantity of work scarcely distinguishable from that of the worst passages in Mr. Tennyson, Mr. Browning, and Mr. Swinburne, seems to be limited only by the supply of stationery at the disposal of practised performers. That which makes the imitations of Pope prominent is partly the extent of his sovereignty; the vast number of writers who confined themselves exclusively to his style; and partly the fact that what is easily imitable in him is so conspicuous an element of the whole. The rigid framework which he adopted is easily definable with mathematical precision. The difference between the best work of Pope and the ordinary work of his followers is confined within narrow limits, and not easily perceived at a glance. The difference between blank verse in the hands of its few masters and in the hands of a third-rate imitator strikes the ear in every line. Far more is left to the individual idiosyncrasy. But it does not at all follow, and in fact it is quite untrue, that the distinction which turns on an apparently insignificant element is therefore unimportant. The value of all good work ultimately depends on touches so fine as to elude the sight. And the proof is that although Pope was so constantly imitated, no later and contemporary writer succeeded in approaching his excellence. Young, of the *Night Thoughts*, was an extraordinarily clever writer and talker, even if he did not (as one of his hearers asserts) eclipse Voltaire by the brilliance of his conversation. Young's satires show abundance of wit, and one may not be able to say at a glance in what they

are inferior to Pope. Yet they have hopelessly perished, whilst Pope's work remains classical. Of all the crowd of eighteenth-century writers in Pope's manner, only two made an approach to him worth notice. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* surpasses Pope in general sense of power, and Goldsmith's two poems in the same style have phrases of a higher order than Pope's. But even these poems have not made so deep a mark. In the last generation, Gifford's *Baviad and Mæviad*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, were clever reproductions of the manner; but Gifford is already unreadable, and Byron is pale beside his original; and, therefore, making full allowance for Pope's monotony, and the tiresome prominence of certain mechanical effects, we must, I think, admit that he has after all succeeded in doing with unsurpassable excellence what innumerable rivals have failed to do as well. The explanation is—if the phrase explains anything—that he was a man of genius, or that he brought to a task, not of the highest class, a keenness of sensibility, a conscientious desire to do his very best, and a capacity for taking pains with his work, which enabled him to be as indisputably the first in his own peculiar line, as our greatest men have been in far more lofty undertakings.

The man who could not publish pastorals without getting into quarrels, was hardly likely to become a professed satirist without giving offence. Besides numerous stabs administered to old enemies, Pope opened some fresh animosities by passages in these poems. Some pointed ridicule was aimed at Montagu, Earl of Halifax, in the *Prologue*; for there can be no doubt that Halifax¹ was pointed out in the character of Bufo. Pope told a story in

¹ Roscoe's attempt at a denial was conclusively answered by Bowles in one of his pamphlets.

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later days of an introduction to Halifax, the great patron of the early years of the century, who wished to hear him read his Homer. After the reading Halifax suggested that one passage should be improved. Pope retired rather puzzled by his vague remarks, but, by Garth's advice, returned some time afterwards, and read the same passage without alteration. "Ay, now, Mr. Pope," said Halifax, "they are perfectly right; nothing can be better!" This little incident perhaps suggested to Pope that Halifax was a humbug, and there seems, as already noticed, to have been some difficulty about the desired dedication of the Iliad. Though Halifax had been dead for twenty years when the *Prologue* appeared, Pope may have been in the right in satirizing the pompous would-be patron, from whom he had received nothing, and whose pretences he had seen through. But the bitterness of the attack is disagreeable when we add that Pope paid Halifax high compliments in the preface to the Iliad, and boasted of his friendship, shortly after the satire, in the *Epilogue to the Satires*. A more disagreeable affair at the moment was the description, in the *Epistle on Taste*, of Canons, the splendid seat of the Duke of Chandos. Chandos, being still alive, resented the attack, and Pope had not the courage to avow his meaning, which might in that case have been justifiable. He declared to Burlington (to whom the epistle was addressed), and to Chandos, that he had not intended Canons, and tried to make peace by saying in another epistle that "gracious Chandos is beloved at sight." This exculpation, says Johnson, was received by the duke "with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse, without believing his professions." Nobody, in fact, believed, and even Warburton let out the secret by a comic oversight. Pope had prophesied in his poem that

another age would see the destruction of "Timon's Villa," when laughing Ceres would reassume the land. Had he lived three years longer, said Warburton in a note, Pope would have seen his prophecy fulfilled, namely, by the destruction of Canons. The note was corrected, but the admission that Canons belonged to Timon had been made.

To such accusations Pope had a general answer. He described the type, not the individual. The fault was with the public, who chose to fit the cap. His friend remonstrates in the Epilogue against his personal satire. "Come on, then, Satire, general, unconfined," exclaims the poet,

"Spread thy broad wing and souse on all the kind

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Ye reverend atheists. (Friend) Scandal! name them! who?

(Pope) Why, that's the thing you bade me not to do.

Who starved a sister, who forswore a debt,

I never named; the town's inquiring yet.

The pois'ning dame— (F.) You mean— (P.) I don't. (F.)

You do.

(P.) See, now, I keep the secret, and not you!"

It must, in fact, be admitted that from the purely artistic point of view Pope is right. Prosaic commentators are always asking, Who is meant by a poet? as though a poem were a legal document. It may be interesting, for various purposes, to know who was in the writer's mind, or what fact suggested the general picture. But we have no right to look outside the poem itself, or to infer anything not within the four corners of the statement. It matters not for such purposes whether there was, or was not, any real person corresponding to Sir Balaam, to whom his wife said, when he was enriched by Cornish wreckers, "live like yourself,"

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"When lo! two puddings smoked upon the board,"
in place of the previous one on Sabbath days. Nor does
it even matter whether Atticus meant Addison, or Sappho
Lady Mary. The satire is equally good, whether its ob-
jects are mere names or realities.

But the moral question is quite distinct. In that case
we must ask whether Pope used words calculated or in-
tended to fix an imputation upon particular people.
Whether he did it in prose or verse, the offence was the
same. In many cases he gives real names, and in many
others gives unmistakable indications, which must have
fixed his satire to particular people. If he had written
Addison for Atticus (as he did at first), or Lady Mary for
Sappho, or Halifax for Bufo, the insinuation could not have
been clearer. His attempt to evade his responsibility was
a mere equivocation—a device which he seems to have pre-
ferred to direct lying. The character of Bufo might be
equally suitable to others; but no reasonable man could
doubt that every one would fix it upon Halifax. In some
cases—possibly in that of Chandos—he may have thought
that his language was too general to apply, and occasional-
ly it seems that he sometimes tried to evade consequences
by adding some inconsistent characteristic to his portraits.

I say this, because I am here forced to notice the worst
of all the imputations upon Pope's character. The epistle
on the characters of women now includes the famous lines
on Atossa, which did not appear till after Pope's death.¹
They were (in 1746) at once applied to the famous Sarah,
Duchess of Marlborough; and a story immediately became
current that the duchess had paid Pope 1000*l.* to suppress
them, but that he preserved them, with a view to their ul-
timate publication. This story was repeated by Warton

¹ On this subject Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*.

and by Walpole; it has been accepted by Mr. Carruthers, who suggests, by way of palliation, that Pope was desirous at the time of providing for Martha Blount, and probably took the sum in order to buy an annuity for her. Now, if the story were proved, it must be admitted that it would reveal a baseness in Pope which would be worthy only of the lowest and most venal literary marauders. No more disgraceful imputation could have been made upon Curll, or Curll's miserable dependents. A man who could so prostitute his talents must have been utterly vile. Pope has sins enough to answer for; but his other meannesses were either sacrifices to his morbid vanity, or (like his offence against Swift, or his lies to Aaron Hill and Chandos) collateral results of spasmodic attempts to escape from humiliation. In money-matters he seems to have been generally independent. He refused gifts from his rich friends, and confuted the rather similar calumny that he had received 500*l.* from the Duke of Chandos. If the account rested upon mere contemporary scandal, we might reject it on the ground of its inconsistency with his known character, and its likeness to other fabrications of his enemies. There is, however, further evidence. It is such evidence as would, at most, justify a verdict of "not proven" in a court of justice. But the critic is not bound by legal rules, and has to say what is the most probable solution, without fear or favour.

I cannot here go into the minute details. This much, however, may be taken as established. Pope was printing a new edition of his works at the time of his death. He had just distributed to his friends some copies of the *Ethic Epistles*, and in those copies the Atossa appeared. Bolingbroke, to whom Pope had left his unpublished papers, discovered it, and immediately identified it with the

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duchess, who (it must be noticed) was still alive. He wrote to Marchmont, one of Pope's executors, that there could be "no excuse for Pope's design of publishing it after the favour you and I know." This is further explained by a note added in pencil by Marchmont's executor, "1000*l*;" and the son of this executor, who published the Marchmont papers, says that this was the favour received by Pope from the duchess. This, however, is far from proving a direct bribe. It is, in fact, hardly conceivable that the duchess and Pope should have made such a bargain in direct black and white, and equally inconceivable that two men like Bolingbroke and Marchmont should have been privy to such a transaction, and spoken of it in such terms. Bolingbroke thinks that the favour received laid Pope under an obligation, but evidently does not think that it implied a contract. Mr. Dilke has further pointed out that there are many touches in the character which distinctly apply to the Duchess of Buckingham, with whom Pope had certainly quarrelled, and which will not apply to the Duchess of Marlborough, who had undoubtedly made friends with him during the last years of his life. Walpole again tells a story, partly confirmed by Warton, that Pope had shown the character to each duchess (Warton says only to Marlborough), saying that it was meant for the other. The Duchess of Buckingham, he says, believed him; the other had more sense, and paid him 1000*l*. to suppress it. Walpole is no trustworthy authority; but the coincidence implies at least that such a story was soon current.

The most probable solution must conform to these data. Pope's *Atossa* was a portrait which would fit either lady, though it would be naturally applied to the most famous. It seems certain, also, that Pope had received some favours

(possibly the 1000*l.* on some occasion unknown) from the Duchess of Marlborough, which was felt by his friends to make any attack upon her unjustifiable. We can scarcely believe that there should have been a direct compact of the kind described. If Pope had been a person of duly sensitive conscience he would have suppressed his work. But to suppress anything that he had written, and especially a passage so carefully laboured, was always agony to him. He preferred, as we may perhaps conjecture, to settle in his own mind that it would fit the Duchess of Buckingham, and possibly introduce some of the touches to which Mr. Dilke refers. He thought it sufficiently disguised to be willing to publish it whilst the person with whom it was naturally identified was still alive. Had she complained, he would have relied upon those touches, and have equivocated as he equivocated to Hill and Chandos. He always seems to have fancied that he could conceal himself by very thin disguises. But he ought to have known, and perhaps did know, that it would be immediately applied to the person who had conferred an obligation. From that guilt no hypothesis can relieve him; but it is certainly not proved, and seems, on the whole, improbable that he was so base as the concessions of his biographers would indicate.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE END.

THE last satires were published in 1738. Six years of life still remained to Pope; his intellectual powers were still vigorous, and his pleasure in their exercise had not ceased. The only fruit, however, of his labours during this period was the fourth book of the *Dunciad*. He spent much time upon bringing out new editions of his works, and upon the various intrigues connected with the Swift correspondence. But his health was beginning to fail. The ricketty framework was giving way, and failing to answer the demands of the fretful and excitable brain. In the spring of 1744 the poet was visibly breaking up; he suffered from dropsical asthma, and seems to have made matters worse by putting himself in the hands of a notorious quack—a Dr. Thomson. The end was evidently near as he completed his fifty-sixth year. Friends, old and new, were often in attendance. Above all, Bolingbroke, the venerated friend of thirty years' standing; Patty Blount, the woman whom he loved best; and the excellent Spence, who preserved some of the last words of the dying man. The scene, as he saw it, was pathetic; perhaps it is not less pathetic to us, for whom it has another side as of grim tragic humour.

Three weeks before his death Pope was sending off copies of the *Ethic Epistles*—apparently with the *Atossa*

lines—to his friends. “Here I am, like Socrates,” he said, “dispensing my morality amongst my friends just as I am dying.” Spence watched him as anxiously as his disciples watched Socrates. He was still sensible to kindness. Whenever Miss Blount came in, the failing spirits rallied for a moment. He was always saying something kindly of his friends, “as if his humanity had outlasted his understanding.” Bolingbroke, when Spence made the remark, said that he had never known a man with so tender a heart for his own friends or for mankind. “I have known him,” he added, “these thirty years, and value myself more for that man’s love than—” and his voice was lost in tears. At moments Pope could still be playful. “Here I am, dying of a hundred good symptoms,” he replied to some flattering report, but his mind was beginning to wander. He complained of seeing things as through a curtain. “What’s that?” he said, pointing to the air, and then, with a smile of great pleasure, added softly, “’twas a vision.” His religious sentiments still edified his hearers. “I am so certain,” he said, “of the soul’s being immortal, that I seem to feel it within me, as it were by intuition;” and early one morning he rose from bed and tried to begin an essay upon immortality, apparently in a state of semi-delirium. On his last day he sacrificed, as Chesterfield rather cynically observes, his cock to Æsculapius. Hooke, a zealous Catholic friend, asked him whether he would not send for a priest. “I do not suppose that it is essential,” said Pope, “but it will look right, and I heartily thank you for putting me in mind of it.” A priest was brought, and Pope received the last sacraments with great fervour and resignation. Next day, on May 30, 1744, he died so peacefully that his friends could not determine the exact moment of death.

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It was a soft and touching end; and yet we must once more look at the other side. Warburton and Bolingbroke both appear to have been at the side of the dying man, and before very long they were to be quarrelling over his grave. Pope's will showed at once that his quarrels were hardly to end with his death. He had quarrelled, though the quarrel had been made up, with the generous Allen, for some cause not ascertainable, except that it arose from the mutual displeasure of Mrs. Allen and Miss Blount. It is pleasant to notice that, in the course of the quarrel, Pope mentioned Warburton, in a letter to Miss Blount, as a sneaking parson; but Warburton was not aware of the flash of sarcasm. Pope, as Johnson puts it, "polluted his will with female resentment." He left a legacy of 150*l.* to Allen, being, as he added, the amount received from his friend—for himself or for charitable purposes; and requested Allen, if he should refuse the legacy for himself, to pay it to the Bath Hospital. Allen adopted this suggestion, saying quietly that Pope had always been a bad accountant, and would have come nearer the truth if he had added a cypher to the figures.

Another fact came to light, which produced a fiercer outburst. Pope, it was found, had printed a whole edition (1500 copies) of the *Patriot King*, Bolingbroke's most polished work. The motive could have been nothing but a desire to preserve to posterity what Pope considered to be a monument worthy of the highest genius, and was so far complimentary to Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke, however, considered it as an act of gross treachery. Pope had received the work on condition of keeping it strictly private, and showing it to only a few friends. Moreover, he had corrected it, arranged it, and altered or omitted passages according to his own taste, which naturally did

not suit the author's. In 1749 Bolingbroke gave a copy to Mallet for publication, and prefixed an angry statement to expose the breach of trust of "a man on whom the author thought he could entirely depend." Warburton rushed to the defence of Pope and the demolition of Bolingbroke. A savage controversy followed, which survives only in the title of one of Bolingbroke's pamphlets, *A Familiar Epistle to the most Impudent Man Living*—a transparent paraphrase for Warburton. Pope's behaviour is too much of a piece with previous underhand transactions, but scarcely deserves further condemnation.

A single touch remains. Pope was buried, by his own directions, in a vault in Twickenham Church, near the monument erected to his parents. It contained a simple inscription, ending with the words, "*Parentibus bene merentibus filius fecit.*" To this, as he directed in his will, was to be added simply "*et sibi.*" This was done; but seventeen years afterwards the clumsy Warburton erected in the same church another monument to Pope himself, with this stupid inscription. *Poeta loquitur.*

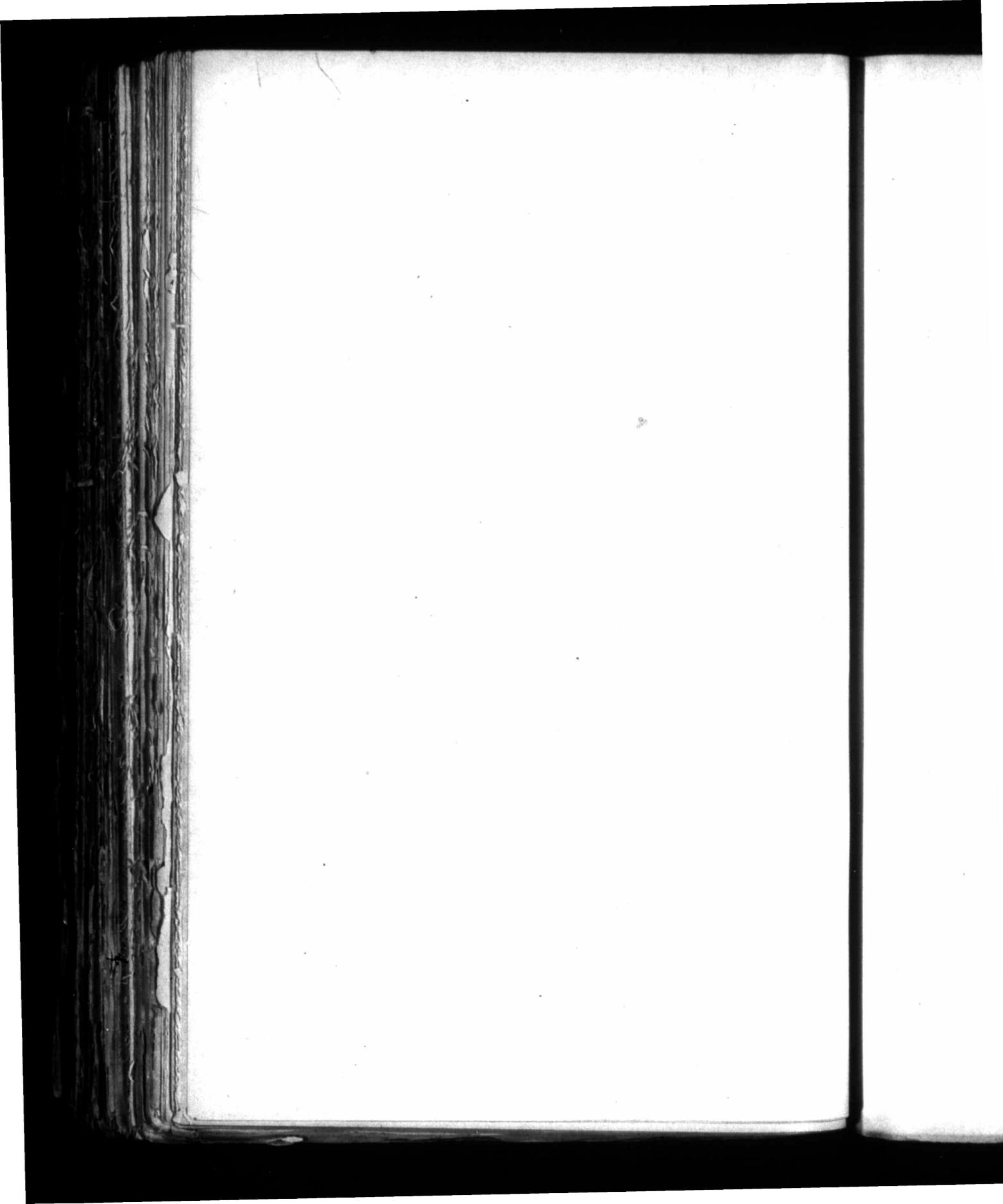
"For one who would not be buried in Westminster Abbey.

Heroes and kings, your distance keep!
In peace let one poor poet sleep
Who never flatter'd folks like you;
Let Horace blush, and Virgil too."

Most of us can tell from experience how grievously our posthumous ceremonials often jar upon the tenderest feelings of survivors. Pope's valued friends seem to have done their best to surround the last scene of his life with painful associations; and Pope, alas! was an unconscious accomplice. To us of a later generation it is impossible to close this strange history without a singular mixture of feelings. Admiration for the extraordinary literary talents,

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respect for the energy which, under all disadvantages of health and position, turned these talents to the best account; love of the real tender-heartedness which formed the basis of the man's character; pity for the many sufferings to which his morbid sensitiveness exposed him; contempt for the meannesses into which he was hurried; ridicule for the insatiable vanity which prompted his most degrading subterfuges; horror for the bitter animosities which must have tortured the man who cherished them even more than his victims—are suggested simultaneously by the name of Pope. As we look at him in one or other aspect, each feeling may come uppermost in turn. The most abiding sentiment—when we think of him as a literary phenomenon—is admiration for the exquisite skill which enabled him to discharge a function, not of the highest kind, with a perfection rare in any department of literature. It is more difficult to say what will be the final element in our feeling about the man. Let us hope that it may be the pity which, after a certain lapse of years, we may be excused from conceding to the victim of moral as well as physical diseases.



SIDNEY

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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PREFACE.

THE chief documents upon which a life of Sir Philip Sidney must be grounded are, at present, his own works in prose and verse, Collins' *Sidney Papers* (2 vols., 1745), Sir Henry Sidney's Letter to Sir Francis Walsingham (*Ulster Journal of Archæology*, Nos. 9-31), Languet's *Latin Letters* (Edinburgh, 1776), Pears' *Correspondence of Languet and Philip Sidney* (London, 1845), Fulke Greville's so-called *Life of Sidney* (1652), the anonymous "Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney," prefixed to old editions of the *Arcadia*, and a considerable mass of memorial writings in prose and verse illustrative of his career. In addition to these sources, which may be called original, we possess a series of modern biographies, each of which deserves mention. These, in their chronological order, are: Dr. Zouch's (1809), Mr. William Gray's (1829), an anonymous *Life and Times of Sir Philip Sidney* (Boston, 1859), Mr. Fox Bourne's (1862), and Mr. Julius Lloyd's (later in 1862). With the American Life I am not acquainted; but the two last require to be particularly noticed. Mr. Fox Bourne's *Memoir of Sir Philip Sidney* combines a careful study of its main subject with an able review of the times. The author's industrious researches in State Papers and other MS. collections brought many new facts to light. This book is one upon which all later

handlings of the subject will be based, and his deep indebtedness to which every subsequent biographer of Sidney must recognise. Mr. Lloyd's *Life of Sir Philip Sidney* appearing in the same year as Mr. Fox Bourne's, is slighter in substance. It has its own value as a critical and conscientious study of Sidney under several aspects; and in one or two particulars it supplements or corrects the more considerable work of Mr. Bourne. For Sidney's writings Professor Arber's reprint of the *Defence of Poesy*, and Dr. Grosart's edition of the poems in two volumes (The Fuller Worthies' Library, 1873), will be found indispensable.

In composing this sketch I have freely availed myself of all that has been published about Sidney. It has been my object to present the ascertained facts of his brief life, and my own opinions regarding his character and literary works, in as succinct a form as I found possible.

BADENWEILER, *May* 11, 1886.

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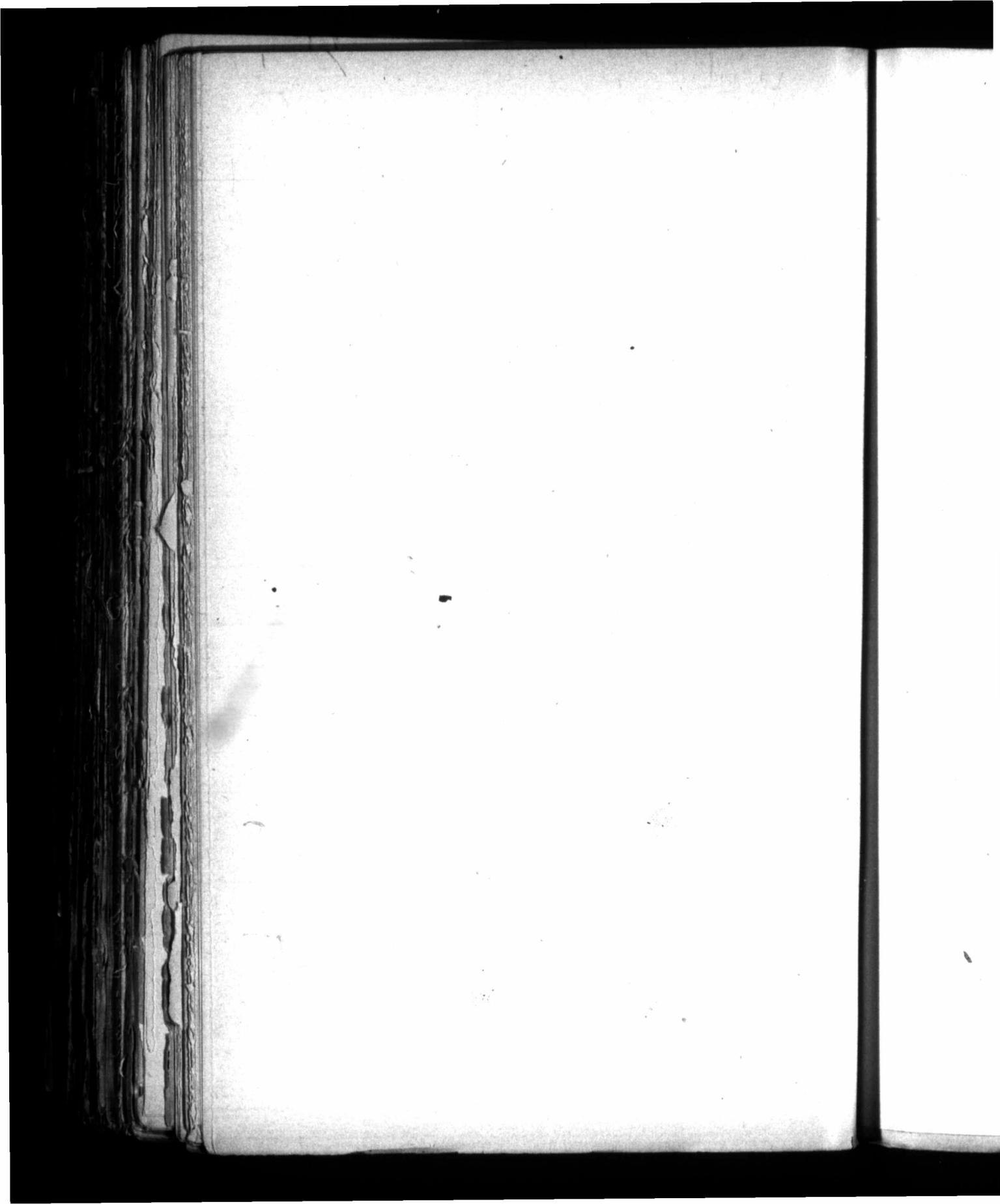
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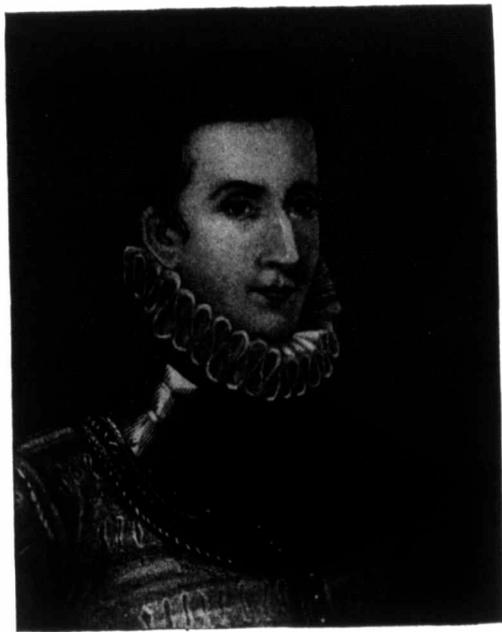
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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

CHAPTER I.

LINEAGE, BIRTH, AND BOYHOOD.

SHELLEY, in his memorial poem on the death of Keats, named Sir Philip Sidney among "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown." If this praise be applicable to Chatterton and Keats, it is certainly, though in a less degree perhaps, true also of Sidney. His best friend and interpreter put on record that "the youth, life, and fortune of this gentleman were, indeed, but sparks of extraordinary greatness in him, which, for want of clear vent, lay concealed, and, in a manner, smothered up." The real difficulty of painting an adequate portrait of Sidney at the present time is that his renown transcends his actual achievement. Neither his poetry nor his prose, nor what is known about his action, quite explains the singular celebrity which he enjoyed in his own life, and the fame which has attended his memory with almost undimmed lustre through three centuries. In an age remarkable for the great deeds of its heroes, no less than for the splendour of its literature, he won and retained a homage which was paid to none of his contemporaries. All classes concurred in worshipping that marvellous youth,

who displayed the choicest gifts of chivalry and scholarship, of bravery and prudence, of creative and deliberative genius, in the consummate harmony of a noble character. The English nation seemed instinctively to recognise in him the impersonation of its manifold ideals. He was beautiful, and of illustrious ancestry,—an accomplished courtier, complete in all the exercises of a cavalier. He was a student, possessed of the new learning which Italy had recently bequeathed to Europe. He was a poet and the “warbler of poetic prose,” at a moment when the greater luminaries of the Elizabethan period had scarcely risen above the horizon. Yet his beauty did not betray him into levity or wantonness; his noble blood bred in him neither pride nor presumption. Courtly habits failed to corrupt his rectitude of conduct, or to impair the candour of his utterance. The erudition of the Renaissance left his Protestant simplicity and Christian faith untouched. Literary success made him neither jealous nor conceited; and as the patron and friend of poets, he was even more eminent than as a writer. These varied qualities were so finely blent in his amiable nature that, when Wotton called him “the very essence of congruity,” he hit upon the happiest phrase for describing Sidney’s charm.

The man, in fact, was greater than his words and actions. His whole life was “a true poem, a composition, and pattern of the best and honourablest things;” and the fascination which he exerted over all who came in contact with him—a fascination which extended to those who only knew him by report—must now, in part at least, be taken upon trust. We cannot hope to present such a picture of him as shall wholly justify his fame. Personalities so unique as Sidney’s exhale a perfume which evanesces when the lamp of life burns out. This the English nation felt

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when they put on public mourning for his death. They felt that they had lost in Sidney, not only one of their most hopeful gentlemen and bravest soldiers, but something rare and beautiful in human life, which could not be recaptured,—which could not even be transmitted, save by hearsay, to a future age. The living Euphues of that era (so conscious of its aspirations as yet but partially attained, so apt to idealise its darlings) had perished—just when all men's eyes were turned with certainty of expectation on the coming splendours of his maturity. "The president of nobleness and chivalry" was dead. "That most heroic spirit, the heaven's pride, the glory of our days," had passed away like young Marcellus. Words failed the survivors to express their sense of the world's loss. This they could not utter, because there was something indescribable, incalculable, in the influence his personality had exercised. We, then, who have to deal with meagre records and scanty written remains, must well weigh the sometimes almost incoherent passion which emerges in the threnodies poured out upon his grave. In the grief of Spenser and of Camden, of Fuller and of Jonson, of Constable and Nash, of the Countess of Pembroke and Fulke Greville, as in a glass darkly, we perceive what magic spell it was that drew the men of his own time to love and adore Sidney. The truth is that Sidney, as we now can know him from his deeds and words, is not an eminently engaging or profoundly interesting personage. But, in the mirror of contemporary minds, he shines with a pure lustre, which the students of his brief biography must always feel to be surrounding him.

Society, in the sixteenth century, bestowed much ingenuity upon the invention of appropriate mottoes and significant emblems. When, therefore, we read that Sir

Philip Sidney inscribed his shield with these words *Vix ea nostra voco* ("These things I hardly call our own"), we may take it for a sign that he attached no undue value to noble birth; and, indeed, he makes one of the most respectable persons in his *Arcadia* exclaim: "I am no herald to enquire of men's pedigrees; it sufficeth me if I know their virtues." This might justify his biographers in silence regarding his ancestry, were it not that his connections, both on the father's and the mother's side, were all-important in determining the tenor of his life.

The first Sidney of whom we hear anything came into England with Henry II., and held the office of Chamberlain to that king. His descendant, Nicholas Sidney, married a daughter of Sir William Brandon and aunt of Charles, Duke of Suffolk. Their son, Sir William Sidney, played an important part during the reign of Henry VIII.; he served in the French wars, and commanded the right wing of the English army at Flodden. To him was given the manor of Penshurst in Kent, which has remained in the possession of the Sidneys and their present representatives. On his death in 1554 he left one son and four daughters. The eldest of these daughters was ancestress of Lord Bolingbroke. From the marriage of the second to Sir James Harrington descended, by female alliances, the great house of Montagu and the families of North and Noel. Through the marriage of the third with Sir William Fitz-William, Lord Byron laid claim to a drop of Sidney blood. The fourth, who was the wife of Thomas Ratcliffe, Earl of Sussex, dying childless, founded Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge. With the only son, Sir Henry Sidney (b. 1529-89), we shall have much to do in the present biography. It is enough now to mention that Henry VIII. chose him for bedfellow and companion to

his only writes, "dear mast being his mother h meaner pe he left st long as h prince gre liking of contribute Sidney's s famous, re by father infancy br nearness to ion." Not ed Sir Hen er in the re in 1553 at

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his only son. "I was, by that most famous king," he writes, "put to his sweet son, Prince Edward, my most dear master, prince, and sovereign; my near kinswoman being his only nurse, my father being his chamberlain, my mother his governess, my aunt in such place as among meaner personages is called a dry nurse; for, from the time he left sucking, she continually lay in bed with him, so long as he remained in woman's government. As the prince grew in years and discretion so grew I in favour and liking of him." A portion of Hollingshed's Chronicle, contributed by Edward Molineux, long time Sir Henry Sidney's secretary, confirms this statement. "This right famous, renowned, worthy, virtuous, and heroic knight, by father and mother very nobly descended, was from his infancy bred and brought up in the prince's court and in nearness to his person, used familiarly even as a companion." Nothing but Edward VI.'s untimely death prevented Sir Henry Sidney from rising to high dignity and power in the realm. It was in his arms that the king expired in 1553 at Greenwich.

