

THE LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION AND OF THE LATTER PART OF THE 17TH CENTURY

PRELIMINARY REMARKS—DECADENCE AND CORRUP- TION OF LITERATURE

YOU will have observed that I say “the latter part” of the 17th century. As I told you before, the spirit and genius of the age of Elizabeth really lasted up to the period of the Restoration; and the Restoration (of Charles II) occurred in 1660, that is, in the latter part of the century. This is the easiest way of remembering and of grouping English literature for the present. Of course there was what is called Caroline literature, that is, the literature of the time of King Charles I, strictly called Early Caroline; then there was also Jacobean literature by which is meant the literature of the reign of King James. Other subdivisions have also been suggested and named; but it would only confuse the memory for you to attempt such classification at the present. The real fact is that Caroline literature, and Jacobean literature, and all the other literature produced between the time of Elizabeth and the time of the Restoration, was Elizabethan in feeling; even the great Milton must be regarded as half Elizabethan. The Elizabethan quality, however, was not the same through all these periods. There was a slow general decline. After that first wonderful outburst of songs which we have been considering, the voices of the singers gradually became weaker and weaker, hoarser and hoarser, and finally ended in something very much like discordant croaking after the Restoration. I do not want to say that there were no exceptions; for there were a great many exceptions. But this was the general fact. The drama began to decline, you will remember, even from the time of Ben Jonson. Then the lyric poetry began to decline. But the department

of English prose did not decline. This is the main thing to remember, as for exceptions. Everything declined except English prose. That improved all through the rest of the 17th century, and all through the 18th century, and even into the 19th century. But when I say prose, I do not mean either prose drama, or prose fiction,—I do not mean any particular field of literary art at all, but only style. The improvements in style sometimes appeared in works of fiction, sometimes in essays, sometimes in sermons, sometimes in philosophy. No particular department of prose literature could be said to improve particularly; but all prose style began to show those classic tendencies, all those tendencies to simplification, which were to blossom at last in the classic essay or in the popular romance of the 18th century.

So we start out with this fact to keep in mind,—that there was a general decadence in everything except prose style towards the end of the 17th century, and even for a very considerable time before it. If we take a general survey of the field of poetry, we shall be able to find three groups of poets—lyric poets, representing three distinct stages of the decline. In such poets as Herrick, Carew, Suckling, Donne, Cowley, Waller, and Denham, we find a great mixture of good and bad with a remarkable tendency to sensualism—a tendency that appears at its worst in the work of Carew and Donne.

The work of Herrick,¹ even in its sensualism, belongs, however, rather to the Elizabethan school than to the later one; but the work of Carew² and of several others marks a new departure in the direction of coarseness: the grace of fancy disappears; the erotic element becomes more reckless. It has been well said that writers like Carew and Suckling prepared the way for writers like Rochester. There were not wanting men who saw that poetry was becoming degraded both in form and in fancy; and there were not wanting pious men who attempted to turn the flow of poetry backward towards the nobler regions from which it had been steadily descending; such were

¹ Robert Herrick (1591-1634).

² Thomas Carew (1595?-1639).

Randolph, Cartwright, Herbert, Stanley, Quarles, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Marvell. Quarles¹ is a name still familiar; because his book called *Emblemes*² still remains a curiosity in literature, and is popular with religious people even to-day: it consists of extraordinary symbolic or mystical pictures with little verses attached to each. It is very likely that Quarles may have influenced the great poet and mystic of the 18th century,—Blake. But even when these men succeeded in restoring the moral tone of poetry, they could not restore the form. That was getting worse and worse. Herbert,³ for example, of whom I spoke to you in a former lecture, actually began to write verse in the shape of crosses and doves, and other religious symbols. And, at last, came the dreadful group of wicked poets: Rochester, Sedley, Mulgrave, Dorset, and others. I say “wicked,” because these men put the wickedness of their own lives and thoughts into such poetry as never appeared in England before or since. By “wicked” I do not mean irreligious, nor do I even mean sensual; for a man may be both sensual and irreligious without being wicked. I should define wickedness as that conduct or sentiment which is directly contrary to all human moral and social experience,—which is contrary to that which makes the foundations of society and the sense of honour. These men did not only mock at faith in religion, but at faith in virtue, in truth, in decency;—they mocked at woman as woman, as wife and mother; they denied the existence of virtue, beauty, honesty;—they befouled everything, and then became silent, and English poetry also became silent. Poetry is founded upon feeling, upon ideas, upon the sense of beauty and of tenderness. When you destroy all ideas, all feeling, poetry becomes impossible. This was what these men did. They became impotent;—and the song that had begun so magnificently in the reign of Elizabeth died away in this horrible howl of debauchery. We shall learn more of the reason when we come to speak of the Restoration drama. At present, enough to say that lyric poetry in the

¹ Francis Quarles (1592-1644).

² *Emblemes* 1635 (1718, 1818).

³ George Herbert (1593-1633).

latter part of the century might be represented by three descending undulations; thus:—



each undulation representing one of the three groups above mentioned, but all sinking downward.

Yet there is something to note here besides the decadence. In this period of falling and decaying the seeds were sown of a new poetry,—the artificial poetry that was to dominate the 18th century under the leadership of Pope. You know that this form of verse is called usually the heroic couplet—a line of ten syllables, with five beats, or emphases, to the line. The first to make this line at all popular was the poet Edmund Waller¹ whose name belongs to the first of the three groups of poets above mentioned. Edmund Waller was not a great poet, but he was a good versifier; and sound critics quickly perceived that he had introduced a form of correct verse with which great things might be done. Three other poets of the same group followed him. These were Cowley, Davenant and Sir John Denham. All of them used the heroic couplet with more or less grace. But the name of Sir John Denham² is the best known; and four lines from his address to the River Thames in his poem of *Coopers-Hill*³ are very famous even to-day. When you read them, you at once begin to think of Pope and the 18th century classic school:—

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream,
My great example, as it is my theme,—
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,—
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full!

Please remember especially the names of Waller, Denham, and Cowley—because of their relation to the future poetry of the 18th century.

¹ Edmund Waller (1606-1687).

² Sir John Denham (1615-1669).

³ *Coopers-Hill* 1642 (1669, 1702).

So much for lyric verse, and miscellaneous brief poetry. But it is very curious that the same period of poetical decline should have produced in epic poetry the greatest figure of all English literature. For Milton is the greatest English epic poet. And it is also strange that the same period should have produced that very great poet and man of letters, Dryden, who was the second of the old English "literary kings"—Ben Jonson being the first. I suppose that you are tolerably familiar with the lives of these two great men; and I shall not say much about the biography of either. You should remember that Milton was born very early in the 17th century—in 1608; dying in 1674:—while Dryden, born in 1631, died in 1700—so that his death exactly marks the beginning of the 18th century. **A** word about Milton first.

MILTON

You know that he went to Cambridge University,—where on account of his personal beauty he was called "The Lady"; you know that he was very religious, and in sympathy with the Puritan movement; you know that he travelled in Italy, and there studied with great masters; you know that he had curious troubles in his married life, and that he was too passionate and too sensitive to be a good husband and father, though he was the very prince of poets. The character of the man was not at all amiable; but there are some fine things about it—courage, love of truth, sense of duty in all matters that his nerves could bear; together with faultless taste in matters of literary art. These make him a most interesting personality, though not perhaps a lovable one. And you know that he wasted 20 years of his life in furious political writings—writing on the Puritan side and, I am sorry to say, very badly, because of the passion that was in him—until he actually became blind from overwork. His blindness, and all his misfortunes were of his own making. But had it not been for this

misfortune of blindness, we should perhaps never have had the great epic of *Paradise Lost*.¹

Now in speaking of *Paradise Lost* I should be very sorry to have you think that I wish you to admire the poem in point of sentiment or argument. I think,—as the great English scientist Professor Maudsley had the courage to say that the English people will some day be thoroughly ashamed of the theology of this poem—that they will look back to it as we look back to the time of Northern ancestors who were cannibals. The theology is horrible, the moral tone is gloomy and harsh. But that is not the way to consider this really grand monument of English verse. Detest the subject as much as you please;—dislike as much as you please the ideas expressed about marriage and about woman and about responsibility; you cannot but wonder at the workmanship. Stated in the shortest possible way, this epic is an attempt to apply to biblical story and church-legend the artistic laws of Greek epic as embodied in Homer, and of Latin epic as embodied in Virgil, and the attempt is successful. It is an amazing success. Milton was too profound a scholar not to perceive that English verse could never repeat the echoes of Greek and Roman verse; but he made a blank verse that could at least repeat the dignity, the majesty, and the rolling beauty of the antique epic in a slightly different way. Otherwise the whole effect and arrangement is antique. And there is yet another thing to notice about this wonderful verse. Almost any kind of blank verses may become monotonous in spite of being perfectly correct. It is possible to be a great deal too correct. When you try to read aloud blank verse that is too correct—so that every line sounds exactly like the line before it, rising and falling in exactly the same way—you soon become tired: you become tired of Pope's verse, because of the regularity of the sound—just as you become tired of the beating of a drum. This is the great difficulty of rhymed couplets; but blank verse may be made just as monotonous and tiresome as the rhymed couplet, and still be perfectly correct. Now you cannot read Milton so as to

¹ *Paradise lost* 1667.

make him sound monotonously. He had the magical art of slightly varying the "quantity" of the line so that no two successive lines rise and fall in exactly the same manner. Do not think that this is a small thing to accomplish. It is almost the most difficult thing to do in all poetry. Tennyson has been able to do it sometimes; but he could not do it as Milton did. Even Swinburne, a still greater master of technical verse than Tennyson, could not do it as Milton did. Swinburne is often very monotonous; Milton never. Therefore we have a right to say that Milton's blank verse is by far the most perfect verse in the English language.

