

ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

THE Elizabethan age was the greatest age of English literature and its best work has never been equalled — perhaps never again will be equalled. But we must remember that this literary greatness appeared only in particular departments of production. Those departments were only two,—lyrical poetry and drama. It is because of the extraordinary perfection attained especially by drama that the age is justly considered so great. When I say drama, however, you must remember that Elizabethan drama means blank verse poetry. The Elizabethan age was not an age of great prose. But in poetry there never has been another age like it; and as that poetry happened to be cast into the noblest and highest form of literature—great drama—there is no later poetry that can justly compare with it. We may speak of Tennyson's verse and Rossetti's verse as better than Shakespeare's verse in exquisiteness of workmanship. But only in workmanship. In thought and passion and power all the poets of the 19th century were but little children compared with Shakespeare. In Shakespeare English poetry as well as English drama rose to the greatest eminence ever attained. So much for an introductory observation as to the great poetry; but the subject of Elizabethan lyrical poetry is scarcely less wonderful.

The lyrical outburst represents a conditional thing closely approximating what we might call a national enthusiasm. For the first and the last time everybody in England took to writing poetry—that is to say, everybody who could write at all. There never was a time in England when everybody could write; and in the 16th century the spread of education was very limited. In Japan I believe that almost everybody can write, and write poetry of some kind. There was not any time in English literature when the same condition prevailed in Eng-

land; but the Elizabethan era really witnessed such a fashion and delight in the writing as might remind you of Oriental conditions in the past. There was also one time during the Renaissance in Italy when all uneducated people took to writing poetry. In either case you must try to think of the phenomenon as a fashion,—a polite fashion. It became just as much of a fashion to write poetry as it was a fashion to wear clothes of particular shape and colour. And as fashions are most observed by the upper classes, this literary fashion both in Italy and England was especially aristocratic. The Queen herself wrote poetry, and suggested subjects and rewarded poets. Her ministers and her courtiers obeyed her example and tried to rival each other in shaping beautiful verse. The gentry, as a matter of course, also followed the example; and after the gentry, all educated people. The universities made themselves particularly busy with poetry; and the ability to compose it was considered almost indispensable in the case of any well-trained and well-read person.

Becoming a fashion, however, poetry was not written for the purpose of making money or of making a reputation—it was not even written for publication. People did not even think of printing their poems: they only wrote them, and had them beautifully copied;—and they would send copies to their friends and acquaintances. In this regard they did very much as Japanese scholars have been doing for hundreds of years; they displayed their poetry upon particular occasions only, to grace those occasions, to give pleasure to friends, to leave souvenirs with those from whom they had to part, or to record the memory of some happy event. And then, as now in this country, poems were composed upon almost every imaginable topic. But love poetry predominated,—because it was the fashion, a fashion borrowed from Italy. Do not forget that, when you are reading the beautiful but often passionately extravagant lyrics of the time. You must not think of them too seriously;—you must not suppose that they were really intended to express the emotions of their writers under particular circumstances. Of course some poems were of the sincere

emotional kind. But most of them were written in a particular tone of the intense feeling only in imitation of Italian work. If you remember that, you will be able to admire them the more. Though not often rising to the level of greatness, they kept generally well to the line of exquisiteness. They were dainty, pretty, delicate,—often charming as a bird-song is.

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

We must consider the subject of drama first, in treating of Elizabethan literature — because it is the highest form of Elizabethan literature. But we need now only consider the beginnings of it. In the preceding lecture you saw how drama had been developed, from the Interlude, out of religious drama. But you remember also how I pointed out to you that the early English drama had been comedy—not tragedy. Tragedy is a much higher form of drama than comedy — it is indeed the highest of all forms of literary art. There is also a noble form of comedy; and there is a noble mingling of tragedy with comedy to which a very lofty place may be assigned. But the greatest drama must always be tragedy; and tragedy was not developed in England until after comedy had found shape. The higher the literary art the later to develop.

Now just as the English writers of the early comedy studied Latin authors for construction, so did the English writers of early tragedy study Latin authors. Only much later were Greek authors studied for the same purpose. And the result might have been unfortunate but for the genius of the English race. The Latin writers did not produce great tragedy. Tragedy never succeeded in Rome. Comedy did succeed — though it was never equal to the Greek comedy: there was no Roman Aristophanes, for example. But the Roman people could not care about tragedy. Why? For this very interesting reason,—that the public amusements had brutalized the public mind. In the great amphitheatres there were spectacles to be seen

for nothing which infinitely surpass in horror and in pathos any imaginary tragedy. For example, you might go there to see men, women and children eaten alive by lions and tigers;—you might see a thousand men kill each other in the course of a single morning;—you might see gladiatorial exhibitions conducted upon a scale almost equal to that of a real battle;—you could even see a naval fight—for the theatre was sometimes flooded and whole fleets were then floated upon it, and a real battle took place. Moreover, when tragedies were acted with success at all, it would be at the amphitheatre that they were acted, because the tragedy became horribly real there. When the story of the death of Hercules was represented for the Romans, the slave who personated Hercules was really burned alive;—and all the sights which Greek tragedy forbade to be represented, were represented in actuality by the Romans. You could easily understand that, when the sight of blood, the sight of torture, the sight of slaughter and of cruelty became matters of everyday amusement, the people could not care for the literary art of tragedy. That is the reason why great tragedy never became a part of Roman literature.

But there were some Latin tragedies of an inferior kind. The most famous writer of these Latin tragedies was a philosopher called Seneca. There were two Senecas, — father and son. The father Marcus Annæus Seneca appears to have been born about the year 61 B.C. in Spain,—whence he went to Rome to try his fortune. He was a lawyer and a rhetorician; and he succeeded tolerably well in Rome. He wrote many books, in the nature of treatises, and they are all worthless. He was not a great thinker nor a great writer. But he had one son Lucius Annæus Seneca, who became a very great man. This was the Seneca who wrote tragedies. He became the tutor of the young Emperor Nero; and he amassed an enormous fortune—probably in ways that cannot be called honest. But he was a good teacher and perhaps not more dishonest than other men in the same walk of life. He was a flatterer—that was the fashion; he took care to make himself rich — that was the fashion. But what he taught and wrote about morals, about

law, and about literature, was very sound indeed. Whatever wrong he may have done he expiated bitterly, for his treacherous pupil Nero eventually caused him to be put to death, partly to get rid of him, chiefly in order to seize his property. However, he lived by his books in a high place; and it is the judgment of many scholars that there is perhaps no other Latin writer who wrote such excellent books as the books of Seneca on the subject of morals. Indeed Seneca's moral teaching was so good that in the time of the Middle Ages the Christian Church believed that he must have been a Christian; of course Seneca was not a Christian; and his morality was of the Stoic school with something of the Platonic teaching in it,—simplified and admirably applied to the conduct of everyday life. But its teachings accorded so well with all the best of human moral experience, that he was treated by the enemies of classic literature with the very greatest consideration. Perhaps that was the reason why so much attention was given to his plays at an early time. Unfortunately the plays are not to be compared for a moment with the books on ethics. Seneca was the great master of ethics;—he was only a very clumsy pupil in the art of tragedy.

This much about Seneca is very important to remember. He never intended his plays for the stage. He wrote ten tragedies,—imitations of Greek tragedies, with Roman modifications, mostly in anapæstic verse;—and he seems to have written them merely as exercises in the arts of rhetoric and prosody, with the intention perhaps also of reading them to his friends. As one of them, entitled *Octavia*, is a satire upon the Emperor Nero, it is quite evident that the manuscript could have been read only in private; and the same thing is probably true of several others. Another thing to remember—for Seneca's name is of immense importance in the study of any European literature—is that Seneca chose for his drama, not the gentle and comic, and very human tragedies of the Greek, but the terrible dramas, the horrible stories of vengeance and despair: *Medea*, which is a tale of jealousy and revenge; *Thyestes*, the most awful of all Greek tragedies, and which treats of the eat-

ing of human flesh; *Agamemnon*, a story of adultery, murder and matricide. Such were the particular subjects which Seneca selected. It is very necessary to remember this; for the fact indirectly affected English literature and drama for a long time. Seneca liked strong and bloody incidents for the moral purpose of his drama: the more violent the facts—the more they shocked the imagination, the better, he thought, they would serve for ethical illustration. And his verse was really fine. So far as form is concerned, it would be very difficult indeed to criticize Seneca. The faults of his dramas are faults of another kind than form. They are not true to human nature nor to human life; they are artificial; obviously didactic; they want the real fire of genius to make them alive. But the verse is often grand and is always correct; and the whole structure of these Latin dramas is the very perfection of artificial excellence. Now comes the point of these remarks—the whole drama of France, the drama of Italy, the drama of Spain was actually shaped for 300 years by the study of Seneca. The Renaissance did not go to the Greek tragedians immediately: it went to Seneca. In other countries Seneca's influence weakened with the passing of time; but classical French drama is all based upon Senecan tragedy,—and that tragedy is not yet dead. Such authors as Corneille, Racine, Boileau, these represent Senecan tragedy to a surpassing degree. The plays of Racine, you know, are still acted in France, according to the old rules.

It would have seemed that the dramas of Seneca were likely to influence all the drama of England. But the English national feeling acted after a fashion quite different from that of the national feeling among the Latin race. There was a kind of independent conservatism in English character which prevented Senecan drama from working out its destiny through English channels. Four times there was an attempt to introduce this kind of drama into England; and four times the English public rejected it. Otherwise English drama would certainly have become as monotonous, correct, cold and stiff as the French drama of the classic school.

But the first English tragedy *Gorboduc*¹ was a Senecan drama. Several other dramas of the same school were produced either just before Elizabeth's accession, or a little later; and the public refused to care about them. It is not worth while even to mention the name of them. They are dead and forgotten. But when the company of university students, commonly called "the University Wits," took hold of Seneca and studied him, they found that there was some good to be got out of him without following his methods at all. All of them studied Seneca. But what they liked of Seneca, was the terrible part of him—the awful situation, the ghost, the horror, all that is generally called in dramatic language "blood and thunder."

The "blood and thunder" they took for material, but they chose to write their dramas in a more natural way, and leave out all the classical machinery, and to keep as close as they could to truth and human nature.

The first great English drama was the work of these university students. We need mention only six of the "Wits";—Marlowe, Lyly, Peele, Greene, Nashe and Lodge. Marlowe, Greene and Nashe were Cambridge students. Lyly, Peele and Lodge were Oxford men. The greatest poet and the dramatist among these was certainly Christopher Marlowe. But the name of Lyly is scarcely less important in English literature—not only because he prepared the way for Shakespeare after a fashion very different from that of Marlowe, but because he also affected nearly the whole prose of the Elizabethan age by the invention of a new style and a new art of expression. The other men named are much less important. Let us first speak of the work of Marlowe and of Lyly.

Marlowe² did not produce many plays—though his work represents a good-sized volume—about half of which is either poetry or poetical translation from classic authors. And all his plays are not good—some of them are failures. You must remember that he was a pioneer—the quasi-inventor of a new sort of tragedy, and that he could not help making mistakes

¹ *The tragedie of Gorboduc. Sett forth as shewed before the Quenes Maiestie* 1561 (1565). Another ed., entitled *The tragidie of Ferrex and Porrex* 1570.

² Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593).

occasionally. For instance, his plays of *Edward II*¹ and of *Dido*² — the first dealing with facts of English history, the second modelled upon the Virgilian legend Dido — are really very poor. But his tragedies of *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta*, are really much greater than anything else before them, and have not lost, even to this day, their interest as drama and as poetry. The best of all is *The Jew of Malta* — it is the study of a supremely wicked career of successful crime, discovered and defeated only by happy chance. It is not true to human nature as Shakespeare's plays are; and the villain of the piece is not altogether real. He reminds us rather of a caricature of badness—he is an exaggeration of the possible. But the figure, even as an exaggeration, has great strength; and the action of the play, though furiously rapid, compels our praise. Moreover, there is an attraction in finely sounding verse. Marlowe wrote his plays in blank verse—a kind of verse introduced into England by Surrey and afterwards adopted by Shakespeare. And he managed this blank verse magnificently. There are passages in *Dr. Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* and even in *Tamburlaine* which are almost worthy of being mistaken for Shakespeare. I need scarcely tell you that *Tamburlaine*³ is an imaginary study of the life of the great Tartar conqueror, Timouri Beg, also called Tamburlaine in former times. The fault of this composition is the excess of blood and tragedy in it. The story of *Dr. Faustus*⁴ is, of course, the mediæval legend of Faust, which Goethe was afterwards to make such grand use of. But the part which Marlowe especially used is the part which Goethe put into the second division of *Faust*. Finally *The Jew of Malta*⁵ is only the expansion into violent tragedy of an old Italian story.

Marlowe prepared the way for Shakespeare; and in the earliest work of Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, there are resemblances to the work of Marlowe. Of course there can be

¹ *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second a 1593* (1594).

² *The tragedie of Dido queene of Carthage* (with Thomas Nashe) *a 1593* (1594).

³ *Tamburlaine the great* (2 parts) 1586-87 (1590).

⁴ *The tragical history of Doctor Faustus c 1590* (1616).

⁵ *The famous tragedy of the rich Jew of Malta c 1592* (1633).

no comparison as to merit: Shakespeare's worst is as much above Marlowe's best in drama as Mount Fuji is above Kudan-zaka. But the suggestion of the one is to be found in the other. Marlowe has great talent and good ideas; but he was only a beginner; and the defects of his plays are very largely in construction. One great characteristic in all of Marlowe is the unnatural rapidity of the action. A few lines are made to represent what an experienced playwright would require many pages to express. The play is not only too much hurried: the hurry in it is like a panic. For all that we must not forget that Marlowe probably helped Shakespeare in various ways. Another direction in which he certainly inspired Shakespeare, and in which he came much closer to Shakespeare, was in his poetry. Besides the poetry of his plays, Marlowe produced a great deal of splendid poetry in the shape of translations from the Latin, or imitations of the Greek. He translated much of Martial, a good deal of Juvenal; and he composed in *Hero and Leander*¹ a poem which for splendid sensuousness can be equalled only by Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. If you do not find more of Marlowe's poetry in the English anthology, it is chiefly because the poetry is too voluptuous for use in schools and colleges—not because it is second-rate poetry at all. It is poetry of the very highest class, but it intimates in so bold a manner the voluptuous side of the Roman poets that it offends modern English taste. It would not offend modern French taste;—the neglect of it in England is a mere matter of prudery. Had it not been written, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* would probably not have been written. I need scarcely remind you that you will not find these poems of Shakespeare's in modern anthologies for the very same reason.

Marlowe was scarcely thirty years old when he died. He appears to have been rather too fond of merry living and to have frequently got into trouble. The students of that day, like the French students of Villon's time, were often reckless livers. Marlowe at last got into a quarrel about a woman, and

¹ *Hero and Leander* (finished by G. Chapman) a 1593 (1598).

the man he quarrelled with, Francis Archer, stabbed him in the eye with a dagger, the blade penetrating the brain and killing him instantly. After Marlowe's death, many bad things were said about him; but it would be foolish to believe them all, and the best opinion of our time is on Marlowe's side. He was imprudent and sometimes guilty of follies; but he was probably in no sense a bad man,—and it is interesting to know that the person who most calumniated him was afterwards hung for a serious crime. Young men who wrote plays in the middle of the 16th century had to do so at their own risk; there was a great deal of religious prejudice against new drama; and it is not unlikely that many of the stories circulated about Marlowe and his friends were inspired by that prejudice. The charges made against Marlowe were also made against Greene and Peele, and it has now been found that most of them are untrue, or at least unsupported by reasonable evidence.

In the case of Lyly¹ everything was different. Lyly, unlike his fellow students, was a man of society, — with friends at court and powerful supporters. No charges of a false kind were ever made against him. Most of his plays were written to be acted by children, at the court of Queen Elizabeth. They were plays of a totally different kind from those of Marlowe's. They resemble masques much more than plays; and their subjects were taken mostly from Greek myths and from Fairyland. Such titles as *Endymion*² (*Endimion* as he spelled it), *Sapho and Phao*,³ *The Maid's Metamorphosis*⁴ and *The Woman in the Moon*⁵ (which is a curious transformation of the myth of Pandora), are enough to show that we have entered into a totally new world of dramatic art. Lyly was a good Greek scholar and no inferior poet. There is nothing tragic in his work; it is all the most delicate comedy—beautiful, sentimental comedy; and it is very important to remember this: for, if Marlowe paved the way for Shakespearian tragedy, it was Lyly who paved the way for Shakespearian melo-drama. These charm-

¹ John Lyly (1554?-1606).