One year before this event Sir Henry had married the Lady Mary Dudley, daughter of Edmund, Viscount De l'Isle and Duke of Northumberland. The Dudleys were themselves of noble extraction, though one of their ancestors had perished ignobly on the scaffold. Edmund Dudley, grandson of John Lord Dudley, K.G., joined with Sir Richard Empson in those extortions which disgraced the last years of Henry VII.'s reign, and both were executed in the second year of his successor. His son, Sir John Dudley, was afterwards relieved of the attainder, and restored to those honours which he claimed from his mother. His mother, Elizabeth Grey, was heiress of a very ancient house, whose baronies and titles had passed by an almost unex-

amplified series of female successions. The first founder of the family of De l'Isle appears in history during the reign of King John. The last baron of the male blood died in the reign of Richard II., leaving an heiress, who was married to Thomas Lord Berkeley. Their daughter and sole heiress married Richard, Earl of Warwick, and also left an only heiress, who married John Talbot, the great Earl of Shrewsbury. Her eldest son, John Talbot, Baron De l'Isle, created Viscount De l'Isle, left an only daughter, Elizabeth, who was wedded to Sir Edward Grey, created Baron and Viscount De l'Isle. It was the daughter and heiress of this marriage who gave birth to the ambitious and unfortunate Duke of Northumberland. From these dry facts it will be seen that the descendants of Edmund Dudley were not only heirs and representatives of the ancient barony of De l'Isle, but that they also inherited the blood and arms of the illustrious houses of Berkeley, Beauchamp, Talbot, and Grey. When we further remember to what an eminence the Duke of Northumberland climbed, and how his son, the Earl of Leicester, succeeded in restoring the shattered fortunes of the family after that great prince's fall, we can understand why Sir Henry Sidney used the following language to his brother-in-law upon the occasion of Mary Sidney's betrothal to the Earl of Pembroke:—"I find to my exceeding great comfort the likelihood of a marriage between my Lord of Pembroke and my daughter, which great honour to me, my mean lineage and kin, I attribute to my match in your noble house." Philip Sidney, too, when he was called to defend his uncle Leicester against certain libels, expressed his pride in the connection. "I am a Dudley in blood; that Duke's daughter's son; and do acknowledge, though in all truth I may justly affirm that I am by my father's side of ancient and always well-es-

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teemed and well-matched gentry,—yet I do acknowledge, I say, that my chiefest honour is to be a Dudley.”

Philip was born at Penshurst on the 29th of November 1554. At that epoch their alliance with the Dudleys seemed more likely to bring ruin on the Sidneys than new honours. It certainly made their home a house of mourning. Lady Mary Sidney had recently lost her father and her brother Guilford on the scaffold. Another of her brothers, John, Earl of Warwick, after his release from the Tower, took refuge at Penshurst, and died there about a month before his nephew's birth.¹ Sir Henry's loyalty and prudence at this critical time saved the fortunes of his family. He retired to his country seat, taking no part in the Duke of Northumberland's ambitious schemes; and though he was coldly greeted at Mary's Court, the queen confirmed him in the tenure of his offices and honours by a deed of 8th November 1554. She also freed his wife from participation in the attainder of her kinsfolk. Their eldest son was christened Philip in compliment to Mary's Spanish consort. It appears that Sir Henry Sidney subsequently gained his sovereign's confidence; for in this reign he was appointed Vice-Treasurer and Controller of the royal revenues in Ireland.

Of Philip's birthplace Ben Jonson has bequeathed to us a description, animated with more of romantic enthusiasm than was common to his muse.

“Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
Of touch² or marble, nor canst boast a row

¹ Duke of Northumberland, d. 22d August 1553; Lord Guilford Dudley and Lady Jane Grey, 12th February 1554; John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, 21st October 1554.

² *Touch* is a superlative sort of marble, the classic *basanites*. The reference to a *lantern* in the next line but one might pass for a prophecy of Walpole's too famous lantern at Houghton.

Of polished pillars or a roof of gold :
 Thou hast no lantern, whereof tales are told ;
 Or stair, or courts ; but stand'st an ancient pile ;
 And these, grudged at, are revered the while.
 Thou joy'st in better marks, of soil, of air,
 Of wood, of water ; therein art thou fair.
 Thou hast thy walks for health as well as sport :
 Thy mount, to which thy dryads do resort,
 Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made,
 Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade ;
 That taller tree, which of a nut was set,
 At his great birth, where all the muses met ;
 There, in the writhed bark, are cut the names
 Of many a Sylvan taken with his flames ;
 And there the ruddy satyrs oft provoke
 The lighter fauns to reach thy lady's oak."

The tree here commemorated by Jonson as having been planted at Sir Philip Sidney's birth, was cut down in 1768, not, however, before it had received additional fame from Edmund Waller. His *Sacharissa* was the Lady Dorothea Sidney; and the poet was paying her court at Penshurst when he wrote these lines :

"Go, boy, and carve this passion on the bark
 Of yonder tree, which stands the sacred mark
 Of noble Sidney's birth."

Jonson expatiates long over the rural charms of Penshurst, which delighted him on many a summer's holiday. He celebrates the pastures by the river, the feeding-grounds of cattle, the well-stocked game preserves, the fish-ponds, and the deer-park, which supplied that hospitable board with all good things in season.

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 And for thy mess is willing to be killed ;

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And if the high-swol'n Medway fail thy dish
 Thou hast the ponds that pay thee tribute fish,
 Fat aged carps that run into thy net,
 And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat,
 As loth the second draught or cast to stay,
 Officiously at first themselves betray."

Next he turns to the gardens:—

"Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,
 Fresh as the air, and new as are the hours;
 The early cherry, with the later plum,
 Fig, grape, and quince, each in his time doth come;
 The blushing apricot and woolly peach,
 Hang on thy walls, that every child may reach."

The trellised walls remind him of the ancient habitation, which, though homely, is venerable, rearing itself among the humbler dwellings of the peasants, with patriarchal rather than despotic dignity.

"And though thy walls be of the country stone,
 They're reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan;
 There's none that dwell about them wish them down,
 But all come in, the farmer and the clown,
 And no one empty-handed to salute
 Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit.
 Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,
 Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make
 The better cheeses, bring them; or else send
 By their ripe daughters, whom they would commend
 This way to husbands, and whose baskets bear
 An emblem of themselves in plum or pear."

This poem, composed in the days when Philip's brother Sir Robert Sidney, was master of Penshurst, presents so charming a picture of the old-world home in which Philip was born, and where he passed his boyhood, that I have been fain to linger over it.

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Sir Henry Sidney was sent to Ireland in 1556 as Vice-Treasurer and General Governor of the royal revenues in that kingdom. He distinguished himself, soon after his arrival, by repelling an invasion of the Scots in Ulster, and killing James MacConnel, one of their leaders, with his own hand. Next year he was nominated Lord Justice of Ireland; and, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, he obtained the confirmation of his offices. In 1558 the queen nominated him Lord President of Wales, which dignity he held during the rest of his life. It does not exactly appear when he first took the rank of Lord Deputy of Ireland, a title corresponding to that of Lord Lieutenant. But throughout the first seven years of Elizabeth's reign he discharged functions there which were equivalent to the supreme command. In 1564 he received the honour of the Garter, being installed in the same election with King Charles IX. of France. On this occasion he was styled "The thrice valiant Knight, Deputy of the Realm of Ireland, and President of the Council of Wales." Next year he was again despatched to Ireland with the full title and authority of Lord Deputy.

The administration of Wales obliged Sir Henry Sidney to reside frequently at Ludlow Castle, and this was the reason which determined him to send Philip to school at Shrewsbury. Being the emporium of English commerce with North Wales and Ireland, and the centre of a thriving wool-trade, Shrewsbury had then become a city of importance. The burgesses established there a public school, which flourished under the able direction of Thomas Ashton. From a passage in Ben Jonson's prose works it is clear that the advantages of public-school education were well appreciated at that time in England. Writing to a nobleman, who asked him how he might best train up his

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sons, he says: "I wish them sent to the best school, and a public. They are in more danger in your own family among ill servants than amongst a thousand boys, however immodest. To breed them at home is to breed them in a shade, whereas in a school they have the light and heat of the sun. They are used and accustomed to things and men. When they come forth into the commonwealth, they find nothing new or to seek. They have made their friendships and aids, some to last till their age." One such friend, whose loving help was given to Sidney till death parted them, entered Shrewsbury school together with him on the 19th of November 1564. This was Fulke Greville, a distant relative, and a boy of exactly the same age. To the sincere attachment which sprang up between them, and strengthened with their growing age, we owe our most valuable information regarding Philip's character and opinions. Fulke Greville survived his friend, became Lord Brooke, and when he died in 1628 the words "Friend to Philip Sidney" were inscribed upon his tomb. From the short biography of his friend, prefixed to a collection of his own works, which was dedicated to Sidney's memory, we obtain a glimpse of the boy while yet at school:—

"Of his youth I will report no other wonder but this, that though I lived with him, and knew him from a child, yet I never knew him other than a man; with such staidness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity as carried grace and reverence above greater years. His talk ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind. So as even his teachers found something to observe and learn above that which they had usually read or taught. Which eminence, by nature and industry, made his worthy father style Sir Philip in my hearing (though I unseen) *Lumen familie sue.*"

According to our present notions, we do not consider it altogether well if a boy between the ages of ten and fifteen

wins praise for exceptional gravity. Yet Fulke Greville does not call Philip bookish; and we have abundant evidence that, while he was early heedful of nourishing his mind, he showed no less eagerness to train his body in such exercises as might be serviceable to a gentleman, and useful to a soldier. Nevertheless, his friend's admiring eulogy of the lad's deportment indicates what, to the end, remained somewhat chilling in his nature—a certain stiffness, want of impulse—want, perhaps, of salutary humour. He could not take the world lightly—could not act, except in rare moments of anger, without reflection. Such a character is admirable; and youths at our public schools, who remain overgrown boys in their games until they verge on twenty, might well take a leaf from Sidney's book. But we cannot refrain from thinking that just a touch of recklessness would have made him more attractive. We must, however, remember that he was no child of the nineteenth century. He belonged to the age of Burleigh and of Bacon, and the circumstances of his birth forced on him precocity in prudence. Being the heir of Sir Henry Sidney and Lady Mary Dudley, he could not but be early conscious of the serious difficulties which perplexed his parents. Had he not been also conscious of a calling to high things, he would have derogated from his illustrious lineage. His gravity, then, befitted his blood and position in that still feudal epoch, his father's eminent but insecure station, and the tragic fate of his maternal relatives.

A letter written by Sir Henry Sidney to his son, while still at school in Shrewsbury, may here be cited. It helps to show why Philip, even as a boy, was earnest. Sympathetic to his parents, bearing them sincere love, and owing them filial obedience, he doubtless read with veneration, and observed with loyalty, the words of wisdom—wiser

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than those with which Polonius took farewell of Laertes —dictated for him by the upright and valiant man whom he called father. Long as it is, I shall give it in full; for nothing could better bring before our eyes the ideal of conduct which then ruled English gentlefolk:—

“I have received two letters from you, one written in Latin, the other in French; which I take in good part, and wish you to exercise that practice of learning often; for that will stand you in most stead in that profession of life that you are born to live in. And since this is my first letter that ever I did write to you, I will not that it be all empty of some advices, which my natural care for you provoketh me to wish you to follow, as documents to you in this your tender age. Let your first action be the lifting up of your mind to Almighty God by hearty prayer; and feelingly digest the words you speak in prayer, with continual meditation and thinking of Him to whom you pray and of the matter for which you pray. And use this as an ordinary act, and at an ordinary hour, whereby the time itself shall put you in remembrance to do that which you are accustomed to do in that time. Apply your study to such hours as your discreet master doth assign you, earnestly; and the time I know he will so limit as shall be both sufficient for your learning and safe for your health. And mark the sense and the matter of that you read, as well as the words. So shall you both enrich your tongue with words and your wit with matter; and judgment will grow as years groweth in you. Be humble and obedient to your master, for unless you frame yourself to obey others, yea, and feel in yourself what obedience is, you shall never be able to teach others how to obey you. Be courteous of gesture and affable to all men, with diversity of reverence according to the dignity of the person: there is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost. Use moderate diet, so as after your meal you may find your wit fresher and not duller, and your body more lively and not more heavy. Seldom drink wine, and yet sometimes do, lest being enforced to drink upon the sudden you should find yourself inflamed. Use exercise of body, yet such as is without peril of your joints or bones; it will increase your force and enlarge your breath. Delight to be cleanly, as well in all parts of your body as in your garments: it shall make you grateful in each company, and otherwise loathsome. Give yourself to

be merry, for you degenerate from your father if you find not yourself most able in wit and body and to do anything when you be most merry; but let your mirth be ever void of all scurrility and biting words to any man, for a wound given by a word is oftentimes harder to be cured than that which is given with the sword. Be you rather a hearer and bearer away of other men's talk than a beginner and procurer of speech; otherwise you shall be counted to delight to hear yourself speak. If you hear a wise sentence or an apt phrase commit it to your memory with respect of the circumstance when you shall speak it. Let never oath be heard to come out of your mouth nor word of ribaldry; detest it in others; so shall custom make to yourself a law against it in yourself. Be modest in each assembly; and rather be rebuked of light fellows for maiden-like shamefastness than of your sad friends for pert boldness. Think upon every word that you will speak before you utter it, and remember how nature hath ramparted up, as it were, the tongue with teeth, lips, yea, and hair without the lips, and all betokening reins or bridles for the loose use of that member. Above all things, tell no untruth; no, not in trifles: the custom of it is naughty. And let it not satisfy you that, for a time, the hearers take it for truth; for after it will be known as it is, to your shame; for there cannot be a greater reproach to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar. Study and endeavour yourself to be virtuously occupied, so shall you make such a habit of well-doing in you that you shall not know how to do evil, though you would. Remember, my son, the noble blood you are descended of, by your mother's side; and think that only by virtuous life and good action you may be an ornament to that illustrious family, and otherwise, through vice and sloth you shall be counted *labes generis*, one of the greatest curses that can happen to man. Well, my little Philip, this is enough for me, and too much, I fear, for you. But if I shall find that this light meal of digestion nourisheth anything in the weak stomach of your capacity, I will, as I find the same grow stronger, feed it with tougher food.—Your loving father, so long as you live in the fear of God,

“H. SIDNEY.”

To this epistle Lady Mary Sidney added a postscript, which, if it is less correct in style and weighty with wise counsel, interests us by its warm and motherly affection.

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"Your noble and careful father hath taken pains (with his own hand) to give you in this his letter so wise, so learned, and most requisite precepts for you to follow with a diligent and humble thankful mind, as I will not withdraw your eyes from beholding and reverent honouring the same,—no, not so long time as to read any letter from me; and therefore at this time I will write no other letter than this: and hereby I first bless you with my desire to God to plant in you His grace, and secondarily warn you to have always before the eyes of your mind those excellent counsels of my lord, your dear father, and that you fail not continually once in four or five days to read them over. And for a final leave-taking for this time, see that you show yourself a loving obedient scholar to your good master, and that my lord and I may hear that you profit so in your learning as thereby you may increase our loving care of you, and deserve at his hands the continuance of his great joys, to have him often witness with his own hand the hope he hath in your well-doing.

"Farewell, my little Philip, and once again the Lord bless you.—
Your loving mother, MARY SIDNEY."

In those days boys did not wait till they were grown men before they went to college. Sidney left Shrewsbury in 1568, and began residence at Christ Church. He was still in his fourteenth year. There he stayed until some time in 1571, when he quitted Oxford without having taken a degree. In this omission there was nothing singular. His quality rendered bachelorship or mastership of arts indifferent to him; and academical habits were then far freer than in our times. That he studied diligently is, however, certain. The unknown writer named Philophilippus, who prefixed a short essay on "The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney" to the *Arcadia*, speaks thus in his quaint language of the years spent at Oxford: "Here an excellent stock met with the choicest grafts; nor could his tutors pour in so fast as he was ready to receive." The Dean of Christ Church, Dr. Thomas Thornton, had it afterwards en-

graved upon his own tomb at Ledbury that he had been the preceptor of "Philip Sidney, that most noble Knight." We possess few particulars which throw any light upon Sidney's academical career. There is some reason, however, to believe that liberal learning at this period flourished less upon the banks of the Isis than at Cambridge and in our public schools. Bruno, in his account of a visit to Oxford ten years later, introduces us to a set of pompous pedants, steeped in mediæval scholasticism and heavy with the indolence of fat fellowships. Here, however, Sidney made the second great friendship of his youth. It was with Edward Dyer, a man of quality and parts, who claims distinction as an English poet principally by one faultless line: "My mind to me a kingdom is." Sir Edward Dyer and Sir Fulke Greville lived in bonds of closest affection with Sir Philip Sidney through his life, and walked together as pall-bearers at his funeral. That was an age in which friendship easily assumed the accents of passionate love. I may use this occasion to quote verses which Sidney wrote at a later period regarding his two comrades. He had recently returned from Wilton to the Court, and found there both Greville and Dyer.

"My two and I be met,
A blessed happy trinity,
As three most jointly set
In firmest bond of unity.
Join hearts and hands, so let it be;
Make but one mind in bodies three.

"Welcome my two to me,
The number best beloved;
Within the heart you be
In friendship unremoved.
Join hearts and hands, so let it be;
Make but one mind in bodies three."

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And again, when tired of the Court, and sighing for the country, he offers up a prayer to Pan, according to the pastoral fashion of the age, in which his two heart's brothers are remembered:—

“Only for my two loves' sake,
In whose love I pleasure take;
Only two do me delight
With their ever-pleasing sight;
Of all men to thee retaining
Grant me with those two remaining.”

As poetry these pieces are scarcely worth citation. But they agreeably illustrate their author's capacity for friendship.

It was also from Oxford that Sidney sent the first letter still extant in his writing. This is a somewhat laboured Latin epistle to his uncle Leicester. Elizabeth's favourite had taken his nephew under special protection. It was indeed commonly accepted for certain that, failing legitimate issue, the Earl intended to make Philip his heir. This expectation helps us to understand the singular respect paid him through these years of early manhood. Sir Henry Sidney was far from being a rich man. His duties in Ireland and Wales removed him from the circle of the Court, and his bluntness of speech made him unacceptable to the queen. Philip therefore owed more of his prestige to his uncle than to his father. At this time Leicester appears to have been negotiating a marriage contract between the lad at Christ Church and Anne Cecil, daughter of Lord Burleigh. Articles had been drawn up. But the matter fell through; the powerful Secretary of State judging that he could make a better match for his girl than with the son of a needy knight, whose expectations of succeeding to Leicester's estate were problematical. Politely but plainly

he extricated himself from the engagement, and bestowed Anne upon Edward de Vere, the dissolute and brutal Earl of Oxford. This passage in the life of Sidney is insignificant. That the boy of sixteen could have entertained any strong feeling for his projected bride will hardly admit of belief. One of his biographers, however, notices that about the time when the matter terminated in Anne's betrothal to the Earl of Oxford, Philip fell into bad health. Leicester had to obtain permission for him to eat flesh in Lent from no less a personage than Doctor Farker, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

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CHAPTER II.

FOREIGN TRAVEL.

It is not the business of Sir Philip Sidney's biographer to discuss Elizabeth's Irish policy at length. Yet his father's position as governor of the island renders some allusion to those affairs indispensable. Sir Henry Sidney was a brave and eminently honest man, the sturdy servant of his sovereign, active in the discharge of his duties, and untainted by corrupt practice. But he cannot be said to have displayed the sagacity of genius in his dealings with the Irish. He carried out instructions like a blunt proconsul—extirpating O'Neil's rebellion, suppressing the Butlers' war, maintaining English interests, and exercising impartial justice. The purity of his administration is beyond all doubt. Instead of enriching himself by arts familiar to viceroys, he spent in each year of his office more than its emoluments were worth, and seriously compromised his private fortune. Instead of making friends at Court he contrived, by his straightforward dealing, to offend the brilliant and subtle Earl of Ormond. While Sir Henry was losing health, money, and the delights of life among the bogs and wastes of Ulster, Ormond remained attached to the queen's person. His beauty and adroit flattery enabled him to prejudice Elizabeth against her faithful henchman. Broken in health by a painful disease contracted in the hardship

of successive campaigns, maddened by his sovereign's re-
 criminations, and disgusted by her parsimony, Sir Henry
 Sidney returned in 1571 to England. He was now a man
 of forty-three, with an impaired constitution and a dimin-
 ished estate. His wife had lost her good looks in the
 small-pox, which she caught while nursing the queen
 through an attack of that malady. Of this noble lady, so
 patient in the many disasters of her troubled life, Fulke
 Greville writes: "She chose rather to hide herself from
 the curious eyes of a delicate time than come upon the
 stage of the world with any manner of disparagement;
 this mischance of sickness having cast such a veil over her
 excellent beauty as the modesty of that sex doth many
 times upon their native and heroical spirits." Neither Sir
 Henry Sidney nor Lady Mary uttered a word of reproach
 against their royal mistress. It was Elizabeth's good fort-
 une to be devotedly served by men and women whom she
 rewarded with ingratitude or niggardly recognition. And
 on this occasion she removed Sir Henry from his dignity
 of Lord Deputy, which she transferred to his brother-in-
 law, Sir William Fitz-William. As a kind of recompense
 she made him the barren offer of a peerage. The distinc-
 tion was great, but the Sidneys were not in a position to
 accept it. A letter, addressed by Lady Mary to Lord Bur-
 leigh, explains the difficulty in which they stood. Her
 husband, she says, is "greatly dismayed with his hard
 choice, which is presently offered him; as, either to be a
 baron, now called in the number of many far more able
 than himself to maintain it withal, or else, in refusing it,
 to incur her Highness's displeasure." She points out that
 the title, without an accompanying grant of land, would be
 an intolerable burden. Elizabeth had clearly no intention
 of bestowing estates on the Sidney family; and Lady Mary

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was forced to beg the secretary's good offices for mitigating the royal anger in the event of Sir Henry's refusal. Of the peerage we hear no more; and it is probable that Elizabeth took the refusal kindly. She had paid the late Deputy for his long service and heavy losses by a compliment, his non-acceptation of which left her with a seat in the House of Lords at her disposal.

After leaving Oxford, Philip passed some months at Ludlow with his father, who continued to be President of Wales. In the spring of 1572 the project of a French match was taken up at Court. Mr. Francis Walsingham, the resident ambassador at Paris, had already opened negotiations on the subject in the previous autumn; and the execution of the Duke of Norfolk for treasonable practice with Mary, Queen of Scots, now rendered Elizabeth's marriage more than ever politically advisable. It was to be regretted that the queen should meditate union with the Duke of Alençon. He was the youngest member of the worthless family of Valois, a Papist, and a man green in years enough to be her son. Yet at this epoch it seemed not wholly impossible that France might still side with the Protestant Powers. Catherine de' Medici, the queen-mother, had favoured the Huguenot party for some years; and Charles IX. was scheming the marriage of his sister Margaret with Henry of Navarre. The interests, moreover, of the French Crown were decidedly opposed to those of Spain. The Earl of Lincoln was, therefore, nominated Ambassador Extraordinary to sound the matter of his queen's contract with a prince of the French blood-royal. Sir Henry Sidney seized this opportunity for sending Philip on the grand tour; and Elizabeth granted licence to "her trusty and well-beloved Philip Sidney, Esq., to go out of England into parts beyond the sea, with three serv-

ants and four horses, etc., to remain the space of two years immediately following his departure out of the realm, for the attaining the knowledge of foreign languages." On the 26th of May the expedition left London, Philip carrying a letter from his uncle Leicester to Francis Walsingham. This excellent man, who was destined after some years to become his father-in-law, counted among the best and wisest of English statesmen. He was a man of Sir Henry Sidney's, rather than of Leicester's, stamp; and it is recorded of him, to his honour, that, after a life spent in public service, he died so poor that his funeral had to be conducted at night.

When Lincoln returned to England with advice in favour of Alençon's suit, Philip stayed at Paris. The summer of 1572 was an eventful one in French history. Charles IX. had betrothed his sister, Margaret of Valois, to Henry of Navarre; and the Capital welcomed Catholic and Huguenot nobles, the flower of both parties which divided France, on terms of external courtesy and seeming friendship. Fulke Greville tells us that the king of Navarre was so struck with Philip's excellent disposition that he admitted him to intimacy. At the same time Charles IX., who had been installed Knight of the Garter on the same day as Philip's father, appointed him Gentleman in Ordinary of his bed-chamber. The patent runs as follows: "That considering how great the house of Sidenay was in England, and the rank it had always held near the persons of the kings and queens, their sovereigns, and desiring well and favourably to treat the young Sir Philip Sidenay for the good and commendable knowledge in him, he had retained and received him," etc. On the 9th of August "Baron Sidenay," as he is also described in this document, took the oaths and entered on his new office. His position at the French

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Court made him to some extent an actor in the ceremonial of Henry's wedding, which took place upon the 18th of August. It will be remembered that Margaret of Navarre had previously been pledged to the Duke of Guise, the ambitious leader of the League, the sworn enemy to Reform, and the almost openly avowed aspirant after the French Crown. Before the altar she refused to speak or bend her head, when asked if she accepted Henry for her husband; and her brother had to take her by the neck and force her into an attitude of assent. Already, then, upon the nuptial morning, ominous clouds began to gather over the political horizon. When the Duke of Guise marched his armed bands into Paris, the situation grew hazardous for the Huguenots. Then followed the attack upon Coligny's life, which exploded like the first cannon shot that preludes a general engagement. Yet the vain rejoicings in celebration of that ill-omened marriage continued for some days; until, when all was ready, on the 24th of August, Paris swam with the blood of the Huguenots. Anarchy and murder spread from the Capital to the provinces; and during the seven days and more which followed, it is not known how many thousands of Protestants perished. In Rome *Te Deums* were sung, and commemorative medals struck. In England the Court went into mourning. The French ambassador, when ordered by his master to explain the reasons of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew to Elizabeth, excused himself from the performance of this duty. His words deserve to be recorded: "I should make myself an accomplice in that terrible business were I to attempt to palliate." The same man has also left a vivid account of his reception at Woodstock when the news arrived. "A gloomy sorrow sat on every face. Silence, as in the dead of night, reigned through all the chambers of the royal

apartments. The ladies and courtiers were ranged on each side, all clad in deep mourning; and as I passed them, not one bestowed on me a civil look or made the least return of my salutes."

Philip had taken refuge at the English embassy, and to this circumstance he possibly owed his life. The horrors of St. Bartholomew must, however, have made a terrible impression on his mind; for there was no street in Paris which did not resound with the shrieks of the assassinated, the curses of their butchers, and the sharp ring of musketry. He knew that the king, intoxicated with a sudden blood-thirst, had levelled his harquebus from that window in the Louvre; he knew that the Duke of Guise had trampled with his heel upon Coligny's naked corpse. It cannot be doubted that the bold and firm opposition which Philip subsequently offered to Elizabeth's French schemes of marriage had its root in the awful experience of those days of carnage.

Early in September Lords Leicester and Burleigh despatched a formal letter from the Privy Council to Francis Walsingham, requesting him to provide for the safety of young Lord Wharton and Master Philip Sidney by procuring passports in due form, and sending them immediately back to England. It seems, however, that Sir Henry Sidney did not think a return to England necessary in his son's case. Philip left Paris, passed through Lorraine, visited Strasburg, stopped at Heidelberg, and came thence to Frankfurt.

It would be interesting to know what social and political impressions the young man, now in his eighteenth year, carried away with him from Paris. Had he learned the essential baseness and phlegmatic wickedness of the Florentine queen-mother? Had he discerned that the king,

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crazy, misled, and delirious in his freaks and impulses, was yet the truest man of all his miserable breed? Had he taken a right measure of the Duke of Anjou—ghastly, womanish, the phantom of a tyrant; oscillating between Neronian debauchery and hysterical relapses into pietism? And the Duke of Alençon, Elizabeth's frog-faced suitor, had he perceived in him the would-be murderer of his brother, the poisonous traitor, whose innate malignancy justified his sister Margaret in saying that, if fraud and cruelty were banished from the world, he alone would suffice to repeople it with devils? Probably not; for the backward eye of the historian is more penetrative into the realities of character than the broad, clear gaze of a hopeful gentleman upon his travels. We sound the depths revealed to us by centuries of laborious investigation. He only beheld the brilliant, the dramatic, the bewilderingly fantastic outside of French society, as this was displayed in nuptial pomps and tournaments and massacres before him. Yet he observed enough to make him a firmer patriot, a more determined Protestant, and an abhorrer of Italianated Courts. At Frankfort he found a friend, who, having shared the perils of St. Bartholomew, had recently escaped across the Rhine to Germany. This was Hubert Languet, a man whose conversation and correspondence exercised no small influence over the formation of Sidney's character.

Languet was a Frenchman, born in 1518 at Viteaux in Burgundy. He studied the humanities in Italy, and was elected Professor of Civil Law at Padua in 1547. Two years later he made the acquaintance of Melanchthon. Their intercourse ripened into friendship. Languet resigned his professorship in order to be near the man whom he had chosen for his teacher; and under Melanchthon's influence he adopted the reformed religion. From 1550 forwards

he was recognised as one of the leading political agents of the Protestant Powers, trusted by princes, and acquainted with the ablest men of that party in France, Holland, and the German States. No one was more competent to guide Sidney through the labyrinth of European intrigues, to unmask the corruption hidden beneath the splendours of the Valois Court, and to instil into his mind those principles of conduct which governed reformed statesmen in those troubled times. They were both staying, as was then the custom, in the house of the printer Wechel at Frankfort. A few years later, Giordano Bruno also sojourned under that hospitable roof, whence he departed on his fatal journey to Venice. The elder man immediately discerned in Sidney a youth of no common quality, and the attachment he conceived for him savoured of romance. We possess a long series of Latin letters from Languet to his friend, which breathe the tenderest spirit of affection, mingled with wise counsel and ever-watchful thought for the young man's higher interests. It was indeed one of Sidney's singular felicities that he fell so early under the influence of characters like Walsingham and Languet. Together with his father, they helped to correct the bias which he might have taken from his brilliant but untrustworthy uncle Leicester. There must have been something inexplicably attractive in his person and his genius at this time; for the tone of Languet's correspondence can only be matched by that of Shakespeare in the sonnets written for his unknown friend.

Fulke Greville has penned a beautiful description of "this harmony of an humble hearer to an excellent teacher," which grew up between Sidney and Languet at Frankfort; but he is mistaken in saying that the latter threw up all other business for the sake of attending his new-found friend upon his three years' travel. It is true that they

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went together to Vienna in the summer of 1573. But Sidney visited Hungary alone, and in November crossed the Alps without Languet to Venice. He was accompanied by a gentleman of his own age and station, not very distantly connected with him, named Thomas Coningsby. Two of his attendants, Griffin Madox and Lewis Brysket, are also known to us. The latter writes thus of their journey :

"Through many a hill and dale,
Through pleasant woods, and many an unknown way,
Along the banks of many silver streams
Thou with him yodest; and with him didst scale
The craggy rocks of the Alps and Apennine;
Still with the muses sporting."

One incident of the tour has to be recorded for the light it throws on Sidney's character. An innkeeper contrived to get his bill twice paid; and Sidney finding himself out of pocket, charged Coningsby with having made away with the money. In a letter to Languet he cleared the matter up, and exculpated his travelling companion. But the incident was not greatly to his credit. With all his gravity and suavity of nature, he was apt to yield to temper and to unamiable suspicion. I shall have to revert to this point again.

Since Sidney is now launched, without guide or tutor, upon his Italian travels, it will not be out of place to collect some contemporary opinions regarding the benefit to be derived by Englishmen from Italy. In a fine passage of "The Schoolmaster" Ascham relates a conversation which he had at Windsor with Sir Richard Sackville on this subject. His judgment was that young men lost far more than they gained by an Italian tour. Too many of

them returned Papists, or Atheists, experienced in new-fangled vices, apt for treason, lying, and every form of swinish debauchery. Taking for his text the well-known proverb, "*Inglese itulianato è un diavolo incarnato*,"—which Sidney, by the way, has translated thus :

"An Englishman that is Italianate,
Doth lightly prove a devil incarnate,"—

Ascham preaches an eloquent sermon, with allegories from Plato and Homer, to prove that Italy is but a garden of Circe or an isle of sirens to our northern youth. Parker, Howell, Fuller, Hall, Gabriel Harvey, Marston, Greene, all utter the same note, and use the same admonishments, proving how very dangerous an Italian tour was reckoned in those days. Sidney, in a remarkable letter to Languet, insists upon the point. He says he wishes the Turks could come to Italy in order to find corruption there: "I am quite sure that this ruinous Italy would so poison the Turks themselves, would so ensnare them in its vile allurements, that they would soon tumble down without being pushed." Venice, in particular, had an evil reputation. There, as Ascham says, he saw in nine days' sojourn "more liberty to sin than ever I heard tell of in our noble city of London in nine years." He admits, however, that while he knows of many who "returned out of Italy worse transformed than ever was any in Circe's court," yet is he acquainted with "divers noble personages and many worthy gentlemen of England, whom all the siren songs of Italy could never untwine from the mast of God's word, nor no enchantment of vanity overturn them from the fear of God and love of honesty." To the former class belonged the Earl of Oxford. Of the latter Philip Sidney was an emi-

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traits which are supposed to represent Sidney, the best to my mind is one now preserved at Warwick Castle. It is said to have belonged to Fulke Greville, and therefore we may trust its resemblance to the original. John Aubrey, the useful anecdote-monger, tells us that he was "extremely beautiful. He much resembled his sister; but his hair was not red, but a little inclining, namely a dark amber colour. If I were to find a fault in it, methinks 'tis not masculine enough; yet he was a person of great courage." The Warwick Castle portrait answers very closely to this description, especially in a certain almost girlish delicacy of feature and complexion. That Sidney was indeed beautiful may be taken for granted, since there is considerable concurrence of testimony on this point. The only dissident I can call to mind is Ben Jonson, who reported that he "was no pleasant man in countenance, his face being spoiled with pimples, and of high blood, and long." But Jonson was only thirteen years of age when Sidney died, and the conversations with Drummond, from which this sentence was quoted, abound in somewhat random statements.

It was natural that a Telemachus of Sidney's stamp should wish to visit Rome before he turned his face northwards. But his Huguenot Mentor, and perhaps also his friends at home, so urgently dissuaded him from exposing his immaturity to the blandishments of the Catholic Calypso, that he prudently refrained. After a short excursion to Genoa, he returned to Venice, crossed the Alps, and was again with Languet at Vienna in July. Here the grave youth, who had set his heart on becoming perfect in all gentle accomplishments, divided his time between discourse on politics and literature, courtly pleasures, and equestrian exercises. In the *Defence of Poesy* he has given us an agreeable

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picture of his Italian master in horsemanship, the gasconading Pugliano.

The winter of 1574-75 passed away at Vienna. In the spring he attended the Emperor Maximilian to Prague, where he witnessed the opening of the Bohemian Diet. Thence he moved homewards through Dresden, Heidelberg, Strasburg, and Frankfort, reaching London in June. During his absence one of his two sisters, Ambrozia, had died at Ludlow Castle. The queen took the other, Mary, under special protection, and attached her to her person. A new chapter was now opened in the young man's life. His education being finished, he entered upon the life of Courts.

CHAPTER III.

ENTRANCE INTO COURT-LIFE AND EMBASSY.