Mere perfection of form, however, does not make the greatest poetry. There must be more than this. There must be beauty of fancy; there must be a sense—an exquisite sense of word-values; there must be true scholarship—at least in the highest and most solemn form of poetry. Milton has all this; and it is an education to study him—an education in all the values attaching to verses—whether of force, colour, hardness, sonority, or anything else. I have often told you that Tennyson is to-day the most important English poet to study, because of the influence which he has had upon the whole English language. In Tennyson's case the influence was due chiefly to the astonishing way in which he revived forgotten Anglo-Saxon, Danish, or Scandinavian words—that is to say, the way in which he gave new life to the old Northern elements of the English tongue. The influence of Milton has been of a totally different kind. Milton did not so much enrich English by working with words as by working with Latin and Greek, especially Latin. To use a technical literary term, Milton was the greatest of all English "Latinizers"—that is to say, of men who make Latin words, idioms, or turns of expression into English ones. He transported out of the soil of a dead language hundreds of germs which, planted in English ground, have taken root and grown and blossomed, and become an immortal part of English speech. I must confess that all of these seeds have not grown; some withered and died in the ground: I mean that some of Milton's Latinisms have already become obsolete. That is

what makes him so very difficult to Japanese students. Unless you have studied Latin very extensively, you will often find it almost impossible to imagine what Milton means without help. Many words which he uses quite accurately from the standpoint of scholarship, have not at all the same meaning now that they had when he wrote them. But in spite of this he enriched the language immensely; and he will be studied for hundreds of years to come with profit by the classic student. I shall not speak of his many poems in detail; you know the titles of *Paradise Regain'd*,¹ *Samson Agonistes*,² *Comus*,³ etc., etc. *Samson* is a great imitation of Greek tragedy in English verse. *Comus* is the best of all the English masques. The shorter poems, *Il Penseroso*⁴ etc., are in almost every anthology; and each one still remains the best of its kind. *Lycidas*⁵ has been the supreme English model of elegy in the classic manner for generations: I suppose you remember that Matthew Arnold among many modern poets has made the most successful imitation of it. The *Nativity Ode*⁶ is the most wonderful of all English odes; and the sonnet entitled *At a Solemn Music* has been pronounced by Professor Gosse the most perfect verse in the language. This surely is glory supreme. Almost everything that Milton attempted to do he did better than anybody else; and his work even to-day has no rival. But the scope of that work is severely limited to classic form. There is nothing romantic about Milton. He is the greatest epic poet, the greatest writer of elegy, the greatest master of ode, the greatest author of the masque, the greatest imitator of Greek tragedy; but he is not the greatest poet in everything because he did not attempt everything. He attempted only the severest and most difficult forms in the highest art of poetry. And there he remains.

Perhaps you will ask, "Is Milton a greater poet than Shakespeare?" I should answer both No and Yes. In one sense—

¹ *Paradise regain'd* 1671.

² *Samson Agonistes* 1671.

³ *A maske presented at Ludlow castle* 1634.

⁴ *Il penseroso* 1632.

⁵ *Lycidas* 1637.

⁶ *On the morning of Christs nativity* 1629.

and the deepest sense—no poet is greater than Shakespeare. Milton wrote the most perfect sonnets in the English language; and Shakespeare's sonnets are much less perfect as to form;—yet there is more poetry, more real emotional poetry in one of Shakespeare's sonnets than in ten of Milton's. You must remember that also Shakespeare is the greatest figure in all modern literature; he never sacrificed anything to form. He could afford to be very careless about form and still be the greatest of all poets. And what is more, I am going to say, frankly, that I think the study of Milton cannot, at the present time, be of any value to the average Japanese student. The study of Milton depends for good results upon an extensive knowledge of Latin and of old classical literature, as well as upon an absolutely perfect knowledge of English. Therefore I think that to study Milton would be for most of you waste of time. On the contrary you cannot study Shakespeare too much—nobody can study Shakespeare too much. That is the great difference in the deeper essentials of poetry. The great poet, whose place in literature does not depend upon form, can be studied to advantage in all countries and at all times. But the poet whose place is chiefly assured by the architecture of his verse, can only be studied with profit in his own tongue. I therefore think that I am right in always putting the emotion, the sentiment, and the thought before the form. Any poetry which does not remain poetry when literally translated into any other language—and I mean translated into prose—is not the greatest poetry,—is not in most cases even great poetry. Milton remains great even when translated into prose; but he then takes a very much lower place than he occupies in English, and all his faults are brought out. But take such great poets as Gœthe or Heine—when you translate their best work into prose it is still grand poetry, poetry of the highest class. That is the test. Now a few weeks ago I was reading with great surprise some new French translations of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. As I have told you, Shakespeare's form is not perfect: it has many faults; but as translated into perfect French these sonnets show no faults at all—on the contrary they seem even

more wonderful than they seem in English. Milton would not bear that test; and I should put Milton incomparably below Shakespeare.

But you will remember that the other day I spoke of Milton's relation to Elizabethan poetry. Now you will also have noticed that I called him the most perfect of all English classic poets—using "classic" in the relation of the term to Greek and Latin culture. Do not think that there is any contradiction here. Although so very classic, Milton was Elizabethan to a very considerable extent. He was not so as to form, but as to tone, feeling. The great quality characterizing Elizabethan poetry was its pagan spirit—a spirit delighting in the images and the names of the old gods of Greece and Rome. Milton surpassed all the Elizabethans in his exquisite use of the pagan mythology which had become the fashion. I know that he did so in such a way as not to appear himself indifferent to religious beliefs; but he could be just as fond of the old pagan beauty as any of the singers who preceded him. You must not think, because he represented the gods as fallen angels or devils in his *Paradise Lost*, that he really disliked them. Elsewhere in his briefer poems, in his odes and sonnets—perhaps most of all in the wonderful *Lycidas*, he seems almost as much of a pagan as Theocritus himself. Unlike the Elizabethan singers he did not love songs—he was too serious for that; but he had a very warm sense of beauty, an artistic sensualism or sensuousness, which glows through the pages even of his *Paradise Lost*, and which was altogether the reverse of Puritanism. So, when you hear Milton referred to as the last of the Elizabethan poets, you will understand that the critic is speaking only of his tone, not of his form.

Such a poet could not be understood in an age of poetical decay. He was almost unread in his lifetime. It was not until well into the 18th century that men began to understand what a wonderful artist he had been, and to study his poetry seriously. Some attempts have since been made to imitate it; but none have been successful.

DRYDEN

Now let us speak of Dryden.¹ First of all, let me ask you to dismiss from your minds altogether the common idea that Dryden was a poet in the same way that Milton was a poet. I am not sure whether we ought even to call him especially a poet—notwithstanding the fact that he was made Poet Laureate. Of course you have seen a volume containing about 650 pages of small print, called *The Poetical Works of Dryden*; but in the higher sense of poetry how much of these hundreds of pages are real poetry? I think not more than 25 or 30. The great mass of that book is made up of prologues, or versified introductions to plays; another large part consists of stories remodelled from Chaucer—that is to say, translations of Chaucer's Middle English into Modern English; and most of the remainder consists of satires,—which certainly do not belong to the higher regions of poetry. Then you have several political poems, very famous in their day, but now scarcely interesting. Lastly you have a few, a very few, exquisite bits of verse, and the wonderful ode on *St. Cecilia's Day*,² — perhaps the only other ode of the age at all comparable with some of Milton's work. Throw out of the volume these few beautiful pieces now printed in all the anthologies, and the whole of what is left will not be found above second or third class verse. This volume, huge as it is, represents only about a tenth of the whole volume of verse that Dryden wrote,—because he wrote an immense number of plays in verse,—mostly in rhymed verse, of rather indifferent quality. Also he wrote dramas in blank verse. We cannot speak of his dramas here—except to say that the whole of them would fill a great many very large volumes. To put the matter very simply, he wrote too much verse to be a great poet. He rose to the heights of poetry only during a few moments of his long life. I should not advise you to think of him so much as a poet, but as a man of letters in the widest sense of the word. He was a dramatist, a satirist, a writer of prose, a Poet Laure-

¹ John Dryden (1631-1700).