² *Endimion, the man in the moone* (anon.) 1591.

³ *Sapho and Phao* (anon.) 1584.

⁴ *The maydes metamorphosis* (attrib. to Lyly) 1600 (Bullen, *Old plays* I, 1882).

⁵ *The woman in the moone* 1597.

ing lighter comedies of Shakespeare—such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*—owed very much to Lyly. Undoubtedly Shakespeare also owed something to Peele. Peele¹ was the author of about half a dozen plays, of which the best is founded upon the story of King David and Beth Sheba, which Peele writes *Bethsabe*.² Some passages in this play read almost exactly like Shakespeare, and like Shakespeare in his glory. The whole play is not great; but some of the poetry is. Of the plays by Lodge,³ who like Lyly was an admirable poet, need be mentioned only the pleasant comedy of *Campaspe*.⁴ And of Greene⁵ we need only mention the best—also a comedy: *The Story of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay*.⁶ Neither Lodge nor Greene, however, influenced English drama to such an extent as Marlowe and Lyly. But the work of all of the six University Wits ought to be considered as a single force; it was the combination of the efforts of all that created English drama of the really English kind,—and developed it to the point at which it was taken up and perfected by Shakespeare.

ELIZABETHAN PROSE

EUPHUISM

We have not yet done with Lyly. Lyly was not only a great dramatist and great poet: he was also the founder of the Romance of Manners and Morals. Unfortunately he was also the founder of a detestable style, which obtained the most astonishing success, and fantastically coloured all the prose of Elizabeth's age. This style was called euphuism, after the name of the book which Lyly wrote, *Euphues*.⁷ The word "euphues"

¹ George Peele (1558-1597).

² *The love of King David and fair Bethsabe* 1599.

³ Thomas Lodge (1558?-1625).

⁴ *Campaspe* (anon) 1584. Another issue, entitled *A moste excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* 1584.

⁵ Robert Greene (1560?-1592).

⁶ *The honorable historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay* c 1590 (1630; 1878).

⁷ *Euphues, the anatomy of wyt* 1579 (Arber 1868). *Euphues and his England* 1580 (Arber 1868).

is borrowed from Greek; and it signifies “well-grown”—this is to say, graceful, comely. Euphues was supposed to be a handsome and very moral young Greek, who travelled through Europe for the purpose of studying different kinds of governments and social conditions—visiting England on his journey, which country he described as being the best country in the world, governed by a queen more beautiful than Venus and more chaste than an angel (Queen Elizabeth), a country where all the women were bewilderingly beautiful and all the men astonishingly good and brave. Enormous was the success of this book.

In the book there is nothing ridiculous—except style. It is a good book though a dull book. As to style it is very queer indeed. Having all of you studied Macaulay, you are doubtless familiar with what is meant by antithetical prose—a prose style in which antitheses are used both for ornament and expression, in other words a style in which everything is effected by the contrast of opposites. You may remember sentences in Macaulay of this kind, but Macaulay was a perfect master of antithesis; he used it often but not too often; and he never used it ineffectively or merely for the sake of ornament. Indeed, he used it chiefly in masterly imitation of the Latin writers. Lyly used it fantastically, extravagantly, absurdly,—and this was not all. He used alliteration also; and he stuffed every sentence with grotesque similes, borrowed from the symbolical zoology of the Middle Ages. You remember what I told you about the books that were called Bestiary—books full of imaginary stories about real or imaginary animals, every story having its particular moral or religious purpose. So the peculiarities of English euphuism were three:—the antithesis, alliteration, and bestiary simile,—all three being extravagantly used. But no account of the style could enable you to understand what it was like. Only quotation can do that;—and here is a quotation from *Euphues*.

The foul toad hath a fair stone in his head, the fine gold is found in the filthy earth, the sweet kernel lieth in the hard shell. Virtue is harboured in the heart of him that most men esteem

misshapen. . . . Do we not commonly see that in painted pots is hidden the deadliest poison? that in the greenest grass is the greatest serpent? in the clearest water the ugliest toad? Doth not experience teach us that in the most curious sepulchre are enclosed rotten bones? That the cypress tree beareth a fair leaf but no fruit? That the ostrich carrieth fair feathers, but rank flesh?

For reading, all this sounds pretty enough; and the imagination is constantly amused by a succession of strange images. But, of course, such a style is very artificial; everything is sacrificed to form; and nearly all the similes are nonsensically wrong. It is not true that the toad has a stone in his head or that a fine gold is found in the filthy earth or that sweet kernels are enclosed in hard shells invariably, or that virtue is harboured especially in ugly bodies, or that deadly poison is kept in beautifully painted pots. Out of thousands and thousands of similes nearly all are absolute misstatements of facts. People did not care at first about the nonsense of the style; the Bestiary books had prepared them for it—they thought only of the beautiful sound—the alliteration, the antithesis; and so euphuism rapidly became a fashion. That word still exists in English as a term of literary criticism. When a man fills his sentences with antitheses and needless similes, he is accused of “euphuism.”

The dramatist Greene also indulged in euphuism—imitated Lyly: here is a specimen from Greene:—

The greener the leaves be the more bitter is the sap. The salamander is most warm when it lies farthest from the fire; and women are most heart-hollow when they are most lip-whole; the strongest oak has his sap and his worms. The ravens will grieve in the fairest ash.

And a long, long line of writers—including the famous Sir Philip Sidney—imitated this style. But there were men even in Elizabeth's day who treated it with contempt; and one of these men happened to be Shakespeare. When Shakespeare wanted to make some character supremely ridiculous, he would cause that character to talk euphuism on the stage. The best example of Shakespeare's satire on euphuism is to be found in

the First Part of his great play *Henry IV*¹—Act II, Scene IV. It is when the Prince of Wales and Falstaff are amusing themselves in the tavern, and Falstaff pretends to be the King—the Prince's father, and to be talking morality to the son. He talks euphuism, and the imitation is admirable:—

Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art accompanied: for though the camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears. . . . There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch: this pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile; so doth the company thou keepest: for, Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink but in tears, not in pleasure but in passion, not in words only, but in woes also.

In spite of Shakespeare's satire euphuism prevailed in fashionable circles for a time. Its influence was not all bad—we must regard it as a new attempt in the direction of romantic English prose; and experience always has value. Now the question comes, where did Lyly get this style? Certainly not from his university training; and in other departments of literature he showed perfectly good taste. The fact is that euphuism represents the very first strong influence upon English of Spanish literature. Euphuism was invented really in Spain; and its inventor was a bishop named Antonio de Guevara who published a book written in this style about the year 1545—that is to say, about twenty-five or thirty years before Lyly. (Remember that there are no less than five Guevaras in Spanish literature. It is better, therefore, to memorize the name Antonio and the date.) Bishop Guevara wrote a book called *The Golden Book of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius*; and he also wrote a volume of didactic letters all of which purported to be translation from the Latin and the Greek. They were literary forgeries—nothing more;—and they were exposed as forgeries by the scholars of the time. But nevertheless people were pleased with Guevara's book. In order to make the text look as if it had really been translated from Latin, the Bishop had used the

¹ *The first part of Henry the fourth* 1596.

Latin antithetical form of sentences to excess; and in order to make the book seem very moral, he had stuffed it with similes taken from the *Natural History* of Pliny and other writers. That was the beginning of the style which in England came to be known as euphuism. From Spain indeed, England learned very little that is good for literary ends. Euphuism was her first literary lesson in Spanish; her second was quite as bad or worse,—and is called in English by the name of Gongorism.

Gongorism is a style that took its name from a Spanish writer Luis de Gongora, who lived in the first half of the 17th century. Originally he was a very good poet and prose writer; but later in life, perhaps to attract attention, he adopted a very eccentric style of expression,—much as Browning did in our own time, and at last he became quite unintelligible. But he also became astonishingly fashionable; and the fashion of him rapidly spread all over Spain and even found its way into other countries. There seems to be for vulgar people a very great attraction in the unintelligible—and even for people who are not altogether vulgar. Browning is an excellent example of the kind. When he wrote clearly the people cared little about him;—when he wrote unintelligibly, Browning Societies were established everywhere for the purpose of discovering some imaginary philosophy supposed to be hidden behind the enigma of his style. Browning is a very, very great poet, in spite of his faults—one of the greatest lyrical poets and psychological poets that ever lived, but his faults are more admired than his fine qualities. The case of Gongora was almost exactly the same: he was also by nature a good poet; but it was his faults that made him fashionable. These eccentricities consisted in the habit of extraordinary inversion—inversion of the natural order of words in a sentence,—and also in the habit of never calling things by their right names. Instead of naming the sky, the sea, the mistress, the prince, he would use fantastic similes and round-about phrases to suggest these objects or persons—so that every line of his poetry became a riddle. You have to guess what he meant. And anybody who to-day writes in the same obscure way is accused of Gongorism. Gongorism

only slightly affected Lyly, but it affected his followers much more, and developed in England an absurd kind of prose which Shakespeare ridiculed in one of his plays. When euphuism became all the rage, Lyly was imitated by many writers. I need only mention the names of Greene, Rich,¹ Dickenson,² and Lodge. Two of these were of the University Wits before-mentioned; and their imitations are the best. But we need only here consider Lodge. Lodge, who was a soldier and a traveller, as well as an exquisite poet, put some of his experiences of strange countries and strange happenings into a romance called *Rosalynde* or *Euphues Golden Legacie*; ³—and it was from this romance that Shakespeare got his play of *As You Like It*. The name of Lodge in connection with euphuism is important for this reason. For, in his particular case, Shakespeare borrowed very much:—that is to say, that the greatest dramatic genius this world had ever known, considered Lodge as able to furnish him with the best part of what is probably his most beautiful comedy.

What are we to call these romances of euphuism? They are not the same as the romances of the Middle Ages, of course;—but what makes the new mode? It is not merely that the subject is new; it is also, and much more, that the thought is new and the emotion new. I think that we may call them Moral Romances, but the mediæval romances were also, in a certain sense, moral romances. Then what was the difference? The difference was this—that in the romance of Lyly and his school the morality of the romance is entirely dissociated from religion. This is social morality,—not religious morality. And the fact marks a great advance in literary freedom.

This advance becomes still more marked in a new form of romance that presently made its appearance—the Pastoral Romance. The pastoral romance also came into English literature through Spanish channels. The English writer of it was the famous Sir Philip Sidney, ⁴—poet, courtier, soldier,—one of

¹ Barnabe Rich (1540?-1617).

² John Dickenson (fl. 1594).

³ *Rosalynde. Euphues golden legacie* 1590.

⁴ Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586).

the noblest figures of the Elizabethan age. I think you will remember that he was killed in battle at Zutphen in Flanders; and that the last words which he spoke were the words of a brave and unselfish man. As he was lying, fatally wounded on the battle-field and tortured by thirst—that terrible thirst which always follows upon great loss of blood—a drink of water was brought to him. But he had seen lying near him an English soldier wounded as badly as himself; and he said: “Give the water to him, he needs it more than I.” This was the man who introduced the pastoral romance into English literature. His book was called *Arcadia*;¹ and it was written only to amuse his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. The idea of the book he got from the Spanish author Montemayor, who had written a romance of the same kind entitled *Diana Enamorada* (Diana in Love). Montemayor was also a soldier and was killed in a duel in Italy while still very young. His book did not appear until after his death. It was then recognized that Montemayor had got his idea from an Italian writer Sannazaro, who had written a romance called *Arcadia*. The peculiarity in the work of both Spaniard and Italian is not that the scenes are laid in the country of Arcadia in both cases, but that both men used their own personal experience for the making of the romance. This was quite a new thing in modern literature.

But I must tell you here why the romance is called pastoral, and why the scenes are laid in Arcadia.

In the southern part of ancient Greece, bordering the country of the Spartans, Laconia, the original Arcadia was situated. It was north of Laconia and thus in the centre of the Peloponnesus; and the whole country there is a country of high mountains and deep valleys. The inhabitants have been compared to the Swiss, and their country has often been called the Switzerland of Greece—for good reason. The Arcadians were an agricultural people, though a race of mountaineers;—they were exceedingly strong and active, so that they furnished excellent soldiers to all the Greek armies, and the Spartans

¹ *The countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* a 1586 (1590, 1598, 1621, 1629; Sommer 1891; Feuillerat 1912-22).

hired many Arcadians to fight for them. They were also a very simple people in their habits—so simple that they were often considered stupid, and the term Arcadian was sometimes used contemptuously. But the Greek poets understood them better and praised their simplicity and honesty. They were also a very brave people: and never lost their independence. They successfully resisted all the powers of the Spartans to subdue their country; and it was not until all Greece became a Roman province that the Arcadians ceased to have their own republic, their own laws and their own customs.

The customs of Arcadia have made memories capable of influencing all western poetry for a thousand years and more. I have said that the people were agricultural; but it would have been better to have called them pastoral, for they were a nation of shepherds as well as of farmers. Much of the country was too mountainous for cultivation; but it could feed sheep and goats. Agriculture, properly speaking, was carried on only in the valleys, as in Switzerland. The amusements of the people were chiefly rural; they loved music and dancing and religious festivals;—and there were wrestling matches for the young men and races for the boys and girls. One curious custom deserves mentioning. At a certain festival of the country-god Pan all the children of the district had a kissing match. The umpires were the old men of place; and children, each in turn, came and kissed the old men. Whoever gave the most graceful kiss received a prize. This fact, well authenticated by Greek writers, proves that the Arcadians could not have been a rough people. There must have been a good deal of refinement among them; and it was this refinement, coupled with their sturdy character and simple ways, that especially impressed in after days the Idyllic School of Greek poets,—Theocritus and others. Their descriptions of pastoral life and Arcadian simplicity and joy, influenced in turn the Roman poets—especially Virgil. Later on, after the disappearance of both Greek and Roman civilizations, the study of Virgil brought into modern literature the poetry of Arcadia. In England, in France, in Italy, in Spain, in Germany, a taste for pastoral

poetry and pastoral romance—that is to say, for poetry and romance relating to simple country life, especially relating to shepherds—came into vogue; a vogue that expired only in the 18th century. I think you know that even the Kings and Queens of France before the Revolution actually performed pastoral plays—dressing themselves to represent shepherds and shepherdesses. But this later pastoral mania which is reflected all through the poetry of Pope and his artificial school was mere humbug. It was artificial, false, even ludicrous. At first, however, the taste for things pastoral was sincere and represented a particular phase of a love of nature.

To-day we mean by pastoral romance any romance treating of simple incidents of country life, or of life as influenced romantically by country surroundings. By pastoral poetry we mean, in the general sense, poetry about the happy and simple conditions of country existence, while, in the special sense, we mean poetry imitating the idyllic character of the verse of Virgil or Theocritus in the treatment of light subjects.

You now know what is meant by pastoral romance, and that this was first introduced into England by Sir Philip Sidney. But Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance is not true pastoral romance—it is only an attempt in that direction. He called it *Arcadia*; but the scenes are laid in an imaginary country and the conditions are not Greek, but of Sir Philip's own time. There are knights and ladies and adventures of the wildest kind; but there are neither shepherds nor Arcadians. The book resembles much more those Spanish compilations called *Caballerias*, that is to say, *Knightly Stories*,—than anything really pastoral. Nevertheless the book is a landmark in literary evolution. Like the novels of Lyly and Lodge it presents us with a moral ideal entirely dissociated from religion; and it had very much to do with the future development of the English novel. One of the characters of the romance is called Pamela; and it was this character which gave Richardson, in the 18th century, the notion of his great story *Pamela*—the first true English novel. Richardson took not only the name, but even parts of his text from *Arcadia*.

One more noteworthy story of Spanish influence remains to be noticed in English prose—the creation of what is called the *Picaroon* or *Picaresque Romance*. Some say “novel,” but the true novel was still a long way off. The difference between the novel and the romance is essentially that the novel pictured *realities* of contemporary life; the romance represents only imaginary incidents and combinations.

