A History of English Prose Fiction eBook

A History of English Prose Fiction

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CHAPTER I.

The romance of chivalry.

I

In the midst of an age of gloom and anarchy, when Feudalism was slowly building up a new social organization on the ruins of the Roman Empire, arose that spirit of chivalry, which, in its connection with the Christian religion, forms so sharp a division between the sentiments of ancient and modern times. Following closely on the growth of chivalry as an institution, there came into being a remarkable species of fiction, which reflected with great faithfulness the character of the age, and having formed for three centuries the principal literary entertainment of the knighthood of Europe, left on the new civilization, and the new literature which had outgrown and discarded it, lasting traces of its natural beauty. Into the general fund of chivalric romance were absorbed the learning and legend of every land. From the gloomy forests and bleak mountains of the North came dark and terrible fancies, malignant enchanters, and death-dealing spirits, supposed to haunt the earth and sea; from Arabia and the East came gorgeous pictures of palaces built of gold and precious stones, magic rings which transport the bearer from place to place, love-inspiring draughts, dragons and fairies; from ancient Greece and Rome came memories of the heroes and mysteries of mythology, like old coins worn and disfigured by passing, through ages, from hand to hand, but still bearing a faint outline of their original character. All this mass of fiction was floating idly in the imaginations of men, or worked as an embellishment into the rude numbers of the minstrels, when the mediaeval romancers gathered it up, and interweaving it with the traditions of Arthur and Charlemagne, produced those strange compositions which are so entirely the product and repository of the habits, superstitions, and sympathies of the Middle Ages that they serve to

> “Hold the mirror up to Nature,
> To show Vice its own image, Virtue its own likeness,
> And the very age and body of the times,
> His form and pressure.”

The men who wrote, and the men who read these romances, the first springs of our modern fiction, were influenced by two dominant ideas: “One religious, which had fashioned the gigantic cathedrals, and swept the masses from their native soil to hurl them upon the Holy Land; the other secular, which had built feudal fortresses, and set the man of courage erect and armed within his own domain."[1] These two ideas were outwardly expressed in the Roman Church and the Feudal System.

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During the anarchy of the Middle Ages, every man was compelled to look upon war as his natural occupation, if he hoped to preserve life or property. His land was held as a condition of military service. As long as there was no effective administration of justice, redress for the aggrieved lay in the sword alone. A military career had no rival in the eyes of the ambitious and the noble. There was no learning, no art, to share with skill in arms, the honors to which a youth aspired. Religion and love, the most powerful inspirations of his moral life, made force of arms the merit most worthy of their rewards. The growth of the people in the mechanical arts took the direction of improving the instruments of warfare; the increase of refinement and humanity tended less to diminish war than to make it more civilized, showy, and glorious. The armies of the Romans seem prosaic when we turn to the brilliant array of chivalry, to the ranks of steel-clad knights couching the lance to win fame, the smile of woman, or the reward of religious devotion;—men to whom war seemed a grand tournament, in which each combatant, from the king to the poorest knight, was to seek distinction by his strength and valor. It was through the senses, and especially through the eye, that the feudal imagination was moved. Every heart was kindled at the sight of shining armor, horses with brilliant trappings, gorgeous dress, and martial show. The magnificent Norman cathedrals struck the mind with devotional awe; the donjons and towers of the great baronial castles were suggestive of power and glory. To the impressibility of the senses was added the romantic spirit of adventure, which kept the knighthood of Europe in a constant ferment, and for lack of war, burst forth in tournaments, in private feuds, or in the extravagances of knight-errantry. The feudal system, growing up to meet the necessities of conquerors living on conquered territory, and founded on the principle of military service as a condition of land tenure, made of Europe a vast army. The military profession was exalted to an importance which crushed all effort of a more useful or progressive nature; the military class, including all who possessed land, and did not labor upon it, became an aristocracy despising peaceful occupations, whose most powerful prejudice was pride of birth, whose ruling passion was love of war. Under the influence of this military spirit, intellectual was subordinated to active life; a condition of ignorance and danger was sustained; an overwhelming reverence for the supernatural was produced, and there resulted that predominance of the imagination over the reason of man which forms the distinctive feature of Romantic Fiction.

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While the feudal system formed the framework of society, and, as much by inspiration as by law, governed the outward actions of men, the human mind was in complete, and almost universally willing, subjection to theological influence. The state of war, or of readiness for war, which was the inevitable accompaniment of feudal tenure, did much to sustain the state of profound ignorance and consequent superstition in which the people of mediaeval times were plunged, both by preventing the pursuit of peaceful occupations and the growth of knowledge, and by increasing the element of danger in life, which always inclines the human mind to a belief in the supernatural. The same results were brought about by the character and aims of the Roman Church. The unswerving purpose of that church was to govern, temporally as well as spiritually. She sought to supply to men from her own store all the knowledge which was necessary for their welfare, and that knowledge was limited to dogmas and beliefs which would strengthen the power of the priesthood. A strict and absolute acceptance of the truths of Christianity as she defined them, and a humble obedience to the clergy were made the sole and necessary conditions of salvation. A questioning of those truths or a violation of that obedience was a crime before which murder and license faded into insignificance. The spirit of doubt and of inquiry which alone leads to knowledge, and through knowledge to civilization, was repressed by excommunication or in blood. As long as men continued in a state of helpless ignorance and willing credulity, the church was a fitting, even a beneficent, mistress and guide. For centuries she was the sole teacher and the sole external source of moral elevation. For centuries she alone pointed out the distinction between right and wrong, the beauty of virtue, and the ugliness of sin. Whatever there was in life to raise men above their earthly struggles, their evil passions, and the despair of a hard and dangerous existence, was supplied by her. The consolations of religion, the ennobling acquaintance with the character of Christ, and the hope of salvation through Him were incalculable blessings. Her aid in suppressing disorder and in establishing a respect for law and government is not to be overlooked. She presented in her own organization an example of authority, of system, and of obedience, which, despite many failings and abuses, was of great value to the world. But there is in human nature an irrepressible tendency toward growth and progress, and when this tendency began to show itself in the Middle Ages, it found in the theological spirit, then personated by the Roman Church, its most bitter and most powerful enemy. The church, which had hitherto been a teacher and guide, became the champion of barbarism and the genius of retrogression. Instead of adapting herself to the growing wants of mankind, instead of preserving her influence and power by inward progress proportionate to that which she saw advancing without,

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she sought, stationary herself, to keep the world stationary, and to stamp out in blood the progressive spirit of man. Hence it is that the blessings of our modern life have been achieved in spite of the Roman Church, which should have promoted them, and the history of modern civilization and modern knowledge is in so large a part the history of emancipation from the tyranny of the theological spirit,—that is, the clerical opposition to mental and material advancement, both of which are as necessary to moral advancement as they are to the happiness of men. This spirit has been the same in every country and in every age, when the spiritual has exceeded the secular power, and its lamentable effects may be traced as well in the gloomy Protestant theocracy of Scotland as in the Catholic Inquisition of Spain. During the period, however, when the romances of chivalry were principally written and enjoyed, the convulsions arising from attempts to burst the bonds by which the minds of men were restrained, had not yet been sensibly felt. The church was still the controlling intellectual influence. A dark cloud of ignorance and superstition hung over Europe, to be dispelled at last by the new growth of learning, and the consequences following upon it. The best intelligence of the time was confined to the clergy, who used it skilfully to maintain their authority. By every device they sought to usurp to themselves the sole power of ministering to popular wants. Nothing which could strike the mind through the senses was neglected. They offset tournaments by religious shows and pageantry, rivalled the attractions of the harp by sacred music, and to wean their flocks from the half dramatic entertainments of the minstrels, they invented the Miracle Play and the Mystery. The church forced herself on the attention of every man without doors or within, by the friars black or gray who met him at every turn, by the imposing monasteries which formed a central figure in every landscape, and by the festivals and processions of priests which made the common occasions for the assemblage of the people. The constant recurrence of holy days and fasts called the mind to the consideration of spiritual things, and the rough superstition of the time was deeply excited when the approach of death in a household brought the priestly train with lighted tapers, and the awe-inspiring ceremonies with which the lingering soul was sent on its way.

The military nature of feudalism explains the predominance of warlike incidents in romantic fiction, and the character of the Roman Church gives us an insight into the causes which, in addition to the ignorance of the time, induced men to refer all remarkable events to supernatural influence, and prepared their minds for the unquestioning belief in the fictions which are so important a characteristic of the romances of chivalry. The low standard of morality also, which is reflected in the same pages, is due quite as much to the predominance of the dogmatic over the moral element of Christianity, as to the unrefined and rude conditions of life.

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There is much that is picturesque and brilliant in the times, but much more that is terrible. The nobles and knights, who lived sword in hand behind their battlements and massive walls, were the rulers of the country. Their ungoverned passions and their love of fighting for its own sake or for that of revenge, were perpetual dangers to internal peace. There was no power sufficient to keep them in check. The lawlessness and anarchy caused by the ceaseless quarrels between baron and baron, found but a feeble remedy in the laws of King or Church. Of the darkness of the earlier Middle Ages Von Sybel[2] gives a graphic picture: "Monarchies sank into impotence; petty lawless tyrants trampled all social order under foot, and all attempts after scientific instruction and artistic pleasures were as effectually crushed by this state of general insecurity as the external well-being and material life of the people. This was a dark and stormy period for Europe, merciless, arbitrary, and violent. It was a sign of the prevailing feeling of misery and hopelessness that, when the first thousand years of our era were drawing to their close, the people in every country in Europe looked with certainty for the destruction of the world. Some squandered their wealth in riotous living, others bestowed it, for the good of their souls, on churches and convents; weeping multitudes lay day and night about the altars; some looked forward with dread, but most with secret hope, toward the burning of the earth and the falling in of heaven." Gradually some order and security succeeded this chaos. The church exerted all her strength in subduing violence, and the character of her remedies are illustrative of the evils they were intended to abate. The truce of God set apart the days between Thursday and Monday of each week as a time of peace, when private quarrels should be suspended. The peace of the king forbade the avenging of an alleged injury until forty days after its commission. The Council of Clermont ordered that every noble youth on attaining the age of twelve years should take an oath to defend the oppressed, the widows, and the orphans.[3] Much superfluous energy was exhausted in the crusades. In England the growth of the universities and the study and development of law aided the establishment of social order, while the spread of commerce and the improvements in husbandry brought with wealth some refinement and luxury. The baronage wrested from the crown those liberties which finally became the common property of all. Trade pushed the inhabitants of the towns into prominence as an important class whose influence was thrown entirely into the scale of peace and quiet, on which its prosperity depended. No element of change was more essential, and none was greater in its civilizing effects than the development of the chivalric spirit into an institution of which the laws and customs were observed from England to Sicily. Its influence worked directly upon

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the disturbing classes of society. Only time and the slow march of civilization could calm the restlessness and the martial spirit of the powerful, but chivalry introduced into warfare knightly honor and generosity, and into social life a courtesy and gallantry which formed a strong ally to religion in bringing out the better sentiments of humanity. At a time when force was greater than law, when the weak and defenceless were at the mercy of the powerful, when women were never safe from the attacks of the brutal, a body of men who were sworn to redress wrongs, to succor the oppressed, and to protect women and children, could not fail to be highly beneficial and to win the reverence of mankind. To be a good knight was to be the salt of the earth. The church gave easy absolution to the champion of the weak,—the soldier of God. Women smiled upon the cavalier whose profession was her service, and whose deeds, as well as the glitter of his arms and the fascination of his martial appearance, flattered her pride and gratified her imagination.

Yet, in considering the period of chivalry, we must not yield too much to the attraction of its brilliant show, its high flown sentiments, and knightly valor. Beneath religion there ever lurked a bigoted superstition; beneath valor, cruelty; beneath love, mere brutal passion. The sympathies of the order were much confined to the higher classes, and there was little feeling for the sufferings of the common people. The reign of Edward the Third embraces the most brilliant days of chivalry. About that period is spread a mist of manly gallantry and feminine charms which conceals the darkness beneath. The Black Prince, after winning his spurs at Cressy, carried fire and sword among the peaceful and defenceless inhabitants of Garonne, gratifying a greed of gain by blood and rapine. The gallant deeds of Sir Walter de Manny, of Sir John Chandos, the fame of Edward himself, only make darker by contrast the desolation and suffering by which their glory was purchased. The poetic illusion inspired by Froissart’s chronicles of knightly deeds and manners is rudely torn when we read Petrarch’s description of France after the battle of Poitiers; “I could not believe that this was the same France which I had seen so rich and flourishing. Nothing presented itself to my eyes but a fearful solitude, land uncultivated, houses in ruins. Even the neighborhood of Paris showed everywhere the marks of desolation and conflagration. The streets are deserted, the roads overgrown with weeds, the whole is a vast solitude."[4]

It is among the Northern conquerors that we must look for the origin of the spirit of chivalry, which consisted first and chiefly in manly valor exerted to obtain the favor of woman. Of this there is no trace in any ancient civilization. Among the barbarous tribes of the North, physical strength and military prowess were the qualities most essential in a man, and woman naturally looked upon them as the merit

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she most loved, especially as they were needed for her own protection. But this condition is natural to all barbarous and warlike peoples, and cannot by itself account for that sentiment which we call chivalric. To the valor of the Goths were joined an extraordinary reverence and respect for their women, due, as these feelings always must be, to feminine chastity. The virtue for which the Northern women were distinguished elevated them to a position to which the females of other uncivilized nations never approached. It gave them a large influence in both public and private affairs, and made them something to be won, not bought. To obtain his wife the Northern warrior must have deserved her, he must have given proofs that he was worthy of the woman who had preserved her chastity inviolate, and for whom love must be mingled with respect.[5] It is curious to observe how exactly these sentiments, which existed at so early a period among the Gothic nations, were continued into feudal times. Take, as one instance, the exclamation of Regner Lodbrog, the famous Scandinavian chieftain, who about the year 860 rescued a princess from a fortress in which she was unjustly confined, and received her hand as his reward: “I made to struggle in the twilight that yellow haired chief, who passed his mornings among the young maidens and loved to converse with widows. He who aspires to the love of young virgins ought always to be foremost in the din of arms!"[6] Compare to this a scene at Calais about the middle of the fourteenth century. Edward *iii* had just accomplished an adventure of chivalry. Serving under the banner of Sir Walter de Manny as a common knight, he had overcome in single combat the redoubted Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont, who had brought the king twice on his knees during the course of the battle. Edward that evening entertained all his French prisoners as well as his own knights at supper, and at the conclusion of the feast he adjudged the prize of valor for that day’s fighting to Sir Eustace de Ribeaumont, and removing a chaplet of pearls from his own head, he placed it on that of the French knight, with the significant words[7]: “Sir Eustace, I present you with this chaplet as being the best combatant this day, either within or without doors; and I beg of you to wear it this year for love of me. I know that you are lively and amorous, and love the company of ladies and damsels; therefore say wherever you go that I gave it to you.” But the chivalry of the Goths was only the seed of the plant which flourished so luxuriantly under better conditions in later times. The feudal system fostered the growth of the sentiment into the institution, as a palliative to anarchy and as an ornament to life, while the Church, always eager to absorb enthusiasm and power into her own ranks, adopted the institution as the Holy Order, and adding religious devotion to the inspiration of love, directed the energies of chivalry into the work of civilization, and made the knight the champion of the weak, in addition to his character as a valiant soldier.

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It is difficult in considering a period so remote and so peculiar as that of chivalry, to fix the limit between the actual and the imaginary, between the character of the ideals which men placed before themselves, and the extent to which these ideals were realized. That the writings of the romancers were exaggerations of actual manners rather than inventions, is shown by the descriptions of the habits and inmates of mediaeval castles, which form so interesting a portion of Froissart's chronicles, and give such striking and life like illustrations of the society which at once inspired and enjoyed the romances of chivalry. The castle of the Earl of Foix and the Earl himself would have seemed quite natural in the pages of a romance: "Ther was none more rejoysed in dedes of armes than the erle dyde: ther was sene in his hall, chambre, and court, knightes and squyers of honour going up and downe, and talking of armes and amours; all honour ther was found, all maner of tidyngs of every realme and countre ther might be herde, for out of every countree ther was resort, for the valyantness of this erle." Of "armes and amours" the knights and ladies loved to talk, and arms and amours formed the burden of the ponderous tomes which the Earl of Foix caused to be read before him. The adventures of knights-errant, and their obligation to render aid and comfort to "all distressed ladies and damsels," have a charming illustration in the championship of the cause of Isabel, Queen of Edward the Second of England, by Sir John of Hainault, and the words used by the latter in undertaking the enterprise were the echo of the chivalric feeling of the time. As soon as the arrival of Queen Isabel in Hainault was known, "this Sir John, being at that time very young and panting for glory, like a knight-errant mounted his horse, and, accompanied by a few persons, set out from Valenciennes for Ambreticourt, where he arrived in the evening and paid the Queen every respect and honour." Notwithstanding the remonstrances and objections which were raised against his undertaking so perilous an adventure as the invasion of England, "the gallant knight would not change his purpose, saying, 'that he could die but once; that the time was in the will of God; and that all true knights were bound to aid, to the utmost of their power, all ladies and damsels driven from their kingdoms comfortless and forlorn.'" To suppose that the romances formed an accurate reflection of actual life would show an entire ignorance of their nature; but there can be no doubt that these fictions were the natural outcome of existing thought and manners; that they were sufficiently life-like to interest; and that they increased and intensified the habits and ideas in which they had their origin.

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The combination of qualities and motives which we are accustomed to express in the general term of chivalry was the mediaeval ideal of virtue, and as such was in practice inevitably subject to imperfection and inconsistency. The Roman *virtus* was simply courage. Chivalry meant courage and skill in arms, united to gentle birth, to courtesy, to gallantry, and to a faithful observance of the laws of combat; the whole inspired by military glory, religious enthusiasm, or devotion to women. We should admire the greatness and nobility of this ideal, standing out as it does against a background of lawlessness and ignorance, rather than complain that in practice its valor often degenerated into ferocity, its Christianity into narrow bigotry, its worship of women into license and brutality. Chivalry, supplying a standard of excellence adapted by its nature to excite the admiration of men, did much to refine and civilize the rude age in which it arose; and this result is not belittled by the fact that that standard was pitched above the possibility of human attainment. Chivalry was the spontaneous expression of what was best in the time, and gave sentiment and charm to lives otherwise hard and barren. Its very exaggerations and grotesqueness illustrate the eagerness with which it was received, and the greatness of the want which it supplied. This was an ideal, too, separate and distinct from any that had been known before, possessing enduring characteristics of greatness and beauty which have never ceased to command sympathy and admiration. Though changed in outward form, and appearing under different manifestations, the chivalry of the Middle Ages is essentially the chivalry of to-day, but it now exerts a moral and intellectual, instead of a physical force.

The new dignity which woman assumed in connection with the growth of chivalry was owing considerably to a cause separate from the Northern sentiment concerning them, and as the position of women is an important part of the social condition we are now examining, a glance at this other cause will not be without value or interest. It is indeed remarkable that in the Middle Ages woman should for the first time have attained her true rank, and that the highest conception of the female character which the world had yet known should have been developed in so rude and ferocious a time. The estimation in which women were held among Eastern nations was little lower than their position among the Jews. Where polygamy exists, and where purchase-money is paid to the father of the bride, women never attain to high appreciation or respect. Beauty rather than virtue was the ideal of Greece. The women of that country, living in continual seclusion, deprived alike of opportunities for attaining culture or exerting influence, became narrowed in thought and intelligence, and passed their lives in obscurity under the control of their husbands or sons.[8] Roman history gives us examples of female excellence and

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distinction, and represents women during some periods in a better position than had previously been known. But the female sex was never accorded among the Romans the general respect for its peculiar virtues, and the consideration for its weakness which forms one of the brightest pages of modern civilization. With the spread of Christianity, there was for centuries no improvement. The low standard by which the Jews had judged the sex exerted a strong and an evil influence. The spirit of asceticism, rapidly gaining ground in the Roman Church, pointed out absolute chastity in both sexes as the only praiseworthy condition of life, made marriage only an excusable sin, and recognized in that relationship, merely its use for the propagation of the species. Views so absurd and unnatural could not fail in producing the most evil results. Woman came to be regarded by the church as the origin of all sin, the favorite medium of the temptations of the Devil, the sanctity and happiness of marriage were interfered with, and the priesthood, debarred from that condition, showed themselves not insensible to the charms they so fiercely denounced, and presented to their flocks demoralizing examples of profligacy. The Northern invaders brought with them their own ideas concerning women, rough and crude, but containing the germ of much good. Being met by Christianity, they embraced it in large numbers, unreflectingly, at the command of their leaders. But in embracing it they changed it to suit themselves. Their minds were unfit for the reception of the dogmas of the church, or for the realization and worship of an invisible being. They seized on the ideas of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints, and worshipped in a great degree their old gods under the new names. But of the new objects of worship, Mary most struck their imaginations and won their affection. The meek and forgiving Christ was unsuited to their fierce and warlike dispositions. But Mary, the beautiful, the tender, the merciful mother of God became the object of an enthusiastic adoration, and with the worship of Mary the position of the whole sex was elevated. The brutish and unnatural teachings of the Fathers were overridden by the new and noble ideas which were springing up. Doctrines such as that of the Immaculate Conception rapidly won ground, and Catholic Mariolatry, taking root in the fertile soil of Northern chivalry, worked benefits which have lasted down to our own time, and conferred great blessings upon it.

The purely military character of feudalism impressed itself on the habits of the time, and moulded domestic life, amusements and education in strict accordance with it. The castles of the great lords and knights were “academies of honour” for the children of their dependents and less wealthy neighbors; the court yards became the scene of martial exercises, and the presence of noble women within the walls afforded an opportunity for the cultivation of gentle manners,

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and for the growth of that feeling of reverence for the fair sex which was to form so important an element in the boys' later life. The "gentle damoiseau," confided at the age of seven or eight to the care of a knight whose reputation for prowess and courtesy ensured a good example, learned modesty and obedience in the performance of menial services, then considered honorable; in the court-yard of the castle he was instructed in horsemanship, and in the use of the lance, the bow, and the sword. In the dangers and hardships of the chase the principal occupation in time of peace,—he was inured to fatigue, hunger, and pain; he learned to sound the horn at the different stages of the hunt, to dress the game when killed, and to carve it on the table.[9] He waited upon the ladies in their apartments as upon superior beings, whose service, even the most menial, was an honor. While yet a damoiseau, and before he had attained the rank of squire, the youth was expected to choose one girl who should receive his special admiration and service, in whose name his future knightly deeds should be performed, who should be his inspiration in battle, the reward of his valor, and the object of his gallantry. In the loves of Amadis and Oriana, so famous in romance, we have a simple and charming description of the first budding of the chivalric sentiment. "Oriana was about ten years old, the fairest creature that ever was seen; wherefore she was called the one 'without a peer.' * * * The Child of the Sea (Amadis) was now twelve years old, but in stature and size he seemed fifteen, and he served the queen; but now that Oriana was there, the queen gave her the Child of the Sea, that he should serve her, and Oriana said that 'it pleased her'; and that word which she said the child kept in his heart, so that he never lost it from his memory, and in all his life he was never weary of serving her, and his heart was surrendered to her; and this love lasted as long as they lasted, for as well as he loved her did she also love him. But the Child of the Sea, who knew nothing of her love, thought himself presumptuous to have placed his thoughts on her, and dared not speak to her; and she, who loved him in her heart, was careful not to speak more with him than with another; but their eyes delighted to reveal to the heart what was the thing on earth that they loved best. And now the time came that he thought he could take arms if he were knighted; and this he greatly desired, thinking that he would do such things that, if he lived, his mistress should esteem him."[10]

Life in a Norman castle was at best hard and comfortless. In summer it was enlivened by hunting and hawking, by tournaments and pageantry. The gardens which usually surrounded a castle formed a resource for the female portion of the inhabitants, who are often represented in the illuminations of the time as occupied in tending the flowers or in making garlands. But in winter there were few comforts to lessen the suffering, and

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few resources to vary the monotony of life. The passages in the romances which hail the return of spring, are full of thankfulness and delight. Chess, dice, and cards, as well as many frolicsome games, served, with the aid of the minstrels, to afford amusement. The women had their occupations of spinning, sewing, and embroidery, while some of the accomplishments they cultivated may be inferred from the following passage in the folio of old Sir Joshua Barnes: "And now the ladies themselves, with many noble virgins, were meditating the various measures their skilful feet were to make, the pleasant aires their sweet voices should warble, and those soft divisions their tender fingers should strike on the yielding strings."[11] Life was lacking in physical comforts, and still more in refinement. The dining-hall became at night the sleeping place of a promiscuous crowd of retainers. There was a very imperfect separation of the sexes at any time. Men and women ate with their fingers, and threw the refuse of their meal on the table, or amidst the straw on the floor, to be devoured by the cats and dogs which swarmed about. Read the directions for ladies' table manners given by Robert de Blois: "If you eat with another (*i.e.*, in the same plate), turn the nicest bits to him, and do not go picking out the finest and largest for yourself, which is not courteous. Moreover, no one should eat greedily a choice bit which is too large or too hot, for fear of choking or burning herself. * * * Each time you drink wipe your mouth well, that no grease may go into the wine, which is very unpleasant to the person who drinks after you. But when you wipe your mouth for drinking, do not wipe your eyes or nose with the table-cloth, and avoid spilling from your mouth or greasing your hands too much."[12] The same authority on manners and etiquette warns ladies against scolding and disputing, against swearing and getting drunk, and against some other objectionable actions which betray a great lack of feminine modesty. The "Moral Instructions" of the Chevalier de la Tour Landry present a picture of coarseness and immorality among both men and women, which shows how incompatible was the barrack-like existence of feudal times with the practice of any sort of self-restraint or purity of life.

Of such a character, then, was the audience which the mediaeval romancers had to please. A class essentially military, ferocious, and accustomed to shedding blood, yet preserving in their violence a certain observance of laws of honor and courtesy; setting before themselves more often an ideal of glory and nobility, than an object of plunder or conquest; cultivating a consideration and gallantry toward women, remarkable in view of the necessarily rough and unrefined circumstances of their life; highly imaginative and adventurous; rejoicing in brilliancy of dress and show; filling the monotony of peace by tournaments, martial games, and the entertainments of the minstrels.

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[Footnote 1: Taine: History of Eng. Lit., Van Laun's trans. chap. 3, pt. ii.]

[Footnote 2: "Hist. of Crusades," p. 11; Sir E. Strachey, Introd. to "Morte d'Arthur."]

[Footnote 3: Mill's "Chivalry."]

[Footnote 4: Quoted in Green's "Short History of the English People." p. 224.]

[Footnote 5: Warton's "Hist. of English Poetry," Dissert. i.]

[Footnote 6: Quoted by Warton, "Hist. of Poetry," Dis. i.]

[Footnote 7: Froissart's "Chronicles," v. ii, p. 248, Johnes' Trans.]

[Footnote 8: Lecky's "History of Morals," chap. 5, vol. 2.]

[Footnote 9: Scott's "Essay on Chivalry."]

[Footnote 10: "Amadis of Gaul," Southey's ed. vol. 1, p. 40. This romance belongs to a late period of romantic fiction, but the passage cited is a good illustration of mediaeval sentiment.]

[Footnote 11: Sir J. Barnes' "History of Edward *iii*."]

[Footnote 12: Wright's "Manners and Sentiments in the Middle Ages," p. 276.]

II.

The romances of chivalry sprang to life a logical production of the times. Their authors seized on the character of a king and a warrior—their highest conception of greatness, in the persons of Charlemagne and Arthur. Regardless of anachronism, they represented their heroes as the centre of a chivalric court, accoutred in the arms, and practising the customs of later centuries; they created in fact a new Arthur and a new Charlemagne, adapted to the new times. They brought to light the almost forgotten characters of antiquity. They represented Jason and Alexander invested with chivalric attributes and affected by mediaeval superstitions. Hercules, according to them, performed his labors, not because of the wrath of Juno or the command of Jove, but, like a true knight-errant, to gain the favor of a Boeotian princess. Virgil the poet was transformed into Virgil the enchanter. The chief heroes were surrounded with restless knights, whose romantic adventures afforded unlimited range to the imagination, and delighted the chivalric mind. The romancers mingled with their endless tales of "arms and amours," the superstitions and myths which occupied the minds of men to the exclusion of all real knowledge and inquiry. The gloomy and terrible fictions which had adorned the songs of Northern scalds, the bright and fanciful imagery contained in the

tales of Arabia and the East which the crusaders brought back with them into Europe, the superstitions of Christianity itself, were given only a greater influence in the lives of fictitious heroes than they were supposed to have in those of living men. Perfectly suited to the times, and in fact born of them, the romances took at once a powerful hold on the popular imagination. The characters of Arthur, of Launcelot and of Tristram became the objects of an ardent admiration, and the standards of excellence to which many strove to attain.

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The most exaggerated ideas of chivalry contained in the romances were adopted in actual life. Knights and ladies took upon themselves adventures and cultivated manners, which vied in extravagance with those of imaginary beings. The personality of King Arthur was so intensely realized, that for centuries it was believed that he would one day return from beyond the grave to resume his glorious rule. On his tomb were supposed to be inscribed the words:

> Hic jacet Arthurus rex, quondam rexque futurus.

Henry *ii* visited his legendary grave at Glastonbury, and named his grandson Arthur. Edward I held a Round Table at Kenilworth. Remarkable features of nature—rocks, caves, and mounds were associated in the popular mind with the achievements of Arthur, and many are connected with them by name at the present day.

But the romances relating to Arthur were far more than the reflection of passing thoughts and customs destined to perish with the generations who read them. They embodied the ideals of the English race six centuries ago, and although appearing in a different form, those ideals are still our own. The examples presented in romantic fiction of manly courage, of self-sacrificing devotion, of simplicity of character, and of chivalric consideration for the weakness of the female sex, may excite our admiration and sympathy, as well as that of a fierce and untutored knighthood. These tales were the product of the English mind in its boyhood, and it is to the youth of our day that they are best adapted and most attractive; but the rationalism of the nineteenth century may find in their spirit of simple faith, of unquestioning belief and trust, much that is beautiful in human life which modern thought and science have swept away. It is on account of the enduring character of the ideals, of which the Arthurian legends were the spontaneous expression, that these works, although contained in a rude form, without artistic plan or literary merit to give them permanence, have never wholly passed from the acquaintance of men. The rude force and beauty of mediaeval fiction has been deeply felt by many of the greatest minds which have contributed to modern literature. To the perusal of the story of Launcelot and Guenever Dante ascribes the coming of Paolo and Francesca *al doloroso passo*. While the other works of Ariosto have fallen into obscurity, his “Orlando Furioso” has achieved a lasting fame. One of the greatest poems in the German language, the “Oberon” of Wieland, is almost a reproduction of a chivalric romance. The reader of Milton is often reminded of

> Uther’s son,
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights.

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Spenser transferred romantic fiction into the region of allegory, and gave to English literature the immortal “Faery Queen.” In our own day the “Idyls” of Tennyson have made the legends of Arthur a part of our common thought, and the Knights of the Round Table familiar in almost every household. The romances of chivalry fall naturally into three general classes: those relating to Charlemagne and his peers; those relating to classical and mythological heroes; and, finally, the tales connected with King Arthur. The strong similarity which exists in the character and incidents of these three classes makes an acquaintance with one of them sufficient for the purpose of this work. The “Morte d’Arthur” and the romances of which it forms a compendium will therefore be chiefly considered, as being the most interesting in their bearing on English fiction.

In the early part of the twelfth century, Walter Mapes, Archdeacon of Oxford, while travelling in France, became possessed of a book written in the British or Armoric language, which treated of the history of kings of Britain, and was undoubtedly even at that time of considerable antiquity. Little is known concerning this curious work. It related the fabulous martial deeds of British kings, of whose existence there is no previous record, their victories over giants and dragons, and the various supernatural influences to which they were subject. Hence comes the story of King Lear and of Jack the Giant-Killer, and here are first met the characters of King Arthur and the enchanter Merlin. This book having been translated into Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Benedictine monk, at once attained a great popularity and reputation; and for several centuries was universally accepted as true history. A number of metrical romances soon appeared to gratify the taste which Geoffrey’s chronicle had excited, and in the first half of the thirteenth century the same stories began to be written in prose. From this time until the middle of the fifteenth century most of what we now call romantic fiction was produced, although many imitations and translations appeared in England for more than a century afterward. The exact dates of the different romances and the names of their authors cannot be positively established, as the early copies were undated, and the names prefixed to them are believed to be fictitious. During this period were given to the world, among many others, the romances of Merlin the Enchanter, of Launcelot du Lac, of Meliadus, of his son Tristram, of Gyron le Courtoys, of Perceval le Gallois, and, finally, that of the Saint Greal, in which the whole body of knights-errant are represented, probably by some monkish writer, in the search for the Holy Cup which had held the blood of Christ. At last Sir Thomas Malory, a London knight, well read in chivalric literature, combined these tales in the volume he called the “Morte d’Arthur,” an excellent specimen of a chivalric romance, which was printed by Caxton in 1485, and has since appeared in many editions down to the present day.

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The influence of the supernatural appears in the very beginning of the “Morte d’Arthur,” and throughout we trace its controlling effect upon the incidents of the story. It is by the help of Merlin’s magic that King Uther Pendragon slays the Duke of Cornwall, and assuming the likeness of his rival, obtains possession of his wife Igraine, “a faire ladye, and a passing wyse,” from which union Arthur is born. On the death of Uther, when the chief nobles and knights are summoned to London by the Archbishop of Canterbury to choose a new king, it is Merlin’s art which discovers to them a sword imbedded in a great rock in the churchyard of St. Paul’s bearing the inscription: “Whoso pulleth this sword out of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England”; and it is by the same supernatural aid that the stripling Arthur, whose birth is unknown, fulfils the task which all had essayed in vain. By the friendly influence of Merlin, Arthur receives his famous sword Excalibur from the hands of the Lady of the Lake, with the scabbard whose wearer can lose no blood; he defeats with great slaughter the hosts of the eleven kings who dispute his throne; and obtains in marriage the celebrated Guenever, who brings him in dowry the Table Round. But Merlin, who could do so much for others, had the power only to foresee, and not to avert, his own impending fate. Enamoured of a fickle damsel, who soon tires of his love, the great enchanter discloses his secrets to her, and with a sad farewell and final advice to Arthur, he suffers himself to be imprisoned forever in the rock which his own magic had wrought, by the spell which he had intrusted to his treacherous mistress. The friendly arts of Merlin are succeeded by the machinations of the malicious fairy Morgana, and the watchful care of the the Lady of the Lake. To excite the childlike wonder of his readers, the romancer turns knights to stone, or makes them invisible; he introduces enchanted castles, vessels that steer themselves, and the miraculous properties of the Saint Greal, Arthur and Tristram fight with dragons and giants. The loves of Tristram and Isoud arise from the drinking of an amorous potion. The chastity of knight and damsel is determined by the magic horn, whose liquor the innocent drink, but the guilty spill; and by the enchanted garland, which blooms on the brow of the chaste, but withers on that of the faithless. Inventions such as these were regarded as facts, or at least as possible occurrences, by the readers of romantic fiction. Men believed what they were told, and to doubt, to inquire were intellectual efforts which they knew not how to make, and which all the influences of their life opposed their making. There were no fictions in the romances more improbable than the accounts of foreign parts brought back by travellers. Sir John of Mandeville was not doubted when he wrote that he had met with a race of men who had only one eye, and that in the middle of the forehead,

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or a people with only one foot and that one large enough to be used as a parasol. The knight who had mastered the art of reading looked upon such stories as curious facts. His religion was a religion of miracles, and, ignorant of natural laws, he was accustomed to refer any unusual occurrence to the influence of supernatural beings, a habit of thought which presented an ever-ready solution to mysteries and problems otherwise inexplicable.

The entire credence accorded to the supernatural features of the romance gave to it a power and an interest which has now, of course, disappeared; but the influence of the supernatural upon the work is so strong, that even the modern reader, wandering with Launcelot and Tristram in a world of wonders, meets a giant without surprise, and feels at home in an enchanted castle.