² *A song for St. Cecilia's day* 1687.

ate, and at last a “literary king.” Like most of the literary kings, he accomplished more by personal influence than by the intrinsic value of his productions.

A few words about the man himself ought to convince anybody that he never could have become a very great poet. The noblest poetry requires much sincerity of feeling and of purpose; and Dryden was something of a knave. He was a graduate of Cambridge, and a good scholar; but, almost from the time that he first took to literature as a profession, he showed by his conduct that he chiefly considered it a means to make money. Under the Government of the Puritans, he was a Puritan, and when Cromwell died he wrote a poem upon his death, lamenting for him as for a demi-god. Then came the Restoration and Dryden wrote a poem celebrating royalty, and the return of the king. King Charles set a fashion of moral corruption; so Dryden wrote immoral poems. Then came King James II, a Roman Catholic Ruler; Dryden at once became a Roman Catholic, and sent his children to a Roman Catholic school. It is not to be expected that such a man could be a very sincere poet.

It is a noteworthy fact that the greatest thing which he wrote, the second of the two odes on Saint Cecilia’s Day (you may remember it better under the name of *Alexander’s Feast*)¹ was the one piece which he wrote believing that he could not get any money for it. He complained that it was a case of hard work and no pay. Yet he did get pay for it afterwards. However, he wrote it under the belief that he was performing a labour of love, and, perhaps for that very reason it is a noble and beautiful composition. The rest of his poetry does not come up to this level; and the most famous of it are the four satires entitled *Absalom and Achitophel* (in two parts),² *The Medal*,³ and *Mac Flecknoe*.⁴ The first three are political satires—chiefly directed at the Earl of Shaftesbury; while the fourth

¹ *Alexander’s feast; or the power of musique. An ode in honour of St. Cecilia’s day* 1697.

² *Absalom and Achitophel* 1681.

³ *The medal* 1682.

⁴ *Mac Flecknoe, or a satyr upon the true-biew-protcstant poet, T(homas) S(hadwell)* 1682.

is an attack upon a rival poet, Shadwell. The substance of these satires cannot interest us much now, because of their political character. But we may say of them that, with the possible exception of Pope's *Satires*, they remain the best work of their kind. Such poems as *The Hind and the Panther*,¹ a defence of the Church of Rome—cannot attract the reader of to-day as they attracted the readers of the 17th century. The best of Dryden's work has become too old-fashioned to please (excepting always the Odes) simply because he did not depend upon the deeper and nobler elements of poetry for his success. Satire is not noble literature, and allegory, which Milton could make sublime, Dryden could not. There remains besides the work mentioned an immense mass of verse, both dramatic and narrative. On the stage Dryden was represented by no less than 28 plays in verse; then you must remember his great translation of *Virgil*; his fables and stories in verse; his reconstruction of Chaucer's stories in verse; his Epistles, Elegies, Prologues, in verse. The bulk of his work is immense; but it very seldom rises to the eternal snowline that separates sublime poetry from all that is not sublime. Perhaps the best criticism upon him is that of the contemporary French critic M. Jusserand, who declares that he had so much talent that it almost resembled genius.

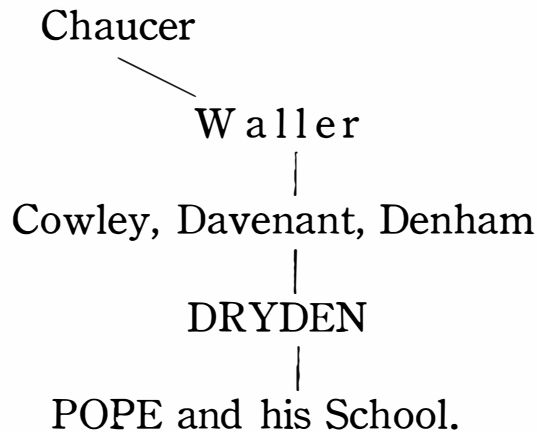
It is therefore chiefly as to form that Dryden is important; and as respects form, he was the greatest poet, between Milton and Pope. But he did not invent anything. He was not an original innovator. What he did was simply to improve upon rules that had already been established. He must really be considered as the great founder of the classic poetry in heroic couplets—I mean that he founded the great school of artificial verse upon which Pope and the 18th century poets afterwards built some additional structures or stories.

Here, it is necessary that I should be very clear in explaining the evolution of this poetical manifestation. Remember that I told you that Milton was the greatest English classic poet, and still so remains. That is true;—do not forget it.

¹ *The hind and the panther, a poem* 1687.

But nobody in the 17th century really understood Milton;— he was too fine, too supremely perfect for that age. So there were two classic schools—or, rather, two classic ideals. The first was Milton's and he had no following in his time. The second was Dryden's, which was not much of an improvement upon the classicism of Ben Jonson; but it was much easier to follow; and everybody followed it for about 150 years. But do not think that Dryden invented it; he did not. He only used his great influence and talent in order to further it.

The real founders of this classic form, the inventors, were, as I told you before, Waller, Cowley, Davenant, and Denham,—especially Waller. It might be claimed that Waller did not invent the heroic couplet, because Chaucer had used it in the *Canterbury Tales*. But the language in which Chaucer wrote, Middle English,—had ceased to exist: his language was scarcely intelligible to the 17th century. Waller was really the first to introduce this measure successfully into Modern English. So we may trace out the history of the Augustan or Classical School of artificial English poetry by the help of this little diagram:—



I have put the names of Dryden and of Pope in capitals, to remind you of the fact that they were the real chiefs, the true leaders of English classicism—that is, perhaps, to say pseudo-classicism; for the supreme classical feeling only found pure expression in Milton; and Milton had no following until late in the next century.

I think that you will now see Dryden's historical impor-

tance in English literature. He polished and perfected the heroic couplet, and left it all ready for Pope to use. Pope improved upon it a little, but only a little. The greater part of Dryden's work is in this tiresome measure. But he was a better poet than Pope to this extent,—that he could write in a great many different measures, whereas Pope did almost nothing worth mentioning outside of heroics. Dryden had more mastery of different forms; and he could write very fair blank verse. He was the first to lay down a kind of general rule,—that heroic couplets should be used for serious poetry of almost every kind, and that dramas should be written in blank verse. But he made this rule only with great hesitation; in his old age and after he himself had written a great number of plays in rhymed verse. His rule was long followed. After him it became the fashion to write all kinds of poetry in rhymed heroics, and to write plays in blank verse. You need only remember that he made the rule, and that it was long obeyed. As for the rule itself, it was, from one point of view, nonsensical; and it cramped literary expression for more than a century. It gave us the most wearisome, the most monotonous, the most artificial, the most unsatisfying, the most mechanical, the most insincere poetry ever produced in the history of English literature. And yet the student of literature must not complain too much. We have reason to be really grateful to Dryden.

Why?

Because Dryden was able to do that which Milton could not do—could not do owing to his very superiority. Dryden was able to reform English prose.

Reform it in what manner?

Only in respect to correct form. Only in respect to the discipline of verse. Not in any other way. But reform in this one way had been very much needed.

All the English poetry of the age of Elizabeth, beautiful as it is, varied as it is, nevertheless shows defects of form which never appeared after the 17th century. The English ear had not yet been perfectly trained. Men had been singing as the birds sing,—out of their hearts, without much thought about

the possibilities of perfecting their song. And because they sang so well and so sweetly, they had been perfectly satisfied with their work, and the rest of the world had been equally well satisfied. Now there is one bad thing about carelessness in workmanship,—namely that it leads to still greater carelessness. So long as there happens to be no severe standard of form, by which all work can be critically judged, people will not take proper pains to improve their language. However unjust and malicious criticism may sometimes be, it has always this value, that it forces people to take pains. When there was no criticism, English poets, who began at first to sing very well because they were passionately sincere, became less sincere as the emotion of the age exhausted itself and at last they got to be so careless that they wrote poetry in the form by doves and crosses as I told you before. In this time of the general poetical decay Milton and Dryden established new standards, and made criticism possible. But the public could not understand Milton; he was too great a scholar for them. On the other hand they could understand Dryden, who gave them simple rules, which they could learn how to obey. Dryden established criticism and established discipline.