SIDNEY's prospects as a courtier were excellent. His powerful uncle Leicester, now at the height of royal favor, displayed marked partiality for the handsome youth, who was not unnaturally regarded by the world as his presumptive heir. In July 1575 Philip shared those famous festivities with which the earl entertained Elizabeth at Kenilworth; and when the Court resumed its progress, he attended her Majesty to Chartley Castle. This was the seat of the Earl of Essex, who was then in Ireland. The countess, in his absence, received her royal guest; and here Sidney, for the first time, met the girl with whom his fortunes and his fame were destined to be blended. Lady Penelope Devereux, illustrious in English literature as Sir Philip Sidney's Stella, was now in her thirteenth year; and it is not likely that at this time she made any strong impression on his fancy. Yet we find that soon after the return of Essex from Ireland in the autumn of 1575, he had become intimate with the earl's family. At Durham House, their London residence, he passed long hours during the following winter; and when Essex went again to Ireland as Earl-Marshal in July 1576, Philip accompanied him. It should here be said that Sir Henry Sidney had been nominated for the third time Lord Deputy in August

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1575. Philip's visit was therefore paid to his father; but he made it in company with the man whom he had now come to regard as his future father-in-law. There is little doubt that had Lord Essex lived, the match would have been completed. But the Earl-Marshal died at Dublin on the 21st of September, after a painful illness, which raised some apparently ill-founded suspicions of poison. Philip was in Galway with his father, and Essex sent him this message on his deathbed: "Tell him I sent him nothing, but I wish him well; so well that, if God do move their hearts, I wish that he might match with my daughter. I call him son; he is so wise, virtuous, and godly. If he go on in the course he hath begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as ever England bred." These words are sufficient to prove that Philip's marriage with Penelope was contemplated by her father. That the world expected it appears from a letter of Mr. Edward Waterhouse to Sir Henry Sidney under date 14th November. After first touching upon the bright prospects opened for "the little Earl of Essex," this gentleman proceeds: "and I suppose all the best sort of the English lords, besides, do expect what will become of the treaty between Mr. Philip and my Lady Penelope. Truly, my Lord, I must say to your Lordship, as I have said to my Lord of Leicester and Mr. Philip, the breaking off from their match, if the default be on your parts, will turn to more dishonour than can be repaired with any other marriage in England."

What interrupted the execution of this marriage treaty is not certain. Penelope's mother, the widowed Lady Essex, was privately wedded to the Earl of Leicester soon after her first husband's death. The Sidneys were poor. Lady Mary Sidney writes to Lord Burleigh about this

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time: "My present estate is such by reason of my debts, as I cannot go forward with any honourable course of living." It is remarkable that, so far as we know, she placed but little confidence in her brother Leicester, preferring to appeal in difficulties to a friend like Cecil. Philip was often at a loss to pay his debts. We possess, for instance, the copy of a long bill from his bootmaker which he requests his father's steward to discharge "for the safeguard of his credit." Thus Leicester's marriage, which seriously impaired Philip's prospects, Lady Mary's want of cordiality toward her brother, and the poverty of the Sidneys, may be reckoned among the causes which postponed Penelope's betrothal. It should also here be noticed that Sir Henry Sidney entertained a grudge against the Earl of Essex. Writing to Lord Leicester, he couples Essex with his old enemy the Earl of Ormond, adding that "for that their malice, I take God to record, I could brook nothing of them both." We may therefore conclude that Philip's father was unfavourable to the match. But the chief cause remains to be mentioned. Up to this time the proposed bridegroom felt no lover's liking for the lady. Languet frequently wrote, urging him to marry, and using arguments similar to those which Shakespeare pressed on his "fair friend." Philip's answers show that, unless he was a deep dissembler, he remained heart-free. So time slipped by. Perhaps he thought that he might always pluck the rose by only asking for it. At any rate, he displayed no eagerness, until one morning the news reached him that his Penelope was contracted to a man unworthy of her, Lord Rich. Then suddenly the flame of passion, which had smouldered so obscurely as to be unrecognised by his own heart, burst out into a blaze; and what was worse, he discovered that Penelope too loved him. In the

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chapter devoted to Sidney's poetry I shall return to this subject. So much, however, had to be said here, in order to present a right conception of his character. For at least four years, between the death of Essex, in September 1576, and Penelope's marriage, which we may place in the spring or summer of 1581, he was aware that her father with his last breath had blessed their union. Yet he never moved a step or showed any eagerness until it was too late. It seems that this grave youth, poet as he was, passionate lover as he undoubtedly became, and hasty as he occasionally showed himself in trifles, had a somewhat politic and sluggish temperament. Fulke Greville recorded that he never was a boy; Languet could chide him for being sad beyond his years; he wrote himself, amid the distractions of Venetian society, that he required hard studies to drive away melancholy. Moreover, he indulged dreams of high and noble ambition. Self-culture, the preparation of his whole nature for some great task in life, occupied his thoughts to the exclusion of a woman's image. This saved him from the faults and follies of his age; but it rendered him cold, until the poet's fire leaped up and kindled a slumbering emotion.

Not love, but the ambition of a statesman, then was Sidney's ruling passion at this time. He had no mind to "sport with Amaryllis in the shade," or even to "meditate the thankless Muse," when work could be done for England and the affairs of Europe called for energetic action. In the spring of 1577 Elizabeth selected him for a mission, which flattered these aspirations. Rodolph of Hapsburg had just succeeded to the imperial throne, and the Elector Palatine had died, leaving two sons, Lewis and John Casimir. She sent Philip to congratulate the emperor and to condole with the bereaved princes. He stipulated

that, after performing the ceremonial part of this embassy, he should be permitted to confer with the German Powers upon the best means of maintaining reformed principles and upholding political liberties. Instructions were accordingly drawn up which empowered the youthful envoy to touch upon these points. At the end of February he set out upon his travels, attended by Fulke Greville and by a train of gentlefolk. In the houses where he lodged he caused tablets to be fixed, emblazoned with his arms, under which ran a Latin inscription to this effect: "Of the most illustrious and well-born English gentleman, Philip Sidney, son of the Viceroy of Ireland, nephew of the Earls of Warwick and Leicester, Ambassador from the most Serene Queen of England to the Emperor." This ostentation was not out of harmony with the pompous habits of that age. Yet we may perhaps discern in it Sidney's incapacity to treat his own affairs with lightness. He took himself and all that concerned him *au serieux*; but it must also be observed that he contrived to make others accept him in like manner. As Jonson puts it, when comparing himself, under the name of Horace, with men of less sterling merit:

"If they should confidently praise their works,
In them it would appear inflation;
Which, in a full and well-digested man,
Cannot receive that foul, abusive name,
But the fair title of erection."

He first proceeded to Heidelberg, where he failed to find the Elector Lewis, but made acquaintance with the younger prince, his brother Casimir. The palatinate, like many of the petty German states, was torn by religious factions. The last elector had encouraged Calvinism; but his son Lewis was now introducing Lutheran ministers into his do-

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minions. The Calvinists, after enduring considerable hardships, had to emigrate; and many of them took refuge with Prince Casimir. It seems that before he reached Heidelberg, Sidney had been met by Hubert Languet; and this good counsellor attended him through all his German wanderings. They went together to Prague, where the new emperor was holding his Court. Here, even more than at Heidelberg, the English Envoy found matter for serious disquietude. Rodolph had grown up under Catholic influences, and the Jesuits were gaining firm hold upon his capital. Students of history will remember that a Jesuit Father had negotiated the participation of the Emperor Ferdinand in the closing of the Tridentine Council. Austria, under his grandson Rodolph's rule, bid fair to become one of their advanced posts in northern Europe. Sidney meant, so far as in him lay, to shake the prestige of this "extremely Spaniolated" and priestridden emperor. It was his intention to harangue in Germany against the "fatal conjunction of Rome's undermining superstition with the commanding forces of Spain." Fulke Greville has sketched the main line of his argument; but it is hardly probable that he bearded the lion in his den and spoke his mind out before the imperial presence. The substance of the policy he strove to impress upon those German princes who took the Protestant side, and upon all well-wishers to the people, was that the whole strength of their great nation could not save them from the subtle poison which Sarpi styled the Diacatholicon, unless they made a vigorous effort of resistance. Rome, by her insidious arts and undermining engines—by her Jesuits and casuistical sophistications—sapped the social fabric and dissolved the ancestral loyalties of races. Into the dismembered and disintegrated mass marched Spain with her might of arms,

her money, her treaties, marriages, and encouragement of sedition. In short, Sidney uttered a prophecy of what happened in the Thirty Years' War, that triumph of Jesuitical diplomacy. As a remedy he proposed that all the German Powers who valued national independence, and had a just dread of Spanish encroachment, should "associate by an uniform bond of conscience for the protection of religion and liberty." In other words, he espoused the policy of what was known as the *Fœdus Evangelicum*.

Theoretically, this plan was not only excellent, but also necessary for stemming the advance of those reactionary forces, knit together by bonds of common interest and common enthusiasm, which governed the Counter Reformation. But unfortunately it rested upon no solid basis of practical possibilities. A Protestant Alliance, formed to secure the political and religious objects of the Reformation in its warfare with Catholicism, had been the cherished scheme of northern statesmen since the days of Henry VIII. The principles of evangelical piety, of national freedom, of progressive thought, and of Teutonic emancipation upon regulated methods, might perhaps have been established, if the Church of England could have combined with the Lutherans of Germany, the Calvinists of Geneva, and of France, Sweden, and the Low Countries, in a solid confederation for the defence of civil and religious liberty. But from the outset, putting national jealousies and diplomatic difficulties aside, there existed in the very spirit of Protestantism a power antagonistic to cohesion. Protestantism had its root in critical and sceptical revolt. From the first it assumed forms of bewildering diversity on points of doctrine. Each of its sects passed at an early stage into dogmatism, hardly less stubborn than that of the Catholic Church. It afforded no common or firm groundwork for

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alliance. Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anglicans, Anabaptists, Hussites, Calvinists, Sacramentarians, Puritans, could not work together for a single end. It has always been thus with the party of progress, the Liberals of world-transforming moments in the march of thought. United by no sanctioned *Credo*, no fixed *Corpus Fidei*, no community of Conservative tradition; owing no allegiance to a spiritual monarch; depending for their being on rebellion against authority and discipline; disputing the fundamental propositions from which organisation has hitherto been expanded,—they cannot act in concert. These men are innovators, scene-shifters, to whom the new scene, as in the plan of God it will appear, is still invisible. They are movers from a fixed point to a point yet unascertained. Each section into which they crystallise, and where as sects they sterilise, conceives the coming order according to its narrow prejudices. Each sails toward the haven of the future by its own ill-balanced compass, and observes self-chosen stars. The very instinct for change, the very apprehension which sets so-called Reformers in motion, implies individualities of opinion and incompatibilities of will. Therefore they are collectively weak when ranged against the ranks of orthodoxy and established discipline. It is only because the life of the world beats in their hearts and brains, because the onward faces of humanity are with them, that they command our admiration. The victory of liberalism in modern Europe was won at the cost of retrograde movements—such as the extinction of free thought in Italy and Spain, the crushing of the Huguenots in France, the bloody persecution of the Netherlands, the Thirty Years' War, and the ossification of the Reformed Churches into inorganic stupidity. And the fruits of the victory fall not to any sect of Protestantism, but to a new

spirit which arose in Science and the Revolution. To expect, therefore, as Sidney and the men with whom he sympathised expected, that a Protestant League could be formed, capable of hurling back the tide of Catholic reaction, was little short of the indulgence of a golden dream. Facts and the essence of the Reformation were against its possibility. As a motive force in the world, Protestantism was already well-nigh exhausted. Its energy had already passed into new forms. The men of the future were now represented by philosophers like Bruno and Bacon, by navigators of the world like Drake, by explorers of the heavens like Galileo, by anatomists and physicists like Vesalius, Servetus, Sarpi, Harvey.

Whatever Sidney's hopes and dreams may have been, the religious discords of Germany, torn asunder by Protestant sectarians and worm-eaten to the core by Jesuitical propagandists, must have rudely disilluded him. And no one was better fitted than Languet to dissect before his eyes the humours and imposthumes of that unwieldy body politic. They left Prague at the end of April, travelled together to Heidelberg, visited the Landgrave of Hesse, and arrived at Cologne in May. Here Sidney thought that he must turn his face immediately homewards, though he greatly wished to pass into Flanders. Languet dissuaded him, on grounds of prudence, from doing so without direct commission from the queen. Great therefore was the satisfaction of both when letters arrived from England, ordering Sidney to compliment William the Silent, Prince of Orange, on the birth of his son. During this visit to the Netherlands he made acquaintance with the two most distinguished men there, and won the respect of both. Don John of Austria, the victor of Lepanto, was then acting as viceroy to the King of Spain. Sidney paid him his respects, and

this is the account Fulke Greville gives of his reception:—

“Though at the first, in his Spanish haughture, he (Don John) gave him access as by descent to a youth, of grace as to a stranger, and in particular competition, as he conceived, to an enemy; yet after a while that he had taken his just altitude, he found himself so stricken with this extraordinary planet that the beholders wondered to see what ingenuous tribute that brave and high-minded prince paid to his worth, giving more honour and respect to this hopeful young gentleman than to the ambassadors of mighty princes.”

What happened at Sidney's interview with William of Orange is not told us. That he made a strong impression on the stadtholder appears from words spoken to Fulke Greville after some years. Greville had been sent as ambassador to the prince at Delft. Among other things William bade him report to Queen Elizabeth his opinion “that her Majesty had one of the ripest and greatest counsellors of estate in Sir Philip Sidney that at this day lived in Europe; to the trial of which he was pleased to leave his own credit engaged until her Majesty might please to employ this gentleman either amongst her friends or enemies.” Sidney's caution prevented his friend from delivering this message to a sovereign notoriously jealous of foreign interference in her home affairs.

Philip was in London again in June, when he presented his respects to her Majesty at Greenwich. That he had won credit by the discharge of his embassy appears from a letter written by Mr. Secretary Walsingham to Sir Henry Sidney soon after his arrival. “There hath not been any gentleman, I am sure, these many years that hath gone through so honourable a charge with as great commendations as he: in consideration whereof I could not but communicate this part of my joy with your Lordship, being no

less a refreshing unto me in these my troublesome businesses than the soil is to the chafed stag." Henceforth we may regard our hero as a courtier high in favour with the queen, esteemed for his solid parts by the foremost statesmen of the realm, in correspondence with the leaders of the Reformed party on the Continent, and surely marked out for some employment of importance. He had long to wait, however, before that craving for action in the great world which we have already indicated as his leading passion, could even in part be gratified. Meanwhile it was his duty to hang about the Court; and how irksome he found that petty sphere of compliments, intrigues, and gallantries, can be read in the impatient letters he addressed to Languet. Their correspondence was pretty regularly maintained, although the old man sometimes grumbled at his young friend's want of attention. "Weigh well, I beseech you, what it is to grudge through so long a space of time one single hour to friends who love you so dearly, and who are more anxious for you than for themselves. By omitting one dance a month you could have abundantly satisfied us." In this strain Languet writes occasionally. But his frequent reference to Philip's "sweetest letters," and the familiarity he always displays with his private affairs, show that the young courtier was a tolerably regular correspondent. It is difficult for elderly folk, when they have conceived ardent affection for their juniors, to remember how very much more space the young occupy in the thoughts of the old than the old can hope to command in youthful brains distracted by the multifarious traffic of society. Languet had little to do but to ply his pen in his study. Sidney had to follow the queen on progress, trifle with her ladies, join in games of skill and knightly exercises with the gentlemen about the Court. Yet it is certain that this life

wearied him. He was for ever seeking to escape; at one time planning to join Prince Casimir in the Low Countries; at another to take part in Frobisher's expedition; and more than once contemplating "some Indian project." Languet did his best to curb these wandering ambitions. He had conceived a very firm opinion that Sidney was born to be a statesman, not a soldier of fortune, not an explorer of the ocean. At the same time, he greatly dreaded lest his friend should succumb to the allurements of fashionable idleness. "My noble Sidney, you must avoid that persistent siren, sloth." "Think not that God endowed you with parts so excellent to the end that you should let them rot in leisure. Rather hold firmly that He requires more from you than from those to whom He has been less liberal of talents." "There is no reason to fear lest you should decay in idleness if only you will employ your mind; for in so great a realm as England opportunity will surely not be wanting for its useful exercise." Nature has adorned you with the richest gifts of mind and body; fortune with noble blood and wealth and splendid family connections; and you from your first boyhood have cultivated your intellect by those studies which are most helpful to men in their struggle after virtue. Will you then refuse your energies to your country when it demands them? Will you bury that distinguished talent God has given you?" The career Languet had traced out for Philip was that of a public servant; and he consistently strove to check the young man's restlessness, to overcome his discouragement, and to stimulate him while depressed by the frivolities of daily life. It was his object to keep Philip from roaming or wasting his powers on adventure, while he also fortified his will against the seductions of an idle Court.

During this summer of 1577 Languet once or twice al-

ludes in very cautious language to some project of great importance which had recently been mooted between them on the Continent. It involved the participation of eminent foreigners. It required the sanction and active assistance of the queen. What this was we do not know. Some of Sidney's biographers are of opinion that it concerned his marriage with a German noblewoman. Others—perhaps with better reason—conjecture that his candidature for the Polish Crown had then been mooted. When Henri III. resigned the throne of Poland for that of France in 1574 Stephen Bathori was elected king. He lived until 1585. But in 1577, the year of Languet's mysterious letters, he had not yet given substantial proof of his future policy; and the Protestant party in Europe might have been glad to secure a nominee of the English queen as candidate in the case of a vacancy. There is no doubt that a belief prevailed after Sidney's death that the crown of Poland had in some sort been offered him. The author of *The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney* mentions it. Sir Robert Naunton asserts that the queen refused "to further his advancement, not only out of emulation, but out of fear to lose the jewel of her times." Fuller says that Sidney declined the honour, preferring to be "a subject to Queen Elizabeth than a sovereign beyond the seas." It would be far too flattering to Philip to suppose that a simple English gentleman in his twenty-third year received any actual offer of a throne which a king of France had recently vacated, and which was generally given by election to such as could afford to pay dearly for the honour. Yet it is not impossible that the Reformed princes of Germany may have thought him a good pawn to play, if Elizabeth were willing to back him. The *Fœdus Evangelicum*, it must be remembered, was by no means yet devoid of actuality.

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Mary Sidney's recent marriage to the Earl of Pembroke had strengthened the family by an alliance with one of England's chief noblemen. After coming home Philip paid his sister a visit at Wilton, returning, however, soon to Court in order to watch his father's interests. Sir Henry Sidney was still at his post as Lord Deputy of Ireland; and in his absence the usual intrigues were destroying his credit with the queen. Brilliant, unscrupulous, mendacious, Ormond poured calumnies and false insinuations into her ear. She gave the earl too easy credence, partly because he was handsome, and partly because the government of Ireland was always costing money. There seems little doubt that Sir Henry made no pecuniary profit for himself out of his viceroyalty, and that he managed the realm as economically and as justly as was possible. Ormond and the nobles of his party, however, complained that the Lord Deputy decided cases inequitably against them, that his method of government was ruinously expensive, and that he tyrannously exacted from them land-taxes which had been remitted by his predecessors. Philip undertook his father's defence in a written statement, only the rough notes of which, and those imperfect, have come down to us. He met the charge of injustice by challenging the accusers to show evidence. On the question of the land-tax, or cess, which Ormond and others claimed to have remitted, he proved the inequity and the political imprudence of freeing great nobles from burdens which must be paid by the poor. These poor, moreover, were already taxed by their lords, and shamefully ill-treated by them. "And privileged persons, forsooth, be all the rich men of the pale, the burden only lying upon the poor, who may groan, for their cry cannot be heard." Sir Henry had proposed to convert the cess, computed at an average of ten pounds,

into a fixed annual payment of five marks. At this the nobles cried out that they were being robbed. Philip demonstrated that, according to their own showing, a very easy compromise had been offered them. On the head of economy, he was able to make it clear that his father's administration tended to save money to the State, allowing always for the outlay needed by an army in occupation of a turbulent and disaffected country. Such a government as that of Ireland could not be conducted cheaper. But some had urged that the Lord Deputy exceeded measure in the severity of his justice and the cruelty of his executive. Philip contended that a greater lenity than that which his father showed would have been worse than folly. What he wrote upon this point is worthy of careful perusal at the present day. It reminds us that the Irish difficulty has been permanent, and without appreciable alteration, through three centuries. "Little is lenity to prevail in minds so possessed with a natural inconstancy ever to go in a new fortune, with a revengeful hate to all English as to their only conquerors, and that which is most of all, with so ignorant obstinacy in Papistry that they do in their souls detest the present Government." And again: "Truly the general nature of all countries not fully conquered is against it (*i. e.* against gentle dealing and concessions). For until by time they find the sweetness of due subjection, it is impossible that any gentle means should put out the remembrance of their lost liberty. And that the Irishman is that way as obstinate as any nation, with whom no other passion can prevail but fear (besides their history, which plainly points it out), their manner of life, wherein they choose rather all filthiness than any law, and their own consciences, who best know their own natures, give sufficient proof of. For under the sun there is not a

nation that live more tyrannously than they do one over the other.”

This defence seems to have satisfied Elizabeth and exculpated the Lord Deputy, without impairing its writer's credit at Court. It is the first of a series of semi-official documents, in which, more perhaps than in any other species of composition, Sidney showed his power as a master of language. Waterhouse wrote to Sir Henry that it was the most excellent discourse he had ever read, adding, “Let no man compare with Sir Philip's pen.” During the dispute, and before the queen had expressed her satisfaction with the Lord Deputy's defence, Ormond addressed some remarks to Philip in the presence of the Court. The young man made no reply, marking his hostility by silence. It was expected that a duel would follow upon this affront to the great Irish earl. But Ormond, judging it expedient to treat Sidney as a virtuous gentleman who was bound to defend his father's cause, conceded him the indulgence of a superior.

The storm which threatened Sir Henry Sidney blew over, in great measure owing to his son's skilful advocacy. Still Elizabeth retained her grudge against the Viceroy. He had not yet contrived to flatter that most sensitive member of the royal person—her pocket. Consequently, the year 1578 scarcely opened before new grievances arose. The queen talked of removing Sir Henry from his office—with, perchance, the cumbrous honour of a peerage. He, on the other hand, presented bills to the amount of three thousand and one pounds, for money disbursed from his private estate in the course of public business. She refused to sign a warrant for their payment, alleging, apparently, that the Lord Deputy was creating debts of State in his own interest. Sir Henry retorted—and all the extant

documents tend to the belief that his retort was true—that he had spent thus much of his own moneys upon trust for her Majesty; and that he needed the sum, barring one pound, for the payment of his daughter's marriage portion to the Earl of Pembroke. Perusal of the correspondence seems to me to prove that, however bad a diplomatist and stubborn a viceroy Sir Henry may have been, he was, at any rate, a thoroughly honest man. And this honest man's debts, contracted in her name and in her service, the queen chose to repudiate. It is not wonderful that, under these circumstances, the Lord Deputy thought of throwing up his appointment and retiring into private life in England. Philip's persuasions induced his father to abandon this design. He pointed out that the term of office would expire at Michaelmas, and that it would be more for the Deputy's credit to tender his resignation at that time without an open rupture. One of his letters shows how valuable in these domestic counsels was the Lady Mary Sidney. Philip writes that in the meantime—that is, between Ladyday and Michaelmas—Sir Henry's friends would do their best to heal the breach; "Among which friends, before God, there is none proceeds either so thoroughly or so wisely as your lady, my mother. For mine own part, I have had only light from her."

These sentences afford a very pleasing insight into the relations between father, mother, and eldest son. But the tension of the situation for Philip at Court, playing his part as queen's favourite while his father was disgraced, shouldering the Irish braggarts whom she protected, and who had declared war against her viceroy, presenting a brave front before the world, with only an impoverished estate to back him,—the tension of this situation must have been too great for his sensitive nerves. We find that

he indulged suspicions. Things transpired at Court which he believed had been committed only in most private correspondence to Sir Henry. He wrote to his father: "I must needs impute it to some men about you that there is little written from you or to you that is not perfectly known to your professed enemies." A few weeks after penning these words he thought that he had caught the culprit in Mr. Edmund Molineux, Sir Henry's secretary. This explains the following furious epistle, which no biographer of Sidney should omit in its proper place:—

"MR. MOLINEUX—Few words are best. My letters to my father have come to the ears of some: neither can I condemn any but you. If it be so, you have played the very knave with me; and so I will make you know, if I have good proof of it. But that for so much as is past. For that is to come, I assure you, before God, that if ever I know you to do so much as read any letter I write to my father without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak in earnest. In the meantime, farewell.—From Court, this last of May 1578. By me,

"PHILIP SIDNEY."

Philip had made a great mistake—a mistake not unlike that which betrayed him into false judgment of his comrade Coningsby. Molineux was as true as steel to his father, as loyal as Abdiel to the house of Sidney. It was he who composed for Hollingshed the heartfelt panegyrics of Sir Henry, Sir Philip, and Lady Mary. On this occasion he met the young man's brutal insults with words which may have taught him courtesy. The letter deserves to be given in its integrity:—

"SIR—I have received a letter from you which as it is the first, so the same is the sharpest that I ever received from any; and therefore it amazeth me the more to receive such an one from you, since I have (the world can judge) deserved better somewhere, howsoever it

pleased you to condemn me now. But since it is (I protest to God) without cause, or yet just ground of suspicion, you use me thus, I bear the injury more patiently for a time, and mine innocency I hope in the end shall try mine honesty, and then I trust you will confess that you have done me wrong. And since your pleasure so is expressed that I shall not henceforth read any of your letters (although I must confess I have heretofore taken both great delight and profit in reading some of them) yet upon so hard a condition as you seem to offer, I will not hereafter adventure so great peril, but obey you herein. Howbeit, if it had pleased you, you might have commanded me in a far greater matter with a less penalty.—Yours, when it shall please you better to conceive of me, humbly to command,

“F. MOLINEUX.”

We doubt not that Philip made honourable amends for his unjust imputations, since good friendship afterwards subsisted between him and Molineux. The incident, on which I have thought fit to dwell, reveals something not altogether pleasing in our hero's character. But the real deduction to be drawn from it is that his position at this time was well-nigh intolerable.

In the midst of these worrying cares he remained in attendance on the queen. It seems that he journeyed with the Court in all her progresses; and in May he formed part of the royal company which Leicester welcomed to his house at Wanstead. The entertainment provided for her Majesty was far simpler than that so famous one at Kenilworth in 1575. Yet it has for us a special interest, inasmuch as here Philip produced his first literary essay. This was a rural masque entitled, *The Lady of the May*. How it came to be written we know not; peradventure at two sittings, between the evening's dance and retirement to bed. The thing is slight and without salt. If it were not still quoted in the list of Sidney's works, we should not notice it; and why it ever was printed I am unable to conjecture,

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except upon the supposition that even in Elizabeth's days the last drops from a famous pen, however dull they were, found publishers. Of dramatic conception or of power in dialogue it shows nothing; nor are the lyrics tuneful. There is plenty of flattery introduced, apparently to glut the queen's appetite for mud-honey, but yet so clumsily applied as to suggest a suspicion whether the poet were not laughing at her. The only character which reveals force of portraiture and humour is that of Rombus, the pedagogue, into whose mouth Sidney has put some long-winded speeches, satirising the pedantic and grossly ignorant style in vogue among village school-masters. Rombus, in fact, is a very rough sketch for the picture of Master Holofernes, as may be judged by his exordium to Queen Elizabeth—

"*Stage Direction.*—Then came forward Master Rombus, and, with many special graces, made this learned oration:—

"Now the thunder-thumping Jove transfund his dotes into your excellent formosity, which have, with your resplendent beams, thus segregated the enmity of these rural animals; I am 'potentissima domina,' a school-master; that is to say, a pedagogue, one not a little versed in the disciplinating of the juvenile fry, wherein, to my laud I say it, I use such geometrical proportion, as neither wanted mansuetude nor correction: for so it is described—

"'Parcare subjectos, et debellare superbos.'

Yet hath not the pulchritude of my virtues protected me from the contaminating hands of these plebeians; for coming, 'solummodo,' to have parted their sanguinolent fray, they yielded me no more reverence than if I had been some 'pecorius asinus.' I, even I, that am, who am I? 'Dixi; verbus sapiento satum est.' But what said that Trojan Æneas, when he sojourned in the surging sulks of the sandiferous seas?

"'Hæc olim memonasse juvebit.'

Well, well, 'ad propositos reverteto;' the purity of the verity is, that

a certain 'pulchra puella profecto,' elected and constituted by the integrated determination of all this topographical region, as the sovereign lady of this dame Maia's month, hath been, 'quodammodo,' hunted, as you would say; pursued by two, a brace, a couple, a cast of young men, to whom the crafty coward Cupid had, 'inquam,' delivered his dire dolorous dart.'

During this summer Philip obtained a place at Court, the importance of which his friend Languet seems to have exaggerated. Zouch says it was the post of cup-bearer to the queen; and in this statement there is no improbability, but there is also nothing to warrant it. At any rate the office failed to satisfy his ambition; for he wrote complainingly, as usual, of the irksomeness of Court existence.

● How disagreeable that must in some respects have been is made clear to us by Lady Mary's letters in the autumn of this year. She was expecting her husband home from Ireland. He had to reside with her at Hampton Court, where she could only call one bedroom her own. To the faithful Molineux she writes:—

"I have thought good to put you in remembrance to move my Lord Chamberlain in my Lord's name, to have some other room than my chamber for my Lord to have his resort unto, as he was wont to have; or else my Lord will be greatly troubled, when he shall have any matters of despatch: my lodgings, you see, being very little, and myself continually sick and not able to be much out of my bed. For the night-time one roof, with God's grace, shall serve us. For the daytime, the queen will look to have my chamber always in a readiness for her Majesty's coming thither; and though my Lord himself can be no impediment thereto by his own presence, yet his Lordship, trusting to no place else to be provided for him, will be, as I said before, troubled for want of a convenient place for the despatch of such people as shall have occasion to come to him. Therefore, I pray you, in my Lord's own name, move my Lord of Sussex for a room for that purpose, and I will have it hanged and lined for

him with stuff from hence. I wish you not to be unmindful hereof; and so for this time I leave you to the Almighty.—From Chiswick, this 11th October 1578."

It would appear that Lady Mary's very modest request for a second room, which she undertook to furnish out of her own wardrobe, was not at once granted. Another letter to Molineux shows that he had made some progress in the matter, but had not succeeded. Hampton Court, she writes, however full it may be, has always several spare rooms. Perhaps there are those who "will be sorry my Lord should have so sure footing in the Court." Could not Molineux contrive the loan of a parlour for her husband in the daytime? Yet, after all, "when the worst is known, old Lord Harry and his old Moll will do as well as they can in parting, like good friends, the small portion allotted our long service in Court." There is something half pathetic and half comic in the picture thus presented to our minds of the great Duke of Northumberland's daughter, with her husband, the Viceroy of Ireland and Wales, dwelling at hugger-mugger in one miserable chamber—she well-nigh bedridden, he transacting his business in a corner of it, and the queen momentarily expected upon visitations, not always, we may guess, of friendship or affection. Yet the touch of homely humour in the last sentence I have quoted from the noble lady's letter, sheds a pleasant light upon the sordid scene.

Studying the details of Court life both in Italy and England at this period, we are often led to wonder why noblemen with spacious palaces and venerable mansions of their own to dwell in—why men of genius whose brilliant gifts made them acceptable in every cultivated circle—should have submitted so complacently to its ignoble conditions. Even those who seemed unable to breathe outside the sphere

of the Court spoke most bitterly against it. Tasso squandered his health, his talents, nay, his reason, in that servitude. Guarini, after impairing his fortune, and wasting the best years of his manhood at Ferrara, retired to a country villa, and indulged his spleen in venomous invectives against the vices and the ignominies he had abandoned. Marino, who flaunted his gay plumage at Turin and Paris, screamed like a cockatoo with cynical spite whenever the word Court was mentioned. The only wise man of that age in Italy was the literary bravo Aretino. He, having debauched his youth in the vilest places of the Roman Courts, resolved to live a free man henceforth. Therefore he took refuge in Venice, where he caressed his sensual appetites and levied blackmail on society. From that retreat, which soon became a sty of luxury, he hurled back upon the Courts the filth which he had gathered in them. His dialogue on Court service is one of the most savage and brutally naked exposures of depravity which satirical literature contains. In England there was indeed a far higher tone of manliness and purity and personal independence at the Court than obtained in Italy. Yet listen to Spenser's memorable lines, obviously poured forth from the heart and coloured by bitterest experience:—

“ Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
What hell it is in suing long to bide :
To lose good days, that might be better spent ;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent ;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow ;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow ;
To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers' ;
To have thy asking, yet wait many years ;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares ;
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs ;

To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undone:
 Unhappy wight, born to disastrous end,
 That doth his life in so long tendance spend!"

Therefore we return to wondering what it was in Courts which made gentlefolk convert broad acres into cash that they might shine there, which lured noblemen from their castles and oak-shaded deer-parks to occupy a stuffy bedroom in a royal palace, and squires from their moss-grown manor-houses to jolt along the roads on horseback in attendance on a termagant like Elizabeth or a learned pig like James I. The real answer to these questionings is that, in the transition from mediæval to modern conditions of life, the Court had become a social necessity for folk of a certain quality and certain aspirations. It was the only avenue to public employment; the only sphere in which a man of ambition, who was neither clerk in orders nor lawyer, could make his mark; the only common meeting-ground for rank, beauty, wealth, and genius. Thus it exercised a splendid fascination, the reflex of which is luminous in our dramatic literature. After reading those sad and bitter lines of Spenser, we should turn the pages of Fletcher's *Valentinian*, where the allurements of the Court are eloquently portrayed in the great scene of Lucina's attempted seduction. Or better, let us quote the ecstasies of Fortunatus from the most fanciful of Dekker's plays:—

"For still in all the regions I have seen,
 I scorned to crowd among the muddy throng
 Of the rank multitude, whose thickened breath,
 Like to condensed fogs, do choke that beauty
 Which else would dwell in every kingdom's cheek.
 No, I still boldly stepped into their courts,
 For there to live 'tis rare, oh, 'tis divine!

There shall you see faces angelical ;
There shall you see troops of chaste goddesses,
Whose star-like eyes have power (might they still shine)
To make night day, and day more crystalline :
Near these you shall behold great heroës,
White-headed counsellors, and jovial spirits,
Standing like fiery cherubims to guard
The monarch who in god-like glory sits
In midst of these, as if this deity
Had with a look created a new world,
The standers-by being the fair workmanship."

Philip, like so many of his contemporaries, continued to waver between the irresistible attraction of the Court and the centrifugal force which urged him to be up and doing, anywhere, at any occupation, away from its baneful and degrading idleness. Just now, in the summer of 1578, he was hankering to join his friend, John Casimir, at Zutphen. Elizabeth had nominated this prince to her lieutenancy in the Low Countries, supplying him with money in small quantities for the levying of troops. When he took the field, Philip burned to accept an invitation sent him by the prince. But first he had to gain his father's permission. Sir Henry's answer is the model of kindness and of gentle unselfishness. He begins by acknowledging the honour paid his son, and commending Philip's eagerness. But "when I enter into the consideration of mine own estate, and call to mind what practices, informations, and wicked accusations are devised against me, and what an assistance in the defence of those causes your presence would be unto me, reposing myself so much both upon your help and judgment, I strive betwixt honour and necessity what allowance I may best give of that motion for your going." Then he goes on to say that he leaves the consideration of these matters to his son, and will in no way check his inclination

or refuse his consent. Philip sacrificed his wishes, and remained in England to assist his father. This act of filial compliance cost him, as it happened, nothing; for Casimir's dealings in the Netherlands brought no credit to himself or his companions. None the less should we appreciate the amiable trait in Sidney's character.