When Arthur is finally established on his throne, the knights of the Round Table begin their wonderful career of adventure and gallantry. With them the reader roams over a vague and unreal land called Britain or Cornwall, in full armor, the ever ready lance in rest. At almost every turn a knight is met who offers combat, and each detail of the conflict—the rush of the horses, the breaking of lances, the final hand-to-hand with swords—is described with a minuteness which only the military enthusiasm of the Middle Ages could thoroughly appreciate. Sometimes our hero meets a damsel who tells a tale of wrong, and leads the knight to champion her cause; again, he encounters some old companion in arms, breaks a lance upon him by way of friendly salutation, and wanders with him in search of adventures, inquiring of a chance peasant or dwarf, of a wrong to be avenged, or a danger to be incurred. The reader attends tournaments, of which every blow and every fall are chronicled. He becomes familiar with the respective merits and prowess of a hundred different champions. He learns the laws of judicial combat, and the intricate rules of the chivalric code. With imagination aroused and sympathies excited he enters a life of alternate combat and love, almost real in the consistency of its improbability. Three gallant knights, Sir Gawaine, Sir Marhaus, and Sir Uwaine set out together in search of adventures.

At the last they cam in to a grete forest that was named the countreye and foreste of Arroy and the countrey of straunge auentures. In this countrey, said syr Marhaus cam neuer knyghte syn it was crystened, but he fonde straunge auentures, and soo they rode, and cam in to a depe valey ful of stones, and ther by they sawe a fayr streme of water, aboue ther by was the hede of the streme, a fayr fontayne, & thre damoysels syttynge therby. And thenne they rode to them, and eyther salewed other, and the eldest had a garland of gold aboute her hede, and she was thre score wynter of age, or more, and her here[13] was whyte under the garland. The second damoysel was of thirty wynter of age, with a serkelet of gold aboute her hede. The thyrd

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damoysel was but xv year of age, and a garland of floures aboute her hede. When these knyghtes had soo beholde them, they asked hem the cause why they sat at that fontayne; we be here, sayd the damoysels for thys cause, yf we may see ony erraunt knyghtes to teche hem unto straunge auentures, and ye be thre knyghtes that seken auentures, and we be thre damoysels, and therfore eche one of yow must chose one of us. And whan ye haue done soo, we wylle lede yow vnto thre hyhe wayes, and there eche of yow shall chese a wey and his damoysel wyth hym. And this day twelue monethe ye must mete here ageyn and god sende yow your lyues, and ther to ye must plyzte your trouthe. This is wel said, sayd Syr Marhaus. * * * Thenne euery damoysel took her knyght by the raynes of his brydel, and broughte him to the thre wayes, and there was their othe made to mete at the fontayne that day twelue moneth and they were lyvynge, and soo they kyst and departed, and eueryche knyghte sette his lady behynde him.[14]

Sir Alysandre le Orphelin holds a piece of ground against all comers. A damsel called La Belle Alice proclaims at Arthur's court that whoever overthrows him, shall have herself and all her lands. Many knights undertake the adventure, but all are defeated by Sir Alysandre.

And whanne La Beale Alys sawe hym juste soo wel, she thought hym a passynge goodly knyght on horsbak. And thenne she lepte out of her pauelione, and toke Syr Alisandre by the brydel, and thus she sayd; Fayre knyght, I require the of thy knyghthode, shewe me thy vysage. I dar wel, sayd Sir Alysander shewe my vysage. And then he put of his helme, and she sawe his vysage, she said; O swete Jhesu! the I must loue and neuer other. Thenne shewe me your vysage, said he. Thenne she unwympeled her vysage. And whanne he saw her, he sayde, here haue I fond my loue and my lady. Truly fayre lady, said he, I promise yow to be your knyghte, and none other that bereth the lyf. Now, gentil knyghte, said she, telle me your name. My name is, said he, Alysander le Orphelyn. Now damoysel, telle me your name, said he. My name is, said she, Alys la Beale Pilggrym. And whan we be more at oure hertes ease both ye and I shalle telle other of what blood we be come. Soo there was grete loue betwyxe them. And as they thus talked, ther came a knyghte that hyght Harsouse le Berbuse, and axed parte of sir Alysanders speres. Thenne Sir Alysander encountred with hym, and at the fyrst Sir Alysander smote hym ouer his hors croupe.[15]

Sir Tristram is thus welcomed at Arthur's court:

Thenne Kynge Arthur took Sir Tristram by the hand, and wente to the table round. Thenne came Quene Guenever and many ladyes with her, and alle the ladyes sayden at one voyce, welcome Sir Tristram, welcome, said the damoysels, welcome said knightes, welcome said Arthur, for one of the best knyghts and the gentylst of the world, and the man of moost worship, for all manner of hunting

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thou berest the pryce, and of all mesures of blowynge thou art the begynninge, and of alle the termes of huntynge and haukinge ye are the begynner, of all Instrumentes of musyke ye are the best, therefor gentyl knyght, said Arthur, ye are welcome to this courte.[16]

The description of the combat between King Arthur and Accolon is perhaps the most interesting of the kind which the “Morte d’Arthur” contains. Accolon of Gaul had by the aid of Morgan le Fay obtained possession of Arthur’s enchanted sword and scabbard.[17]

And thenne they dressyd hem on bothe partyes of the felde, & lete their horses renne so fast that eyther smote other in the myddes of the shelde, with their speres hede, that bothe hors and man wente to the erthe. And thenne they sterte up bothe, and pulled oute their swerdys, * * * And so they went egrely to the battaille, and gaf many grete strokes, but alweyes Arthurs swerd bote[18] not like Accolon’s swerd. But for the most party euery stroke that Accolon gaf he wounded sore Arthur, that it was merucylle he stode. And alweyes his blood fylle from him fast. When Arthur behelde the ground so sore bebledde he was desmayed, and thenne he demed treason that his swerd was chaunged, for his swerd boote not styl[19] as it was wont to do, therefore he dredde hym sore to be dede, for euer hym seemed that the swerd in Accolons hand was Excalibur, for at euery stroke that Accolon stroke he drewe blood on Arthur. Now knyghte, said Accolon unto Arthur, kepe the wel from me, but Arthur ansuered not ageyne, and gat hym suche a buffet on the helme that he made hym to stoupe nygh fallynge doune to the earthe. Thenne Sir Accolon with drewe hym a lytel, and cam on with Excalibur on hyghe, and smote Syr Arthur suche a buffet that he felle nyhe to the erthe. Thenne were they wroth bothe, and gaf eche other many sore strokes, but alweyes Syr Arthur lost so muche blood that it was merucille he stode on his feet, but he was so ful of knighthode, that knyghtly he endured the payne. And Syr Accolon lost not a dele of blood, therefore he waxed passynge lyghte, and Syr Arthur was passynge feble, and wende veryly to have dyed, but for al that he made countenaunce as though he myghte endure, and helde Accolon as shorte as he myght. But Accolon was bolde by cause of Excalibur that he waxed passynge hardy. * * * And therewith he cam fyersly upon Arthur, and syre Arthur was wrothe for the blood that he had lost, and smote Accolon on hyhe upon the helme soo myztely that he made hym nyhe to falle to the erthe. And therewith Arthurs swerd brast at the crosse and felle in the grasse amonge the blood, and the pommel and the sure handels he helde in his handes. When syr Arthur sawe that, he was in grete fere to dye, but alweyes he helde vp his shelde and lost no ground nor bated no chere. Thenne syre Accolon beganne with wordes of treason, and sayd knyghte thow arte overcome, and mayste not endure, and also thow arte wepenles, and thow

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hast loste moche of thy blood, and I am ful lothe to slee the, therfor yelde the to me as recreaunt. Nay, saide syre Arthur I maye not so, for I haue promysed to doo the bataille to the vttermost by the feythe of my body whyle me lasteth the lyf, and therfor I had leuer to dye with honour than to lyve with shame. And yf it were possyble for me to dye an C tymes, I had leuer to dye so ofte, than yelde me to the, for though I lacke wepen, I shalle lacke no worship. And yf thou slee me wepenles that shalle be thy shame. Wel, sayd Accolon, as for the shame I wyl not spare. Now kepe the from me, for thow arte but a dede ma. And therwith Accolon gaf hym suche a stroke that he felle nyghe to the erthe, and wolde haue had Arthur to haue cryed hym mercy. But syre Arthur pressed unto Accolon with his sheld and gaf hym with the pomel in his hand suche a buffet that he wente thre strydes abak. * * * And at the next stroke Syr Accolon stroke hym suche a stroke that by the damoysels enchauntement the swerd Excalibur felle oute of Accolons hande to the erthe. And therwith alle syre Arthur lyghtely lepte to hit, and gate hit in his hand, and forwith al he knewe that it was his suerd Excalibur, & sayd thow hast ben from me al to long, & moche dommage hast thow done me. * * * And therwith syr Arthur russhed on hym with hys myghte, and pulled hym to the erthe, and thenne russhed of his helme, and gaf hym suche a buffet on the hede that the blood cam oute at his eres, his nose & his mouthe. Now wyll I slee the said Arthur. Slee me ye may wel, said Accolon, and it please yow, for ye ar the best knyghte that euer I fonde, and I see wel that god is with yow.

The knights of the Round Table had much more difficulty in dealing with one another than in overcoming the most redoubtable giants. Sir Launcelot arrived at a giant's castle,[20] and "he looked aboute, and sawe moche peple in dores and wyndowes that sayd fayre knyghte thow art unhappy. Anone with al cam there vpon hym two grete gyaunts wel armed al sauf the hedes, with two horryble clubbes in theyr handes. Syre Launcelot put his sheld afore hym and put the stroke aweye of the one gyaunt, and with his swerd he clafe his hede a sondre. Whan his felaw sawe that, he ran awey as he were wood, for fere of the horryble strokes, & laucelot after hym with al his myzt & smote hym on the sholder, and clafe hym to the nauel. Thenne Syre Launcelot went in to the halle, and there came afore hym thre score ladyes and damoysels, and all kneled unto hym, and thanked God and hym of their delyveraunce." The horrors of battle as recounted by the romancers lose much of their painfulness by the enjoyment which the combatants take in them, and by the facility with which the most terrible wounds are healed. The mediaeval passion for conflict and violence could hardly be more strikingly illustrated than by the words of the mother of Tristram, who had just given birth to her son in the midst of a forest, and being far from human aid, sees that her end is near. "Now lete me see my lytel child for whome I haue had alle this sorowe. And whan she sawe hym she said thus, A my lytel sone, thou hast murthered thy moder, and therfore I suppose, thou that art a murtherer soo yong, thou arte ful lykely to be a manly man in thyn age."[21]

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From the recital of combats we turn to tales of love. The most interesting of these relate to Launcelot and Guenever, and to Tristram and Isould. They differ in many respects, and yet share the noteworthy feature that both the women are already married, and their lovers are connected by ties of relationship or of great intimacy with the husbands whom they wrong. Arthur, however, is made to preserve, throughout the story of his deception, the same dignity and the same respect which he had always possessed, and in the loyalty of his character never admits a doubt of his wife's virtue; while King Mark, the husband of Isould, loses the sympathy of the reader by his treachery and cowardice, and is always conscious of Isould's infidelity. Guenever and Launcelot feel the deeper and the nobler passion, as theirs is inspired solely by each other's merit, while that of Isould and Tristram is inflamed by an amorous potion. The immorality of these love stories was not in the Middle Ages the same immorality which it would be considered at present. The conditions of life were all opposed to self restraint. The standard of morals was set by the church, and according to her interpretation of Christianity, continence was so subsidiary to orthodoxy, that what would now be considered a crime, was in the Middle Ages an irregularity which need not weigh on the conscience. Evidence of this is amply supplied by the social history of the time, and the fact is fully illustrated by the romances. The authors of these compositions, from their tendency to idealization, held up to their readers a higher view of virtue in every respect than was practised in actual life, and in their writings, conjugal infidelity is of constant occurrence. The fictitious personages who indulge in licence are but dimly conscious of wrong-doing, and almost the only evidence of a realization of their fault is in the Quest of the Saint Greal, when Launcelot and other noble knights acknowledge that the attainment of the sacred prize is not for them as being "sinful men," and the quest is achieved by the spotless Sir Galahad, who, impersonating the purifying influence of Christianity, forms the most striking character conceived by the fertile imagination of the Middle Ages. The virtue of constancy was far more admired than that of chastity, and it is said of Guenever, whose sin had brought such calamity upon the Round Table, that "as she was a true lover, so she had a good end."

Launcelot and Tristram vie with one another in the deeds of chivalry which they accomplish in honor of their ladies, and the intimacy which exists between the two knights and their mistresses adds much to the interest of the story. A fine touch in the loves of Tristram and Isould is the introduction of Sir Palomides, a valiant knight, almost the equal of Tristram in prowess, who loves Isould as passionately as his successful rival, but finds no favor to reward a long career of devotion. The passions of jealousy and hatred on the one hand, and knightly courtesy and honor on the other, which alternately sway the two warriors, and struggle for the mastery in their relations with each other, form a touching picture, and show that the romancers could occasionally rise above the description of conflicts to a study of the heart and character of men.

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That our lovers felt a deep and absorbing passion, there can be no doubt. Sir Dynas, the Seneschal, tells the Queen la Belle Isould that Sir Tristram is near: "Thenne for very pure joye la Beale Isould swouned, & whan she myghte speke, she said, gentyl knyghte Seneschall help that I myghte speke with him, outher my herte will braste." They meet, and then "to telle the joyes that were between la Beale Isoud and sire Tristram, there is no tongue can telle it, nor herte thinke it, nor pen wryte it." When Tristram thought Isoud unfaithful, he "made grete sorowe in so much that he fell downe of his hors in a swoune, and in suche sorowe he was in thre dayes and thre nyghtes." When he left her, Isoud was found "seke in here bedde, makynge the grettest dole that ever ony erthly woman made." "Sire Alysander beheld his lady Alys on horsbak as he stood in her pauelione. And thenne was he soo enamoured upon her that he wyst not whether he were on horsbak or on foote." Sir Gareth falls in love at first sight: "and euer the more syr Gareth behelde that lady, the more he loued her, and soo he burned in loue that he was past himself in his reason, and forth toward nyghte they wente unto supper, and sire Gareth myghte not ete for his loue was soo hot that he wyst not wher he was."

The Roman war introduced into the "Morte d'Arthur" is a curious illustration of the vagueness of the historical groundwork of the romances of chivalry. The memory of Roman power was still too great to permit a warrior to achieve greatness without having matched his strength against that of Rome, and thus we have the singular spectacle of King Arthur with his adventurous knights, clad in mail, passing easily through "Almayne" into Italy, conquering giants by the way, and reducing the Emperor Lucius to dependence.

The story of the Saint Greal originally formed a distinct romance, but it was the dull production of some ascetic monk, who thought that the knights of the Round Table were too much occupied with secular pursuits, and who found no greater encomium to pass upon Sir Galahad, than to call him a "maid." But the idea of the Christian knighthood setting out to seek the Holy Cup was "marvellous and adventurous," and so well suited to please the mediaeval mind that we find this quest introduced into several of the romances of chivalry, and it appears, though in an incomplete form, in the "Morte d'Arthur." The adventures met with by the knighthood are much the same as when they were pursuing a less lofty object. Sir Galahad occupies the intervals between his serious occupations with rolling his father Sir Launcelot and other noble knights into the dust in the usual unsaintly fashion. The supernatural element is stronger perhaps in the story of the Saint Greal than in any other romance, and the monkish inspiration of the work is everywhere manifest. When Sir Galahad rescues the inmates of the Castle of Maidens by overthrowing their oppressors, the romancer points out that the Castle of Maidens "betokeneth the good souls that were in prison before the incarnation of Jesu Christ." It is here also that we learn that "Sir Launcelot is come but of the eighth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, and Sir Galahad is of the ninth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ; therefore I dare say that they may be the greatest gentlemen of the world."

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When we have read of the “byrth, lyf and actes of Kyng Arthur, of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table, theyr mervayllous enquests and aduentures, th’ achyeuyng of the sangreal,” we come to the “dolorous deth and departyng out of this world of them.” It is indeed a “pytous hystory.” Long drawn out as the romance is, serious tax though it sometimes be on the reader’s patience, the author succeeds in making us so familiar with all his heroes, in inspiring us with so deep and active a sympathy with them, that it is with a real sadness that we read of the dissensions brought about by the loves of Launcelot and Guenever, the deserted Round Table, the separation of life-long companions, and the fraternal war between Sir Launcelot, Sir Gawaine, and King Arthur. Their love for each other was so strong that it is not wholly quenched even in the sanguinary struggles which follow, and it bursts forth in full vigor when death comes upon them in the midst of their fury. Sir Gawaine is the first to go, using his last strength to write to Sir Launcelot begging his forgiveness: “I byseche the, Sir Launcelot, to retorne ageyne vnto this realme, and see my tombe, & praye some prayer more or lesse for my soule.”

Whan syr Arthur wyst that syre Gawayne was layd so lowe he went vnto hym, and there the kyng made sorowe oute of mesure, and took sire Gawayne in his armes, and thryes[22] he there swouned. And thenne whan he awaked, he sayd, allas Sir Gawayne my sisters sone, here now thou lyggest[23], the man in the world that I loued moost, and now is my joye gone, for now my neuewe syre Gawayne I will discouer me vnto your persone, in syr Launcelot & you I had moost my joye and myn affyaunce, & now haue I lost my joye of you bothe, wherefor all myn erthely joye is gone from me.[24]

We turn from the death of Sir Gawaine only to witness the mortal blow dealt to King Arthur; to see his famous sword Excalibur, which he had borne so nobly and so long, returned to the Lady of the Lake; and the almost lifeless body of the great king carried away over the water by the fairy queens, disappearing at last beneath the horizon. Guenever would seen to have deserved a harder fate than simply to retire to a nunnery of which she is made the abbess. Sir Launcelot dies a holy man and a monk, saying masses for the souls of his old companions in arms. With his death the old glory of the Round Table passes away forever.

And whan syr Ector herd suche noyse & lyghte in the quyre of joyous Garde, he alyghted and put his hors from hym, and came in to the quyre, & there he sawe men synge the seruyse full lamentably. And alle they knewe syre Ector, but he knewe not them. Thenne went syr Bors to syr Ector, & tolde him how there laye hys broder syr Launcelot dede, and then syr Ector threwe his shelde, hys swerde & helme from hym. And whan he behelde syr Launcelot’s vysage, he felle donne in a sowne. And when he awakyd it were harde for any

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tonge to telle the doleful complayntes that he made for his broder. A, syr Launcelot, he sayd, thou were head of all Crysten knyztes, and now I dare saye, sayd syr Ector, thou syr Launcelot, ther thou lyest, that thou were neuer matched of none erthely knyghtes handes. And thou were the curtoyste knyghte that ever bare shelde. And thou were the truest frend to thy louer that euer bestradde hors, & thou were the truest louer of a synfull man that euer loued woman. And thou were the kyndest man that euer stroke wyth swerde. And thou were the goodelyest persone that euer came among prees of knyghtes. And thou were the mekest man & the gentylest that euer ete in halle amonge ladyes. And thou were the sternest knyghte to thy mortall foo that euer put spere in the reyst. Thenne there was wepyng & dolour oute of mesure.[25]

The literary form of the “Morte d’Arthur” admits of description rather than of criticism. A noble and forcible simplicity of expression pervades the old Norman French in which the romances of chivalry were first written, which is well reflected in the English of Sir Thomas Malory. Of plot there is none. The same vagueness pervades the course of the narrative, which is characteristic of the historical groundwork, the geography, and the time of action. Most of the incidents depend on chance. Life in the Middle Ages was a very serious affair, and in the romances there was almost no attempt at wit or humor. In the “Morte d’Arthur,” perhaps the only passage which might have raised a laugh among the early readers of the romance, is that in which King Arthur’s fool Dagonet is clad in Sir Mordred’s armor, and in that disguise is made to chase before him the coward King Mark. The authors of the romances of chivalry never attempted delineation of character. Their heroes are good knights or bad knights, and in either case possess only the particular qualities which would place them in one of these categories. The female characters are still more slightly drawn, and show no distinct attributes except beauty and a capacity to love.

In laying down the “Morte d’Arthur,” and bidding farewell to the Middle Ages with their heroes of chivalry, we come to the end of a most picturesque period of English history, —a period marked by lights and shadows, rather than by distinct forms. There was ferocity, and there was courtesy; there was brilliant show and rude coarseness; there were scenes of blood and scenes of noble chivalry. In the next chapter we shall notice the tendencies which were at work to replace this state of society by a better. But to the Middle Ages will always be traced much that is distinctive of English character, and in the history of fiction we may fairly allow to the knights of romance the legendary charm and fascination which hang about their bright helmets in the long vista of departed years.

[Footnote 13: Hair.]

[Footnote 14: “Morte d’Arthur.” Southey’s reprint from Caxton’s ed., 1485, chaps. xix and xx. book 4.]

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[Footnote 15: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 10, chap. xxxix.]

[Footnote 16: Southey’s “Morte d’Arthur,” vol. 2, p. 11.]

[Footnote 17: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 4, chap. ix.]

[Footnote 18: Hit, cut.]

[Footnote 19: Cut not steel.]

[Footnote 20: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 6, ch. x.]

[Footnote 21: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 8, ch. i.]

[Footnote 22: Thrice.]

[Footnote 23: Liest.]

[Footnote 24: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 22, chap. ii.]

[Footnote 25: “Morte d’Arthur,” book 22, chap. xiii.]

CHAPTER II.

Chaucer. *Popular tales*. *More’s* “*Utopia*.”

In the history of English intellectual development between the vague ignorance of the Middle Ages and the new growth of learning in the sixteenth century, stands the great figure of Chaucer. The first English writer possessing dramatic power, he is the first also to unite with the art of story-telling, the delineation and study of human character. In his translation of the “Romaunt of the Rose” he belongs to the Middle Ages,—a period of uncontrolled imagination, of unsubstantial creations, of external appearances copied without reflection. In his “Canterbury Tales” he belongs to the present,—when Reason asserts her authority, gives the stamp of individual reality to the characters of fiction, and studies the man himself behind his outward and visible form.

The creations of romantic fiction were unreal beings distinguished by different names, by the different insignia on their shields, and by the degree in which they possessed the special qualities which formed the ideal of mediaeval times. The story of their lives was but a series of adventures, strung together without plan, the overflow of an active but ungoverned imagination. The pilgrims to the shrine of Canterbury are men and women, genuine flesh and blood, as thoroughly individual and distinct as the creations of Shakespeare and of Fielding. They dress, they talk, each one after his own manner and according to his position in life, telling a story appropriate to his disposition and

suitable to his experience. The knight, with armor battered in “mortal battailles” with the Infidel, describes the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, a tale of chivalry. The lusty young squire, bearing himself well, “in hope to stonden in his lady grace,” tells an Eastern tale of love and romance. The prioress, “all conscience and tendre herte,” relates the legend of “litel flew of Lincoln,” murdered by the Jews for singing his hymn to the Virgin. The clerk of Oxford, who prefers to wealth and luxury his “twenty bookes clad in blak or reede,” contributes the story of the patient Griselda.

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The “Canterbury Tales” are so familiar that an extended notice of them here would be superfluous, especially as we are dealing with narratives in prose form. But in seeking to trace the origin and progress of the English novel as it is now written, we must record the first appearance of its special characteristics in the works of Chaucer. Here are first to be seen real human beings, endowed with human virtues and subject to human frailties; here fictitious characters are first represented amid the homely scenes of daily life; here they first become living realities whose nature and dispositions every one may understand, and with whose thoughts every one may sympathize. We must notice, also, the significant fact that of the thirty-two pilgrims who jogged along together that April day, four were of a military character, eleven belonged to the clergy, and seventeen were of the common people. A century before Chaucer’s time, when the feudal spirit was still all-powerful, there were but two classes of men thought worthy of consideration, the knighthood and the clergy; and in the romances of chivalry knights and priests exclusively composed the *dramatis personae*. But the slow progress of the masses, in whom lies the chief strength of a nation, becomes visible in Chaucer’s time. In the towns the tradesmen were rising to wealth and consideration. In the country the yeomanry—the laborers and farmers—were throwing off their serfdom, and emerging from the chrysalis of obscurity in which they had long been hidden. At Cressy and Poitiers the English archers disputed with the knighthood the honors of victory. While Chaucer was planning the “Canterbury Tales,” introducing into his gallery of contemporary portraits more figures of tradesmen than of knights or priests, the Peasant Revolt took place; the common people, long trodden in the dust, rose in defence of their rights as men, and John Ball, the “mad priest of Kent,” asked questions of the yeomen about him which showed how surely the Middle Ages were becoming a part of the past. “By what right are they whom we call lords greater folk than we? * * * If we all came of the same father and mother, of Adam and Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it be not that they make us gain for them by our toil what they spend in their pride?” * * * “When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"[26] As in the history of Chaucer’s time, so in his “Canterbury Tales” we perceive the decline of feudal and priestly tyranny which had gone hand in hand: the one keeping up a perpetual state of war and violence; the other limiting and enfeebling the human intellect, the activity of which could alone raise mankind out of barbarism.

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The passion for war and for a military life which had kept Europe in a state of constant disturbance during the Middle Ages, which had brought about the Hundred Years' struggle between England and France, and which had found its worst issue in the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century, had, in the sixteenth century largely spent its force. The pomp and luxury of chivalry had lessened the activity of military feelings. The expense entailed by chivalric pageantry had diminished the power of the nobles over their dependents. Many feudal barons were obliged to sell liberty and privileges to part of their bondsmen to obtain the wherewithal to maintain the remainder. The gradual growth of the towns and of trade produced a class which, having all to lose and nothing to gain by war, threw its influence against disorder. The advance in the study and practice of law diminished habits of violence by furnishing legal redress. But the most powerful agent in destroying the old warlike taste was the invention of gunpowder. In the Middle Ages the whole male population had been soldiers in spirit and in fact. But the application of gunpowder to the art of war made it necessary that men should be especially trained for the military profession. A limited number were therefore separated from the main body of the people, who occupied themselves exclusively with military affairs, while the remainder were left to pursue the hitherto neglected arts of peace. The love of war and the indifference to human suffering so long nourished by feudalism could only be thoroughly extinguished by centuries of gradual progress. The heads of queens and ministers of state falling from the block attest the strength of these feelings in Henry the Eighth's time. They were, however, fast losing ground before the new growth of learning. Their decline is illustrated by the fiction of the sixteenth century, as their full power was depicted in the early romances of chivalry.

In the sixteenth century, chivalry as an institution, and even as an influential ideal had entirely passed away. The specimens of romantic fiction which were read during the reigns of Henry the Eighth and of Elizabeth could no longer appeal to an entirely warlike and superstitious class. They were modified to meet new tastes, and in the process became superior in literary merit, but inferior in force and interest. This is especially true of the romances translated from the Spanish. Amadis of Gaul and Palmerin of England show merits of narrative sequence and elegance of expression which did not belong to the earlier romances, of which the "Morte d'Arthur" formed a compendium. But the chivalry of Amadis and Palmerin was polished, refined and exaggerated till it became entirely fanciful and lost the old fire and spirit. In the so-called tales of chivalry produced or adapted by English writers during this century there is no trace of the poetry and interest of chivalric sentiments. In "Tom-a-Lincoln," the Red Rose Knight, the noble King Arthur is represented as an old dotard, surrounded by knights who bear no resemblance in person or in the nature of their adventures to their prototypes of romantic fiction.[27]

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The ideal character of the yeomanry succeeded to the ideal character of the knighthood; Robin Hood and his merry companions took the place in the popular mind which belonged to King Arthur and his knights of the Table Round. The yeomen of England were imbued with a spirit of courage and liberty unknown to the same class on the continent of Europe, and their love of freedom and restless activity of disposition found a reflection in the person of their hero. Supposed to have lived in the thirteenth century, his name and achievements have been sung in countless rhymes and ballads, and have remained dear to the common people down to the present day. The patron of archery, the embodiment of the qualities most loved by the people—courage, generosity, faithfulness, hardihood,—the places he frequented, the well he drank from, have always retained his name, and his bow, with one of his arrows, was preserved with veneration as late as the present century.[28] The ideal of the yeomanry was similar to that of chivalry in the love of blows fairly given and cheerfully taken, in the love of fighting for fighting's sake. It was similar in the courtesy which was always a characteristic of Robin Hood; in the religious devotion which caused the outlaw to hear three masses every morning before setting out on his depredations; in the gallantry which restrained him from molesting any party which contained a woman.[29] But the tales relating to Robin Hood differ from those of the Round Table in their entire freedom from affectation and from supernatural machinery. They breathe, too, an open-air spirit of liberty and enjoyment which was pleasing and comprehensible to the dullest intellect, and which made them, in the broadest sense, popular. The good-humored combativeness of the yeoman sympathized with every beating which Robin Hood received, and with every beating which he gave. In Robin's enmity to the clergy, in his injunction to his followers,

> "Thyse byshopppes and thyse archebyshoppes,
> Ye shall them bete and bynde,"

the people applauded resistance to the extortion of the church. In Robin's defiance of the law and its officers, they applauded resistance to the tyranny of the higher classes. Waylaying sheriffs and priests, or shooting the king's deer in Sherwood Forest, the famous outlaw and his merry men, clad all in green, were the popular heroes. On Robin Hood's day the whole population turned gaily out to celebrate his festival, never weary of singing or hearing the ballads which commemorated his exploits. Robin was a robber, but in times of disorder highway robbery has always been an honorable occupation, and the outlaws of Sherwood Forest were reputed to give to the poor what they took from the rich. Diligent enquiries have been made to ascertain whether the personage known as Robin Hood had a real existence, but without positive results. The story of his life is purely legendary, and the theories in regard to him have never advanced beyond hypothesis.

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It is exceedingly probable that such a man lived in the twelfth or thirteenth century, and that the exploits of other less prominent popular heroes were connected with his name and absorbed in his reputation. The noble descent which has often been ascribed to him is in all likelihood the result of the mediaeval idea, that the great virtues existed only in persons of gentle birth. This very prevalent opinion is often apparent in the romances of chivalry, where knights of exceptional valor, who had supposed themselves to be basely descended, almost invariably turn out to be the long-lost offspring of a famous and noble person. Like the tales of chivalry, the narratives of Robin Hood's adventures were sung and recited in metrical form long before they found their way into prose. The following extract forms a part of the first chapter of the story called the "Merry Exploits of Robin Hood," which had a considerable circulation in the sixteenth century.

> "Robin Hood's Delights; or, a gallant combate fought between Robin Hood, Little John, and William Scarlock, and three of the keepers of the King's deer, in the forest of Sherwood, in Nottinghamshire."

"On a midsummer's day, in the morning, Robin Hood, being accompanied with Little John and William Scarlock, did walk forth betimes, and wished that in the way they might meet with some adventures that might be worthy of their valour; they had not walked long by the forrest side, but behold three of the keepers of the king's game appeared, with their forrest-bills in their hands, and well appointed with faucheons and bucklers to defend themselves. Loe here (saith Robin Hood) according to our wish we have met with our mates, and before we part from them we will try what mettle they are made off. What, Robin Hood, said one of the keepers; I the same, reply'd Robin. Then have at you, said the keepers; here are three of us and three of you, we will single out ourselves one to one; and bold Robin, I for my part am resolved to have a bout with thee. Content, with all my heart, said Robin Hood, and Fortune shall determine who shall have the best, the outlaws or the keepers; with that they did lay down their coats, which were all of Lincoln Green, and fell to it for the space of two hours with their brown bills, in which hot exercise Robin Hood, Little John and Scarlock had the better, and giving the rangers leave to breathe, demanded of them how they liked them; Why! good stout blades i'faith, saith the keeper that fought with Robin, we commend you. * * * I see that you are stout men, said Robin Hood, we will fight no more in this place, but come and go with me to Nottingham, (I have silver and gold enough about me) and there we will fight it out at the King's Head tavern with good sack and claret; and after we are weary we will lay down our arms, and become sworn brothers to one another, for I love those men that will stand to it, and scorn to turn their backs for the proudest

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Tarmagant of them all. With all our hearts, jolly Robin, said the keepers to him; so putting up their swords and on their doublets, they went to Nottingham, where for three days space they followed the pipes of sack, and butts of claret without intermission, and drank themselves good friends."

The story of "George-a-Green," the brave Pindar of Wakefield is very similar to that of Robin Hood. George was as fond as his more noted friend of giving and taking hard knocks, and it is his skilful and judicious use of the quarter-staff in fulfilling the duties of his office, which gives rise to the incidents of the story. A curious relic of chivalry appears in the passage where Robin Hood the outlaw, and George a-Green the pound-keeper, meet to decide with their quarter-staves the relative merit of their sweethearts. [30]

Of the stories relating to the yeomanry the most important was the "Pleasant Historic of Thomas of Reading; or, The Sixe Worthie Yeomen of the West," by Thomas Deloney, a famous ballad-maker of the 16th century. It is the narrative of the life and fortunes of a worthy clothier of Henry the First's time, telling how he rose to wealth and prosperity, and was finally murdered by an innkeeper. There is interwoven a relation of the unhappy loves of the "faire Margaret," daughter of the exiled Earl of Shrewsbury, and of Duke Robert, the King's brother, which ends in the Duke losing his eyes, and the fair Margaret being immured in a convent. The story illustrates some curious old customs, and is written in an unaffected and easy style, which makes it still very readable. A passage describing the churching feast of the wife of one of the "Sixe worthie yeomen," makes a natural and humorous picture of contemporary manners.

Sutton's wife of Salisbury, which had lately bin deliuered of a sonne, against her going to church, prepared great cheare; at what time Simon's wife of Southhampton came thither, and so did diuers others of the clothiers' wiues, onely to make merry at this churching feast: and whilest these dames sate at the table, Crab, Weasell and Wren waited on the board, and as the old Prouerbe speaketh, Many women, many words, so tell it out at that time; for there was such prattling that it passed: some talkt of their husbands' frowardnes, some shewed their maids' sluttishnes, othersome deciphered the costlines of their garments, some told many tales of their neighbours: and to be briefe there was none of them but would have talke for a whole day.But when Crab, Weazell and Wren saw this, they concluded betwixt themselves, that as oft as any of the women had a good bit of meate on their trenchers, they offering a cleane one should catch that commodity, and so they did; but the women being busie in talke, marked it not, till at the last one found leisure to misse her meate * * * The women seeing their men so merry, said it was a sign there was good ale in the house.[31]

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As the decline of disorder and of martial tastes had given men the opportunity to lead other than military lives, so the decline of the theological spirit enabled them to attain that diffusion of knowledge without which there could be no civilization. The Roman clergy, during many centuries, partly from conscientious motives, and partly to maintain their own power, had suppressed intellectual and material advancement, and had kept men in a state of gross ignorance and superstition. In England the church gradually lost her old influence by her internal rottenness: she was unable to resist the new growth of learning which sprung up in the first half of the sixteenth century; and her power for evil was destroyed by the Reformation. The superstitions, however, which she had nourished, lingered long after her power had passed away, and these have given birth to some curious specimens of fiction. The natural tendency of an ignorant and superstitious people was to ascribe superior mental ability to intercourse with Satan, and to imagine that any unusual learning must be connected with the occult sciences. These ideas are illustrated by the stories relating to Friar Bacon and to Virgil which were printed during the sixteenth century, and which embodied the legends regarding these great men which had passed current for two hundred years. The same ignorant indifference to useful learning which made Roger Bacon, the great philosopher of the thirteenth century, "unheard, forgotten, buried," represented him after his death as a conjurer doing tricks for the amusement of a king. "The Famous Historie of Frier Bacon," is written in a clear and simple style, very similar to that of "Thomas of Reading," and recounts: "How Fryer Bacon made a Brazen Head to speake, by the which hee would have walled England about with Brasse"; "how Fryer Bacon by his arte took a towne, when the king had lyen before it three months, without doing to it any hurt"; with much more of the same sort. This story would be without interest, were it not for the introduction of the Friar's servant, one Miles, whose futile attempts at seconding his master's efforts, and sometimes at imitating them, occasion some very amusing scenes. Friar Bungay, the famous conjurer of Edward the Fourth's time, appears as Bacon's assistant.

Virgil was treated in the same way. The age which turned Hercules into a knight-errant, very consistently represented the poet and philosopher as a magician. All through the Middle Ages the name of Virgil had been connected with necromancy. "The authors," says Naudeus,[32] "who have made mention of the magic of Virgil are so many that they cannot be examined one after another, without loss of much time." On the title page of the "Lyfe of Virgilius," we learn that: "This boke treateth of the lyfe of Virgilius, and of his deth, and many mervayles that he dyd in hys lyfe tyme by whychcrafte and nygramancye thorowgh the helpe of the devyls of Hell."

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Some of the “mervayles” being: “Howe Virgilius made a lampe that at all tymes brenned”; “howe Virgilius put out all the fyer of Rome”; “howe Virgilius made in Rome a metall serpente.” In this story of Virgil occurs a curious instance of the appearance of the same incident in very different works of fiction. The poet being enamoured of a certain Roman lady, persuaded her to lower a basket from her window, in which he should enter and be drawn up to her chamber. The lady assented, but when the basket had ascended half way, she left her lover to hang there, exposed the next morning to the ridicule of the populace, for which treachery Virgil takes terrible revenge. This story of the basket became very popular; it was introduced into a well known French fabliau[33]; and Bulwer worked it, with slight changes, into his novel of “Pelham,” where Monsieur Margot experiences the same sad reflections concerning the deceitfulness of woman, which had long before passed through the mind of Virgil.