The word *Picaroon* is a corruption of the Spanish word *picaron*—which again is derived from the Spanish word *pícaro*—which again comes from the Spanish word *picar*, meaning “to prick,” “to goad.” A *picaro* is a person who pricks—the idea is exactly that conveyed by the English word “sharper.” A “sharper” is not exactly a thief;—he is a man who makes his way by trickery, by deceiving and duping others, by clever cunning and unscrupulousness. Behind the word “*picaro*” and the word “sharper” there is alike the suggestion of something to be avoided, as we would avoid a thorny plant, or anything that is likely to hurt us if we get too close to it. Yet one more bit of explanation. The English word *picaroon*, as I told you, is not from the Spanish *picaro*, but from the Spanish *picaron*. What is the difference? Spanish adjectives have what we call augmentative forms: a peculiar method of declension increases their force or diminishes it. By one termination the adjective expresses the diminutive, by another termination it expresses the augmentative. For example the Spanish word for girl is “*muchacha*.” “*Muchachita*” means a very little girl. But “*muchachona*” means a great big girl. Those are feminine forms of diminutive and augmentative. The Spanish word for boy is “*muchacho*.” “*Muchachito*” means a very little boy. But “*muchachon*” means a great big hulk boy. Now suppose we translate the word *picaro* by sharper or rascal. *Picarito* would mean a little rascal; and *picaron* a great rascal. That is the Spanish word which has been made into the English word *picaroon*. Therefore a *picaroon* romance simply means a romance about a very great rascal—a romance of crime. It is curious that the new moral romance and the romance of rascality should have been developed in England about the same time.

The Spanish author who first invented this style of romance (so far as it is possible for any human being to invent anything) was Diego de Mendoza, a very wonderful character. He was a knight, a great captain, a great statesman, a man of tremendous energy, and a very keen observer of human life. As a diplomat he was in high favour with Charles V. of Spain, but when Philip II. came to the throne, the great frankness and honesty of Mendoza displeased him and the old man was banished from the court. He was then 64 years of age, but still stronger than most young men, and active enough for any military duties. He wrote many things, both in his old age and in his youth; and the best of them is not the work by which he is chiefly remembered. That work was written in his youth. It was called *Lazarillo de Tormes*—that is to say *Little Lazarus of the Town of Tormes*.

Before telling you who Lazarus was, a few words about the social condition of Spain in the early 16th century will be necessary. You know that Spain after hundreds of years of constant fighting against the Moors had developed immense military power;—that this military power, both aggressive and fanatic, found an outlet in the discovery of America for its energies;—that within a few generations the whole of North and South America and West Indies, as well as the earlier conquests of absorbed Portugal, had become Spanish;—that enormous quantities of gold were being poured into Spain from all parts of the world; in short, that Spain had suddenly become the most powerful of countries, the dominator of European politics. Her prosperity lasted for only one hundred and fifty years. It was wrecked by the attempts of Philip II. to establish the Inquisition all over Europe. But during those 150 years Spain was the greatest of countries; and the chances of making fortunes in Spain, or in the Spanish colonies, were chances such as had never been offered before and probably never will be offered again. Nevertheless, a sudden influx of wealth into a poor country is very apt to corrupt public morals. Gold weakened the moral power of Spain instead of strengthening it. The temptations to make money easily by dishonest means

were almost too great to be resisted. Think of the chances! A common soldier, unable to read and write, might suddenly make himself the master of a new country and become a viceroy, practically a king. The man, who yesterday was the lowest servant in the house of a small nobleman, might to-morrow rise to fortune and fame and power, and become the patron of his former master. Almost anything was possible for cleverness and courage. But there are two kinds of cleverness; and wherever money can be made too easily by dishonourable means, one kind of this cleverness invariably develops. Everybody could not become a soldier or a statesman; but anybody with a fair share of cunning and few moral scruples, might manage to play upon successful soldiers or wealthy statesmen. And there arose in Spain the famous class of Picaros—sharpers who lived entirely by playing upon the rich and the distinguished. One of these lives is illustrated in the story of *Little Lazarus*. The occupation of Little Lazarus is that of guiding a blind man, an occupation in these days usually given to intelligent dogs. It was the lowest position that the poorest boy could be given. But Little Lazarus, being gifted with great cunning, watches his opportunity to study life and to study character, and studies the ways of deceiving the charitable and the hospitable. He soon rises to higher things. He becomes a clerk, a page, a squire, a soldier, a successful adventurer—all by unscrupulous use of opportunity. He obtains the wealth easily and loses it easily—is rich one day and poor the next—gets into prison and gets into palace—changes his name time after time, and makes himself a terror to his fellow creatures under every name. But he wins, as a rule, and his career illustrates the fact that in corrupt society an utter scoundrel has a much better chance of succeeding than a gentleman—providing only that the scoundrel be not a fool. He must be a mixture of fox and wolf. The picaro was both. A book like this could not fail to succeed in Spain of 1560 or thereabouts. By that time everybody knew what the picaro was, and how true the book was. Mendoza had many imitators within the next few years. Even a better book than his *Lazarillo de Tormes*

was the *Guzman de Alfarache* of Mateo Aleman. Aleman's work is indeed the greatest of all picaresque books; but it is better than Mendoza only in the fact that it describes conditions of a later time, and consequently a larger national experience with the picaresque. After Aleman came a celebrated writer called Espinel, who wrote a book about an adventurer named Escudero Marcos de Obregon. The word Escudero means esquire, or rather squire; and the story is of an attendant upon a person of rank, who used his opportunities to enrich himself by tricking others. It is still the picaresque, but the picaresque in a somewhat different rôle. This also is a good book of its kind; and there were many of the kind. There was even a story about a female of this class—a picaresque or picaresque, entitled *La Picaresque Justina*. It is an immoral book and a curious fact is that it was written by a bishop,—showing how much works of the sort were in vogue at the time. But the two great books were those of Mendoza and of Aleman. Each of these influenced the whole world of literature. The former introduced into England the novel of adventure, the latter introduced the same thing into France. And it was in France that picaresque literature ultimately obtained its highest perfection. For the greatest of all picaresque stories is the wonderful story of *Gil Blas* by Le Sage.

The Englishman who first wrote a picaresque novel was the dramatist Nashe.¹ Inspired by Mendoza's book, he conceived the idea of making an English book upon the same line, and he did this successfully in the adventure entitled *Jack Wilton, or The Unfortunate Traveller*.² This book is not a mere imitation of Mendoza; it is really clever—so clever that Shakespeare two years afterwards took parts of his great plays *Henry IV* and *V*³ from it. It was not Shakespeare who invented the character of Sir John Falstaff;—it was Nashe and Nashe seems to have drawn upon real experience for his personage. Reading the book Shakespeare must have recognized that this figure was drawn from life; and he took it and drew it even still better than Nashe. But Nashe is important in another way

¹ Thomas Nashe (1567-1601).

² *The unfortunate traveller, or the life of Jack Wilton* 1594.

³ *The life of Henry the fifth* 1599.

also. Nashe became the forefather of a long line of English novelists—real novelists. The picaresque romance, as time went on, gradually changed into the novel of adventure, and the novel of adventure at last became the novel of everyday life. Though Nashe is only a small figure in one sense, the greatest of all English novelists Fielding really descends from him. Fielding's *Tom Jones* is only the highest possible artistic development of the germs contained in *Jack Wilton*. After *Jack Wilton*, among many other books, appeared *The English Rogue*,¹ by Richard Head,² also a picaresque novel of much merit; then came Defoe with *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, the last of the picaresque novels worth mentioning. Then came at last Smollet and Fielding, the greatest writers of real novel that the English nation produced. The line of development is quite plain.

You may ask, what then of Richardson, so commonly called the father of the English novel? Richardson derives from Sir Philip Sidney and the Elizabethan moral romance;—while Fielding and Smollet derived from Nashe, and the English picaresque romance, through Defoe. You will see how small and clumsy beginnings may have magnificent endings. The *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney is not much more than a curiosity in literature, and is written in an intolerable style. But it suggested Richardson's *Pamela*. The picaresque romance, whether Spanish or English, is a very low form of romance, as originally conceived; but it pointed out to succeeding writers the right way to make a great novel, and indirectly it inspired the greatest English novel ever written—Fielding's masterpiece *Tom Jones*.

To sum up, then, the history of Elizabethan prose chiefly represents the influence of Spanish literature upon English literature. Directly that influence was altogether bad as far as literary form is concerned. It introduced the most fantastic and most tortured forms of literary expression ever known. But indirectly it had precious results. It introduced new ideas,

¹ *The English rogue described in the life of Meriton Latroon* 1665; Part II by F. Kirkman 1671; Parts III and IV by Head and Kirkman 1671 (1874).

² Richard Head (1637?-1686?).

in a very undeveloped shape, which, becoming developed by English genius (and also by French genius), brought into existence the highest form of prose literature outside of drama.

THE LYRIC POETRY

When introducing the subject of Elizabethan literature I told you that most of the great poetry written in this epoch was written as a fashion, as a delight,—not for publication. People wrote poetry as birds sing; and they kept this poetry in manuscript. Later on, when they began to publish, — or at least when others began to publish for them, their names did not appear in many cases. A great deal of the Elizabethan lyric poetry is anonymous. Remember also that great quantities of it have not yet been published. The bulk of it has been published only within our own time, through the labours of such scholars as Mr. Arber¹ and Mr. Bullen.² The result has been a great surprise to all who had not made special research in the same direction. Nobody suspected 30 or 40 years ago what riches of songs were lying in manuscript in the British Museum or the great library of Oxford University.

I do not think that I could hope to interest you much in Elizabethan lyric poetry verse—that is to say, as regards its intrinsic beauty and charm. One reason is that the greater part of it is love poetry of a passionate kind which has long passed out of fashion and which was imitated from the most passionate kind of the Italian Renaissance. The two qualities which most distinguish it are amorous exultation and melody. The fact of melody depends so much upon accent that it is a subject for critical study chiefly. And the passionate part of it cannot appeal to us much now, unless we can historically place ourselves in the mental atmosphere of “the spacious times of great Elizabeth.” That is not difficult perhaps for English students to do, but it would be very difficult for us to do in

¹ *British anthologies* (1899-1901) ed. by Edward Arber (1836-1912).

² *Lyrics from the dramatists of the Elizabethan age* (1896); *Lyrics from the song-books of the Elizabethan age* (1896). Ed. by Arthur Henry Bullen (1857-1920).

this country, having behind us a world of entirely opposite tradition and feeling. But it is impossible to treat this great subject with indifference; and the historical part of it ought at least to be studied a little. I have told you that a great deal of the work is anonymous; but you should know that among what is not anonymous we find contributions by almost every great man or woman of the age — Queen Elizabeth herself, Shakespeare and all the great dramatists, Sir Walter Raleigh ¹ and a host of noblemen — besides which almost every profession is represented. It is impossible to illustrate the relation of this lyrical poetry to the life of the time better than by quoting examples of the most striking kind. This I shall presently do — but, first I want to say something about the lyrical movement as a whole.

Specialists divide the study of Elizabethan lyrical poetry into three chief periods with many minor sub-periods. We have what is called the Early Elizabethan, the Later Elizabethan, and the Jacobian, that is to say, the poetry written during the reign of King James I, though continuing the traditions of the preceding reign. But we are not specialists; and it is better for us to think about all these periods as one. Elizabethan poetry, we may say, lasted well into the reign of James I, and even beyond it. The interest for the student of literary history is chiefly in the fact that there were two distinct literary impulses. One was purely Italian and romantic in origin and spirit. The other was classical and very strange, though not difficult to understand. I have already said enough about the Italian side of the subject; if you want to know a little more you would do well to study the subject in special treatises, and also to read Rossetti's translation of the old Italian poets, *Dante and his Circle*. For the present I want to call your attention only to the classical feeling which began in the time of the University Wits.

When English scholars seriously began to study Greek and Roman poetry with all the enthusiasm of Renaissance feeling, they could not but see that it was much better poetry than

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh (1552 ?-1618).

anything modern. And they were struck by the fact that it had no rhyme. Why should not English poets also try to write lyrical poetry without rhyme? You see, English scholars had not yet learned how very inferior was the English language to the Greek and Latin, both as regards flexibility and sonority. They tried hard to write lyrics, like the Latins and like the Greeks, in classic measure, and failed. But, even when they failed, they could not suspect that the fault was in the English language. Very modestly they thought that it was their own fault, their own incapacity; and they wrote treatises urging future scholars to try to do what they had failed in doing. Even to-day, expanded and enriched as the English language has become, we cannot do lyrical work in it like that of the Greeks and the Romans—though some wonderful things have been done. The best modern attempts are those of Tennyson and Swinburne. (Kingsley made the best attempt in blank verse; but that is not lyric poetry.) Do you remember the wonderful little song in Tennyson's *Princess* entitled "Tears, idle tears"? The peculiar thing about that little song is that, when you hear it read, you *think* that it is rhymed verse; and yet there are no rhymes in it at all. Greek and Roman poetry does this for us—it gives us all the effect of rhymes without using rhyme. Swinburne's best example is an imitation of the Greek poetess Sappho, beginning with the words "All the night long sleep came not upon my eyelids." But it is very interesting to know that the first attempts to make lyric without rhymes were in the Elizabethan age, and that the most successful effort was that of Dr. Thomas Campion.¹ If we except Shakespeare and a few other extraordinary names, Campion might be called the greatest of the Elizabethan lyric poets. But his greatness is principally due to his wonderful mastery of rhyme. Is it not strange that this great master of rhyme should have written a book to prove that no rhyme ought to be used in English poetry?

This is Campion's best attempt at unrhymed lyric—but there are many others:—

¹ Thomas Campion (1567?-1619).

LAURA

Rose-cheek'd *Laura*, come;
 Sing thou smoothly with thy beauty's
 Silent music, either other
 Sweetly gracing.

Lovely forms do flow
 From concert divinely framèd:
 Heaven is music, and thy beauty's
 Birth is heavenly.

These dull notes we sing
 Discords need for helps to grace them;
 Only beauty purely loving
 Knows no discord;

But still moves delight,
 Like clear springs renew'd by flowing,
 Ever perfect, ever in them-
 selves eternal.

This is very far away from Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears"—very far away from Swinburne's glorious attempt in classic measure. But you must remember that Campion, the Elizabethan, had no forerunners in attempts of this kind. Nobody else had ever tried to write English lyrics in Latin and Greek forms of blank verse. It is not to be wondered at that they failed;—rather we may be surprised that they did so well. For perhaps fifty years they preached their doctrine and made their experiments; but luckily for English literature they did not waste too much time in this hopeless direction. They only talked about such things and did them when they had nothing better to do; and most of the time they were using rhyme in the most beautiful way. I need say nothing more about the matter,—only remember that it was in Elizabeth's time that this idea was first suggested and first imperfectly put into practice.

In giving examples of Elizabethan lyrics, it is difficult to attempt anything chronologically. But I may begin with a

quotation or two from the University Wits; for they began to sing very early. Lyly, the author of *Euphues*, was one of the very earliest. For his play, entitled *Alexander and Campaspe*,¹ he made a charming little song. It is now put in almost every anthology. Perhaps you remember the Greek story on which the play is founded—how Alexander ordered a great painter to paint the portrait of his concubine Campaspe, and how the painter fell in love with her, and Alexander, instead of becoming angry, was generous enough to present Campaspe to the painter. This is the little song:—

Cupid and my Campaspe play'd
 At cards for kisses—Cupid paid :
 He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows,
 His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;
 Loses them too; then down he throws
 The coral of his lips, the rose
 Growing on's cheek (but none knows how);
 With these, the crystal of his brow,
 And then the dimple of his chin :
 All these did my Campaspe win.
 At last he set her both his eyes—
 She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
 O Love! has she done this for thee?
 What shall, alas! become of me?

Gracious playing with mythological illusions—is it not? The reference to the mother's doves and sparrows needs explanation perhaps. The dove is sacred to Venus; and the painter often represented her as riding in an aerial car drawn by doves. But the Latin poets often described her as being drawn by sparrows; and in Rome the sparrows were especially considered her birds. You know that in Greek art Cupid was sometimes represented as blind—symbol of the fact that love makes the lover blind to everything else.

Lodge was even greater than Lyly in this kind of erotic verse. One of his lyrics has been called the most sugary thing

¹ *A moste excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes* 1584. — Another issue, entitled *Campaspe* (anon.) 1584.

in the English language; and I think it is. At all events it is the best piece by which he can be fittingly represented in a short lecture. It is a song composed for a play of his, already mentioned to you, *Rosalynde*, which inspired Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

ROSALYNDE'S MADRIGAL

Love in my bosom like a bee
 Doth suck his sweet :
 Now with his wings he plays with me,
 Now with his feet.
 Within mine eyes he makes his nest,
 His bed amidst my tender breast;
 My kisses are his daily feast,
 And yet he robs me of my rest :
 Ah! wanton, will ye?