Sir Henry returned in due course to England in the autumn, and tendered his resignation of the Irish Viceroyalty. He still maintained his post as Lord President of Wales. On New Year's Day, 1579, presents were exchanged, as usual, between Elizabeth and her chief courtiers. Poor Sir Henry, out of pocket as he was, presented her Majesty with a jewel of gold, diamonds, pearls, and rubies, upon which was wrought a figure of Diana. She returned a hundred and thirty-eight ounces of gold plate. Lady Mary and Philip offered articles of dress, receiving their equivalent in plate. Prince Casimir, who had to answer for his misconduct of affairs in the Low Countries, reached London in the month of January. The queen gave him a gracious reception. He was nominated to a stall in St. George's chapel, and entertained with various amusements. Among other sports, we hear that he shot a stag in Hyde Park. On the 12th of February he again left England with presents from the queen. A letter of the day significantly alludes to her unwilling bestowal of money on the prince: "There hath been somewhat to do to bring her unto it, and Mr. Secretary Walsingham bare the brunt thereof."

One incident of Casimir's visit must not be omitted. Hubert Languet, old as he now was, and failing in health, resolved to set his eyes once more on his beloved Philip. "I am almost afraid," he wrote in January, "that my great desire of seeing you may betray me into thinking I am better than I am, yet I will do my very utmost to be

ready for the journey, even though I should take it at the peril of my life." He came and went safely, had the pleasure of conversing with Philip, and made friends with the chief members of the Sidney family. A letter written in the autumn of the next year shows that this experienced judge of men and cities formed no very favourable opinion of the English Court. "I was pleased last winter to find you flourishing in favour, and highly esteemed by all men. Yet, to conceal nothing, it appeared to me that the manners of your Court are less manly than I could wish; and the majority of your great folk struck me as more eager to gain applause by affected courtesy, than by such virtues as benefit the commonwealth, and are the chief ornament of noble minds and high-born personages. It grieved me then, as also your other friends, that you should waste the flower of your youth in such trifles. I began to fear lest your excellent disposition should at last be blunted, lest you should come by habit to care for things which soften and emasculate our mind."

We have already seen that Sidney was not otherwise than himself alive to these dangers, and that he chafed continually at the "expense of spirit in a waste" of frivolities. As a couplet in one of his occasional poems puts it—

"Greater was the shepherd's treasure,
Than this false, fine, courtly pleasure."

From the same poem we learn that his friendship for Fulke Greville and Edward Dyer continued to be his mainstay at the Court; and when I enter upon the details of his literary career, it will become apparent that much of his time had been already spent with these and other cultivated gentlemen in the prosecution of serious studies. For the present it seems better not to interrupt the history of his external life.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE FRENCH MATCH AND “THE ARCADIA.”

THE years 1579 and 1580 are of importance in the biography of Sidney, owing to the decided part he took in the discussion of the French match. Elizabeth's former suitor, d'Alençon, now bore the title of Duke of Anjou, by his brother Henri's accession to the throne of France. Time had cast a decent veil over the memory of St. Bartholomew, and Anjou was now posing as the protector of national liberties in the Low Countries. He thought the opportunity good for renewing negotiations with the Queen of England. That the Court of the Valois was anxious to arrange the marriage admits of no doubt. The sums of money spent in presents and embassies render this certain, for Catherine de' Medici and her sons were always in pecuniary difficulties. They could not afford to throw gold away on trifles.

Elizabeth showed a strong inclination to accept the duke's proposal. She treated his envoy, Du Simiers, with favour, and kept up a brisk correspondence with Paris. The match, however, was extremely unpopular with the English people. In the autumn of 1579 there appeared a pamphlet entitled: “The Discovery of the Gaping Gulf, whereinto England is like to be swallowed, by a French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the Banns, by letting her

Majesty see the Sin and Punishment thereof." This sufficed to indicate the temper of the best part of the nation, the Protestants, who saw their religious and political liberties in danger. Stubbs and Page, the author and the printer of this "lewd and seditious book," as it was termed by royal proclamation, were each condemned to lose the right hand. Stubbs, when the hangman had performed his office, waved his hat with the left hand, crying "God save the Queen!" Page pointed to his bloody hand upon the ground, and said, "There lies the hand of a true Englishman!"

At Court opinion was divided. Elizabeth's flatterers, with Oxford at their head, declared themselves loudly in favour of the match. Leicester opposed it; but Du Simiers' opportune discovery of the secret marriage with Lady Essex ruined his credit. The great earl had to retire in disgrace. Camden relates that the queen banished him until further notice to Greenwich Castle. Fulke Greville says "the French faction reigning had cast aspersions upon his (Sidney's) uncle of Leicester, and made him, like a wise man (under colour of taking physic) voluntarily become prisoner in his chamber." Whether his retirement was compulsory or voluntary matters little. For the time he lost his influence, and was unable to show his face at Court. Thus Philip who had already elected to "join with the weaker party and oppose this torrent," found himself at the moment of his greatest need deprived of the main support which powerful connections gave him.

Greville has devoted a chapter to his action in this matter, analysing with much detail the reasons which moved him to oppose the queen's inclination. It is not necessary to report his friend's view of the case, since I shall shortly have to present an abstract of the famous document which

Sidney drew up for Elizabeth's perusal. Yet the exordium to this chapter may be quoted, as representing in brief his position at the close of 1579.

"The next doubtful stage he had to act upon (howsoever it may seem private) was grounded upon a public and specious proposition of marriage between the late famous queen and the Duke of Anjou. With which current, although he saw the great and wise men of the time suddenly carried down, and every one fishing to catch the queen's humour in it; yet when he considered the difference of years, person, education, state, and religion between them; and then called to mind the success of our former alliances with the French; he found many reasons to make question whether it would prove poetical or real on their part. And if real, whether the balance swayed not unequally, by adding much to them and little to his sovereign. The duke's greatness being only name and possibility; and both these either to wither or to be maintained at her cost. Her state, again, in hand; and though royally sufficient to satisfy that queen's princely and moderate desires or expenses, yet perchance inferior to bear out those mixed designs into which his ambition or necessities might entice or draw her."

It came to pass, through Leicester's disgrace, that Philip stood almost alone at Court as the resolute opponent of the French faction. The profligate and unscrupulous Earl of Oxford, now foremost in the queen's favour, was carrying his head aloft, boastful of his compliance with her wishes, and counting doubtless on the highest honours when the match should be completed. An accident brought the two champions of the opposed parties into personal collision. One of Languet's letters enables us to fix the date of the event in September 1579, and Greville's minute account of the same is so curious that I shall transcribe it without further comment.

"Thus stood the Court at that time; and thus stood this ingenuous spirit in it. If dangerously in men's opinions who are curious of the

present, and in it rather to do craftily than well: yet, I say, that princely heart of hers was a sanctuary unto him; and as for the people, in whom many times the lasting images of worth are preferred before the temporary visions of art or favour, he could not fear to suffer any thing there, which would not prove a kind of trophy to him. . . . In this freedom of heart, being one day at tennis, a peer of this realm, born great, greater by alliance, and superlative in the prince's favour, abruptly came into the tennis-court; and, speaking out of these three paramount authorities, he forgot to entreat that which he could not legally command. When, by the encounter of a steady object, finding unrespectiveness in himself (though a great lord) not respected by this princely spirit, he grew to expostulate more roughly. The returns of which style coming still from an understanding heart, that knew what was due to itself and what it ought to others, seemed (through the mists of my lord's passion, swollen with the wind of this faction then reigning) to provoke in yielding. Whereby, the less amazement or confusion of thoughts he stirred up in Sir Philip, the more shadows this great lord's own mind was possessed with; till at last with rage (which is ever ill-disciplined) he commands them to depart the court. To this Sir Philip temperately answers; that if his lordship had been pleased to express desire in milder characters, perchance he might have led out those that he should now find would not be driven out with any scourge of fury. This answer (like a bellows) blowing up the sparks of excess already kindled, made my lord scornfully call Sir Philip by the name of *puppy*. In which progress of heat, as the tempest grew more and more vehement within, so did their hearts breathe out their perturbations in a more loud and shrill accent. The French Commissioners unfortunately had that day audience in those private galleries whose windows looked into the tennis-court. They instantly drew all to this tumult: every sort of quarrels sorting well with their humours, especially this. Which Sir Philip perceiving, and rising with an inward strength by the prospect of a mighty faction against him, asked my lord with a loud voice that which he heard clearly enough before. Who (like an echo that still multiplies by reflexions) repeated this epithet of *puppy* the second time. Sir Philip, resolving in one answer to conclude both the attentive hearers and passionate actor, gave my lord a lie, impossible (as he averred) to be retorted; in respect all the world knows, puppies are gotten by dogs and children by men.

"Hereupon these glorious inequalities of fortune in his lordship were put to a kind of pause by a precious inequality of nature in this gentleman; so that they both stood silent a while, like a dumb show in a tragedy; till Sir Philip, sensible of his own wrong, the foreign and factious spirits that attended, and yet even in this question between him and his superior tender of his country's honour, with some words of sharp accent led the way abruptly out of the tennis-court; as if so unexpected an incident were not fit to be decided in that place. Whereof the great lord making another sense, continues his play, without any advantage of reputation, as by the standard of humours in those times it was conceived."

Thus the Earl of Oxford called Sidney a puppy; and Sidney gave him the lie. It was judged inevitable that the former would send a challenge and a duel would ensue. But Oxford delayed to vindicate his honour. The Lords of the Council intervened, and persuaded the queen to effect a reconciliation. She pointed out to Sidney that he owed deference to a peer of the realm. "He besought her Majesty to consider that although he were a great lord by birth, alliance, and grace; yet he was no lord over him." As free men and gentlemen the earl and himself were equals, except in the matter of precedency. Moreover, he reminded Elizabeth that it had been her father's policy to shield the gentry from the oppression of the grandees, in the wise opinion that the Crown would gain by using the former as a balance to the power and ambition of the latter. But having stated his case, he seems to have deferred to her wishes. We do not hear that apologies were made on either side. The matter, however, dropped; Oxford so far retaining his resentment that Sidney's friends believed he entertained a scheme for his assassination.

After reading this passage, we may remember with what spirit on a former occasion Philip gave the cut direct to Ormond. It is also interesting to compare his carriage

upon both occasions with that of his nephew, the Viscount l'Isle, who bearded James' favourite, James Hay, at that time Viscount Doncaster, in his own chamber. A detailed account of this incident, written by Lord l'Isle in vindication of his honour, is printed among the Sidney papers. It casts valuable light upon the manners of the English Court, and illustrates the sturdy temper of the Sidney breed.

Philip contrived apparently to keep the queen's goodwill until the beginning of 1580; for she accepted his present of a crystal cup on New Year's Day. But his position at Court was difficult. Oxford, it was commonly believed, had planned his murder; and being an Italianated Englishman—in other words, a devil incarnate—he may well have entertained some project of the sort. As the avowed champion of the opposition, wielding a pen with which no man could compete, Sidney thought the time had now come to bring matters to an issue by plain utterance. Therefore he drew up a carefully-prepared memorial, setting forth in firm but most respectful language those arguments which seemed to him decisive against the French match. This he presented to Elizabeth early in 1580. Immediately after its perusal, she began to show her resentment, and Philip, like his uncle, found it convenient to leave the Court. His retreat was Wilton, where he remained in privacy for seven months.

I have elsewhere remarked that Sidney showed his powers as a thinker and prose-writer nowhere more eminently than in documents, presenting a wide survey of facts, marshalling a series of arguments, combining the prudence of a statesman and the cunning of an orator. This memorial to the queen is a gem in its own species of composition. It well deserves the high praise which has been given it as

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“at once the most eloquent and the most courageous piece of that nature which the age can boast. Every important view of the subject is comprised in this letter, which is long, but at the same time so condensed in style and so skilfully compacted as to matter that it well deserves to be read entire; and must lose materially either by abridgment or omission.” In it Sidney appeals to what Fulke Greville quaintly calls “that princely heart of hers which was a sanctuary unto him.” He enters the sanctuary with reverence, and stands alone there, pleading like a servant before his mistress. He speaks to Elizabeth in the character of a simple gentleman and loyal subject, relying on no support of party, nor representing himself as the mouth-piece of an indignant nation. This independent attitude gives singular lucidity and beauty to his appeal. It is the grave but modest warning of a faithful squire to his liege lady in the hour of danger. Although extracts can do but scanty justice to the merits of Sidney’s oratory, I must present such specimens as may serve as samples of his English style and display his method of exposition. He begins as follows:—

“MOST FEARED AND BELOVED, MOST SWEET AND GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN
—To seek out excuses of this my boldness, and to arm the acknowl-
edging of a fault with reasons for it, might better show I knew I did
amiss, than any way diminish the attempt, especially in your judgment;
who being able to discern lively into the nature of the thing done, it
were folly to hope, by laying on better colours, to make it more ac-
ceptable. Therefore, carrying no other olive branch of intercession,
than the laying of myself at your feet; nor no other insinuation, ei-
ther for attention or pardon, but the true vowed sacrifice of unfeigned
love; I will, in simple and direct terms (as hoping they shall only
come to your merciful eyes), set down the overflowing of my mind in
this most important matter, importing, as I think, the continuance of
your safety; and as I know, the joys of my life. And because my

words (I confess shallow, but coming from the deep well-spring of most loyal affection) have delivered to your most gracious ear, what is the general sum of my travelling thoughts therein; I will now but only declare, what be the reasons that make me think, that the marriage with Monsieur will be unprofitable unto you; then will I answer the objection of those fears, which might procure so violent a refuge."

Having finished these personal explanations, he proceeds to show that the French marriage must be considered from a double point of view, first as regarding the queen's estate, and secondly as touching her person. Her real power as "an absolute born, and accordingly respected princess," rests upon the affection of her subjects, who are now divided between Protestants and Catholics. The former,

"As their souls live by your happy government, so are they your chief, if not your sole, strength: these, howsoever the necessity of human life makes them lack, yet can they not look for better conditions than presently they enjoy: these, how their hearts will be galled, if not aliened, when they shall see you take a husband, a Frenchman and a Papist, in whom (howsoever fine wits may find farther dealings or painted excuses) the very common people well know this, that he is the son of a Jezebel of our age: that his brother made oblation of his own sister's marriage, the easier to make massacres of our brethren in belief: that he himself, contrary to his promise, and all gratefulness, having his liberty and principal estate by the Hugonot's means, did sack La Charité, and utterly spoil them with fire and sword. This, I say, even at first sight, gives occasion to all, truly religious, to abhor such a master, and consequently to diminish much of the hopeful love they have long held to you."

The Catholics are discontented and disaffected. They will grasp easily at any chance of a revolution in religion and the State; and to such folk the French match is doubtless acceptable, not as producing good to the commonwealth, but as offering them the opportunity of change.

"If then the affectionate side have their affections weakened, and the discontented have a gap to utter their discontent, I think it will seem an ill preparative for the patient (I mean your estate) to a great sickness."

From these general reflections upon the state of parties in England, Sidney passes to a consideration of the Duke of Anjou's personal qualities. The following paragraph is marked by skilful blending of candour with reserve. Elizabeth had declared a special partiality for the French prince. It is her subject's duty to paint him as inconstant, restless in ambition, uncertain in his affections, swayed by light-brained and factious counsellors, greedy of power at any cost. His profession of the Catholic faith renders him a dangerous tool in the hands of disaffected English Papists. His position as next heir to the French Crown makes him an inconvenient consort for the queen of Great Britain. It is not likely that a man of his temper and pretensions should put up with a subordinate place in his wife's kingdom. And why, asks Sidney, has Elizabeth set her heart upon a marriage so fraught with dangers? "Often have I heard you with protestation say no private pleasure nor self-affection could lead you to it." Is it because she looks forward to the bliss of children? If so she may marry where the disadvantages are less. But she has herself alleged that she is moved by "fear of standing alone in respect to foreign dealings," and also by "doubt of contempt in them from whom you should have respect." These two points, since they bias the queen's mind, have to be separately entertained. Leagues are usually cemented by the desires or the fears of the contracting parties. What public desires have Elizabeth and the duke in common?

"He of the Romish religion; and if he be a man, must needs have that man-like property to desire that all men be of his mind: you the

erector and defender of the contrary, and the only sun that dazzleth their eyes: he French, and desiring to make France great; your Majesty English, and desiring nothing less than that France should not grow great: he, both by his own fancy and his youthful governors, embracing all ambitious hopes; having Alexander's image in his head, but perhaps evil-painted: your Majesty with excellent virtue taught what you should hope, and by no less wisdom what you may hope; with a council renowned over all Christendom for their well-tempered minds, having set the utmost of their ambition in your favor, and the study of their souls in your safety."

The interests and the dangers of France and England are so diverse that these realms have no fears in common to unite them. Elizabeth, therefore, can expect nothing but perplexity in her foreign dealings from the match. Is it reasonable that she should hope to secure the affection of her subjects, and to guard herself against their contempt, by marriage with a Frenchman? Can she be ignorant that she is the idol of her people? It is indeed true that the succession is uncertain through lack of heirs of her body:

"But in so lineal a monarchy, wherever the infants suck the love of their rightful prince, who would leave the beams of so fair a sun for the dreadful expectation of a divided company of stars? Virtue and justice are the only bonds of people's love; and as for that point, many princes have lost their crowns whose own children were manifest successors; and some that had their own children used as instruments of their ruin; not that I deny the bliss of children, but only to show religion and equity to be of themselves sufficient stays."

It may be demurred that scurrilous libels have been vented against her Majesty, proving some insubordination in her subjects. She ought, however, to "care little for the barking of a few curs." Honest Englishmen regard such attacks upon her dignity as blasphemous.

"No, no, most excellent lady, do not raze out the impression you have made in such a multitude of hearts; and let not the scum of

such vile minds bear any witness against your subjects' devotions. The only means of avoiding contempt are love and fear; love, as you have by divers means sent into the depth of their souls, so if anything can stain so true a form, it must be the trimming yourself not in your own likeness, but in new colours unto them."

In other words, Sidney means that the Queen's proposed course will alienate instead of confirming the affections of the nation. He then passes to his peroration, which I shall quote in full as a fair specimen of his eloquence:—

"Since then it is dangerous for your state, as well because by inward weakness (principally caused by division) it is fit to receive harm; since to your person it can be no way comfortable, you not desiring marriage; and neither to person nor estate he is to bring any more good than anybody; but more evil he may, since the causes that should drive you to this are either fears of that which cannot happen, or by this means cannot be prevented; I do with most humble heart say unto your Majesty (having assayed this dangerous help) for your standing alone, you must take it for a singular honour God hath done you, to be indeed the only protector of his Church; and yet in worldly respects your kingdom very sufficient so to do, if you make that religion upon which you stand, to carry the only strength, and have abroad those that still maintain the same course; who as long as they may be kept from utter falling, your Majesty is sure enough from your mightiest enemies. As for this man, as long as he is but Monsieur in might, and a Papist in profession, he neither can nor will greatly shield you; and if he get once to be king, his defence will be like Ajax's shield, which rather weighed them down than defended those that bare it. Against contempt, if there be any, which I will never believe, let your excellent virtues of piety, justice, and liberality daily, if it be possible, more and more shine. Let such particular actions be found out (which be easy as I think to be done) by which you may gratify all the hearts of your people. Let those in whom you find trust, and to whom you have committed trust in your weighty affairs be held up in the eyes of your subjects. Lastly, doing as you do, you shall be, as you be, the example of princes, the ornament of this age, and the most excellent fruit of your progenitors,

and the perfect mirror of your posterity.—Your Majesty's faithful,
humble, and obedient subject,
P. SYDNEY."

In the early spring of 1580 Sidney went to stay at Wilton, and remained there during the summer. His sister, the Countess of Pembroke, for whom Jonson wrote the famous epitaph, and whom Spenser described as

"The gentlest shepherdess that lives this day,
And most resembling both in shape and spright
Her brother dear,"

was united to him by the tenderest bonds of affection and by common literary interests. Good judges, among whom Jonson may be reckoned, valued her poetry at least as high as Philip's; and this opinion is confirmed by what remains to us of her compositions. The accent of deep and passionate feeling which gives force to some of the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets, is indeed lacking to her verse. But if we are right in believing that only the first forty-two psalms in their joint translation belong to him, her part in that work exhibits the greater measure of felicity. It was apparently upon this visit to Wilton that the brother and sister began to render the Psalms of David into various lyrical metres. After the Vulgate and the Prayer-book all translations of the Psalms, even those done by Milton, seem tame and awkward. Nor can I except the Sidneys from this criticism. In an essay, then, which must of necessity be economical of space, I shall omit further notice of this version. The opportunity, however, is now given for digressing from Philip's biography to the consideration of his place and achievements in English literature.

It is of importance to bear steadily in mind the date of Sidney's birth in order to judge correctly of his relation to predecessors and successors. Wyatt, Surrey, Sackville, and

Norton had already acclimatised Italian forms of poetry and classical principles of metre upon English soil. But very little of first-rate excellence can be referred to this period of our Renaissance. A form of the sonnet peculiar to English literature, and blank verse, destined to become its epic and dramatic metre, were the two chief results of these earliest innovating experiments. Fulke Greville, himself no mean poet, was born in 1554, the same year as Sidney; Raleigh had been born in 1552; Spenser and Lyly in 1553; Drayton followed in 1563; Shakespeare and Marlowe in 1564; Donne not till 1573, and Jonson one year later yet; Wyatt and Surrey were both dead some while before Sidney saw the light; and Sackville, though he still lived, was not much occupied with literature. It will therefore be seen that he belonged to that intermediate group of writers, of whom Spenser was the greatest, and who preceded the brilliant burst of genius in the last decade of the sixteenth century. It was as the morning star of an unexampled day of lyric and dramatic splendour that his contemporaries hailed him.

In the year 1578 Philip attended Queen Elizabeth on one of her progresses when she stayed at Audley End, and there received the homage of some Cambridge scholars. Among these came Gabriel Harvey, a man of character and parts, but of no distinguished literary talent. He was what we now should call a doctrinaire; yet he possessed so tough a personality as to exercise considerable influence over his contemporaries. Harvey enthusiastically declared himself for the remodelling of English metres on the classic method. The notion was not new. Ascham, in the *Schoolmaster*, pointed out "how our English tongue in avoiding barbarous rhyming may as well receive right quantity of syllables and true order of versifying as either Greek or

Latin, if a cunning man have it in handling." He quoted Bishop Watson's hexameters in proof of this proposition:—

"All travellers do gladly report great praise of Ulysses
For that he knew many men's manners and saw many cities."

Yet his good sense saved him from the absurdities into which Stanyhurst, the translator of the *Aeneid*, fell when he attempted Virgil in a "rude and beggarly" modern imitation of the Latin rhythm. Ascham summed the question up in a single sentence, prophetic of the future course of English versification. "Although Carmen Hexametrum doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly in our English tongue, yet I am sure our English tongue will receive Carmen Iambicum as naturally as either Greek or Latin." Harvey was not so finely gifted as Ascham to perceive the native strength and weakness of our language. He could see no reason why the hexameter should not flourish, and wrote verses, which, for grotesqueness, may pass muster with the most "twitching and hopping" of their kind. Robert Greene, who also tried his hand at the new style, composed smoother but more insipid numbers in the eclogue of Alexis. But Harvey, as I have said, exercised the influence of an imperious personality; and one of his friends was Edmund Spenser. Through Harvey, Sidney became acquainted with Spenser; and it is well known that the latter dedicated *The Shepherd's Calendar* to him in 1579. The publication was anonymous. The dedication ran as follows:—"To the noble and virtuous gentleman, most worthy of all titles, both of learning and chivalry, Master Philip Sidney." The envoy opened with these charming triplets:—

"Go, little book! thyself present,
As child whose parent is unkent,
To him that is the president

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Of nobleness and chivalry ;
And if that envy bark at thee,
As sure it will, for succour flee
Under the shadow of his wing ;
And, askèd who thee forth did bring,
A shepherd's swain, say, did thee sing,
All as his straying flock he fed ;
And when his honour has thee read
Crave pardon for thy hardihead."

In the midst, then, of his Court life Sidney made friends with Harvey and with Spenser. He associated his dearer intimates, Fulke Greville and Edward Dyer, in the same companionship. And thus a little academy, formed apparently upon the Italian model, came into existence. Its critical tendency was indicated by the name Areopagus, given it perhaps in fun by Spenser; and its practical object was the reformation of English poetry upon Italian and classical principles. Unless I am mistaken, no member of the club applied its doctrines so thoroughly in practice as Sidney. It is true that Harvey wished to have it inscribed upon his grave that he had fostered hexameters on English soil. But in the history of our poetical literature Harvey occupies no place of honor. It is also true that Spenser elaborated some lame hexameters. But his genius detected the imposture; he wrote to Harvey, pointing out the insurmountable difficulties of English accent, and laughing at the metre as being "either like a lame gosling that draweth up one leg after, or like a lame dog that holdeth one leg up."

Sidney, with his usual seriousness, took the search after a reformed style of English poetry in earnest. He made experiments in many kinds and various metres, which are now preserved to us embedded in the text of his *Arcadia*. Those poems form the most solid residuum from the exer-

cises of the Areopagus. They are not very valuable; but they are interesting as showing what the literary temper of England was, before the publication of the *Faery Queen* and the overwhelming series of the romantic dramas decided the fate of English poetry. Like *Gorboduc* and other tragedies in the manner of Seneca, these "reformed verses" were doomed to be annihilated by the strong blast of the national genius. But they have their importance for the student of crepuscular intervals between the darkness and the day-spring; and it must not be forgotten that their author did not intend them for the public eye. While studying and using these verses as documents for the elucidation of literary evolution, let us therefore bear in mind that we are guilty of an indiscretion, and are prying on the privacy of a gentleman who never sought the suffrage of the vulgar.

It was at Wilton, then, in 1580, that Sidney began the *Arcadia* in compliance with his sister's request. The dedicatory epistle teaches us in what spirit we ought to approach the pages which he left unfinished, and which were given to the press after his decease:

"Here now have you, most dear, and most worthy to be most dear lady, this idle work of mine; which, I fear, like the spider's web, will be thought fitter to be swept away than worn to any other purpose. For my part, in very truth, as the cruel fathers among the Greeks were wont to do to the babes they would not foster, I could well find it in my heart to cast out in some desert of forgetfulness this child which I am loath to father. But you desired me to do it, and your desire to my heart is an absolute commandment. Now it is done only for you, only to you. If you keep it to yourself, or to such friends who will weigh error in the balance of good-will, I hope for the father's sake it will be pardoned, perchance made much of, though in itself it have deformities. For, indeed, for severer eyes it is not, being a trifle, and that triflingly handled."

These words were doubtless penned long after the first sheets of the *Arcadia*. That they were sincere is proved by Sidney's dying request to have the manuscript destroyed. He goes on to say that "his chief safety shall be the not walking abroad; and his chief protection the using of your name, which, if much good-will do not deceive me, is worthy to be a sanctuary for a greater offender." We have, therefore, the strongest possible security that this famous *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney, this "charm of ages," as Young pompously calls it, which passed through seventeen editions before 1674, was intended by its author only for his sister and a friendly circle. Yet, though we must approach it now like eavesdroppers, we may read in it, better perhaps than elsewhere, those tendencies of English literature which were swallowed up and trampled over by the legionaries of the great dramatic epoch.

It is not improbable that Lyly's *Euphues*, which first saw the light in 1579, suggested to Sidney the notion of writing a romance in a somewhat similar style. He did not, however, catch the infection of Lyly's manner; and the *Arcadia*, unlike *Euphues*, has no direct didactic purpose. Critics, soon after its appearance, imagined that they could discern in its structure hidden references to the main events of the age. But this may be considered a delusion, based upon the prevalent tendency to seek allegories in works of art and fancy—the tendency to which Tasso bowed when he supplied a key to the moralities of the *Gerusalemme*, and which induced Spenser to read esoteric meanings into the *Orlando Furioso*. Sidney had clearly in mind the *Arcadia* of Sannazzaro; he also owed much to Montemayor's *Diana* and the Greek romantic novelists. The style at first is noticeably Italian, as will appear from certain passages I mean to quote. After a while it be-

comes less idyllic and ornate, and at last it merges into rapidity of narration. To sustain the manner of the earlier pages, which remind us of Boccaccio and Sannazzaro, throughout the labyrinthine intricacies of the fable, would have been tedious. Perhaps, too, we may connect the alteration of literary tone with Sidney's departure from Wilton to the Court.

I shall not attempt a complete analysis of the *Arcadia*. The main story is comparatively slender; but it is so complicated by digressions and episodes that a full account of the tangled plot would take up too much space, and would undoubtedly prove wearisome to modern readers. Horace Walpole was not far wrong when he asserted that "the patience of a young virgin in love cannot now wade through" that jungle of pastoral, sentimental, and heroic adventures. A brief outline of the tale, together with some specimens of Sidney's descriptive and sententious styles, must, however, here be given, since it is not very likely that any readers of my book will be impelled to turn the pages of the original.

Musidorus, Prince of Thessalia, and Pyrocles, Prince of Macedon, were cousins. An affection, such as bound the knights of elder Greek romance together, united them even more than the nearness of their blood. Pyrocles, being the elder, taught his friend all that he knew of good, and brave, and gracious. Musidorus learned willingly; and thus the pair grew up to manhood in perfect love, twin flowers of gentleness and chivalry. When the story opens the two heroes have just been wrecked on the Laconian coast. A couple of shepherds, Claius and Strephon, happened to be pacing the sea-shore at that moment. They noticed a young man floating on a coffer, which the waves washed gradually landward. He was "of so goodly shape and well-pleasing

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favour that one would think death had in him a lovely countenance; and that, though he were naked, nakedness was to him an apparel." This youth proved to be Musidorus. Pyrocles meanwhile remained upon the wreck; and, while the shepherds were in the act to rescue him, he was carried off by pirates under the eyes of his sorrowing comrade. There was nothing for it but to leave him to his fate; and Musidorus, after a moment of wild despair, yielded to the exhortations of the good shepherds, who persuaded him to journey with them to the house of a just and noble gentleman named Kalander. The way was long; but, after two days' march, it brought them to Arcadia. The description of that land is justly celebrated.

"The third day after, in the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floor, against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep; and rising from under a tree (which that night had been their pavilion), they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus's eyes (wearied with the wasted soil of Laconia) with delightful prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble vallies, whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers: meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so too by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs with bleating outcry craved the dam's comfort: here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing; and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice-music. As for the houses of the country (for many houses came under their eye), they were all scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off as that it barred mutual succour; a show, as it were, of an accompanable solitariness and of a civil wildness."

In due course of time they arrived at the house of Kalandar, where Musidorus was hospitably received.

“The house itself was built of fair and strong stone, not affecting so much any extraordinary kind of fineness as an honourable representing of a firm stateliness.” “The servants not so many in number as cleanly in apparel and serviceable in behaviour, testifying even in their countenances that their master took as well care to be served as of them that did serve.”

Perhaps Sidney, when he penned these sentences, thought of Penshurst. At any rate they remind us of Jonson's lines upon that venerable country seat. The pleasance, also, had the same charm of homeliness and ancient peace:—

“The backside of the house was neither field, garden, nor orchard; or rather it was both field, garden, and orchard: for as soon as the descending of the stairs had delivered them down, they came into a place cunningly set with trees of the most taste-pleasing fruits: but scarcely had they taken that into their consideration, but that they were suddenly stepped into a delicate green; of each side of the green a thicket, and behind the thickets again new beds of flowers, which being under the trees, the trees were to them a pavilion, and they to the trees a mosaical floor, so that it seemed that art therein would needs be delightful by counterfeiting his enemy error and making order in confusion.”

Here Musidorus sojourned some while, until he happened to hear that his host's son, Clitophon, had been taken prisoner by the Helots, who were now in revolt against their Laconian masters. Musidorus begged permission to go to the young man's rescue; and when he reached the rebels, he entered their walled city by a stratagem and began a deadly battle in the market-place. The engagement at first was general between the Helots and the Arcadians, but at length it resolved itself into a single combat, Musidorus attacking the leader of the Helots with all his might. This

duel remained for some time equal and uncertain, when suddenly the brigand chief threw down his sword, exclaiming, "What! hath Palladius forgotten the voice of Daiphantus?" It should here be said that Pyrocles and Musidorus had agreed to call each other by these assumed names. A joyful recognition of course ensued. Pyrocles related the series of events by which he had been forced to head the rebels, after being captured by them. Clitophon was released, and all returned together to Arcadia.

At this point the love intrigue, which forms the main interest of what Milton called "the vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*," begins to unfold itself. An eccentric sovereign, Basilius, Prince of Arcadia, was married to an accomplished and beautiful woman, Gynecia. They had two daughters, Pamela the elder, and Philoclea the younger, equally matched in loveliness of mind and person, yet differing by subtle contrasts of their incomparable qualities. Basilius, in a fit of jealousy and suspicion, had left his palace, and was now residing with his wife and daughters in two rustic lodges, deep-embowered by the forest. Gynecia, Philoclea, and himself occupied one of these retreats. Pamela dwelt in the other, under the care of a clownish peasant family, consisting of Dametas, his hideous wife Miso, and their still more odious daughter Mopsa. It need not be related how Musidorus fell in love with Pamela and Pyrocles with Philoclea. In order to be near the ladies of their choice, the princes now assumed new names and strange disguises. Pyrocles donned Amazon's attire and called himself Zelmane. Musidorus became a shepherd and was known as Dorus. Both contrived to win the affections of the princesses, but meanwhile they got entangled in embarrassing and dangerous complications. Dorus had to feign love for the disgusting Mopsa. Zel-

mane was persecuted by the passion of both Basilius and Gynecia; Basilius deeming him a woman, Gynecia recognising a man through his disguise. When Milton condemned the *Arcadia* as "a book in that kind full of mirth and witty, but among religious thoughts and duties not worthy to be named, nor to be read at any time without due caution," he was assuredly justified by the unpleasant situation created for Zelmane. A young man, travestied as a girl, in love with a princess, and at the same time harassed by the wanton solicitations of both her father and her mother, is, to say the least, a very risky subject for romance. Yet Sidney treated it with sufficient delicacy, and contrived in the end to bring both Basilius and Gynecia to their senses. "Loathsomely loved and dangerously loving," Zelmane remained long in this entanglement; but when he and Philoclea eventually attained their felicity in marriage, both of them concealed Gynecia's error. And she "did, in the remnant of her life, duly purchase [their good opinion] with observing all duty and faith, to the example and glory of Greece; so uncertain are mortal judgments, the same person most infamous and most famous, and neither justly."