The devil himself, or more properly, one of the many devils who abounded in the sixteenth century, is the hero of the “Historie of Frier Rush.”

The imagination of the peasantry had peopled the woods and dells with gay and harmless spirits, fairies and imps. These were sometimes mischievous, but might always be propitiated, and excited in the rural mind curiosity and amusement rather than fear. But the clergy, who shared in the popular superstitions, and gave as ready a belief as the peasantry to the existence of these supernatural beings, were unable from the nature of their creed to admit the possibility that these spirits were harmless. To the monks all supernatural creatures were either angels or devils, and under their influence the imps and fairies whom the peasants believed to be dancing and playing pranks about them were turned into demons bent on the destruction of human souls.[34] Friar Rush was probably at one time a good natured imp like Robin Good Fellow, but under the influence, of Christian superstition he became the typical emissary from Satan, who played tricks among men calculated to set them by the ears, and who sought by various devices, always amusing, to fit them for residence in his master’s dominions.

In the history before us, which is probably only one of many which circulated concerning the mischievous friar, he obtains admission into a convent for the purpose of debauching its inmates. Having received employment as under-cook, he soon finds means to throw his master into a cauldron of boiling water, and pretending that the cook’s death resulted from an accident, he obtains the chief position in the kitchen himself. He then provides the convent with such delicious food that the monks give themselves up entirely to material enjoyment, and finally reach a condition of degeneracy from which recovery is almost impossible. Rush, however, is exposed in time to prevent absolute ruin, and sets out to make up for this failure by good service elsewhere. The story is described on the title-page as “being full of pleasant mirth and delight for young people.”

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The tales of the yeomanry were very popular during the sixteenth century, and were sold as penny chapbooks for many years. They form an interesting link in the history of English prose fiction, representing as they do the first appearance of a popular demand for prose stories, and the first appearance, except in Chaucer, of other than military or clerical heroes. They possess an element of reality which separates the chivalric ideal of the Middle Ages from the pastoral-chivalric ideal of Elizabeth's time, the latter typified by Sidney's "Arcadia." The tales relating to the conjurers are quite mediaeval in character. They are of interest only so far as they serve to illustrate the effect of popular superstition upon the literature of the time.

The New Learning, growing up in the place of war and theology, meant the dawn of material prosperity, of the rule of law, and of a new intelligence diffused through the opinions and industries of men. Of this there is no better exposition than Sir Thomas More's "Utopia." More was a devout Catholic. He wore a hair shirt next his skin; he flogged himself; he gave his life for a theological principle. But he was also a Christian in a wider sense. He appreciated the importance to men of peace and happiness, as well as of orthodoxy. He sought to promote, what the clergy sought to destroy, the benefits of intellectual and material advancement. More was a lawyer, seeing clearly into the temper of his time, and discerning the new tendencies which were forming the opinions and influencing the actions of his countrymen. It was as a lawyer, too, that he was able to do this. As a soldier, or as the inmate of that Carthusian cell his youth had longed for, he would have shared the prevailing blindness. For many centuries all intellectual activity had been occupied with theological disputes,—how barren it is needless to say; all physical activity had been occupied in destroying or in protecting life. "There were indeed," says Buckle,[35] "many priests and many warriors, many sermons and many battles. But, on the other hand, there was neither trade, nor commerce, nor manufactures; there was no science, no literature; the useful arts were entirely unknown; and even the highest ranks of society were unacquainted, not only with the most ordinary comforts, but with the commonest decencies of civilized life." But the New Learning dealt with secular subjects, and aimed at material welfare. At Antwerp, says More:

"Vpon a certayne daye, when I hadde herde the diuine seruice in our Ladies Churche, which is the fayrest, the most gorgeous and curious churche of buyldyng in all the Citie, and also the most frequented of people, and the seruice beynge doone, was readye to go home to my lodgynge, I chaunced to espye this foresayde Peter talkynge with a certayne Straunger, a man well stricken in age, with a blacke sonneburned face, a longe bearde, and a cloke cast homly about his shoulders, whome,

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by his fauoure and apparell furthwith I iudged to bee a mariner."[36]

This was the fictitious personage whose travels had led him to the distant island of Utopia, and who described to Sir Thomas the nature of its government. Europe for fifteen centuries had been under the control of the clergy, and what had been the result? Where was the progress? How much had the barbarism of one century differed from that of the last? But in Utopia there was no priesthood. Men had a simple faith. They “were persuaded that it is not in a man’s power to believe what he list,” and when they met in public worship it was to hold such services that all might freely join in them. Religion in Utopia was left to the individual conscience. War was considered an unmitigated evil, and never undertaken except in the extremest necessity. The people of Utopia, therefore, not being exclusively occupied, on the one hand, with discussing their religion and enforcing it on others, or, on the other hand, with violating all its teachings, were able to think of other things. How to make the best laws for the government of the commonwealth; how to deal with crime, with labor; how to promote the highest condition of general well-being, as regarded the public health, public education, the comfort and cleanliness of dwellings;—these were the questions which the Utopians considered most important, and these were solved by the exercise of human reason. These were questions, too, with which the English people found themselves confronted in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and before that century had passed away, the results even of a very imperfect solution regarding them were apparent in every department and in every class of life.

The great mind, the noble character of Sir Thomas More stand out the best production of his time. The strong religious bias of the man made it inevitable that he should remain considerably under the influence of the old theological teachings, but in the intelligent man of the world, in the large-hearted philanthropist, in the honest patriot, appear the new and beneficent tendencies which were at work. Like all men who have been in advance of their time, More was looked upon as a dreamer. A dreamer he might naturally seem, who, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, looked for peace, for religious toleration, for justice to the lower classes. But these dreams were destined to be realized long after More’s headless body had crumbled to dust, by that learning which he himself so seduously cultivated, and by the decay, too, of some of those ideas for which he died a martyr’s death. The growth of the universities, the establishment of grammar schools, the impetus given to all useful occupations during the reign of Henry *viii*, were gradually aiding the advance of that new era in the history of England which developed so brilliantly under Elizabeth. In her reign the old warlike spirit had decayed, theology had lost its obstructive power, and human reason began to bear its legitimate fruits—prosperity and civilization.

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[Footnote 26: Green's "Short History of the English People," p. 203.]

[Footnote 27: "Tom-a-Lincoln" has been reprinted in W.J. Thorn's valuable collection of "Early English Prose Romances," where may also be found a story similar in nature, called "Helyas, Knight of the Swanne." I do not consider these productions worthy of more extended notice here, as they possess no interest in themselves, and serve only to illustrate the degeneracy of the fictions relating to the knighthood during the 16th century. The compilation called "The Seven Champions of Christendom", by Richard Johnson, the author of "Tom-a-Lincoln", said to contain "all the lyes of Christendom in one lye," obtained considerable popularity and circulation during this period. Dunlop mentions ("Hist. of Fiction," chap. xiv) the "Ornatus and Artesia", and "Parismus, Prince of Bohemia," by Emmanuel Ford, and the "Pheander, or Maiden Knight," by Henry Roberts, belonging in the same class of composition. An English version of the old tale of Robert the Devil belongs to this period, and may be found in W.J. Thom's collection.]

[Footnote 28: Ritson's "Robin Hood."]

[Footnote 29: Hunter's "Robin Hood", p. 13.]

[Footnote 30: "George-a-Green," chap. x, Thom's "Early Eng. Prose Romances."]

[Footnote 31: "Thomas of Reading," chap. 12.]

[Footnote 32: Thom's preface to "Vigilius," "Early Eng. Prose Romances."]

[Footnote 33: "Lai d'Hippocrate," Le Grand. Thom's Prelude to "Virgilius."]

[Footnote 34: Wright's "Essays on the Middle Ages," *Essay x*.]

[Footnote 35: Buckle's "Hist. of Civilization," vol. I, p. 147. Appleton's ed.]

[Footnote 36: "*A fruteful and plesaunt worke of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle called UTOPIA: written in Latin by SYR THOMAS MORE KNYGHT, and translated into Englysshe by RAPHE ROBYNSON Citisein and Goldsmythe of London at the procurement and earnest request of George Tadlowe Citisein and Haberdassher of the same Citie. Imprinted at London by Abraham Wele, dwelling in Paul's Churcheyarde at the Sygne of the Lambe, Anno, 1551." Arber's reprint.*]

CHAPTER III.

The age of Elizabeth: *Lyly*, *greene*, *Lodge*, *Sidney*.

I.

In the rapidity and scope of intellectual and material progress, the age of Elizabeth is unequaled in English history. The nation seemed to pass from the darkness of night into a sunshine which would never end. Freed from the trammels which had hitherto impeded their way, all classes put on a new vigor, a new enterprise, and a new intelligence, which brought advancement into every walk of life. The spread of the Copernican doctrine of the revolutions of the earth, and the relations of our planet to the solar system gradually drove before

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it the old anthropocentric ideas. Men looked into the heavens and saw a new universe. In the grand scheme of creation there unfolded before them, they read in spite of themselves the comparative insignificance of their own world, and an overwhelming blow was dealt at the narrowness and superstition which had hitherto characterized their thoughts. A new world, too, was fast becoming known. The circumnavigation of the earth by Drake, the visits of other Englishmen to the shores of Africa and America, even to the Arctic seas, awakened a deep and healthful curiosity. There arose a passion for travelling, for seeing and studying foreign lands. Those who were forced to remain at home devoured with eagerness the books of those who wandered abroad. The effects of this widening of the mental and physical horizon are observable in the new occupations which absorbed the energies of men, and in the new social life which all classes were beginning to lead. Improvements in husbandry doubled the productiveness of the soil, and greatly enhanced its value. The development of manufactures made English woolens in demand throughout Europe. In commerce the new spirit of enterprise was strikingly apparent. Tradesmen and nobles, ministers of state, Elizabeth herself—all who could, ventured something in the ships which sailed for America or Africa in the hope of golden cargoes. The Russia company brought home furs and flax, steel, iron, ropes, and masts. The Turkey merchants imported the productions of the Levant, silks and satins, carpets, velvets, and cloth of gold. By the side of these were laid in London markets, the rice, cotton, spices, and precious stones of India, and the sugar, rare woods, gold, silver, and pearls of the New World.[37]

Under the influence of this new enterprise and prosperity, the picture of social life becomes more pleasing. The English noble succeeded to the feudal baron, the manor to the fortress. With the coat of mail and huge two-handed sword passed away the portcullis and the moat. The new homes of the nobility, erected during Elizabeth's reign, were marked by a beauty and luxury in keeping with the new ideas of their owners. The eye still rests with admiration on the numberless gables, the quaint chimneys, the oriel windows, the fretted parapets of the Tudor building. Within, the magnificent staircases, the great carved chimney-pieces, the massive oaken furniture, the costly cabinets, and elaborate tapestries all attested the new wealth and the new taste of the occupants. A large chamber of Hardwicke Hall was decorated with a frieze representing a stag hunt, and beneath that the story of Ulysses wrought in tapestry.[38] Harrington rejoiced in the number of "goodly chambers, large gardens and sweet walks" of Elizabeth's palaces. The "goodly chambers" were filled with cloths of gold and silver, with satin-covered furniture, and silk coverlids lined with ermine. In the houses of knights and gentlemen were to be seen a great

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profusion of “Turkic worke, pewter, brasse, fine linen, and thereto costlie cupbords of plate worth five or six hundred or a thousand pounds."[39] The lord of the manor no longer took his meals with all his retainers in the great hall, throwing the bones and scraps from his wooden trencher to his dogs. He withdrew into a separate apartment, and dined with a new refinement. A hitherto unknown variety of food covered the table, served on pewter, china, or silver, instead of the primitive trencher.

The bands of retainers who had hung round the castle, living at the expense of its lord, and ready to follow him in his career of violence, were gradually being absorbed in useful and industrial pursuits. Among the yeomanry the general progress was exceedingly noticeable. The character and worth of this important class were commented upon by Holinshed.[40] “This sort of people * * * commonlie live wealthilie, keepe good houses, and travell to get riches. They are also for the most part farmers to gentlemen, or at the leastwise artificers, and with grazing, frequenting of markets, and keeping of servants (not idle servants as the gentlemen doo, but suche as get bothe their owne and part of their master’s living), do come to great welth, in so much that manie of them are able and doo buie the lands of unthriftie gentlemen, and often setting their sonnes to the schooles, to the universities, and to the Ins of the Court, or otherwise leaving them sufficient lands whereupon they may live without labour, do make them by those meanes to become gentlemen: these were they that in times past made all France afraid, and albeit they be not called Master, as gentlemen are, or Sir, as to knights apperteineth, but only John, and Thomas, *etc*., yet have they beene found to have doone verie good service; and the kings of England in foughten battels, were woont to remain among them (who were their footmen), as the French kings did among their horsemen; the prince thereby showing where his chief strength did consist.” This middle class were enjoying a luxury and comfort undreamt of by their fathers, or indeed by the nobility of feudal times. Thatched cottages smeared with mud were fast being succeeded by brick or stone houses, finely plastered, with glass windows, chairs in place of stools, and tables in place of rough boards lying loosely on tressles. “Farmers learned also to garnish their cupboards with plate, their joined beds with tapestrie and silken hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine naperie, whereby the wealth of our countrie * * * doth infinitelie appeare."[41] The new comforts, enumerated by Harrison, presented a striking contrast to the condition the “old men” had been satisfied with in their “yoong daies,” “Our fathers (yea, and we ourselves also) have lien full oft upon straw pallets, on rough mats * * * and a good round log under their heads instead of a bolster or pillow. If it were so that our fathers, or the good man of the house, had

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within eleven years after his marriage purchased a matteras or flockebed, and thereto a sacke of chaffe to rest his head upon, he thought himself to be as well lodged as the lord of the towne." The new comforts were the result, not of extravagance, but of prosperity. Notwithstanding the rigid economy of the old times, men "were scearce able to live and paie their rents at their daies without selling of a cow, or an horse or more, although they paid but four pounds at the uttermost by the yeare, * * * whereas in my time," says Harrison, "although peradventure foure pounds of old rent be improved to fourtie, fiftie, or an hundred poundes, yet will the farmer as another palme or date tree, thinke his gaines verie small toward the end of his terme, if he had not six or seven yeares rent lieing by him, therewith to purchase a new lease, beside a faire garnish of pewter on his cupboard, with so much in od vessell going aboute the house, three or four feather beds, so manie coverlids and carpets of tapestrie, a silver salt, a bowle for wine * * * and a dozzen of spoones to furnish up the sute."[42] The country gentleman sitting in his hall, hawk on hand, with his hounds about him, made a profuse hospitality his chief pride, and out-door sports the resource of his leisure and conversation. Greek and Latin were gradually making their way into his store of knowledge, hitherto limited to the romances and chronicles. But as Ascham complained, there was little sweetness to flavor his cup of learning. "Masters for the most part so behave themselves," said Peacham, "that their very name is hatefull to the scholler, who trembleth at their coming in, rejoyceth at their absence, and looketh his master (returned) in the face, as his deadly enemy."[43]

The amusements of the rural population partook of the character of material prosperity and material enjoyment which were so prominent in Elizabeth's reign. There is no sign of the prevailing improvement in the condition of men more suggestive than the effervescence of spirits which broke loose on every holiday and at every festival. On the first day of May "the juvenile part of both sexes are wont to rise a little after midnight, and walk to some neighboring wood, accompany'd with music and the blowing of horns, where they break down branches from the trees and adorn them with nosegays and crowns of flowers. When this done, they return with their booty homewards about the rising of the sun, and make their doors and windows to triumph in the flowery spoil."[44] "But their cheefest jewell they bring from thence is their Maie poole whiche they bringe home with great veneration, as thus: They have twentie or fourtie yoke of oxen, every oxe havyng a sweete nosegaie of flowers, tyed on the tippe of his hornes, and these oxen drawe home this Maie poole."[45] Games, dances, rude dramatic performances succeeded each other for hours, interspersed with feasting and drinking. An extravagant fancy sought expression in the excitement,

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of grotesque actions and brilliant costumes. The Morris dancers executed their curious movements, clad in “gilt leather and silver paper, and sometimes in coats of white spangled fustian,"[46] or in “greene, yellow, or some other light wanton collour,” bedecked with “scarfs, ribbons and laces hanged all over with golde ringes, precious stones and other jewells,” and “aboute either legge twentie or fourtie belles."[47] Robin Hood’s Day, Christmas, Twelfth Night, Harvest Home, Sheepshearing, were all celebrated in turn with a liveliness of spirit, a vigor of imagination, and a noisy enjoyment of the good things of life which showed that Merry England had at last succeeded to the gloom of the Middle Ages.

The prevailing prosperity and activity were naturally even more apparent in London than in the rural districts. The city was growing rapidly, filling up with warehouses and shops, with palaces and dwellings. The people in general were attracted to it by the growing trade and industry, and by the theatres, taverns, bear-gardens, and other places of amusement, the number of which was constantly increasing. The nobility and gentry sought the splendor of Elizabeth’s court to spend their leisure and their wealth. The middle or commercial classes of the city, like the corresponding agricultural classes in the country, were enjoying the fruits of their industry and attaining a respectable position of their own. The houses and furniture belonging to them struck a foreigner with astonishment and pleasure[48]; “The neate cleanlinesse, the exquisite finenesse, the plesaunte and delightfull furniture in every point for household wonderfully rejoyced mee; their chambers and parlours, strawed over with sweet herbes, refreshed mee; their nosegayes finelye intermingled wyth sondry sortes of fragraunte floures in their bed-chambers and privie roomes, with comfortable smell cheered me up and entierlye delighted all my senses.” The profusion of expenditure, and the love of show resulting from the sudden increase of wealth, affected even the apprentices of the city. The Lord Mayor and Common Council, in 1582, found it necessary to direct apprentices; “to wear no hat with any silk in or about the same. To wear no ruffles, cuffs, loose collar, nor other thing than a ruff at the collar, and that only a yard and a half long. To wear no doublets * * * enriched with any manner of silver or silke. * * * To wear no sword, dagger, nor other weapon but a knife; nor a ring, jewel of gold, nor silver, nor silke in any part of his apparel."[49]

It was, however, at Elizabeth’s court, and among the nobility, that the tendencies of the time were most marked. The literature of this era—never surpassed in brilliancy and power—was the work of poets and dramatists. It was the outcome of a poetical and dramatic life. Even the fiction which belongs to the period was colored by the same fondness for dramatic incident and poetic treatment. The enthusiasm which had animated the nobility in

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their martial life went with them to the court of Elizabeth. There it showed itself in gallantry, in love of show, and in a devotion to amusement and to self-cultivation which internal peace had at length made possible. Men of whom any age might be proud crowded the scene. Cecil and Walsingham among statesmen, Drake among discoverers, Bacon and Hooker among thinkers, Raleigh and Sidney at once among courtiers, soldiers, and scholars. The prevailing extravagance and variety of dress was simply the outward sign of a love of whatever was brilliant and new. The fashions of France, of Spain, of Turkey, even of the Moors contributed to the wardrobe of the English gallant. “And, as these fashions are diverse, so likewise it is a world to see the costlinesse and the curiositie: the excesse and the vanitie: the pomp and the braverie; the change and the varietie: and finallie the ficklenesse and the follie that is in all degrees: insomuch that nothing is more constant in England than inconstancie of attire."[50] Each one aimed at making the best appearance. The long seams of men’s hose were set by a plumb line, and beards were cut to suit the face, “If a man have a leane and streight face, a Marquess Ottons cut will make it broad and large; if it be platter-like, a long, slender beard will make it seeme the narrower.” “Some lustie courtiers also, and gentlemen of courage doo weare either rings of golde, stones, or pearle in their eares, whereby they imagine the workmanship of God not to be a little amended."[51] All are familiar with the brilliant female dress of the time. The enormous starched ruffs of various colors, the long stomachers stiffened with wire and studded with jewels, the costly stuffs enriched with gold and silver, made up a costume which has never been surpassed in extravagance and fanciful exaggeration.

The queen herself set the example of brilliancy of costume, and took care to be outshone by none. Sir John Harrington relates that “Ladie M. Howarde was possessede of a rich border, powdered wyth golde and pearle and a velvet suite belonginge thereto, which moved manie to envye; nor did it please the queene, who thought it exceeded her owne. One daye the queene did sende privately, and got the ladie’s rich vesture, which she put on herself, and came forthe the chamber amonge the ladies; the kirtle and border was far too shorte for her majestie’s heigth; and she asked everyone, ‘How they likede her new fancied suit?’ At length she askede the owner herself, ’If it was not made too shorte and ill becoming?’—which the poor ladie did presentlie consente to. ’Why, then, if it become not me, as being too shorte, I am minded it shall never become thee, as being too fine; so it fitteth neither well.’ This sharp rebuke abashed the ladie, and she never adorned her herewith any more."[52]

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It was the fashion to walk in the aisles of St. Paul's Church, which became a general rendezvous for business or pleasure. A facetious writer of the time, instructing a young gallant how to procure his clothes, and to show them off to the best advantage, gives an amusing picture of the prevailing vanity and foppery. "Bend your course directly in the middle line, that the whole body of the church may appear to be yours; where, in view of all you may publish your suit in what manner you affect most * * * and then you must, as 'twere in anger, suddenly snatch at the middle of the inside, if it be taffeta at the least; and so, by that means, your costly lining is betrayed. * * * But one note, by the way, do I especially woo you to, the neglect of which makes many of our gallants cheap and ordinary, that by no means you be seen above four times; but in the fifth make yourself away, either in some of the semsters' shops, the new tobacco office, or among the booksellers, where, if you cannot read, exercise your smoke, and enquire who has writ against this divine weed. * * * After dinner you may appear again, having translated yourself out of you English cloth into a light Turkey grogram, if you have that happiness of shifting; and then be seen for a turn or two to correct your teeth with some quill or silver instrument, and to cleanse your gums with a wrought handkerchief; it skills not whether you dined or no; that is best known to your stomach; or in what place you dined; though it were with cheese of your own mother's making, in your chamber or study. * * * If, by chance, you either encounter, or aloof off throw your inquisitive eye upon any knight or squire, being your familiar, salute him, not by his name, Sir such a one, or so; but call him Ned, or Jack, *etc*. This will set off your estimation with great men; and if, though there be a dozen companies between you, 'tis the better, he call aloud to you, for that is most genteel, to know where he shall find you at two o'clock; tell him at such an ordinary, or such; and be sure to name those that are dearest, and whither none but your gallants resort."[53]

With all the luxury of furniture and dress, with all the new elegance and ceremony of court life, there naturally remained much disorder, violence, and coarseness throughout the social system. Although the laws concerning the maintenance of order in the streets were strict, forbidding any one even to "blowe any horne in the night, or whistle after the hour of nyne of the clock in the night," yet they were not effectively enforced. A member of the House of Commons described a Justice of the Peace as an animal, who for half a dozen of chickens would dispense with a dozen penal laws[54]; and Gilbert Talbot spoke of two serious street affrays, which he described in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury as "trifling matters."[55] The gallows were kept busy in town and country. The habits of violence, and the old fondness of the nobility for fighting out their own quarrels,

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lingered in the prevalent custom of duelling. Ladies, and even the queen herself, chastised their servants with their own hands. On one occasion Elizabeth showed her dislike of a courtier's coat by spitting upon it, and her habit of administering physical correction to those who displeased her called forth the witty remark of Sir John Harrington: "I will not adventure her Highnesse choller, leste she should collar me also." The first coach appeared in the streets of London in Elizabeth's time and the sight of it "put both horse and man into amazement; some said it was a great crab-shell brought out of China; and some imagined it to be one of the Pagan temples, in which the Cannibals adored the divell." The extravagance and luxury of the feasts which were given on great occasions by the nobility were not attended by a corresponding advance in the refinement of manners at table. In a banquet given by Lord Hertford to Elizabeth in the garden of his castle, there were a thousand dishes carried out by two hundred gentlemen lighted by a hundred torch-bearers and every dish was of china or silver. But forks had not yet come into general use, and their place was supplied by fingers. Elizabeth had two or three forks, very small, and studded with jewels, but they were intended only for ornament. A divine inveighed against the impiety of those who objected to touching their meat with their fingers, and it was only in the seventeenth century that the custom of eating with forks obtained general acceptance, and ceased to be considered a mark of foppery.

The co-existence of coarseness and brilliant luxury, so characteristic of the time, is curiously apparent in the amusements of the city and the court. The whole people, from Elizabeth to the country boor, delighted in the savage sports of bull and bear-baiting. In the gratification received by these exhibitions, appear the remains of the old bloodthirstiness which had once been only satisfied with the sight of human suffering. The contrast is striking when we turn to the masques, the triumphs, and the pageants which were exhibited on great occasions by the court or by the citizens of London. The awakening of learning and the new interest in life were expressed in the dramatic entertainments which mingled the romantic elements of chivalry with the mythology of ancient Greece, in the rejoicings of men over present prosperity and welfare. The accounts of the festivities during the progresses of Elizabeth, so ably collected by Nichol, read like a tale of fairyland. When the queen visited Kenelworth she was met outside the gates by sybils reciting a poem of welcome. At the gates the giant porter feigned anger at the intrusion, but, overcome by the sight of Elizabeth, laid his club and his keys humbly at her feet. On posts along the route were placed the offerings of Sylvanus, of Pomona, of Ceres, of Bacchus, of Neptune, of Mars, and of Phoebus. From Arthur's court tame the Lady of the Lake, begging the queen to deliver

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her from the Knight without Pity. Fawns, satyrs, and nymphs brought their greetings, while an Echo replied to the addresses of welcome. Amusements of every variety occupied the succeeding days. Hunting, bear baiting, fireworks, tilting, Morris dances, a rustic marriage, a fight between Danes and English, curious aquatic sports,—all succeeded each other, interspersed with brilliant feasts. Poems founded on the legends of Arthur, or drawn from the inexhaustible sources of mythology, were recited in the pauses of festivity, or sung beneath the windows of the queen. The same readiness of invention and luxuriance of fancy characterized all the celebrations of the time. The love of the dramatic which applauded Pyramus and Thisbe in the rural districts, made actors of the courtiers. When the French commissioners came to negotiate the marriage of Elizabeth with the Duke of Anjou, they were entertained with a triumph, in which the Earl of Arundel, Lord Windsor, Master Philip Sidney, and Master Fulk Grevil, impersonating the four “foster children of Desire,” carried by force of arms the “Fortress of Beauty,” which represented Elizabeth herself.

The age of Elizabeth, although it had worked itself free from the intellectual sloth of the Middle Ages, although it was familiarizing itself with an almost unknown world abroad, and creating a new world at home, yet had inherited with little qualification the violence, the cruelty, and the unbridled passions of the centuries which had gone before. All this variety of life was expressed in the drama, which, as a reflection of contemporary thought and manners, was to Elizabeth’s time what the novel is to our own. Before the end of this reign there were eighteen theatres in London, all crowded with audiences which embraced every class of the people,—from the noble and court gallant who played cards on the stage, to the workmen and apprentices who fought and bandied coarse jests in the pit. The names of Marlowe, of Shakespeare, of Johnson, are sufficient to remind us of the grandeur to which the Elizabethan drama attained, under the influence of prosperity at home, victory abroad, and the quickening of the national intelligence which followed the revival of learning. But while the stage reflected all that was most noble, it reflected also all that was most base in human nature. Ecclesiastical discipline had been laid aside, and the unrestrained passions of men, which in actual life found vent in violence and debauchery, were gratified by the dramatic representation of the worst crimes and most vitiated tastes. The Puritans brought about reformation and self-restraint, by enforcing a new code of morals all the more rigid from the looseness which on every side they found to combat. In closing the theatres, they were actuated, in Mr. Green’s words, by the hatred “of God-fearing men against the foulest depravity presented in a poetic and attractive form."[56]

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While the drama reflected alike the good and the bad, all the finer aspirations of the time found expression in poetry. Spenser, Sackville, Drayton, Donne, Hall, the two Fletchers, are but leaders in a band of more than two hundred, who made this period unrivalled in the annals of English poetry. It was a time of unexampled prosperity, of an enlarged freedom, of an active intelligence, when men were eagerly seeking for whatever was novel and brilliant; when translations without number of the classical writers and contemporary foreign works were welcomed alike with the "costly attire of the new cut, the Dutch hat, the French hose, the Spanish rapier, the Italian hilt." "It is a world to see how Englishmen desire to hear finer speech than the language will allow, to eat finer bread than is made of wheat, or wear finer cloth than is made of wool." Such are the words in which John Lyly, the Euphuist, characterized his own time, and they were the words of one who expressed in his own writings the tendency to fanciful exaggeration, which was so strong among the men about him.

[Footnote 37: Froude's "History of England," vol. 8, p. 429.]

[Footnote 38: Stone, "Chronicles of Fashion."]

[Footnote 39: Holinshed, vol. I, p. 315; Drake's "Shakespeare and his Times", vol. 1, p. 72.]

[Footnote 40: Holinshed, vol. I, p. 275; Drake's "Shakespeare", vol. 1, p. 99.]

[Footnote 41: Harrison's "Description"; Drake's "Shakespeare," vol. 1, p. 101.]

[Footnote 42: Drake's "Shakespeare and his Times," vol. 1, p. 101.]

[Footnote 43: Henry Peacham, "Compleat Gentleman," 1624.]

[Footnote 44: Bourne; Drake's "Shakespeare," vol. 1, p. 153.]

[Footnote 45: Stubbes, "Anatomie of Abuses," p. 168.]

[Footnote 46: Douce, "Illustrations of Shakespeare."]

[Footnote 47: Stubbes; Drake's "Shakespeare," vol. 1, ch. vi.]

[Footnote 48: Laevinius Lemnius; Drake, vol. 2, p. 113.]

[Footnote 49: Nichol's "Progresses of Elizabeth," vol. 2, p. 391.]

[Footnote 50: Harrison: Drake's "Shakespeare and his Times," vol. 2, p. 87.]

[Footnote 51: Harrison's "Description of England"; Holinshed, vol. I, pp. 289-90; Drake's "Shakespeare and his Times" vol. 2, pp. 88, 89.]

[Footnote 52: “Nugae Antique”, Drake’s “Shakespeare and his Times,” vol. 2, p. 90.]

[Footnote 53: “The Gull’s Horn Book”; Drake’s “Shakespeare and his Times”, vol. 2, p. 184.]

[Footnote 54: Lodge’s “Illustrations.”]

[Footnote 55: *Idem.*]

[Footnote 56: Green, “Short History of the English People,” p. 429.]

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It is to the drama that we must look for the most complete literary expression of the social condition of the period. The student of history must regret, indeed, that the realistic novel, with its study of human thoughts and motives, with its illustration of manners and customs, so valuable in a reconstruction of the past, should have been delayed till the end of the seventeenth century. But though there be regret, there cannot be surprise. The reigns of Elizabeth and the Stuarts cover the period of court life; when men lived in public, and sought their intellectual entertainment in crowds at a theatre, as now, in a time of citizen-life, they seek it in private, by the study-lamp.[57] In a dramatic age the creations of the imagination will be placed behind the footlights, and in a period of quiet and reflection they will be placed between the covers of a book. In the age of Elizabeth the writers of fiction neither studied the characters and manners of the men about them, nor aimed at any reflection of actual life. But their tales and romances were the natural fruit of their intellectual condition, and form an interesting if not a valuable portion of English fiction. In them are reflected the happiness, the poetry, the love of novelty, and the ideality of the time. The stirring incidents of chivalric romance were no longer in vogue, and the subject became an idealized love. But the most striking feature of Elizabethan fiction is the great importance attached to style. The writer cared more to excite admiration by the turn of his phrases and the ornaments of his language, than to interest his reader by plot or incident.

In 1579 John Lyly published his curious romance, “Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit,” a work which attained a great popularity, and made the word Euphuism an abstract term in the language to express the ornate and antithetical style of which this book is the most marked example. In Lyly’s own day it was said by Edward Blount that the nation was “in his debt for a new English which hee taught them.” Since then, the verdict of posterity has been that Lyly corrupted the public taste, and introduced an affected and overloaded manner of writing which had a mischievous influence upon literature. A careful examination of Lyly’s work, and of the condition of the English language in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, will not sustain either of these views. The Euphuistic style was not of Lyly’s invention. He acquired it from the men about him, and merely gave it, through his writings, a distinct character and individuality. In a letter of Elizabeth to her brother Edward *vi*, long-before “Euphues” was written, occurs the following passage: “Like as a shipman in stormy wether plukes down the sails tarrying for bettar winde, so did I, most noble kinge, in my unfortunate chanche a Thursday pluk downe the hie sailes of my joy and comforte, and do trust one day that as troublesome waves have repulsed me backwarde, so a gentil winde

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will bringe me forwarde to my haven."[58] This is a moderate specimen of the ornate and exaggerated language which was following the new acquisitions of learning and intelligence, just as extravagance in dress and food was following the new prosperity and wealth. Men wished to crowd their learning and cultivation into every thing they said or wrote. As the language was not yet settled by good prose writers, the more affected a style, the more numerous its similes, and far-fetched its allusions, the more ingenious and admirable it was considered to be. There resulted a sacrifice of clearness and simplicity to a strained elegance. Still, in the Euphuistic style, tedious and grotesque as it often is, appear the first serious efforts, among English prose writers, to attain a better mode of expression. The results which followed the absence of a standard written language at home were strengthened by the general acquaintance with foreign literature. Italy in the sixteenth century was the leading intellectual nation, and the example of the refined and over-polished manner of writing there prevalent had much to do with the growth in England of a fondness for affected mannerisms and fancied ornaments of language. The new ideas in regard to poetry and versification which Wyat and Surrey had brought from Italy, were but the beginning of an extensive Italian influence. It was not without reason that Ascham inveighed against “the enchantments of Circe brought out of Italy to mar men’s manners in England.” Italian works were translated and circulated in great numbers in England, and among these the most popular were the gay and amorous productions of the story tellers.[59]

Born in Kent in 1554, John Lyly studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, and received the degree of Master of Arts. Not a very diligent scholar, he disliked the “crabbed studies” of logic and philosophy, “his genie being naturally bent to the pleasant paths of poetry,” but he was reputed at the University as afterward at Elizabeth’s court, “a rare poet, witty, comical, and facetious.” During his life in London he produced a number of plays and poems which have given his name a not inconsiderable place in the list of Elizabethan poets and dramatists. He is now best known, where known at all, by his prose work “Euphues,” which was so much admired at Elizabeth’s court, that all the ladies knew his phrases by heart, and to “parley Euphuism” was a sign of breeding. For many years Lyly lingered about the court waiting for a promised position to reward his labors and support his declining years. But in vain. “A thousand hopes,” he complained, “but all nothing; a hundred promises, but yet nothing.” Lyly died in 1606, leaving, as he said, but three legacies; “Patience to my creditors, Melancholie without measure to my friends, and Beggarie without shame to my family.”

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The deeper meaning of Lyly's work, which lies beneath the surface of his similes and antitheses, has escaped almost all his critics.[60] It is suggested by the title, "Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit." In the "Schoolmaster," Ascham explained how Socrates had described the anatomy of wit in a child, and the first essential quality mentioned by Socrates, and that most fully discussed by Ascham was Euphues which may be translated of good natural parts, as well of the body as the mind. Euphues, then, as well in the story in which he figures, as afterward in the essays or which he is the supposed author, is the model of a young man at once attractive in appearance, and possessing the mental qualities most calculated to please. While the story is meant to attract readers, the essays and digressions introduced into the work are intended to inculcate the methods of education which Lyly taught in common with Ascham. It was, however, the manner rather than the matter which gave to "Euphues" its prominence and popularity. The story is but a slender thread. Euphues and Philautus are two young gentlemen of Naples, bound together by the closest ties of friendship. Philautus is deeply enamored of a lady named Lucilla, to whom in an unfortunate moment he presents Euphues. The meeting is at supper, and the conversation turns on the question "often disputed, but never determined, whether the qualities of the minde, or the composition of the man, cause women most to lyke, or whether beautie or wit move men most to love." Euphues shows so much ingenuity in the discussion of this interesting subject that Lucilla transfers her affections to him. Upon this the two friends quarrel and exchange letters of mutual recrimination couched in the most elaborate language. Philautus writes:

Although hereto Euphues, I have shrined thee in my heart for a trustie friende, I will shunne thee hereafter as a trothless foe. * * * Dost thou not know yat a perfect friend should be lyke the Glazeworme, which shineth most bright in the darke? or lyke the pure Frankencense which smelleth most sweet when it is in the fire? or at the leaste not unlike to the damaske Rose which is sweeter in the still than on the stalke? But thou, Euphues, dost rather resemble the Swallow, which in the summer creepeth under the eues of euery house, and in the winter leaveth nothing but durt behinde hir; or the humble Bee, which hauing sucked hunny out of the fayre flower, doth leaue it and loath it; or the Spider which in the finest web doth hang the fayrest Fly.