(You must remember that it is a young girl, secretly in love, who sings this song. She pictures for us the God of Love in his baby form — a little child with wings, who sometimes caresses her in a baby way, but will not let her sleep at night; and she speaks to him, just as an elder sister would scold a mischievous child. "Wanton" only meant mischievous in those days; and the last line of the verse signifies: "Ah, you mischievous little child, will you not keep quiet?")

And if I sleep, then percheth he
 With pretty flight,
 And makes his pillow of my knee
 The livelong night.
 Strike I my lute, he tunes the string;
 He music plays if so I sing;
 He lends me every lovely thing,
 Yet cruel he my heart doth sting :
 Whist, wanton, still ye!

("Whist" is a word still in use — but only in Ireland. In Lodge's time it was as much English as Irish; but it is a sign of Irish extraction to be heard using it to-day. It means simply "Hush!" "Still ye" means "be still,"—"keep quiet!")

Else I with roses every day
 Will whip you hence,
 And bind you, when you long to play,
 For your offence.
 I'll shut mine eyes to keep you in ;
 I'll make you fast it for your sin ;
 I'll count your power not worth a pin.
 —Alas! what hereby shall I win
 If he gainsay me?

(The allusions in the 5th, 6th and 7th lines are worth noting. She has already told us that the little god of love enters into her eyes; and the words "I'll shut mine eyes to keep you in" means that she will imprison him by keeping her eyes shut. But there is also a suggestion here that, in order to keep herself from loving, the speaker will not look at the person loved. "I'll make you fast it" is only an old-fashioned way of saying "I'll punish you by not giving you anything to eat." "I'll count your power not worth a pin" signifies really "Don't think that I am afraid of you; you may be a god, but I don't care even the value of a pin for your divine power.")

What if I beat the wanton boy
 With many a rod?
 He will repay me with annoy,
 Because a god.
 Then sit thou safely on my knee;
 Then let thy bower my bosom be;
 Lurk in mine eyes, I like of thee;
 O Cupid, so thou pity me,
 Spare not, but play thee!

(The beauty of this composition, remember, is not only in this gracious picture of a young girl playing with the mischievous baby-god: it is rather in the perfectly natural suggestion of the young person's struggle with her own feelings. Maiden-wise she would fight against the affection that overpowers her,—but she finds that she cannot. She must yield;—therefore she feels afraid, and appeals to the god, saying: "If you will only have pity on me, I will no longer oppose you.")

Lodge and Lyly have really no equals, at least no superiors,

until the time of Campion: if we except Shakespeare. Of Campion I may now say something. Like Robert Bridges of our own time he was three things—a fashionable physician, a good musician, and a scholarly poet. By a scholarly poet I mean a master of Greek and Latin poetry as well as of English. He wrote Latin verse admirably; and as to his English poetry, in all the five books¹ which he published, there is scarcely anything that is not good. So much cannot be said of most poets. However, we cannot be sure that Campion wrote all of these poems. We only know that he composed the music for them and some of them may have been written by his friends. It is the custom to credit the poems unsigned to the editor of the collection in which they are found. We have at least so many of Campion's signed poems that his style is well known; and the best pieces attributed to him are undoubtedly his. Two or three examples will suffice. Here is one about a lover, who in his despair at being rejected, tells the woman of his choice that she will be responsible for his death. The subject is tiresomely old—thousands of years old; but it would be hard to say that it was ever better treated than in this—at least so far as modern poetry is concerned.

When thou must home to shades of underground,
 And there arrived, a new admirèd guest,
 The beauteous spirits do engirt thee round,
 White Iope, blithe Helen, and the rest,
 To hear the stories of thy finish'd love
 From that smooth tongue whose music hell can move;

Then wilt thou speak of banqueting delights,
 Of masques and revels which sweet youth did make,
 Of tourneys and great challenges of knights,
 And all these triumphs for thy beauty's sake:
 When thou has told these honours done to thee,
 Then tell, O tell, how thou didst murder me!

(When you must at last go to your lone home in the world
 of the dead, all the ghosts of all the beautiful women of the past

¹ *Two books of ayres; being songs without accompaniments* 1610; *The third and fourth books of ayres* 1612; *Songs of mourning* 1613.

will gather about you to admire you:—Helen of Troy, and white Iope and thousands more; and they will ask you to tell them the story of all your loves, the story of all the men that you made unhappy:—and you will tell them, in that sweet voice of yours, which will make music in the world of ghosts. You will tell them of great feasts that were held in honour of you and masques and dances, and tournaments and how often you were crowned by conquering knights as the Queen of Beauty. And when you have told them all that, do not forget to tell them that you murdered me.)

You know who Helen is:—but who is meant by white Iope? You will not find the name in the classical dictionary. Yet this is the most beautiful expression in the whole poem. Perhaps Iope may be she who was turned into a white cow to save her from the jealousy of Hera. But the fact is that nobody seems to know. *Campion* must have been inspired here by a verse from the Latin poet *Propertius*, who seems to have been born about 51 years before the Christian era. *Propertius* was a very good poet; but he is one of the most obscure of all the Latin poets, for he delighted in references to Greek mythology that very few of his contemporaries knew anything about. He too describes a beautiful woman in the world of the dead, and said to her:—

Vobiscum est Iope, vobiscum candida Tyro.

(With you is Iope, with you white Tyro.)

“White Tyro” was a maiden beloved by the god of the sea, who made for her a water palace; but we do not know for certain who Iope was. *Campion* could not have used the beautiful adjective “white” with the name of Tyro, like the Roman poet did; for Tyro does not sound beautifully in English. But by transferring the adjective to the beautiful name Iope, he produced a surprising effect. And really it does not matter we do not know any more than *Campion* did about the story of Iope;—for the poem brings before us the vision of a charming ghost, and that is all that is necessary.

Much more passionate *Campion* often is; but he can some-

times write about more serious things. No poet of the Elizabethan age has written prettier lines about a good wife—in-
deed the subject was seldom touched by Elizabethan poets at
all. Here is Campion's composition:—

What is it all that men possess, among themselves conversing?
Wealth or fame or some such boast, scarce worthy the rehearsing.
Women only are men's good, with them in love conversing.

If weary, they prepare us rest; if sick, their hand attends us;
When with grief our hearts are prest, their comfort best befriends us;
Sweet or sour, they willing go to share what fortune sends us.

What pretty babes with pain they bear, our name and form presenting!
What we get how wise they keep, by sparing wants preventing!
Sorting all their household cares to our observed contenting!

All this, of whose large use I sing, in two words is expressed:
Good Wife is the good I praise, if by good men possessed;
Bad with bad in ill suit well, but good with good live blessed.

It is difficult to think that the author of the above quiet
poem also wrote, not only the following, but scores of the same
kind:—

If thou long'st so much to learn, sweet boy, what 'tis to love,
Do but fix thy thoughts on me and thou shalt quickly prove:

Little suit at first shall win
Way to thy abashed desire,
But then will I hedge thee in,
Salamander-like, with fire.

With thee dance I will, and sing, and thy fond dalliance bear;
We the grovy hills will climb and play the wantons there;

Other whiles we'll gather flowers,
Lying dallying on the grass;
And thus our delightful hours,
Full of waking dreams, shall pass.

When thy joys were thus at height, my love should turn from thee,
Old acquaintance then should grow as strange, as strange might be:

Twenty rivals thou shouldst find,
Breaking their hearts for me,

While to all I'll prove more kind
 And more forward than to thee.

Thus thy silly youth, enraged, would soon my love defy,
 But, alas, poor soul, too late! clipt wings can never fly.

Those sweet hours which we had past,
 Called to thy mind, thy heart would burn;
 And couldst thou fly ne'er so fast,
 They would make thee straight return.

Many of Campion's compositions represent the woman experienced in love thus addressing the inexperienced youth,—mocking him and boasting of her power over him. Nor is Campion, though the best, the only one; hundreds of poets took up the same idea. It is full of sensuous charm; but it was new then—and we cannot help wondering where the English suddenly got this new fashion from. It represents something not in English character at all—something much more Italian or French. In Italy, even at the present day, there are popular songs of the same kind to be heard in the streets. One of them inspired Rossetti with his charming *Italian Street-Song*. Undoubtedly the Renaissance brought this fashion into English poetry; but it reached England chiefly through the Greek and Latin Italian studies. Observe, for example, the immense number of Elizabethan poems on the subject of “Venus and Adonis”—which Shakespeare himself treated at such length and in so daring a way. Now if you apply the mythological story to real life, the result becomes something like the songs of Campion. It is always, in mythology, a subject which is less questionable: we do not think much about the story except as a singular mythological tradition. But when the tempting Venus is suddenly changed to a wanton English girl, and Adonis is transformed into a modest boy, loving without even knowing why, the result startles. It would not startle us in French and Italian literature; the older races are much more frank about these things, and consider them only from the point of art. But such poetry is really foreign to English feeling; and when we find hundreds and hundreds of such compositions, all produced in this age of songs, we are surprised at

the immense changes in taste that have occurred within so short a period.

As a matter of fact there was an actual revival of paganism, the beautiful paganism of Rome and Greece. Occasionally a faint note of Christian poetry is heard; but there can be no question that the dominant feeling of the time was Pagan—so far as literature is concerned. The old gods were revived and worshipped and invoked and celebrated in a thousand poems. There were hymns to Venus, to Diana, to Pan, to Mercury, to all the gods of Olympus, sometimes under their Greek names, though more commonly under their Latin names. There were imitations, too, of all the Greek erotic poets and of the Latin poets of the same class,—especially Catullus and Horace. One requires, indeed, a slight knowledge of mythology to understand the lyric poetry which teems with allusions not only to Greek divinities, but to the rites and sacrifices of pagan times. It was especially an age of hymns: Ben Jonson, for example, wrote hymns to nearly all the great gods; and some of these, like the following, to the moon, are of immortal beauty:—

HYMN TO DIANA

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
 Now the sun is laid to sleep,
 Seated in thy silver chair,
 State in wonted manner keep:
 Hesperus entreats thy light,
 Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
 Dare itself to interpose;
 Cynthia's shining orb was made
 Heaven to clear when day did close:
 Bless us then with wishèd sight,
 Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
 And thy crystal-shining quiver;
 Give unto the flying hart

Space to breathe, how short soever :
Thou that mak'st a day of night—
Goddess excellently bright.

Diana was the Roman name of Artemis,—the maiden goddess, particularly invoked by young girls as the protector of feminine chastity. Now this goddess had several forms and attributes: she was also the goddess of the moon; and she was likewise invoked by hunters; in art she was represented commonly as a tall maiden, with her robe tucked up for running, a bow in her hand and a quiver of arrows on her back. As Artemis, she was the maiden huntress; as Cynthia, Luna or Diana, she was the moon, the goddess of maidens, and the goddess of faithful vows. It is by the mingling together of her most famous attributes in this hymn that the hymn obtains its singular music and beauty. There are Greek hymns to the moon much more beautiful—but nothing in English. Observe the reference to the eclipse in the second stanza: that alone contains a slight obscurity. “Envious shade” means the shadow of the eclipse; and the following verb “clear” means “illuminate.” It was not only in poetry that this neo-paganism appeared: if it had been, the volume of such work must have been far less. The feeling extended through all upper society, and manifested itself in theatricals, in masques and ball-costumes, in astonishing pageants, where living persons assumed the character of gods and goddesses, fauns and satyrs, nymphs and dryads and those charming monsters, half animal, half human, of Greek mythology. No expense was spared for these amusements. Rich men actually sold their lands and castles in order to dress magnificently. At no other time in English history was such splendour of apparel to be seen, and at no other time was such luxury displayed. And yet it was not a vicious luxury—there was no moral corruption, such as that which afterwards appeared under the Restoration. The impulse was purely æsthetic—a new joy of life, a new comprehension of beauty, a new sense of liberty and strength. Sensuous much of the lyrical work certainly was—much of the

luxury also, but sensuous is not sensual. It was a healthy sensuousness, giving indulgence to æsthetic feeling and intellectual liberty, not breaking down any moral values. At no time were people more loyal, more upright, more daring, throughout the whole course of English history. They played at paganism, because it was beautiful; but they do not play at vice, and they went to church on Sundays, because they thought that too was a good custom. Unless you understand this, it would be very difficult to understand the Renaissance in England. Of course the new fashion could not reach far down to the popular understanding. The common people were not educated enough to find pleasure in mythological allusion and in Italian ideas. What they enjoyed, however, was larger freedom. With the Renaissance freedom there also came in a higher sense of justice, a new fashion of generosity;—the upper classes began to treat the lower with a consideration previously unknown. The tone of the time was Humanity.

There is another minor tone running through Elizabethan poetry also particularly of the Italian Renaissance—half melancholy, half passionate. I need hardly say that there are two ways of looking at life. One is the serious and resigned manner, which tells us: “All things quickly pass away, therefore it is foolish to become attached too much to the pleasures of life.” The other way, the old Greek and Roman way was this: “It is true that everything beautiful and lovable quickly passes away; that is just the reason why we should attach ourselves as much as possible to pleasure while they last. Very beautiful the world is; and we are here to enjoy it and he who refuses to enjoy the divine gift of life, dies a fool.”

This latter view of things greatly obtained in Italy with the revival of Greek literature; and the greatest of those Italian princes who patronized the new learning, Lorenzo de' Medici, himself wrote Italian songs in the Greek manner, celebrating the joys of youth, and preaching the necessity of seeking happiness while happiness could be enjoyed. Now we find this also expressed in many Elizabethan poems: one of the prettiest is the following:—

EIDOLA

Are they shadows that we see?
 And can shadows pleasure give?
 Pleasures only shadows be,
 Cast by bodies we conceive,
 And are made the things we deem
 In those figures which they seem.

But these pleasures vanish fast
 Which by shadows are exprest.
 Pleasures are not if they last;
 In their passage is their best:
 Glory is most bright and gay
 In a flesh, and so away.

Feed apace then, greedy eyes
 On the wonder you behold:
 Take it sudden as it flies,
 Though you take it not to hold:
 When your eyes have done their part,
 Thought must length it in the heart.

Paraphrase:—

“Is it true that all things we see are only shadows? And yet how can shadows give such pleasure? Let us grant that pleasures are only shadows, cast by beautiful things or beautiful bodies which we cannot understand—and so become what we think them to be, according to their appearance. Let us grant that they are only shadows; and that shadows vanish. Whatever pleasures belong to shadows must disappear very quickly. Everybody knows that if any pleasure were to last more than a certain length of time, it would become a pain rather than a pleasure. It is in the very fact of their being transitory that pleasures are pleasures. Think of the splendour of sunlight, for example:—it is beautiful to us because of its going and coming. Look at a strong light for more than a moment, and your eyes become tired. Therefore, O my eager eyes, gaze quickly, as much as you can, at the beauty before you. Accept the delight of that beauty as it passes by. What difference does it make that you cannot always have it before you? After your eyes have seen the beautiful, your heart re-

members; and that which has passed away from the vision of sense will never pass away from the vision of remembrance.”

After the Elizabethan era, the healthy feeling in the joy of life degenerated; the true neo-paganism of the Renaissance became changed into a stupid and lifeless mythological fashion—to dive away into the tiresome effusion of Pope and of his school. Nobody of that school could have written so charming a poem as *Eidola*. But in our own time there has been something of a revival; and the most striking expression of that revival, I think, is to be found in the work of William Cory, the author of *Ionica*. Cory was long headmaster in one of the great English public schools; and he anonymously produced a delightful little volume of poems written in the Greek spirit, though with occasional touches of English melancholy. In that little book you will find a poem called *Mimnermus in Church*, which is strangely like *Eidola*. It is perhaps the most striking utterance of the same feeling in our own time. “This world,” the poet sings, “is quite good enough for me: why should I refuse to enjoy it for the sake of some imagined evil, of which there is no proof at all? You say, ‘All beautiful things must die’ :—

But oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die.”

There was, however, some serious moral poetry in this lyrical period. There was not much of it; but there were examples of great strength and charm.

The following must have sounded, across the revelry of the Elizabethan age, like the tolling of a funeral bell—but it is taken from a play, where poetry of this kind mostly found expression :—

DEATH THE LEVELLER

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against Fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:

Sceptre and Crown
 Must tumble down,
 And in the dust be equal made
 With the poor crookèd scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
 And plant fresh laurels where they kill :
 But their strong nerves at last must yield ;
 They tame but one another still :
 Early or late
 They stoop to Fate,
 And must give up their murmuring breath
 When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow ;
 Then boast no more your mighty deeds !
 Upon Death's purple altar now,
 See where the victor-victim bleeds.
 Your heads must come
 To the cold tomb :
 Only the actions of the just
 Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

—J. Shirley.