I have dwelt on this part of the story because it anticipates the plots of many Elizabethan dramas which turned upon confusions of sex, and to which the custom of boys acting female parts lent a curious complexity. If space allowed I might also follow the more comic fortunes of Dorus, and show how the tale of Amphialus (another lover of Philoclea) is interwoven with that of Pyrocles and Musidorus. This subordinate romance introduces one of the longest episodes of the work, when Cecropia, the wicked mother of Amphialus, imprisons Zelmane, Philoclea, and Pamela together in her castle. It is during this imprison-

ment that Pamela utters the prayer made famous by the fact that Charles I. is supposed to have used it just before his execution. I will quote it here at length, both for its beauty of style and for the sake of this historical association:—

"O All-seeing Light and Eternal Life of all things, to whom nothing is either so great that it may resist, or so small that it is contemned; look upon my misery with Thine eye of mercy, and let Thine infinite power vouchsafe to limit out some proportion of deliverance unto me, as to Thee shall seem most convenient. Let not injury, O Lord, triumph over me, and let my faults by Thy hand be corrected, and make not mine unjust enemy the minister of Thy justice. But yet, my God, if, in Thy wisdom, this be the aptest chastisement for my inexcusable folly, if this low bondage be fitted for my over high desires, if the pride of my not enough humble heart be thus to be broken, O Lord, I yield unto Thy will, and joyfully embrace what sorrow Thou wilt have me suffer. Only thus much let me crave of Thee: let my craving, O Lord, be accepted of Thee, since even that proceeds from Thee; let me crave, even by the noblest title which in my greatest affliction I may give myself, that I am Thy creature, and by Thy goodness, which is Thyself, that Thou wilt suffer some beam of Thy majesty so to shine into my mind that it may still depend confidently on Thee. Let calamity be the exercise, but not the overthrow of my virtue; let their power prevail, but prevail not to destruction. Let my greatness be their prey; let my pain be the sweetness of their revenge; let them, if so it seem good unto Thee, vex me with more and more punishment; but, O Lord, let never their wickedness have such a hand but that I may carry a pure mind in a pure body."

Among the papers given to Bishop Juxon by Charles upon the scaffold was this prayer, slightly altered in some particulars. His enemies made it a cause of reproach against him, especially Milton, in a memorable passage of "Iconoclastes," from which I have already quoted certain phrases. "Who would have imagined," writes the Latin secretary, "so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity,

so little reverence of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to dictate and present our Christian prayers, so little care of truth in his last words, or honour to himself or to his friends, or sense of his afflictions, or that sad hour which was upon him, as immediately before his death to pop into the hand of that grave bishop who attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god; and that in no serious book, but in the vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*?" Charles' defenders pointed out that the papers given to Juxon had been seized by the regicides, and accused them of foisting this prayer in on purpose to have the opportunity of traducing their victim to Puritan England. It is also noticeable that it does not appear in the first edition of *Eikon Basiliké*, nor in Dr. Earl's Latin version of that book. However the case may be, Dr. Johnson showed good sense when he wrote: "The use of it (the prayer) by adaptation was innocēt; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse."

Pamela's prayer has led me so far away from the intricacies of Sidney's *Arcadia* that I shall not return to further analyses of the fable. The chief merits of the book, as a whole, seem to be an almost inexhaustible variety of incidents, fairly correct character-drawing, purity of feeling, abundance of sententious maxims, and great richness of colouring in the descriptive passages. Its immense popularity may be ascribed to the fact that nothing exactly like it had appeared in English literature; for *Euphues* is by no means so romantically interesting or so varied in material, while the novels of Greene are both shorter and more monotonous. The chivalrous or heroic incidents are so

well combined with the sentimental, and these again are so prettily set against the pastoral background, that, given an appetite for romance of the kind, each reader found something to stimulate his curiosity and to provide him with amusement. The defects of the *Arcadia* are apparent; as, for instance, its lack of humour, the extravagance of many of its situations, the whimsicality of its conceits, and the want of solid human realism in its portraits. These defects were, however, no bar to its popularity in the sixteenth century; nor would they count as such at present were it not, as Dr. Zouch pertinently remarks, that "the taste, the manners, the opinions, the language of the English nation, have undergone a very great revolution since the reign of Queen Elizabeth." Such a revolution condemns all works which fascinated a bygone age, and which are not kept alive by humour and by solid human realism, to ever-gradually-deepening oblivion.

Before concluding this chapter there is another point of view under which the *Arcadia* must be considered. Sidney interspersed its prose with verses, after the model of Sannazaro's pastoral, sometimes introducing them as occasion suggested into the mouths of his chief personages, and sometimes making them the subject of poetical disputes between the shepherds of the happy country. Some of these poems are among the best which he composed. I would cite in particular the beautiful sonnet which begins and ends with this line: "My true love hath my heart, and I have his;" and another opening with—"Beauty hath force to catch the human sight." But what gives special interest to the verses scattered over the pages of *Arcadia* is that in a large majority of them Sidney put in practice the theories of the Arcopagus. Thus we have English hexameters, elegiacs, sapphics, phaleuciacs or hendecasylla-

bles, asclepiads, and anacreontics. I will present some specimens of each. Here then are hexameters:—

“Lady reserved by the heavens to do pastors’ company honour,
 Joining your sweet voice to the rural muse of a desert,
 Here you fully do find this strange operation of love,
 How to the woods love runs as well as rides to the palace;
 Neither he bears reverence to a prince nor pity to beggar,
 But (like a point in midst of a circle) is still of a nearness.
 All to a lesson he draws, neither hills nor caves can avoid him.”

One elegiac couplet will suffice:—

“Fortune, Nature, Love, long have contended about me,
 Which should most miseries cast on a worm that I am.”

Nor will it be needful to quote more than one sapphic stanza:—

“If mine eyes can speak to do hearty errand,
 Or mine eyes’ language she do hap to judge of,
 So that eyes’ message be of her receivèd,
 Hope, we do live yet.”

The hendecasyllables, though comparatively easy to write in English, hobble in a very painful manner, as thus:—

“Reason, tell me thy mind, if here be reason,
 In this strange violence to make resistance,
 Where sweet graces erect the stately banner
 Of virtue’s regiment, shining in harness.”

So do the asclepiads, which, however, are by no means so easy of execution:—

“O sweet woods, the delight of solitariness!
 O how much I do like your solitariness!
 Where man’s mind hath a freed consideration
 Of goodness to receive lovely direction;
 Where senses do behold the order of heavenly host,
 And wise thoughts do behold what the Creator is.”

The anacreontics, being an iambic measure, come off somewhat better, as may be judged by this transcript from a famous fragment of Sappho:—

"My Muse, what ails this ardour?
 Mine eyes be dim, my limbs shake,
 My voice is hoarse, my throat scorched,
 My tongue to this my roof cleaves,
 My fancy amazed, my thoughts dulled,
 My heart doth ache, my life faints,
 My soul begins to take leave."

It is obvious from these quotations that what the school called "our rude and beggarly rhyming" is not only more natural, but also more artistic than their "reformed verse." Indeed, it may be said without reserve that Sidney's experiments in classical metres have no poetical value whatsoever. They are only interesting as survivals from an epoch when the hexameter seemed to have an equal chance of survival with the decasyllabic unrhymed iambic. The same is true about many of Sidney's attempts to acclimatise Italian forms of verse. Thus we find embedded in the *Arcadia* terza rima and ottava rima, sestines and madrigals, a canzone in which the end of each line rhymes with a syllable in the middle of the next. So conscientious was he in the attempt to reproduce the most difficult Italian metres that he even attempted terza rima with *sdrucchiolo* or trisyllabic rhymes. I will select an example:—

"If sunny beams shame heavenly habitation,
 If three-leaved grass seem to the sheep unsavory,
 Then base and sore is Love's most high vocation.
 Or if sheep's cries can help the sun's own bravery,
 Then may I hope my pipe may have ability
 To help her praise who decks me in her slavery."

But enough of this. It has proved a difficult task to in-

roduce terza rima at all into English literature; to make so exceptionally exacting a species of it as the *sdrucchiolo* at all attractive, would almost be beyond the powers of Mr. Swinburne. The octave, as handled by Sidney, is passable, as will appear from the even flow of this stanza:—

“ While thus they ran a low but levelled race,
 While thus they lived (this was indeed a life!)
 With nature pleased, content with present case,
 Free of proud fears, brave beggary, smiting strife
 Of clime-fall court, the envy-hatching place,
 While those restless desires in great men rife
 To visit folks so low did much disdain,
 This while, though poor, they in themselves did reign.”

Of the sestines I will not speak. That form has always seemed to me tedious even in the hands of the most expert Italian masters; and Sidney was not the sort of poet to add grace to its formality by any sprightliness of treatment. It should be noticed that some of the songs in the *Arcadia* are put into the mouth of a sad shepherd who is Sidney himself. Phillisides (for so he has chosen to Latinise the first syllables of his Christian and surnames) appears late in the romance, and prepares us to expect the higher poetry of *Astrophel and Stella*.

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CHAPTER V.

LIFE AT COURT AGAIN, AND MARRIAGE.

WHILE Philip was in retirement at Wilton two events of interest happened. His nephew, William Herbert, saw the light upon the 28th of April; and Edmund Spenser left England for Ireland as secretary to the new Viceroy, Lord Grey of Wilton. The birth of the future Earl of Pembroke forcibly reminds us of Sidney's position in the history of English literature. This baby in the cradle was destined to be Shakespeare's friend and patron; possibly also to inspire the sonnets which a publisher inscribed in Shakespeare's name to Master W. H. We are wont to regard those enigmatical compositions as the product of Shakespeare's still uncertain manhood. But William Herbert was yet a child when his uncle Philip's life-work ended. *Astrophel and Stella* had circulated among its author's private friends for at least four years when Zutphen robbed England of her poet-hero. At that date little Herbert, for whom Shakespeare subsequently wrote the lines—

"Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?"—

this little Herbert was but in his seventh year.

It is also possible, but not probable, that, while Philip was away in Wiltshire, his half-affianced bride, the daugh-

ter of the Earl of Essex, gave her hand to another suitor. Her guardian, the Earl of Huntingdon, wrote upon the 10th of March, in 1580, to Lord Burleigh, that he considered Lord Rich "a proper gentleman, and one in years very fit for my Lady Penelope Devereux, if, with the favour and liking of her Majesty, the matter might be brought to pass." Lord Rich certainly married Penelope Devereux; but whether it was in 1580, or rather in 1581, admits of discussion. To fix the exact date of her betrothal is a matter of some moment. I must therefore point out that, at that time in England, the commencement of the year dated officially from March 25. In private correspondence, however, the 1st of January had already begun to mark the opening of a new year. Privately, then, Lord Huntingdon's letter may have carried the date, 1580, as we understand it; but, officially, it must have been reckoned into the year which we call 1581. Now this letter is endorsed by Burleigh or his secretary, officially, under the year 1580; and, therefore, we have a strong presumption in favour of Penelope's not having been engaged to Lord Rich until 1581, seeing that the month of March in 1580 counted then for our month of March in 1581. When I review *Astrophel and Stella* it will appear that I do not attach very great importance to this question of dates. But I think it safer, on the evidence, to place Stella's marriage in the spring or summer of 1581.

Lord Rich was the son of the Lord Chancellor of England, who had lately died, bequeathing to his heir a very substantial estate, and a large portion of his own coarse temperament. If we may trust the Earl of Devonshire's emphatic statement, made some twenty-five years later to King James, this marriage was not to the mind of the lady. He says that Penelope, "being in the power of her

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friends, was married against her will unto one against whom she did protest at the solemnity and ever after; between whom, from the very first day, there ensued continual discord, although the same fears that forced her to marry constrained her to live with him." I may here remind my readers of her subsequent history. During her husband's lifetime she left him and became the mistress of Sir Charles Blount, to whom she bore three children out of wedlock. He advanced to the peerage with the inherited title of Lord Mountjoy, and was later on created Earl of Devonshire; while Lady Rich, in spite of her questionable conduct, received, by patent, the dignity and precedence of the most ancient Earldom of Essex. Having been divorced from Lord Rich, she was afterwards at liberty to marry her lover; and in 1605 she became the Countess of Devonshire. James refused to countenance the nuptials. He had tolerated the previous illicit connection. But his opinions upon divorce made him regard its legalisation with indignant horror. Stella died in 1607 a disgraced woman, her rights of wifhood and widowhood remaining unrecognised.

In the course of the summer (1580), Leicester left his retirement and returned to Court. It was understood that though still not liking the French match, he would in future offer no opposition to the queen's wishes; and on these terms he induced Philip also to make his peace with her Majesty. We find him, accordingly, again in London before the autumn. Two of the longest private letters from his pen may be referred to this period. They are addressed to his brother Robert Sidney, who afterwards became Lord Leicester. This young man was then upon his travels, spending more money than his father's distressed circumstances could well afford. Philip sent him supplies,

using language of great delicacy and warm brotherly affection: "For the money you have received, assure yourself (for it is true) there is nothing I spend so pleaseth me, as that which is for you. If ever I have ability, you will find it; if not, yet shall not any brother living be better beloved than you of me." "For £200 a year, assure yourself, if the estates of England remain, you shall not fail of it; use it to your best profit." Where Philip found the money may be wondered; but that he gave it with good grace is unquestionable. Probably he received more from the queen in allowances than we are aware of; for he ranked among the favoured courtiers then known as "pensioners." As was the fashion of those times, he lectured his brother somewhat pompously on how to use the opportunities of the grand tour. Robert was constantly to observe the "virtue, passion, and vices" of the foreign countries through which he travelled.

"Even in the Kingdom of China, which is almost as far as the Antipodes from us, their good laws and customs are to be learned; but to know their riches and power is of little purpose for us, since that can neither advance nor hinder us. But in our neighbouring countries, both these things are to be marked, as well the latter, which contain things for themselves, as the former, which seek to know both those, and how their riches and power may be to us available, or otherwise. The countries fittest for both these are those you are going into. France is above all other most needful for us to mark, especially in the former kind; next is Spain and the Low Countries; then Germany, which in my opinion excels all others as much in the latter consideration, as the other doth in the former, yet neither are void of neither; for as Germany, methinks, doth excel in good laws, and well administering of justice, so are we likewise to consider in it the many princes with whom we may have league, the places of trade, and means to draw both soldiers and furniture thence in time of need. So on the other side, as in France and Spain, we are principally to mark how they stand towards us both in power and in-

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clination ; so are they not without good and fitting use, even in the generality of wisdom to be known. As in France, the courts of parliament, their subaltern jurisdiction, and their continual keeping of paid soldiers. In Spain, their good and grave proceedings ; their keeping so many provinces under them, and by what manner, with the true points of honour ; wherein since they have the most open conceit, if they seem over curious, it is an easy matter to cut off when a man sees the bottom. Flanders likewise, besides the neighbourhood with us, and the annexed considerations thereunto, hath divers things to be learned, especially their governing their merchants and other trades. Also for Italy, we knew not what we have, or can have, to do with them, but to buy their silks and wines ; and as for the other point, except Venice, whose good laws and customs we can hardly proportion to ourselves, because they are quite of a contrary government ; there is little there but tyrannous oppression, and servile yielding to them that have little or no right over them. And for the men you shall have there, although indeed some be excellently learned, yet are they all given to counterfeit learning, as a man shall learn among them more false grounds of things than in any place else that I know ; for from a tapster upwards, they are all discoursers in certain matters and qualities, as horsemanship, weapons, painting, and such are better there than in other countries ; but for other matters, as well, if not better, you shall have them in nearer places."

The second of the two epistles (dated from Leicester House, Oct. 18, 1580) contains more personal matter. "Look to your diet, sweet Robin," he says, "and hold up your heart in courage and virtue ; truly great part of my comfort is in you." And again : "Now, sweet brother, take a delight to keep and increase your music ; you will not believe what a want I find of it in my melancholy times." It appears, then, that Philip, unlike many gentlemen of that age, could not touch the lute or teach the "saucy jacks" of the virginal to leap in measure. Then follows another bit of playful exhortation : "I would by the way your worship would learn a better hand ; you write worse

than I, and I write evil enough; once again have a care of your diet, and consequently of your complexion; remember *Gratior est veniens in pulchro corpore virtus.*" If Ben Jonson was right in what he said of Philip's complexion, this advice had its ground in tiresome experience. On the subject of manly exercises he has also much to say: "At horsemanship, when you exercise it, read Crison Claudio, and a book that is called *La Gloria del Cavallo*, withal that you may join the thorough contemplation of it with the exercise; and so shall you profit more in a month than others in a year; and mark the biting, saddling, and curbing of horses."

"When you play at weapons, I would have you get thick caps and bracers, and play out your play lustily, for indeed ticks and dalliances are nothing in earnest, for the time of the one and the other greatly differs; and use as well the blow as the thrust; it is good in itself, and besides exerciseth your breath and strength, and will make you a strong man at the tourney and barriers. First, in any case practise the single sword, and then with the dagger; let no day pass without an hour or two such exercise; the rest study, or confer diligently, and so shall you come home to my comfort and credit."

Studies come in for their due share of attention. "Take delight likewise in the mathematical; Mr. Savile is excellent in them. I think you understand the sphere; if you do, I care little for any more astronomy in you. Arithmetic and geometry I would wish you were well seen in, so as both in matters of number and measure you might have a feeling and active judgment. I would you did bear the mechanical instruments, wherein the Dutch excel." It may be said with reference to this paragraph that Mr. Savile was Robert Sidney's travelling governor. The sphere represented medieval astronomy. Based upon the traditional interpretation of the Ptolemaic doctrine, it lent itself to

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theoretical disquisitions upon cosmology in general, as well as to abstruse speculations regarding the locality of paradise and heaven, the elements, and superhuman existences. On the point of style Philip observes: "So you can speak and write Latin, not barbarously, I never require great study in Ciceronianism, the chief abuse of Oxford, *qui dum verba sectantur res ipsas negligunt.*" History being Robert Sidney's favourite study, his brother discourses on it more at large.

I have quoted thus liberally from Philip's letters to Robert Sidney, because of the agreeable light they cast upon his character. It is clear they were not penned for perusal by the public. "My eyes are almost closed up, overwatched with tedious business," says the writer; and his last words are, "Lord! how I have babbled." Yet, though hastily put together, and somewhat incoherently expressed, the thoughts are of excellent pith; and one passage upon history, in particular, reads like a rough sketch for part of the "Defence of Poesy."

After weighing the unaffected words of brotherly counsel and of affectionate interest which Philip sent across the sea to Robert, we are prepared for Sir Henry Sidney's warm panegyric of his first-born to his second son. He had indeed good hopes of Robert; but he built more on Philip, as appears from the following sentence in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham: "I having three sons, one of excellent good proof, the second of great good proof, and the third not to be despaired of, but very well to be liked." Therefore he frequently exhorted Robert to imitate the qualities of his "best brother." "*Perge, perge*, my Robin, in the filial fear of God, and in the meanest imagination of yourself, and to the loving direction of your most loving brother. Imitate his virtues, exercises, studies, and actions.

He is the rare ornament of this age, the very formular that all well disposed young gentlemen of our Court do form also their manners and life by. In truth I speak it without flattery of him or of myself; he hath the most rare virtues that ever I found in any man. Once again I say imitate him." And once more, at a later date: "Follow your discreet and virtuous brother's rule, who with great discretion, to his great commendation, won love, and could variously ply ceremony with ceremony."

The last extant letter of Languet to Philip was written in October of this year. The old man congratulates his friend upon returning to the Court; but he adds a solemn warning against its idleness and dissipations. Familiarity with English affairs confirmed his bad opinion of Elizabeth's Court circle. He saw that she was arbitrary in her distribution of wealth and honours; he feared lest Philip's merits should be ignored, while some more worthless favourite was being pampered. Once he had hoped that his service of the queen would speedily advance him to employment in public affairs. Now he recognised the possibility of that young hopeful life being wasted upon formalities and pastimes; and for England he prophesied a coming time of factions, complicated by serious foreign troubles. It is the letter of a saddened man, slowly declining towards the grave, amid forebodings which the immediate future of Europe only too well justified. Languet had now just eleven months more to live. He died in September 1581 at Antwerp, nursed through his last illness by the wife of his noble friend Philip du Plessis Mornay, and followed to the tomb by William, Prince of Orange. Among the poems given to Phillisides in the *Arcadia* is one which may perhaps have been written about the time when Languet's death had brought to Philip's

memory the debt of gratitude he owed this faithful counsellor :—

“The song I sang old Languet had me taught,
Languet the shepherd best swift Ister knew
For clerkly reed, and hating what is naught,
For faithful heart, clean hands, and mouth as true;
With his sweet skill my skillless youth he drew
To have a feeling taste of Him that sits
Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.

“He said the music best thilk powers pleased
Was sweet accord between our wit and will,
Where highest notes to godliness are raised,
And lowest sink not down to jot of ill;
With old true tales he wont mine ears to fill,
How shepherds did of yore, how now they thrive,
Spoiling their flocks, or while 'twixt them they strive.

“He likèd me, but pitied lustful youth;
His good strong staff my slippery years upbore;
He still hoped well because I lovèd truth;
Till forced to part, with heart and eyes even sore,
To worthy Corydon he gave me o'er.”

On New Year's Day, 1581, Philip presented the queen with a heart of gold, a chain of gold, and a whip with a golden handle. These gifts symbolised his devotion to her, and her right to chastise him. The year is marked in his biography by his first entrance into Parliament, as knight of the shire for Kent. He only sat two months; but during that short period he joined the committees appointed to frame rules for enforcing laws against Catholics, and for suppressing seditious practices by word or deed against her Majesty. The French match was still uppermost in Elizabeth's mind. She hankered after it; and some of the wisest heads in Europe, among them William the Silent,

approved of the project. Yet she was unable to decide. The Duke of Anjou had raised questions as to the eventuality of England becoming dependent on the French Crown; which it might have been, if he had married the Queen, and succeeded to his childless brother. This made her pause and reflect. She was, moreover, debating the scheme of an alliance with Henri III. against Spain. Between the two plans her mind wavered. As Walsingham wrote to Burleigh: "When her Majesty is pressed to the marriage, then she seemeth to effect a league; and when the league is yielded to, then she liketh better a marriage; and when thereupon she is moved to assent to marriage, then she hath recourse to the league; and when the motion is for the league, or any request is made for money, then her Majesty returneth to the marriage."

These hesitations seem to have been augmented by the urgency of the French Court. On the 16th of April Francis of Bourbon arrived from Paris at the head of a magnificent embassy, with the avowed object of settling preliminaries. They were received with due honour by the principal nobles of Elizabeth's Court, all open opposition to the marriage having now been withdrawn by common consent. Among the entertainments provided for the envoys during their sojourn in London, Philip played a conspicuous part. Together with the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, and Fulke Greville, he prepared a brilliant display of chivalry. Calling themselves the Four Foster Children of Desire, they pledged their word to attack and win, if possible, by force of arms, the Fortress of Perfect Beauty. This fort, which was understood to be the allegorical abode of the queen, was erected in the Tilt Yard at Whitehall. Seven times the number of the challengers, young gentlemen of knightly prowess, offered themselves as defenders

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of the fortress; and it was quite clear from the first how the tournament would end. This foregone conclusion did not, however, mar the sport; and the compliment intended to Elizabeth would have been spoiled, if the Foster Children of Desire could have forced their way into her Castle of Beauty. The assault upon the Fortress of Perfect Beauty began on the 15th of May and was continued on the 16th, when the challengers acknowledged their defeat. They submitted their capitulation to the queen, by the mouth of a lad, attired in ash-coloured clothes, and bearing an olive-branch. From the detailed accounts which survive of the event, I will only transcribe what serves to bring Philip Sidney and his train before us. The passage describes his entrance on the first day of the lists:—

“Then proceeded Master Philip Sidney in very sumptuous manner, with armour, part blue and the rest gilt and engraven, with four spare horses, having caparisons and furniture very rich and costly, as some of cloth of gold embroidered with pearl, and some embroidered with gold and silver feathers, very richly and cunningly wrought. He had four pages that rode on his four spare horses, who had cassock coats and Venetian hose, all of cloth of silver, laied with gold lace, and hats of the same with gold bands and white feathers, and each one a pair of white buskins. Then had he thirty gentlemen and yeomen, and four trumpeters, who were all in cassock coats and Venetian hose of yellow velvet laied with silver lace, yellow velvet caps with silver bands and white feathers, and every one a pair of white buskins; and they had upon their coats a scroll or band of silver, which came scarf-wise over the shoulder, and so down under the arm, with this posy or sentence written upon it, both before and behind: *Sic nos non nobis.*”

It behoves us not to ask, but we cannot help wondering, where the money came from for this costly show. Probably Philip was getting into debt. His appeals to friends with patronage at their disposal became urgent during the

ensuing months. Though he obtained no post which combined public duties with pay, a sinecure worth £120 a year was given him. It must be said to his credit that he did not so much desire unearned money as some lucrative appointment, entailing labour and responsibility. This the queen would not grant; even an application made by him so late as the summer of 1583, begging for employment at the Ordnance under his uncle Warwick, was refused. Meanwhile his European reputation brought invitations, which prudence bade him reject. One of these arrived from Don Antonio of Portugal, a bastard pretender to that kingdom, calling upon Philip Sidney to join his forces. The life at Court, onerous by reason of its expenditure, tedious through indolence and hope deferred, sweetened chiefly by the companionship of Greville and Dyer, wore tiresomely on. And over all these months wavered the fascinating vision of Stella, now a wife, to whom Phillisides was paying ardent homage. It may well be called a dangerous passage in his short life, the import of which we shall have to fathom when we take up *Astrophel and Stella* for perusal. Courtly monotony had its distractions. The French match, for instance, afforded matter for curiosity and mild excitement. This reached its climax when the Duke of Anjou arrived in person. He came in November, and stayed three months. When he left England in February 1582, the world knew that this project of a marriage for Elizabeth was at an end. Sidney, with the flower of English aristocracy, attended the French prince to Antwerp. There he was proclaimed Duke of Brabant, and welcomed with shows of fantastic magnificence. We may dismiss all further notice of him from the present work, with the mention of his death in 1584. It happened on the first of June, preceding the Prince of Orange's assassination by

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just one month. People thought that Anjou also had been murdered.

The greater part of the year 1582 is a blank in Philip's biography. We only know that he was frequently absent from the Court, and in attendance on his father. Sir Henry Sidney's affairs were seriously involved. The Crown refused him substantial aid, and kept him to his post at Ludlow Castle. Yet, at the beginning of 1583, we find Philip again in waiting on the queen; presenting her with a golden flower-pot, and receiving the gracious gift of a lock of the royal virgin's hair. In January Prince Casimir had to be installed Knight of the Garter. Philip was chosen as his proxy, and obtained the honour of knighthood for himself. Henceforward he takes rank as Sir Philip Sidney of Penshurst.

Never thoroughly at ease in courtly idleness, Philip formed the habit of turning his eyes westward, across the ocean, towards those new continents where wealth and boundless opportunities of action lay ready for adventurous knights. Frobisher's supposed discovery of gold in 1577 drew an enthusiastic letter from him. In 1578 he was meditating some "Indian project." In 1580 he wrote wistfully to his brother Robert about Drake's return, "of which yet I know not the secret points; but about the world he hath been, and rich he is returned." In 1582 his college friend, Richard Hakluyt, inscribed the first collection of his *Voyages* with Sidney's name. All things pointed in the direction of his quitting England for the New World, if a suitable occasion should present itself, and if the queen should grant him her consent. During the spring of 1583 projects for colonisation, or plantation as it then was termed, were afloat among the west country gentlefolk. Sir Humphrey Gilbert and his half-brother

Walter Raleigh, with Sir George Peckham and others, thought of renewing the attempts they had already made in 1578. Elizabeth in that year had signed her first charter of lands to be explored beyond the seas, in favour of Sir Humphrey Gilbert; and now she gave a second to Sir Philip Sidney. It licensed and authorised him

“To discover, search, find out, view, and inhabit certain parts of America not yet discovered, and out of those countries by him, his heirs, factors, or assignees, to have and enjoy, to him, his heirs, and assignees for ever, such and so much quantity of ground as shall amount to the number of thirty hundred thousand acres of ground and wood, with all commodities, jurisdictions, and royalties, both by sea and land, with full power and authority that it should and might be lawful for the said Sir Philip Sidney, his heirs and assignees, at all times thereafter to have, take, and lead in the same voyage, to travel thitherwards or to inhabit there with him or them, and every or any of them, such and so many her Majesty's subjects as should willingly accompany him and them and every or any of them, with sufficient shipping and furniture for their transportation.”

In other words, her Majesty granted to Sir Philip Sidney the pretty little estate of three millions of acres in North America. It is true that the land existed, so to say, *in nubibus*, and was by no means sure to prove an El Dorado. It was far more sure that if the grantee got possession of it, he would have to hold it by his own strength; for Britain, at this epoch, was not pledged to support her colonies. Yet considering the present value of the soil in Virginia or New England, the mere fantastic row of seven figures in American acres, so lightly signed away by her Majesty, is enough to intoxicate the imagination. How Philip managed to extort or wheedle this charter from Elizabeth we have no means of knowing. She was exceedingly jealous of her courtiers, and would not willingly lose sight of

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them. When Philip two years later engaged himself in a colonising expedition, we shall see that she positively forbade him to leave England. Now, however, it is probable she knew that he could not take action on her gift. She was merely bestowing an interest in speculations which cost her nothing and might bring him profit. At any rate, the matter took this turn. In July 1583 he executed a deed relinquishing 30,000 acres, together with "all royalties, titles, pre-eminences, privileges, liberties, and dignities," which the queen's grant carried, to his friend Sir George Peckham.

The reason of this act of resignation was that Philip had pledged his hand in marriage to Frances, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. So far back as December 1581 there are indications that his friendship with Walsingham and his family was ripening into something more intimate. We do not know the date of his marriage for certain; but it is probable that he was already a husband before the month of July.

A long letter addressed in March 1583 by Sir Henry Sidney to Walsingham must here be used, since it throws the strongest light upon the circumstances of the Sidney family, and illustrates Sir Henry's feeling with regard to his son's marriage. The somewhat discontented tone which marks its opening is, I think, rather apologetical than regretful. Sir Henry felt that, on both sides, the marriage was hardly a prudent one. He had expected some substantial assistance from the Crown through Walsingham's mediation. This had not been granted; and he took the opportunity of again laying a succinct report of his past services and present necessities before the secretary of state, in the hope that something might yet be done to help him. The document opens as follows:—

"DEAR SIR—I have understood of late that coldness is thought in me in proceeding in the matter of marriage of our children. In truth, sir, it is not so, nor so shall it ever be found; for compromitting the consideration of the articles to the Earls named by you, and to the Earl of Huntingdon, I most willingly agree, and protest, and joy in the alliance with all my heart. But since, by your letters of the 3d of January, to my great discomfort I find there is no hope of relief of her Majesty for my decayed estate in her Highness' service, I am the more careful to keep myself able, by sale of part of that which is left, to ransom me out of the servitude I live in for my debts; for as I know, sir, that it is the virtue which is, or that you suppose is, in my son, that you made choice of him for your daughter, refusing haply far greater and far richer matches than he, so was my confidence great that by your good means I might have obtained some small reasonable suit of her Majesty; and therefore I nothing regarded any present gain, for if I had, I might have received a great sum of money for my good will of my son's marriage, greatly to the relief of my private biting necessity."

After this exordium, Sir Henry takes leave to review his actions as Viceroy of Ireland and Governor of Wales, with the view of showing how steadfastly he had served his queen and how ill he had been recompensed.

"Three times her Majesty hath sent me her Deputy into Ireland, and in every of the three times I sustained a great and a violent rebellion, every one of which I subdued, and (with honourable peace) left the country in quiet. I returned from each of these three Deputations three hundred pounds worse than I went."

It would be impertinent to the subject of this essay were I to follow Sir Henry in the minute and interesting account of his Irish administration. Suffice it to say that the letter to Walsingham is both the briefest and the most material statement of facts which we possess regarding that period of English rule. Omitting then all notice of public affairs, I pass on to confidences of a more personal charac-

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ter. After dwelling upon sundry embassies and other employments, he proceeds:—

“Truly, sir, by all these I neither won nor saved; but now, by your patience, once again to my great and high office—for great it is in that in some sort I govern the third part of this realm under her most excellent Majesty; high it is, for by that I have precedency of great personages and far my betters: happy it is for the people whom I govern, as before is written, and most happy for the commodity that I have by the authority of that place to do good every day, if I have grace, to one or other; wherein I confess I feel no small felicity; but for any profit I gather by it, God and the people (seeing my manner of life) knoweth it is not possible how I should gather any.

“For, alas, sir! how can I, not having one groat of pension belonging to the office? I have not so much ground as will feed a mutton. I sell no justice, I trust you do not hear of any order taken by me ever reversed, nor my name or doings in any court ever brought in question. And if my mind were so base and contemptible as I would take money of the people whom I command for my labour taken among them, yet could they give me none, or very little, for the causes that come before me are causes of people mean, base, and many very beggars. Only £20 a week to keep an honourable house, and 100 marks a year to bear foreign charges I have; . . . but true books of account shall be, when you will, showed unto you that I spend above £30 a week. Here some may object that I upon the same keep my wife and her followers. True it is she is now with me, and hath been this half year, and before not in many years; and if both she and I had our food and house-room free, as we have not, in my conscience we have deserved it. For my part, I am not idle, but every day I work in my function; and she, for her old service, and marks yet remaining in her face taken in the same, meriteth her meat. When I went to Newhaven I left her a full fair lady, in mine eye at least the fairest; and when I returned I found her as foul a lady as the small-pox could make her, which she did take by continual attendance of her Majesty's most precious person (sick of the same disease), the scars of which, to her resolute discomfort, ever since have done and doth remain in her face, so as she liveth solitarily, *sicut mcticorax in domicilio suo*, more to my charge

than if we had boarded together, as we did before that evil accident happened."

The epistle ends with a general review of Sir Henry's pecuniary situation, by which it appears that the Sidney estate had been very considerably impoverished during his tenure of it.

"The rest of my life is with an over-long precedent discourse manifested to you. But this to your little comfort I cannot omit, that whereas my father had but one son, and he of no great proof, being of twenty-four years of age at his death, and I having three sons; one of excellent good proof, the second of great good proof, and the third not to be despaired of, but very well to be liked; if I die to-morrow next I should leave them worse than my father left me by £20,000; and I am now fifty-four years of age, toothless and trembling, being £5000 in debt, yea, and £30,000 worse than I was at the death of my most dear king and master, King Edward VI.