To these bitter reproaches Euphues replies that "Love knoweth no Lawes," and in support of the proposition cites as many cases from mythology as he can remember. The faithless Lucilla, however, soon treats Euphues as she had before treated Philautus, and marries a third lover whom they both despise. The friends are then once more united, and lament in each other's arms the folly of Lucilla. A second part of the work appeared in the following year, in which Euphues and Philautus are represented on a visit to England. Philautus marries, and Euphues, after eulogizing the English government, Elizabeth, and all her court, retires forever "to the bottom of the mountain Silexedra."

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The educational essays dispersed throughout the book display a good sense which even Lyly's style cannot conceal. Ascham and Lyly were alone in deprecating the excessive use of the rod, and in so doing were far in advance of the age. Cruelty seems to have been a common characteristic of the school-teacher. "I knew one," said Peacham, "who in winter would ordinarily in a cold morning whip his boyes over for no other purpose than to get himself a heat; another beat them for swearing, and all the time he swears himself with horrible oathes that he would forgive any fault save that. * * * Yet these are they that oftentimes have our hopefull gentry under their charge and tuition, to bring them (up) in science and civility."[61]

The style which proved so attractive to Elizabeth's courtiers had three principal characteristics, which the reader will perceive in the extracts hereafter to be given—a pedantic exhibition of learning, an excess of similes drawn from natural history, usually untrue to nature, and a habit of antithesis, which, by constant repetition becomes exceedingly wearisome. Euphues, wishing to convince his listeners of the inferiority of outward to inward perfection, pursues the following argument:

The foule Toade hath a fayre stone in his head, the fine golde is found in the filthy earth; the sweet kernell lyeth in the hard shell; vertue is harboured in the heart of him that most men esteeme misshappen. Contrarywise, if we respect more the outward shape, then the inward habit, good God, into how many mischiefs do wee fall? into what blindnesse are we ledde? Due we not commonly see that in painted pottes is hidden the deadlyest poyson? that in the greenest grasse is ye greatest serpent? in the cleerest water the vgliest Toade? Doth not experience teach vs, that in the most curious sepulcher are enclosed rotten bones? That the Cypresse tree beareth a faire leafe, but no fruite? That the Estridge carrieth faire feathers, but ranke flesh? How frantick are those louers which are carried away with the gaye glistering of the fine face?"In the coldest flint," says Lucilla, "there is hot fire, the Bee that hath hunny in hir mouth, hath a sting in hir tayle; the tree that beareth the sweetest fruite, hath a sower sap; yea, the wordes of men though they seeme smooth as oyle: yet their heartes are as crooked as the stalke of luie."

Lyly's antithetical style is well illustrated by the following passage, in which he means to be particularly serious and impressive:

If I should talke in words of those things which I haue to conferre with thee in writings, certes thou would blush for shame, and I weepe for sorrowe: neither could my tongue vtter yat with patience, which my hand can scarse write with modesty, neither could thy ears heare that without glowing, which thine eyes can hardly vewe without griefe. Ah, Alcius, I cannot tell whether I should most lament in thee thy want

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of learning, or thy wanton lyvinge, in the on thou art inferiour to all men, in the other superiour to al beasts. Insomuch as who seeth thy dul wit, and marketh thy froward will, may well say that he neuer saw smacke of learning in thy dooings, nor sparke of relygion in thy life. Thou onely vauntest of thy gentry: truely thou wast made a gentleman before thou knewest what honesty meant, and no more hast thou to boast of thy stocke, than he, who being left rich by his father, dyeth a beggar by his folly. Nobilitie began in thine auncestors and endeth in thee, and the generositie that they gayned by vertue, thou hast blotted with vice.[62]

The popularity of “Euphues” excited much imitation, and its influence is strongly marked in the works of Robert Greene. Born in Norfolk in 1560, Greene studied at Cambridge and received the degree of Master of Arts. After wasting his property in Italy and Spain, he returned to London to earn his bread by the pen. As a pamphleteer, as a poet, and especially as a dramatist, Greene achieved a considerable reputation. But his improvident habits and a life of constant debauchery brought his career to a close, amidst poverty and remorse, at the early age of thirty-two. He died in a drunken brawl, leaving in his works the evidence of talents and qualities which the degradation of his life had failed to destroy.

Greene’s “Arcadia” was published in 1587, and bears in its fanciful title of “Camilla’s Alarum to Slumber Euphues,” the evidence of its inspiration. Even among pastorals the improbability of this story is surpassing. Damocles, king of Arcadia, banished his daughter with her husband and son. Sephestia, the daughter, arrived in a part of Arcadia entirely inhabited by shepherds. There she becomes a shepherdess under the name of Samela, and meets her husband, Maximus, who is already tending sheep in the same neighborhood with the name of Melicertus. Strange to say, Sephestia fails to recognize her husband, and receives his addresses as a favored lover. Soon after, Pleusidippus, Sephestia’s son, is stolen by pirates, and adopted by the king of Thessaly, in whose court he grows up. The fame of Sephestia’s beauty reaches her father and her son, who, ignorant of the relationship in consequence of Sephestia’s change of name, both set out to woo the celebrated shepherdess. The repulsive scene of the same woman being the object at once of the passion of her father and her son is ended by Damocles carrying off Sephestia to his own court, where he proposes to execute Maximus as his successful rival, and Sephestia for her obstinate refusal of his addresses. The Delphian oracle, however, interposes in time by declaring the identity of Sephestia, and the story terminates as usual in weddings and reconciliations.

The conventional shepherd’s life is well described in the “Arcadia,” and the pastoral tone is skilfully maintained. The language, however, is confessedly euphuistic, as may be seen by the author’s comment on a speech of Samela:

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Samela made this reply, because she had heard him so superfine, as if Ephebus had learned him to refine his mother's tongue; wherefore though he had done it of an ink horn desire to be eloquent, and Melicertus thinking Samela had learned with Lucilla in Athens to anatomize wit, and speak none but similes, imagined she smoothed her talk to be thought like Sappho, Phaon's paramour.

The following passage could hardly be distinguished from the writings of Lyly:

I had thought, Menaphon, that he which weareth the bay leaf had been free from lightning, and the eagle's pen a preservative against thunder; that labour had been enemy to love, and the eschewing of idleness an antidote against fancy; but I see by proof, there is no adamant so hard, but the blood of a goat will make soft, no fort so well defended, but strong battery will entry, nor any heart so pliant to restless labours, but enchantments of love will overcome.

Melicertus addresses Samela, whom he finds feeding her flocks, in the following terms:

Mistress of all eyes that glance but at the excellence of your perfection, sovereign of all such as Venus hath allowed for lovers, Oenone's over-match, Arcadia's comet, Beauty's second comfort, all hail! Seeing you sit like Juno when she first watched her white heifer on the Lincen downs, as bright as silver Phoebe mounted on the high top of the ruddy element, I was, by a strange attractive force, drawn, as the adamant draws this iron, or the jet the straw, to visit your sweet self in the shade, and afford you such company as a poor swain may yield without offense; which, if you shall vouch to deign of, I shall be as glad of such accepted service, as Paris was first of his best beloved paramour.

Another of Samela's lovers, despairing of success, "became sick for anger, and spent whole ecologues in anguish."

Greene's story of "Pandosto," of "Dorastus and Fawnia," which attained a great popularity, and went through at least fourteen editions, is well known as the foundation of Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale." Shakespeare has followed Greene in the material points of the story, even so far as to make Bohemia a maritime country. But the genius of the dramatist is manifest in the miraculous and happy ending which he substitutes for the unlawful love and inconsistent suicide of Pandosto in the work of Greene. Shakespeare borrowed from the text, as well as from the plot of the novelist. The lines,

> The gods themselves,
> Humbling their deities to love, have taken
> The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
> Became a bull, and bellowed: the green Neptune
> A ram, and bleated; and the fire robed god,

> Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
> As I seem now,

are evidently a reproduction of the soliloquy of Dorastus:

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And yet Dorastus, shame not at thy shepheard's weede: The heavenly Godes have sometime earthly thoughts: Neptune became a ram, Jupiter a bull, Apollo a shepheard; they Gods, and yet in love; and thou a man appointed to love.[63]

The story of "Philomela," "penned to approve women's chastity," is the best of Greene's tales, and approaches more closely the modern novel than any work of the time. It is related with much less than the usual prolixity, and contains two characters of distinct individuality. The scene is placed in Venice, partly in consequence of the Italian origin of the story, and partly, it would seem, because writers of fiction imagined that the further distant they could represent their incidents to have occurred, the more interest and probability would attach to them. Philippo Medici possessed a wife Philomela, renowned, "not for her beauty, though Italy afforded none so fair—not for her dowry, though she were the only daughter of the Duke of Milan—but for the admirable honours of her mind, which were so many and matchless, that virtue seemed to have planted there the paradise of her perfection." Philippo was so prone to jealousy, that he suspected even this paragon, and worked himself into a belief in her infidelity by such euphuisms as these: "The greener the Alisander leaves be, the more bitter is the sap, and the salamander is the most warm when he lieth furthest from the fire," therefore "women are most heart-hollow, when they are most lip-holy." Inflamed by this reasoning, he induced a friend, one Lutesio, to attempt his wife's virtue, enjoining him to bring immediate information in case of any evidence of success. Lutesio, after some misgivings, undertook the task, and under the influence of Philomela's beauty, found it a very agreeable one. His most elaborate discourses on love in the abstract were met by Philomela with replies fully as long and fully as lofty, but when he made the conversation personal, and declared his attitude to be that of a lover, he was met with a virtuous indignation which fully bore out the reputation of Philomela. Even this conclusive test did not satisfy the jealous mind of the wretched Philippo. Having hired two slaves to swear in court to his wife's infidelity, he procured her banishment to Palermo. By the efforts of the Duke of Milan, this infamous proceeding was finally exposed, and Philippo, overcome by remorse, set out in search of Philomela. At Palermo, he accused himself, in a fit of despair, of a murder which had been committed in that city. But while the trial was in progress, Philomela, in order to shield her husband, appeared in court and proclaimed herself guilty of the crime. The innocence of both was discovered. Philippo, as he deserved, died immediately in an "ecstacy," and Philomela "returned home to Venice, and there lived the desolate widow of Philippo Medici all her life; which constant chastity made her so famous, that in her life she was honoured as the paragon of virtue, and after her death, solemnly, and with wonderful honour, entombed in St. Mark's Church, and her fame holden canonized until this day in Venice."

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The character of Philomela possesses strong traits of feminine virtue and wifely fidelity. Philippo has little distinctiveness except in his extreme susceptibility to jealousy—a fault which was exaggerated by the author to set off the opposite qualities of Philomela. The story has no little merit in regard to the construction and sequence of the narrative, and holds up to admiration a high moral excellence. But its interest is seriously impaired by the same defect which marks all the fiction of the time. Philomela is almost the only tale which makes any pretence to being a description of actual life, or which deals with possible incidents. Yet the language, although it has some elegance, is so affectedly formal, that all sense of reality is destroyed. When Philippo's treachery to his wife is discovered, and he himself is plunged in remorse, it is in such words as these that he speaks of his exposure: "There is nothing so secret but the date of days will reveal; that as oil, though it moist, quencheth not fire, so time, though ever so long, is no sure covert for sin; but as a spark raked up in cinders will at last begin to glow and manifest a flame, so treachery hidden in silence will burst forth and cry for revenge."[64]

A prose idyl is the term which best describes the courtly and pastoral character of Lodge's "Rosalynde," the last work of fiction of any importance which distinctly bears the impress of euphuism. Published in 1590, the ten editions through which it passed during the next fifty years are sufficient evidence of its popularity. It is probably the only work of fiction of Elizabeth's time which could be read through at the present day without impatience, and its story and personages are well known to all through their reproduction in Shakespeare's "As You Like it." The author of "Rosalynde" was a man of very varied talents and experience. The son, it is believed, of a Lord Mayor of London, he graduated at Trinity College, Oxford, and followed successively the professions of an actor, soldier, lawyer, and physician. In the intervals of these occupations, he found time to join in two privateering expeditions to the Pacific, and to publish a number of literary productions, of which the most successful were dramas and poems. He is thought to have died of the plague in 1625.

"*Rosalynde*. *Euphues*' *golden* LEGACIE: *Found after his death in his cell at Silexedra, Bequeathed to Philantus' sonnes nursed up with their Father in England. Fetched from the Canaries by T.L., Gent.*" Such is the fanciful title of the story which Shakespeare transformed into "As You Like it." In the comedy, the characters of Touchstone, Audrey, and Jacques are added, but otherwise the dramatist has followed his original quite closely. He made use, not infrequently, of the language as well as the incidents of Lodge, which in itself is sufficient praise. "Rosalynde," is, indeed, a charming tale, containing agreeable and well drawn characters, dramatic

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incidents, and written in an elevated strain of dignity and purity. Occasionally, the influence of “Euphues” is manifest:—“Unhappy Saladyne, whom folly hath led to these misfortunes, and wanton desires wrapt within the laborinth of these calamities. Are not the heavens doomers of men’s deedes? And holdes not God a ballance in his fist, to reward with favour and revenge with justice? Oh, Saladyne, the faults of thy youth, as they were fond, so were they foule; and not onely discovering little nourture, but blemishing the excellence of nature.”

A more natural and attractive passage is the discussion between Rosalynde and Alinda, [65] regarding their escape from court.

Rosalynde began to comfort her, and after shee had wept a fewe kind teares in the bosome of her Alinda, she gave her heartie thankes, and then they sat them downe to consult how they should travel. Alinda grieved at nothing but they might have no man in their company; saying it would be their greatest prejudice in that two women went wandering without either guide or attendant. “Tush (quoth Rosalynde), art thou a woman and hast not a sodeine shift to prevent a misfortune? I, thou seest, am of a tall stature, and would very wel become the person and apparel of a Page: thou shalt bee my mistresse, and I wil play the man so properly, that (trust me) in what company so ever I come I will not be discovered: I wil buy me a suite, and have my Rapier very handsomely at my side, and if any knave offer wrong, your Page wil shew him the poynt of his weapon.”

Shakespeare has followed this scene very closely in “As You Like It.”

> *Ros.* Alas, what danger will it be to us,
> Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!
> Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.

Cel. I’ll put myself in poor and mean attire, And with a kind of umber smirch my face; The like do you; so shall we pass along And never stir assailants*Ros.* Were it not better, Because that I am more than common tall, That I did suit me all points like a man? A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh. A boar spear in my hand; and in my heart, Lie there what hidden woman’s fear there will,— We’ll have a swashing and a martial outside. As many other mannish cowards have That do outface it with their semblances.[66]

The most brilliant and characteristic work of fiction belonging to the Elizabethan era composed by a man who was himself regarded by his contemporaries as the embodiment of all the qualities they most loved and admired. During the three hundred years which have elapsed since the death of Sir Philip Sidney, the same enthusiastic praise has accompanied the mention of his name. Sir William Temple, writing in a

critical time, and when the effect of Sidney's personal character need no longer have biassed a literary judgment, pronounced Sir Philip to be "the greatest

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poet and the noblest genius of any that have left writings behind them."[67] Such were the words of a man of genius, who was acquainted with the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser. While all admirers of Sidney must regret a praise of his literary abilities so exaggerated and mistaken, the eulogies which have been lavished upon his personal character have never been thought to surpass the worth of their object. Sir Philip Sidney, in the short life allotted to him, had added to his personal beauty and amiable disposition all that was most fitted to win the admiration of his time. His rare accomplishments, his chivalrous manners and unusual powers of conversation made him so great a favorite at court, that it was the pride of Elizabeth to call him “her Philip.” A considerable knowledge of military affairs, and a fearless gallantry in battle, combined, with Sidney’s genial disposition, to win for him the universal affection of the army. The violence of the Middle Ages lingers in Sir Philip’s angry words to his father’s secretary: “Mr. Molyneux, if ever I know you to do so much as read any letter I write to my father, without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you. And trust to it, for I speak it in earnest.” But the spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice, which we are also accustomed to associate with mediaeval knighthood, was realized in the famous scene on the battle-field before Zutphen. With good natural talents and an untiring industry, Sir Philip acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of literature, which gave him a reputation abroad as well as at home. The learned Languet relinquished his regular duties without prospect of pecuniary reward “to be a nurse of knowledge to this hopeful young gentleman."[68] The regrets of the universities at Sidney’s death filled three volumes with academic eulogies. But a better testimony than these volumes to the general admiration for Sidney’s talents, and to his position as a patron of literature, is to be found in the beautiful lines in which Spenser lamented his benefactor, and in two sentences by poor Tom Nash[69], who knew but too well the value of what he and his fellow-laborers had lost: “Gentle Sir Philip Sidney, thou knewest what belonged to a scholar; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travel conduct to perfection; well could’st thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself. But thou art dead in thy grave, and has left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted.” The public manifestations of grief at Sidney’s death, and the rivalry of two nations for the possession of his remains, seem to have proceeded rather from the fame of his personal virtues than from the accomplishment of great achievements. It was recorded on the tomb of the learned Dr. Thornton that he had been “the tutor of Sir Philip Sidney,” and Lord Brooke caused the inscription to be placed over his own grave: “Fulke Greville, servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney.”

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The work of a man who belonged so thoroughly to his own time, and who united in himself talents and virtues so remarkable could hardly fail to be of historical interest. Such is the value now belonging to the “Arcadia”—a work unrivalled in its own day, and deserving the admiration of the present, but which has been left behind in the great advance of English prose fiction. In the courtly pages of the “Arcadia” are brilliantly reflected the lofty strain of sentiment characteristic of Elizabeth’s time, and the chivalry, the refinement, and the impetuosity of if its noble author. “Heere have you now,” wrote Sir Philip to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, “most deare, and most worthy to be most deare Ladie, this idle worke of mine. * * * Youre deare self can best witnesse the manner, being done in loose sheetes of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest by sheetes sent unto you, as fast as they were done.” It would be tedious to the reader to receive a detailed description of the story which extends through the four hundred and eighty pages of Sidney’s folio. The plot turns on the fulfilment of a Delphian prophecy, in fear of which Basilius, king of Arcadia, retires to a forest with his wife and two daughters. One daughter, Philoclea, lives with her father Basilius, and the other, Pamela, is confided to the care of Dametas, a country fellow, in the service of Basilius, who lives close by with his wife. Pyrocles, prince of Macedon, and Musidorus, prince of Thessaly, are wrecked on the coast of Arcadia, where they soon become enamored of the two daughters of Basilius. To the better attainment of their ends, Pyrocles obtains admittance to the house of Basilius in the disguise of an Amazon, and Musidorus enters the service of Dametas in the character of a shepherd. The story which is unrolled in the remainder of the work relates the extraordinary occurrences which are necessary to the fulfilment of the Delphian prophecy, together with the intrigues and adventures of the young lovers. Shipwrecks, attacks by pirates, rescues, journeys through Arcadia among poetic shepherds, a war with the Helots, through forests and carving sonnets on trees, —such are the scenes which succeed each other with unending variety. On the arrival of Pyrocles and Musidorus in Arcadia, the reader is introduced to that ideal land, never more happily described than by Sidney’s pen[70]:

The third day after, in the time that the Morning did strow roses and violets in the heavenly floore against the comming of the sunne, the Nightingales, (striving one with the other which could in most daintie varietie recount their wrong caused sorrow,) made them put off their sleepe, and rising from under a tree, (which that night had bin their pavillion,) they went on their journey, which by and by welcomed Musidorus eies (wearied with the wasted soile of Laconia) with delightfull prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble

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vallies, whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers: medowes, enameled with all sorts of eie pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so too, by the cheerfull disposition of manie well tuned birds: each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober securitie, while the prettie lambes with bleating oratorie craved the dammes comfort: here a shepheards boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepheardesse knitting, and withall singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to worke, and her hands kept time to her voice's musick. As for the houses of the country, (for manie houses came under their eye,) they were all scattered, no two being one by th' other, and yet not so farre off as that it barred mutuall succour: a shew, as it were, of an accompanable solitarinesse, and of a civill wildeness.

Amid such scenes dwell Basilius and his wife, whose two daughters are described by Sidney in language unsurpassed for delicacy and charm.

Of these two are brought to the world two daughters, so beyond measure excellent in all the gifts allotted to reasonable creatures, that we may thinke they were borne to shew, that nature is no stepmother to that sexe, how much so ever some men (sharp witted onely in evill speaking) have sought to disgrace them. The elder is named Pamela, by many men not deemed inferiour to her sister: for my part, when I marked them both, me thought there was, (if at least such perfections may receive the word of more,) more sweetness in Philoclea, but more majestie in Pamela: mee thought love plaied in Philoclea's eies, & threatened in Pamela's; me thought Philoclea's beautie only perswaded, but so perswaded that all hearts must yield; Pamela's beautie used violence, and such violence as no heart could resist. And it seems that such proportion is betweene their mindes; Philoclea so bashfull, as though her excellencies had stolne into her before she was aware, so humble, that she will put all pride out of countenance; in summe, such proceeding as will stirre hope, but teach hope good maners. Pamela of high thoughts, who avoids not pride with not knowing her excellencies, but by my making that one of her excellencies to be void of pride: her mother's wisdome, greatnesse, nobilitie, but (if I can guesse aright) knit with a more constant temper.[71]

The description of an envious man in the second book,[72] which suggested to Sir Richard Steele his essay in the nineteenth number of the *Spectator*, is another good example of Sidney's ability in delineating character. The passage in which Musidorus is represented showing off the paces of his horse,[73] a subject especially adapted to excite the best effort of the author, is a very remarkable effort of descriptive power, for the insertion of which, unfortunately, space is wanting here. Sidney might have quoted his description of Pamela sewing, to justify his belief that "It is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy":

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Pamela, who that day having wearied her selfe with reading, * * * was working upon a purse certaine roses and lillies. * * * The flowers shee had wrought caried such life in them, that the cunningest painter might have learned of her needle: which, with so pretty a manner, made his careers to & fro through the cloth, as if the needle it selfe would haue been loth to haue gone fromward such a mistresse, but that it hoped to returne thitherward very quickly againe; the cloth looking with many eyes vpon her, and louingly embracing the wounds she gaue it: the sheares also were at hand to behead the silke that was growne too short. And if at any time shee put her mouth to bite it off, it seemed, that where she had beene long in making of a rose with her hands, she would in an instant make roses with her lips; as the lillies seemed to haue their whitenesse rather of the hand that made them, than of the matter whereof they were made; & that they grew there by the suns of her eyes, and were refreshed by the most * * * comfortable ayre, which an unawares sigh might bestow upon them.[74]

Charles I. passed many hours of his prison life in reading the “Arcadia,” and Milton[75] accused him of stealing a prayer of Pamela to insert in the “Eikon Basilike”: “And that in no serious book, but the vain amatorious poem of Sir Philip Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’; a book in that kind, full of worth and wit, but among religious thoughts and duties not worthy to be named: nor to be read at any time without good caution, much less in time of trouble and affliction to be a Christian’s prayerbook.” This prayer is in itself so beautiful, coming from the lips of Pamela, and the greater part of it suits so perfectly the unhappy circumstances of King Charles, that at the risk of unduly multiplying our extracts from the “Arcadia,” it will be inserted here:—

And therewith kneeling downe, euen where shee stood, she thus said: O All-seeing Light, and eternall Life of all things, to whom nothing is either so great, that it may resist; or so small, that it is condemned: looke vpon my misery with thine eye of mercie, and let thine infinite power vouchsafe to limite out some proportion of deliuerance vnto me, as to thee shall seeme most conuenient. Let not injurie, O Lord, triumph ouer me, and let my faults by thy hand bee corrected, and make not mine vnjust enemy the minister of thy justice. But yet, my God, if in thy wisdome this be the aptest chastisement for my vnexcusable folly: if this low bondage be fittest to my ouerhigh desires: if the pride of my not inough humble heart be thus to be broken, O Lord I yeeld vnto thy will, and joyfully embrace what sorrow thou will haue mee suffer. Onely thus much let me craue of thee, (let my crauing, O Lord, be accepted of thee, since euen that proceeds from thee,) let me craue, euen by the noblest title, which in my greatest affliction I may give myself, that I am thy creature, and by thy goodness (which is thyselfe) that thou

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wilt suffer some beame of thy Majestie so to shine into my minde, that it may still depend confidently on thee. Let calamitie be the exercise, but not the ouerthrow or my vertue; let their power preuaile, but preuaile not to destruction; let my greatnesse be their pray; let my paine bee the sweetnesse of there reuenge: let them, (if so it seeme good vnto thee) vexe me with more and more punishment. But, O Lord, let neuer their wickednesse haue such a hand, but that I may cary a pure minde in a pure body. (And pausing a while.) And O most gracious Lord, (said she) what euer become of me, preserve the vertuous Musidorus.[76]

The “Arcadia” combines the elements of both the chivalric and the pastoral romance. Sidney’s familiarity with the legends of Arthur, together with his own gallantry and love of adventure, peculiarly adapted him to describe martial scenes. But the chivalry of Sir Philip is not more apparent where he describes the shock of arms than where, with such exquisite delicacy, he writes of women. The student of English fiction would fain linger long over the pages which describe the loves of Pamela and Philoclea. For when these pages are laid aside, it is long before he may again meet with the poetry, the manly and womanly sentiment, and the pure yet stirring passion which adorn the romance of Elizabeth’s Philip. Three centuries have passed away since the “Arcadia” was written, and we who live at the end of this period not unjustly congratulate ourselves on our superior civilization and refinement. And yet in all this time we have arrived of no higher conception of feminine virtue or chivalrous manhood than is to be found in this sixteenth-century romance, and during one half of these three hundred years there was to be seen so little trace of such a conception, whether in life or in literature, that the word love seemed to have lost its nobler meaning and to stand for no more than animal desire. There is not in English fiction a more charming picture of feminine modesty than that of Pamela hiding her love for Musidorus.

How delightfull soeuer it was, my delight might well bee in my soule, but it neuer wente to looke out of the window to doe him any comforte. But how much more I found reason to like him, the more I set all the strength of my minde to conceale it. * * * Full often hath my breast swollen with keeping my sighes imprisoned: full often have the teares I draue back from mine eyes turned back to drowne my heart. But, alas, what did that helpe poore Dorus?[77]

Hardly less beautiful is the gradual yielding, through pity, of Pamela’s maidenly heart.

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This last dayes danger having made Pamela's loue discerne what a losse it should haue suffered if Dorus had beene destroyed, bred such tendernesse of kindnesse in her toward him, that she could no longer keepe loue from looking out through her eyes, and going forth in her words; whom before as a close prisoner, shee had to her heart onely committed: so as finding not onely by his speeches and letters, but by the pitifull oration of a languishing behaviour, and the easily deciphered character of a sorrowfull face, that despaire began now to threaten him destruction, she grew content both to pitie him, and let him see shee pitied him. * * * by making her owne beautifull beames to thaw away the former ycinesse of her behaviour.[78]

That portion of the "Arcadia" which relates to pastoral life owes its origin to Spanish and Portuguese works. But there were not wanting to Sidney's experience actual examples of that peaceful existence to which, in troubled times, men have so often turned as a pleasing contrast to their own cares, and dangers. The shepherds of the Sussex Downs, pursuing through centuries their simple vocation, unheeded by the world, untouched by revolution or civil war, tended their sheep with little thought or knowledge of the world beyond the downs, and presented to the poet a picture of calm content, in pleasing contrast to the active or terrible incidents which more frequently made up the sum both of romance and of actual life. The shepherds of the "Arcadia" make even less pretence to reality than the martial heroes. They are usually poets and musicians; speaking in courtly phrases, and occupied with amorous adventures, they serve sometimes to relieve, and sometimes to heighten, the more stirring scenes.

A third element in the "Arcadia" is the comic, and with this, as might be expected from the rather crude ideas of humor prevalent in the sixteenth century, Sidney met with indifferent success. The wit depends on the ugliness, the perversity, and the clownish character of Dametas, his wife, and their daughter Mopsa. It partakes of the nature of the practical joke, and though it no doubt amused the courtiers of Elizabeth, is too clumsy for a more cultivated taste. But although Sidney's comic scenes may no longer amuse, it must be said that they are free from the low coarseness and ribaldry which have furnished merriment to times which pretended to a much higher standard of wit and education than his own. An interesting contrast may be made between a comic passage of the "Arcadia,"[79] representing a fight between two cowards, and perhaps the only scene in the "Morte d'Arthur" of humorous intent,[80]—that in which King Mark is ignominiously put to flight by Arthur's court fool disguised in the armor of a knight.

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In the history of English literature, Sir Philip Sidney's romance will always have a prominent place as the first specimen of a fine prose style. The affectations and mannerisms which are its chief defect were due to the unsettled condition of the language, and to the influence of foreign works, which the general love of learning had made familiar to cultivated Englishmen. The position of the "Arcadia" in fiction is established by the exquisite descriptions of nature and the life-like sketches of character which will often reward the patient reader. That prolixity, which more than any other cause has made the work obsolete, and, as a whole, unreadable, was a recommendation rather than an objection at the time of publication. The "Arcadia," standing almost alone in the department of fiction, and far superior to its few competitors, took the place of a small circulating library. A spirit of lofty ideality pervades the work of Sir Philip Sidney, which is expressive of the aspirations of his time. In the fictions of that age is to be seen a constant attempt, not always successful, to dignify life, to exalt the beautiful, and to conceal or condemn the base. Everyday life was not tempting to the writer, because it contained too much that was repulsive. The story teller and the poet painted amid unreal scenes that happiness and virtue which they thought more easily to be conceived in an ideal land of knights and shepherds, than amidst the cares and dangers of their own existence.[81]

[Footnote 57: Paine's "History of English Literature," book iii, ch. 1.]

[Footnote 58: Nichol's "Progresses," vol. I, p. 3.]

[Footnote 59: The Italian tales were issued in various collections, such as Painter's "Palace of Pleasure," Whetstone's "Heptameron," the "Histories" of Goulard and Grimstone. One of the best of these collections is "Westward for Smelts," by Kinde Kit of Kingstone, circa 1603, reprinted by the Percy Society. It is on the same plan as Boccaccio's "Decamerone," except that the story-tellers are fish-wives going up the Thames in a boat. Imitations of the Italian tales may be found in Hazlitt's "Shakespeare's Library," notably "Romeo and Julietta." Most of these are modernized versions of old tales. I may here add, as undeserving further mention, such stories as "Jacke of Dover's Quest of Inquirie," 1601, Percy Soc.; "A Search for Money," by William Rowley, dramatist, 1609, Percy Soc.; and "The Man in the Moone, or the English Fortune-Teller," 1609, Percy Soc.]

[Footnote 60: The most comprehensive remarks on Lyly and "Euphues" are to be found in the *London Quarterly Review* for April, 1801, and are due to Mr. Henry Morley.]

[Footnote 61: Henry Peacham, "Compleat Gentleman." See Drake's "Shakespeare and his Times."]

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[Footnote 62: Shakespeare ridiculed the affectations of contemporary language in "Love's Labour Lost." Among the characters of Ben Jonson are some good Euphuists. In "Every Man out of his Humour," Fallace says (act v, sc. x), "O, Master Brisk, as 'tis said in Euphues, Hard is the choice, when one is compelled, either by silence to die with grief, or by speaking to live with shame." In "The Monastery," a novel which the author himself considered a failure, Sir Walter Scott represented a Euphuist. But the language of Sir Piercie Shafton is entirely devoid of the characteristics of Euphuism, and gives a very false impression concerning it. (See introduction to "The Monastery.") Compare passages quoted in the text with one in chap. xiv ("Monastery") beginning: "Ah, that I had with me my Anatomy of Wit." Also *passim*.]

[Footnote 63: The lines quoted from the "Winter's Tale" are in act iv, sc. 3. For Greene's words see "Dorastus and Fawnia," in Hazlitt's "Shakespeare's Library," part I, vol. 4, p. 62. The resemblance between the two passages is pointed out by Dunlop ("History of Fiction," p. 404). Collier in his introduction to "Dorastus and Fawnia" denied this obligation of Shakespeare to Greene. But he was evidently led into this error by liking the following passage, instead of the one quoted in the text, for the foundation of Shakespeare's lines: "The gods above disdaine not to love women beneathe. Phoebus liked Sibilla: Jupiter Io; and why not I, then Fawnia?"]

[Footnote 64: Another of Greene's tales, possessing much the same merits and the same defects as those already mentioned is "Never too Late."]

[Footnote 65: Shakespeare's Celia.]

[Footnote 66: Act I, sc. 3.]

[Footnote 67: "Miscellanea," part ii, essay iv.]

[Footnote 68: Gray's "Life of Sidney," p. 8.]

[Footnote 69: "Pierce Penniless."]

[Footnote 70: Folio, 1622. p. 6.]

[Footnote 71: Folio, 1622, p. 10.]

[Footnote 72: Folio, p. 130.]

[Footnote 73: Folio, p. 115.]

[Footnote 74: Folio, p. 260.]

[Footnote 75: See an "Answer in 'Eikon Basilike,'" Milton's Works, Symmons' ed., v. 2, p. 408.]

[Footnote 76: Folio, p. 248.]

[Footnote 77: Folio, p. 116.]

[Footnote 78: Folio, p. 231.]

[Footnote 79: Book iii.]

[Footnote 80: “Morte d’Arthur,” book x, chap. 12.]

[Footnote 81: A Scotchman named Barclay published a partly political and partly heroic volume called “Argenis” in 1621. It was much commended by Cowper the poet, but being written in Latin, is hardly to be included in English fiction. See Dunlop, chap. x. Francis Godwin wrote a curious story about 1602, called “The Man in the Moon,” in which is described the journey of one Domingo Gonzales to that planet. Dunlop ("Hist. of Fiction”) thought Domingo to be the real author. See chapter xiii. This romance is chiefly remarkable for its scientific speculations, and the adoption by the author of the Copernican theory. It was translated into French, and imitated by Cyrano de Bergerac, who in his turn was imitated by Swift in Brobdignag. See Hallam, “Lit. of Europe,” vol 3, p. 393.]

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CHAPTER IV.

THE PURITANS. BUNYAN'S "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS."

I.

The renaissance of learning, with its delight in a sense of existence, its enjoyment of a new life, a newly acquired knowledge, and a quickened intelligence, was gradually supplanted by that renaissance of religion which followed the general introduction of the Bible among the English people. Weary of the oppression of the clergy, weary of giving an often ruinous obedience to the tyranny of men whose lives gave them no claim to control the conduct of others, the early Puritan found in the Bible the knowledge of God and the means of grace which he despaired of obtaining from the priest. The Bible became in reality *The Book*. It was the one volume possessed and read by the people at large. The classical authors, the volumes of translations issued in Elizabeth's time, the productions, even, of English genius had been familiar only to the upper and best-educated classes. The great body of the people were without books, and the Bible became their one literary resource, and the sole teacher of the conditions by which salvation could be attained. It was seized upon with extraordinary avidity and enthusiasm. Old men learned to read, that they might study it for themselves. Crowds gathered in churches and private houses to hear it read aloud. A good reader became a public benefactor. Alike in manor and in cottage, the family gathered at night to listen with awe-struck interest to the solemn words whose grandeur was not yet lessened by familiarity. As we quote, often unconsciously, from a hundred different authors, the Puritans quoted from their one book.[82] Some, like Bunyan, at first preferred the historical chapters. But the Bible soon came to have a far more powerful and absorbing interest than any of a literary nature. There men looked for their sentence of eternal life or eternal torment. There they sought the solution of the question: "What shall I do to be saved?" And they sought it with all the fervor of conscientious men who realized, as we cannot realize, the doctrine of eternal damnation. To understand the influence of the Bible, we must remember how completely men believed in a personal God, ruling England then, as He had ruled Israel of old; and in a devil who stalked through the world luring men to their perdition. The Bible was studied with a fearful eagerness for the way to please the one and to escape the other. Looked upon as the word of God, pointing out the only means of salvation, men placed themselves, through the Bible, in direct communication with the Deity, and, casting aside the authority of a church, acknowledged responsibility to Him alone. The difficulty of interpreting obscure portions of the Scriptures drove many to frenzy and despair. A hopeful or consoling passage was hailed with joy. "Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "Lo," wrote Tyndale, "here God hath made a covenant wyth us, to mercy full unto us, yf we wyll be mercy full one to another."