Shakespeare himself could not have done much better than this; and it reminds us of his very famous song on a similar subject — the song which Tennyson, when dying, wanted to have read to him over and over again :

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
 Nor the furious winter's rages ;
 Thou thy worldly task hast done,
 Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages :
 Golden lads and girls all must,
 As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

I need not quote the whole of this dirge from *Cymbeline*,¹ but you will do well to look at it when you have time, because it is one of the finest things in Elizabethan lyrics. There were serious lyrics too, you will see : — the very greatest could be

¹ *The tragedie of Cymbeline* 1611.

serious and imposing;—indeed seriousness was sometimes used only to make a sharp contrast, by opposition, with the expression of merriment. In the artistic use of seriousness Shakespeare easily excels all—need I remind you of the wonderful song in *As You Like It*¹?

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude;
 Thy tooth is not so keen,
 Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then heigh ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
 That dost not bite so nigh
 As benefits forgot:
 Though thou the waters warp,
 Thy sting is not so sharp
 As friend remember'd not.

Heigh ho! sing, heigh ho! unto the green holly:
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then heigh ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.

What a tremendous irony is here, made by the use of the merry burden! But that was Shakespeare's way of using the serious. As a general rule the moral lyric and the meditative or reflective form of the same poetry came chiefly during the latter part of Elizabeth's reign. By that time the grand enthusiasm was dying down; the Puritan gloom was soon to succeed the age of laughter and pomp and joy. It is about the middle of the period that the love poetry is at its best. The best is not always the best because of mere prettiness, or "conceit," as critics sometimes termed it. Intense earnestness, grave sincerity, occasionally makes a beauty of another kind. The

¹ *As you like it* 1600.

following, for instance, is not good merely as poetry, it is good because of the sort of Shakespearian fire that burns through it. Who wrote it we do not know:—it was found in the collection made by John Dowland¹ as early as 1597.

Dear, if you change, I'll never choose again ;
 Sweet, if you shrink, I'll never think of love ;
 Fair, if you fail, I'll judge all beauty vain ;
 Wise, if too weak, more wits I'll never prove.
 Dear, sweet, fair, wise ! change, shrink, nor be not weak ;
 And, on my faith, my faith shall never break.

Earth with her flowers shall sooner heaven adorn ;
 Heaven her bright star through earth's dim globe shall move ;
 Fire heat shall lose, and frosts of flames be born ;
 Air, made to shine, as black as hell shall prove :
 Earth, heaven, fire, air, the world transformed shall view,
 Ere I prove false to faith or strange to you.

A most difficult and complicated form of verse, with its repetitions and antitheses; but how natural the thought that speaks through the fetters of form! Already verse had become capable of extraordinary things; and there are many extraordinary things in the forms of the Elizabethan lyric; for example, we have two poems made to compliment each other after a fashion never attempted before, and never imitated afterwards in English. I am not going to quote it because it is merely ingenious: I shall only speak of the way in which it is composed. Firstly we have a composition of exactly 36 lines divided into 6 stanzas. Then we have another composition of 36 lines also divided into 6 stanzas. Now the closing words of the lines of the first composition run on regularly from 1 to 36. But the lines of the second composition end with the very same words arranged in inverse order by stanzas,—not from 36 to 1, but in this way:—

6	5	4	3	2	1
12	11	10	9	8	7

¹ *The first book of songs or airs* 1597, ed. by John Douland or Dowland (1563?-1626?).

and so on to the end of the composition, the last stanza running of course—36, 35, 34, 33, 32, 31.

You must go to the early times of Victor Hugo and the French romantic movement to discover anything resembling this ingenuity in the use of what we call “bouts-rimés,” end-rhymes.

The subject of the Elizabethan lyric is so interesting that I regret to leave it here. Unfortunately we have no time to do it justice. The chief things to remember, besides the fact of its extraordinary richness and excellence, are:—

- I. It represented a neo-pagan sentiment on the subject of youth, love and joy.
- II. It was chiefly shaped by Italian influence, but also to some extent by English interest in classic literature, — especially the Greek.
- III. It contains the first noteworthy attempts to write lyrical poetry in English without the use of rhymes, in imitation of the Greek and Roman erotic poets.

EDMUND SPENSER

Although the age of Elizabeth was the supreme age of English poetry there was but one great poet who produced anything in the shape of epic. Elizabeth’s age was not an age of epic poetry, it was an age of lyrical and dramatic poetry. Nevertheless Spenser¹ offers one very great exception; and we must give very particular attention to him, because of the immense influence which he exerted upon subsequent English poetry. Without understanding the place of Spenser you could not well understand the story of the romantic movement in the latter part of the 18th and far into the 19th century.

As for Spenser himself, very little is known. He seems to have been born in 1552 (though the date is still disputed); and although of good family he was so poor that his education was

¹ Edmund Spenser (1552?-1599),

obtained chiefly through charitable assistance. He studied at Cambridge where he proved a good scholar—though not good enough to obtain a fellowship. At Cambridge, however, he made aristocratic friends, one of whom afterwards introduced him to the great Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's favourite; and Leicester got him some position under Government. He travelled in Europe a little and was afterwards sent to Ireland, where the Queen gifted him with a castle and 3,000 acres of land. Unfortunately Ireland was in a stormy condition;—a rebellion followed and Spenser's castle was burned, one of his children being burned alive. The rest of the family escaped to England in a condition of destitution. Spenser died soon after—some say, of hunger; but this is very improbable. So much as is known of his life and work assures us that he was a noble gentleman, generous and frank and very fond of all that was beautiful in nature and in art. But otherwise his figure is a little mystic—quite as vapoury, in fact, as the figure of Chaucer.

Though living and writing two hundred years apart, there is much for comparison between the two great poets. Like Chaucer, Spenser formed a gigantic plan, which he was never able to finish. Like Chaucer he knew the court and the nobility—a fact which did not save him from knowing also the sorrows of official life. Like Chaucer he obtained, with great difficulty, a pension, after having done much in the Government service. But there is one very sharp distinction between the two men. Chaucer studied life as he saw it; and Spenser did not. Spenser was altogether romantic, imaginative, subjective: there was nothing of realism in his work. He never could be said to have had a purely English period like Chaucer. You may remember that Chaucer is said to have had a French period, Italian period, English period—which means only that at one time he studied French models, at another Italian, at last turned to the life of his own country as he saw it. Spenser's literary existence, on the other hand, was almost altogether under Italian influence, especially that of Ariosto.

I need not speak at any length regarding his minor poems

—except to remind you that in his *Shepherd's Calendar*,¹ imitated chiefly from Theocritus and Virgil, as studied by the Italians, he anticipated something of what James Thomson afterwards gave to the 18th century—a new love of nature. Also, I should remind you that Spenser's *Epithalamion*² (poems written to celebrate a marriage) are among the best in English literature. But the great fame of Spenser rests upon his unfinished work—just as in the case of Chaucer with *Canterbury Tales*. *The Faerie Queene*³ was scarcely more than half finished.

Half finished though it remains, its bulk is nevertheless enormous. In the one-volume Macmillan edition, where it is printed in double column and in very small letters, it occupied no less than 436 pages. The whole work would have probably represented about a thousand such pages, that is to say, considerably more than 2,000 pages of an ordinary 12mo textbook printed in ordinary type. If printed in large type, the completed work would make a volume almost as great as Webster's *Dictionary*. Perhaps we have reason to be glad the thing was never finished. Even to-day very few persons read it;—it requires great patience to read it; and even the most patient will read it only for purely literary reasons. Our ways of thinking and feeling have so much changed that we cannot find pleasure in the composition which so much delighted the court of Elizabeth. We can enjoy the lyrics; but Spenser is too much!

So in reminding you of the importance of Spenser, I am not asking you to read him. I do not know that it would do you any good to attempt it. To read extracts from him is indeed necessary; but that is a matter of study, not of amusement. The importance of Spenser is almost entirely an importance of form. We shall speak of that presently. A word first about the plan of the poem. It was a very noble plan as originally conceived. *The Faerie Queene* was to consist of 12 books, each book divided into 12 cantos; so that there would have been altogether 144 cantos. Each of the 12 books was to tell the adventures of one knight; and these 12 knights

¹ *The shepherd's calendar* 1579.

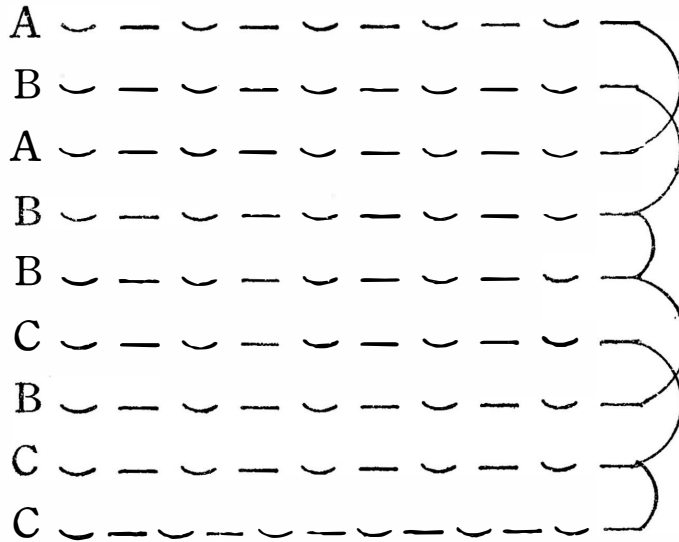
² *Epithalamion* 1595.

³ *The faerie queene* 1590-96.

were to represent the incarnation of the 12 virtues of Aristotle and the enemies of these 12 knights were to represent the 12 vices opposed to these 12 virtues. The Faerie Queene herself "Gloriana" was to represent Queen Elizabeth; and at the end of the poem Gloriana was to have married King Arthur, the incarnation of pure knightliness. This was a great scheme, but Spenser only finished the first 6 books and a few stanzas of the 7th. The Queene, after whom the poem is named, never appeared in the poem at all. The thing breaks off suddenly. So in the case of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the pilgrims never reach Canterbury and never come back from there. We see in Chaucer's work the long procession climbing the hill to the holy city—then darkness and eternal oblivion blot everything out. In Spenser we see another kind of procession—not of living figures, but of old romantic ideals,—heroic and impossible figures, like the figures of some great masque. All of the poem is indeed an enormous masque. But before the masque has much more than half passed before us, it is night, and "the rest is silence."

Now as to the value of the poem, I have said already that the value is only of form. Spenser made the smoothest and the most perfect verse that had yet been written when he produced *The Faerie Queene*. There is no more smooth verse in English even to-day. It flows on softly, softly, like a river of oil, rather than of water. And we are amazed, puzzled by the extraordinary art of it. But this art itself depends much upon the fact that Spenser *invented* his own form. It used to be said that he simply copied Ariosto, or some other Italian poets. But later criticism has very positively proved that this is not true. The Italian forms are all different. The Spenserian stanza was really invented by Spenser; and his invention of it gives him extraordinary importance. Hundreds of poets afterwards adopted that form. I think you know that Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and Byron's *Childe Harold* and Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam*—to mention only three—are written in this measure. It is a measure suitable only to certain dreamy, meditative kinds of work, but it is unsurpassed within those limits of fit-

ness. Now observe the form of it. It is a 9-lined stanza. The first 8 lines are in heroic measure—5 feet to a line of iambic verse. The 9th line has 6 feet; it corresponds to what the French call Alexandrine. And the rhymes go this way:—



I do not know why some persons have called this stanza complicated. It is not complicated at all. There are only two changes in the alternation of the rhyme, one in the middle and one at the end. Indeed the proof of its not being complicated is given by the vast number of poems that have since been written in it. It is very easy to write, but it is not easy to write as smoothly as Spenser wrote it. Perhaps only Thomson can be said to have equalled him occasionally. Byron in *Childe Harold* does not compare with Spenser; he is rough and gritty when placed beside him. Of course the stanza cannot have the value of the sonnet; for the sonnet has 5 lines more. But next to the sonnet, perhaps more can be expressed in the Spenserian stanza than in any other form of stanza. Being slow in its music it is not suited for a great variety of subjects—neither is the sonnet. But within its own proper field it has scarcely a rival. Now you will understand the worth of Spenser. When we think of his influence on Thomson, Burns (*The Cotter's Saturday Night* is in Spenserian stanza), Shelley, Byron, and his followers, we can understand his creative importance.

TRANSLATORS

Before turning to the great drama there is yet one other field in Elizabethan literature calling for mention; that of English translators. It might have been expected that Renaissance influence in England would have stimulated translations very much; and this was the fact. Only a few examples need be quoted. Florio's English translation of Montaigne's *Essayes*¹ from the French laid the foundation of the English essay. (As you might guess from the name, the translator was of Italian origin, but was naturalized as an Englishman). North's *Plutarch*² was the first good English translation of Plutarch's *Lives* made into English; and it needs to be remembered, since Shakespeare used it for his classic plays—*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, etc. Later on there were translations in multitude from the Greek and the Latin. The Greek romances of Heliodorus, *The Golden Asse* of Apuleius, the *Natural Historie* of Pliny, the histories of Livy and Tacitus, and the Greek histories of Herodotus and of Thucydides. None of these were so good as the work of North, nor quite as good as French work in the same line; but they were quite good enough to stimulate English literature in that time and give fresh ideas about writing of histories, fiction, and the essay. Nor must one very curious translation be forgotten — that of *Rabelais*,³ done by Sir Thomas Urquhart. Urquhart was a Scotchman, and his work might not have been quite so well done, had he been an Englishman. A curious thing about the Scotchmen of the later 16th and early 17th century was the mixture of their work of rough and even obscene colloquialism with the terms of learning. The scholars were pedantic and precise enough; but they remained very much coarser than their English brethren. Probably the roughness and coarseness of Scotch life accounts for this. The fact serves Urquhart admirably. I think that you

¹ *Montaigne's Essayes, or morall, politike and millitarie discourses* tr. 1603 (1632) by John Florio (1553?-1625).

² *Plutarch's Lives of the noble Grecians and Romanes* tr. 1579 (1595, 1603, 1612, 1657, 1676, 1895) by Sir Thomas North (1535?-1601?).

³ *The first (second) book of the works of Mr. Francis Rabelais* 1653 (1664); *The third book* (1693, 1694). Tr. by Sir Thomas Urquhart or Urchard (1611-1660).

know that Rabelais—the wonderful monk who wrote in the most ferociously satirical way about monks and priests and miracles and the Church in general—was a very difficult author to translate. His romance *Pantagruel* is written in a way of which no example exists in English literature with perhaps the exception of Sterne, who imitated Rabelais in *Tristram Shandy*. If you look at *Tristram Shandy* you will find certain passages where a thing is not called by one name only, but a whole litany of names. All mediæval students and clerks used to write that way—it was an indication of learning. Moreover the mediæval clerk, in speaking of such a thing as a chair, as a bed, for example, would not use simply all the French words that could be used to indicate the object; he would also use classical words, borrowed from multitudes of authors, and mix the whole thing up into a wonderful mess of language. To translate such stuff requires an absolute knowledge of the conditions under which it was written, and some scholarship as well. But this is not the only difficulty with Rabelais. He is very fond of dirty words, or terms expressing dirty things. He was not in the worst sense immoral; he was simply dirty—the dirtiest writer that ever lived. You must remember that he was anxious to ridicule what he thought was wrong, both in education and in religion; and a good way to attack them was to ridicule them by the use of filthy words. That is what Rabelais did. And when he wanted to speak of dung, for example, he would not only say “dung,” but he would use all the French words and terms by which it could be named among rich or poor, and all the names it could be called in medicine, and the names referring to it in the Greek or Latin authors. Urquhart undertook to translate all this; and he actually did. He knew all the dirty words and dirty witticisms used in all classes of society in Scotland and in England and he also knew the classic authors very well. He made such a translation of Rabelais as could not have been made in any subsequent age. Of course he used many Scotch terms—but they are not any more obscure than the English. His translation is very easy to read; and it is assuredly a literary wonder. The English

language of to-day could not furnish the terms for such a translation of Rabelais;—the age of Elizabeth could. We may say that the book ranks among the most remarkable of all translations. After you have done laughing at the ridiculous pages, you cannot help admiring and wondering at the extraordinary ingenuity of the man. Some years ago Urquhart's translation could be purchased cheaply; it was reprinted in the Bohn's Library in two volumes—though among what were called "extra volumes." To-day this edition is very rare and the new re-print, just announced, is priced at several pounds.