"I have not of the crown of England of my own getting, so much ground as I can cover with my foot. All my fees amount not to 100 marks a year. I never had since the queen's reign any extraordinary aid by license, forfeit, or otherwise. And yet for all that was done, and somewhat more than here is written, I cannot obtain to have in fee-farm £100 a year, already in my own possession, paying the rent.

"And now, dear sir and brother, an end of this tragical discourse, tedious for you to read, but more tedious it would have been if it had come written with my own hand, as first it was. Tragical I may well term it; for that it began with the joyful love and great liking with likelihood of matrimonial match between our most dear and sweet children (whom God bless), and endeth with declaration of my unfortunate and hard estate.

"Our Lord bless you with long life and happiness. I pray you, sir, commend me most heartily to my good lady, cousin, and sister, your wife, and bless and kiss our sweet daughter. And if you will vouchsafe, bestow a blessing upon the young knight, Sir Philip."

There is not much to say of Philip's bride. He and she lived together as man and wife barely three years. Nothing

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remains to prove that she was either of assistance to him or the contrary. After his death she contracted a secret marriage with Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex; and when she lost this second husband on the scaffold, she adopted the Catholic religion and became the wife of Lord Clanricarde. In this series of events I can see nothing to her discredit, considering the manners of that century. Her daughter by Philip, it is known, made a brilliant marriage with the Earl of Rutland. Her own repeated nuptials may be taken to prove her personal attractiveness. Sir Philip Sidney, who must have been intimately acquainted with her character, chose her for his wife while his passion for Penelope Devereux had scarcely cooled; and he did so without the inducements which wealth or brilliant fortunes might have offered.

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CHAPTER VI.

"ASTROPHEL AND STELLA."

AMONG Sidney's miscellaneous poems there is a lyric, which has been supposed, not without reason, I think, to express his feelings upon the event of Lady Penelope Devereux's marriage to Lord Rich.

"Ring out your bells, let mourning shows be spread :

For Love is dead :

All love is dead, infected

With plague of deep disdain :

Worth, as naught worth, rejected,

And faith fair scorn doth gain.

From so ungrateful fancy,

From such a female frenzy,

From them that use men thus,

Good Lord, deliver us !

"Weep, neighbours, weep ; do you not hear it said

That Love is dead ?

His death-bed, peacock's folly ;

His winding-sheet is shame ;

His will, false-seeming holy ;

His sole executor, blame.

From so ungrateful fancy,

From such a female frenzy,

From them that use men thus,

Good Lord, deliver us !

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"Alas! I lie: rage hath this error bred;
 Love is not dead;
 Love is not dead, but sleepeth
 In her unmatched mind,
 Where she his counsel keepeth
 Till due deserts she find.
 Therefore from so vile fancy,
 To call such wit a frenzy,
 Who Love can temper thus,
 Good Lord, deliver us!"

These stanzas sufficiently set forth the leading passion of *Astrophel and Stella*. That series of poems celebrates Sir Philip Sidney's love for Lady Rich after her marriage, his discovery that this love was returned, and the curb which her virtue set upon his too impetuous desire. Before the publication of Shakespeare's sonnets, these were undoubtedly the finest love poems in our language; and though exception may be taken to the fact that they were written for a married woman, their purity of tone and philosophical elevation of thought separate them from the vulgar herd of amatorious verses.

I have committed myself to the opinion that *Astrophel and Stella* was composed, if not wholly, yet in by far the greater part, after Lady Rich's marriage. This opinion being contrary to the judgment of excellent critics, and opposed to the wishes of Sidney's admirers, I feel bound to state my reasons. In the first place, then, the poems would have no meaning if they were written for a maiden. When a friend, quite early in the series, objects to Sidney that

"Desire
 Doth plunge my well-formed soul even in the mire
 Of sinful thoughts which do in ruin end,"

what significance could these words have if Stella were still

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free? Stella, throughout two-thirds of the series (after No. xxxiii.), makes no concealment of her love for Astrophel; and yet she persistently repels his ardent wooing. Why should she have done so, if she was at liberty to obey her father's death-bed wish and marry him? It may here be objected that the reasons for the breaking off of her informal engagement to Sidney are not known; both he and she were possibly conscious that the marriage could not take place. To this I answer that a wife's refusal of a lover's advances differs from a maiden's; and Stella's refusal in the poems is clearly, to my mind at least, that of a married woman. Sidney, moreover, does not hint at unkind fate or true love hindered in its course by insurmountable obstacles. He has, on the other hand, plenty to say about the unworthy husband, Stella's ignoble bondage, and Lord Rich's jealousy.

But, it has been urged, we are not sure that we possess the sonnets and songs of *Astrophel and Stella* in their right order. May we not conjecture that they were either purposely or unintelligently shuffled by the publisher, who surreptitiously obtained copies of the loose sheets? And again, will not close inspection of the text reveal local and temporal allusions, by means of which we shall be able to assign some of the more compromising poems to dates before Penelope's marriage?

There are two points here for consideration, which I will endeavour to treat separately. The first edition of *Astrophel and Stella* was printed in 1591 by Thomas Newman. Where this man obtained his manuscript does not appear. But in the dedication he says: "It was my fortune not many days since to light upon the famous device of *Astrophel and Stella*, which carrying the general commendation of all men of judgment, and being reported to

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be one of the rarest things that ever any Englishman set abroad, I have thought good to publish it." Further on he adds: "For my part I have been very careful in the printing of it, and whereas, being spread abroad in written copies, it had gathered much corruption by ill-writers; I have used their help and advice in correcting and restoring it to his first dignity that I know were of skill and experience in those matters." If these sentences have any meaning, it is that *Astrophel and Stella* circulated widely in manuscript, as a collected whole, and not in scattered sheets, before it fell into the hands of Newman. It was already known to the world as a "famous device," a "rare thing;" and throughout the dedication it is spoken of as a single piece. What strengthens this argument is that the Countess of Pembroke, in her lifetime, permitted *Astrophel and Stella* to be reprinted, together with her own corrected version of the *Arcadia*, without making any alteration in its arrangement.

If we examine the poems with minute attention we shall, I think, be led to the conclusion that they have not been shuffled, but that we possess them in the order in which Sidney wrote them. To begin with, the first nine sonnets form a kind of exordium. They set forth the object for which the whole series was composed, they celebrate Stella's mental and personal charms in general, they characterise Sidney's style and source of inspiration, and criticise the affectations of his contemporaries. In the second place, we find that many of the sonnets are written in sequence. I will cite, for example, Nos. 31-34, Nos. 38-40, Nos. 69-72, Nos. 87-92, Nos. 93-100. Had the order been either unintelligently or intentionally confused, it is not probable that these sequences would have survived entire. And upon this point I may notice that the interspersed lyrics occur in

their proper places, that is to say, in close connection with the subject-matter of accompanying sonnets. It may thirdly be observed that *Astrophel and Stella*, as we have it, exhibits a natural rhythm and development of sentiment, from admiration and chagrin, through expectant passion, followed by hope sustained at a high pitch of enthusiasm, down to eventual discouragement and resignation. As Thomas Nash said in his preface to the first edition: "The chief actor here is Melpomene, whose dusky robes dipped in the ink of tears as yet seem to drop when I see them near. The argument cruel chastity, the prologue hope, the epilogue despair." That the series ends abruptly, as though its author had abandoned it from weariness, should also be noticed. This is natural in the case of lyrics, which were clearly the outpouring of the poet's inmost feelings. When he had once determined to cast off the yoke of a passion which could not but have been injurious to his better self, *Astrophel* stopped singing. He was not rounding off a subject artistically contemplated from outside. There was no envoy to be written when once the aliment of love had been abandoned.

With regard to the second question I have raised, namely, whether close inspection will not enable us to fix dates for the composition of *Astrophel and Stella*, and thus to rearrange the order of its pieces, I must say that very few of the poems seem to me to offer any solid ground for criticism of this kind. Sonnets 24, 35, and 37 clearly allude to Stella's married name. Sonnet 41, the famous "Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance," may refer to Sidney's assault upon the Castle of Perfect Beauty; but since he was worsted in that mimic siege, this seems doubtful. The mention of "that sweet enemy France" might lead us equally well to assign it to the period of Anjou's visit. In

either case, the date would be after Stella's betrothal to Lord Rich. Sonnet 30, "Whether the Turkish new moon minded be," points to political events in Europe which were taking place after the beginning of 1581, and consequently about the period of Penelope's marriage. These five sonnets fall within the first forty-one of a series which numbers one hundred and eight. After them I can discover nothing but allusions to facts of private life, Astrophel's absence from the Court, Stella's temporary illness, a stolen kiss, a lover's quarrel.

In conclusion, I would fain point out that any one who may have composed a series of poems upon a single theme, extending over a period of many months, will be aware how impertinent it is for an outsider to debate their order. Nothing can be more certain, in such species of composition, than that thoughts once suggested will be taken up for more elaborate handling on a future occasion. Thus the contention between love and virtue, which occurs early in *Astrophel and Stella*, is developed at length towards its close. The Platonic conception of beauty is suggested near the commencement, and is worked out in a later sequence. Sometimes a motive from external life supplies the poet with a single lyric, which seems to interrupt the lover's monologue. Sometimes he strikes upon a vein so fruitful that it yields a succession of linked sonnets and intercalated songs.

I have attempted to explain why I regard *Astrophel and Stella* as a single whole, the arrangement of which does not materially differ from that intended by its author. I have also expressed my belief that it was written after Penelope Devereux became Lady Rich. This justifies me in saying, as I did upon a former page, that the exact date of her marriage seems to me no matter of vital importance in Sir

Philip Sidney's biography. My theory of the love which it portrays, is that this was latent up to the time of her betrothal, and that the consciousness of the irrevocable at that moment made it break into the kind of regretful passion which is peculiarly suited for poetic treatment. Stella may have wasted some of Philip's time; but it is clear that she behaved honestly, and to her lover helpfully, by the firm but gentle refusal of his overtures. Throughout these poems, though I recognise their very genuine emotion, I cannot help discerning the note of what may be described as poetical exaggeration. In other words, I do not believe that Sidney would in act have really gone so far as he professes to desire. On paper it was easy to demand more than seriously, in hot or cold blood, he would have attempted. To this artistic exaltation of a real feeling the chosen form of composition both traditionally and artistically lent itself. Finally, when all these points have been duly considered, we must not forget that society at that epoch was lenient, if not lax, in matters of the passions. Stella's position at Court, while she was the acknowledged mistress of Sir Charles Blount, suffices to prove this; nor have we any reason to suppose that Philip was, in this respect, more "a spirit without blot" than his contemporaries. Some of his death-bed meditations indicate sincere repentance for past follies; but that his liaison with Lady Rich involved nothing worse than a young man's infatuation, appears from the pervading tone of *Astrophel and Stella*. A motto might be chosen for it from the 66th sonnet:

"I cannot brag of word, much less of deed."

The critical cobwebs which beset the personal romance of *Astrophel and Stella* have now been cleared away. Readers of these pages know how I for one interpret its prob-

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lems. Whatever opinion they may form upon a topic which has exercised many ingenious minds, we are able at length to approach the work of art, and to study its beauties together. Regarding one point, I would fain submit a word of preliminary warning. However artificial and allusive may appear the style of these love poems, let us prepare ourselves to find real feeling and substantial thought expressed in them. It was not a mere rhetorical embroidery of phrases which moved downright Ben Jonson to ask :

"Hath not great Sidney Stella set
Where never star shone brighter yet?"

It was no flimsy string of pearled conceits which drew from Richard Crashaw in his most exalted moment that allusion to :

"Sydnaean showers
Of sweet discourse, whose powers
Can crown old Winter's head with flowers."

The elder poets, into whose ken *Astrophel and Stella* swam like a thing of unimagined and unapprehended beauty, had no doubt of its sincerity. The quaintness of its tropes, and the condensation of its symbolism were proofs to them of passion stirring the deep soul of a finely-gifted, highly-educated man. They read it as we read *In Memoriam*, acknowledging some obscure passages, recognising some awkwardness of incoherent utterance, but taking these on trust as evidences of the poet's heart too charged with stuff for ordinary methods of expression. What did Shakespeare make Achilles say ?

"My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred,
And I myself see not the bottom of it."

Charles Lamb puts this point well. "The images which

lie before our feet (though by some accounted the only natural) are least natural for the high Sydnaean love to express its fancies. They may serve for the love of Tibullus, or the dear author of the *Schoolmistress*; for passions that weep and whine in elegies and pastoral ballads. I am sure Milton (and Lamb might have added Shakespeare) never loved at this rate."

The forms adopted by Sidney in his *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets are various; but none of them correspond exactly to the Shakespearian type—four separate quatrains clinched with a final couplet. He adheres more closely to Italian models, especially in his handling of the octave; although we find only two specimens (Nos. 29, 94) of the true Petrarchan species in the treatment of the sextet. Sidney preferred to close the stanza with a couplet. The best and most characteristic of his compositions are built in this way: two quatrains upon a pair of rhymes, arranged as *a, b, b, a, a, b, b, a*; followed by a quatrain *c, d, c, d*, and a couplet *e, e*. The pauses frequently occur at the end of the eighth line, and again at the end of the eleventh, so that the closing couplet is not abruptly detached from the structure of the sextet. It will be observed from the quotations which follow that this, which I indicate as the most distinctively Sidneyan type, is by no means invariable. To analyse each of the many schemes under which his sonnets can be arranged, would be unprofitable in a book which does not pretend to deal technically with this form of stanza. Yet I may add that he often employs a type of the sextet, which is commoner in French than in Italian or English poetry, with this rhyming order: *c, c, d, e, e, d*. I have counted twenty of this sort.

The first sonnet, which is composed in lines of twelve syllables, sets forth the argument:

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"Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
 That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
 Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
 Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
 Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,
 Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burned brain.
 But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
 Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame study's blows;
 Another's feet still seemed but stranger's in my way.
 Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
 Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite—
 'Fool,' said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write!'"

This means that Sidney's love was sincere; but that he first sought expression for it in phrases studied from famous models. He wished to please his lady, and to move her pity. His efforts proved ineffectual, until the Muse came and said: "Look in thy heart and write." Like Dante, Sidney then declared himself to be one:

"Che quando,
 Amore spira, noto; ed a quel modo
 Ch'ei detta dentro, vo significando."

Purg. 24. 52.

"Love only reading unto me this art."

Astrophel and Stella, sonnet 28.

The 3d, 6th, 15th, and 28th sonnets return to the same point. He takes poets to task, who

'With strange similes enrich each line,
 Of herbs or beasts which Ind or Afric hold."

(No. 3.)

He describes how

"Some one his song in Jove, and Jove's strange tales attires,
 Bordered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden rain;

Another, humbler wit, to shepherd's pipe retires,
Yet hiding royal blood full oft in rural vein."

(No. 6.)

He inveighs against

"You that do search for every purling spring
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows;
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring;
Ye that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows;
You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes,
With new-born sighs, and denized wits do sing."

(No. 15.)

He girds no less against

"You that with allegory's curious frame
Of other's children changelings use to make."

(No. 28.)

All these are on the wrong tack. Stella is sufficient source of inspiration for him, for them, for every singer. This theoretical position does not, however, prevent him from falling into a very morass of conceits, of which we have an early example in the 9th sonnet. Marino could scarcely have executed variations more elaborate upon the single theme:

"Queen Virtue's Court, which some call Stella's face."

I may here state that I mean to omit those passages in *Astrophel and Stella* which strike me as merely artificial. I want, if possible, to introduce readers to what is perennially and humanly valuable in the poetical record of Sir Philip Sidney's romance. More than enough will remain of emotion simply expressed, of deep thought pithily presented, to fill a longer chapter than I can dedicate to his book of the heart.

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(No. 6.)

The 2d sonnet describes the growth of Sidney's passion. Love, he says, neither smote him at first sight, nor aimed an upward shaft to pierce his heart on the descent.¹ Long familiarity made him appreciate Stella. Liking deepened into love. Yet at the first he neglected to make his love known. Now, too late, he finds himself hopelessly enslaved when the love for a married woman can yield only torment.

"Not at first sight, nor with a dribbèd shot,
Love gave the wound, which, while I breathe will bleed;
But known worth did in mine-of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
I saw and liked; I liked, but lovèd not;
I loved, but straight did not what Love decreed:
At length to Love's decrees I forced agreed,
Yet with repining at so partial lot.
Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone; and now, like slave-born Muscovite,
I call it praise to suffer tyranny;
And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While with a feeling skill I paint my hell."

(No. 15.)

(No. 28.)

In the 4th and 5th sonnets two themes are suggested, which, later on, receive fuller development. The first is the contention between love and virtue; the second is the Platonic conception of beauty as a visible image of virtue. The latter of these motives is thus tersely set forth in sonnet 25:

"The wisest scholar of the wight most wise
By Phoebus' doom, with sugared sentence says

¹ This, at least, is how I suppose we ought to interpret the word *dribbed*. In Elizabethan English this seems to have been technically equivalent to what in archery is now called *elevating* as opposed to *shooting point blank*.

That virtue, if it once met with our eyes,
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise."

Here, at the commencement of the series, Sidney rather plays with the idea than dwells upon it:

"True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed.
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country move;
True, and yet true—that I must Stella love." (No. 5.)

In the 10th sonnet he opens a dispute with Reason, which also is continued at intervals throughout the series:

"I rather wished thee climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heaven's course or heaven's inside to see;
Why should'st thou toil our thorny soil to till?
Leave sense, and those which sense's objects be;
Deal thou with powers of thoughts, leave Love to Will." (No. 10.)

The next explains how Cupid has taken possession of Stella's person; only the fool has neglected to creep into her heart. The 12th expands this theme, and concludes thus:

"Thou countest Stella thine, like those whose powers
Having got up a breach by fighting well,
Cry 'Victory! this fair day all is ours!'
O no; her heart is such a citadel,
So fortified with wit, stored with disdain,
That to win it is all the skill and pain." (No. 12.)

At this point, then, of Astrophel's love-diary, Stella still held her heart inviolate, like an acropolis which falls not with the falling of the outworks. In the 14th he replies

to a friend who expostulates because he yields to the sinful desire for a married woman :

"If that be sin which doth the manners frame,
Well stayed with truth in word and faith of deed,
Ready of wit and fearing naught but shame ;
If that be sin which in fixed hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastity ;
Then love is sin, and let me sinful be." (No. 14.)

The 16th has one fine line. At first Sidney had trifled with love :

"But while I thus with this young lion played,"

I fell, he says, a victim to Stella's eyes. The 18th bewails his misemployed manhood, somewhat in Shakespeare's vein :

"My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys ;
My wit doth strive these passions to defend,
Which, for reward, spoil it with vain annoys." (No. 18.)

The 21st takes up the same theme, and combines it with that of the 14th :

"Your words, my friend, right healthful caustics, blame
My young mind marred."

It is clear that Stella's love was beginning to weigh heavily upon his soul. Friends observed an alteration in him, and warned him against the indulgence of anything so ruinous as this passion for a woman who belonged to another. As yet their admonitions could be entertained and playfully put by. Sidney did not feel himself irrevocably engaged. He still trifled with love as a pleasant episode in life, a new and radiant experience. At this point two well-composed sonnets occur, which show how he be-

haved before the world's eyes with the burden of his nascent love upon his heart :

“The curious wits, seeing dull pensiveness
 Bearing itself in my long-settled eyes,
 Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
 With idle pains and missing aim do guess.
 Some, that know how my spring I did address,
 Deem that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies ;
 Others, because the prince of service tries,
 Think that I think state errors to redress.
 But harder judges judge ambition's rage,
 Scourge of itself, still climbing slippery place,
 Holds my young brain captived in golden cage.
 O fools, or over-wise ! alas, the race
 Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start
 But only Stella's eyes and Stella's heart.”

(No. 23.)

“Because I oft in dark abstracted guise
 Seem most alone in greatest company,
 With dearth of words or answers quite awry
 To them that would make speech of speech arise ;
 They deem, and of their doom the rumour flies,
 That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie
 So in my swelling breast, that only I
 Fawn on myself and others do despise.
 Yet pride, I think, doth not my soul possess,
 Which looks too oft in his unflattering glass ;
 But one worse fault, ambition, I confess,
 That makes me oft my best friends overpass,
 Unseen, unheard, while thought to highest place
 Bends all his powers—even unto Stella's grace.”

(No. 27.)

Now, too, begin the series of plays upon the name Rich, and invectives against Stella's husband. It seems certain that Lord Rich was not worthy of his wife. Sidney had an unbounded contempt for him. He calls him “rich fool” and “lout,” and describes Stella's bondage to him as

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"a foul yoke." Yet this disdain, however rightly felt, ought not to have found vent in such sonnets as Nos. 24 and 78. The latter degenerates into absolute offensiveness, when, after describing the *faux jaloux* under a transparent allegory, he winds up with the question :

"Is it not evil that such a devil wants horns?"

The first section of *Astrophel and Stella* closes with sonnet 30. Thus far Sidney has been engaged with his poetical exordium. Thus far his love has been an absorbing pastime rather than the business of his life. The 31st sonnet preludes, with splendid melancholy, to a new and deeper phase of passion :

(No. 23.)

"With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies!
 How silently, and with how wan a face!
 What, may it be that even in heavenly place
 That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
 Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes
 Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
 I read it in thy looks; thy languished grace
 To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.
 Then, even of fellowship, O moon, tell me,
 Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
 Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
 Do they above love to be loved, and yet
 Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
 Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?"

(No. 27.)

Sidney's thoughts, throughout these poems, were often with the night; far oftener than Petrarch's or than Shakespeare's. In the course of our analysis, we shall cull many a meditation belonging to the hours before the dawn, and many a pregnant piece of midnight imagery. What can be more quaintly accurate in its condensed metaphors than the following personification of dreams?—

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“Morpheus, the lively son of deadly sleep,
 Witness of life to them that living die,
 A prophet oft, and oft an history,
 A poet eke, as humours fly or creep.” (No. 32.)

In the 33d sonnet we find the first hint that Stella might have reciprocated Astrophel's love :

“I might, unhappy word, woe me, I might !
 And then would not, or could not, see my bliss :
 Till now, wrapped in a most infernal night,
 I find how heavenly day, wretch, I did miss.
 Heart, rend thyself ; thou dost thyself but right !
 No lovely Paris made thy Helen his ;
 No force, no fraud robbed thee of thy delight,
 Nor fortune of thy fortune author is !
 But to myself myself did give the blow,
 While too much wit, forsooth, so troubled me,
 That I respects for both our sakes must show :
 And yet could not, by rising morn foresee
 How fair a day was near : O punished eyes,
 That I had been more foolish or more wise !” (No. 33.)

This sonnet has generally been taken to refer to Sidney's indolence before the period of Stella's marriage ; in which case it expands the line of No. 2 :

“I loved, but straight did not what Love decrees.”

It may, however, have been written upon the occasion of some favourable chance which he neglected to seize ; and the master phrase of the whole composition, “ respects for both our sakes,” rather points to this interpretation. We do not know enough of the obstacles to Sidney's match with Penelope Devereux to be quite sure whether such “ respects ” existed while she was at liberty.

There is nothing now left for him but to vent his regrets

and vain longings in words. But what are empty words,
what consolation can they bring?

"And, ah, what hope that hope should once see day,
Where Cupid is sworn page to chastity?" (No. 35.)

Each day Stella makes new inroads upon the fortress of
his soul.

"Through my long-battered eyes
Whole armies of thy beauties entered in:
And there long since, love, thy lieutenant lies." (No. 36.)

Stella can weep over tales of unhappy lovers she has never
known. Perhaps if she could think his case a fable, she
might learn to pity him:

"Then think, my dear, that you in me do read
Of lover's ruin some thrice-sad tragedy.
I am not I; pity the tale of me!" (No. 45.)

He entreats her not to shun his presence or withdraw the
heaven's light of her eyes:

"Soul's joy, bend not those morning stars from me,
Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might!"

Nay, let her gaze upon him, though that splendour should
wither up his life:

"A kind of grace it is to kill with speed." (No. 48.)

He prays to her, as to a deity raised high above the stress
and tempest of his vigilant desires:

"Alas, if from the height of virtue's throne
Thou canst vouchsafe the influence of a thought
Upon a wretch that long thy grace hath sought,
Weigh then how I by thee am overthrown!" (No. 40.)

It is here, too, that the pathetic outcry, "my mind, now
of the basest," now (that is) of the lowest and most hum-

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bled, is forced from him. Then, returning to the theme of Stella's unconquerable virtue, he calls her eyes

"The schools where Venus hath learned chastity." (No. 42.)

From the midst of this group shine forth, like stars, two sonnets of pure but of very different lustre :

"Come, sleep! O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
 The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
 The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
 Th' indifferent judge between the high and low!
 With shield of proof shield me from out the press
 Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw;
 O make in me those civil wars to cease;
 I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
 Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
 A chamber deaf of noise and blind of light,
 A rosy garland and a weary head;
 And if these things, as being thine in right,
 Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
 Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see." (No. 39.)

"Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance
 Guided so well that I obtained the prize,
 Both by the judgment of the English eyes
 And of some sent from that sweet enemy France;
 Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance,
 Town-folks my strength; a daintier judge applies
 His praise to sleight which from good use doth rise;
 Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
 Others, because of both sides I do take
 My blood from them who did excel in this,
 Think nature me a man-at-arms did make.
 How far they shot awry! the true cause is,
 Stella looked on, and from her heavenly face
 Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race." (No. 41.)

Sometimes he feels convinced that this passion will be his ruin, and strives, but strives in vain as yet, against it:

"Virtue, awake! Beauty but beauty is;
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Leave following that which it is gain to miss.
Let her go! Soft, but here she comes! Go to,
Unkind, I love you not! O me, that eye
Doth make my heart to give my tongue the lie!"

(No. 47.)

Sometimes he draws strength from the same passion; at another time the sight of Stella well-nigh unnerves his trained bridle-hand, and suspends his lance in rest. This from the tilting-ground is worth preserving:

"In martial sports I had my cunning tried,
And yet to break more staves did me address,
While with the people's shouts, I must confess,
Youth, luck, and praise even filled my veins with pride;
When Cupid, having me, his slave, descried
In Mars's livery prancing in the press,
'What now, Sir Fool!' said he: I would no less:
'Look here, I say!' I looked, and Stella spied,
Who hard by made a window send forth light.
My heart then quaked, then dazzled were mine eyes;
One hand forgot to rule, th' other to fight,
Nor trumpet's sound I heard nor friendly cries:
My foe came on, and beat the air for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see."

(No. 53.)

The quaint author of the *Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney*, prefixed to the *Arcadia*, relates how: "many nobles of the female sex, venturing as far as modesty would permit, to signify their affections unto him; Sir Philip will not read the characters of their love, though obvious to every eye." This passage finds illustration in the next sonnet:

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"Because I breathe not love to every one,
 Nor do not use set colours for to wear,
 Nor nourish special locks of vowèd hair,
 Nor give each speech a full point of a groan ;
 The courtly nymphs, acquainted with the moan
 Of them which in their lips love's standard bear,
 'What he!' say they of me: 'now I dare swear
 He cannot love; no, no, let him alone !'
 And think so still, so Stella know my mind !
 Profess indeed I do not Cupid's art :
 But you, fair maids, at length this true shall find,
 That his right badge is but worn in the heart :
 Dumb swans, not chattering pies, do lovers prove ;
 They love indeed who quake to say they love."

(No. 54.)

Up to this point Stella has been Sidney's saint, the
 adored object, remote as a star from his heart's sphere.
 Now at last she confesses that she loves him. But her
 love is of pure and sisterly temper; and she mingles its
 avowal with noble counsels, little to his inclination.

"Late tired with woe, even ready for to pine
 With rage of love, I called my love unkind ;
 She in whose eyes love, though unfelt, doth shine,
 Sweet said that I true love in her should find.
 I joyed ; but straight thus watered was my wine :
 That love she did, but loved a love not blind ;
 Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline
 From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind ;
 And therefore by her love's authority
 Willed me these tempests of vain love to fly,
 And anchor fast myself on virtue's shore.
 Alas, if this the only metal be
 Of love new-coined to help my beggary,
 Dear, love me not, that you may love me more !"

(No. 62.)

His heated senses rebel against her admonitions :

"No more, my dear, no more these counsels try;
 O give my passions leave to run their race;
 Let fortune lay on me her worst disgrace;
 Let folk o'ercharged with brain against me cry;
 Let clouds bedim my face, break in mine eye;
 Let me no steps but of lost labour trace;
 Let all the earth with scorn recount my case;
 But do not will me from my love to fly!" (No. 64.)

Then he seeks relief in trifles. Playing upon his own coat of arms ("or, a pheon azure"), he tells Love how he nursed him in his bosom, and how they both must surely be of the same lineage:

"For when, naked boy, thou couldst no harbour find
 In this old world, grown now so too-too wise,
 I lodged thee in my heart, and being blind
 By nature born, I gave to thee mine eyes . . .
 Yet let this thought thy tigrish courage pass,
 That I perhaps am somewhat kin to thee;
 Since in thine arms, if learned fame truth hath spread,
 Thou bear'st the arrow, I the arrow head." (No. 65.)

Stella continues to repress his ardour:

"I cannot brag of word, much less of deed . . .
 Desire still on stilts of fear doth go." (No. 66.)

Yet ~~once~~ she blushed when their eyes met; and her blush "guilty seemed of love." Therefore he expostulates with her upon her cruelty:

"Stella, the only planet of my light,
 Light of my life, and life of my desire,
 Chief good whereto my hope doth only aspire,
 World of my wealth, and heaven of my delight;
 Why dost thou spend the treasures of thy sprite,
 With voice more fit to wed Amphion's lyre,
 Seeking to quench in me the noble fire
 Fed by thy worth and kindled by thy sight?" (No. 68.)

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No. 62.)

Suddenly, to close this contention, we find him at the height of his felicity. Stella has relented, yielding him the kingdom of her heart, but adding the condition that he must love, as she does, virtuously :

“ O joy too high for my low style to show !
 O bliss fit for a nobler state than me !
 Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
 What oceans of delight in me do flow !
 My friend, that oft saw through all masks my woe,
 Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee :
 Gone is the winter of my misery ;
 My spring appears ; O see what here doth grow !
 For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
 Of her high heart given me the monarchy ;
 I, I, O I, may say that she is mine !
 And though she give but thus conditionally,
 This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
 No kings be crowned but they some covenants make.”

(No. 69.)

Now, the stanzas which have so long eased his sadness, shall be turned to joy :

“ Sonnets be not bound prentice to annoy ;
 Trebles sing high, so well as basses deep ;
 Grief but Love's winter-livery is ; the boy
 Hath cheeks to smile, so well as eyes to weep.”

And yet, with the same breath, he says :

“ Wise silence is best music unto bliss.” (No. 70.)

In the next sonnet he shows that Stella's virtuous conditions do not satisfy. True it is that whoso looks upon her face,

“ There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
 Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
 Of reason.
 But, ah, desire still cries : Give me some food !” (No. 71.)

Farewell then to desire :

" Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure love that I
One from the other scarcely can descry,
While each doth blow the fire of my heart;
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part." (No. 72.)

It is characteristic of the fluctuations both of feeling and circumstance, so minutely followed in Astrophel's love-diary, that, just at this moment, when he has resolved to part with desire, he breaks out into this jubilant song upon the stolen kiss :

" Have I caught my heavenly jewel,
Teaching sleep most fair to be !
Now will I teach her that she,
When she wakes, is too-too cruel.

" Since sweet sleep her eyes hath charmèd,
The two only darts of Love,
Now will I with that boy prove
Some play while he is disarmèd.

" Her tongue, waking, still refuseth,
Giving frankly niggard no :
Now will I attempt to know
What no her tongue, sleeping, useth.

" See the hand that, waking, guardeth,
Sleeping, grants a free resort :
Now will I invade the fort ;
Cowards Love with loss rewardeth.

" But, O fool, think of the danger
Of her high and just disdain !
Now will I, alas, refrain :
Love fears nothing else but anger.

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“ Yet those lips, so sweetly swelling,
Do invite a stealing kiss :
Now will I but venture this ;
Who will read, must first learn spelling.

“ Oh, sweet kiss ! but ah, she’s waking ;
Lowering beauty chastens me :
Now will I for fear hence flee ;
Fool, more fool, for no mere taking !”

Several pages are occupied with meditations on this lucky kiss. The poet’s thoughts turn to alternate ecstasy and wantonness.

“ I never drank of Aganippe’s well,
Nor ever did in shade of Tempe sit,
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell ;
Poor layman I, for sacred rites unfit !

“ How falls it then that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak ; and what I speak doth flow
In verse, and that my verse test wits doth please ?”

The answer of course is :

“ Thy lips are sweet, inspired with Stella’s kiss.” (No. 74.)

In this mood we find him praising Edward IV., who risked his kingdom for Lady Elizabeth Grey.

“ Of all the kings that ever here did reign,
Edward, named fourth, as first in praise I name ;
Not for his fair outside, nor well-lined brain,
Although less gifts imp feathers oft on fame :
Nor that he could, young-wise, wise-valiant, frame
His sire’s revenge, joined with a kingdom’s gain ;
And gained by Mars, could yet mad Mars so tame
That balance weighed what sword did late obtain :

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Nor that he made the flower-de-luce so 'fraid,
 Though strongly hedged of bloody lions' paws,
 That witty Lewis to him a tribute paid :
 Not this, not that, nor any such small cause ;
 But only for this worthy knight durst prove
 To lose his crown rather than fail his love." (No. 75.)

A sonnet on the open road, in a vein of conceits worthy of Philostratus, closes the group inspired by Stella's kiss :

"High way, since you my chief Parnassus be,
 And that my Muse, to some ears not unsweet,
 Tempers her words to trampling horse's feet
 More oft than to a chamber-melody :
 Now blessèd you bear onward blessèd me
 To her, where I my heart, safe-left shall meet,
 My Muse and I must you of duty greet
 With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
 Be you still fair, honoured by public heed ;
 By no encroachment wronged, nor time forgot ;
 Nor blamed for blood, nor shamed for sinful deed ;
 And that you know I envy you no lot
 Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss—
 Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss." (No. 84.)

And now a change comes over the spirit of Sidney's dream. It is introduced, as the episode of the stolen kiss was, by a song. We do not know on what occasion he may have found himself alone with Stella at night, when her husband's jealousy was sleeping, the house closed, and her mother in bed. But the lyric refers, I think, clearly to some real incident—perhaps at Leicester House :

"Only joy, now here you are
 Fit to hear and ease my care,
 Let my whispering voice obtain
 Sweet reward for sharpest pain ;
 Take me to thee and thee to me :—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

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"Night hath closed all in her cloak,
 Twinkling stars love-thoughts provoke;
 Danger hence, good care doth keep;
 Jealousy himself doth sleep:
 Take me to thee and thee to me:—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"Better place no wit can find
 Cupid's knot to loose or bind;
 These sweet flowers, our fine bed, too
 Us in their best language woo:
 Take me to thee and thee to me:—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"This small light the moon bestows,
 Serves thy beams but to disclose;
 So to raise my hap more high,
 Fear not else; none can us spy:
 Take me to thee and thee to me:—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"That you heard was but a mouse;
 Dumb sleep holdeth all the house;
 Yet asleep, methinks they say,
 Young fools, take time while you may:
 Take me to thee and thee to me:—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"Niggard time threats, if we miss
 This large offer of our bliss,
 Long stay ere he grant the same:
 Sweet then, while each thing doth frame,
 Take me to thee and thee to me:—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be!'