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Thus two ideas became paramount: the idea of God, and the idea of conscience. God was thought of as a judge who will reward His chosen servants by eternal happiness, but who will deliver those who do not know Him, or those who sin against His laws, to Satan and everlasting fire; a God to please whom is the first object of this life, as no pleasure and no pain here can compare with the pleasure or pain to come. This conception of the Deity still survives among us, but it is not realized with the intensity of men who feel the hand of God in every incident of their lives, who fancy that the Devil in person is among them, and who distinctly hear his tempting words. Conscience, the guide who pointed out the path of rectitude, became strict and self-searching, ever looking inwardly, and judging harshly, magnifying, through the greatness of its ideal of virtue, every failing into a crime. The natural result of these ideas seething in a brain which had little other food was Puritanism: the subordination of all other interests of life to the attainment of a spiritual condition acceptable in the sight of God. Following this aim with feverish intentness, and tortured by a conscience of extreme tenderness, the Puritans naturally cast aside the pleasures of this life as likely to interfere with the attainment of future happiness, and as worthless compared to it. It was no time for gaiety and trifling when the horrors of hell were staring them in the face.

There is extant a life-like picture of a London housewife, which can teach us much regarding the spirit of Puritanism.[83] “She was very loving and obedient to her parents, loving and kind to her husband, very tender-hearted to her children, loving all that were godly, much misliking the wicked and profane. She was a pattern of sobriety unto many, very seldom was seen abroad, except at church. When others recreated themselves, at holidays and other times, she would take her needlework, and say, ‘here is my recreation.’”

The self-denial of this virtuous housewife developed into that austerity which, when Puritanism had become the ruling power in England, closed the theatre and the bear-garden, stopped the dancing on the village green, and assumed a dress and manner, the sombreness of which was meant to signify a scorn of this world. While we can now easily perceive the mistakes of the Puritans, and condemn the folly of prohibiting innocent amusements which form a natural outlet for exuberant spirits, it will be well if we can do justice to the nobility of aim, and the greatness of self-sacrifice, to which their austerity was due. We must remember that the aim of the Puritans was a godliness far more exacting than that which we seek, and requiring a proportionate sacrifice of immediate pleasure. We must remember, too, that the amusements of that time were in large part brutal, like the bear-gardens; and licentious, like most of the theatres. Puritanism could only exist among men filled to an uncommon degree

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with a love of virtue, who were ready to undergo every hardship, and to sacrifice every personal inclination to attain it. Growing up among the people at large, Puritanism showed a strong national love of religion and morality. The resolution with which its devotees pursued their aims, the serene content with which the martyrs welcomed the flames which were to open the gates of Heaven, were backed by a strength of faith not exceeded by that of the early Christians. The self-control and self-sacrifice of the Puritans moulded the armies of the Commonwealth, and overthrew the tyranny of Charles. But their finer qualities were clouded by the fanaticism which a long persecution had engendered. A phrase in our description of the London housewife unconsciously tells the story: "Loving all that were godly, much misliking the wicked and profane." The godly were the sharers of her own faith, the "wicked and profane" were all those without its pale. Here lay the weakness of Puritanism: its narrowness, its lack of sympathy with the world at large, its indifference to the sufferings of those who had no place in the ranks of the elect.

Among such men we must look in vain for literary productions having the aim of entertainment. The literature of the time was chiefly polemical, and commentaries crowded on the book-shelves the volumes of classical and Italian writers. To Puritanism, fiction was the invention of the Evil One, but still to Puritanism we owe, what is now, and seems destined ever to remain, the finest allegory in the English language.

[Footnote 82: See Green's "Short History of the English People," chap. viii, sec. 1.]

[Footnote 83: John Wallington's description of his mother. Green's "Short History of the English People," p. 451.]

II.

That John Bunyan, a poor, illiterate tinker, was able to take the first place among writers of allegory, and to accomplish the extraordinary intellectual feat of producing a work which charmed alike the ignorant, who could not perceive its literary merits, and cultivated critics, who viewed it only from a literary standpoint, depended partly on his own natural gifts, and partly on the character of Puritan thought. To write a good allegory requires an imagination of unusual power. It requires, in addition, a realization of the subject sufficiently strong to give to immaterial and shadowy forms a living personality. These conditions were combined in Bunyan's case to an unexampled degree. He possessed an imagination the activity of which would have unsettled the reason of any less powerfully constituted man. His subject, the doctrine of salvation by grace, was, by the absorbing interest then attached to it, impressed upon his mind with a vividness difficult to conceive. In "Grace Abounding in the Chief of Sinners," Bunyan

left a description of his life, and the workings of his mind on religious subjects, which is without a parallel

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in autobiography. The veil which hides the thoughts of one man from another is withdrawn, and the reader is placed in the closest communion with the mind of the writer. In “Grace Abounding” is easily detected the secret of Bunyan’s success in allegory. “My sins did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood He did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with dreadful visions. I have been in my bed greatly afflicted, while asleep, with apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits, who still, as I then thought, labored to draw me away with them, of which I could never be rid. I was afflicted with thoughts of the Day of Judgment, night and day, trembling at the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell fire.” One Sunday, “as I was in the midst of a game at cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, ’Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to Heaven, or have thy sins and go to Hell?’ At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore leaving my cat on the ground, and looking up to Heaven, saw, as with the eyes of my understanding, Jesus Christ looking down upon me very hotly displeased with me, and severely threatening me with some grievous punishment for my ungodly practices. * * * I cannot express with what longing I cried to Christ to call me. I saw such glory in a converted state that I could not be contented without a share therein. Had I had a whole world it had all gone ten thousand times over for this, that my soul might have been in a converted state.” After Bunyan’s conversion he says of his conscience: “As to the act of sinning, I was never more tender than now. I durst not take up a pin or a stick, though but so big as a straw, for my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch. I could not tell how to speak my words for fear I should misplace them.”

A man so sensitive to supernatural impressions could realize them as completely as the actual experiences of his daily life. Such, in fact, they were. With a conscience so tender, and a longing so intense for what he considered a condition of grace, Bunyan described the journey of Christian with the minuteness and fidelity of one who had trod the same path. The sketch of the pilgrim, which opens the work, stamps Christian at once an individual.

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the Book, and read therein; and, as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying “what shall I do?”

The same impression of reality pervades the whole

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work. Christian's sins take an actual form in the burden on his back. Every personage whom he meets on his journey, and every place through which he passes appears to the mind of the reader with the vividness of actual experience. The child or the laborer reads the "Pilgrim's Progress" as a record of adventures undergone by a living man; the scholar forgets the art which has raised the picture before his mind, in a sense of contact with the subject portrayed. This is the triumph of a great genius, and it is a triumph to which no other writer has attained to the same degree. Other allegorists have pleased the fancy or gratified the understanding, but Bunyan occupies at once the imagination, the reason and the heart of his reader. Defoe's power of giving life to fictitious scenes and personages has not been surpassed by that of any other novelist. But Defoe's scenes and characters were of a nature familiar to his readers, and therefore easily realized. In the "Pilgrim's Progress," strange and unreal regions become well-known places, and moral qualities distinct human beings. Evangelist, who puts Christian on the way to the Wicked Gate; Pliable, who deserts him at the first difficulty; Help, who pulls him out of the Slough of Despond; Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who shows him an easy way to be rid of his burden, are all life-like individuals. Timorous, Talkative, Vain Confidence, Giant Despair, are not mere personifications, but distinct human beings with whom every reader of the "Pilgrim's Progress" feels an intimate acquaintance. Not less real is the impression produced by the various scenes through which the journey of Christian conducts him. The Slough of Despond, the Wicket Gate, the House of the Interpreter, the Hill Difficulty, have been familiar localities to many generations of men, who have watched Christian's struggle with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, and followed his footsteps as they trod the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as they passed through the dangers of Vanity Fair, and brought him at last to the Celestial City, and the welcome of the Shining Ones.

The "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Holy War" are not as allegories entirely perfect, but they probably gain in religious effect, as much as they lose from a literary point of view, in those passages where the allegorical disguise is not sustained. The simplicity and power of their language are alone sufficient to give them an important place in English literature. Throughout the "Pilgrim's Progress" are evidences of a strong human sympathy, and a kindly indulgence on the part of the author for the weak and erring among his fellow-men. Ignorance, to be sure, is cast into the bottomless pit; but as the work taught a spiritual perfection, it could not afford to encourage the willingly ignorant by bestowing a pardon on their representative. Bunyan himself was distinguished for a general sympathy with his fellow-men which the narrowness of Puritanism had failed to impair. The sad words in which

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he mourned, while in prison, his long separation from his wife and children, show the natural tenderness of his disposition, as well as the greatness of the sacrifice which he was making for his religion:—“The parting with my wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I often brought to mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with; especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer to my heart than all I had beside.”

With the allegories of Bunyan, we leave ideality behind us as a characteristic feature of English fiction. The knights of the Round Table, Robin Hood and his merry men, the princes and princesses of the “Arcadia,” the pilgrim Christian, were the ideal heroes of the particular periods to which they belong. They were placed amid the scenes which seemed most attractive, and were endowed with the qualities which seemed most admirable to the men whose imaginations created them. But, with the exception perhaps of Robin Hood, they were purely ideal, without prototypes in nature. The writer of fiction had not yet turned his attention to the delineation of character, to the study of complex social questions, to the portrayal of actual life. With the fall of Puritan power, begins a great intellectual change. History shows, since the Restoration, a tendency which has continuously grown stronger and wider, to subordinate the imagination to the reason of man, to withdraw political and social questions from the influence of mere tradition, to subject them instead, to the test of practical experience, and to encourage the patient physical investigations which have resulted in the triumphs of modern science. This tendency has pervaded all the channels of human industry. Its effect upon works of fiction has been to introduce into that department of literature, a spirit of realism, and a love of investigating the problems of life and character, which have resulted in the modern novel. Henceforth we shall meet no more ideal beings, but men or women, more or less true to nature. In the fiction of the Restoration are first observable the new tendencies, which, although but slightly marked at first, have finally given to the English novel its present importance. An attempt to trace the gradual perfection of this form of literature, its development into a work of art, into a natural history of men, into a truthful reflection of very varied social conditions, will occupy the remainder of this volume.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESTORATION. ROGER BOYLE. MRS. MANLEY. MRS. BEHN.

I.

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The Puritans had overthrown the political tyranny of Charles, but in attempting to build up by force a kingdom of the saints on earth, they had established a spiritual tyranny, quite as irksome and quite as perishable, of their own. Meanwhile they had failed to preserve the reputation for sanctity which formed the chief basis of their authority. As soon as they had attained power, they were joined by men who professed their principles merely for selfish purposes; who vied with each other in presenting to the world the outward signs of Puritanism, and remained notoriously profligate in life and character. The kingdom of the saints, objectionable as a tyranny, and finally identified in the popular mind with a hated hypocrisy, came to its inevitable end in the reaction of the Restoration. But when the first fury of this reaction had passed away, it was evident that Puritanism survived it: no longer a political power, but a moral influence which controlled the great body of the people, and gave to English habits and literature their distinctive tone of serious morality.

But for the time, all sight of this was lost. The entry of Charles II into Whitehall was the sign for unlimited indulgence in all that had lately been forbidden. “Chassez le naturel, il revient au galop."[84] The Puritans had pent up for so long the natural cravings for pleasure and gaiety, that, when the barriers were withdrawn, license and debauchery were necessary to satisfy appetites which a long-enforced abstinence had made abnormal. In Vanburgh’s “Provoked Wife,” a comedy, like so many others of the time, at once very immoral and very entertaining, Sir John Brute thus excuses the virtues of his early life: “I was afraid of being damned in those days; for I kept sneaking, cowardly company, fellows that went to church, said grace to their meat, and had not the least tincture of quality about them.” *Heartfree*: “But I think you have got into a better gang now.” *Sir John*: “Zoons, sir, my Lord Rake and I are hand in glove."[85] In the country, people were generally satisfied with getting back their May-poles and Sunday games. But in London, where the rule of Puritanism had been the strictest, and above all among the courtiers, the new liberty resulted in a license and shamelessness unequalled in English history.

In the general proscription of Puritan ideas, the good were involved in the same destruction as the bad. Religion was mocked at as a cloak for hypocrisy, self-restraint was thrown aside as an obstacle to enjoyment. It was thought that emancipation from Puritan tyranny could not be attained more effectually than by a life of open licentiousness; by gambling and drunkenness. Such, under the Restoration, were the occupations most attractive to the gentlemen of fashion. Buckingham, Rochester, and the troop of courtiers who looked to them for an example, spent their lives in sinking into an ever deeper depravity. Their thoughts

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and mouths were never clean. The verses they wrote are too foul to transcribe as an illustration of the taste of their composers. The orgies in which they indulged were not scenes of gaiety, in which buoyant spirits and lively wit might excuse excess, but were serious, bestial, and premeditated. The dealings of these men with the female sex were but a succession of low intrigues, which destroyed all sentiment and left nothing but disgust behind them. We hear a great deal about “love” in the literature of the time, but it is the same kind of love that might be found among a herd of cattle. It would be difficult to mention any man about the court of Charles II who could have appreciated the pure and enduring passion which in the century before had breathed through the noble lines of Spenser’s “Epithalamion,” and in the century that followed inspired “John Anderson, my jo’ John.” Charles himself, “the old goat,” set an example which hardly needed the authority of the Lord’s anointed to become attractive. Without honor or virtue himself, and denying their existence in others, he made a fitting leader of the society about him. His mistresses insulted the queen by their splendor and arrogance, and insulted him by amours with servants and mountebanks. So destitute of dignity or principle as to share the Duchess of Cleveland with the world, he coolly asked a courtier who was reputed to be on too intimate terms with the queen, how his “mistress” did. While the gaming-tables at court were nightly covered with gold, and Lady Castlemaine gambled away thousands of pounds at a sitting, the exchequer was closed amid a widespread ruin, and the menial servants about the court were in want of bread. So openly was the king’s coarse licentiousness pursued, that “the very sentrys speak of it,” that the queen rarely entered her dressing-rooms without first being assured that the king was not there with one of his women. Such an example had a powerful influence upon all the rank and fashion of the time, already predisposed to a similar course. The extent of the prevailing reverence for royalty is admirably illustrated by the scene in which the Earl of Arlington advised Miss Stewart concerning her conduct as mistress of the king, to which position “it had pleased God and her virtue to raise her.” Thus from the popular dislike of Puritanism, and the example of a profligate court, began that reign of social and political corruption which for a hundred years demoralized the manners and sullied the literature of the English people. The vice which became so engrafted on the habits of private life as to make decency seem an affectation, invaded religion and politics. To religion it brought about a general indifference, which in the higher ranks of the clergy took effect in disregard of their duties and in a shameless scramble for lucrative posts, and in the lower ranks produced poverty and social degradation. In politics are to be dated from this reign the gross corruption which enabled every public officer, however high or however low, to use his position for the purpose of private plunder, and the habit of bribing members of Parliament which soon converted them into tools of the crown’s ministers.

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While the men found their greatest enjoyment and most congenial occupation in drunkenness, duelling, and seduction, it is not to be expected that women should have retained an unappreciated refinement. Half-naked and ornamented with a profusion of jewels, they look out from the portraits of the time with a sleepy, voluptuous expression, which suggests a lack of intelligence and too great a susceptibility to physical impressions. Women as we find them in contemporary memoirs, and these most often deal with such as are about the court, are not unfit companions for the men. We see not a few the willing victims of coarse intrigues, and some even assisting in the degradation of others of their sex. Many of them swore “good mouth filling oaths,” and the scandal they talked would have shocked the taste as well as the principles of Elizabeth’s time. In the eighteenth century much coarseness is to be seen in literature and society, but we are constantly meeting with the words “delicacy” and “indelicacy” in their application to social refinement, and it is evident that the ideas of that time on this subject differ from ours only in degree. Under the Restoration, these words, or the thoughts they represent, had a very insignificant existence. Public taste inclined to the gross and the sensual, and welcomed as enjoyable, what the present discards as disgusting. Ladies of the highest rank sat through plays of which the purpose and effect was to degrade their own womanhood, to remove from the minds of the men who sat about and watched their countenances at each new obscenity, whatever respect for the sex might have lingered there. Some wore masks to hide the blushes which might have been looked for as a drama proceeded, which represented every female character on the stage as little better than an animal, using such reason as she possessed only to further the gratification of her appetites. Under such conditions there could be no encouragement for maiden modesty, and for old age no crown.

It is usually unfair to judge a community by its theatre, to which an exceptional liberty must always be allowed. But the drama of the Restoration may be said to reflect with much truth the popular taste. For the noblest efforts of dramatic genius the student turns by preference to the age of Elizabeth. There he finds art, beauty, and poetry; there he finds human nature, with its nobility and its littleness, with its virtues and its vices. The time of Charles II was as narrow in its way as the Puritans had been in theirs, and was as little capable of forming broad and just views of mankind. The Puritans, if they had had a stage, would have represented man as an embodiment of moral qualities. The dramatists of the Restoration made him merely a creature subject to animal desires and brutish instincts, which he made no effort to regulate. “It might, not be easy perhaps,” says Hallam, “to find a scene in any comedy of Charles II’s reign, where one character has the behavior

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of a gentleman, in the sense we attach to the word."[86] The stage was in perfect accord with its audience. Morality was outraged by a constant association of virtue with all that is contemptible and of vice with all that is attractive. Taste was outraged by a perpetual choice of degraded subjects and disgusting scenes. Nature was outraged by the representation of man, not as a complex being, worthy of deep and skilful investigation, but as a creature influenced by two or three passions always apparent on the surface. Thus the dramatists, notwithstanding their very exceptional abilities, produced little of enduring value, and nothing which could outlive a change in the popular taste. They did, however, produce what was greatly admired by their contemporaries: and the fact that the men and the women of the time enjoyed the plays provided for them, shows that they preferred to noble and elevating subjects, the literary reproduction of their own corrupt lives. The theatre no doubt represented men as worse than they were. But the friends of Buckingham and Rochester, both male and female, found in its long list of unprincipled men, of married women debauched, and of young girls anxious to be debauched, the reflection and justification of their own careers.

Posterity remembers little of the reign or the theatre of Charles II beyond their corruption. Yet there is much that is worthy of remembrance, without which any remarks on the social condition of the time would be one-sided. There are to be referred to that period many legislative enactments in the highest degree conducive to civil and religious liberty. The foundation of the Royal Society marked the inauguration of a new interest in speculative enquiry, of a great activity in scientific research, and of a broader and more liberal habit of thought on questions connected with government and education. These advantages were attained in spite of a worthless king, of corrupt ministers, and a licentious court, and they are due to the earnestness and vigor of the great body of the English people, qualities which have remained unchanged through every national vicissitude or success. While Pepys and Grammont supply full details of the moral degeneration which weakened and debased the highest ranks of society, the sound morality, steady industry, and progressive nature of the nation are to be seen in the journal of the good Evelyn. His character and occupations, as well as those of his friends, offset the coarse tastes and worthless lives which brought the time into discredit. To the prevailing disregard of the marriage tie may well be contrasted the happiness of Evelyn’s domestic life. His daughter, of whom he has left a beautiful description, was endowed with an elevation of character, a charm of disposition, and a purity of thought admirable in any age, and it cannot be doubted that she had many contemporary parallels.

[Footnote 84: Destouches, “Glorieux,” v. 3.]

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[Footnote 85: Act ii, sc. 1.]

[Footnote 86: “Literature of Europe,” vol. 4, chap. 6, sec. 2-47.]

II

With the pensions and fashions which were sent across the Channel from the court of Louis XIV, came a curious species of fiction which had a temporary vogue in England. Gomberville, Scuderi, and Calprenede had created the school of Heroic Romance by the publication of those monumental works which the French not inaptly termed “les romans de longue haleine.” This was the bulky but enervated descendant of chivalric and pastoral romance. The tales of chivalry and of pastoral life had their *raison d’etre*. The feudal knighthood found in the tournaments, in the adventures of knight-errantry, and in the supernatural agencies which filled their volumes of romance, the reflection of their own aspirations and beliefs. They admired in the ideal characters of Charlemagne and Arthur the qualities most valued among themselves. Martial glory was to them the chief object of life; love was simply the reward of valor. The pastoral romance followed in less warlike times. Its subject was love; and that passion was usually described amidst humble and peaceful shepherds, where its strength and charm could develop more fully than amidst scenes of war and tumult. Both the chivalric and the pastoral romance were the embodiment of ideals which in turn represented contemporary tastes. But heroic romance, although it shared some of the characteristics of its predecessors, had not the same claim to interest. It was unnatural and artificial, rather than ideal. It imitated the martial character of the tales of chivalry, but subordinated that character to love. It imitated the devoted strain of adoration which ran through the fanciful phrases of pastoral fiction; but that artificial passion which seemed appropriate to ideal shepherds tuning their pipes under a perpetual sunshine, became absurd when applied to Greek or Carthaginian soldiers.

Gomberville’s “Polexander,” complete-in six thousand pages, and Calprenede’s “Cassandra,” “the fam’d romance,” are now before me. Greeks, Romans, Turks, Parthians, Scythians, Babylonians are mingled together in a truly heroic structure of absurdity and anachronism. Artaxerxes appears on one page, the queen of the Amazons on the next, then the king of Lacedaemon, Alexander the Great, even a prince of Mexico, and comparatively private persons beyond computation. This crowd of names represent personages who imitate the deeds of chivalry, and converse in the affected style of the French court, while their ancient bosoms are distracted by a pure, all-absorbing, and never-dying love as foreign to their nature as to that of the readers of heroic romance. That this species of fiction should have met with any success, is largely due to the circumstance, that under the disguise of Greek warriors or Parthian princesses, there were really described contemporary beauties and courtiers, who fondly believed that they had attained, through the genius of Calprenede and Scuderi,

an enviable immortality. Unhappily for them, the characters of heroic romance have found in that endless desert of phraseology at once their birthplace and their tomb.

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The works of Gomberville, Calprenede, and Scuderi, although little adapted to the English taste, shared the favor which was extended to every thing French, and were both translated and imitated. The “Eliana,” published in 1661; although a *bona-fide* imitation, would have served much better as a caricature. To the absurdity of incident is added an absurdity of language which gives the book almost a comic aspect. The beauty of flowers growing in the fields is disguised under the statement that Flora “spreads her fragrant mantle on the superficies of the earth, and bespangles the verdant grass with her beauteous adornments.” A lover “enters a grove free from the frequentations of any besides the ranging beasts and pleasing birds, whose dulcet notes exulsecrate him out of his melancholy contemplations."[87]

Dunlop considered the best work of this description to be the “Parthenissa,” published in 1664, by Roger Boyle, afterward Earl of Orrery. This romance, although marked by the faults of prolixity and incongruity characteristic of the heroic style, is not without narrative interest or literary merit. The hero is Artabanes, a Median prince, as usual “richly attired, and proportionately blessed with all the gifts of nature and education.” At the Parthian court he becomes enamored of the beautiful Parthenissa, and in her honor performs many distinguished deeds of arms. Distracted, however, at the suspicion of Parthenissa’s preference for a rival, he leaves the Parthian court with the determination to spend the remainder of his life on the summit of the Alps. This intention is frustrated by pirates, who take him prisoner and bestow him as a slave upon their chief. Artabanes soon escapes from bondage, suddenly turns out to be the historic Spartacus, and returns to Asia. There he finds that Parthenissa, to avoid the importunities of an objectionable lover, has swallowed a potion which gives her the appearance of death. In this dilemma he journeys to “the Temple of Hieropolis in Syria, where the Queen of Love had settled an oracle as famous as the Deity to whom it was consecrated.” The priest of this temple, after listening patiently to the long account of Artabanes’ misfortunes, tells the story of his own remarkable career, by which it appears that he is Nicomedes, king of Bythinia, the father of Julius Caesar’s Nicomedes. While Artabanes is listening to this narrative, he sees two persons land upon the shore, and enter a neighboring wood. One is a young knight, and the other the exact counterpart of Parthenissa. At this apparition Artabanes is thrown into the greatest confusion. The lady he has seen presents every outward appearance of his mistress, and yet he believes her dead, and is unable to conceive that if living, she should so far forget her duty to him and the rules of propriety, as to place herself in so suspicions a position. Here the romance comes to an abrupt end, leaving Artabanes in the condition of painful uncertainty in which he has ever since remained.

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Heroic romance proved as ephemeral in England as the cloaks and feathers with which it had crossed the Channel, and we may pass over such trivial literary attempts as those of the Duchess of Newcastle to the writings of Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Behn. These two novelists, if such they may still be called, represent, in narrative fiction, the period which extends from the Restoration to the opening of the eighteenth century. They have left us little, and that of very indifferent merit. But their stories have a certain importance, inasmuch as with them begins the tendency, in English fiction, to deal with the actual, instead of the imaginary, to describe characters and scenes meant to represent real life.

The daughter of Sir Roger Manley, at one time Governor of Guernsey, Mrs. Manley was seduced, when quite a young woman, and passed the remainder of her life in a licentiousness which has evidently inspired her literary productions. Having picked up a few stories from current report, she worked them into what she called “The Power of Love, in Seven Novels."[88] The “love” here described is an unregulated animal passion, and its “power” is the natural effect of such a passion upon men and women who have no idea of self-restraint or refinement. The result is a series of licentious scenes, unredeemed by any literary merit. Mrs. Manley’s most prominent work was the “Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean.” This book is a scandalous chronicle of crimes reputed to have been committed by persons of high rank, and the names are so thinly disguised as to be easily identified. Mrs. Manley was arrested and prosecuted for the publication, but escaped without serious punishment. The work itself had a wide circulation, and Pope adopted the endurance of its fame as a measure of time in his shortsighted line, “As long as Atalantis shall be read.”

In the beginning of this book a female personage named Astraea resolves to revisit the earth, which she had long before abandoned in disgust. She alights upon an island in the Mediterranean, named Atalantis, which is meant to signify England, and a female form immediately rises up before her.

Her habit *obsolete* and *torn*, almost degenerated into tatters; But her Native Charms, that needed not the Help of Art, gave to Astraea’s returning Remembrance that it could be no other than her beautiful Mother Vertue. But oh! how despicable her Garments! how neglected her flowing Hair! How languid her formally animated Eyes! How pale, how withered the Roses of her lovely Cheeks and Lips! How useless her snowy arms and polished Fingers! they hung in a melancholy Decline, and seemed out of other Employment, but sometimes to support the Head of the dejected Fair One! Her limbs enervated and supine, wanting of that Energy which should bear her from a Solitude so affrighting!

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From this very accurate description of the condition of virtue at the end of the seventeenth century, it might be supposed that Mrs. Manley deplored her neglected state. But such is far from being the case. Astraea and Virtue meet with a personage called Intelligence, who furnishes them with a detailed account of current scandal calculated to still further depress the dejected Virtue. The trio are soon joined by Mrs. Nightwork, a midwife, who never breaks an oath of secrecy unless it be to her interest, and the character of whose contributions to the general fund of gossip may be easily imagined. This semi-allegorical method of narration is kept up during the first two volumes; in the third and fourth Mrs. Manley tells her story in her own way. In the course of these four volumes is unrolled an extraordinary series of crimes, some unnatural, and all gross in highest degree. The details which Mrs. Manley could not obtain from authentic sources are supplied by her vivid and heated imagination. She gloats over each incident with a horrible relish, and adds, with no unsparing brush, a heightened color to each picture. Only a society whose conduct could afford material for this composition could possibly have read it. Mrs. Manley no doubt invented and exaggerated without scruple, but the fact that her work was widely read and even popular is a sufficient commentary on the taste of the time. The reader of to-day is sickened by the multiplication of repulsive scenes, and the absence from the book of any good qualities or actions whatever. The style in which the “Atalantis” is written is so mean, that no person could have derived any pleasure from its pages other than the gratification of a depraved taste.

A writer of fiction of much greater importance appeared in the person of Aphra Johnson, more generally known as Mrs. Behn, or “the divine Astraea”; “a gentlewoman by birth, of a good family in the city of Canterbury.” Her father was appointed to a colonial office in the West Indies, where he took his family while Mrs. Behn was yet a young girl. There the future authoress began a chequered life by living on a plantation among rough and lawless colonists, and there she made the acquaintance of the slave Oroonoko, whose sad story she afterward made known to the world. On her return to England, she married Behn, a merchant of Dutch extraction, and went to live in the Netherlands, where she acted as a British spy. By working upon the feelings of her lovers, she was able to convey information to the English government of the intention of the Dutch to enter the Thames to destroy the English fleet. Her warnings were disregarded, and giving up her patriotic occupation, she returned to London, and devoted herself to literature. She died in 1689, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey:—-“Covered only with a marble stone, with two wretched verses on it.” Although Mrs. Behn is now almost forgotten, her position in her own time was not inconsiderable.

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Besides a number of letters and poems, her literary productions include a translation of Fontenelle's "Plurality of Worlds," and a paraphrase on Van Dale's "De Oraculis Ethnicorum." Her plays met with some success, but were characterized by a licentiousness which won for her the title of "the female Wycherley," a fact, which, on account of her sex, called down upon her a general and well-deserved condemnation. Two other productions, of which the nature is sufficiently indicated by their titles, were "The Lover's Watch; or the Art of making Love: being Rules for Courtship for every Hour of the Day and Night"; and "The Ladies Looking Glass to dress themselves by; or the whole Art of charming all Mankind."

It was on Mrs. Behn's return from the West Indies that, being introduced at court, she related to Charles the Second the terrible fate of the noble slave Oroonoko. At the solicitation of the king, she put her narrative into the form of a novel, which obtained a large circulation, and was dramatized by Southern in his tragedy of the same name. "Oroonoko" is worthy of notice as one of the earliest attempts on the part of an English novelist to deal with characters which had come under the writer's observation in actual life. It is still more important on account of the presence within it of a didactic purpose; a characteristic which for good or for evil has been a prominent feature of the English novel. Sir Thomas More had made use of fiction in the sixteenth century to urge his ideas of political and social reforms. Bunyan, more than a century later, used the same means to promulgate his conception of Christian life. While English narrative fiction was still in its first youth, Mrs. Behn protested against the evils of the slave trade through the medium of a story which may be considered a forerunner of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

To interest the public in a distant country or an abstract principle, the novel is the most effective literary means. A treatise on the slave trade by Mrs. Behn, however strong and truthful, would have met with the little attention which is accorded to the sufferings of a distant and unknown people. But the novel has the advantage over the treatise, that it deals with the particular and not the general, with the individual and not the nation. It can place before the reader a limited number of persons; it can interest his mind and heart in their characters, lives, and fate; and by subjecting them to the horrors of the evil to be depicted, excite through commiseration for their sufferings a hatred of the cause which inflicted them. To such a use the novel has often been put, at too frequent a sacrifice of its artistic merit. To excite indignation against the results of the slave trade, Mrs. Behn took the special instance of Oroonoko. She endowed the African slave with beauty of person and nobility of character. She gave him tastes and qualities of a kind to attract the interest of a European reader. She added a description of his wife Imoinda, dwelling on the details of her beauty and charms. By a passionate relation of the amatory scenes which occurred between Oroonoko and his wife, she touched a key particularly calculated to excite contemporary English sympathy. Finally, by telling the story of the cruel wrongs inflicted on the slaves, she aroused a natural indignation against the system which could entail such evil results.

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The story itself is briefly as follows. Oroonoko was a brave young chief, the grandson of a king whose dominions lay on the coast of Africa. He had distinguished himself in war, and already commanded all the forces of his grandfather's kingdom. Hitherto rather unsusceptible to female charms, he became deeply enamored of Imoinda, on returning victorious from a great war. Unfortunately the king noticed Imoinda at the same time, and had her brought to his palace as his concubine. According to the rules of the court, this would separate the lovers forever. Oroonoko in desperation made his way to Imoinda's chamber in the palace at night, where he was discovered by the king's servants. Imoinda was immediately sold as a slave. Oroonoko made his way down to the seashore, and was there allured, under false pretenses of hospitality, on board an English ship. He was carried to the West Indies, and sold to a planter of Surinam, the colony in which Mrs. Behn was living, and where by a remarkable chance Imoinda had already been sold. The beauty of Imoinda had brought about her a large number of suitors, all of whom met with a cold repulse. The tenderness of the meeting between Oroonoko and Imoinda prevailed upon their master to allow them to live together. But Oroonoko longed for liberty. He plotted a revolt among his fellow-slaves, and on its suppression was brutally flogged. Enraged by this, he escaped into the woods with Imoinda, who was then pregnant. Fearing that she might fall into the hands of the whites, and unwilling to be the father of a slave, he killed her, and remained by her dead body several days, half insensible with grief and without food. Again taken by the colonists, he was tied to a post, hacked to pieces and burned. The story, simple in itself, becomes striking in the hands of Mrs. Behn. The hut of the old negro king is given the brilliancy of an Eastern court, and his harem is copied after that of a Turkish potentate. When Oroonoko is induced to board the English slaver, it is in no common style, but "the Captain in his Boat richly adorned with Carpets and velvet Cushions went to the Shore to receive the Prince, with another Long Boat where was placed all his Music and Trumpets." Mrs. Behn's methods of adorning her tale are best shown by her description of Oroonoko himself, which is a good example of the tone in which the story is written.

I have often seen and conversed with this Great Man, and been a Witness to many of his mighty Actions: and do assure my Reader, the most illustrious Courts could not have produced a braver Man, both for Greatness of Courage and Mind, a Judgment more solid, a Wit more quick, and a Conversation more sweet and diverting. He knew almost as much as if he had read much; he had heard of and admired the Romans; he had heard of the late Civil Wars in England, and the deplorable Death of our great Monarch; and would discourse of it with all the Sense and abhorrence of the Injustice

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imaginable. He had an extremely good and graceful Mien, and all the civility of a well bred Great Man. He had nothing of Barbarity in his Nature, but in all Points addressed himself as if his Education had been in some European Court.This great and just character of Oroonoko gave me an extreme Curiosity to see him, especially when I knew he spoke French and English, and that I could talk with him. But though I had heard so much of him, I was as greatly surprised when I saw him, as if I had heard nothing of him; so beyond all Report I found him. He came into the Room, and addressed himself to me and some other Women with the best Grace in the World. He was pretty tall, but of a Shape the most exact that can be fancyed: The most famous Statuary could not form the figure of a Man more admirably turned from Head to Foot. His face was not of that brown lusty Black which most of that Nation are, but a perfect Ebony or polished Jet. His Eyes were the most aweful that could be seen, and very piercing; the White of 'em being like Snow, as were his teeth. His Nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His Mouth the finest Shape that could be seen; far from those great turn'd Lips which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes. The whole Proportion and Air of his Face was nobly and exactly form'd, that bating his Colour, there would be nothing in Nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome. There was no one Grace wanting that bears the Standard of true Beauty. His Hair came down to his Shoulders, by the aids of Art, which was by pulling it out with a quill, and keeping it comb'd; of which he took particular care. Nor did the perfections of his Mind come short of those of his Person; for his Discourse was admirable upon almost any Subject; and whoever had heard him speak, would have been convinced of their Errors, that all fine Wit is confined to the white Men, especially to those of Christendom; and would have confessed that Oroonoko was as capable even of reigning well, and of governing as wisely, had as great a Soul, as politick Maxims, and was as sensible of Power, as any Prince civilized in the most refined Schools of Humanity and Learning, or the most illustrious Courts.[89]

"Oroonoko" is the only one of Mrs Behn's stories which has a didactic aim or a special interest of any kind. Her other works of fiction are short tales, usually founded on fact, which describe in unrestrained language the passion and adventures of a pair of very ardent lovers. They show the prevailing inclination in narrative fiction toward characters and scenes taken from actual life. But they have no interest apart from the slender thread of the story itself. They contain no studies of character, and no information of importance concerning contemporary manners. Their heroes and heroines differ from each other only in the intensity or the circumstances of their love. The best in narrative interest, and the most attractive

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in tone, is the “Lucky Mistake.” It is without the grossness characteristic of Mrs. Behn’s works, and gives quite a pretty account of the loves of a young French nobleman and an unusually modest young woman named Atlante. Mrs. Behn’s notion of love is contained in the opening lines of the “Fair Jilt,” the most licentious of her tales. “As Love is the most noble and divine Passion of the Soul, so it is that to which we may justly attribute all the real Satisfactions of Life; and without it Man is Unfinished and unhappy. There are a thousand Things to be said of the Advantages this generous Passion brings to those whose Hearts are capable of receiving its soft Impressions; for ’tis not Every one that can be sensible of its tender Touches. How many Examples from History and Observation could I give of its wondrous Power; nay, even to a degree of Transmigration! How many Idiots has it made wise! How many Fools eloquent! How many home-bred Squires accomplished! How many cowards brave!” There is no doubt that Mrs. Behn was fully alive to the strength of the passion she describes, but as Sir Richard Steele said, she “understood the practic part of love better than the speculative.” In accordance with the views general amidst the society of her own time, she represented love merely as a physical passion, and made the interest of her stories depend on its gratification, and not on the ennobling effects or subtle manifestations of which it is capable.