It seems to us rather sad to-day that generations of English poets should have wasted their talent and their time in writing tiresome heroic couplets—in writing that sort of poetry which you may best judge of from such a work as Pope's translation of *Homer*. But that is not the way that we must look at the facts. You must think of the English nation as going to school under Dryden and under Pope until they could learn to compose decently correct verse. You must think of them as training themselves in the mastery of form. But perhaps you will say that it was surely waste of time to write only in one form for 150 years. The truth is that it was not waste of time, any more than are the tiresome exercises in prosody which the schoolboy has to make before his graduation. When you learn to master only one kind of verse perfectly well, then you can attempt the mastery of other kinds; but not before. When the training is done,—when the mind has become accustomed to

find pleasure in exactitude and obedience to rule,—then everything is possible; but not before. When the English had learned to make rhymed heroic verse nearly as good as the Alexandrines of the French poets, they naturally rebelled against the classic school; and English poetry became romantic again. But when it became romantic again, it remained correct, restrained, polished, perfect. It had been at school for 150 years; it had graduated with honours. Such verses as those of Shelley, or Wordsworth, or Keats—not to speak of the still finer work of the Victorian poets—never could have been written unless poetry had been under the classical discipline of the tiresome Dryden and the monotonous Pope. All preliminary study is monotonous and tiresome, but the result is of the greatest possible service. You cannot make progress in any kind of study without first enduring a great deal of monotony.

One more thing must be mentioned about Dryden's place in poetry: we may call him the father of English satire. I do not like satire; I cannot believe that any art of which the object is to inflict pain, of which the purpose is to gratify malice, can be considered a really fine art. I do not understand why such great critics as Professor Gosse and Professor Saintsbury speak of the delight which they find in the malignant skill of a Dryden or a Pope attacking his enemies. I can only suppose that it must be the same kind of pleasure that men feel in shooting birds or in hunting foxes—the pleasure of the hunter; and I think that all hunting is cruel and bad. Having expressed this opinion, however, I must go back to the fact that Dryden's satires are the best of their kind in English verse. Pope and his followers practised satire very extensively;—the 18th century was a cruel age—at least up to the time of the Romantic Movement. While the classical school lasted, satire also lasted, and it was developed into an atrocious weapon of offence as well as of defence. When the matter happens to be purely personal we cannot, I think, morally admire it; but when the verse serves only to paint some particular kind of vice or weakness, then indeed it may be said to possess a certain didactic value. For instance, Pope's satire upon "Atticus"

is simply cruel and mean if we think of it in connection with Addison; but when we think of it only as a picture of a certain weak and contemptibly wicked variety of human envy, then it seems a matchless bit of work. Well, all this school of satire dates from Dryden; but Dryden was not the first English satirist. He never invented anything. Samuel Butler¹ was before him; you will remember something about his poem, *Hudibras*,²—that long composition made to ridicule the Puritans and written in short jerky verse of eight syllables. As early as the time of Henry VIII there had been satire. And, if we go back to the period of Middle English, we must regard much of the allegorical poetry of *Piers Plowman* as satire. But what Dryden did was to make satire in heroic couplets a fashionable weapon of attack and of defence. In previous times satire had mostly been put into popular language and popular forms of verse—because it had then been directed chiefly against general abuses, not against individuals. Now things were changed. As the literary class began to grow large, and to come into contact with other classes, it was found that every poet and dramatist must expect to fight. Everybody wore swords; but the literary men were no longer so skilful in the use of steel that they could hope to take care of themselves in the old-fashioned way. They invented a weapon of words more terrible than a sword. We might say of the classic satirist as has been said in the Bible of a divine personage, that “Out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword.” With romanticism, and later humanitarianism, satire almost died. Modern poets try to be kindly to each other, and to the world in general. Yet the art is not quite dead. Even Tennyson was once made the subject of a satire by the elder Bulwer-Lytton; and you will remember that he replied in so terrible a fashion that Bulwer was silenced for the rest of his life, and made ridiculous throughout the whole English-speaking world. But see how different the morals of our epoch. Tennyson would never suffer the cruel verses which he wrote to be printed in any edi-

¹ Samuel Butler (1612-1680).

² *Hudibras* part i 1663, part ii 1664, part iii 1678.

tion of his works. In the 17th or 18th century men gloried in being able to give pain ; in the 19th century I am glad to say that they are ashamed of it.

And now we shall take up the subject of the drama of the later 17th century,—the atrocious drama of the Restoration.

RESTORATION DRAMA

A PERIOD OF MORAL DECAY—CONDITION OF THE COURT AND SOCIETY—THE TWO SCHOOLS OF DRAMA

Before anything else, it is necessary to say something about the history of this period. When Charles II was restored in 1660 the entire nation had become tired of the Puritan military Government. Perhaps the Puritan army was the best army that ever existed in Europe. It was composed entirely of men trained to consider duty to God,—as they understood the word God,—the supreme law of conduct. These men never drank, never quarrelled, never swore, never stole, never disobeyed orders. I suppose you know that they never lost a battle:—as Macaulay says, they were never beaten. They won, and still keep, the admiration of the world for their soldierly quality. But they were only human after all ; and their extraordinary virtues were off-set by extraordinary faults. They were terrible fanatics. They demanded that everybody should conform to their ideal of conduct. They considered all pleasure sinful ;—therefore they closed the theatres, put some of the actors into prison, and publicly whipped others. They closed all houses of amusement. They even abolished public holidays. They forbade people to enjoy themselves upon Christmas-day ; they forbade also the spring-festivities, and cut down the May-poles about which the people had been accustomed to dance. They blamed persons who dressed well or in bright colours. They made holes in pictures and hammered beautiful statues to pieces. It would be hard to tell you all that they did to make the English people miserable. Enough to say that while the

soldiery represented the supreme power, England became, for every day in the year, what England still is upon a Sunday in the great cities. There is nothing so dismal and so joyless, as a Sunday in London—when all the shops are closed, and all the places of amusement as well. Of course you will say that the Parliament first made these Puritan laws. Yes; but the soldiery dissolved that Parliament, and then turned themselves into an armed police that watched everything, and that regulated everything,—even the intercourse of the sexes. No man could do what he pleased in those times;—everybody did what he was obliged to do. And when the terrible army had been disbanded, and the King restored, almost everybody was delighted. The English people felt free again. And like little boys released from school, they made a great noise and indulged in a great deal of fun for the time being.

Unfortunately this comparison cannot be carried very far. The public rejoicing at the new liberty was, indeed, boyish enough at first; but very soon it became vicious—became a general debauchee. That some excess is sure to follow a long period of over-severe repression, is an old political axiom. But the extraordinarily bad character of the excesses of the Restoration period cannot be entirely explained by the period of Puritan tyranny. It required a bad King, a wicked Court, and a corrupt nobility to make England as immoral as she became in the Restoration days. Charles II set the fashion of being immoral; that he was not cruel as well is about the only thing that can be said to his credit. And when the King set the fashion, immorality became fashionable. It also became cruel; and at last it became cowardly. When a Government becomes at once corrupt and cruel and cowardly, patriotism is paralyzed. Think of Charles II selling himself to the King of France, and undertaking to become a Catholic, on payment of, so many thousand pounds a year. This is what the King actually did. But Louis XIV knew Charles too well to suppose that English politics could be best regulated by bribery in money. He understood that the best way to govern the English King was to send him a French woman, beautiful enough and clever enough

to control him and to keep him subject to the will of France. You can imagine what was likely to become of England under such conditions. England was miserably beaten both by land and sea. For the first and the last time in history, an enemy's fleet boldly sailed up the river to London, and destroyed the English ships in the port. The Dutch admiral De Ruyter who did this brave feat was able to sail down the river again and escape without any trouble at all. If such a Government had continued very long the English nation would probably have ceased to exist. Considering all these things you will be able to understand why the drama of the Restoration period is the worst drama ever produced by any European people. It was the drama that particularly reflected the fact that immorality had become fashionable. But there were two kinds of Restoration drama. We shall speak later on of the classical drama of the time. The wickedness of the hour was principally shown in comedy. Indeed there were only two sorts of plays possible at this epoch. In Shakespeare's time there had been three. There was tragedy; there was comedy; and there was the romantic drama — perhaps the most beautiful of all kinds of dramatic composition. But romantic drama can flourish only in a time when men's minds are generous and tender and animated by noble ideas. The romantic drama vanished in the foul atmosphere of the Restoration. Nothing delicate and beautiful could live there. But some kind of tragedy and some kind of comedy might very well continue to please persons of that age. Bloody tragedy, or sensual tragedy has a morbid attraction for certain minds; and any comedy capable of ridiculing all that is good might very well please minds that have become altogether bad.