"Your fair mother is a-bed,
 Candles out and curtains spread;
 She thinks you do letters write:
 Write, but first let me endite:

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Take me to thee and thee to me :—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Sweet, alas ! why strive you thus ?
 Concord better fitteth us ;
 Leave to Mars the strife of hands ;
 Your power in your beauty stands :
 Take me to thee and thee to me :—
 'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !'

"Woe to me ! and do you swear
 Me to hate ? but I forbear :
 Cursèd be my destinies all,
 That brought me so high to fall !
 Soon with my death I'll please thee :—
 "No, no, no, no, my dear, let be !"

It will be noticed that to all his pleadings, passionate or playful, and (it must be admitted) of very questionable morality, she returns a steadfast No ! This accounts for the altered tone of the next sonnet. In the 85th he had indulged golden, triumphant visions, and had bade his heart be moderate in the fruition of its bliss. Now he exclaims :

"Alas ! whence came this change of looks ? If I
 Have changed desert, let mine own conscience be
 A still-felt plague to self-condemning me ;
 Let woe gripe on my heart, shame load mine eye !"

(No. 86.)

He has pressed his suit too far, and Stella begins to draw back from their common danger. Five songs follow in quick succession, one of which prepares us for the *denouement* of the love-drama :

"In a grove most rich of shade,
 Where birds wanton music made,

May, then young, his pied weeds showing,
New-perfumed with flowers fresh growing:

“Astrophel with Stella sweet
Did for mutual comfort meet;
Both within themselves oppressèd,
But each in the other blessèd.

“Him great harms had taught much care,
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare;
But her sight his cares did banish,
In his sight her yoke did vanish.

“Wept they had, alas, the while;
But now tears themselves did smile,
While their eyes, by Love directed,
Interchangeably reflected.”

For a time the lovers sat thus in silence, sighing and gazing, until Love himself broke out into a passionate apostrophe from the lips of Astrophel:

“Grant, O grant! but speech, alas,
Fails me, fearing on to pass:
Grant, O me! what am I saying?
But no fault there is in praying.

“Grant, O dear, on knees I pray
(Knees on ground he then did stay)
That not I, but since I love you,
Time and place for me may move you.

“Never season was more fit;
Never room more apt for it;
Smiling air allows my reason;
These birds sing, ‘Now use the season.’

“This small wind, which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kiss;

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Each tree in his best attiring,
Sense of love to love inspiring.

"Love makes earth the water drink,
Love to earth makes water sink ;
And if dumb things be so witty,
Shall a heavenly grace want pity?"

To this and to yet more urgent wooing Stella replies in stanzas which are sweetly dignified, breathing the love she felt, but dutifully repressed.

"Astrophel, said she, my love,
Cease in these effects to prove ;
Now be still, yet still believe me,
Thy grief more than death would grieve me.

"If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me, fed with hellish anguish,
Joyless, hopeless, endless languish.

"If those eyes you praised be
Half so dear as you to me,
Let me home return stark blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder minded ;

"If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost placèd,
Be both wish and I defacèd.

"If more may be said, I say
All my bliss in thee I lay ;
If thou love, my love, content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee.

"Trust me, while I thee deny,
In myself the smart I try ;

Tyrant honour doth thus use thee,
Stella's self might not refuse thee.

"Therefore, dear, this no more move,
Lest, though I not leave thy love,
Which too deep in me is framèd,
I should blush when thou art namèd.

"Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him to [so?] passion rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken."

The next song records Astrophel's hard necessity of parting from Stella. But why—

"Why, alas, doth she thus swear
That she loveth me so dearly?"

The group of sonnets which these lyrics introduce lead up to the final rupture, not indeed of heart and will, but of imposed necessity, which separates the lovers. Stella throughout plays a part which compels our admiration, and Astrophel brings himself at length to obedience. The situation has become unbearable to her. She loves, and, what is more, she has confessed her love. But, at any price, for her own sake, for his sake, for honour, for duty, for love itself, she must free them both from the enchantment which is closing round them. Therefore the path which hitherto has been ascending through fair meadows to the height of rapture, now descends upon the other side. It is for Sidney a long road of sighs and tears, rebellions and heart-aches, a veritable *via dolorosa*, ending, however, in conquest over self and tranquillity of conscience. For, as he sang in happier moments:

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"For who indeed infelt affection bears,
 So captives to his saint both soul and sense,
 That, wholly hers, all selfness he forbears;
 Then his desires he learns, his life's course thence."
 (No. 61.)

In the hour of their parting Stella betrays her own emotion:

"Alas, I found that she with me did smart;
 I saw that tears did in her eyes appear."
 (No. 87.)

After this follow five pieces written in absence:

"Tush, absence! while thy mists eclipse that light,
 My orphan sense flies to the inward sight,
 Where memory sets forth the beams of love."
 (No. 88.)

"Each day seems long, and longs for long-stayed night;
 The night, as tedious, woos the approach of day:
 Tired with the dusty toils of busy day,
 Languished with horrors of the silent night,
 Suffering the evils both of day and night,
 While no night is more dark than is my day,
 Nor no day hath less quiet than my night."
 (No. 89.)

He gazes on other beauties; amber-coloured hair, milk-white hands, rosy cheeks, lips sweeter and redder than the rose.

"They please, I do confess, they please mine eyes;
 But why? because of you they models be,
 Models, such be wood-globes of glistening skies."
 (No. 91.)

A friend speaks to him of Stella:

"You say, forsooth, you left her well of late;—
 O God, think you *that* satisfies my care?
 I would know whether she did sit or walk;
 How clothed, how waited on; sighed she, or smiled;
 Whereof, with whom, how often did she talk;
 With what pastimes Time's journey she beguiled;

If her lips deigned to sweeten my poor name.—
Say all; and all well said, still say the same.”

(No. 92.)

Interpolated in this group is a more than usually fluent sonnet, in which Sidney disclaims all right to call himself a poet:

“Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips my history:
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
Nor so ambitious am I as to frame
A nest for my young praise in laurel-tree;
In truth I swear I wish not there should be
Graved in my epitaph a poet's name.
Nor, if I would, could I just title make
That any laud thereof to me should grow;
Without my plumes from other wings I take;
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
Since all my words thy beauty doth endite,
And love doth hold my hand and makes me write.”

(No. 90.)

The sonnets in absence are closed by a song, which, as usual, introduces a new motive. It begins “O dear life,” and indulges a far too audacious retrospect over the past happiness of a lover. If, as seems possible from an allusion in No. 84, he was indiscreet enough to communicate his poems to friends, this lyric may have roused the jealousy of Stella's husband and exposed her to hard treatment or reproaches. At any rate, something he had said or done caused her pain, and he breaks out into incoherent self-revilings:

“O fate, O fault, O curse, child of my bliss! . . .
Through me, wretch me, even Stella vexèd is . . .
I have (live I, and know this?) harmèd thee . . .
I cry thy sighs, my dear, thy tears I bleed.”

(No. 93.)

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Should any one doubt the sincerity of accent here, let him peruse the next seven sonnets, which are written in sequence upon the same theme.

"Grief, find the words; for thou hast made my brain
So dark with misty vapours which arise
From out thy heavy mould, that inbent eyes
Can scarce discern the shape of mine own pain." (No. 94.)

"Yet sighs, dear sighs, indeed true friends you are,
That do not leave your left friend at the worst;
But, as you with my breast I oft have nursed,
So, grateful now, you wait upon my care.

"Nay, Sorrow comes with such main rage that he
Kills his own children, tears, finding that they
By Love were made apt to consort with me:
Only, true sighs, you do not go away." (No. 95.)

The night is heavier, more irksome to him; and yet he finds in it the parallel of his own case:

"Poor Night in love with Phoebus' light,
And endlessly despairing of his grace." (No. 97.)

The bed becomes a place of torment:

"While the black horrors of the silent night
Paint woe's black face so lively to my sight,
That tedious leisure marks each wrinkled line." (No. 98.)

Only at dawn can he find ease in slumber. The sonnet, in which this motive is developed, illustrates Sidney's method of veiling definite and simple thoughts in abstruse and yet exact phrases. We feel impelled to say that there is something Shakespearean in the style. But we must remember that Shakespeare's sonnets were at this time locked up within his brain, as the flower is in the bud.

"When far-spent night persuades each mortal eye
 To whom nor art nor nature granteth light,
 To lay his then mark-wanting shafts of sight
 Closed with their quivers in sleep's armoury ;
 With windows ope then most my mind doth lie
 Viewing the shape of darkness, and delight
 Takes in that sad hue, which with the inward night
 Of his mazed powers keeps perfect harmony :
 But when birds charm, and that sweet air which is
 Morn's messenger with rose-enamelled skies
 Calls each wight to salute the flower of bliss ;
 In tomb of lids then buried are mine eyes,
 Forced by their lord who is ashamed to find
 Such light in sense with such a darkened mind." (No. 99.)

Two sonnets upon Stella's illness (to which I should be inclined to add the four upon this topic printed in Constable's *Diana*) may be omitted. But I cannot refrain from quoting the last song. It is in the form of a dialogue at night beneath Stella's window. Though apparently together at the Court, he had received express commands from her to abstain from her society; the reason of which can perhaps be found in No. 104. This sonnet shows that "envious wits" were commenting upon their intimacy; and Sidney had compromised her by wearing stars upon his armour. Anyhow he is now reduced to roaming the streets in darkness, hoping to obtain a glimpse of his beloved.

"Who is it that this dark night
 Underneath my window plaineth ?
 It is one who from thy sight
 Being, ah, exiled disdaineth
 Every other vulgar light.

"Why, alas, and are you he ?
 Be not yet those fancies changèd ?
 Dear, when you find change in me,

Though from me you be estrangèd,
Let my change to ruin be.

"Well, in absence this will die ;
Leave to see, and leave to wonder.
Absence sure will help, if I
Can learn how myself to sunder
From what in my heart doth lie.

"But time will these thoughts remove ;
Time doth work what no man knoweth.
Time doth as the subject prove ;
With time still the affection groweth
In the faithful turtle-dove.

"What if ye new beauties see ;
Will not they stir new affection ?
I will think they pictures be ;
Image-like of saints' perfection,
Poorly counterfeiting thee.

"But your reason's purest light
Bids you leave such minds to nourish.
Dear, do reason no such spite !
Never doth thy beauty flourish
More than in my reason's sight.

"But the wrongs Love bears will make
Love at length leave undertaking.
No ! the more fools it doth shake,
In a ground of so firm making
Deeper still they drive the stake.

"Peace, I think that some give ear ;
Come no more lest I get anger !
Bliss, I will my bliss forbear,
Fearing, sweet, you to endanger ;
But my soul shall harbour there.

“ Well, begone ; begone, I say ;
 Lest that Argus' eyes perceive you ?
 O unjust is fortune's sway,
 Which can make me thus to leave you ;
 And from louts to run away !”

A characteristic but rather enigmatical sonnet follows this lyric. It is another night scene. Sidney, watching from his window, just misses the sight of Stella as her carriage hurries by :

“ Cursed be the page from whom the bad torch fell ;
 Cursed be the night which did your strife resist ;
 Cursed be the coachman that did drive so fast.” (No. 105.)

Then *Astrophel and Stella* closes abruptly, with those disconnected sonnets, in one of which the word “despair” occurring justifies Nash's definition of “the epilogue, Despair” :

“ But soon as thought of thee breeds my delight,
 And my young soul flutters to thee his nest,
 Most rude Despair, my daily unbidden guest,
 Clips straight my wings, straight wraps me in his night.”
 (No. 108.)

Stella's prudent withdrawal of herself from Sidney's company begins to work with salutary effect upon his passion. As that cools or fades for want of nourishment, so the impulse to write declines ; and the poet's sincerity is nowhere better shown than in the sudden and ragged ending of his work. I doubt whether the two sonnets on Desire and Love, which Dr. Grosart has transferred from the Miscellaneous Poems and printed here as Nos. 109 and 110, were really meant to form part of *Astrophel and Stella*. They strike me as retrospective, composed in a mood of stern and somewhat bitter meditation on the past, and prob-

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ably after some considerable interval; yet the Latin epigraph attached to the second has the force of an envoy. Moreover, they undoubtedly represent the attitude of mind in which Sidney bade farewell to unhallowed love, and which enabled him loyally to plight his troth to Frances Walsingham. Therefore it will not be inappropriate to close the analysis of his love poetry upon this note. No one, reading them, will fail to be struck with their resemblance to Shakespeare's superb sonnets upon Lust and Death ("The expense of spirit" and "Poor soul, thou centre"), which are perhaps the two most completely powerful sonnets in our literature:

"Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare,
 Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scattered thought;
 Band of all evils; cradle of causeless care;
 Thou web of will whose end is never wrought!
 Desire, desire! I have too dearly bought
 With price of mangled mind thy worthless ware;
 Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought,
 Who shouldst my mind to higher things prepare.
 But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought;
 In vain thou mad'st me to vain things aspire;
 In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire:
 For virtue hath this better lesson taught—
 Within myself to seek my only hire,
 Desiring naught but how to kill desire.

"Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;
 Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
 Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
 To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be,
 Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,
 That doth but shine and give us sight to see.

O take fast hold ; let that light be thy guide
In this small course which birth draws out to death ;
And think how evil becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh heaven and comes of heavenly breath.
Then farewell, world ! thy uttermost I see :
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me !”

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CHAPTER VII.

"THE DEFENCE OF POESY."

FULKE GREVILLE, touching upon the *Arcadia*, says that Sidney "purposed no monuments of books to the world."

"If his purpose had been to leave his memory in books, I am confident, in the right use of logic, philosophy, history, and poesy, nay even in the most ingenious of mechanical arts he would have showed such tracts of a searching and judicious spirit as the professors of every faculty would have striven no less for him than the seven cities did to have Homer of their sept. But the truth is: his end was not writing, even while he wrote; nor his knowledge moulded for tables or schools; but both his wit and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinion, but in life and action, good and great."

"His end was not writing, even while he wrote." This is certain; the whole tenor of Sidney's career proves his determination to subordinate self-culture of every kind to the ruling purpose of useful public action. It will also be remembered that none of his compositions were printed during his lifetime or with his sanction. Yet he had received gifts from nature which placed him, as a critic, high above the average of his contemporaries. He was no mean poet when he sang as love dictated. He had acquired and assimilated various stores of knowledge. He possessed an

exquisite and original taste, a notable faculty for the marshalling of arguments, and a persuasive eloquence in exposition. These qualities inevitably found their exercise in writing; and of all Sidney's writings the one with which we have to deal now is the ripest.

Judging by the style alone, I should be inclined to place *The Defence of Poesy* among his later works. But we have no certain grounds for fixing the year of its composition. Probably the commonly accepted date of 1581 is the right one. In the year 1579 Stephen Gosson dedicated to Sidney, without asking his permission, an invective against "poets, pipers, players, and their excusers," which he called *The School of Abuse*. Spenser observes that Gosson "was for his labour scorned; if at least it lie in the goodness of that nature to scorn. Such folly is it not to regard aforehand the nature and quality of him to whom we dedicate our books." It is possible therefore that *The School of Abuse* and other treatises emanating from Puritan hostility to culture, suggested this Apology. Sidney rated poetry highest among the functions of the human intellect. His name had been used to give authority and currency to a clever attack upon poets. He felt the weight of argument to be on his side, and was conscious of his ability to conduct the cause. With what serenity of spirit, sweetness of temper, humour, and easy strength of style—at one time soaring to enthusiasm, at another playing with his subject,—he performed the task, can only be appreciated by a close perusal of the essay. It is indeed the model for such kinds of composition—a work which combines the quaintness and the blitheness of Elizabethan literature with the urbanity and reserve of a later period.

Sidney begins by numbering himself among "the paper-blurrers," "who, I know not by what mischance, in these

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my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation." Hence it is his duty "to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning, is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children." Underlying Sidney's main argument we find the proposition that to attack poetry is the same as attacking culture in general; therefore, at the outset, he appeals to all professors of learning: will they inveigh against the mother of arts and sciences, the "first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledge?" Musæus, Homer, and Hesiod lead the solemn pomp of the Greek writers. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in Italy, Gower and Chaucer in England came before prose-authors. The earliest philosophers, Empedocles and Parmenides, Solon and Tyrtæus, committed their metaphysical speculations, their gnomic wisdom, their martial exhortation, to verse. And even Plato, if rightly considered, was a poet: "in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin as it were, and beauty, depended most of poetry." Herodotus called his books by the names of the Muses: "both he and all the rest that followed him, either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm." They also put imaginary speeches into the mouths of kings and captains. The very names which the Greeks and Romans, "the authors of most of our sciences," gave to poets, show the estimation in which they held them. The Romans called the poet *vates*, or prophet; the Greeks ποιητής, or maker, a word, by the way, which coincides with English custom. What can be higher in the scale of human understanding than this faculty of

making? Sidney enlarges upon its significance, following a line of thought which Tasso summed up in one memorable sentence: "There is no Creator but God and the Poet."

He now advances a definition, which is substantially the same as Aristotle's: "Poesy is an art of imitation; that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end to teach and delight." Of poets there have been three general kinds: first, "they that did imitate the inconceivable excellences of God;" secondly, "they that deal with matter philosophical, either moral or natural or astronomical or historical;" thirdly, "right poets . . . which most properly do imitate, to teach and delight; and to imitate, borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range only, reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be." The preference given to the third kind of poets may be thus explained: The first group are limited to setting forth fixed theological conceptions; the second have their material supplied them by the sciences; but the third are the makers and creators of ideals for warning and example.

Poets may also be classified according to the several species of verse. But this implies a formal and misleading limitation. Sidney, like Milton and like Shelley, will not have poetry confined to metre: "apparelled verse being but an ornament, and no cause to poetry; since there have been many most excellent poets that have never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets." Xenophon's "Cyropædia," the "Theagenes and Chariclea" of Heliodorus, are cited as true poems; "and yet both these wrote in prose." "It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet; but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with

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that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by." Truly "the senate of poets have chosen verse as their fittest raiment;" but this they did, because they meant, "as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them." "Speech, next to reason, is the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality;" and verse "which most doth polish that blessing of speech," is, therefore, the highest investiture of poetic thought.

Having thus defined his conception of poetry, Sidney inquires into the purpose of all learning. "This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed; the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clay lodgings, can be capable of." All the branches of learning subserve the royal or architectonic science, "which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing, and not of well-knowing only." If then virtuous action be the ultimate object of all our intellectual endeavours, can it be shown that the poet contributes above all others to this exalted aim? Sidney thinks it can.

Omitting divines and jurists, for obvious reasons, he finds that the poet's only competitors are philosophers and historians. It therefore now behoves him to prove that poetry contributes more to the formation of character for virtuous action than either philosophy or history. The argument is skilfully conducted, and developed with nice art; but it amounts in short to this, that while philosophy is too abstract and history is too concrete, poetry takes the just path between these extremes, and combines their

methods in a harmony of more persuasive force than either. "Now doth the peerless poet perform both; for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it, by some one whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example." "Anger, the Stoics said, was a short madness; but let Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus; and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger than finding in the schoolmen his genius and difference?" Even Christ used parables and fables for the firmer inculcation of his divine precepts. If philosophy is too much occupied with the universal, history is too much bound to the particular. It dares not go beyond what was, may not travel into what might or should be. Moreover, "history being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness." It cannot avoid revealing virtue overwhelmed with calamity and vice in prosperous condition. Poetry labours not under the same restrictions. Her ideals, delightfully presented, entering the soul with the enchanting strains of music, "set the mind forward to that which deserves to be called and accounted good." In fine: "as virtue is the most excellent resting-place for all worldly learning to make his end of, so poetry, being the most familiar to teach it, and most princely to move towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman."

Sidney next passes the various species of poems in review: the pastoral; "the lamenting elegiac;" "the bitter but wholesome iambic;" the satiric; the comic, "whom naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made

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odious;" "the high and excellent tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue—that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants to manifest their tyrannical humours—that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilded roofs are builded;" the lyric, "who with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice giveth praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts—who giveth moral precepts and natural problems—who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God;" the epic or heroic, "whose very name, I think, should daunt all backbiters . . . which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry." He calls upon the detractors of poesy to bring their complaints against these several sorts, and to indicate in each of them its errors. What they may allege in disparagement, he meets with chosen arguments, among which we can select his apology for the lyric. "Certainly, I must confess my own barbarousness: I never heard the old-song of 'Percy and Douglas' that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil-apparelled in the dust and cobweb of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?"

Having reached this point, partly on the way of argument, partly on the path of appeal and persuasion, Sidney halts to sum his whole position up in one condensed paragraph:

"Since, then, poetry is of all human learnings the most ancient and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have

taken their beginnings ; since it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor barbarous nation is without it ; since both Roman and Greek gave such divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering, that where all other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only, only bringeth his own stuff, and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter for a conceit ; since neither his description nor end containeth any evil, the thing described cannot be evil ; since his effects be so good as to teach goodness, and delight the learners of it ; since therein (namely in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges) he doth not only far pass the historian, but, for instructing, is well nigh comparable to the philosopher ; for moving, leaveth him behind him ; since the Holy Scripture (wherein there is no uncleanness) hath whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it ; since all his kinds are not only in their united forms, but in their severed dissections fully commendable ; I think, and think I think rightly, the laurel crown appointed for triumphant captains, doth worthily, of all other learnings, honour the poet's triumph."

Objections remain to be combated in detail. Sidney chooses one first, which offers no great difficulty. The detractors of poetry gird at "rhyming and versing." He has already laid it down that "one may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry." But he has also shown why metrical language should be regarded as the choicest and most polished mode of speech. Verse, too, fits itself to music more properly than prose, and far exceeds it "in the knitting up of the memory." Nor is rhyme to be neglected, especially in modern metres ; seeing that it strikes a music to the ear. But the enemy advances heavier battalions. Against poetry he alleges (1) that there are studies upon which a man may spend his time more profitably ; (2) that it is the mother of lies ; (3) that it is the nurse of abuse, corrupting the fancy, enfeebling manli-

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ness, and instilling pestilent desires into the soul; (4) that Plato banished poets from his commonwealth.

These four points are taken seriatim, and severally answered. The first is set aside, as involving a begging of the question at issue. To the second Sidney replies "paradoxically, but truly I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar; and though he would, as a poet, can scarcely be a liar." It is possible to err, and to affirm falsehood, in all the other departments of knowledge; but "for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore nothing lieth." His sphere is not the region of ascertained fact, or of logical propositions, but of imagination and invention. He labours not "to tell you what is, or is not, but what should, or should not be." None is so foolish as to mistake the poet's world for literal fact. "What child is there, that cometh to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?" The third point is more weighty. Are poets blamable, in that they "abuse men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love?" Folk say "the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits; they say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets; the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress; and that even to the heroical Cupid hath ambitiously climbed." Here Sidney turns to Love, and, as though himself acknowledging that deity, invokes him to defend his own cause. Yet let us "grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault," let us "grant that lovely name of love to deserve all hateful reproaches," what have the adversaries gained? Surely they have not proved "that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry." "But what! shall the abuse of a thing make the right odious?" Does not law, does not physic, injure man every day by the abuse of ignorant

practisers? "Doth not God's Word abused breed heresy, and His name abused become blasphemy?" Yet these people contend that before poetry came to infect the English, "our nation had set their heart's delight upon action and not imagination, rather doing things worthy to be written than writing things fit to be done." But when was there that time, when the Albion nation was without poetry? Of a truth, this argument is levelled against all learning and all culture. It is an attack, worthy of Goths or Vandals, upon the stronghold of the intellect. As such, we might dismiss it. Let us, however, remember that "poetry is the companion of camps: I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier; but the quiddity of *ens* and *prima materia* will hardly agree with a corselet." Alexander on his Indian campaigns left the living Aristotle behind him, but slept with the dead Homer in his tent; condemned Callisthenes to death, but yearned for a poet to commemorate his deeds. Lastly, they advance Plato's verdict against poets. Plato, says Sidney, "I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence; and with good reason, since of all philosophers he is the most poetical." Having delivered this sly thrust, he proceeds: "first, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets." Next let us look into his writings. Has any poet authorised filthiness more abominable than one can find in the "Phaedrus" and the "Symposium?" "Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato doth banish them." It is in sooth one where the community of women is permitted; and "little should poetical sonnets be hurtful, when a man might have what woman he listed." After thus trifling with the subject, Sidney points out that Plato was not offended with poetry, but with the abuse of

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it. He objected to the crude theology and the monstrous ethics of the myth-makers. "So as Plato, banishing the abuse not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour to it, shall be our patron and not our adversary."

Once again he pauses, to recapitulate :

"Since the excellencies of poesy may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low creeping objections so soon trodden down ; it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine ; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage ; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit ; not banished, but honoured by Pláto ; let us rather plant more laurels for to ingarland the poets' heads (which honour of being laureate, as besides them only triumphant captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they ought to be held in) than suffer the ill-favoured breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the clear springs of poesy."

Then he turns to England. Why is it that England, "the mother of excellent minds, should be grown so hard a stepmother to poets?"

"Sweet poesy, that hath anciently had kings, emperors, senators, great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David, Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but to be poets : and of our nearer times, can present for her patrons, a Robert, King of Sicily ; the great King Francis of France ; King James of Scotland ; such cardinals as Bembus and Bibiena ; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon ; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and Scaliger ; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus ; so piercing wits as George Buchanan ; so grave counsellors as, besides many, but before all, that Hospital of France ; than whom, I think, that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgment more firmly builded upon virtue ; I say, these, with numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies, but to poetise for others' reading : that poesy, thus embraced in all other places, should only find, in our time, a hard welcome in England, I think the very earth laments it, and therefore decks our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed."

The true cause is that in England so many incapable folk write verses. With the exception of the *Mirror of Magistrates*, Lord Surrey's Lyrics, and *The Shepherd's Kalendar*, "I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them." At this point he introduces a lengthy digression upon the stage, which, were we writing a history of the English drama, ought to be quoted in full. It is interesting because it proves how the theatre occupied Sidney's thoughts; and yet he had not perceived that from the humble plays of the people an unrivalled flower of modern art was about to emerge. *The Defence of Poesy* was written before Marlowe created the romantic drama; before Shakespeare arrived in London. It was written in all probability before its author could have attended the representation of Greene's and Peele's best plays. *Gorboduc*, which he praises moderately and censures with discrimination, seemed to him the finest product of dramatic art in England, because it approached the model of Seneca and the Italian tragedians. For the popular stage, with its chaos of tragic and comic elements, its undigested farrago of romantic incidents and involved plots, he entertained the scorn of a highly-educated scholar and a refined gentleman. Yet no one, let us be sure, would have welcomed *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, *Volpone* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, more enthusiastically than Sidney, had his life been protracted through the natural span of mortality.

Having uttered his opinion frankly on the drama, he attacks the "courtesan-like painted affectation" of the English at his time. Far-fetched words, alliteration, euphuistic similes from stones and beasts and plants, fall under his honest censure. He mentions no man. But he is clearly aiming at the school of Lyly and the pedants; for he pertinent-

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ly observes: "I have found in divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning." Language should be used, not to trick out thoughts with irrelevant ornaments or to smother them in conceits, but to make them as clear and natural as words can do. It is a sin against our mother speech to employ these meretricious arts; for whoso will look dispassionately into the matter, shall convince himself that English, both in its freedom from inflections and its flexibility of accent, is aptest of all modern tongues to be the vehicle of simple and of beautiful utterance.

The peroration to *The Defence of Poesy* is an argument addressed to the personal ambition of the reader. It somewhat falls below the best parts of the essay in style, and makes no special claim on our attention. From the foregoing analysis it will be seen that Sidney attempted to cover a wide field, combining a philosophy of art with a practical review of English literature. Much as the Italians had recently written upon the theory of poetry, I do not remember any treatise which can be said to have supplied the material or suggested the method of this apology. England, of course, at that time was destitute of all but the most meagre textbooks on the subject. Great interest therefore attaches to Sidney's discourse as the original outcome of his studies, meditations, literary experience, and converse with men of parts. Though we may not be prepared to accept each of his propositions, though some will demur to his conception of the artist's moral aim, and others to his inclusion of prose fiction in the definition of poetry, while all will agree in condemning his mistaken dramatic theory, none can dispute the ripeness, mellowness, harmony, and felicity of mental gifts displayed in work at once so concise and so compendious. It is indeed a pity that English lit-

erature then furnished but slender material for criticism. When we remember that, among the poems of the English Renaissance, only Surrey's *Lyrics*, *Gorboduc*, the *Mirror of Magistrates*, and *The Shepherd's Kalendar* could be praised with candour (and I think Sidney was right in this judgment), we shall be better able to estimate his own high position, and our mental senses will be dazzled by the achievements of the last three centuries. Exactly three centuries have elapsed since Sidney fell at Zutphen; and who shall count the poets of our race, stars differing indeed in glory, but stars that stream across the heavens of song from him to us in one continuous galaxy?

Sir Philip Sidney was not only eminent as pleader, critic, and poet. He also ranked as the patron and protector of men of letters. "He was of a very munificent spirit," says Aubrey, "and liberal to all lovers of learning, and to those that pretended to any acquaintance with Parnassus; insomuch that he was cloyed and surfeited with the poetasters of those days." This sentence is confirmed by the memorial verses written on his death, and by the many books which were inscribed with his name. A list of these may be read in Dr. Zouch's *Life*. It is enough for our purpose to enumerate the more distinguished. To Sidney, Spenser dedicated the first fruits of his genius, and Hakluyt the first collection of his epoch-making *Voyages*. Henri Etienne, who was proud to call himself the friend of Sidney, placed his 1576 edition of the Greek Testament and his 1581 edition of Herodian under the protection of his name. Lord Brooke, long after his friend's death, dedicated his collected works to Sidney's memory.

Of all these tributes to his love of learning the most interesting in my opinion is that of Giordano Bruno. This Titan of impassioned speculation passed two years in Lon-

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don between 1583 and 1585. Here he composed, and here he printed, his most important works in the Italian tongue. Two of these he presented, with pompous commendatory epistles, to Sir Philip Sidney. They were his treatise upon Ethics, styled *Lo Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*, and his discourse upon the philosophic enthusiasm, entitled *Gli Eroici Furori*. That Bruno belonged to Sidney's circle, is evident from the graphic account he gives of a supper at Fulke Greville's house, in the dialogue called *La Cena delle Ceneri*. His appreciation of "the most illustrious and excellent knight's" character transpires in the following phrase from one of his dedications: "the natural bias of your spirit, which is truly heroical." Those who know what the word *eroica* implied for Bruno, not only of personal courage, but of sustained and burning spiritual passion, will appreciate this eulogy by one of the most penetrating and candid, as he was the most unfortunate of truth's martyrs. Had the proportions of my work justified such a digression, I would eagerly have collected from Bruno's Italian discourses those paragraphs which cast a vivid light upon literary and social life in England. But these belong rather to Bruno's than to Sidney's biography.

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CHAPTER VIII.

LAST YEARS AND DEATH.

AFTER Sidney's marriage there remained but little more than three years of life to him. The story of this period may be briefly told. Two matters of grave import occupied his mind. These were: first, the menacing attitude of Spain and the advance of the Counter-Reformation; secondly, a project of American Colonisation. The suspicious death of the Duke of Anjou, followed by the murder of the Prince of Orange in 1584, rendered Elizabeth's interference in the Low Countries almost imperative. Philip II., assisted by the powers of Catholicism, and served in secret by the formidable Company of Jesus, threatened Europe with the extinction of religious and political liberties. It was known that, sooner or later, he must strike a deadly blow at England. The Armada loomed already in the distance. But how was he to be attacked? Sidney thought that Elizabeth would do well to put herself at the head of a Protestant alliance against what Fulke Greville aptly styled the "masked triplicity between Spain, Rome, and the Jesuitical faction of France." He also strongly recommended an increase of the British navy and a policy of protecting the Huguenots in their French seaports. But he judged the Netherlands an ill-chosen field for fighting the main duel out with Spain. There, Philip was firmly seated in

well-furnished cities, where he could mass troops and munitions of war at pleasure. To maintain an opposition on the side of Holland was of course necessary. But the really vulnerable point in the huge Spanish empire seemed to him to be its ill-defended territory in the West Indies. Let then the Protestant League, if possible, be placed upon a firmer basis. Let war in the Low Countries be prosecuted without remission. But, at the same time, let the English use their strongest weapon, attack by sea. Descents might be made from time to time upon the Spanish ports, as Drake had already harried Vera Cruz, and was afterwards to fall on Cadiz. Buccaneers and filibustering expeditions against the Spanish fleets which brought back treasure across the Indian main, were not to be contemned. But he believed that the most efficient course would be to plant a colony upon the American continent, which should at the same time be a source of strength to England and a hostile outpost for incursions into the Spanish settlements. Fulke Greville has devoted a large portion of his *Life* to the analysis of Sidney's opinions on these subjects. He sums them up as follows: "Upon these and the like assumptions he resolved there were but two ways left to frustrate this ambitious monarch's designs. The one, that which diverted Hannibal, and by setting fire on his own house made him draw in his spirits to comfort his heart; the other, that of Jason, by fetching away his golden fleece and not suffering any one man quietly to enjoy that which every man so much affected."

In the autumn of 1584 Sidney sat again in the House of Commons, where he helped to forward the bill for Raleigh's expedition to Virginia. This in fact was an important step in the direction of his favourite scheme; for his view of the American colony was that it should be a real "plantation,

not like an asylum for fugitives, a *bellum piraticum* for banditti, or any such base *ramas* of people; but as an emporium for the confluence of all nations that love or profess any kind of virtue or commerce." Parliament next year had to take strong measures against the Jesuits, who were already fomenting secret conspiracies to dethrone or assassinate the queen. The session ended in March, and in April Raleigh started for the New World. Three months later Sidney received a commission to share the Mastership of the Ordnance with his uncle Warwick. He found that department of the public service in a lamentable plight, owing to Elizabeth's parsimony; and soon after his appointment, he risked her displeasure by firmly pressing for a thorough replenishment of the stores upon which England's efficiency as a belligerent would depend.