There is a great deal in that well-known anecdote of Sir Walter Scott’s, in which he relates that he “was acquainted with an old lady of family, who assured him that, in her younger days, Mrs. Behn’s novels were as currently upon the toilette as the works of Miss Edgeworth at present; and described with some humor her own surprise, when the book falling into her hands after a long interval of years, and when its contents were quite forgotten, she found it impossible to endure, at the age of fourscore, what at fifteen, she, like all the fashionable world of the time, had perused without an idea of impropriety.” This is a striking illustration of the mere relativeness of such words as “morality,” “refinement,” and their opposites. If this old lady could have lived over her early youth embued with the refinement of taste which surrounded her declining years, she would have been still more shocked at the coarseness of language, and the looseness of conduct and morals which prevailed among the highest ranks. At the same time she would have observed, that the society which appeared to her coarse and corrupt was far from so considering itself. What is gross to one age may have been the refinement of the last. A young girl considered modest and discreet at the end of the seventeenth century, if transferred unchanged to the end of the eighteenth, would have shocked the women she met with by talking of subjects unmentioned in society with a freedom and broadness unusual among the men. In judging a literary work from the point of view of morality or refinement, we must compare it with the standard of the age to which it belongs, and not with our own. Pope’s graphic lines, in which he describes Mrs. Behn’s position as a dramatist,

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"The stage how loosely doth Astraea tread,
Who fairly puts all characters to bed."

apply almost equally well to her novels. But still the contemporary reader found nothing in their pages to offend his sense of propriety. And Mrs. Behn, who simply put into a literary form ideas and scenes which were common in the society about her, cannot with justice be accused of an intention to pander to the lowest tastes of her readers. She said herself, when reproved for the tone of her plays, which was much inferior to that of her novels: "I make challenge to any person of common sense and reason, that is not wilfully bent on ill nature, and will, in spite of sense, wrest a *double entendre* from everything * * * but any unprejudiced person that knows not the author—to read one of my comedies and compare it with others of this age, and if they can find one word which can offend the chastest ear, I will submit to all their pevish cavills." All this is worthy of note, if we are to follow the course of English fiction without prejudice. For it will be shown that the nineteenth century, with all its well-deserved pride in an advanced refinement and morality, has produced a large number of novelists, both male and female, whose works are as immoral as those of Mrs. Behn, without her excuse. Who, with all the advantages accruing from life in a refined age, with every encouragement to pursue a better course, have deliberately chosen to court an infamous notoriety by making vice familiar and attractive. And this too, at a time when a general confidence in the purity of contemporary literary works has practically done away with parental censorship; when books of evil tendency are as likely to fall into the hands of the young and susceptible as those of elevating tendency—a circumstance which adds a new responsibility to the duties of the conscientious writer.

[Footnote 87: Dunlop's "History of Fiction," chap. iv.]

[Footnote 88: "The Fair Hypocrite," "The Physician's Stratagem," "The Wife's Resentment," "The Husband's Resentment," in two parts; "The Happy Fugitive," "The Perjured Beauty."]

[Footnote 89: "History of Oroonoko," Mrs. Behn's "Collected plays and novels."]

CHAPTER VI.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.
I.—ENGLAND UNDER ANNE AND THE FIRST TWO GEORGES.
II.—SWIFT, ADDISON, DEFOE.
III.—RICHARDSON, FIELDING, SMOLLETT.

I.

The advance of a nation in numbers and civilization is accompanied by so great a complexity of social conditions that in this volume it is possible only to attempt to seize such salient characteristics of the eighteenth century as may serve to throw light on the course of English fiction. No age presents a more prosaic aspect. If we consider the condition of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the prevalence of abuses and corruption left by the

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ignorance or vice of preceding years, and reflect at the same time upon the progressive nature of the people, the practical habit of their minds, and the moral earnestness which they never wholly lost, it is not surprising to find that the century is one of reforms. Population and wealth had outgrown the laws and customs which had hitherto served for their control, and though in the earlier part of the period we find corruption in public and private life, indifference in religion, inadequate provision for the education of the young, gross abuses in jurisprudence, and coarseness of action and taste throughout the social system, there is also perceptible a solid foundation of good-sense and an earnest desire for improvement, which gradually, as the century wore on, introduced one reform after another, until many of those benefits were attained or made possible which the present century almost unconsciously enjoys. We should lose one of the most instructive lessons which history can afford, if, with Carlyle, we should allow the eighteenth century to lie “massed up in our minds as a disastrous, wrecked inanity, not useful to dwell upon,"[90] The England of that century was modern England, but modern England, burdened with a heritage of corruption and ignorance which it is the glory of the time to have in large part discarded. It was a time of social and material progress, and it was also the period of the growth and perfection of English fiction. To thoroughly understand the one, we must be acquainted with the other, and it will be the object of the two following chapters to trace the development of the English novel in connection with that national development of which it will be shown to be in great measure the exponent.

That subordination of the imagination to reason, which, after the Restoration, became so marked in English thought on intellectual, political, and religious subjects, was continued in the eighteenth century with results which affected the whole current of national life. Before the light of physical science, silent but irresistible in its advances, faded away the remains of dogmatism and superstition. Astrology was forgotten in astronomy; belief in modern miracles and witchcraft ceased to take root in minds conscious of a universe too vast for realization, and governed by laws so regular, that probability could not attach to arbitrary interference by God or the devil. From the broadening of the intellectual horizon finally resulted inestimable benefits; but these benefits were purchased at the price of much temporary evil. If in religion, the rational tendencies prepared the way for the liberal and undogmatic Christianity to come, their effect for many years was to be seen only in scepticism, in a mocking indifference to religion itself, in a contempt of high moral aspirations and sentiments. If in politics, the final effect of these tendencies was to introduce new wisdom into government, they showed for long no other result than the suppression of all the higher qualities of a statesman, the disappearance of every sign of patriotism other than an ignorant hatred of foreign countries, the complete subversion of public spirit by private rapacity.

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The prevailing intellectual characteristics are marked, in literature, by the great predominance of prose over poetry. It will be no disparagement to Pope, Prior, Gray, Collins, Akenside, Goldsmith, or Young, to say that they did not attain in poetry what in prose was attained by Swift, Defoe, Steele, Addison, Bolingbroke, Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, Hume, Gibbon, Junius, and Burke; while Goldsmith is as much valued for his prose as for his verse, Addison, Swift, and Johnson more so. It is to these men, and to contemporaries of lesser note, that English literature is indebted for the invention or perfection of prose forms of the highest importance and beauty. Defoe stands pre-eminent among the founders of the newspaper, destined to attain so high a degree of power and utility. Addison, Steele, and Johnson made the essay one of the most attractive and popular forms of literature. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Horace Walpole, Chesterfield, and Junius brought letter-writing to perfection. Defoe, Addison, Richardson, and Fielding developed the realistic novel. A prosaic and conventional tone pervaded even the poetry of the period. Appreciation of poetry was almost extinguished, Addison, writing of the poets of the past, made no mention of Shakespeare, and found it possible to say of Chaucer:

> In vain he jests in his unpolish'd strain,
> And tries to make his readers laugh, in vain.

And of Spenser:

> Old Spenser next, warm'd with poetick rage,
> In ancient tales amus'd a barb'rous age.
> But now the mystick tale that pleas'd of yore
> Can charm an understanding age no more.[91]

"If you did amuse yourself with writing any thing in poetry," wrote Horace Walpole to Sir H. Mann, in 1742, "you know how pleased I should be to see it; but for encouraging you to it, d'ye see, 'tis an age most unpoetical! 'Tis even a test of wit to dislike poetry; and though Pope has half a dozen old friends that he has preserved from the taste of last century, yet, I assure you the generality of readers are more diverted with any paltry prose answer to old Marlborough's secret history of Queen Mary's robes. I do not think an author would be universally commended for any production in verse, unless it were an ode to the Secret Committee, with rhymes of liberty and property, nation and administration."

During the brilliant era of literary activity, known by the name of Queen Anne, men of letters were encouraged by the government by means of employment or rewards. They were supported also by the public through the high social consideration which was freely accorded to men of talent. Literary success was a passport to the houses and the intimacy of the great. But under the first two Georges and the administration of Walpole the government was seconded by the public in its neglect of authors and their works. In

those days the circle of readers was too small to afford remuneration to authorship.
Employment

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or help from the government was almost a *sine qua non* for the production of works which required time and research. While under Anne, Swift received a deanery, Addison was Secretary of State, Steele a prominent member of Parliament, and Newton, Locke, Prior, Gay, Rowe, Congreve, Tickell, Parnell, and Pope all received direct or indirect aid from the government, in the reigns of George I and George II, Steele died in poverty, Savage walked the streets for want of a lodging, Johnson lived in penury and drudgery. Thomson was deprived of a small office which formed his sole dependence.[92] This neglect of authors and of literature was only partially due to an unappreciative government. It was supported by the indifference of a public in a high degree material and unintellectual. Conversation in France, said Chesterfield, “turns at least upon some subject, something of taste, some point of history, criticism, and even philosophy; which, though probably not quite so solid as Mr. Locke’s, is, however, better and more becoming rational beings than our frivolous dissertations upon the weather or upon whist.”

In keeping with the unimpassioned and prosaic tone of the time, was the low state of religious feeling, and the degeneration of the church, both in its own organization and in public esteem. The upper classes of society, as a rule, were lukewarm and insincere in any form of belief. Statesman and nobles in the most prominent positions combined professed irreligion with open profligacy, while the lower classes were left, through the indolence and selfishness of the clergy, almost without religious teaching. Montesquieu found that people laughed when religion was mentioned in London drawing-rooms. Sir Robert Walpole put the general feeling in his own coarse way. “Pray, madam,” said he to the Princess Emily, when it was suggested that the archbishop should be called to the death-bed of Queen Caroline, “let this farce be played; the archbishop will act it very well. You may bid him be as short as you will. It will do the queen no hurt, no more than any good; and it will satisfy all the wise and good fools, who will call us all atheists if we don’t pretend to be as great fools as they are."[93] This low state of religious sentiment was brought about by much the same causes which, at a later time, substituted a moral and liberal for the old dogmatic Christianity. The dislike of theological controversy left by the civil wars was aided by the Act of Toleration in giving the nation a religious peace, and in diverting human energy from religious speculations or emotions. The rational character of the national intellect was inclined to what was material and tangible, to physical study or industry. The general desire to submit all questions to the test of a critical reason, induced the clergy to apply the same test to theology. But while these tendencies, in their final result, were on the whole beneficial to religion, their temporary

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effect was injurious to it in a high degree. With a few exceptions, such as Butler, Berkeley, and Wilson, the clergy shared the indifference of their flocks. The upper ranks were indolent, selfish, often immoral; the lower, poor, ignorant, and degraded in social position. Bishops and prominent clergymen, under the system of pluralities, left their congregations to the care of hungry curates, and sought promotion by assiduous attendance at ministers' levees, or by paying court to the king's mistresses. It is not surprising that public respect for them and for their calling almost died away. Pope wrote sneeringly:[94]

> EVEN *in a* BISHOP *I can spy desert*;
> *Seeker is decent, Rundle has a heart*.

A naked Venus hung in the room where prayers were read while Queen Caroline dressed, which Dr. Madox sarcastically termed "a very proper altar-piece."[95] Of the High Churchmen Defoe declared that "the spirit of Christianity is fled from among them." When the Prince of Wales died, George the Second appointed governors and preceptors for the prince's children. Horace Walpole's description[96] of one of these is significant. "The other Preceptor was Hayter, Bishop of Norwich, a sensible well-bred man, natural son of Blackbourn, the jolly old Archbishop of York, who had all the manners of a man of quality, though he had been a Buccaneer and was a Clergyman; but he retained nothing of his first profession except his seraglio."

While the attention of the upper clergy was largely absorbed by thoughts of private profit and by the pursuit of worldly advancement, the lower ranks were left in a position degrading alike to themselves and to religion. In the country a clergyman was little above a peasant in social consideration, and seldom equal to him in the comforts of life. To eke out the sustenance of himself and family, hard labor in his own garden was by no means the most menial of the services he was obliged to perform. His wife was usually a servant-maid taken from a neighboring country house, and the kitchen was his most common resort when he visited the home of a squire. A private chaplain was little above a servant. In London, many clergymen fell into the prisons through debt or crime. From the ranks of the lower clergy were recruited the "buck-parsons," so long a scandal to the church and to public morality; and the large body of "Fleet parsons," of infamous character, in the pay of gin shops and taverns, who, for a trifling sum, performed what were legal marriages between boys and girls, drunkards and runaways.

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The corruption in political life, begun under the Restoration and increased during the Revolution, was amplified and reduced to a system under Walpole until government seemed to be based on bribery. Ridiculing public spirit and disinterested motives in others, he bribed George the Second with the promise of a large civil list, bribed Queen Caroline with a large allowance, bribed members of Parliament with sinecures, pensions, or with direct payment of money, and paid himself with wealth and a peerage. Corruption was so firmly rooted as an engine of power, that no serious discredit attached to it. So low had fallen the standard of political honor, so widespread had become the spirit of self-seeking and corruption among the ministers and in Parliament, that “Love of our country,” wrote Browne, “is no longer felt; and except in a few minds of uncommon greatness, the principle of public spirit exists not."[97] The dominating idea of political life was well put in the words of the Marquis of Halifax: “Parties in a state, generally, like freebooters, hang out false colors; the pretence is public good, the real business is to catch prizes.” Lord Hervey divided the Whig party in 1727 into “Patriots and Courtiers, which was in plain English, ‘Whigs in place,’ and ‘Whigs out of place.’"[98] The assertion of disinterestedness met only with ridicule. In an interview with Queen Caroline, “when Lord Stair talked of his conscience with great solemnity, the queen (the whole conversation being in French) cried out: Ah, my Lord, ne me parlez point de conscience, vous me faites evanouir."[99] As personal advancement, and not the public service, was the ruling aim of statesmen, it is not surprising that for this advancement no means were regarded as too low. The king’s mistresses were the object of ceaseless attentions from aspirants for office, and sometimes were the recipients of their bribes. Treachery was the order of the day. Bolingbroke said to Sir Robert Walpole, “that the very air he breathed was the gift of his bounty,” and then left Sir Robert to tell the king that Walpole “was the weakest minister any prince ever employed abroad, and the wickedest that ever had the direction of affairs at home."[100] The Duke of Newcastle, that “living, moving, talking caricature,” stands out an exaggerated type of the common statesmen of the time; “hereditary possessors of ennobled folly,"[101] maintained in offices which they had no capacity to fill by corruption, the abuse of patronage, and the control of rotten boroughs. Speaking of the Dukes of Devonshire, Grafton, and Newcastle, Lord Hervey says[102]: “The two first were mutes, and the last often wished so by those he spoke for, and always by those he spoke to.” George the Second appreciated the character and objects of his advisers. He had, also, a frank and pointed way of describing them. In his opinion Sir Robert Walpole was “a great rogue”; Mr. Horace Walpole, ambassador to France, was a “dirty buffoon”; Newcastle, an “impertinent

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fool”; Lord Townshend, a “choleric blockhead";[103] while Lord Chesterfield was disposed of as a “tea-table scoundrel."[104] He complained that he was “obliged to enrich people for being rascals, and buy them not to cut his throat."[105] “The king and queen,” wrote Hervey, “looked upon human kind as so many commodities in a market, which, without favor or affection, they considered only in the degree they were useful, and paid for them in that proportion—Sir Robert Walpole being sworn appraiser to their Majesties at all these sales."[106]

The cringing subserviency of political men was equal to their corruption. When George I died, and it was believed that Sir Spencer Compton would succeed to the power of Sir Robert Walpole, at the king’s reception “Sir Robert walked through these rooms as if they had been still empty; his presence, that used to make a crowd wherever he appeared, now emptied every corner he turned to, and the same people who were officiously a week ago clearing the way to flatter his prosperity, were now getting out of it to avoid sharing his disgrace. Everybody looked upon it as sure, and whatever profession of adherence and gratitude for former favors were made him in private, there were none among the many his power had obliged (excepting General Churchill and Lord Hervey) who did not in public as notoriously decline and fear his notice, as they used industriously to seek and covet it."[107] On the same occasion, Horace Walpole tells us, “my mother * * * could not make her way (to pay her respects to the king and queen) between the scornful backs and elbows of her late devotees, nor could approach nearer to the queen than the third or fourth row; but no sooner was she descried by her Majesty, than the queen cried aloud, ’*There I am sure I see a friend!*’ The torrent divided and shrunk to either side: ’and as I came away,’ said my mother, ’I might have walked over their heads if I had pleased.’"[108] The general corruption and wickedness produced a remarkable misanthropy in the minds of men, which is reflected in the savage satire of Swift, in the bitter invective of Junius, in the cynicism of Lord Hervey. Sir Robert Walpole, said the latter, “had more warmth of affection and friendship for some particular people than one could have believed it possible for any one who had been so long raking in the dirt of mankind to be capable of feeling for so worthless a species of animals. One should naturally have imagined that the contempt and distrust he must have had for the species in gross, would have given him at least an indifference and distrust toward every particular."[109]

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The mercenary character of Parliament allowed the first two Georges to have much their own way as long as the money held out. Liberty of the subject, if not in great danger, had certainly lost its natural guardian. Few seats depended on a direct and popular vote. Most of them were in the gift of noblemen or rich commoners, “rotten boroughs,” having only “the bare name of a town, of which there remains not so much as the ruins."[110] Defoe tells us that the market price of a seat was a thousand guineas. The object of the purchaser was less often the service of his country, or even an honorable ambition, than the profit to be made from the sale of his vote. Members not infrequently had regular salaries from the government. “Sir Robert Walpole and the queen both told me separately,” wrote Lord Hervey, “that it (the victory of the court) cost the king but 900_l_.—500_l_. to one man, and 400_l_. to another; and that even those two sums were advanced to two men who were to have received them at the end of the session had this question never been moved, and who only took this opportunity to solicit prompt payment."[111] Lord Chesterfield, in the same letter in which he spoke of the corrupt influencing of elections as a high crime and misdemeanor, recommends the Earl of Marchmont to *bribe* “some of your venal peers” to confess that they took money to vote for the court.[112] “Ever since Lord Granville went out,” wrote Horace Walpole in 1744, “all has been in suspense. The leaders of the Opposition immediately imposed silence upon their party; everything passed without the least debate, in short, *all were making their bargains*. One has heard of the corruption of courtiers, but, believe me the impudent prostitution of patriots, going to market with their honesty, beats it to nothing. Do but think of two hundred men *of the most consummate virtue*, setting themselves to sale for three weeks!"[113] The corruption of Parliament and the indifference, of members to any interests other than their own, were pointedly expressed by Queen Caroline in her reply to an address by Lord Stair[114]:—“I must, therefore, once more ask you, my Lord, how you can have the assurance to talk to me of your thinking the sense of constituents, their interests, or their instructions any measure or rule for the conduct of their representatives in Parliament. * * * To talk, therefore, in the patriot strain you have done to me on this occasion, can move me, my Lord, to nothing but laughter.”

In the words of Mr. Lecky,[115] the government was “corrupt, inefficient, and unheroic, but it was free from the gross vices of continental administrations; it was moderate tolerant, and economical; it was, with all its faults, a free government, and it contained in itself the elements of reformation.” The national industry and resolution, particularly in the middle classes, brought about a great increase of wealth, a remarkable development of manufactures

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and commerce, which gave the country the extraordinary prosperity which it has since, almost without a check, enjoyed. The external appearance of England presented a new aspect. A fourth part of the whole land was redeemed from waste and put under cultivation.[116] The advance in agriculture and manufactures, making necessary better means of communication, introduced canals and substituted fine highways for the old muddy, robber-infested roads. The condition of these as late as 1736 may be inferred from that of the road between Kensington and London: "The road between this place and London is grown so infamously bad, that we live here in the same solitude as we should do if cast on a rock in the middle of the ocean, and all the Londoners tell us there is between them and us a great, impassable gulf of mud. There are two roads through the Park, but the new one is so convex and the old one so concave, that by this extreme of faults they agree in the common one of being, like the high-road, impassable."[117]

Social life was marked by the same corruption, by the same absence of high aspirations and standards which we have seen in politics. The nation, especially the higher ranks, had not recovered from the license of the Restoration, while the agencies which can preserve virtue and refinement in a society were almost inactive. Religion, partly in consequence of the reaction which followed the civil wars, and partly in consequence of the spread of rational tendencies, had lost its hold on society, and no longer sufficed to keep it in check. Theological controversy, although it issue in narrowness and persecution, yet has the merit of keeping alive an appreciation of high moral qualities and aims. In the absence of strong religious feeling, there is yet in the human mind a natural preference for what is beautiful and honorable, usually taking the form of ideals, which may keep up a social tone. This may be seen in the age of Elizabeth, not a very religious period, but one in which poetry and elevation of thought overshadow coarseness and immorality. The nineteenth century, again, is neither marked by strong religious feelings nor by any great tendency to idealization. And yet the nineteenth century has its standard, firmly based on public opinion, made up of a respect for decency and justice, a love of refinement, and an appreciation of the expediency as well as the attractiveness of virtue; a standard which influences many minds over which religion has little control. But in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, religion had ceased to govern, and had not yet attained that moral influence which, even in the absence of strong faith, establishes rectitude of conduct, philanthropy, and purity of thought in the minds of men. The ideals and aspirations of preceding centuries had no meaning for what Addison called an "understanding age," and the standard of order, refinement and taste of the present had yet to come. The low state of

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society was realized and revolted against by the best minds of the time. Gay lampooned it in the “Beggars’ Opera,” Swift satirized it in “Gulliver’s Travels,” Defoe became by force of circumstances a moral teacher; Addison, Steele, all the essayists preached lay sermons; the novelists set out with the object, less to amuse than to instruct, to improve their readers. This tendency, so marked in the literature of the time, is the evidence of the reforming influences at work. But many years passed before their effect was perceptible.

There is nothing attractive about George the First and his two ugly old mistresses, the “Elephant” and the “Maypole”; nor about his court of Germans, utilizing their time in England by accumulating money to carry back to Hanover when the harvest time had passed. George the Second, brave, but narrow and ill-tempered, embodied in himself the coarseness of the time. He loved his wife, who was faithful to him through every outrage and every neglect. He caused one side to be taken out of her coffin, so that when he should be laid beside her his dust might mingle with hers. He esteemed her so highly, that in his grief at losing her, he went so far as to say that if she had not been his wife, he would have wished her for a mistress. To this wife, whom, in his own way, he sincerely loved and sincerely mourned, he confided all the details of his amours with other women. From Hanover, where he was acquiring Madame Walmoden as his mistress, “he acquainted the queen by letter of every step he took—of the growth of his passion, the progress of his applications, and their success, of every word as well as every action that passed—so minute a description of her person that, had the queen been a painter, she might have drawn her rival’s picture at six hundred miles’ distance. He added, too, the account of his buying her, and what he gave her, which, considering the rank of the purchaser, and the merits of the purchase as he set them forth, I think he had no great reason to brag of, when the first price, according to his report, was only one thousand ducats—a much greater proof of his economy than his passion."[118] Among many extraordinary relations and expressions his letters contained, “there was one in which he desired the queen to contrive, if she could, that the Prince of Modena, who was to come the latter end of the year to England, might bring his wife with him; and the reason he gave for it was, that he heard her Highness was pretty free of her person, and that he had the greatest inclination imaginable to pay his addresses to a daughter of the late Regent of France, the Duke of Orleans—’un plaisir’ (for he always wrote in French), ’que je suis sur, ma chere Caroline, vous serez bien aise de me procurer, quand je vous dis combien je le souhaite.’ Such a request to his wife respecting a woman he never saw, and during his connection with Madame Walmoden, speaks much stronger in a bare narrative of the fact, than by any comment or reflections; and is as incapable of being heightened as difficult to be credited."[119]

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Queen Caroline bore all this without a murmur in order to retain her political influence with the king. To the power of the queen she sacrificed the feelings of the woman. With many good qualities and considerable ability, she shared in the prevailing coarseness. Her son, the Prince of Wales, was a very disagreeable person. Neither the queen nor the Princess Caroline "made much ceremony of wishing a hundred times a day that the prince might drop down dead of an apoplexy—the queen cursing the hour of his birth, and the Princess Caroline declaring she grudged him every hour he continued to breathe; and reproaching Lord Hervey" for ever having believed "the nauseous beast (those were her words) cared for anybody but his own nauseous self."[120] The morning after the prince had been ordered to leave the palace, "the queen, at breakfast, every now and then repeated, 'I hope, in God, I shall never see him again'; and the king, among many other paternal *douceurs* in his valediction to his son, said,'Thank-God, to-morrow night the puppy will be out of my house.'"[121] "My dear Lord" said the queen to Hervey, "I will give it to you under my own hand, if you are in any fear of my relapsing, that my dear first-born is the greatest ass and the greatest liar and the greatest *canaille*, and the greatest beast in the whole world, and that I most heartily wish he was out of it."[122] After the royal family, Sir Robert Walpole was the most prominent person in the country. He went about publicly with his mistress, and entertained his friends at his country-seat with orgies which disturbed the whole neighborhood. When the queen died he urged the princesses to get their father some new mistress to distract him. Lord Hervey says that Lady Sundon "had sense enough to perceive what black and dirty company, by living in a court, she was forced to keep."[123] Lady Deloraine, who was suspected of being the king's mistress, "when she spoke seriously to Sir Robert Walpole, pretended not to have yet yielded; and said 'she was not of an age like a vain or a loving fool, but that if she did consent, that she would be well paid.'"[124] "She told Lady Sundon, with whom she was very little acquainted, that the king had been very importunate these two years; and had often told her how unkind she was to refuse him; that it was mere crossness, for that he was sure her husband would not take it at all ill."[125] The looseness of the marriage tie had been a prevailing evil ever since the Restoration. Steele wrote in the *Tatler* in 1710: "The wits of this island for above fifty years past, instead of correcting the vices of the age, have done all they could to inflame them. Marriage has been one of the common topics of ridicule that every stage scribbler hath found his account in; for whenever there is an occasion for a clap, an impertinent jest upon matrimony is sure to raise it. This hath been attended with very pernicious consequences. Many a country squire, upon his setting up for a man of the town, has gone home in the gaiety of his heart and beat his wife. A kind husband hath been looked upon as a clown, and a good wife as a domestic annual unfit for the company or conversation of the *beau monde*. In short, separate beds, silent tables, and solitary homes have been introduced by your men of wit and pleasure of the age."[126]

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The prevailing immorality and coarseness were in keeping with the absence of sympathy with all elevation of thought and sentiment. “If a man of any delicacy were to attend the discourses of the young fellows of this age,” wrote Steele, “he would believe that there were none but prostitutes to make the objects of passion."[127] “Every woman is at heart a rake,” thought Pope. Women were generally treated with disrespect, and distinctively female virtues were almost without appreciation. It is instructive to contrast the deeds of arms done in honor of a mistress in the Middle Ages, and the elevated sentiments held regarding women in what Addison called a “barbarous age,” with the actions by which young men sometimes showed their devotion in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. The latter were as extravagant as the former, but extravagant after how different a manner. One young fellow, distinguished himself by drinking wine strained through his mistress’ chemise; another, by drinking out of her shoe; another, by having her slipper torn to shreds, cooked, and served up as a dish. Coarseness of thought naturally brought on coarseness of action. Horace Walpole wrote in 1737, “’Tis no little inducement, to make me wish myself in France, that I hear gallantry is not left off there; that you may be polite, and not be thought awkward for it. You know the pretty men of the age in England use the women with no more deference than they do their coach horses, and have not half the regard for them that they have for themselves."[128]

Against the grosser faults of immorality and indecency Steele and Addison preached. But even they were insensible to an elevated view of the relations between men and women. Such a view was, however, taken by Defoe; a man whom Steele and Addison, as well as the polite world in general, looked upon as an adventurer, and one whose opinions on social subjects they disdained. “We reproach the sex every day,” wrote Defoe, “with folly and impertinence, while I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves. * * * I cannot think that God ever made them so delicate, so glorious creatures, and furnished them with such charms, so agreeable and so delightful to mankind, with souls capable of the same enjoyments as men, and all to be only stewards of our houses, cooks, and slaves."[129] Defoe stands almost alone in his remonstrance against the neglect of female education. But he stands more isolated still in his appreciation of womanly virtues, and in the enthusiasm with which he could speak of them. “A woman well-bred and well-taught, furnished with the additional accomplishments of knowledge and behavior, is a creature without comparison. Her society is the emblem of sublimer enjoyments; she is all softness and sweetness, love, wit, and delight; she is every way suitable to the sublimest wish; and the man that has such a one to his portion, has nothing to do but to rejoice in her and be thankful."[130]

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Love was hardly distinguished from mere animal desire. The poets wrote of it coldly and conventionally, as of a thing which existed only in name. The lover could only beg his mistress “to ease his pain.” But the conventionality which extended through all thoughts and expressions relating to the higher emotions of the human soul, had no effect in diminishing the coarseness of thought and conversation. Men were conventional as regards the nobler sentiments of life, but they were not conventional in the spirit which excludes from conversation and literature the gross and the immoral. Chesterfield wrote to his son of honor, justice, and so forth, as qualities of which he should know the names, but of no consequence compared to “manners, good-breeding, and the graces.” If a man blushed, it was not at his own indecency, nor at his own vice, but at the supposition that he could be so weak as to be influenced by sentiments of delicacy. Coarseness is, of course, quite separate from immorality, although the two are usually found together. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century there was a marked distinction between them. Swift’s Stella, a woman of refinement, was highly indignant at remarks being made before her of a licentious character, but she herself used expressions of the grossest description without a thought of impropriety. The same distinction is seen in the essays and novels of the time. Swift, Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, all had a moral object in their fictions—the exposure and condemnation of vice, the encouragement of virtue. And yet most of these novels, especially intended to exert a good influence, are of so coarse a nature, and describe scenes so licentious that no parent would now allow them in their children’s hands. The essayists wrote principally what we should now look upon as sermons, or moral teachings, and yet very many of their papers are unfit to be read in a mixed society. Men and women were made then of coarser stuff than we. Their eyes and ears were less sensitive. They were, at best, accustomed to think and speak of things which to us seem disgusting, and of which, therefore, we think and speak as little as possible. In view of the circumstances which influenced society in the last century, this condition was a perfectly natural one. We must bear it in mind in reading contemporary literature, that we may not mistake an author’s intention. But we must be careful in censuring what was, after all, only one necessary stage in the development of our own civilization. It must be said, also, that the coarseness of the eighteenth century was a healthy coarseness, bred of energetic natures and animal spirits. In our time, and in the midst of our advanced refinement there lurks a sickly sentimentality, a false modesty, and an unhealthy delicacy which are in a degree inimical to morality. We have novels in great numbers, not broadly coarse, as those of Fielding or Smollett, but insidiously immoral, painting vice and unbridled passions in an attractive light.

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The same rude and physical coarseness controlled the standard of taste, and introduced boisterousness and violence even into amusements. “The present grandeur of the British nation might make us expect,” wrote Steele, “that we should rise in our public diversions and manner of enjoying life, in proportion to our advancement in glory and power. Instead of that, survey this town, and you will find rakes and debauchees are your men of pleasure; thoughtless atheists and illiterate drunkards call themselves free-thinkers; and gamesters, banterers, biters, swearers, and twenty new-born insects more, are, in their several species, the modern men of wit."[131] Walpole[132] wrote in 1744: “The town has been trying all this winter to drive pantomimes off the stage, very boisterously; for it is the way here to make even an affair of taste and sense a matter of riot and arms. Fleetwood, the master of Drury Lane, has omitted nothing to support them, as they supported his house. About ten days ago he let into the pit great numbers of bear-garden *bruisers* (that is the term), to knock down everybody that hissed. The pit rallied their forces and drove them out. I was sitting very quietly in the boxes contemplating all this. On a sudden the curtain flew up, and discovered the whole stage filled with blackguards armed with bludgeons and clubs, to menace the audience. This raised the greatest uproar.”

Mrs. Delany, whose character has excited so much admiration in her own and in succeeding generations, left, in her autobiography and letters, a picture of the society about her as seen by one of the most refined and cultivated women of the time. Like many others, she was struck with disgust at the coarseness and immorality which surrounded her. “It is enough to make one a cynic, to shun the world, and shut oneself up in a tub as Diogenes did; but I must acknowledge, though the age is very degenerate, that it is not quite void of perfection. I know some persons that still reconcile me to the world, and that convince me that virtue is not fled, though it is confined to a few."[133] “The men have so despicable an opinion of women, and treat them by their words and actions so ungenerously and inhumanly."[134] “The women were never so audacious as now; this may well be called the brazen age."[135] The material tone of society and its lack of sentiment were largely responsible for the low estimation in which women were held. Marriages were almost universally arranged on the simple basis of money, a circumstance which explains much of the conjugal infidelity and unhappiness which prevailed. “My Lady A.’s behaviour,” wrote Mrs. Delany,[136] “and some more wives’ behaviour of the same stamp, has so disgraced matrimony that I am not surprised the men are afraid of it; and if we consider the loose morals of the men, it is strange the women are so easily won to their own undoing.” Mrs. Delany, while a young married woman, although she was known to be of a virtuous character, was subjected

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to licentious attacks which fell little short of violence. It is hardly necessary to comment on the hard drinking and the hard swearing which were almost universal characteristics of gentlemen of fashion. Duelling was still a custom, and gambling was the favorite amusement at court, at the clubs, and in ladies' drawing-rooms. The title of gentleman depended on birth, and had nothing to do with personal conduct. Caste feeling was very strong. Gentlemen looked upon professional men or men of letters as beneath them, however superior they might be in manners, morals, or education. A curious instance of this caste feeling occurred in the case of Captain Vratz, who said of himself and companions on their way to the gallows for murder, that "God would show them some respect as they were gentlemen." When Gay's "Beggar's Opera" was put on the stage, the fashionable world crowded to see their own coarseness and immorality exhibited in the persons of thieves and highwaymen, and to laugh at the truth of the Beggar's words: "Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen."

The lower classes of society were as ignorant and brutal as the higher were coarse and corrupt. Among the other qualities in which the times were deficient, was philanthropy. The measures which the wisdom and charity of the present have exerted to diminish crime, and to improve the condition of the poor, were then represented only by a harsh and cruel penal code, which had a powerful, though an indirect tendency to promote pauperism and to multiply criminals. Although population had greatly increased, no new provision had been made for religious teaching, and there were no schools but those of Edward and Elizabeth.[137] Defective poor-laws, which forbade laborers to move from one parish to another in search of work, made pauperism in many cases the inevitable fate of the industrious. In the cities there was no adequate police regulation of the criminal classes; and this, too, at a time when peaceful habits were fast growing among the people at large, and police protection was more needed than ever before. At the same time there came upon the lower classes, the terrible scourge of gin. Violent and ignorant as these classes were, the effects upon them of so cheap and maddening a drink were incalculably debasing. "The drunkenness of the common people," says an eye-witness, "was so universal by the retailing of a liquor called *gin*, with which they could get drunk for a groat, that the whole town of London, and many towns in the country swarmed with drunken people of both sexes from morning to night, and were more like a scene from a Bacchanal than the residence of a civil society."[138] The sign which hangs over the inn-door in Hogarth's picture of Gin Lane, and announces

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that the customer can get drunk for a penny, dead drunk for twopence, and have straw for nothing, was a copy, not an invention. Attempts to limit the traffic in gin were met by riots so fierce that the government was obliged to withdraw its measures. The violent natures of the common people appeared in their amusements as well as in their crimes. Their sports were of the most brutal kind, and almost all involved the sufferings of men or animals. Among other entertainments advertised to take place in London in 1729 and 1730, were “a mad bull to be dressed up with fireworks and turned loose in the game place, a dog to be dressed up with fireworks over him, a bear to be let loose at the same time, and a cat to be tied to the bull’s tail, a mad bull dressed up with fireworks to be baited."[139] Such amusements were interspersed with cock-fighting, prize fights, and boxing matches between women. The same brutality characterised the crimes of the period. Violent riots, aggravated by the plunder of gin-shops, attended the preaching of the Methodists, the Gin Act, and even the employment by Garrick of a few French dancers at Drury Lane Theatre. Piracy and smuggling were systematically carried on, accompanied by atrocious cruelties and murders. It was no uncommon practice for the inhabitants of the sea-coast to lure vessels on shore by false signals in order to plunder them.