Let us take the worst side of the subject first,—Restoration comedy. Four names especially deserve to be remembered in this connection, — remembered as more or less infamous. These four are Wycherley, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Everything bad in the morals of the time has been fully represented by the work of these four men. They were men of great talent; but that talent was abused and prostituted as no

English talent ever had been before. Besides these four principals, there were several minor dramatists whose names cannot be passed over—Etheredge (Sir George), Shadwell (the Mac Flecknoe of Dryden's satire); Mrs. Afra (or Aphra) Behn, the first woman who made a living by writing for the stage, and the Duke of Buckingham, famous as the author of that witty *Rehearsal*,—which inspired Sheridan at a later day. Observe that all this production represents comedy. We shall speak of tragedy later on.

First, a few words about the bad character of the drama represented by these names,—the whole of Restoration comedy. I should never tell you that a work of art is immoral because it happens to be sensual,—because it happens to make an appeal to sexual emotion. Very probably religious critics would condemn any work of art for this reason; but that would be a very narrow way of judging things. Restoration comedy was not bad for this reason, but for very different reasons. I should qualify as immoral only that spirit which is contrary to human moral experience,—to the experience that holds society together, that makes the marriage relation a sacred thing, that teaches men to be good and kind to each other,—that insists upon gentleness and courtesy to women, and affectionate regard to children. Any spirit that attacks this teaching is essentially wicked because it is essentially destructive of civilized feeling. Now Restoration comedy differs from all other English drama in the fact that it exhibits this spirit. It was not merely sensual: it was coldly vicious,—vicious without passion,—like some old man who, after a lifetime of debauch, preserves only the inclination for indulgence without the power to gratify it. Then, as there is always a tendency for cold vice to become cruel, Restoration comedy was cruel,—brutally cruel. Finally, for the same reason that an essentially bad man cannot understand goodness or kindness, and imagines that either is explainable by some cunning and selfish motive, so Restoration comedy represented all that is good as a fit subject for mockery. So for a number of years the English drama represented the utter decay and corruption of all social morality. For a long

time no one had the courage to oppose it,—partly because the Court patronized this kind of drama, and also because it was almost as much as a man's life was worth in those days to make a protest on behalf of sound morals. If you did that you would be called a Puritan, a conspirator, a schemer endeavouring to appeal to religious prejudice for a political purpose; and it would have been wonderful if you were not beaten upon the street by hired bullies, or did not have your nose slit open by young men of the ruffian companies then called "Pinkers." These used to catch somebody whom they did not like in the streets at night, and prod him with their swords—so as to cover all his body with little wounds about an inch deep. It required some skill to torture people in this way without killing them; and the "Pinkers" were very skilful at inflicting the greatest possible amount of pain without committing murder. But at last a great preacher did have the courage to attack the drama in a sensible way,—Jeremy Collier.¹ The Church of England had been very cowardly about the matter, because of its relation to the Government. But Jeremy Collier was a Non-conformist, and independent of all political or selfish motives. He published his opinion of Restoration comedy in a little pamphlet, full of good sense; and it was impossible to answer his arguments, either from the standpoint of art or from the standpoint of morals. The wittiest men of the time tried to answer him and failed. He simply crushed them. And he was able to do so, not because he was a very great writer, or even a good logician. He was able to do so merely because he had right and reason upon his side, and courage to say what he thought. He drove Congreve from the stage. He reformed the theatre; for the good sense of the public presently came to his assistance. But the disease made too much progress before the cure came. Jeremy Collier put an end to Restoration comedy; but he could not do so without killing English comedy for all time. In the 18th century Sheridan indeed wrote some two or three good comedies—but that was the last expiring flicker of the art. With Restoration comedy all English comedy

¹ Jeremy Collier (1650-1726).

really died; and even to-day there is no sign of its revival. Other forms of light drama have appeared; but the true comedy now appears upon the English stage only as translated from foreign authors.

Having spoken of the general character of this drama, let us now note something regarding the authors of it, and their best work. Of the four names first cited, two are names of men educated in Ireland; the other two were English, but considerably under French influence. William Wycherley,¹ for example, was an Oxford man; but he spent many years in France; and he got his ideas about comedy chiefly from Molière. His two best plays are *The Plain-Dealer*,² and *The Country-Wife*,³—and the first mentioned is a very close imitation of the *Misanthrope* of Molière. But Molière is not responsible for the brutal coarseness of Wycherley's imitation. There is no coarseness in Molière. On the whole, the principal character in this play of his, Alceste, is a very amiable person—one whom you cannot help liking in spite of his eccentricities. Wycherley's *Plain-Dealer*, on the contrary, is a vulgar ruffian, who uses language of the most detestable and unrestrained description. Comparing the two plays, you will be able to understand the French critic who said that an Englishman cannot cease to be moral without becoming something of a beast. To be gracefully immoral is not in his nature. But it is true that Wycherley had very great talent, and that he was able at times to imitate in English very successfully the brilliancy of French wit.

The other Englishman of most note in this group was William Congreve.⁴ So far as literary perfection is concerned, Congreve was supremely clever. His chief fault—outside of grossness—was that he sacrificed story to form: he was so very careful about style, that one feels the work a little unnatural,—especially in the conversational passages. Of course work is always faulty from a literary point of view when it betrays the effort that it costs. Congreve was educated partly in Ireland,

¹ William Wycherley (1640-1716).

² *The plain-dealer* 1676.

³ *The country-wife* 1675.

⁴ William Congreve (1670-1729).

partly in France: he also attempted to reproduce the effects of French wit in English; and he probably succeeded as well as any man could have done in such an age. *Love for Love*,¹ and *The Way of the World*,² are said to be his best plays. Altogether he did not write many; he spent a great deal of time over each one; and he left off writing when Collier attacked him.

Sir John Vanbrugh,³ third of the four, had the coarseness of Wycherley without the brilliancy of Congreve. It is hard to say which was the worst of the four, morally speaking; but perhaps it will not be unjust to say that Vanbrugh is the most offensive. On the other hand he probably represents the brilliant and brutal society of the time more faithfully than any of the rest; because he knew it better. He was a man of court, and acquainted with the notables of the time. But he did what the others did not often attempt,—namely, made pictures of middle-class life. Three of his plays, *The Relapse*,⁴ *The Provok'd Wife*⁵ and *The Confederacy*,⁶ will give one a better idea of the social conditions of that era than can be obtained from perhaps any other Restoration drama. But it was not a pretty picture that he drew; and I do not think that you would find any pleasure in it.

This cannot be said of the work of the fourth writer, George Farquhar,⁷ an Irish military officer. Farquhar was a good man, though he lived in bad times—kind-hearted, generous, and, strange to say, somewhat romantic. There are some interesting stories about him. Being very poor he wanted to marry both a rich and beautiful wife: he said that beauty was the first thing, but that beauty required certain expenses in order to set it off. Then a girl who was an admirer of the young officer, represented herself to him as being very rich. She was pretty; but, as for money, she did not have a penny in the world. He married her, expecting to become a very rich man, and gave up his commission in the army for her sake.

¹ *Love for love* 1695.

² *The way of the world* 1700.

³ Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726).

⁴ *The relapse, or virtue in danger* 1697.

⁵ *The provok'd wife* 1697.

⁶ *The confederacy* (anon.) 1705.

⁷ George Farquhar (1678-1707).

After the marriage she coolly told him that she was quite poor, and that she had pretended to be rich only in order to get him. Of course you know that by English law he could not divorce her. However, he acted like a man,—forgave her the deception that she had practised inasmuch as he understood that she really loved him; and then he bravely took to writing plays for a living. He thought himself obliged to write in the tone of the time, which was a wicked tone; but he could not really manage to be wicked, even in words, and his plays are much less offensive than the comedies of the other three men. They are also much more interesting to the modern reader. Two of them are said to be drawn from experience in his own life, — *The Recruiting Officer*¹ and *The Beaux Stratagem*.² About the second of these plays, we are not sure of the personal element; but only a military man of the time could have written *The Recruiting Officer*. It contains a little song which is still sung, and constantly referred to, “Over the hills and far away.”

I think that only Farquhar could give you any great pleasure in the reading,—any amusement. The other three could not amuse you; and they would certainly disgust you very frequently.

Now, of the minor group, only two are worth dwelling upon in this place, — Sir George Etherege and the Duke of Buckingham. Both produced satirical comedies of very considerable merit. If you want to know anything about the extraordinary life of Sir George Etherege,³ you cannot do better than to read a delightful essay upon him in Professor Gosse's *Seventeenth Century Studies*. Here it will be necessary to speak only of one of his plays, *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter*.⁴ You know that the word *fop* means a man who is extravagantly anxious about being well-dressed. Add to this word the contemptuous diminutive suffix “ling”; then you will see the comic force of the name. This is a wonderful picture of 17th century life, in the worst times of the Restoration. Ether-

¹ *The recruiting officer* 1706.