It was probably in this year that Sidney took up his pen to defend his uncle Leicester against the poisonous libel, popularly known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, and generally ascribed to the Jesuit Parsons. We possess the rough draft of his discourse, which proves convincingly that he at least was persuaded of the earl's innocence. He does not even deign to answer the charges of "dissimulation, hypocrisy, adultery, falsehood, treachery, poison, rebellion, treason, cowardice, atheism, and what not," except by a flat denial, and a contemptuous interrogation: "what is it else but such a bundle of railings, as if it came from the mouth of some half drunk scold in a tavern?" By far the larger portion of the defence is occupied with an elaborate exhibition of the pedigree and honours of the House of Dudley, in reply to the hint that Edmund, Leicester's grandfather, was basely born. Sidney, as we have seen, set great store on his own descent from the Dudleys, which he rated higher than his paternal ancestry; and this aspersion on their

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origin inspired him with unmeasured anger. At the close of the pamphlet he throws down the glove to his anonymous antagonist, and defies him to single combat. "And, from the date of this writing, imprinted and published, I will three months expect thine answer." Horace Walpole was certainly not justified in calling this spirited, but ill-balanced composition, "by far the best specimen of his abilities."

June 1585 marked an era in the foreign policy of Elizabeth. She received a deputation from the Netherlands, who offered her the sovereignty of the United Provinces if she would undertake their cause. This offer she refused. But the recent adhesion of the French Crown to what was called the Holy League, rendered it necessary that she should do something. Accordingly, she agreed to send 6000 men to the Low Countries, holding Flushing and Brill with the Castle of Rammekins in pledge for the repayment of the costs of this expedition. Sidney began now to be spoken of as the most likely governor of Flushing. But at this moment his thoughts were directed rather to the New World than to action in Flanders. We have already seen why he believed it best to attack Spain there. A letter written to him by Ralph Lane from Virginia echoes his own views upon this topic. The governor of the new plantation strongly urged him to head a force against what Greville called "that rich and desert West Indian mine." Passing by the islands of St. John and Hispaniola, Lane had observed their weakness. "How greatly a small force would garboil him here, when two of his most richest and strongest islands took such alarms of us, not only landing, but dwelling upon them, with only a hundred and twenty men, I refer it to your judgment." Sidney, moreover, had grown to distrust Burleigh's government of England.

"Nature," says Greville, "guiding his eyes first to his native country, he found greatness of worth and place counterpoised there by the arts of power and favour. The stirring spirits sent abroad as fuel, to keep the flame far off; and the effeminate made judges of dangers which they fear, and honour which they understand not." He saw "how the idle-censuring faction at home had won ground of the active adventurers abroad;" he perceived the queen's "governors to sit at home in their soft chairs, playing fast and loose with them that ventured their lives abroad." All these considerations put together made him more than lukewarm about the Netherlands campaign, and less than eager to take office under so egotistical an administration. It was his cherished scheme to join in some private enterprise, the object of which should be the enfeeblement of Spain and the strengthening of England beyond the Atlantic.

The thoughts which occupied his mind took definite shape in the summer of 1585. "The next step which he intended into the world was an expedition of his own projecting; wherein he fashioned the whole body, with purpose to become head of it himself. I mean the last employment but one of Sir Francis Drake to the West Indies." With these words Greville introduces a minute account of Sidney's part in that famous adventure. He worked hard at the project, stirring up the several passions which might induce men of various sympathies to furnish assistance by money or by personal participation.

"To martial men he opened wide the door of sea and land for fame and conquest. To the nobly ambitious, the far stage of America to win honour in. To the religious divines, besides a new apostolical calling of the lost heathen to the Christian faith, a large field of reducing poor Christians misled by the idolatry of Rome to their

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mother primitive church. To the ingeniously industrious, variety of natural riches for new mysteries and manufactures to work upon. To the merchant, with a simple people a fertile and unexhausted earth. To the fortune-bound, liberty. To the curious, a fruitful work of innovation. Generally, the word gold was an attractive adamant to make men venture that which they have in hope to grow rich by that which they have not."

Moreover he "won thirty gentlemen of great blood and state here in England, every man to sell one hundred pounds land" for fitting out a fleet. While firmly resolved to join the first detachment which should sail from Plymouth, he had to keep his plans dark; for the queen would not hear of his engaging in such ventures. It was accordingly agreed between him and Sir Francis that the latter should go alone to Plymouth, and that Sir Philip should meet him there upon some plausible excuse. When they had weighed anchor, Sidney was to share the chief command with Drake. Sir Francis in due course of time set off; and early in September he sent a message praying urgently for his associate's presence. It so happened that just at this time Don Antonio of Portugal was expected at Plymouth, and Philip obtained leave to receive him there. From this point I shall let Fulke Greville tell the story in his own old-fashioned language:—

"Yet I that had the honour, as of being bred with him from his youth, so now by his own choice of all England to be his loving and beloved Achates in this journey, observing the countenance of this gallant mariner more exactly than Sir Philip's leisure served him to do, after we were laid in bed acquainted him with my observation of the discountenance and depression which appeared in Sir Francis, as if our coming were both beyond his expectation and desire. Nevertheless that ingenuous spirit of Sir Philip's, though apt to give me credit, yet not apt to discredit others, made him suspend his own and labour to change or qualify by judgment; till within some few days

after, finding the ships neither ready according to promise, nor possibly to be made ready in many days, and withal observing some sparks of false fire breaking out from his yoke-fellow daily, it pleased him in the freedom of our friendship to return me my own stock with interest.

"All this while Don Antonio landed not; the fleet seemed to us, like the weary passengers' inn, still to go farther from our desires; letters came from the Court to hasten it away; but it may be the leaden feet and nimble thoughts of Sir Francis wrought in the day, and unwrought by night, while he watched an opportunity to discover us without being discovered.

"For within a few days after, a post steals up to the Court, upon whose arrival an alarm is presently taken: messengers sent away to stay us, or if we refused, to stay the whole fleet. Notwithstanding this first Mercury, his errand being partly advertised to Sir Philip beforehand, was intercepted upon the way; his letters taken from him by two resolute soldiers in mariners' apparel, brought instantly to Sir Philip, opened and read. The next was a more imperial mandate, carefully conveyed and delivered to himself by a peer of this realm; carrying with it in the one hand grace, the other thunder. The grace was an offer of an instant employment under his uncle, then going general into the Low Countries; against which as though he would gladly have demurred, yet the confluence of reason, transcendency of power, fear of staying the whole fleet, made him instantly sacrifice all these self-places to the duty of obedience."

In plain words, then, Sir Francis Drake, disliking the prospect of an equal in command, played Sir Philip Sidney false by sending private intelligence to Court. The queen expressed her will so positively that Sidney had to yield. At the same time it was settled that he should go into the Netherlands, under his uncle Leicester, holding her Majesty's commission as Governor of Flushing and Rammekins. By this rapid change of events his destiny was fixed. Drake set sail on the 14th of September. Two months later, on the 16th of November, Sidney left England for his post in the Low Countries. I ought here to add that

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at some time during this busy summer his daughter Elizabeth, afterwards Countess of Rutland, was born.

Sidney's achievements in the Netherlands, except as forming part of his short life, claim no particular attention. He was welcomed by Count Maurice of Nassau, the eldest son of William, Prince of Orange; and gleanings from letters of the time show that folk expected much from his activity and probity. But he enjoyed narrow scope for the employment of his abilities. Rammekins, the fortress which commanded Flushing, was inadequately furnished and badly garrisoned. The troops were insufficient, and so ill-paid that mutinies were always imminent. In one of his despatches, urgently demanding fresh supplies, he says: "I am in a garrison as much able to command Flushing as the Tower is to answer for London." The Dutch government did not please him: he found "the people far more careful than the government in all things touching the public welfare." With the plain speech that was habitual to him, he demanded more expenditure of English money. This irritated the queen, and gave his enemies at Court occasion to condemn him in his absence as ambitious and proud. He began to show signs of impatience with Elizabeth. "If her Majesty were the fountain, I would fear, considering what I daily find, that we should wax dry." This bitter taunt he vented in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham. Meanwhile the Earl of Leicester arrived upon the 10th of December, and made matters worse. He laid himself out for honours of all sorts, accepting the title of Governor-General over the United Provinces, and coquetting with some vague scheme of being chosen for their sovereign. Imposing but impotent, Leicester had no genius for military affairs. The winter of 1585-86 dragged through, with nothing memorable to relate.

The following season, however, was marked by several important incidents in Philip Sidney's private life. First, Lady Sidney joined her husband at Flushing. Then on the 5th of May Sir Henry Sidney died in the bishop's palace at Worcester. His body was embalmed and sent to Penshurst. His heart was buried at Ludlow; his entrails in the precincts of Worcester Cathedral. So passed from life Elizabeth's sturdy servant in Ireland and Wales; a man, as I conceive him, of somewhat limited capacity and stubborn temper, but true as steel, and honest in the discharge of very trying duties. Later in the same year, upon the 9th of August, Lady Mary Sidney yielded up her gentle spirit. Of her there is nothing to be written but the purest panegyric. Born of the noblest blood, surviving ambitious relatives who reached at royalty and perished, losing health and beauty in the service of an exacting queen, suffering poverty at Court, supporting husband and children through all trials with wise counsel and sweet hopeful temper, she emerges with pale lustre from all the actors of that time to represent the perfect wife and mother in a lady of unpretending, but heroic, dignity. Sidney would have been the poorer for the loss of these parents, if his own life had been spared. As it was, he survived his mother but two months.

In July he distinguished himself by the surprise and capture of the little town of Axel. Leicester rewarded him for this service with the commission of colonel. Elizabeth resented his promotion. She wished the colonelcy for Count Hohenlohe, or Hollock, a brave but drunken soldier. Walsingham wrote upon the occasion: "She layeth the blame upon Sir Philip, as a thing by him ambitiously sought. I see her Majesty very apt upon every light occasion to find fault with him." Ambition, not of the

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vaulting kind, which "overleaps itself," but of a steady, persistent, intellectual stamp, was, indeed, I think, the leading quality in Sidney's nature. From the courtiers of the period, the Leicesters, Oxfords, Ormonds, Hattons, and so forth, this mark of character honourably distinguished him. And, if he had but lived, Elizabeth, who judged her servants with some accuracy, might by judicious curbing and parsimonious encouragement have tempered the fine steel of his frailty into a blade of trenchant edge. There was nothing ignoble, nothing frivolous in his ambition. It was rather of such mettle as made the heroes of the commonwealth: pure and un-self-seeking, but somewhat acrid. And now he fretted himself too much because of evil-doers; impatiently demanded men and munitions from England; vented his bile in private letters against Leicester. Sidney was justified by events. The campaign dragged negligently on; and the Commander of the Forces paid more attention to banquets and diplomatic intrigues than to the rough work of war. But the tone adopted by him in his irritation was hardly prudent for so young and so comparatively needy a gentleman.

Whatever he found to blame in Leicester's conduct of affairs, Sidney did not keep aloof; but used every effort to inspire his uncle with some of his own spirit. At the end of August they were both engaged in reducing the little fort of Doesburg on the Yssel, which had importance as the key to Zutphen. It fell upon the 2d of September; and on the 13th Zutphen was invested—Lewis William of Nassau, Sir John Norris, and Sir Philip Sidney commanding the land-forces, and Leicester blockading the approach by water. The Duke of Parma, acting for Spain, did all he could to reinforce the garrison with men and provisions. News came upon the 21st to Leicester that a considerable

convoy was at Deventer waiting an opportunity to enter the town. He resolved to cut off these supplies, and fixed an early hour of the 22d, which was a Thursday, for this operation. We have a letter, the last which Sidney penned before his fatal wound, dated from the camp at Zutphen upon the morning of the engagement. It recommends Richard Smyth, "her Majesty's old servant," to Sir Francis Walsingham, and is one among several writings of the kind which show how mindful Sidney was of humble friends and people in distress. The 22d of September opened gloomily. So thick a mist covered the Flemish lowlands that a man could not see farther than ten paces. Sidney, leading a troop of two hundred horsemen, pushed his way up to the walls of Zutphen. Chivalrous punctilio caused him to be ill-defended, for meeting Sir William Pelham in light armour, he threw off his cuisses, and thus exposed himself to unnecessary danger. The autumn fog, which covered every object, suddenly dispersed; and the English now found themselves confronted by a thousand horsemen of the enemy, and exposed to the guns of the town. They charged, and Sidney's horse was killed under him. He mounted another, and joined in the second charge. Reinforcements came up, and a third charge was made, during which he received a wound in the left leg. The bullet, which some supposed to have been poisoned, entered above the knee, broke the bone, and lodged itself high up in the thigh. His horse took fright, and carried him at a gallop from the field. He kept his seat, however; and when the animal was brought to order, had himself carried to Leicester's station. On the way occurred the incident so well-known to every one who is acquainted with his name. "Being thirsty with excess of bleeding, he called for drink, which was presently brought him; but as he was putting

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the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along, who had eaten his last at the same feast, ghastly casting up his eyes at the bottle, which Sir Philip perceiving, took it from his head before he drank, and delivered it to the poor man, with these words, *Thy necessity is yet greater than mine.* And when he had pledged this poor soldier, he was presently carried to Arnheim."

At Arnheim he lay twenty-five days in the house of a lady named Gruithueisens. At first the surgeons who attended him had good hopes of his recovery. Ten days after the event Leicester wrote to Walsingham: "All the worst days be passed, and he amends as well as possible in this time." Friends were around him—his wife, his brothers Robert and Thomas, and the excellent minister, George Gifford, whom he sent for on the 30th. The treatment of the wound exposed him to long and painful operations, which he bore with a sweet fortitude that moved the surgeons to admiration. With Gifford and other godly men he held discourses upon religion and the future of the soul. He told Gifford that "he had walked in a vague course; and these words he spake with great vehemence both of speech and gesture, and doubled it to the intent that it might be manifest how unfeignedly he meant to turn more thoughts unto God than ever." It is said that he amused some hours of tedious leisure by composing a poem on *La Cuisse Rompue*, which was afterwards sung to soothe him. He also contrived to write "a large epistle in very pure and eloquent Latin" to his friend Belarius the divine. Both of these are lost.

As time wore on it appeared that the cure was not advancing. After the sixteenth day, says Greville, "the very shoulder-bones of this delicate patient were worn through his skin." He suffered from sharp pangs which "stang

him by fits," and felt internally that his case was desperate. "One morning lifting up the clothes for change and ease of his body, he smelt some extraordinary noisome savour about him, differing from oils and salves, as he conceived." This he judged, and judged rightly, to be the sign of "inward mortification, and a welcome messenger of death." Thereupon he called the ministers into his presence, "and before them made such a confession of Christian faith as no book but the heart can truly and feelingly deliver." Death had its terrors for his soul; but he withstood them manfully, seeking peace and courage in the sacrifice of all earthly affections. "There came to my mind," he said to Gifford, "a vanity in which I delighted, whereof I had not rid-myself. I rid myself of it, and presently my joy and comfort returned." Soon he was able to declare: "I would not change my joy for the empire of the world." Yet, up to the very last, he did not entirely despair of life. This is proved by the very touching letter he wrote to John Wier, a famous physician, and a friend of his. It runs thus in Latin: "Mi Wiere, veni, veni. De vitâ periculator et te cupio. Nec vivus, nec mortuus, ero ingratus. Plura non possum, sed obnixè oro ut festines. Vale. Tuus Ph. Sidney." "My dear friend Wier, come, come. I am in peril of my life, and long for you. Neither living nor dead shall I be ungrateful. I cannot write more, but beg you urgently to hurry. Farewell. Your Ph. Sidney." In this way several days passed slowly on. He had made his will upon the 30th of September. This he now revised, adding a codicil in which he remembered many friends and servants. The document may be read in Collins' *Sidney Papers*. Much of it is occupied with provisions for the child, with which his wife was pregnant at this time, and of which she was afterwards delivered still-born. But the

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thoughtful tenor of the whole justifies Greville in saying that it "will ever remain for a witness to the world that those sweet and large affections in him could no more be contracted with the narrowness of pain, grief, or sickness, than any sparkle of our immortality can be privately buried in the shadow of death."

Reflecting upon the past he exclaimed: "All things in my former life have been vain, vain, vain." In this mood he bade one of his friends burn the *Arcadia*; but we know not whether he expressed the same wish about *Astrophel and Stella*. On the morning of the 17th of October it was clear that he had but a few hours to live. His brother Robert gave way to passionate grief in his presence, which Philip gently stayed, taking farewell of him in these memorable words: "Love my memory, cherish my friends; their faith to me may assure you they are honest. But above all, govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator; in me beholding the end of this world with all her vanities." Shortly afterwards he sank into speechlessness, and the bystanders thought that what he had greatly dreaded—namely, death without consciousness, would befall him. Yet when they prayed him for some sign of his "inward joy and consolation in God," he held his hand up and stretched it forward for a little while. About two o'clock in the afternoon he again responded to a similar appeal by setting his hands together in the attitude of prayer upon his breast, and thus he expired.

Sidney's death sent a thrill through Europe. Leicester, who truly loved him, wrote upon the 25th, in words of passionate grief, to Walsingham. Elizabeth declared that she had lost her mainstay in the struggle with Spain. Duplessis Mornay bewailed his loss "not for England only, but for all Christendom." Mendoza, the Spanish secre-

tary, said that though he could not but rejoice at the loss to his master of such a foe, he yet lamented to see Christendom deprived of so great a light, and bewailed poor widowed England. The Netherlanders begged to be allowed to keep his body, and promised to erect a royal monument to his memory, "yea, though the same should cost half-a-ton of gold in the building." But this petition was rejected; and the corpse, after embalment, was removed to Flushing. There it lay eight days; and on the 1st of November the English troops accompanied it with military honours to the *Black Prince*, a vessel which had belonged to Sidney. On the 5th it reached Tower Hill, and on the 16th of February it was buried with pomp in St. Paul's. This long delay between the landing in London and the interment arose from certain legal complications, which rendered the discharge of Sidney's debts difficult. Walsingham told Leicester that he would have to "pay for him about six thousand pounds, which I do assure your Lordship hath brought me into a most desperate and hard state, which I weigh nothing in respect of the loss of the gentleman who was my chief worldly comfort." Lest this should seem to reflect ill upon Sidney's character, it must be added that he had furnished Walsingham with a power of attorney to sell land, and had expressly considered all his creditors in his will. But his own death happened so close upon his father's, and the will was so imperfect touching the sale of land, that his wishes could not be carried into effect. This, added Walsingham, "doth greatly afflict me, that a gentleman that hath lived so unspotted in reputation, and had so great care to see all men satisfied, should be so exposed to the outcry of his creditors." When the obstacles had been surmounted the funeral was splendid and public. And the whole nation went

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into mourning. "It was accounted a sin," says the author of *The Life and Death of Sir Philip Sidney*, "for any gentleman of quality, for many months after, to appear at Court or City in any light or gaudy apparel."

I have told the story of Sidney's last days briefly, using the testimony of those who knew him best, or who were present at his death-bed. Comment would be superfluous. There is a singular beauty in the uncomplaining, thoughtful, manly sweetness of the young hero cut off in his prime. Numberless minute touches, of necessity omitted here, confirm the opinion that Sidney possessed unique charm and exercised a spell over those who came in contact with him. All the letters and reports which deal with that long agony breathe a heartfelt tenderness, which proves how amiable and how admirable he was. The character must have been well-nigh perfect which inspired persons so different as the Earl of Leicester, George Gifford, and Fulke Greville with the same devoted love. We have not to deal merely with the record of an edifying end, but with the longing retrospect of men whose best qualities had been drawn forth by sympathy with his incomparable goodness.

The limits of this book make it impossible to give an adequate account of the multitudinous literary tributes to Sidney's memory, which appeared soon after his decease. Oxford contributed *Exequiae* and *Peplus*; Cambridge shed *Lacrymae*; great wits and little, to the number it is said of some two hundred, expressed their grief with more or less felicity of phrase. For us the value of these elegiac verses is not great. But it is of some importance to know what men of weight and judgment said of him. His dearest and best friend has been so often quoted in these pages that we are now familiar with Greville's life-long adora-

tion. Yet I cannot omit the general character he gives of Sidney :

“Indeed he was a true model of worth ; a man fit for conquest, plantation, reformation, or what action soever is greatest and hardest among men : withal, such a lover of mankind and goodness, that whoever had any real parts in him, found comfort, participation, and protection to the uttermost of his power : like Zephyrus, he giving life where he blew. The universities abroad and at home accounted him a general Mecaenas of learning ; dedicated their books to him ; and communicated every invention or improvement of knowledge with him. Soldiers honoured him, and were so honoured by him as no man thought he marched under the true banner of Mars that had not obtained Sir Philip Sidney’s approbation. Men of affairs in most parts of Christendom entertained correspondency with him. But what speak I of these, with whom his own ways and ends did concur ? Since, to descend, his heart and capacity were so large that there was not a cunning painter, a skilful engineer, an excellent musician, or any other artificer of extraordinary fame, that made not himself known to this famous spirit, and found him his true friend without hire, and the common *rendezvous* of worth in his time.”

Thomas Nash may be selected as the representative of literary men who honoured Sidney.

“Gentle Sir Philip Sidney !” he exclaims ; “thou knewest what belonged to a scholar ; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travail, conduct to perfection ; well couldst thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself. But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted.”

Lastly, we will lay the ponderous laurel-wreath, woven by grave Camden, on his tomb :

“This is that Sidney, who, as Providence seems to have sent him into the world to give the present age a specimen of the ancients, so did it on a sudden recall him, and snatch him from us, as more wor-

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thy of heaven than earth; thus where virtue comes to perfection, it is gone in a trice, and the best things are never lasting. Rest then in peace, O Sidney, if I may be allowed this address! We will not celebrate your memory with tears but admiration; whatever we loved in you, as the best of authors speaks of that best governor of Britain, whatever we admired in you, still continues, and will continue in the memories of men, the revolutions of ages, and the annals of time. Many, as inglorious and ignoble, are buried in oblivion; but Sidney shall live to all posterity. For, as the Grecian poet has it, virtue's beyond the reach of fate."

The note of tenderness, on which I have already dwelt, sounds equally in these sentences of the needy man of letters and the learned antiquarian.

It would be agreeable, if space permitted, to turn the pages of famous poets who immortalised our hero; to glean high thoughts from Constable's sonnets to Sir Philip Sidney's soul; to dwell on Raleigh's well-weighed quatrains; to gather pastoral honey from Spenser's *Astrophel*, or graver meditations from his *Ruins of Time*. But these are in the hands of every one; and now, at the close of his biography, I will rather let the voice of unpretending affection be heard. Few but students, I suppose, are familiar with the name of Matthew Roydon, or know that he was a writer of some distinction. Perhaps it was love for Sidney which inspired him with the musical but unequal poem from which I select three stanzas:

"Within these woods of Arcady
 He chief delight and pleasure took;
 And on the mountain Partheny,
 Upon the crystal liquid brook,
 The Muses met him every day,
 That taught him sing, to write and say.

"When he descended down the mount,
 His personage seemed most divine;

A thousand graces one might count
 Upon his lovely cheerful eyne.
 To hear him speak, and sweetly smile,
 You were in Paradise the while.

“ A sweet attractive kind of grace ;
 A full assurance given by looks ;
 Continual comfort in a face ;
 The lineaments of Gospel books :
 I trow that countenance cannot lie,
 Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.”

Among Spenser's works, incorporated in his *Astrophel*, occurs an elegy of languid but attractive sweetness, which the great poet ascribes to the Countess of Pembroke, sister by blood to Sidney, and sister of his soul. Internal evidence might lead to the opinion that this “doleful lay of Clorinda,” as it is usually called, was not written by Lady Pembroke, but was composed for her by the author of the *Faery Queen*. Yet the style is certainly inferior to that of Spenser at its best, and critics of mark incline to accept it literally as her production. This shall serve me as an excuse for borrowing some of its verses :

“ What cruel hand of cursèd foe unknown
 Hath cropped the stalk which bore so fair a flower ?
 Untimely cropped, before it well were grown,
 And clean defacèd in untimely hour !
 Great loss to all that ever him did see,
 Great loss to all, but greatest loss to me !

“ Break now your garlands, oh, ye shepherds' lasses,
 Since the fair flower which them adorned is gone ;
 The flower which them adorned is gone to ashes ;
 Never again let lass put garland on ;
 Instead of garland, wear sad cypress now,
 And bitter elder broken from the bough.”

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The reiteration of phrases in these softly-falling stanzas recalls the plaining of thrush or blackbird in the dewy silence of May evenings. But at the close of her long descent, Urania changes to thoughts of the heaven whose light has been increased by the "fair and glittering rays" of *Astrophel*. Then her inspiration takes a loftier flight. Meditations are suggested which prelude to *Lycidas* and *Adonais*. A parallel, indeed, both of diction and idea between this wilding flower of song and the magnificent double-rose of Shelley's threnody on Keats can be traced in the following four stanzas:—

"But that immortal spirit, which was decked
 With all the dowries of celestial grace,
 By sovereign choice from the heavenly choirs select,
 And lineally derived from angel's race,
 Oh, what is now of it become, aread!
 Ah me, can so divine a thing be dead?"

"Ah no! it is not dead, nor can it die,
 But lives for aye in blissful paradise,
 Where, like a new-born babe it soft doth lie,
 In beds of lilies wrapped in tender wise,
 And compassed all about with roses sweet
 And dainty violets from head to feet.

"There lieth he in everlasting bliss,
 Sweet spirit, never fearing more to die;
 Nor dreading harm from any foes of his,
 Nor fearing savage beasts' more cruelty:
 Whilst we here, wretches, wail his private lack,
 And with vain vows do often call him back.

"But live thou there still, happy, happy spirit,
 And give us leave thee here thus to lament,
 Not thee that dost thy heaven's joy inherit,
 But our own selves that here in dole are drent.

Thus do we weep and wail and wear our eyes,
Mourning in others our own miseries."

One couplet by a nameless playwright upon the death of Sidney's aunt by marriage, the Lady Jane Grey, shall serve to end this chapter :

"An innocent to die, what is it less
But to add angels to heaven's happiness !"

EPILOGUE.

WHEN we review the life of Sir Philip Sidney, it is certain that one thought will survive all other thoughts about him in our mind. This man, we shall say, was born to show the world what goes to the making of an English gentleman. But he belonged to his age; and the age of Elizabeth differed in many essential qualities from the age of Anne and from the age of Victoria. Sidney was the typical English gentleman of the modern era at the moment of transition from the mediæval period. He was the hero of our Renaissance. His nature combined chivalry and piety, courtly breeding and humane culture, statesmanship and loyalty, in what Wotton so well called "the very essence of congruity." Each of these elements may be found singly and more strikingly developed in other characters of his epoch. In him they were harmoniously mixed and fused as by some spiritual chemistry. In him they shone, with a lustre peculiar to the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," with a grace and purity distinctive of his unique personality. To make this image charming—this image, not of king or prince or mighty noble, but of a perfect gentleman—the favour of illustrious lineage and the grave

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beauty of his presence contributed in no small measure. There was something Phœbean in his youthful dignity :

“ When he descended down the mount,
His personage seemed most divine.”

Men of weight and learning were reminded by him of the golden antique past: “ Providence seems to have sent him into the world to give the present age a specimen of the ancients.” What the Athenians called *καλοκαγαθία*, that blending of physical and moral beauty and goodness in one pervasive virtue, distinguished him from the crowd of his countrymen, with whom goodness too often assumed an outer form of harshness and beauty leaned to effeminacy or insolence. He gave the present age a specimen of the ancients by the plasticity of his whole nature, the exact correspondence of spiritual and corporeal excellences, which among Greeks would have marked him out for sculpturesque idealisation.

It was to his advantage that he held no office of importance, commanded no great hereditary wealth, had done no deeds that brought him envy, had reached no station which committed him to rough collision with the world's brazen interests. Death, and the noble manner of his death, set seal to the charter of immortality which the expectation of contemporaries had already drafted. He was withdrawn from the contention of our earth, before time and opportunity proved or compromised his high position. Gloriously, he passed into the sphere of idealities; and as an ideal, he is for ever living and for ever admirable. Herein too there was something Greek in his good fortune; something which assimilates him to the eternal youthfulness of Hellas, and to the adolescent heroes of mythology.

This should not divert our thoughts from the fact that

Sidney was essentially an Elizabethan gentleman. His chivalry belonged to a period when knightly exercises were still in vogue, when bravery attired itself in pomp, when the *Mort d'Arthur* retained its fascination for youths of noble nurture. Those legends needed then no adaptations from a Laureate's golden quill to make them popular. Yet they were remote enough to touch the soul with poetry, of which the earlier and cruder associations had by time been mellowed. Knight-errantry expressed itself in careers like that of Stukeley, in expeditions like those of Drake and Raleigh. Lancelot's and Tristram's love had passed through the crucible of the Italian poets.

Sidney's piety was that of the Reformation, now at length accomplished and accepted in England after a severe struggle. Unsapped by criticism, undimmed by centuries of ease and toleration, the Anglican faith acquired reality and earnestness from the gravity of the European situation. Spain threatened to enslave the world. The Catholic reaction was rolling spiritual darkness, like a cloud, northward, over nations wavering as yet between the old and the new creed. Four years before his birth Loyola founded the Company of Jesus. During his lifetime this Order invaded province after province, spreading like leaven through populations on the verge of revolt against Rome. The Council of Trent began its sessions while he was in his cradle. Its work was finished, the final rupture of the Latin Church with Protestantism was accomplished, twenty-three years before his death at Zutphen. He grew to boyhood during Mary's reactionary reign. It is well to bear these dates in mind; they prove how exactly Sidney's life corresponded with the first stage of renascent and belligerent Catholicism. The perils of the time, brought fearfully home to himself by his sojourn in Paris on the night

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of St. Bartholomew, deepened religious convictions which might otherwise have been but lightly held by him. Yet he was no Puritan. Protestantism in England had as yet hardly entered upon that phase of its development. It was still possible to be sincerely godly (as the Earl of Essex called him), without sacrificing the grace of life or the urbanities of culture.

His education was in a true sense liberal. The new learning of the Italian Renaissance had recently taken root in England, and the methods of the humanists were being applied with enthusiasm in our public schools. Ancient literature, including the philosophers and historians of Athens, formed the staple of a young man's intellectual training. Yet no class at once so frivolous and pedantic, so servile and so vicious, as the Italian humanists, monopolised the art of teaching. Roger Ascham, the tutor of princes; Sir John Cheke, at Cambridge; Camden, at Westminster; Thomas Ashton, at Shrewsbury, were men from whom nothing but sound learning and good morals could be imbibed. England enjoyed the rare advantage of receiving both Renaissance and Reformation at the same epoch. The new learning came to our shores under the garb of Erasmus rather than Filelfo. It was penetrated with sober piety and enlightened philosophy instead of idle scepticism and academical rhetoric. Thus the foundations of Sidney's culture were broadly laid; and he was enabled to build a substantial superstructure on them. No better companion of his early manhood could have been found than Languet, who combined the refinements of southern with the robust vigour of northern scholarship. The acquisition of French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish led him to compare modern authors with the classics; while his travels through Europe brought him acquainted with various

manners and with the leading men of several parties. An education so complete and many-sided polished Sidney's excellent natural parts, until he shone the mirror of accomplished gentleness. He never forgot that, in his case, studies had to be pursued, not as an end in themselves, but as the means of fitting him for a public career. Diligent as he was in the pursuit of knowledge, he did not suffer himself to become a bookworm. Athletic exercises received as much of his attention as poetry or logic. Converse with men seemed to him more important than communion with authors in their printed works. In a word, he realised the ideal of Castiglione's courtier, and personified Plato's Euphues, in whom music was to balance gymnastic.

His breeding was that of a Court which had assumed the polish of Italy and France, and with that polish some of their vices and affectations. Yet the Court of Elizabeth was, in the main, free from such corruption as disgraced that of the Valois, and from such crimes as shed a sinister light upon the society of Florence or Ferrara. It was purer and more manly than the Court of James I., and even that remained superior to the immoralities and effeminacies of southern capitals. The queen, with all her faults, maintained a high standard among her servants. They represented the aristocracy of a whole and puissant nation, united by common patriotism and inspired by enthusiasm for their sovereign. Conflicting religious sympathies and discordant political theories might divide them; but in the hour of danger, they served their country alike, as was shown on the great day of the Spanish Armada.

Loyalty, at that epoch, still retained the sense of personal duty. The mediæval conviction that national well-being depended on maintaining a hierarchy of classes, bound together by reciprocal obligations and ascending privileges,

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and presided over by a monarch who claimed the allegiance of all, had not broken down in England. This loyalty, like Protestant piety, was braced by the peculiar dangers of the State, and by the special perils to which the life of a virgin queen was now exposed. It had little in common with decrepit affection for a dynasty, or with such homage as nobles paid their prince in the Italian despotisms. It was fed by the belief that the commonwealth demanded monarchy for its support. The Stuarts had not yet brought the name of loyalty into contempt; and at the same time this virtue, losing its feudal rigidity, assumed something of romantic grace and poetic sentiment. England was personified by the lady on the throne.

In his statesmanship, Sidney displayed the independent spirit of a well-born Englishman, controlled by loyalty as we have just described it. He was equally removed from servility to his sovereign, and from the underhand subtleties of a would-be Machiavelli. In serving the queen he sought to serve the State. His Epistle on the French Match, and his Defence of Sir Henry Sidney's Irish Administration, revealed a candour rare among Elizabeth's courtiers. With regard to England's policy in Europe, he declared for a bold, and possibly a too Quixotic interference in foreign affairs. Surveying the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, Spanish tyranny and national liberties, he apprehended the situation as one of extreme gravity, and was by no means willing to temporise or trifle with it. In his young-eyed enthusiasm, so different from Burleigh's world-worn prudence, he desired that Elizabeth should place herself at the head of an alliance of the Reformed Powers. Mature experience of the home government, however, reduced these expectations; and Sidney threw himself upon a romantic but well-weighed scheme

of colonisation. In each case he recommended a great policy, defined in its object, and worthy of a powerful race, to the only people whom he thought capable of carrying it out effectively.

This kindly blending of many qualities, all of them English, all of them characteristic of Elizabethan England, made Sir Philip Sidney the ideal of his generation, and for us the sweetest interpreter of its best aspirations. The essence of congruity, determining his private and his public conduct, in so many branches of active life, caused a loving nation to hail him as their Euphues. That he was not devoid of faults, faults of temper in his dealings with friends and servants, graver faults perhaps in his love for Stella, adds to the reality of his character. Shelley was hardly justified in calling him "Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot." During those last hours upon his death-bed at Arnhem, he felt that much in his past life had been but vanity, that some things in it called for repentance. But the evil inseparable from humanity was conquered long before the end. Few spirits so blameless, few so thoroughly prepared to enter upon new spheres of activity and discipline, have left this earth. The multitudes who knew him personally, those who might have been jealous of him, and those who owed him gratitude, swelled one chorus in praise of his natural goodness, his intellectual strength and moral beauty. We who study his biography, and dwell upon their testimony to his charm, derive from Sidney the noblest lesson bequeathed by Elizabethan to Victorian England. It is a lesson which can never lose its value for Greater Britain also, and for that confederated empire which shall, if fate defeat not the high aspirations of the Anglo-Saxon race, arise to be the grandest birth of future time.

THE END.

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