Other causes, as well as the ignorance and brutality in which the lower classes almost necessarily lived, contributed to the number and impunity of criminals. It was only in 1736 that the streets of London, hitherto plunged at night in total darkness, began to be lighted for a few hours by lamps. The right of sanctuary, which still practically existed in such quarters as Whitefriars and the Mint afforded to criminals an easy and safe retreat beyond the reach of the law. The rougher elements of the upper as well as of the lower classes, made the streets impassable at night without great danger. They organized themselves into bands, and committed atrocious and wanton brutalities on inoffensive passers-by. One band, called the Modocs, indulged in the amusement called “tipping the lion” which consisted in flattening the nose of the victim on his face and boring out his eyes with the fingers. There were also the “dancing masters,” who made people dance by pricking them with swords, the “sweaters,” who pricked their victims with swords till they fell exhausted, and the “tumblers,” who set women on their heads and mutilated their limbs.[140] Others rolled women down hill in barrels, cut the faces of maid-servants, and slit the noses of watchmen. The criminal classes became so daring and numerous that the streets were insecure even in the day-time, “It is shocking to think what a shambles this country is grown!” wrote Walpole. “Seventeen were executed this morning, after having murdered the turnkey on Friday night, and almost forced open Newgate. One is forced to travel even at noon, as if one were

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going to battle."[141] It was the custom to go out at night accompanied by armed servants. Addison gave an amusing description of the precautions observed when Sir Roger de Coverley was taken to the theatre. “The Captain, who did not fail to meet me there at the appointed Hour, bid Sir Roger fear nothing, for that he had put on the same Sword which he made use of at the Battle of *Steenkirk*. Sir Roger’s Servants, and among the rest my old Friend the Butler, had, I found, provided themselves with good oaken Plants to attend their Master upon this occasion. When we had placed him in his Coach, with myself at his left hand, the Captain before him, and his Butler at the Head of his Footmen in the Rear, we convoyed him in safety to the Playhouse."[142] “One night, in the beginning of November, 1749,” wrote Walpole, “as I was returning from Holland House by moonlight, about ten at night, I was attacked by two highwaymen in Hyde Park, and the pistol of one of them going off accidentally, razed the skin under my left eye, left some marks of shot on my face, and stunned me."[143] These men were taken about a year later. “I have been in town for a day or two, and heard no conversation but about M’Lean, a fashionable highwayman, who is just taken, and who robbed me among others. * * * His father was an Irish Dean; his brother is a Calvinist minister in great esteem at the Hague. * * * He took to the road with only one companion, Plunkett, a journeyman apothecary, my other friend. * * * M’Lean had a lodging in St. James Street, over against White’s, and another at Chelsea; Plunkett one in Jermyn St., and their faces are as well known about St. James’ as any gentleman who lives in that quarter, and who, perhaps, goes upon the road too. M’Lean had a quarrel at Putney Bowling Green two months ago with an officer whom he challenged for disputing his rank; but the captain declined, till M’Lean should produce a certificate of his nobility, which he has just received. * * * As I conclude he will suffer, and wish him no ill, I don’t care to have his idea, and am almost single in not having been to see him. Lord Mountford at the head of half White’s went the first day: his aunt was crying over him: as soon as they were withdrawn she said to him, knowing they were of White’s, ’My dear, what did the lords say to you? Have you ever been concerned with any of them?’—was not it admirable? What a favorable idea people must have of White’s! and what if White’s should not deserve a much better! But the chief personages who have been to comfort and weep over this fallen hero are Lady Caroline Petersham and Miss Asche: I call them Polly and Lucy."[144]

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The fact that death was the penalty for almost all serious violations of the law gave an additional zest to crime. The criminal looked upon himself, and was looked upon by others, as a brave man, and even those who abhorred the crime retained a certain admiration for the courage which they thought involved in its commission. Felons sat erect and proud in the cart which carried them to execution. Their great ambition was to die like “gentlemen,” and they saw no disgrace in death by “the ladder and the cord,” so long as it was borne with bravado. Criminals are frequent and prominent characters in contemporary fiction. The period contributed more than any other to the romance of crime, and a glamour has been cast over the most infamous careers which has made them celebrated to the present day. The famous highwayman Dick Turpin, and one Parsons, the son of a baronet, educated at Eton, attained a public interest and admiration, in which the greatness of their crimes was forgotten in the dangers they incurred and the boldness with which they defied justice. When Jack Sheppard, the burglar, was finally captured after two remarkable escapes from Newgate,[145] he became a popular hero. Great numbers of people visited him in prison and gave him presents of money. Several lives were written of him.

But the most remarkable criminal career, and that which best illustrates the inefficiency of the law and the impunity and ferocity of criminals, is that of Johnathan Wild, surnamed the Great.[146] This man spent some time in Newgate, and having become acquainted with the secrets and methods of its inhabitants, married a notorious woman who was well versed in similar knowledge. He then set up an establishment for receiving stolen goods, and organized thieves into regular bands. Some were to rob churches, others to pick pockets at theatres and fairs, others to rob on the streets and highways. He even divided the country into districts, and appointed a special gang to work in each. All these thieves were obliged to account to him for what they stole, and he disposed of it in London, or if that seemed too dangerous, he sent it abroad in a ship of his own. He attained over lesser criminals the most rigid authority and absolute power. His lieutenants were chosen among transported convicts who had returned before the expiration of their terms. These were legally incapable of giving evidence against Wild, but he could send them to the gallows at a moment’s notice, if suspicious of their fidelity, by information to the authorities. Over the common thieves he had nearly the same power. Those whom he suspected of retaining part of their booty, or whom he feared as witnesses against himself, were at once sent to the gallows by private information to the magistrates. On the other hand, a thief who was in danger of arrest, if useful and faithful, was taken into Wild’s own house, protected, fed, and employed in counterfeiting or other in-door occupation. When a law was passed

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making it criminal to receive stolen goods, Wild opened an intelligence office for the discovery of missing articles. To that office came the thieves, like so many workmen, to deliver their booty and receive their wages, and there, too, came the robbed to describe their losses and name their rewards. If the reward were sufficient to satisfy Wild, he returned the article; otherwise he had it made unrecognizable by skilled workmen whom he employed for the purpose, and presented it to a faithful follower, or disposed of it in the regular course of business. It is impossible not to notice a certain resemblance between Johnathan Wild and Defoe's English Tradesman. The practical turn of mind, the absence of sentiment so characteristic of the times, are to be seen alike in the thief, the tradesman, and the gentleman. Conducted on purely business principles, like a mercer's shop or a marriage between noble families, without hatred or affection, anger or generosity, the work went on. Wild dealt in human lives with the same cold, money-making calculation which directed the disposal of a stolen watch. When public complaints were made, that although many robberies were committed few thieves were apprehended, Wild supplied the gallows with thieves who were useless to him or lukewarm in his interest. When a large reward was offered for the apprehension of a criminal, Wild was usually able to deliver the man. If he was unable to do so, or was friendly to the criminal, he still secured the reward by giving false information against an innocent person, and supported his assertions by the perjury of his subordinates. By these methods he soon grew rich. He carried a silver wand which he asserted to be a badge of office given him by the government, and entered into secret leagues with corrupt magistrates. After a time he called himself a gentleman, and wore a sword, the first use of which was to cut off his wife's ear. At last he was detected in aiding the escape of a highwayman confined in Newgate, and being deprived of his power, he was easily convicted. He was hung in 1725, and on his way to the scaffold was almost pelted to death by the mob.

The impunity with which Wild followed his long career of crime was not unusual. The authorities were inefficient and corrupt. Fielding, himself a police justice, makes a magistrate say in "Amelia": "And to speak my opinion plainly, such are the laws and such the method of proceeding that one would almost think our laws were made for the protection of rogues, rather than for the punishment of them." The laws bore hardly upon the poor and spared the rich. "The parson," complained Defoe in the "Poor Man's Plea," "preaches a thundering sermon against drunkenness, and the justice of the peace sets my poor neighbor in the stocks, and I am like to be much the better for either, when I know perhaps that this same parson and this same justice were both drunk together but the night before." The magistrates and constables were as much in need

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of reform as the laws. “The greatest criminals in this town,” said Walpole,[147] “are the officers of justice; there is no tyranny they do not exercise, no villany of which they do not partake.” Many of the magistrates were never impartial, except, as Fielding said: “when they could get nothing on either side.” One class of constables was described by Fielding in “Amelia."[148] The watchmen intended “to guard our streets by night from thieves and robbers, an office which at least requires strength of body, are chosen out of those poor old decrepit people, who are from their want of bodily strength rendered incapable of getting a livelihood by work. These men, armed only with a pole, which some of them are scarce able to lift, are to secure the persons and houses of his Majesty’s subjects from the attacks of young, bold, stout, desperate, and well-armed villains. If the poor old fellows should run away from such enemies, no one, I think, can wonder, unless it be that they were able to make their escape.” Defoe’s pickpockets are always more afraid of being mobbed on the spot, than of being detected and punished by the police. Well known highwaymen not infrequently rode through the streets of London with armed companions, although large rewards were offered for their capture. Many of the constables were of the most villanous character. The following incident, recorded by Walpole, is only one of many instances of their brutality which might be mentioned.[149] “There has lately been the most shocking scene of murder imaginable; a parcel of *drunken* constables took it into their heads to put the laws in execution against *disorderly* persons, and so took up every woman they met till they had collected five or six and twenty, all of whom they thrust into St. Martin’s round house, where they kept them all night, with doors and windows closed. The poor creatures, who could not stir or breathe, screamed as long as they had any breath left, begging at least for water; one poor wretch said she was worth eighteen-pence, and would gladly give it for a draught of water, but in vain! So well did they keep them there, that in the morning four were found stifled to death; two died soon after, and a dozen more are in a shocking way. In short, it is horrid to think what the poor creatures suffered. Several of them were beggars, who, from having no lodging, were necessarily found in the street, and others honest labouring women. One of the dead was a poor washer-woman, big with child, who was returning home late from washing. * * * These same men, the same night, broke into a bagnio in Covent Garden, and took up Jack Spencer, Mr. Stewart, and Lord George Graham, and would have thrust them into the round-house with the poor women if they had not been worth more than eighteen-pence!”

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Keepers of prisons bought their places with the distinct purpose of making money by extortions from the prisoners. The following is an account of the means pursued by Bainbridge, Warden of the Fleet, to extort money from one Solas, a poor man, imprisoned for debt[150]: "Bainbridge caused him to be turned into the dungeon, called the Strong Room of the Master's side. This place is a vault, like those in which the dead are interred, and wherein the bodies of persons dying in the said prison are usually deposited till the coroner's inquest hath passed upon them; it has no chimney nor fireplace, nor any light but what comes over the door, or through a hole of about eight inches square. It is neither paved nor boarded; and the rough bricks appear both on the sides and top, being neither wainscotted nor plastered; what adds to the dampness and stench of the place, is its being built over the common sewer, and adjoining to the sink and dunghill where all the nastiness of the prison is cast. In this miserable place the poor wretch was kept by the said Bainbridge manacled and shackled for near two months. At length on receiving five guineas from Mr. Kemp, a friend of Solas's, Bainbridge released the prisoner from his cruel confinement. But though his chains were taken off, his terror still remained, and the unhappy man was prevailed upon by that terror, not only to labor *gratis* for the said Bainbridge, but to swear also at random all that he hath required of him; and the committee themselves saw an instance of the deep impression his sufferings had made upon him; for on his surmising from something said, that Bainbridge was to return again as Warden of the Fleet, he fainted, and the blood started out of his mouth and nose." This example is by no means an exceptional one. It is impossible, within the limits of this volume, to give an adequate idea of the disease, the squalor, the cruelties and abuses which existed in the prisons. Their interiors are often described by the novelists, who were unable to exaggerate the actual circumstances. Poor prisoners, when acquitted, were dragged back to prison and kept there till their dues were paid or they were released by death. Richer men were subjected to all sorts of indignity and danger, even to that of small-pox, to force them to enrich their jailers.

The social condition of England in the first half of the eighteenth century presents a material and unattractive aspect. Its most prominent characteristics are the corruption and coarseness of the upper classes, and the ignorant brutality of the lower. Still there existed beneath this exterior, qualities and habits in the highest degree favorable to civilization and social order. At a later time these qualities brought about reforms which did away with many of the worst abuses. Among the middle classes, fast rising to political and social prominence, lived an earnest morality, which at a later time took form in the great Methodist revival, and the rise of philanthropy.

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This persevering industry of the same classes added enormously to the wealth of the nation. When reform came, it came as a revolt against existing conditions, showing at once how bad those conditions were, and how strongly the popular mind inclined to a better state. A general feeling of disgust prevailed which left deep traces on contemporary literature, and produced a widespread misanthropy. The first half of the eighteenth century was to the period of the Restoration like the morning after a debauch. Rochester, in the time of Charles II, and Hervey, in the time of George II were representative men. The difference in the feelings with which these men looked upon life is significant. Rochester, in the full tide of dissipation, glories in his sensuality, and writes the "Maimed Debauchee."

> Should some brave youth (worth being drunk) prove nice,
> And from his fair inviter meanly shrink,
> 'T would please the ghost of my departed vice,
> If, at my council, he repent and drink.

But Hervey represents the time when dissipation had run a long course, and disgust, sanctity, and misanthropy were succeeding. To him, as to Swift, men were "a worthless species of animals," their vices, natural; their virtues, affectation:

> Mankind I know, their nature and their art,
> Their vice their own, their virtue but a part
> Ill played so oft, that all the cheat can tell,
> And dangerous only when 't is acted well,

* * * * *

> To such reflections when I turn my mind
> *I loathe my being, and abhor mankind.*

[Footnote 90: Carlyle, "Frederick the Great," p. 13. vol. i.]

[Footnote 91: Addison, "An Account of the Greatest English Poets." Quoted by Henry Morley, LL.D., "English Literature in the Reign of Victoria."]

[Footnote 92: Lecky's "History of England in the 18th Century," vol. i, p. 502.]

[Footnote 93: Lord Hervey, "Memoirs of George II," v. 3, p. 527.]

[Footnote 94: Hervey's "Mem. of George II," vol. 1, p. 147, note.]

[Footnote 95: Walpole's "Reminiscences"; Hervey's "Mem.," v. 2, p. 103, note.]

[Footnote 96: Walpole's "Mem. of George II," vol. 1, p. 87.]

[Footnote 97: Browne's "Estimate of the Times"; Lecky, "Hist. of 18th Century," vol. 1, p. 509.]

[Footnote 98: Lord Hervey, "Mem. of Geo. II," vol. i, p. 5.]

[Footnote 99: *Idem*, vol. i, p. 170.]

[Footnote 100: *Idem*, vol. i, p. 18.]

[Footnote 101: Hervey's "Mem.," i, 20.]

[Footnote 102: *Idem*, vol. 1, p. 208.]

[Footnote 103: Hervey's "Memoirs," 1, 39.]

[Footnote 104: *Idem*, ii, 360.]

[Footnote 105: *Idem*, ii, 31.]

[Footnote 106: *Idem*, vol. i, p. 91.]

[Footnote 107: Hervey's "Memoirs," vol. 1, p. 37.]

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[Footnote 108: Hervey, 1, 22-25.]

[Footnote 109: Horace Walpole, “Reminiscences.”]

[Footnote 110: Locke “On Civil Government,” b. ii, ch. 13; Lecky’s “History of the 18th Century,” vol. I, p. 471.]

[Footnote 111: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” ii, 280.]

[Footnote 112: Chesterfield, “Correspondence,” iii, 94.]

[Footnote 113: Walpole to Mann, Dec. 24, 1741.]

[Footnote 114: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” i, 172.]

[Footnote 115: “History of the Eighteenth Century,” vol. 1, p. 512.]

[Footnote 116: Green’s “Short History of the English People,” pp. 768-9.]

[Footnote 117: Hervey, ii, 189, note.]

[Footnote 118: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” vol. i, p. 500.]

[Footnote 119: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” vol. i, p. 502.]

[Footnote 120: Lord Hervey’s “Memoirs”, ii, 255.]

[Footnote 121: *Idem*, ii, 434.]

[Footnote 122: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” ii, 472.]

[Footnote 123: Hervey’s “Memoirs,” ii, 350.]

[Footnote 124: *Idem*, i, 90.]

[Footnote 125: *Idem*, ii, 349.]

[Footnote 126: *Tatler*, No. 159, Saturday, April 15, 1710.]

[Footnote 127: Steele, *Tatler*, No. 5.]

[Footnote 128: Walpole to Montague, March 20, 1737.]

[Footnote 129: Wilson’s “Memoirs of Defoe,” vol. i, p. 265.]

[Footnote 130: Wilson’s “Memoirs of Defoe,” vol. i, p. 206.]

[Footnote 131: Steele, *Tatler*, No. 12 May 7, 1709.]

[Footnote 132: Walpole to Mann, Nov. 26, 1711.]

[Footnote 133: Letter to Mrs. Ann Granville, Dec. 5, 1739.]

[Footnote 134: Letter to Mrs. Ann Granville, Jan. 17, 1731-32.]

[Footnote 135: Letter to Mrs. Ann Granville, Nov. 18, 1729.]

[Footnote 136: Letter to Mrs. Ann Granville, Christmas-day, 1729.]

[Footnote 137: Green, “Short History of the English People,” p. 717.]

[Footnote 138: Lord Hervey’s “Memoirs of George II,” vol. ii, p. 139.]

[Footnote 139: Strutt’s “Sports and Pastimes,” p. 259; Lecky, “History of England in the 18th Century,” vol. i, chap. iv.]

[Footnote 140: Lecky, “History of England in the 18th Century,” vol. i, p. 522.]

[Footnote 141: Walpole to Sir H. Mann, March 23, 1752.]

[Footnote 142: The *Spectator*, “Sir Roger at the Playhouse.”]

[Footnote 143: Horace Walpole, “Short Notes of My Life.”]

[Footnote 144: Horace Walpole to Sir H. Mann, Aug. 2, 1750.]

[Footnote 145: See the “Newgate Calendar.”]

[Footnote 146: See the “Newgate Calendar” and Pike’s “History of Crime,” vol. 2, chap. x.]

[Footnote 147: Walpole to Mann, bet. July 14 and 29, 1742.]

[Footnote 148: “Amelia,” book i, chap. 2.]

[Footnote 149: Walpole to Mann, bet. July 14 and 29, 1742.]

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[Footnote 150: "State Trials;" vol. xvii, p. 298. *Proceedings against John Higgins, Esq., Warden of the Fleet, Thomas Bainbridge, Esq., Warden of the Fleet, Richard Corbett, one of the Tipstaffs of the Fleet, and William Acton, Keeper of the Marshalsea Prison: 3 George II, A.D. 1729. Report of the Com. of the House of Commons*.]

II.

Lord Hervey's bitter lines introduce us to Jonathan Swift. Nature, together with the character of his time, made the great Dean a misanthropist. Physical infirmity, disappointed hopes, and a long series of humiliations destroyed the happiness which should have belonged to his rare union of noble gifts,—his tall, commanding figure, his awe-inspiring countenance, his acute wit, and magnificent intellect. Naturally proud and sensitive to an abnormal degree, he was obliged to suffer the most galling slights. From his earliest years he hated dependence, and yet, until middle life he was forced to be a dependent. His education was furnished by the charity of relatives, between whom and himself there was no affection. His college degree was conferred in a manner which made it a disgrace rather than an honor. The long years which he passed in the household of Sir William Temple, subject to the humors and caprices of his master, embittered his temper at the time of life when it should have been most buoyant and hopeful. Thus began the melancholy and misanthropy which marred his whole life, darkening his triumphs, turning such love as he had to give into a curse to those who received it, producing an eccentricity which often gave him the appearance of a madman, and finally bringing him to a terrible end—to die, as he himself foretold, like a blasted elm, first at the top. He kept his birthday as a day of mourning. He solemnly regretted his escape when nearly killed by an accident. He habitually parted from a friend with the wish that they might never meet again. Caesar's description of Cassius is wonderfully applicable to Swift:[151]

> ——He reads much;
> He is a great observer, and he looks
> Quite through the deeds of men ——
> Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort
> As if he mocked himself, and scorn'd his spirit
> That could be amused to smile at any thing.

The character of Swift presents great apparent contradictions. Although full of good-will and appreciation for individuals, although exercising out of a small income the most discriminating and open handed generosity, there has never lived a man more bitter in his misanthropy, more fierce in his denunciation of mankind. Although capable of great and disinterested affection, he was unable to make his affection a source of happiness to himself or to others. Although he always chose for companionship the most refined and cultivated women, the wisest and most honored men, his mind dwelt by

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preference on the most terrible examples of human depravity, and he gave permanent form, in his literary productions, to ideas from which a healthy mind must always turn with horror and disgust. His misanthropy was founded partly on observation of the evil and corruption which he saw about him, and partly on the suspicions and exaggerations of his own imagination. He gave up writing a history of England, because, in his own words, he found the characters of history such a pack of rascals that he would have no more to say to them. He made a “List of Friends,” which he classified as Grateful, Ungrateful, Indifferent, and Doubtful. Of these friends, forty-four in number, only seventeen were marked with the *g* which signified that their friendship was trusted. We cannot disassociate Swift from his own time, nor can we attribute simply to a melancholy life or to mental aberration the revolting conceptions which his works contain. The coarseness and corruption which marked the private and public life of Swift’s day had their share in the production of such poems as The “Lady’s Dressing-Room,” and such degrading views of human nature as are expressed in the “Voyage to the Houyhnhnms.”

It is a significant sign of the times that Hogarth, the greatest English painter, and Swift, the greatest English writer, should have employed their talents in caricature and in satire. In the wonderful allegory of the “Tale of a Tub,” in which the corruptions and failings of the English, Roman, and Presbyterian churches were ridiculed in the persons of Jack, Peter, and Martin, Swift displayed at an early age his exuberant wit and surpassing satirical power. The “Tale of a Tub” was succeeded by the “Battle of the Books,” an imaginary conflict between volumes in a library, which exposed the absurdity of the controversy over the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns. But Swift’s satire became most fierce and brilliant when it was turned from rival creeds and rival literatures, and directed toward mankind itself.

The “Travels of Lemuel Gulliver” were dropped, said the publisher, at his house, in the dark, from a hackney-coach. In regard to this work, the Dean followed his custom of sending out his writings to the world to make their way on their own merits, without the assistance of his name. But the authorship of the book could not long remain unknown before the storm of applause and curiosity which it immediately excited. It was a production, said Johnson,[152] “so new and strange that it filled the reader with a mingled emotion of merriment and amazement. It was received with such avidity, that the price of the first edition was raised before the second could be made; it was read by the high and the low, the learned and illiterate. Criticism was for a while lost in wonder; no rules of judgment were applied to a book written in open defiance of truth and regularity.” Whether read for the satire or the story, the adventures of Gulliver proved equally fascinating. They “offered personal and political satire to the readers in high life, low and coarse incidents to the vulgar, marvels to the romantic, wit to the young and lively, lessons of morality and policy to the grave, and maxims of deep and bitter misanthropy to neglected age and disappointed ambition."[153]

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The early part of the eighteenth century offered rich material to the satirist, and Swift brought to his work unparalleled fierceness and power. He attacked the corruption of the politician and the minister, the vanity and vice of the courtier, the folly and extravagance of the fashionable world, and gathering venom in his course, made his satire universal and painted the pettiness and deformity of the human race. But among the follies and vices of mankind, vanity was the fault most offensive to Swift, and that which he lashed with his most bitter invective. To ridicule human pride, and to expose its inconsistency with the imperfection of man, is the ruling object of his great satirical romance. On Gulliver's return to England from the land of the Houyhnhnms, where, under the degraded form of Yahoos, he had studied mankind as they appeared when influenced by all human vices and brutal instincts unveiled by hypocrisy or civilization, he describes his horror at observing the existence of vanity among his countrymen who resembled Yahoos so closely;—

My reconcilement to the Yahoo kind in general might not be so difficult, if they would be content with those vices and follies only which nature has entitled them to. I am not in the least provoked at the sight of a lawyer, a pickpocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a whoremonger, a physician, an evidence, a suborner, an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things: but when I behold a lump of deformity and diseases, both in body and mind, smitten with pride, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience; neither shall I ever be able to comprehend how such an animal, and such a vice, could tally together.

In the "Voyage to Lilliput" the follies and vanities of individuals and of parties are ridiculed by the representation of their practice among diminutive beings. Sir Robert Walpole suffered in the person of Flimnap the Lilliputian Premier, Tories and Whigs in the High-Heels and Low-Heels, Catholics and Protestants in the Big-endians and Small-endians. In the "Voyage to Brobdingnag," where Gulliver finds himself a pigmy among giants, the general object of the satire is the same, but its application becomes more bitter and universal. Characteristics of the human race hardly perceptible in their ordinary proportions, attain a disgusting and monstrous prominence when seen in the huge persons of the Brobdingnagians. The king of this gigantic people is represented as a beneficent monarch, who directs all his energies toward the peace, prosperity, and material advancement of his subjects; who seeks with a cold, calculating mind, undisturbed by passion or prejudice, the greatest good of the greatest number. To this monarch Gulliver gave a description of his native country: "I artfully eluded many of his questions, and gave to every point a more favorable turn, by many degrees, than the strictness of truth would allow;

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for I have always borne that laudable partiality to my own country, which Dionysius Halicarnasseusis, with so much justice, recommends to a historian; I would hide the frailties and deformities of my political mother, and place her virtues and beauties in the most advantageous light." But the impression produced upon the King of Brobdingnag by Gulliver's relation expressed the widespread sense of evil which existed in Swift's day, which tinctured literature with misanthropy, and made Rousseau at a later time argue the superiority of the savage man over his civilized, but corrupt and hypocritical brother.

He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century; protesting: "It was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition could produce."His majesty, in another audience, was at the pains to recapitulate the sum of all I had spoken; compared the questions he made with the answers I had given; then, taking me into his hands, and stroking me gently, delivered himself in these words, which I shall never forget, nor the manner he spoke them in: "My little friend, Grildrig, you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country; you have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator; that laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some lines of an institution, which in its original, might have been tolerable, but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions. It does not appear from all you have said, how any one perfection is required toward the procurement of any one station among you; much less, that men are ennobled on account of their virtue; that priests are advanced for their piety or learning; soldiers for their conduct or valor; judges for their integrity; senators for the love of their country; or counsellors for their wisdom. * * * I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth!"

In the voyage to Laputa the satire is directed against the vanity of human wisdom, and the folly of abandoning useful occupations for the empty schemes of visionaries. The philosophers of Laputa had allowed their land to run to waste, and their people to fall into poverty in their attempts to "soften marble for pillows and pin-cushions," to "petrify the hoofs of a living horse to prevent them from foundering," to "sow land with chaff," and to "extract sunbeams from cucumbers, which were to be put in phials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw, inclement summers." The satire cannot be considered too broad when we consider the folly and credulity which, at the time of the South Sea mania, led many persons into sinking their whole fortunes in such enterprises as the company "To Fish up Wrecks on the Irish Coast," to "Make Salt-Water Fresh," to "Extract Silver from Lead," and to "Import Jackasses from Spain."

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It is impossible within the limits of this volume to comment with any completeness on the application of Gulliver's Travels. The satire gathered strength and bitterness in its progress, until the limits of horror were reached in the voyage to the Houyhnhnms. This portion of the work cannot be considered to apply universally. Man does not here perceive a truthful reflection of himself. The Houyhnhnms, beings endowed with reason, but undisturbed and untempted by the passions or struggles of earthly existence, are not brutes, and are not to be compared with men. The Yahoos, in their total depravity, are not human; they represent, and that with a terrible truthfulness, the condition into which men may fall when their animal instincts and baser passions are allowed to subvert their reason and their noble qualities. The more a man suffers his better nature to yield to his lower, the more he resembles the detestable Yahoo. In this sense alone, the satire applies generally to mankind; but it applies with peculiar point to some characteristics of Swift's time. In reading the following passage, it is impossible not to be reminded of the treatment of Sir Robert Walpole by his former flatterers and sycophants when his power seemed at an end:

Some curious *Houyhnhnms* observe that in most herds there was a sort of ruling *Yahoo*, * * * who was always more deformed in body and mischievous in disposition than any of the rest; that this leader had usually a favorite as like himself as he could get, whose employment was to lick his master's feet * * * and drive the female Yahoos to his kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of ass's flesh. This favorite is hated by the whole herd, and, therefore, to protect himself, keeps always near the person of his leader. He usually continues in office till a worse can be found; but the very moment he is discarded, his successor, at the head of all the *Yahoos* in that district, young and old, male and female, come in a body, and * * * (defile) him from head to foot.

But Swift, in his denunciation of men under the form of the Yahoos, disclosed the narrowness of his own misanthropy. When Gulliver has returned from his last voyage, with a mind which had dwelt on the beastliness and vice of the human race as it existed in the land of the Houyhnhnms, his warped judgment is unable to discern in his countrymen any attributes but those which they seem to share with the Yahoos:—

My wife and family received me with great surprise and joy, because they concluded me certainly dead; but I must freely confess the sight of them filled me only with hatred, disgust, and contempt; and the more, by reflecting on the near alliance I had to them. * * * As soon as I entered the house, my wife took me in her arms and kissed me; at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell into a swoon for almost an hour. At the time I

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am writing, it is five years since my last return to England: during the first year, I could not endure my wife or children in my presence; the very smell of them was intolerable, much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room. To this hour they dare not presume to touch my bread, or drink out of the same cup; neither was I ever able to let one of them take me by the hand.

Thus Swift himself, from the vividness with which he realized, and the intensity with which he hated, the vices and failings of humanity, was unable to duly appreciate the good, which, in some measure, always accompanies the evil.

It was the habit of the great Dean to utter the witticisms which caused the continual delight or terror of all who approached him with the most stern composure. Such was the manner of the “Travels.” The solemn and circumstantial narrative style, imitated from the old English explorers added verisimilitude to the incidents and point to the sarcasm. Trifles, personal to the traveller and of no consequence to the course of the story, gave an appearance of truth to the whole work. Thus Gulliver keeps the reader informed of the most minute details interesting to himself. “I took part of a small house in the Old Jewry; and being advised to alter my condition, I married Mrs. Mary Burton, second daughter to Mr. Edmund Burton, hosier, in Newgate Street, with whom I received four hundred pounds for a portion.” In the same way he informs us carefully that the date of his sailing on the first voyage was May 4, 1699, from Bristol, and the storm which destroyed the ship arose when in the latitude of 30 degrees 2 minutes south. In a work of fiction only such events are expected as have a direct bearing upon the development of the plot, and when immaterial details are introduced, the reader is likely to be impressed with their truth. In this way the personality of Gulliver is kept up, and he remains, through whatever strange scenes he passes, the same honest, blunt English sailor.

Yet more remarkable is the skill of the author in maintaining the probability of the allegory. When living among the Lilliputians, Gulliver insensibly adopts their ideas of size. He admires as much as they the prowess of the horseman who clears his shoe at a single leap. When the committee of the Lilliputian king examine Gulliver’s pockets, they describe his handkerchief as a “great piece of coarse cloth, large enough to be a foot-cloth to your majesty’s chief room of state”; his purse is “a net, almost large enough for a fisherman,” containing “several massy pieces of yellow metal, which, if they be real gold, must be of immense value.” The same almost mathematical accuracy of proportion is kept up in the visit to Brobdingnag, and on Gulliver’s return to his native country he experiences as much trouble in reaccustoming his mind to the ordinary standard as he had met with in adopting that of pigmies or giants. There was a country clergyman living

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in Ireland, who declared there were some things in Gulliver's Travels he could not quite believe. His difficulty probably occurred in the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." In the latter part of the work Swift allowed the fiction to yield to the exigencies of the satire. So long as we can imagine the existence of giants and pigmies, it is easy to realize all the circumstances connected with Gulliver's existence among them, but it is impossible to feel the same sense of reality in regard to horses who live in houses they could not build, and who eat oats they could not harvest.[154]

The general desire for reform is not more clearly to be seen in Acts of Parliament than in the works of Swift and Addison. The earlier part of the century was marked by a strong realization of evil, and by a constantly growing inclination to suppress it. The first condition is illustrated by the fierce satire of "Gulliver's Travels," the second by the earnest admonitions of the *Spectator*. The two great authors make a striking contrast. Swift, misanthropic, miserable, bitter; Addison, happy, loving mankind, admired alike by ally and opponent, Swift, dying mad; Addison, calm, conscious, employing his last moments to ask pardon of one he had offended. The same contrast is in their works. Swift dwelt and gloated on the evil about him, exposed it in more than its own deformity, and left his reader to reflect on his own degradation. Addison, to whom that evil was almost equally apparent, but who turned from its contemplation with horror, exerted all his talents to correct it. "The great and only end of these speculations," he tells the reader of the *Spectator*, "is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain."

With solemn reproof and delicate raillery, Addison urged women to lay aside coarseness and folly, and preached against the licentiousness, swearing, gambling, duelling, and drunkenness of the men. He attacked with both argument and ridicule the idea so prevalent since the Restoration, that vice was necessarily associated with pleasure and elegance, virtue with Puritanism and vulgarity. To teach people to be witty without being indecent, gay without being vicious, such was the object of Addison. As M. Taine says, he made morality fashionable. To do this he exposed the folly and ugliness of vice. But he did more. He held up to the public view characters who exemplified his teachings, and were calculated to attract imitation. In the creation and delineation of these characters he unconsciously began the English novel.

We should look in vain in the pages of Fielding, of Scott, or of George Eliot, for a more perfect sketch of character than that of Sir Roger de Coverley. And the minor personages are little less delicately and naturally drawn. There is the Bachelor of the Inner-Temple, "an excellent critick," to whom "the time of the play is his hour of business"; Sir Andrew Freeport, the typical merchant;

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Captain Sentry, “a gentleman of great courage, good understanding, but invincible modesty”; Will Honeycomb, “an honest, worthy man where women are not concerned”; the clergyman, who has ceased to have “interests in this world, as one who is hastening to the object of all his wishes, and conceives hope from his decays and infirmities.” “These are my ordinary companions,” says the *Spectator*, whom we soon learn to know very well too.

Addison’s knowledge of human nature, and his skill in delineating it in single touches, place him in the front rank of writers of fiction, notwithstanding the limit of his contributions to this department of literature. In a few words we are made to see and know the Quaker who reproves the insolent captain on the stage-coach: “Thy mirth, friend, savoureth of folly; thou art a person of a light mind; thy drum is a type of thee, it soundeth because it is empty.” There is nothing wanting to the reader’s perfect acquaintance with Will Wimble, the poor relation. All who know Worcestershire, says the *Spectator*, “are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger.” His fame has spread from Worcestershire throughout the English-speaking world, where he has been loved and admired for more than a hundred and fifty years. Sir Roger de Coverley is not to be described by any pen but that of Addison. He exhibits, joined to a perfect simplicity, the qualities of a just, honest, useful man, and delightful companion. Our acquaintance with him is a personal one. We know how he appears at his country-house, surrounded by admiring tenants and servants, and how he occupies himself in London, and whom he meets there. We know his ancestry, the extent and management of his estate, his long standing love affair with the beautiful widow, all his thoughts, opinions, and surroundings. All who read about Sir Roger remember him with affection. Addison dwelt with tenderness on every detail regarding him, and finally described Sir Roger’s death to prevent any less reverential pen from trifling with his hero.

Previous to the publication of the papers of the *Spectator* relating to Sir Roger de Coverley, there had been no attempt at what is a necessary constituent of the modern novel—the study of character. There had been the romance and the allegory. There had been the short love story. But with Addison, nature becomes the subject of fiction, and the novel is begun.

In a review of the remarkable life of Daniel Defoe, he appears to us under the varied aspects of a tradesman, a pamphleteer, a politician, a novelist, and, through it all, a reformer. It is in his character as a novelist that he is now known, and that he is to be considered here. But there are few among the millions to whom “Robinson Crusoe” has brought pleasure, who know that the composition of that work was only one event in a long life of ceaseless labor, political and literary, and that its author’s fame among his contemporaries was assured independently of it. Defoe’s career was so full that both his chief biographers[155] have found three large volumes to be necessary to do it justice. And yet it was not until near the end of that busy life, when the author was fifty-

eight years old, feeling the approach of age and infirmity, and looking about for means to provide for a large family, that he added the writing of novels to his multifarious occupations.