On the whole it may be said that translations from the Greek had more influence on English literature in Elizabeth's time than translations from Latin, so far as new ideas were concerned. The Greek translations were full of novelty; the Latin were already familiar. But so far as form goes, the Latin poets were imitated much more than the Greek. Greek study was a fashion—Queen Elizabeth herself was a proficient Greek scholar. But the English language was not yet ripe enough for experiment with Greek form; and the poets Martial, and Horace, and Catullus, were preferred as models to the later lighter singers of Greek literature.

SHAKESPEARE

Without any long preparation, sudden, unexpected, the enormous figure of Shakespeare¹ suddenly appears in English literature at the beginning of the 17th century. Nothing before him intellectually approached him;—nothing since his time has even faintly approached his work. He represents the highest intellect of modern times; and even the Greek civilization produced no work, yet known to us, which would indicate a mind of equal range and power. To say that there was never a Greek mind equal to that of Shakespeare would be rash; for we know that the average of Greek intellect was very much

¹ William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

higher than that of the average of modern England. But Greek life was under such extraordinary constraint, religious and traditional, that no Greek ever enjoyed the liberty to use his mind in the way that Shakespeare did. Even if a Greek wanted to write plays like those of Shakespeare's he would not have been allowed to do so. So it is quite possible, though not certain, that Shakespeare was the most highly organized human being of whom we have any record within the historical range of nearly seven thousand years.

The most extraordinary thing to note about him at the outset is this,—that he was not an educated man. The University Wits who came before him were trained scholars: Shakespeare had only a very imperfect schooling at a country school, which he must have left very early in boyhood. He was married, we know, at 18, and he had long before that time left school. So this extraordinary being, without any advantages of study and training, accomplished more and higher intellectual work than any other man of ancient or modern times. Certainly what he did was in a special direction. But it was just that direction which required the very highest gifts of mind and heart.

We do not know much about Shakespeare; and you must not believe the books that are called by such titles as *The Life of Shakespeare*. They are mostly conjectural and fictitious narratives. Indeed, so little is known about Shakespeare, that it is not quite certain who wrote the plays that go by his name. We believe that they were written by Shakespeare because the bulk of evidence justified us in that belief; and the advocates of the theory that Bacon wrote them, instead of proving their theory, only strengthened that evidence. But to put the facts as plainly and briefly as possible, all that can be said is this: William Shakespeare was born in 1564—for we have the church register to prove the fact of his having been christened in the month of April of that year. What the actual date of his birth was, nobody knows. We know that he was married at 18 to a woman 8 years older than himself. We know that he had to leave his native town and go to London to earn his living; and

we have good reason to suppose that he began his relation to the theatre as a servant-boy, whose duty it was to hold the horses of people who came to see the play. After that we know scarcely anything about his personal life. Most of his plays were published after his death; and the dates of many remain uncertain. Again we know that he must have died at a comparatively early age. But every thing is misty and cloudy in regard to him—historically speaking. Not so from the literary point of view. The study of literature is a psychological study; and as the greatest psychologists of modern times have brought all their powers to bear upon the mystery of Shakespeare, we are able to know something about it. His work proves that he—or at least the man who wrote those plays—must have possessed a most extraordinary nervous system, immense energy, astonishing perception, large sympathy—all the higher qualities of mind in an almost unparalleled degree. We know that he must have been ignorant of his own power—must have done his work rapidly and instinctively—without dreaming that he was doing anything more than his everyday duty to himself and to the public. Finally we know that he must have been a man of great strength, and that he exhausted that strength by overwork, so that he died at an age when other men are in the prime of life. And that is about all. Of the work thus done about 300 years ago, we have a considerable body of poetry, and 37 plays—not to speak of the apocryphal. The poetry consists of a collection of *Sonnets*,¹ two long narrative compositions (*Venus and Adonis*² and *The Rape of Lucrece*³), miscellanies in verse of considerable variety, ranging from short lyrics to compositions which are rather difficult to class, being at once lyrical and meditative, like *The Passionate Pilgrim*.⁴ Only a word about the poetry. The *Sonnets*, allowing for their form, are the best of all English sonnets; the passionate narratives are also the best of their kind in English; and the lyrical poems have never been surpassed. In whatever

¹ *Sonnets* c 1600.

² *Venus and Adonis* 1592.

³ *Lucrece* 1593 (1594; *The rape of Lucrece* 1616).

⁴ *The passionate pilgrime* 1599.

direction Shakespeare turned his mind, he did things which nobody else could have done.

But our business now is with the plays of which there are 37. To do justice to the subject will require a special course of lectures that would take not less than a year to deliver. In this present course of lectures, our consideration of the subject must be very brief. I must try to tell you in the shortest way possible, how Shakespeare is great, why he is great, and what are those particular qualities of mind and heart by which he surpasses all other mortal men.

The first distinction to be noticed between the work of Shakespeare and all other dramatical work is *life*. In Shakespeare the characters *live* with an intensity far surpassing that of any other figures in any other drama. We see them, feel them, hear them—love them or hate them—laugh at them or weep with them,—just as if they were real people. Real people they are; there is no question about that. They are real as any flesh and blood ever was. The second thing to notice as a distinction between Shakespeare's characters and all other dramatists' characters is that they are intensely *individual*. Not only are they alive, they are individually alive, personally alive. That is to say, they are not types. No type-character can be completely alive. To the same degree that a picture or a statue represents a type, it represents also a general, not a special, personality. We have every reason to like a good type drawn, to admire the picture that cleverly presents us with the figures of peasants or soldiers, officials, or priests, which we can all understand. But still, do not forget that no type picture can be really alive. It is very much like somebody whom you know;—but it is different—not quite the same. If it were quite the same you would not laugh at it, it would almost frighten you—you would be too much astonished at this realization of your memory, you would be afraid that the thing was going to speak and walk—to take individual animation. Now all Shakespeare's figures are not type, but startling realities of this very kind; and there are several hundreds of them.

Thirty-seven plays with from 10 to 20 characters in a play,

and each of these characters a completely distinct creation—try to imagine what this means. Remember that all modern plays, except a very, very few, the work of great men of genius, are not plays containing really living characters at all; the characters are only types, ideas, imaginations, more or less different from actual life. In Shakespeare there is no character of this sort. You cannot know this by reading Shakespeare even two or three times;—you cannot know it at all while you are young;—and one of the best criticisms ever made on Shakespeare was that of Professor Huxley:—“No man can fully understand Shakespeare until he becomes old.” It took the world nearly 300 years to discover this extraordinary fact about Shakespeare,—the fact of his creative power, a power so much like that attributed to Gods, that he has been justly called the “divine.”

A third thing to recollect about Shakespeare’s work is that he never used exactly the same kind of character twice. Everyone of his personages is a special creation. No one of his women is like any other, — though some are more different from the rest and some less different. The character of Viola in *Twelfth Night*¹ and the character of Imogen seems a little alike to superficial observation; but a closer study will soon show you that they are entirely different—that the only resemblance between them happens to be in those passages where the timidity of girlhood, and its gentleness, happens to be brought out as natural facts. So the voice of one child and the voice of another may sound very much alike to the ear of the stranger for a moment; but he soon learns to recognize the difference in timbre. We see this versatility of Shakespeare best shown when he is dealing with the same fashion under two different sets of circumstances. For example—take the case of the jealousy of Othello. It is not the kind of jealousy that makes us despise the man or dislike him; it is a perfectly natural jealousy, of which he is made unwittingly the victim; and he has our sincere sympathy from first to last. But consider the case of the King’s jealousy in *The Winter’s Tale*²—

¹ *Twelfth night, or what you will* 1601.

² *The winters tale* 1611.

there is a jealousy which forces us to hate the man from the outset. It is the jealousy of a naturally malevolent and suspicious nature—capable of astonishing cruelty and astonishing emotional revulsion. We see the man at one moment playing with his child, petting the boy, caressing him passionately; yet in another moment, at the suspicion that the child may not be his own, we see the possibility of an atrocious murder. He does not kill; but we feel that he is capable of more than killing—that he is a being whose friendship is even more dangerous than his enmity. We dread him and detest him, yet it is the same passion, fundamentally speaking, as the jealousy of Othello, whom we should love and trust under any circumstances. The difference is made by the difference of brains in which the passion works havoc.

Another illustration of Shakespeare's versatility may be seen in the very least of his characters,—the clowns, ruffians, servants, watchmen, who figure in the play. Such characters being very subordinate, and appearing on the stage, for the most part only at a very brief interval, one might expect that Shakespeare will here be content with mere types. But not at all. The least of these figures is just as distinctly alive as any of the superior personages. There are even figures who come on the stage for a moment only, speak only a few words and disappear—yet these are as original as the great characters of Shakespeare's tragedies. How do we know it? Does it not seem nonsensical to say that a personage whom we see for a moment only, and whose voice we hear only like the voice of somebody passing in the street, can be made to appear to us a completely finished dramatic character?

The explanation is this: Shakespeare can make any character reveal itself *by the utterance of a single phrase*. Try to think of some experience relating to this in your own life. I think most of us have had such experience. We meet a great people casually and form no particular idea about them;—and we talk to this acquaintance simply as an acquaintance—as to persons who are neither enemies nor friends—until a day comes when one or another of them makes an observation that startles

us, that sets us to thinking. That one observation has changed our relation to the person that makes it; and the change may be either for good or for bad. We may thenceforward learn to like him very much or to dislike him. Why? Simply because those few spoken words were a revelation to us of the person's real character. When Shakespeare puts a figure on the stage for a short time only he makes that figure speak in just such a way. The half-spoken words or phrases uttered by the person immediately enables us to understand all about his moral composition. Now one of the reasons why no man can fully understand Shakespeare before becoming old is that nearly all Shakespeare's sentences are of this sort—every thing said by his personages is a revelation of character. All the 37 plays are built up out of sentences of this kind, and it is not until a man begins to get old that he can have had experience enough in this world to read all the experience uttered by Shakespeare's characters. To know the mere meaning of words is not to read Shakespeare. Always the meaning is incomparably deeper than the words. A child may read Shakespeare for the pleasure of the story; but only an old man, of great intellectual training and immense knowledge of life, can read all the human nature that is in Shakespeare. It is not the story of the play that has made any one of the plays immortal—though the story is always good. It is not in the construction of the play—though that is always good. It is not the poetical art of the language—though that is extraordinary. It is the psychological meaning of everything said or done, as expressing the facts of life.

And yet, though Shakespeare cannot be fully understood by the young, he wrote his plays, most of them, while he was a young man himself! What is the miracle of this astonishing fact that the work of a young man, without education, can only be understood as its best by old men of experience and great learning? Well, there you have the difference between genius and the ordinary mind. The ordinary mind arrives at knowledge only by study and much experience. The genius arrives at the same knowledge directly, intuitively, without study, by ways and means of which most people cannot even

imagine the nature. It is this kind of genius in Shakespeare that makes his work seem like the recollections of hundreds of former lives. He could not have met all these hundreds of characters which he reflected in his drama;—his own personal experience never could have counted for the variety. The work is therefore intuitive work;—but what is intuition? We might call it intellectual instinct, of course. But what is intellectual instinct? Any kind of instinct is now scientifically defined as “organic memory.” (The term is Spencer’s). Organic memory means the inheritance of particular mental tendencies and capacities. The intuition of Shakespeare is, then, a sort of intellectual organic memory. There have been in this world other men possessing the same faculty to some degree; but so far as we know, there never has lived within modern times any man who possessed the gift in the way that Shakespeare possessed it. Above other minds the mind of Shakespeare towers as a great tree towers above the grass that grows beneath it.

Let us now speak about the dramatic work of Shakespeare as briefly as we can. I want to tell you that I am quite sure that it is no use for you to bother your heads in the least with dates of plays or with the special history of plays, or with any of the dry stuff which is written about the special study of Shakespeare. Not now at least. The most necessary thing for you to do first, is to read the plays for the mere pleasure of reading and to learn to love them. But you cannot learn to love them if you begin by reading them as people read school texts—looking for the meaning of every word, using glossaries and dictionaries and Shakespearian grammars. Beginning to read Shakespeare, do *not* study. That is the wrong way to begin. Do not try to understand everything at first—don’t trouble yourselves about the difficulties, but pass them off. Skip everything that you cannot quickly understand; and you will still be able to follow the action of the play and to get at a correct general idea of its intention. Then the charm will take hold of you and when the charm comes you will want to know more. After you have read all Shakespeare without

grammars or dictionaries, without trying to understand details at all, then you will have become prepared to make a study of those plays which most interest you, and have most pleased the world for such a long time. I don't think that it makes such difference where you begin:—your own literary liking should be a good guide. But I may furnish some help by grouping the plays according to the highest literary standard.

Shakespeare's plays consist of tragedies and comedies as well as of some drama which is neither tragedy nor comedy, but a combination of the two. For Shakespeare broke down all convention, composed according to no rules of classic art, constructed everything in the way that seemed to him most effective. You must understand too that the word comedy as Shakespeare uses it has a very wide meaning. We are apt to think of comedy as involving the idea of the amusing, the merry—but some of Shakespeare's comedies are very terrible, terrible as tragedies. *Measure for Measure*¹ is a good example. There is only this distinctive difference in the case of Shakespeare—his comedies *do not end* with death and his tragedies invariably *do*. I need not tell you that this is not at all according to the Greek standard of drama.

There are other things, though, to be observed—that the Greeks placed tragedy far above comedy, and that Shakespeare's tragedies harmonize with the Greek idea to this extent. His great tragedies are much superior to his great comedies. And four of his tragedies are the greatest of all tragedies in any language. These four are *Othello*,² *Hamlet*,³ *Macbeth*⁴ and *King Lear*.⁵

Ought the reading of Shakespeare to begin with these? I should say that it depends very much upon the character and capacity of the reader. Some of us do not like what is terrible and fearful—some of us prefer to find pleasure in what is beautiful, gentle, amusing, happy. Of course all the four tragedies

¹ *Measure for measure* 1603.

² *The tragedie of Othello, the Moore of Venice* 1604 (also 1622).

³ *The tragedie of Hamlet, prince of Denmarke* (1603, 1604).

⁴ *The tragedie of Macbeth* 1605.

⁵ *The tragedie of king Lear* 1605; *The true chronicle historie of the life and death of king Lear and his three daughters* (1608).

of Shakespeare *must* be read: there is no question about that. The question is, what one should we begin with? And it is so important for the student to be pleased at the beginning, that I could not advise him to read one of the tragedies first unless he be sure that he likes tragedy. In that case what tragedy should we read—what is the greatest? It is *King Lear*, a horrible story certainly; but all these stories are horrible. However, as the story of *King Lear* would be especially offensive to Japanese filial sentiment, perhaps the reading of *Macbeth* would be a better choice.

BEN JONSON

THE DECLINE OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA—THE CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS OF SHAKESPEARE

Even in Shakespeare's lifetime the drama, in other hands, began to decline; we must count this decline especially from Jonson.¹ Jonson altogether represents, not progress, but reaction towards a much lower form of dramatic composition. And nothing could better show how little Shakespeare's greatness had been comprehended, than the attitude of Jonson towards the drama.

In the first place, a few words about Jonson. Ben Jonson was, like Shakespeare, of humble birth; but he came of somewhat lower stock. Shakespeare had gentle blood by the mother's side. Jonson had not. He was the son of a bricklayer,—not very much of an occupation, so far as respectability reckons occupations. But his people were thrifty; and Jonson received a very good education,—even university training. He became a thoroughly good classic scholar—a remarkable scholar considering the time. Afterwards poverty compelled him to adopt some occupation in the lower ranks of life; for he would not work at his father's trade; and he had little influence to obtain a position under Government. For a while

¹ Ben Jonson (1573 ?-1637).

he was a soldier and is said to have been a good one. Then he came back to London, began to write for the stage, got into a quarrel with another man and killed him, had a great deal of trouble in consequence, but finally settled down independently as playwright. He was nine years younger than Shakespeare; and outlived Shakespeare by twenty-one years. His contemporaries thought him a much greater scholar than Shakespeare, which he probably was—and a much better dramatist, which he certainly was not. He does not appear to have been at all a man of business; for he made scarcely any money by his work, and died in a condition of great poverty. His life was quite as unsuccessful as that of Shakespeare had been successful.