² *The beaux stratagem* 1706-07.

³ Sir George Etherege (1634-1691).

⁴ *The man of mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* 1676.

edge was a friend of the scoundrelly Rochester, and of the other rakes of the Restoration; and one of the characters in this play is said to represent Rochester. All the characters are real, and you can recognize the truth of them in spite of the satire. The name of Sir Fopling Flutter has become an English byword. All Restoration comedy has its bad side; but you would be much amused by that little play. I do not think that you would be amused by the Duke of Buckingham's¹ *Rehearsal*,² because it requires an immense amount of previous reading to understand what this satirical comedy really is. But you should remember its name: for it had a great influence in changing the character of English drama at the time that it appeared. It helped to kill the heroic drama,—the heavy pompous tragedy in rhymed verse which Dryden and others had been writing in imitation of the French. It was intended to be and proved a very effective satire upon the kind of drama referred to. But the way in which this was composed is perhaps one of the most curious things in the history of English literature. This was the way the thing was done. First of all, a plot was imagined. Then the Duke selected from the heroic tragedies the most ridiculous, pompous, extravagant lines that he could find; and by a skilful use of many hundreds of such lines he made his comedy. You can imagine how people laughed at it. When you begin to read it, you imagine you are reading something serious: then you suddenly find something utterly absurd, and you are tempted to exclaim, "How could a man be such a fool as to write that!" But if the Duke of Buckingham heard you he would have answered, "My dear friend, I did not write that. It was the great poet Dryden, or the great dramatist Davenant, who wrote it." That was where the fun came in. Nothing could be more absurd; and yet all the absurdities were taken from the serious passages of popular tragedies. So that the play was a great criticism as well as a great satire. It is about the only comedy of the period that has a great importance for these very reasons.

¹ George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1628-1687).

² *The rehearsal* 1672.

We shall next turn to the history of the serious drama of the Restoration.

OTHER DRAMAS OF THE LATTER PART OF THE 17TH CENTURY

THE HEROIC PLAYS

The interest of the latter part of the 17th century in drama is not at all confined to the subject of that disreputable comedy which we have been considering. There was also the tragedy, — and the tragedy of two very distinct kinds. These kinds may be roughly classed as the heroic plays and the emotional tragedy, or true tragedy. The latter represents a revival of Elizabethan tragedy or methods; the former was made by French influence in a most curious way. We shall consider the heroic plays first.

I think that I told you, in speaking of the development of the Elizabethan age, that enormous romances began to be written after the appearance of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. They were written in France and afterwards both imitated and translated in England. They were enormous productions, published in five, ten, and twelve great volumes each, and represented in print between 5,000 and 7,000 pages of ordinary type. No one, to-day, would think of reading a novel as big as Webster's big dictionary. But in those times, these huge publications were all the fashion. Charles I. amused himself in his prison by reading one of them; they were popular with all classes and went through many editions. They were written in a very artificial style—a kind of French Euphuism—for the French writers had also felt the influence of those Spanish writers, about whom I told you last year.

Now all that is necessary to tell you about this queer literature is that its most celebrated authors were Madeleine de Scudéry, La Calprenède, and Marine Le Roy, Seigneur de Gomberville. Here is a list of the most famous only of their productions:—

<i>Almahide</i>	}	Scudéry.
<i>Ibrahim</i>		
<i>Artamène ou Le Grand Cyrus</i>		
<i>Cléopâtre</i>	}	Calprenède.
<i>Pharamond</i>		
<i>Cassandre</i>		
<i>Polexandre</i>	}	Gomberville.
<i>Alcidiane</i>		
<i>Cytherie</i>		
<i>Caritie</i>		

All these were translated into English, imitated in English, and at last satirized in English. A curious fact is that the cleverest work of the kind done in English was written only as a satire, but the satire was a better romance than the real romance. It was the work of an anonymous writer who signed his initials T.D. and was called Zelinda.

Now these romances had a very great effect upon drama, both in France and in England. You will notice the subjects are all far away from modern writers; some are classical, some Oriental, none French or English. There was no attempt to picture real life in them, but only to please the imagination with a series of adventures. Such material is just what dramatists want, or wanted at least in those times. To-day we know too much about far-away countries to write imaginative nonsense about the conditions there; but in the 17th century things were different. Now those of you who studied the great French dramatists will have noticed the subjects of their tragedies are very much like the subject of the romance—in fact many of the subjects were suggested by or adopted from those romances. But such great poets as Boileau, Racine, and Corneille were not much concerned about actual presentation of life. They were most concerned about form. When they chose those subjects their whole dream was to produce in French the majesty and the music and the limpid clearness of Latin verse. Of course the French language cannot reproduce all the effects of Latin verse; and to make up for this the French dramatists

used rhyme. Their rhymed Alexandrine corresponds to the heroic couplet in English. Besides, as I told you last year, they adopted as a model the Senecan drama,—which is not capable of serving as a medium for the presentation of actual life. The English had tried the same thing several times and failed. But the French made at least a popular success of their classic drama. Try to read it, and I think that you will find that it is extremely tiresome. It is terribly monotonous to the modern ear. Yet the people who could find delight in it were persons of extraordinary cultivation. Why did they delight in it? Because they were able to understand the immense difficulty of the words, and to admire the prodigious skill with which the verse had been manipulated. It was the pleasure of scholarship, listening to scholarship. In the old Greek theatres there must have been much of the same kind of pleasure. Imagine what kind of audience found pleasure in listening to the historian Herodotus reading to them the whole of his *History* in one day, or think of the quality of mind that could delight in the theatre only when some great poets were reciting their compositions. This was indeed the pleasure that made French drama delightful to the generation of cultivated Frenchmen.

And there was great fascination in the French drama to the English scholar. Dryden was such a scholar. Dryden thought that Racine and Corneille had been able to imitate Latin qualities in their verse after a fashion which no Englishman had been capable of. Delighted, bewitched, especially by Corneille, he began to study the French method, and to make imitations of it. Other Englishmen who attempted the Senecan form of drama had used blank verse; but Dryden thought that the French succeeded with the rhyme; and he used the heroic couplet in imitation of them. I suppose that you know that the heroic verse is the kind of verse chiefly used by Pope. Dryden began to write heroic plays in 1664, and he continued to write them for 14 years. After 14 years of experiment, he felt that he had made a mistake. In 1678 he returned to blank verse, and publicly acknowledged his literary error. Thus, for the third and last time the classic form of drama proved a

failure in England; for when Dryden gave it up and declared that Shakespeare was really the model dramatist for Englishmen, all the other playwrights followed Dryden's example. Altogether Dryden wrote 27 dramas, besides helping to compose many others. Most of these, exclusive of comedies, are heroic plays in imitation of the French masters. It is useless to mention them all: the best were:—

The Indian-Queen,¹
The Indian Emperour,²
The Conquest of Granada,³
Don Sebastian,⁴
 and *Aureng-Zebe*,⁵ a Tragedy.

He got his subjects largely from the French romances, and the whole of his *Conquest of Granada* is taken from *Almahide* of Scudéry. Nobody reads these plays now. But when Dryden returned to blank verse and to the study of Shakespeare, he did some fine work in tragedy. Unfortunately he imitated Shakespeare a little too much. The best of his tragical work is *All for Love, or the World Well Lost*⁶—and this is nothing more than Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* written over again. But it is very well written; and, though far inferior to Shakespeare's work, it is full of beauties of its own, and can be read with great pleasure.

So ended the heroic play in England. It was cruelly, but justly and splendidly satirized by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, in his comedy of *The Rehearsal*. That satire certainly helped to kill it. But what principally accounts for its death is the fact that the whole system of classical French drama was essentially contrary to English genius. You will never get an English public, even to-day, to care about form in itself. But it is otherwise with the French public. At the present moment a masterpiece of mere form is still sure of obtaining

¹ *The Indian-queen, a tragedy* 1665.

² *The Indian emperour, or the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards (a tragedy)* 1665.

³ *The conquest of Granada by the Spaniards. In two parts* 1670, 1672.

⁴ *Don Sebastian, king of Portugal: a tragedy* 1690.

⁵ *Aureng-zebe, a tragedy* 1676.

⁶ *All for love, or the world well lost, a tragedy* 1678.

appreciation in France. But I fear that it must be confessed that, although the French language is finer language, and the French people incomparably more artistic than the English, in this case the English were right and the French wrong.