It is interesting here to observe that Ben Jonson of the Elizabethan age and the great Samuel Johnson of the 18th century resemble one another in a great variety of ways. Both were sturdy Englishmen,—rough, blunt, almost brutal in manner, but really kind-hearted and extremely rigid upholders of moral ideas. Both were big, corpulent, clumsy, ugly men disfigured by smallpox. Both, in spite of their habit of bullying all who differed from them in opinion, were much admired and loved in the world of letters, collecting around them men of talent and of wit; and both of them held the position of the “literary king.” The headquarters of the first great Jonson as well as of the last was a London tavern. Both were classic scholars, and had no sympathy with romantic feeling of any description. Both stuttered when they became excited; and both made themselves feared as exponents of moral opinion. One would almost say that the Jonson of Elizabeth’s time was reborn in the Johnson of the 18th century. But for the present I want you only to remember one thing,—Ben Jonson was the first literary king and Samuel Johnson was the last.

The great demerit of Jonson is chiefly due to the fact that he wrote for a moral purpose—or, at least, with a moral purpose; but this was largely owing to his want of romantic feeling and higher imagination. He believed that a play should be either didactic or satiric or both together. He constructed

everything with a view to ridiculing vice or praising virtue; and he brought no small scholarship to the task. He chiefly studied, as models, the Latin authors, and particularly Plautus. He cultivated a strictly classic style, of immense strength, and hard correctness, which has been very truly called "an iron style." Of classic strength, he obtained supreme mastery—but not of classic beauty or classic tenderness. He had no creative imagination for large things; and the only compositions in which he shows us some charming delicacy and kindly playfulness, are the little songs that he wrote for his *Masques*.¹ His plays may make us laugh a good deal; but they do not touch our emotions in the higher zones of feeling. They are artificial; and the characters in them are never really human. Ben Jonson's plays, although written for a moral purpose, are now only read: they are never acted, and never again will be acted. But the plays of Shakespeare which were not written for a moral purpose now keep the stage in every country of Europe.

But, having spoken thus of Jonson, remember that he seems small only by comparison with Shakespeare. Had there been no Shakespeare, Jonson would have been the greatest literary figure of the Elizabethan age. As it was, he exerted the greatest literary influence—not only in drama, but also in prose, as we shall have occasion to see at a later day. Shakespeare could not be appreciated in that time. But Jonson was very widely appreciated, in France as well as in England. Jonson represented the classic spirit in every way; and he may be said to have laid the foundations of that English classicism which, in the 18th century, was to reach its highest expression in the work of Pope. What is more, although Jonson's plays are not now to be acted, nor to be studied as masterpieces of human thought, they must be read: it is a necessary part of the student's literary education to read the best of them. You cannot read them all, without effort; but that is not necessary. It is necessary only to read the best of them; and you cannot avoid doing that,—for references to Jonson's plays abound throughout all the later English literature into our own time.

¹ *Masques* various dates.

And Jonson is worth reading for his style—which is a very great style in its own way. Finally you will find his best plays very amusing, and you will enjoy the reading of them. They are not plays which the student would like to read over and over again every year while he lives (that is the way Shakespeare's plays appeal to us); but they are worth reading more than once,—at least those which I am going to mention.

I do not think that I need give you a list of the whole of Jonson's plays; there is no particular reason for that, as in Shakespeare's case. I shall only state that he wrote 18 true plays, and no less than 40 masques. This represents almost as great, or greater volume of work than Shakespeare's; but the greatness is only in the volume. Dramatists of the Elizabethan era were very prolific: one man is known to have worked at no less than 220 dramatic compositions! But quantity does not count for much in the history of literature; and we need not be surprised to find that the work of Jonson is extremely unequal. Like Shakespeare he attempted Roman subjects; and like Shakespeare he worked in a great variety of directions. But his tragedies are of rather inferior quality; and his strong point was undoubtedly comedy—comedy of a decidedly coarse kind. However, its coarseness does not rob Jonson's comedy of our esteem: it has great qualities. His three best comedies, which are also his three best plays, are *The Alchemist*,¹ *Volpone, or the Foxe*,² and *Epiccene: or the Silent Woman*.³ Also I should advise you to read *Every Man in His Humor*,⁴ because of the famous character of Bobadil and the excellent satirical studies of contemporary manners. But the three plays first mentioned are the all-important ones: these it is a duty to read,—for they express Jonson's talent at its highest. Of the three, good judges consider *The Alchemist* to be the best. The subject is a very old one in literature;—I have read a French translation of a Chinese novel on the very same topic. The alchemist is a trickster who pretends to have discovered the Philosopher's

¹ *The alchemist* 1610 (1616).

² *Volpone, or the foxe* 1605 (1607, 1616).

³ *Epiccoene: or the silent woman* 1609 (1620).

⁴ *Every man in his humor* 1598 (1011, 1616).

Stone,—that is the secret of changing base metal into gold by chemistry. He humbugs a great many people out of money by making them advance him certain sums in order to carry on the experiments by which they are to be enriched, according to his fake promises. Jonson, in this play, chiefly gives his attention to the characters of the dupes,—the people who are deceived; and there is a variety of these, so that many different kinds of human passions are exhibited. The important personage, Sir Epicure Mammon, has become a byword. The play of *The Foxt* is of quite another kind,—representing an old miser whose chief delight is to gratify the passions of a misanthrope. During his career as a money-maker, he has learned that people generally pretend to be very loving and kind in order to get what they want; and he hates everybody who has approached him for purposes of self-interest. Finally he determines to be revenged upon them all; and he gets a clever servant to help him in putting them to shame by exposing their hypocrisy. The servant, however, is a first-class villain, who takes advantage of his master's malice to get possession of the Foxt's property. Thus we have a picture of malice destroying itself. Parts of this play are extremely amusing—though the amusement is of the cruel kind. The play of *The Silent Woman* is almost in the nature of farce. Here we have an eccentric, selfish, nervous old man, who cannot bear to have any noise in his house, and wants his servants to be dumb. He is told that he can have for wife a young girl who never speaks unless it is absolutely necessary—silent as a ghost. He is delighted and marries her. Immediately after the marriage, she fills the house with guests and musicians;—the guests drink and roar; the musicians beat drums and play on trumpets. The old man becomes almost crazy; he would rebuke his bride. But the silent girl suddenly turns out to be a terrible virago, a scold, a shrew of the worst kind. Really the bride is not a woman at all, but a boy dressed up in woman's clothes, and taught to play his part in a trick upon the old man, who wants to get a divorce immediately. The story of the different ways in which he tries to get the divorce and the tricks that are played upon him by

lawyers and the perjuries that are uttered in court on his behalf, form the amusing part of the play. When he finds out that the girl is really a boy, he is happy again; but he is not allowed to find this out until he has parted with a considerable sum of money.

Such are the subjects of Jonson's three best comedies, subjects very different indeed from such as Shakespeare would have chosen. And now let us consider the difference in treatment.

One of the first things that will strike you on beginning a play of Ben Jonson, is the vulgarity of the atmosphere into which you have entered. There is something unhealthy, close, mephitic about it. The very best of the plays, *The Alchemist*, opens with a shower of filthy words. Shakespeare himself uses nasty language sometimes; but he puts it only into the mouth of very nasty people; and there is incomparably more of this nasty language in Jonson because nearly all of Jonson's people are nasty. The next thing that you will notice is the total want of sympathy. Jonson's characters do not arouse your liking: they make you laugh, but not happily; they interest you only as you might be interested by a quarrel in the street between people about whom you do not care. The reason of both facts is not difficult to explain. Jonson's world is the world of a cynic: he does not see human nature as it really is; he sees it only from the standpoint of the man who despises it, scorns it at its worst, and suspects it at its best. In this respect, he falls, not only below Shakespeare, but even below Molière. Molière's *Misanthrope* is a character which has many fine qualities; and we can even feel real sympathy with Shakespeare's much rougher figure of Timon. But Jonson's misanthropes and all his bad characters are utterly bad, superlatively contemptible: they have not a single redeeming quality. And this is untrue to life. There is no man so ill-natured in reality that he does not know how to make himself pleasant at times; and there is no man so perfectly wicked as to be devoid of all social virtues. Shakespeare saw this, and saw it better than any other man who ever wrote a play. Jonson did not

see it at all; and even if he could have seen it he probably would not have cared. His object was not to represent life as a whole, but to mock at vices and follies. So that although his characters have a certain amount of vitality, they live only as caricatures live. When you see a caricature, you know whom it is intended to represent; but you are never under the impression that you are looking at the figure of a real being. You are looking at a distortion and a partial exaggeration of what is contemptible or strange or funny. All of Jonson's figures are more or less of caricatures. And therefore his self-fancied mission as a moral teacher was of very short duration. His plays would not now be tolerated upon the stage.

So much for his dramas of social life: what shall we say of his Roman plays? Compared with Shakespeare, Jonson was a very good scholar,—holding honourable degrees both from Oxford and Cambridge. Shakespeare was almost uneducated, and Jonson, unable to see the deeper genius of Shakespeare, considered that such plays as *Julius Cæsar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, or *Coriolanus* showed Shakespeare's want of education. He said to himself, "Shakespeare took all this from Plutarch: he does not know Greek nor Latin; and he makes his Romans and Greeks talk and act like Englishmen. Besides, his plays are historically wrong. I shall write some really Roman plays—something historical, something scholarly." Then he wrote the two dramas of *Catiline*¹ and *Sejanus*.² Undoubtedly these plays are historically correct: there is no serious anachronism in this; they are very scholarly; and the characters do speak and act more like Romans than do Shakespeare's characters. Jonson's own generation believed these dramas to be very much finer than Shakespeare's Roman plays. And what Jonson thought about Shakespeare's Greeks and Romans was quite true: they do speak and act like Englishmen. But that is just their extraordinary merit,—their astonishing life. That is what makes them so great. They represented faithfully the nature that Shakespeare knew as a part of universal human nature;

¹ *Catiline his conspiracy* 1611.

² *Sejanus his fall* 1603 (1605, 1616).

and we do not care one cent whether they are true to history or true to classic comprehension: it is quite sufficient that they are more true to human nature than any figures in any drama not written by Shakespeare. This Jonson could not see; but who to-day reads either *Catiline* or *Sejanus* except in the course of the study of the English literary evolution? The plays are good, scholarly, correct; they are also artificial, dreary, unsympathetic, and, in our time, perfectly unactable. On the other hand, Shakespeare's Roman plays are still acted upon every stage—although we know to-day even much better than Jonson did that there is nothing Roman about them except the names.

I doubt whether you could read Jonson's *Masques*. With the exception of Milton's better work in the same direction, they are the best masques in the English language. But the charm of these things depended a great deal upon scenery and music: they were written to be acted at court; they were produced at great expense; and no less artist than the great architect Inigo Jones¹ helped to design the costumes and the scenery of them. Read only, they seem very tiresome; you may wonder how Jonson could have had the patience to write forty of them;—you will wonder how an audience of princes and nobility could have had the patience to listen to them. They have become difficult to read chiefly because their subjects have become threadbare and commonplace to the scholar of to-day. The fashion has changed. Even Professor Saintsbury has confessed that it is very difficult to read them. But if you care to pick out the jewels from this mass of minor dramatic stuff, you will find such jewels in the beautiful little songs which are scattered through the *Masques*—written to be sung to the best music of the time, and the proof of the value of these is that many of them are still sung. Only the other day I received by mail a new collection of music, containing a number of Jonson's old songs. All the sense of beauty that the man had was in the lyrical direction. In the drama he shows no sense of beauty—though he shows wonderful qualities of strength and precision.

¹ Inigo Jones (1573-1652).

There is little more to be said about Jonson here—though we shall have to speak of him again both as poet and as prose-writer. There are two very important things to remember about him, which you should be able to answer about at an examination. The first is that the drama begins its decline under his influence. But the second fact is that he was the greatest classic influence of his age—exerting a power over literary taste well into the 18th century. I might add that you should bear in mind likewise his being Poet Laureate and the first of the literary kings.

AFTER JONSON

BRIEF HISTORICAL MEMENTO

The chronology of what we call the Elizabethan drama is so complicated, that unless we make a little memento of dates and facts in this place, it will not be easy for you to understand exactly what is meant by the Elizabethan age and by the successive schools of Elizabethan drama. The reason for this is that different schools overlap each other—that is, before one ends, another begins. Sometimes we have two schools existing together over a period of years. Therefore when we talk about the successors of Shakespeare, the successors of Jonson, etc., you must understand the word rather in the sense of followers or imitators than in the sense of chronological sequence. Some literary critics have attempted to meet the difficulty by dividing the dramatic period into Elizabethan literature proper, Jacobean literature (*i.e.* of the reign of James I) and Caroline literature (*i.e.* of the reign of Charles I). (The Latin for James is Jacobus; the Latin for Charles is Carolus.) But this elaborate division is very difficult to establish and it can be of no use to the student in a *general* summary of English literature. I shall treat the whole period of drama between Queen Elizabeth and the Restoration as one movement and shall call that movement Elizabethan, although it really includes the reigns of three sovereigns and the dictatorship of Cromwell.

We might indeed make a division—a very general division—of the period into three schools of production. In such a division the first class would be represented by the University Wits 1585—1596; the second period would be represented by Shakespeare and Jonson, and other workers in the new drama up to the reign of Charles I; and the last period, representing the decline of the drama, would date from the accession of Charles to the closing of the theatres by the Puritan parliament in 1642. But let us here make a few memoranda of dates.

Elizabeth begins her reign in 1558,—dies in 1603.

James succeeds in 1603,—dies in 1625.

Charles I—1625,—decapitated 1649.

Commonwealth—1649,—Restoration 1660.

We have nothing to do with the Restoration here, and very little with the Commonwealth. You need only remember that the forces of Elizabethan drama continued through nearly all this period. But the major power of the movement dates from 1580 to 1640; and during that time no less than 2,000 plays were written and acted. Many of these have been lost. To the first half of the 17th century may be ascribed more than 1,000 plays. It would be useless to attempt anything like an enumeration even of the names of authors and titles of dramas. All that we can do is to select the greatest names, and to consider them briefly in their relation to the general tendency. Now you will understand exactly what I am trying to do, to simplify the complexities of this part of literary history. Remember that I am calling Elizabethan drama everything produced between the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 and the closing of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642. But please to keep in mind that this period really includes the reign of King James and the reign of King Charles I. It is not in any way wrong to make this simplification, because most of the great dramatists who produced in the time of Queen Elizabeth also produced in the time of King James and many of them even in the time of King Charles. Shakespeare himself outlived Elizabeth, and Jonson wrote for the court of her successor.

THE GENERAL TENDENCY AFTER JONSON

From Jonson the decline of the drama proceeded very rapidly, with occasional variations in a higher direction. The movement is like that of a descending stream, in which we notice a bright upward leaping of wave and spray at times;—as it might be compared to the descending road of a mountain slope, winding downwards, but occasionally rising slightly as it winds, and then again descending sharply. The decline was in more directions than one: it was both moral and artistic. Not only did the drama constantly tend to become more and more artificial, unnatural; it also tended to become more and more immoral, ignoble, horrible. Tragedy sank down into sloughs of blood: we never had any such bloody drama as in the latter part of the period. Crimes of all kinds, both natural and unnatural, figured upon the stage after a manner that would not have been tolerated in Shakespeare's day. Comedy became nastier and nastier—became obscene, became vicious. And, after all, it is not to be wondered at that the Puritan Government should have closed the theatres. The theatres had really become shamefully demoralized when the Puritans closed them. But they had not then reached their worst in comedy; they had reached it only in tragedy. Comedy continued to degenerate even after the theatres were opened again; and the drama of the Restoration period was to become the worst known in modern times.

So we have to remember this general fact that the whole tendency is downward after Shakespeare:—a decline quite as rapid as the astonishing rise which preceded it. But there was a great deal of fine drama nevertheless produced. It was impossible that everything should become bad at once. Indeed immediately after Jonson we must put the names of two men, Beaumont¹ and Fletcher,² who have given us work sometimes surpassing Jonson and showing an attempt to return to Shakespearian traditions. Beaumont and Fletcher produced an enor-

¹ Francis Beaumont (1584-1616).

² John Fletcher (1579-1625).

mous number of plays—plays of extraordinary variety, tragedy, comedy, romantic plays, fairy plays, moral plays. They may be said to have attempted almost everything. But, although they sometimes do work which tempts comparison with Shakespeare's, at other times we find them deliberately seeking to gratify prurient tastes. They try to be indecent, even when there is no reason whatever for so being,—even when the indecent is untrue to real life. Something of the same may be found in John Marston,¹ George Chapman,² and Thomas Dekker³—all of them dramatists of great ability. Better than any of these was, in this respect, Thomas Middleton.⁴ Compared with Shakespeare, even Middleton is open to the charge of indecency; but he is yet much less to blame than Beaumont and Fletcher; and in tragedy he is great. The tragedy of *The Changeling*⁴ is, in parts, almost worthy of Shakespeare.