OTHER TRAGEDIES

Besides Dryden there are only three names of tragedians belonging to this period worth mentioning. Those three were:—Otway, Lee and Southerne. Otway¹ is a strange and pathetic figure in the infamous age of the Restoration. He was a student of Oxford. When he took to writing plays for a living he showed that the corruption of the time had affected neither his intelligence nor his heart. He did indeed write some indecent things; but he also wrote some touching and tender things and he was able to make the public weep at a time when all emotion was ridiculed. He was the only dramatist of the Restoration who showed real tenderness; and his plays are still admired and read. The best of them *Venice Preserv'd*² is almost worthy in parts of being compared with the work of Shakespeare. His most popular tragedy in his own time was *The Orphan*³—a terrible picture of the misery and crime consequent upon jealousy of two brothers, both of whom are in love with the same girl. We can read the play to-day; but no English audience could bear to see it played, it is too piteous. Now the tenderness of which this man was capable did him more harm than good. He was very susceptible to beauty; and he fell foolishly in love with a beautiful but wicked actress, Mrs. Barry,⁴ who was the idol of those days. She cared only for money, and would in no case have been inclined to like a man such as Otway; but she was the mistress of the wickedest man in the world at that time—the Earl of Rochester.⁵ Rochester, knowing of Otway's admiration for the woman, caused him

¹ Thomas Otway (1652-1685).

² *Venice preserv'd; or a plot discover'd; a tragedy* 1682.

³ *The orphan; or the unhappy marriage; a tragedy* 1680.

⁴ Mrs Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713).

⁵ John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-1680).

to be attacked and beaten; and he was actually driven out of England by the mouth of this nobleman. When Rochester died, Otway came back again as much in love as ever with Mrs. Barry. She only mocked him. Gradually his talent deserted him; his courage faltered, and finding the struggle of life more and more difficult, he at last became incapable of making money. He was put into prison for debt, and at last when a gentleman gave him some money to buy bread, he fell dead from starvation before he could lift the food to his lips. He was then 34 years of age. This reminds me to tell you about the old-fashioned cruel law of imprisonment for debt. Formerly if you owed and could not pay, you were put in prison and left to starve until you could pay. You might ask people passing by for money or food, but you could not do it in prison. Otway was legally starved to death. As he was the finest dramatist of the time in tragedy, it is worth while to remember those facts about his unfortunate life.

Nathaniel Lee¹—the dramatist N. Lee was almost as unfortunate as Thomas Otway. He died at the age of 39, and died of want and misery. He had great talent; but it was not the kind of talent that could please people very much in that corrupt time. His best play is *The Rival Queens*²—a tragedy of which the thought was taken from *Cassandre* of La Calprenède. All the tragedians of the time borrowed from those vast romances.

Southerne³—was very different from either of the other men. Like Lee he was a university man. But he was also a man of business with a very strong head. He did not starve like Otway, nor go mad like Lee, nor even make a single public failure. He wrote only to make money: he knew the public, and he gave them exactly what they wanted. He was, next to Shakespeare, the most remarkable case of dramatists who made a fortune by writing dramas. But it was not because of their merit; many of them cannot be called either bad or good; some of them are decidedly poor. But one of his tragedies *The Fatal*

¹ Nathaniel Lee (1653-1692).

² *The rival queens, or the death of Alexander the Great* 1677,

³ Thomas Southerne (1660-1746).

*Marriage*¹ gives him a place of importance in the dramatic history of his time. This play has been acted upon the stage within our own day.

Here we may leave the subject of drama—only remarking that at this point of English literary history great tragedy may be said to have died. Comedy will make its appearance once again when we come to the 18th century: then even comedy died and the English stage may be said to have reached its most sterile period.

RESTORATION PROSE AND THAT OF THE CLOSE OF THE 17TH CENTURY

The best prose of the period that we have been considering was in an unfamiliar direction. Most of it was theological and therefore cannot greatly interest us in itself. It was the great age of the English pulpit,—that is the greatest English period of sermons and of religious discourses. Does not this seem a contradiction? Here we have the spectacle of the worst modern corruption that ever existed in England; and yet we find that it was also the greatest time of preaching and religious instructions. Really, however, the matter is very easily explained. The Church of England alone did not produce very many of these great theological writers; many of them were nonconformists—representing the old Puritan stock which did not fail to preserve its stern morality even under the reign of Charles II. These men preached very boldly, earnestly, and with all the learning at their command; and they tried to make their sermons beautiful in order to attract people. And people were attracted in great numbers—even people who did not believe in religion at all, and who did not care about doctrines or documents. And the reason is that there was no other place of amusement, except the churches to which respectable people with moral feeling could go. They could not go to the theatre,

¹ *The fatal marriage, or the innocent adultery. A play. Acted at the Theatre Royal by their Majesties servants 1694.*

while the comedies of the Restoration were being played; and they could not take their wives and children to such places. There were no public libraries; and the public gardens were not places to which a father could take his daughter or a husband his wife. Only in the church he could feel safe; and only in the churches could they listen to anything resembling pure literature. This is the explanation of the mystery referred to. I need not say much about the names of the books or the preachers of the time: it will be enough to remember the general fact of the golden age of the English pulpit, and to recollect that the books of these great preachers are still read. Perhaps the greatest was Tillotson;¹ but there were many others. Also there was one Bishop of the English Church worth mentioning, — not so much because he wrote good sermons, but he wrote a very curious book to prove that people were living in the moon. This man was a great mathematician as well as a charming writer. To-day we know there is no life on the moon; but we are pretty nearly sure that at least one of the planets is inhabited; and many of the arguments used by Bishop Wilkins² are interesting to-day as applicable to the theory of a civilization in Mars.

However, two great books must here be considered, having nothing to do with the pulpit orator. It is a curious fact that the two best writers of the age were so utterly opposed to each other in all respects that we might call them antipodal individualities. One was the greatest of English atheists; the other the most religious Puritan. One was not only a profound scholar, but possessed a logical faculty and a force of intelligence even greater than those of Lord Bacon;—the other was a man of the people without education, without training — once a soldier, but certainly a tinker by trade and probably a gypsy; for in those days nearly all the travelling tinkers were gypsies. In spite of this prodigious difference, it would be hard to say which of the two deserve the highest place in the history of English prose. Certainly the influence of the poor

¹ John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury (1630-1694).

² John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester (1614-1672).

man (the former) has been the greatest; but the solid merits of the philosopher and atheist have been affecting the language of our greatest modern philosopher, and these merits are likely to be more and more appreciated in the future because they helped to create the splendid English style of the late Professor Huxley.

The atheist was, of course, Hobbes; and the poor tinker John Bunyan. I shall first speak of Hobbes.¹ The principal work of Hobbes is represented by the book entitled *The Leviathan*.² Hobbes was a thorough materialist writing in an age when men knew much less about matter than do now. If he lived to-day he would probably have been one of the first who recognized that there is an infinite mystery even in a pebble. But he wrote according to his light, and in the electric brightness of his keen mind no theories of any sort were suffered to exist. His logic is like a powerful acid, devouring everything opposed to it. He did not believe in Gods, or ghosts or dogmas, or doubts or shadows of any kind; he dealt only with certainties and he treated ethics and emotion entirely from a utilitarian point of view. He consumed all idealism, all poetry, in the furnace fire of his rational analysis. He was really a dreadful person; and you cannot help being angry while reading some of his pages—because he tells you and proves to you that you love for purely selfish reasons, that you are honourable only for selfish reasons, that friendship is all selfishness, that religion is selfishness, that even a mother's love is selfishness. But he does not make mistakes of facts, and never mistakes of argument; only his personal character helped to make disagreeable an argument which in other hands is not disagreeable at all. He did not recognize sufficiently that we must make a distinction between noble selfishness and selfishness which is not noble. He was altogether an iconoclast, but he was also a very great philosopher and a most admirable master of English. There is no style in English so strong, so terse, so hard, and so cold as the style of Hobbes. The best of Hobbes,

¹ Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679).

² *Leviathan, or the matter, forme, and power of a commonwealth ecclesiasticall and civill* 1651.

considered as argument, is in his philosophy on human nature. This was long thought to have been derived from Descartes; but it is now known that it was not: some of it may have had a French source, but a great deal of it is independent thinking. Hobbes wrote a great deal during his long life of 92 years; and the whole of his work represents not less than 60 volumes. But a great deal of this appears in two languages; for Hobbes was accustomed to write his books first in Latin and afterwards in English. Excluding the Latin we still have nearly ten volumes of the best "bull-dog English" that ever was written. But you must not suppose that his English style was modelled on Latin; on the contrary it is a very curious thing that the style of Hobbes was closely modelled upon the Greek of Thucydides. Hobbes had translated this Greek historian¹ at an early age; and there is no Greek writer more terse, more economic, more clear. However, remember that Hobbes obtained his effect not by imitating Thucydides in many syllable words, but only in finding and using every simple and strong English word that could take the place of a Greek one. The Anglo-Saxon element greatly dominated in the style of Hobbes.

He wrote also upon mathematics, about which he knew very little; and this part of his labour is of no value scientifically. But all his work in English has the value of a perfectly original style. And his philosophy, after the religious prejudice that it aroused has now passed away, is no longer much studied. That is only because the best of it has been embodied and developed and carried further in the successive work of Locke, Hume, and, in our own time, of Herbert Spencer. Spencer has especially developed the analysis of all intellectual processes into elements of simple sensation.

John Bunyan was, as I have already told you, a tinker by trade. He afterwards became a soldier and served abroad. Still later he became a preacher—a Puritan preacher, and the most popular preacher of his time. He was born in 1628 and died in 1688. Contemporaries describe him as a tall, bony man with a red moustache and of a rather fierce appearance, but he was

¹ *Thucydides' Eight bookes of the Peloponesian warre* tr. 1629.

certainly one of the kindest of men. However, he had extraordinary courage and obstinacy and he was not afraid in the most dangerous time of church and political abuses. As a consequence he gave much trouble and passed many years in a prison. While in prison he wrote a book which made him famous and that has become a religious classic. This is *The Pilgrim's Progress*.¹ It is an allegory of the passage of the Christian soul to true light, describing all the temptations, troubles, and triumphs of it in the form of adventures. There is something in the book that reminds us of the old-fashioned religious plays; for as in the Mysteries, the vices and virtues are personified; they constitute the characters of the romance. Perhaps you would find the reading of the book scarcely more interesting than the reading of Miracle play. But that depends very much upon the way that you teach yourself to feel about it. In order to become really interested in the work, you must first understand the social condition of the period and try to sympathize with the brave, simple man without education endeavouring to teach moral truth under the guise of a fable. If you can do that you will like it. But in any case I do not see how the students of English literature can escape the duty of reading it. It has given to the English language a great number of household words, familiar phrases, picturesque similes, which are now scattered through the texts of thousands of well-known authors. Such names as "Vanity-Fair," "The Slough of Despond," "Giant Despair" have become everywhere as familiar as the names of the characters of our fairy tales and nursery rhymes. The reason is that the book immediately after its print obtained the greatest success of any book published in England. Only the English Bible could claim a greater number of readers. Since then many millions of copies have been sold. The work has been translated into all languages of Europe and it has been illustrated by hundreds of artists. Perhaps you will remember that it was the appearance of one edition illustrated by John Martin which furnished Macaulay an opportunity to write his admirable essay on Bunyan. Macau-

¹ *The pilgrim's progress from this world to that which is to come* 1678, 1684.

lay did not like the pictures, but in this I think he was wrong. Macaulay was not an authority upon art, though he was the greatest authority upon many other things. He had very little imagination of the emotional Bunyan; and Martin's pictures were made to appeal to the sense of terror and mystery. They were really very great, and now command a very high price. He also made the best pictures to illustrate Milton. Besides *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan wrote *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*,¹ *The Holy War*² and some other things. None of them equals in merit *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But next to that *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* may be estimated. The English is perfectly simple, limpid, musical, and the construction of the narrative is always the work of a great but unconscious artist. Of course Bunyan disliked men and nature, as he saw them in the course of his wandering life, and he saw with the keenest of eyesight. The places that he paints in words for us are all or nearly all English scenes; and the conversations which enliven his narratives vividly repeat the language of his century. Indeed it is now said that these conversational terms had a great deal of influence at a later day upon a great number of English novelists. Sometimes a great feeling uttered with absolute sincerity seems enough to produce artistic results.

Assuredly it was so in the case of John Bunyan who did not care about literature, who knew nothing of real art, who was a common man of the people. In spite of every disadvantage, he became, without desiring it, a really great force in the history of English prose.

To speak of the various essayists in this connection is scarcely worth our while. There were a number of essayists of fair merit; but very few take the first rank. For example, Sir William Temple,³ once inordinately praised, is now no longer read. He was a man who wrote very pretentiously upon all subjects which he did not understand. No essayist of this time compares with Sir Thomas Browne. Perhaps Dr. Thomas

¹ *The life and death of Mr. Badman* 1680.

² *The holy war made by Shaddai upon Diabolus* 1682.

³ Sir William Temple (1628-1699).

Burnet¹ came nearest; but he belongs chiefly to theological literature—though his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*² is partly romantic—romantic as imagination. But we cannot deal with the subject of prose without referring to a kind of fashion which appeared in the literature of the time—the diary.

THE GREAT DIARIES

No great thing comes suddenly into existence in the world of letters. It would not be correct to imagine that the diary was suddenly invented in the 17th century. Small diaries had appeared before. Besides, the Romans and the Greeks kept diaries, and every English scholar after the beginning of classic study must have known something about the ancient diaries. The English word “diary” is only the adoption of the Latin word “diarium” which signifies among other things a daily book, a book in which a record is kept of the events of every day. The difference between a diary and a chronicle is that the diary records only the personal experiences of the writer. All that we can say about the diaries of the 17th century is that in them the art of diary keeping was first brought to great perfection in England. But only two names are necessary to remember—John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys. Perhaps John Evelyn’s *Diary*³ is the greatest diary by any one man; for he kept it continuously through a period of 64 years. It occupies, in the edited form, three great volumes. But Evelyn himself is a more interesting fact than even his excellent diary. Evelyn was perhaps the most learned man in the world at the time that he lived,—certainly he was the most learned Englishman. He was born in 1620 and died in 1706. Being rich he could devote the whole of his whole life to study, and he did nothing but study and write through the greater part of a century. To give you some idea of what his abilities were, let me tell you

¹ Thomas Burnet (1636?-1715).

² *Telluris theoria sacra* 1681-89; *The theory of the earth* 1684-90.

³ *Diary* 1641-1705-6 (1818, 1850-52, 1879).

that he wrote equally well upon the subjects of horticulture, arboriculture, gardening (in the picturesque English), architecture, engraving and painting, on navigation, commerce and agricultural industries. On each of these subjects he wrote, not an essay, but an enormous book. 27 immense books were published in his lifetime; but these represent only a small part of his work.

One book, about English botany, which took him 40 years to write, is still preserved in manuscript; but it has never been published, it was too expensive to publish. In this respect, it reminds us of that giant, Humboldt, much of whose work also remains unpublished and that a man may know too much for his generation. These facts about Evelyn are simply curious; however, they have nothing to do with his place in English literature. In English literature he is represented only by his *Diary*—a remarkable monument of dignified, clear, and beautiful English; a masterpiece of smooth, scholarly prose which reminds us very much of the best English literature of later centuries. Historically it has an immense value also; but that does not concern us here.

Pepys was a secretary in the navy and remained in Government service all his life, which lasted from 1633 to 1703. It was a strange period for a man like Pepys to live in; for he seemed to have been a man of feeling of an emotional kind. The man who showed emotion in those days found it very hard to keep position in Government service. Brutality was the fashion, the conversation was cynical, and anybody who could not mix in society, taking its tone and adopting its manner, must have been looked upon with suspicion. Pepys was afraid, and he must have been very careful in his acting, but he saw and heard every day astonishing things and thought they ought to be written down, for everybody was afraid to write them. Pepys wrote them in a cypher of his own. In that way he was sure of being able to keep his diary secretly. After his death his library passed into Government hands and the *Diary*¹ re-

¹ *Memoirs. Comprising his diary from 1659 to 1669, and a selection from his private correspondence* 16 . . (1825, 1871, 1875-79, 1893-99).

mained with it for many years before anybody divined what it was. At last somebody became interested, studied the cypher, mastered it and discovered the great value of it. The *Diary* of Pepys covers 9 years and gives us such a picture of the life of the Restoration period as no history could give; for Pepys tells us everything about the dim theatres, the quarrels, the scandals, the town-gossip of the time; and he writes so clearly that we can see and hear all that he records. His style is not literary, it has not very much to be recommended, except the clearness and plain language; but it shows an amiable character behind the candle. Evelyn's *Diary* was written as carefully as Gibbon's *History of Rome*. Pepys' *Diary* is written as one would write a letter to a friend in a great hurry.

But these two diaries did much to establish a new form of literary record;—hundreds of later diaries were modelled after them. This kind of literature will probably never die. It is still written, as was evidenced by the diary of Marie Bashkirtseff which a few years ago was translated into so many languages. A great example of modern diaries is Amiel's *Journal*, which has also been much translated and has become the classical model of a diary of personal emotions and thoughts. We will here close the lecture of the 17th century. Of the last period under discussion—the period of the Restoration—the student has but few names to memorize. You ought to memorize the names of four—the greatest writers of comedy—and the name of one great writer of tragedy, Otway. In prose you should be able to remember Hobbes and Bunyan. And you should remember the appearance of great diaries. In poetry, of course, Dryden is the great figure. Otherwise there is not much which it is necessary to keep fixed in the mind for general examination. We shall now turn to the 18th century.