Thomas Heywood⁵ is the man who is said to have written no less than 220 plays. Most of these have been lost; and perhaps the loss is not serious; for he has done a great deal of poor work; and no man could write 220 plays, and keep his production at a high level. Nevertheless, Heywood must have been a man of great talent; for he has done some things, in spite of this tremendous over-production, which are admirable, such as *A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse*.⁶ Tragedy, as Middleton and Dekker produced it, had become bloody, very brutal, compared with Shakespeare; but tragedy did not reach its lowest depths of horror until it fell into the hands of Webster and Tourneur.

John Webster⁷ was, however, a man of extraordinary genius; and his plays are still much read and studied, though they cannot be acted. The best of them, *The White Divel*,⁸

¹ John Marston (1575?-1634).

² George Chapman (1559?-1634).

³ Thomas Dekker (1570?-1641?).

⁴ Thomas Middleton (1580-1627) and W. Rowley *The changeling* 1623 (1653).

⁵ Thomas Heywood (1575?-1650).

⁶ *A woman kilde with kindnesse* 1607 (Shaks. Soc. 1850).

⁷ John Webster (1575?-1625?).

⁸ *The white divel; or, the tragedy of Paulo Giordano Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, with the life and death of Vittoria Corombona the famous Venetian Curtizan* 1612.

is even now frequently quoted from, because of certain magnificent and passionate passages which largely atone for the general cruelty of the piece. Webster called this play also by the name of the heroine, *Vittoria Corombona*. You will find the real story which inspired him, in Symonds' history of the Italian Renaissance.

Webster spells the name incorrectly; but his tragedy is founded upon facts quite as terrible as the tragedy itself. This is one of the great plays by minor dramatists which I think a student will do well to read. Another Italian play by Webster, *The Dutchesse of Malfy*,¹ has passages of remarkable splendour and power—though it ends after an unnaturally horrible manner. In violent tragedy Webster was very great—so great that I think, after Shakespeare, nobody except Middleton can be compared with him. Not so with Cyril Tourneur.² Tourneur represents the very lowest depth to which violent tragedy fell after Shakespeare. Such plays as *The Atheist's Tragedie*³ and *The Revengers Tragoedie*⁴ are only horrible and disgusting as images of life. You must not be deceived by the fact that Swinburne has written a sonnet in praise of Tourneur: Swinburne admires the form chiefly; and all these dramatists were great masters of form. But, although it is said that the Japanese stage represents forms of tragedy such as no English audience of to-day could bear to see, I am quite sure that no Japanese audience could bear to see such a play as *The Revengers Tragoedie* in a Japanese setting. They would see that it was as unnatural as horrible; and they would refuse to assist at its performance.

Here I might say that the second great period of Elizabethan drama ends. Under Charles I, the third period of the drama gives us three great names, among which we find leaders of a return toward higher forms of tragedy and comedy. These three names are Massinger, Ford, and Shirley. There can be

¹ *The tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* 1623.

² Cyril Tourneur (1575?-1626).

³ *The atheist's tragedie* 1611.

⁴ *The revengers tragoedie* (anon.) 1607.

no question about the greatness of Massinger.¹ Massinger, after Ben Jonson, is the dramatist of all others whom you would best enjoy reading; and I am not even sure but that you would like him better than Jonson. Massinger, too, is still read a good deal; and a cheap popular edition of his entire plays has been very successful. In a general way it may be said that his best tragedy is *The Virgin Martir*,² and his best comedy is *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*,³ but I think that you would like many others of his plays. Ford⁴ is the least natural of the three: he introduces the subject of incest into his plays, and much of the disgustingly horrible; but he had very great talent: and he especially deserves mention because he worked with Massinger at several great plays. Of his many tragedies *'Tis Pity Shees a Whore*⁵ is perhaps the best; but no modern English audience would suffer such a play to be acted now. Shirley,⁶ who also wrote both tragedy and comedy, rather represents like Massinger an attempt to return to the better traditions of the theatre. His best tragedy *The Traytor*,⁷ and his best comedy *The Lady of Pleasure*,⁸ are fine plays of their kind, and much more free from nastiness than the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher or many others of the preceding period. We may close the whole period of Elizabethan drama with the name of Shirley.

Of what value to the student is really the whole mass of this minor drama? I might say that I firmly believe it is of very little value to him. I would not deny the great merit of such a play as Middleton's *Changeling*,—or Massinger's *Duke of Millaine*,⁹ or, here and there, some one specimen of work by the strongest heads of the time, such as Webster and Heywood. But, considering the fact that Shakespeare alone represents the study of a life-time, I cannot persuade myself that the work of the little people who followed after him can be of much im-

¹ Philip Massinger (1583-1640).

² Massinger and T. Dekker *The virgin martir, a tragedie* 1622 (1631, 1661, 1870).

³ *A new way to pay old debts, a comoedie* 1625 (1633).

⁴ John Ford (1586-1639?).

⁵ *'Tis pity shees a whore* 1633.

⁶ James Shirley (1596-1666).

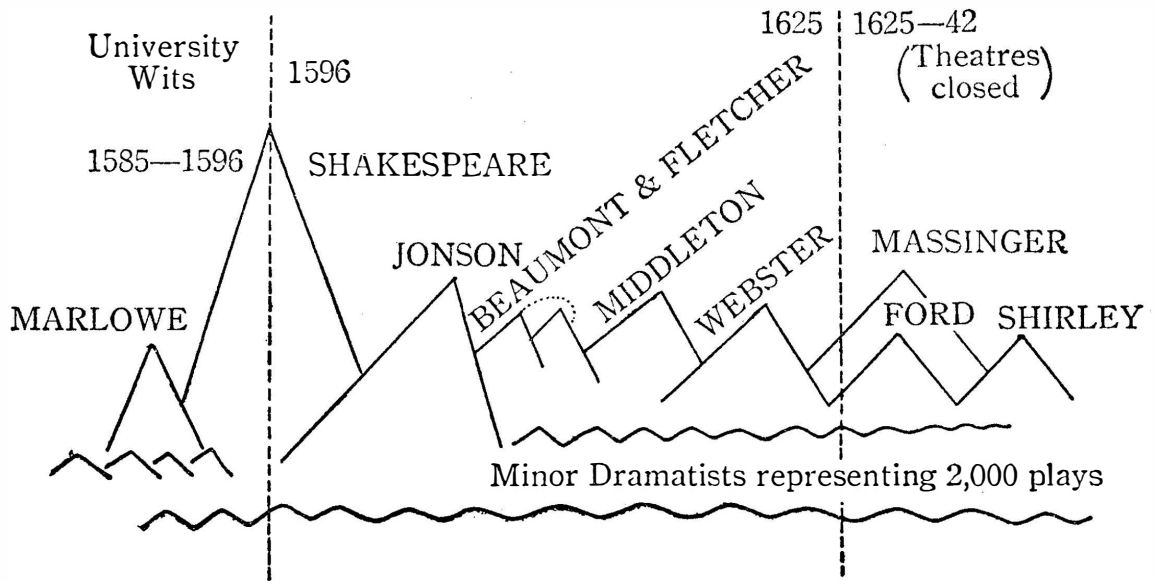
⁷ *The traytor* 1631 (1635).

⁸ *The lady of pleasure* 1626-35.

⁹ *The duke of Millaine, a tragoedie* 1623.

portance in the regular course of study. You are almost obliged to read something of Webster, and of one or two others, because it has become the fashion lately to refer to them. Nevertheless, I believe that the fashion will pass. At the beginning of the century, nobody read these plays: people read Shakespeare and Jonson; — people did not read Dekker and Marston and Heywood and Webster. Even their names had almost become forgotten. Then, after the revival of interest in them, through the labours especially of Charles Lamb, there came about what we call an Elizabethan mania, a rage of interest in everything belonging to the Elizabethan age. Then new editions of hundreds of all plays were published; many appearing only within the last few years. Many have been published directly from manuscript. But even now there is a sign that the public are getting tired of their new “fad,” and that before very long some of these old dramatists will be out of print again. Now if they die a second time, you may be pretty sure that they will never again be resurrected. I think that at least three-fourths of them will die the second time. Only something of the best work is likely to survive in such masses of selection as “The Muses’ Library” represents. We have selections from almost all the leading dramatists of importance in new editions; and even these selections only make something in the neighbourhood of 25 volumes of about 500 pages each. My experience has been that it is very difficult to read through even a small part of these plays. You become tired of the monotony, tired of the nastiness, tired of the violence and the coarseness. The professional playwright must study the old plays; but I do not think that the student ought to waste much time upon them. He would do much better to give that time to the rereading of some plays by Shakespeare.

Now let us try to illustrate the general movement of Elizabethan drama. Professor Dowden suggests that Elizabethan drama may best be compared to mountain ranges; and I shall try to make a rough diagram after the Professor’s suggestion.



The very rough outline should serve to illustrate one great fact, one surprising fact in the course of Elizabethan drama—the extraordinary rapidity of the rise as compared with the rate of the decline. It is actually in the time of the University Wits that Shakespeare suddenly lifted the drama to the grandest heights to which it has ever reached in literary history.

BACON

Francis Bacon¹ more properly belongs to the 17th than to the 16th century; for most of his English work was done after the 16th century. But his life was very long; and as he began to write before the 17th century (the first edition of his *Essays*² appearing in 1597), we may as well consider him here. In many ways he belongs to the Elizabethan age, and reflects its splendour. You are very familiar, no doubt, with the outlines of his life: I shall not deal with that. I am only going to speak of his style.

First of all, it is worth remembering that Bacon did not like to write in English. In this respect his conservatism reminds us of an earlier age—the age of Scholastic Philosophy, when everybody not only wrote but spoke in Latin, and when

¹ Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam (1561-1626).

² *Essays* 1597, 1612, 1625.

university studies were carried on almost altogether through the medium of Latin. Bacon felt that the times had changed; that it was no longer the fashion to write in Latin; and that he would be sure of a much larger audience if he wrote in English. Some of his work—only a small part of it—was written in English. The scientific and philosophical part of the work was written in Latin; because it was still the fashion to use Latin for those subjects. The fashion is not yet entirely dead. European men of science, desirous of communicating their discoveries or ideas to the learned men of all countries at once, still occasionally write treatises in Latin.

You have all read something of Bacon's *Essays*; and I think that you must have found the reading difficult. It is difficult even to a modern English student. There are several reasons for this difficulty. One is that the author, even when writing in English, shows the habit of classical compression. Although ornamental, in a particular and severe way, the style of those essays is wonderfully condensed. Occasionally a thought is put into two lines which would require at least ten lines to explain by more ordinary methods. Often Bacon suggests a truth rather than expresses it. He had studied the compactness and the precision of the Roman writers most thoroughly; and he tried to do the very same thing in English that they had done in Latin. Another reason for the difficulty is the extraordinary care that Bacon took to render impossible any misapprehension of his meaning when he wished that meaning to be definite. You know that he was a consummate lawyer, a very cunning lawyer; and that he had most carefully studied all legal forms of expression. The supreme necessity of legal technical writing is to be careful about statements, about possible interpretations. One mistake of the most trifling character in drawing up a document or a contract may have the most serious consequences. Constant study of law is apt to give a peculiar quality to the style of the student: there is something at once formal and very hard about it, though also very forcible. So you will find Bacon's style to be classic in regard to finish and compactness, yet at the same time

strangely hard and formal in other respects. In spite of all the praise that has been lavished upon the style of Bacon's essays, I must venture to say that I think they are very bad models for Japanese students to analyse. They are extremely wonderful, I am willing to grant; but they are wonderful only in a very artificial way. The greatest value of the *Essayes* is in their thought, not in their style; and the consideration of the style in this connection ought to interest us chiefly as an influence in literary history, not as anything to be admired without reserve.

Nobody imitated Bacon. He represents a style by himself. In order that any one should have been able to imitate him it would have been necessary that the imitator should have been of like character and like training—that is to say, a deep, cold, keen intellect of immense power, trained by the study of law. And perhaps it is rather fortunate that Bacon did not have imitators. The style, though wonderful as to construction, is not at all commendable as a model. It is a little better in *Of the Advancement of Learning*¹ than in the *Essayes* but only in the first volume; in the second volume it becomes worse and worse. When Bacon had written two volumes in English—or, as we should now more correctly call them, two “books”—he suddenly changed his mind, and rewrote the entire work in Latin; making nine books. It is in the introduction to the first volume written in English, that the style is at its best. But this “best” represents something not really according to the genius of the English language. It is a wonderful imitation in English of the style of Cicero in Latin. Cicero, you know, was the greatest of the Roman lawyers; and it is probable that he particularly attracted Bacon for this very reason. The minds of the two men, though separated by hundreds of years, were really very much alike. Cicero is one of the most accomplished of Latin writers; but he is also one of the most difficult to read; and every student obliged to study Cicero in a course of Latin, knows how provoking and how extraordinary his style is. Cicero wanted exactly what Bacon wanted;—warm imagina-

¹ *Of the advancement of learning* 1605.

university studies were carried on almost altogether through the medium of Latin. Bacon felt that the times had changed; that it was no longer the fashion to write in Latin; and that he would be sure of a much larger audience if he wrote in English. Some of his work—only a small part of it—was written in English. The scientific and philosophical part of the work was written in Latin; because it was still the fashion to use Latin for those subjects. The fashion is not yet entirely dead. European men of science, desirous of communicating their discoveries or ideas to the learned men of all countries at once, still occasionally write treatises in Latin.

You have all read something of Bacon's *Essayes*; and I think that you must have found the reading difficult. It is difficult even to a modern English student. There are several reasons for this difficulty. One is that the author, even when writing in English, shows the habit of classical compression. Although ornamental, in a particular and severe way, the style of those essays is wonderfully condensed. Occasionally a thought is put into two lines which would require at least ten lines to explain by more ordinary methods. Often Bacon suggests a truth rather than expresses it. He had studied the compactness and the precision of the Roman writers most thoroughly; and he tried to do the very same thing in English that they had done in Latin. Another reason for the difficulty is the extraordinary care that Bacon took to render impossible any misapprehension of his meaning when he wished that meaning to be definite. You know that he was a consummate lawyer, a very cunning lawyer; and that he had most carefully studied all legal forms of expression. The supreme necessity of legal technical writing is to be careful about statements, about possible interpretations. One mistake of the most trifling character in drawing up a document or a contract may have the most serious consequences. Constant study of law is apt to give a peculiar quality to the style of the student: there is something at once formal and very hard about it, though also very forcible. So you will find Bacon's style to be classic in regard to finish and compactness, yet at the same time

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¹ *Of the advancement of learning* 1605.

tion and generous feeling. Both are cold; both are elegant; and both are dry.

But although Bacon had no imitators, his style had a certain influence. I think we might call this influence the first which was to help to shape English classicism,—that is the classic form as distinguished from the romantic form in English literature. After Bacon there was Burton,¹ who tried to be classic without much success; but who, being more imaginative and sympathetic than Bacon, produced a most interesting book *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.² Then came a far greater man, Sir Thomas Browne³—quite as much of a scholar as Bacon was, probably even more learned, but by nature a true poet—a great poet in prose. Sir Thomas Browne belongs to the 17th century — his book *Religio Medici*⁴ appearing in 1642; but I want to mention him here, because he descends from Bacon as a stylist. No Englishman of any age has written more magnificent prose in a classic style than Sir Thomas Browne: it is still an education to read him as well as a delight. Now Sir Thomas Browne was able to do perfectly well what Bacon had tried to do, and could not,—to make a grand classic style in English. No doubt he had seen Bacon's work, and felt that he could far surpass it. Then came the great prose-writers of the 18th century who imitated Browne so far as they were able,—and among them the great Dr. Johnson. The fashion of classic prose lingered on up to the age of Macaulay. So we may say that Bacon is linked, through all the development of classic prose, with the 18th century writers, and even slightly with Macaulay—who shows some traces of the old classic feeling. This is the importance which Bacon takes in English literature. Otherwise he is interesting only as a thinker and philosopher. We may now turn to the chief features of the literature of the latter part of the 17th century.

¹ Robert Burton (1577-1640).

² *The anatomy of melancholy* 1621 (1624, 1628, 1638, 1651, 1676).

³ Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682).

⁴ *Religio medici* 1642 (1656).