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There is probably no writer with whose works his life and personality are more intimately connected. It is impossible to consider the one separate from the other. Defoe began to write novels as a tradesman, as a literary hack, and as a reformer. Being dependent on his pen for his bread, he wrote what was likely to bring in the most immediate return. He calculated exactly the value and quality of his wares. He gave to his fictions the same moral object which inspired his own life. His novels followed naturally on his other labors, and partook of their character. It was his custom, on the death of any celebrated person, to write his life immediately, and to send it to the world while public interest was still fresh. But being often unable to obtain complete or authentic information concerning the subject of his biography, he supplemented facts and rumors by plausible inventions. Fiction entered into his biographies, just as biography afterward entered into his novels. But in writing the lives of real individuals Defoe recognized the necessity of impressing his reader with a sense of the truth and exactitude of the narrative. This effect he attained by the use of a literary faculty which he possessed in a degree unequalled by any other writer—that of circumstantial invention. By the multiplication of small, unimportant details, each one of which is carefully dwelt upon, and by the insertion of uninteresting personal incidents and moral reflections, seeming true from their very dulness, he gave to his work a remarkable verisimilitude. He did not even issue the book under his own name, but invented an authorship which would attract attention and credibility. Thus the “History of Charles XII” was announced on the title-page as “written by a Scot’s gentleman in the Swedish service”; and the “Life of Count Patkul” was “written by a Lutheran minister who assisted him in his last home, and faithfully translated out of a High Dutch manuscript."[156] The same characteristics appear in all Defoe’s works. He invents freely, giving the most elaborate details to support his assertions, and attains to an extraordinary degree the art of “lying like truth.” In the “Journal of the Plague Year,” Defoe assumed with his accustomed ease and skill the character of a plain, blunt London shopkeeper. He described with such apparent accuracy the observations of a man who had lived in the scene of that terrible calamity, giving curious incidents, anecdotes, statistics, after so methodical a manner, that it was long before any doubts were cast on the authenticity of the journal. It was a work of imagination, but so matter-of-fact, that it is difficult to believe the author had any imagination, and that he had not actually witnessed every occurrence he so calmly related. It is the same with the “Memoirs of a Cavalier.” The civil wars are described by a young officer who took part in them, who gives a detailed account of his own opinions, his wardrobe, his horse, his lodgings. Lord Chatham quoted these memoirs as the true account of an eye-witness. From writing the life of a well known individual, Defoe had advanced to writing the life of a fictitious person placed amidst historical scenes. His next step was to write the life of a fictitious person amidst fictitious scenes.[157]

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The “Journal of the Plague Year” had been issued to satisfy a popular interest excited by the appearance of the plague in France and the consequent fear of it in England. A similar public demand occasioned the composition of “Robinson Crusoe.” A sailor named Alexander Selkirk had been “marooned” on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez, and after living there alone for more than four years, had been taken off by the same captain who had abandoned him. The interest taken in England in the narrative of this event revealed to Defoe’s acute mind a great literary opportunity. But if he was indebted to the adventure of Selkirk for the fundamental idea of his novel, he was not the less original. Never has a greater individuality been given to a fictitious character, or a more vivid impression of life and reality to the circumstances surrounding him. The combination of ingenuity and simplicity which distinguishes the work, has, for a century and a half, had a peculiar fascination for children, and has awakened the wonder and admiration of men. There are three works of English fiction of imperishable interest, all of which have attained in a high degree the quality of reality, and have charmed alike all classes and ages. In the allegory of “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” the sense of reality was produced by the intense realization of the subject by the author, unassisted by any literary device. In “Gulliver’s Travels” the effect was attained by a skilful observation of exact proportions, added to a circumstantial and personal method of narration, which Swift probably owed in some measure to Defoe. If the reader can accept the possible existence of pigmies and giants, his credulity is put to no further strain. Defoe had no difficulty of the supernatural to overcome. He had a power almost as great as that of Bunyan of identifying himself with his hero; and he surpassed Swift in the power of circumstantial invention.

The story of “Robinson Crusoe” is too intimately known to require comment. His over-mastering desire to go to sea, his being cast up by the breakers on the island, his endless labors, and the resolute determination which overcame them, his dangers, fears, and the consolation of religion, the foot-print on the sand, the companionship with Friday, and the final release, are recollections of our childhood too familiar to be dwelt upon. But in this very familiarity with Robinson himself, in the brightness and endurance of our idea of him, in our acquaintance with the inmost workings of his mind and heart, is contained the evidence that Defoe not only wrote a novel of adventure, as he had intended, but that he wrote also a novel of character.

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If the author of “Robinson Crusoe” could realize so thoroughly the difficulties and expedients of a man living on a desert island, he could deal yet more easily with the adventures and shifts of thieves and abandoned women which formed the subject of his other tales. In these minor works, now little known, Defoe displayed equal talents, but did not attain equal results. The enduring interest which must ever attach to the central idea of “Robinson Crusoe” the complete isolation of the man—gave that work a very exceptional claim to the attention of posterity. But it had other merits, which are not apparent in the same perfection in Defoe’s lesser novels. Its design was single and concentrated, its chief character natural and strongly marked, its plot coherent and complete. Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack are indeed well-drawn and real persons, and the design of the works which bear their names is clear, but in both cases the plot is merely a series of independent adventures, and the characters themselves could not, from their nature, long attract the attention of readers. “Colonel Jack,” “Captain Singleton,” “Moll Flanders,” and “Roxana,” have been surpassed, and are neglected. “Robinson Crusoe” is, of its kind, perfect, and therefore enduring.

But the works of Defoe have a historical, almost equal to their literary, interest. Whoever would attain a correct idea of the condition of the lower classes in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, should consult “Moll Flanders” and “Colonel Jack,” as much as the “Newgate Calendar,” and histories of crime and labor. What the author has described, he had seen.

Defoe was throughout his life a reformer; a large proportion of the many pamphlets and occasional writings which fell from his pen have for their object the reformation or exposure of some abuse. Yet a large number of his fictitious characters are thieves and harlots. The criminal classes occupied the public mind in the first half of the eighteenth century to a remarkable degree, and Defoe was not mistaken in thinking that novels concerning those classes would interest and sell. He knew that the public taste was low, and his business was to cater to public taste. He said, in “More Reformation":[158]

> Let this describe the nation’s character.
> One man reads Milton, forty Rochester;
> The cause is plain, the temper of the time.
> One wrote the lewd, the other the sublime.

To satisfy the forty who read Rochester, Defoe described the lives and occupations of pirates, pickpockets, highwaymen, and women of abandoned character. The title-pages of some of these novels cannot with decency be quoted, and the novels themselves are filled with criminal and licentious scenes. But the reforming inclination of Defoe himself, and that which we find in the general literature of the time, induced him to turn these scenes into a moral account. Moll Flanders is a low, cunning, thoroughly bad woman,

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and her life is placed quite bare before the reader. Yet Defoe asserts that the book is designed to teach a good lesson.[159] “There is not a superlative villain brought upon the stage, but either he is brought to an unhappy end, or brought to be a penitent. There is not an ill thing mentioned, but it is condemned even in the relation; nor a virtuous, just thing, but it carries its praise along with it. * * * Upon this foundation the book is recommended to the reader, as a work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious inference is drawn.” Defoe, thoroughly a man of his time, thought he could put the coarsest and most vicious matter before his reader, and reasonably expect him to profit by the moral, without being hurt by contact with the vice. “All possible care,” he says, “has been taken to give no lewd ideas, no immodest turns in the dressing up of this story. * * * To this purpose some of the vicious part of her life, which could not be modestly told, is quite left out, and several other parts very much shortened. What is left, ’tis hoped will not offend the chastest reader, or the modestest hearer.” To any one acquainted with “Moll Flanders” this seems a strange statement. It exhibits the standard of the age. Mrs. Behn said almost the same thing about her novels and plays. To make up for the low, vicious life unrolled before us, it is not enough that Moll at last “grew rich, lived honest, and died penitent.”

The aim of “Roxana, or the Fortunate Mistress,” like that of “Moll Flanders,” is to describe the gradual corruption of a woman, who is influenced by some conscientious scruples and misgivings, but the heroine is placed in a higher station of life. We have a curious commentary on the times in comparing the body of the work with the preface. “Roxana” is among the coarsest records of vice in English fiction. But yet it is to impart moral instruction. “In the manner she has told the story it is evident she does not insist upon her justification in any part of it; much less does she recommend her conduct, or, indeed, any part of it, except her repentance, to our imitation. On the contrary, she makes frequent excursions, in a just censuring and condemning her own practice. How often does she reproach herself in the most passionate manner, and guide us to make just reflections in the like cases?” The modern reader is astonished to find “that all imaginable care has been taken to keep clear of indecencies and immodest expressions; and, it is hoped, you will find nothing to prompt a vicious mind, but everywhere much to discourage and expose it.”

Defoe is much more successful in teaching a moral lesson in “Colonel Jack.” The aim of this novel is to describe the course of a street-boy who takes to thieving before he knows that it is not a legitimate business, and who being possessed naturally of a good character is brought to repentance and reform when subjected to better influences. Defoe’s preface has great significance when we consider the deplorable condition of the lower classes and no better idea can be gained of the usual fate of the children of the poor than is afforded by this novel.

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Here is room for just and copious observations on the blessings and advantages of a sober and well-governed education, and the ruin of so many thousands of all ranks in this Nation for want of it; here also we may see how much public schools and charities might be improved, to prevent the destruction of so many unhappy children, as, in this town, are every year bred up for the executioner.The miserable condition of multitudes of youth, many of whose natural tempers are docible, and would lead them to learn the best things, rather than the worst, is truly deplorable, and is abundantly seen in the history of this man's childhood; where, though circumstances formed him by necessity to be a thief, surprising rectitude of principles remained with him, and made him early abhor the worst part of his trade, and at length to forsake the whole of it. Had he come into the world with the advantage of a virtuous education, and been instructed how to improve the generous principles he had in him, what a figure might he not have made, either as a man or a Christian.

The promise of the preface is fulfilled. The whole work is a protest against the neglect of the education and training of the youth of the lower classes; and the life of Colonel Jack would be apt to have a good effect on youthful readers of the time. In Chapter X, when Jack has risen by his industry and humanity from being a slave on a Virginia plantation to the rank of an overseer, and finally to that of an independent planter, he makes a long digression to rejoice in his change of condition and character:

It was an inexpressible joy to me, that I was now like to be not only a man, but an honest man; and it yielded me a greater pleasure, that I was ransomed from being a vagabond, a thief, and a criminal, as I had been from a child, than that I was delivered from slavery, and the wretched state of a Virginia sold servant; I had notion enough in my mind of the hardship of the servant or slave, because I had felt it, and worked through it; I remembered it as a state of labour and servitude, hardship and suffering. But the other shocked my very nature, chilled my blood, and turned the very soul within me; the thought of it was like reflections upon hell and the damned spirits; it struck me with horror, it was odious and frightful to look back on, and it gave me a kind of fit, a convulsion or nervous disorder, that was very uneasy to me.

These reflections remind us of the self-communings of Bunyan in "Grace Abounding in the Chief of Sinners." They express the feelings of remorse and the longings for a better state arising in the mind of a rough but conscientious man. They are the promptings of a strong moral nature, and illustrate those national qualities which brought about the reforms which distinguish the latter half of the eighteenth century. Colonel Jack took advantage of every opportunity for improvement. When a vagabond in Scotland, he learned with infinite pains to read and write. When a planter in Virginia, he took for his schoolmaster a transported felon, who knew Latin. This spirit of self-advancement by patient labor, by invincible resolution, is the spirit of Defoe's writings; it is the English characteristic which has raised the nation to all its prosperity and greatness.

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When “Robinson Crusoe” had attained celebrity, Defoe claimed that it was an allegory of his own life. A parallel might easily be drawn between the isolation of the solitary sailor on his island, and that of the persecuted author in the heart of a great city. All the world, and particularly his literary brethren, had been against Defoe. Pope had put him into the “Dunciad,” Swift had spoken of him as “the fellow who was pilloried, I forget his name,” He had known oppression and poverty, the pillory and the prison. He has left us his own view of the aim of “Robinson Crusoe."[160] “Here is invincible patience recommended under the worst of misery; indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances.” And such is the moral of Defoe’s own life.

Mrs. Heywood had written a number of stories[161] resembling, in the licentiousness of their character and the flimsiness of their construction, the novels of Mrs. Behn. Toward the end of her life she wrote “Miss Betsey Thoughtless,” which is believed to have suggested to Miss Burney some of the incidents in “Evelina.” This novel was exceedingly popular, and had some merit, considering the period of its composition. It is among the earliest specimens of a domestic novel; the plot has interest, and the characters are life-like. It illustrates, if any illustration were needed, the prevailing absence of any elevated view, either of love, or of the relations between men and women. The book is made up of easy seductions and licentious talk, and represents its youthful characters as very familiar with dissolute scenes and thoughts.

[Footnote 151: “Julius Caesar,” Act. I, sc. 2. Quoted in Scott’s “Life of Swift.” For Swift, see also “Life” by Sheridan, by Roscoe, and by Forster.]

[Footnote 152: “Life of Swift.”]

[Footnote 153: Sir W. Scott. “Life of Swift.”]

[Footnote 154: See “Life of Swift,” by Scott.]

[Footnote 155: Wilson “Life of Defoe.” Lee, “Life of Defoe.”]

[Footnote 156: See “Daniel Defoe,” by William Minto, p. 135. American edition.]

[Footnote 157: William Minto, “Life of Defoe,” p. 134:—“From writing biographies with real names attached to them, it was but a short step to writing biographies with fictitious names.”]

[Footnote 158: “Memoir of Defoe,” William Hazlitt, p. 30.]

[Footnote 159: See the preface to “Moll Flanders.”]

[Footnote 160: Preface to the “Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe.”]

[Footnote 161: “Love in Excess,” “The British Recluse,” “The Injured Husband,” “Jenny and Jemmy Bessamy,” “The Fortunate Foundling.”]

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Samuel Richardson might have stood for Hogarth's "Industrious Apprentice." When a printer's boy, young Samuel stole from his hours of rest and relaxation the time to improve his mind. He was careful not to tire himself by sitting up too late at night over his books, and purchased his own candles, so that his master, who called him the "pillar of his house," might suffer no injury from his servant's improvement.[162] Thus Richardson persevered in the path of virtue, until, like the "Industrious Apprentice," himself, he married his master's daughter, succeeded to his business, and lived happy and respected, surrounded by all the blessings which should fall to the lot of the truly good.

"I was not fond of play, as other boys," says the author of "Pamela"; "my school-fellows used to call me *Serious* and *Gravity*; and five of them particularly, delighted to single me out, either for a walk, or at their fathers' houses, or at mine, to tell them stories, as they phrased it. Some I told them from my reading, as true; others from my head, as mere invention; of which they would be most fond. * * * *All my stories carried with them, I am bold to say, an useful moral.*"[163] In such a manner, and with such an intention, Richardson began his career as a novelist.

The life of the stout, vain little printer was already well advanced, his fortune was assured, and he was surrounded by a group of affectionate relatives and admiring female friends, when he was asked by a publisher to write "a little book of familiar letters on the useful concerns in common life." While thinking over this proposal, be recollected a story once told him of a young servant-girl, whose honor was long attempted by a dissolute master, and who, by her resolute chastity, finally conquered his vicious intentions, and was rewarded by honorable marriage with her thwarted seducer. And then it occurred to Richardson, that this story, "if written in an easy and natural manner, suitable to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance writing, and, dismissing the improbable and marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue." Such was the origin of a novel destined to make a new era in English fiction. It is evident that Richardson placed before himself two aims: to promote the cause of religion and virtue, and to introduce a new species of writing, and in both he succeeded.

The name, "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded," sounds like a tract, and "Pamela" is, indeed, a very long tract. The contrast is curious between the moral object of the work and its contents. In the preface we are told that "Pamela" is to inculcate religion and morality in an easy and agreeable manner; it is to make vice odious, to make virtue truly lovely, and to give practical examples,

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“worthy to be followed, in the most critical cases, by the modest virgin, the chaste bride, and the obliging wife.” Moreover, all this is to be done, “without raising a single idea throughout the whole, that shall shock the exactest purity.” Yet, “Pamela” contains not a few scenes likely to inflame the imagination, and its subject, kept continually before the reader’s mind, is the licentious pursuit of a young girl. This story would not now do for a tract. But it answered the purpose very well in the eighteenth century. Richardson had no fear his book would give the youthful reader any new knowledge of evil, or that the long account of Pamela’s attempted seduction would shock the “exactest purity” of his time. He simply described the dangers to which every attractive young woman was more or less subject by the prevailing looseness of morals, while, by the pathetic and resolute resistance of Pamela’s chastity, he undoubtedly enlisted the sympathies of his reader on the side of virtue. The perusal of the book was recommended by Dr. Sherlock from the pulpit. One critic declared that it would do more good than twenty volumes of sermons; another, that if all other books were to be burnt, “Pamela” and the Bible should be preserved. A gentleman said that he would give it to his son as soon as he could read, that he might have an early impression of virtue.[164]

The moral of “Pamela” was virtue rewarded. That of “Clarissa,” Richardson’s second novel, was virtue triumphant, even in disgrace and ruin. The heroine, to escape the tyranny of her parents who wished to force her into a marriage she abhors, throws herself on the protection of a lover, the famous Lovelace, who, failing to seduce her by any other means, lures her into a brothel, and there violates her person while she is rendered insensible by opiates. Lovelace offers to make reparation for his crime by marriage, but in refusing this offer, and in dying of a broken heart, Clarissa carries out the moral of the story.

Richardson was blamed for making the libertine hero, Lovelace, more attractive than was consistent with moral effect. And to remedy this mistake, he undertook in “Sir Charles Grandison,” his last novel, to draw the portrait of a man of *true honor*; “acting uniformly well through a variety of trying scenes, because all his actions are regulated by one steady principle: a man of religion and virtue; of liveliness and spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in himself, and a blessing to others.” Sir Charles then is not a man, but a model. “Pamela” and “Clarissa” remained virtuous through temptation and trial. But Grandison is a good man because he has no inducement to be otherwise. He can afford to be generous, because he is rich; he can afford to decline a duel, his reputation for skill in swordsmanship is so well established that he runs no danger of being called a coward; he is free from licentiousness, because his passions are under perfect control. The name

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of Sir Charles Grandison has passed into a proverb, and its mention calls up to the mind a man of the most dignified deportment, of the most delicate consideration for women, and of the most elaborate manners. But it must be remembered that in Sir Charles, our author drew the portrait of what a gentleman should be, and not of what a gentleman was. Even the most punctilious men of the time did not, like Grandison, hesitate to visit a sick person, because it would involve travelling on Sunday; nor did they, as he, refuse to have their horses' tails docked, because nature had humanely given those tails as a protection against flies. The Grandisonian manners are not to be taken as a picture of contemporary fashion. Richardson was unacquainted with aristocratic habits, and his high-flown love scenes were purely ideal. When he goes into high life, said Chesterfield, "he mistakes the modes." Not long before Sir Charles was making his formal and courtly addresses to Miss Byron, Walpole had written to George Montagu: "'Tis no little inducement to wish myself in France, that I hear gallantry is not left off there; that you may be polite, and not be thought awkward for it. You know the pretty men of the age in England use the women with no more deference than they do their coach horses." Such was the state of things which the example of Sir Charles Grandison was intended to remedy.

The moral design is an important element in Richardson's novels, but the extraordinary popularity of these works was owing to other causes. Richardson had known how to move his reader's heart, and how to give to his characters a deep personal interest. He had attempted to introduce "a new species of writing," and public enthusiasm testified to his success. Colly Cibber read "Clarissa" before its publication, and was wrought up into a high state of excitement by the story. "What a piteous, d——d, disgraceful pickle you have placed her in!" he wrote to Richardson. "For God's sake, send me the sequel, or—I don't know what to say! * * * My girls are all on fire and fright to know what can possibly have become of her." And when he heard that Clarissa was to have a miserable end, he wrote the author: "God d——n him, if she should."[165] Mrs. Pilkington was not less distressed: "Spare her virgin purity, dear sir, spare it! Consider if this wounds both Mr. Cibber and me (*who neither of us set up for immaculate chastity*), what must it do with those who possess that inestimable treasure?"[166] Miss Fielding, the sister of the novelist of that name, thus described, in a letter to its author, her feelings on reading "Clarissa": "When I read of her, I am all sensation; my heart glows. I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears." One Thomas Turner, who kept a village shop in Sussex, thus recorded in his diary the impression produced upon him by the death of Clarissa: "Oh, may the Supreme Being give me grace to lead my life in such a manner as my exit may in some measure be

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like that divine creature's."[167] Johnson was an enthusiastic admirer of Richardson. Dr. Young looked upon him as an "instrument of Providence." Ladies at Ranelagh held up "Pamela," to show that they had the famous book.[168] Nor was this interest confined to the last century. "When I was in India," said Macaulay to Thackeray, "I passed one hot season at the hills, and there were the governor-general, and the secretary of government, and the commander-in-chief, and their wives. I had "Clarissa" with me, and as soon as they began to read, the whole station was in a passion of excitement about Miss Harlowe and her misfortunes, and her scoundrelly Lovelace. The governor's wife seized the book, and the secretary waited for it, and the chief justice could not read it for tears!" Macaulay "acted the whole scene," adds Thackeray; "he paced up and down the Athenaeum library; I dare say he could have spoken pages of the book."[169] But admiration of Richardson was still greater among foreigners. The novels were translated into French, Dutch, and German, and the enthusiasm they excited may be imagined from the warmth of Diderot's eulogy: "I yet remember with delight the first time ('Clarissa') came into my hands. I was in the country. How deliciously was I affected! At every moment I saw my happiness abridged by a page. I then experienced the same sensations those feel who have long lived with one they love, and are on the point of separation. At the close of the work I seemed to remain deserted. * * * Oh, Richardson! thou singular genius in my eyes! thou shalt form my reading at all times. If, forced by sharp necessity, my friend falls into indigence; if the mediocrity of my fortune is not sufficient to bestow on my children the necessary cares for their education, I will sell my books,—but thou shalt remain! Yes, thou shalt rest in the *same class* with Moses, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles, to be read alternately."[170]

What was the secret by which the stout little printer excited such enthusiasm and won such eulogy? How did he appeal to natures so different as the worldly Lord Chesterfield, the country shopkeeper, and the impassioned Diderot? Richardson was the first novelist to stir the heart and to move the passions, and his power was the more striking that it was new. His study of human nature had begun early in life. "I was not more than thirteen," he says, "when three young women, unknown to each other, having an high opinion of my taciturnity, revealed to me their love secrets, in order to induce me to give them copies to write after, or correct, for answers to their lovers' letters. * * * I have been directed to chide, and even repulse, when an offence was either taken or given, at the very time when the heart of the chider or repulser was open before me, overflowing with esteem and affection; and the fair repulser, dreading to be taken at her word, directed *this* word, or *that* expression, to be

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softened or changed. One, highly gratified with her lover's fervor and vows of everlasting love, has said, when I have asked her direction, *I cannot tell you what to write; but* (her heart on her lips) *you cannot write too kindly*."[171] With such an apprenticeship, Richardson had come to possess a very delicate perception of character, and especially of female character. There was a certain effeminacy in his own nature which made him understand women better than men. His best creations are Pamela and Clarissa. Lovelace and Grandison are drawn from the outside; they are less real and natural. But Richardson leads his reader into the inmost recesses of his heroines' hearts. He is at home in describing the fears, the trials, and the final childlike rejoicings of Pamela. He attains to a high tragic effect in the death of Clarissa, a scene which Sir James Mackintosh ranked with Hume's description of the death of Mary Stuart. In this power to touch the heart and to move the passions of his reader lay the charm of Richardson's writing. But to paint perfection, rather than to study nature, was his object in "Sir Charles Grandison," and therefore that novel was less powerful in the author's day, and is less interesting in ours than "Pamela" and "Clarissa." We no longer need the example of the pompous Sir Charles to dissuade us from indecent language and drunkenness in a lady's drawing-room, and we can only laugh at the studied propriety of his faultless intercourse with Miss Byron:
He kissed my hand with fervor, dropped down on one knee; again kissed it—You have laid me, madam, under everlasting obligation; and will you permit me before I rise—-loveliest of women, will you permit me to beg an early day?—He clasped me in his; arms with an ardor—that displeased me not on reflection. But at the time startled me. He then thanked me again on one knee. I held out the hand he had not in his, with intent to raise him; for I could not speak. He received it as a token of favor; kissed it with ardor; arose; *again* pressed my cheeks with his lips. I was too much surprised to repulse him with anger; but was he not too free? Am I a prude, my dear?Restrain, check me, madam, whenever I seem to trespass on your goodness. Yet how shall I forbear to wish you to hasten the day that shall make you wholly mine? You will the rather allow me to wish it, as you will then be more than ever your own mistress; though you have always been generously left to a discretion that never was more deservedly trusted to. Your will, madam, will ever comprehend mine.

The verisimilitude of Richardson's novels, which is made so striking by his feminine attention to detail, may seem destroyed to modern readers by the apparent improbability of the narrative itself. It appears strange that young girls like Pamela or Clarissa should be so entirely in the power of their seducers, that

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incidents should be repeated with impunity which the existence of a police force would seem to make impossible. But the reader whose sense of probability is shocked by the unpunished and uninterrupted villanies of Mr. B. and of Lovelace, can find evidence of the security with which such crimes could be committed by the rich and influential in the Newgate calendar. The forcible detention in his own house, by Lord Baltimore, of a young girl, his atrocious treatment of her, and his escape from punishment, are incidents in real life not more remarkable than the fictions of the novelist.

Sir Walter Scott lamented, early in the present century, the neglect into which the works of Richardson had fallen. That neglect has not since been diminished, for obvious reasons. “Surely, sir,” said Erskine to Johnson, “Richardson is very tedious.” “Why, sir,” was the lexicographer’s reply, “if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself, but you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment.” But the reader of today will agree with Erskine in thinking that Richardson is tedious. We have so many good novels which do not require the attention and labor exacted by him. We live so fast that we cannot spare the time for so much sentiment. These novels, like the elaborate embroideries of the last century, belong to a period when life was less full, and books less abundant. Samuel Richardson will take his place among the great authors who are much admired and little read, whose works every educated person should have heard of, but upon which very few would like to be examined.

With Richardson’s novels English fiction took a long step forward; but it made a still greater advance in the hands of Henry Fielding. The latter was peculiarly well fitted by his talents and experience to carry the novel to a high position of importance and artistic merit. He united a considerable dramatic, and a great narrative power with an exuberant wit and an extensive knowledge of men. Allied to a noble family, but oppressed by poverty, Fielding mingled during his life with all classes of society. The Hon. George Lyttleton was his friend and protector, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was his cousin. On the other hand, his poverty and improvidence constantly kept him, as Lady Mary put it, “raking in the lowest rinks of vice and misery.” Richardson, who always denounced Fielding’s works as “wretchedly low and dirty,” said sneeringly: “his brawls, his jars, his jails, his spunging-houses are all drawn from what he has seen and known.” But in this ungenerous sneer lay a substantial compliment. Fielding did describe what he had seen and known, and the variety of his experience gave him a breadth and power in describing human nature which the confined life of Richardson could not afford. The two novelists cannot be fairly compared, nor should they be considered as rivals. They pursued different methods, and aimed at opposite effects. Each has a high place in English literature, which the greatness of the other cannot depress. Richardson is best able to make his reader weep, and Fielding to make him laugh.

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Fielding was a tall, handsome fellow, so full of life and spirits that “his happy disposition,” to quote Lady Mary, “made him forget every evil when he was before a venison-pastry, or over a flask of champagne.” This rollicking, careless joyousness is the tone of his books. Whether taken to a prison, an inn, or a lady’s boudoir, whether watching the breaking of heads, the blackening of eyes, or the making of love, the reader is always kept smiling.

Fielding is often censured by moralists for the coarseness of his novels. But had he not been coarse he would not have been true. He described life as it was in the eighteenth century, as he had seen it in the ups and downs of a checkered career. His characters were taken from the higher ranks and the lower. He placed the house, the amusements, the habits of a country gentleman before the reader with the faithfulness of a man who had hunted, feasted, and got drunk with country-gentlemen. He described the miserable prisons of his time as he only could who had mingled with their degraded inmates, and had exerted his power as a police magistrate to break up the gangs of ruffians who infested the streets. Thus Fielding’s novels have a high historical, as well as a literary value. Mr. Lecky has testified to their importance in a reconstruction of the past by placing “Amelia” among his authorities. Squire Allworthy, Squire Western, Tom Jones, Parson Adams, are characters to be studied by whoever would understand social life in the eighteenth century. The lovely Sophia, the modest Fanny, and above all Amelia, whom Thackeray considered “the most charming character in English fiction,” are portraits in the gallery of history.[172]

As Fielding set out to describe truth and nature as he saw them, the reader must put away his notions of refinement and delicacy. He must be prepared to be entertained by blows, licentious assaults, a tub of hog’s blood thrown by a clergyman, coarse practical jokes, foul talk, all put before him without disguise or circumlocution. As he follows Parson Adams, Joseph, and Fanny in their journey, he must always be ready for a fight. Here is a specimen:

“The captain * * * drew forth his hanger as Adams approached him, and was levelling a blow at his head which would probably have silenced the preacher forever, had not Joseph in that instant lifted up a certain huge stone pot of the chamber with one hand, which six beaux could not have lifted with both, and discharged it, together with the contents, full in the captain’s face. The uplifted hanger dropped from his hand, and he fell prostrate on the floor with a lumpish noise, and his half-pence rattled in his pocket: the red liquor which his veins contained, and the white liquor which the pot contained, ran in one stream down his face and his clothes. Nor had Adams quite escaped, some of the water having in its passage shed its honors on his head, and begun to trickle down the wrinkles, or rather furrows, of his cheeks;

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when one of the servants snatching a mop out of a pail of water, which had already done its duty in washing the house, pushed it in the parson's face; yet could he not bear him down; for the parson wresting the mop from the fellow with one hand, with the other brought his enemy as low as the earth."[173]

To obtain any adequate idea of the range of Fielding's pictures of human nature, the reader must consult the novels themselves. Propriety forbids the insertion here of quotations which could convey an impression of the happy dissoluteness of Tom Jones, the brutal coarseness of Squire Western, or the scenes of unblushing license which pervade the novels of Henry Fielding. But a sample of the witty, jovial tone which has made these novels so popular may be of interest to readers who are not inclined to open "Tom Jones" itself. The following scene was occasioned by the appearance of Molly Seagrim in church, in unaccustomed and ostentatious finery, and is described in the Homeric style, which Fielding sometimes adopted with such humorous effect.

As a vast herd of cows in a rich farmer's yard, if, while they are milked, they hear their calves at a distance, lamenting the robbery which is then committing, roar and bellow: so roared forth the Somersetshire mob an halloloo, made up of almost as many squalls, screams, and other different sounds, as there were persons, or indeed passions, among them. Some were inspired by rage, others alarmed by fear, and others had nothing in theirs heads but the love of fun; but chiefly Envy, the sister of Satan and his constant companion, rushed among the crowd and blew up the fury of the women; who no sooner came up to Molly than they pelted her with dirt and rubbish.Molly, having endeavored in vain to make a handsome retreat, faced about; and laying hold of ragged Bess, who advanced in the front of the enemy, she at one blow felled her to the ground. The whole army of the enemy (though near a hundred in number), seeing the fate of their general, gave back many paces, and retired beyond a new dug grave; for the church-yard was the field of battle, where there was to be a funeral that very evening. Molly pursued her victory, and catching up a skull which lay on the side of the grave, discharged it with such fury, that having hit a tailor on the head, the two skulls sent equally forth a hollow sound at their meeting, and the tailor took presently measure of his length on the ground, where the skulls lay side by side, and it was doubtful which was the more valuable of the two. Molly, then taking a thigh bone in her hand, fell in among the flying ranks, and dealing her blows with great liberality on either side, overthrew the carcass of many a mighty hero and heroine. Recount, O muse, the names of those who fell on this fatal day. First Jemmy Tweedle felt on his hinder head the direful bone. Him the pleasant banks of sweetly winding Stour had nourished, where he first learnt

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the vocal art, with which, wandering up and down at wakes and fairs, he cheered the rural nymphs and swains, when upon the green they interweaved the sprightly dance; while he himself stood fiddling and jumping to his own music. How little now avails his fiddle! He thumps the verdant floor with his carcass. Next old Echepole, the sow-gelder, received a blow in his forehead from our Amazonian heroine, and immediately fell to the ground. He was a swinging fat fellow, and fell with almost as much noise as a house. His tobacco-box dropt at the same time from his pocket, which Molly took up as lawful spoils. Then Kate of the Mill tumbled unfortunately over a tombstone, which catching hold of her ungartered stocking, inverted the order of nature, and gave her heels the superiority to her head. Betty Pippin, with young Roger her lover, fell both to the ground; where, O Perverse Fate! she salutes the earth, and he the sky.[174]

Fielding had shown more than any predecessor the possibilities of fiction in the study of character and the illustration of manners, and to the art of the narrator, he had added that of the dramatist. The falling of the rug in Molly Seagrim's bedroom[175] is one of the happiest incidents ever devised, and no doubt suggested to Sheridan the falling of the screen in the "School for Scandal." But the chief distinction of Fielding lies in his having carried the novel to a high point as a work of art. It was the opinion of Coleridge that the "Oedipus Tyrannus," "The Alchemist," and "Tom Jones," were the three most perfect plots ever planned.[176] It is to this excellence of plot—the subordination of each minor circumstance to the general aim, the skill with which all events are made to lead up to the final denouement—that Fielding, if any one, deserves the title of the founder of the English novel. But to give this title to any individual is a manifest injustice. The novel was developed, not created; and in that development many minds took part. Short love stories had been made familiar in England by the Italian writers. Such, also, had been produced by Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Manley, and Mrs. Heywood. Defoe had written novels of adventure, in one of which, at least, is found the combination of a character well drawn and a plot well executed. In the number of his characters and the complication of his plot, Richardson had surpassed Defoe. It is the merit of Fielding to have combined in a far greater degree than those who had gone before the characteristic qualities of the novel. In others we see the promise, in him the fulfilment.

And this was in no respect the result of an accident. Fielding looked upon his first work as a new attempt in English literature. "Joseph Andrews" was first intended to be merely a satire on "Pamela." But study and reflection on the nature of his work determined Fielding to produce a "prose epic." "The epic as well as the drama," he said in the preface, "is divided into tragedy and

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comedy." Now, he continued, "when any kind of writing contains all the other parts (of the epic), such as fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction, and is deficient in metre only; it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic." Such, too, was the opinion of the Chevalier Bunsen. "The romance of modern times," he says in his preface to "Soll und Haben" * * * "represents the latest *stadium* of the epic. Every romance is intended, or ought to be, a new Iliad or Odyssey; in other words, a poetic representation of a course of events consistent with the highest laws of moral government, whether it delineate the general history of a people, or narrate the fortunes of a chosen hero. * * * The excellence of a romance, like that of an epic or a drama, lies in the apprehension and truthful exhibition of the course of human things."[177] Lord Byron expressed his opinion that Fielding had realized this view of the nature of the novel by calling him the prose Homer of human nature.

Fielding's novels are now considered unfit for general perusal. In considering the coarseness and immorality of a writer, the intention and the result must be separated. That Fielding's works are coarse, and that they contain scenes and characters of a dissolute nature, is neither to be denied nor to be regretted. If they were more pure, they would be less valuable from a historical point of view; less true to nature, and therefore less artistic. That the author's intention was far from the production of works with an evil tendency, is evident. He was careful to say in the preface to "Joseph Andrews": "It may be objected to me that I have against my own rules introduced vices, and of a very black kind, in this work. To which I shall answer first, that it is very difficult to pursue a series of human actions, and keep clear from them. Secondly, that the vices to be found here are rather the accidental consequences of some human frailty or foible, than causes habitually existing in the mind. Thirdly, that they are never set forth as the objects of ridicule, but detestation. Fourthly, that they are never the principal figure at that time on the scene; and lastly, they never produce the intended evil." And again, still more strongly, Fielding claims the merit of purity and moral effect for "Tom Jones," "I hope my reader will be convinced, at his very entrance on this work, that he will find, in the whole course of it, nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue; nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend the chastest eye in the perusal. On the contrary, I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavor in this history. * * * Besides displaying that beauty of virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favor, by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her. For this purpose I have shown, that no acquisitions of guilt can compensate the loss of that solid inward comfort of mind, which is the sure companion of innocence and virtue; nor can in the least balance the evil of that horror and anxiety which, in their room, guilt introduced into our bosoms."

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Thus, it is evident, that Fielding had no desire to write what might be harmful. The contrast between his promise and his fulfilment is simply an illustration of the standard of his time. His novels are coarse to a degree which may nullify their merits in the eyes of some readers of the present day, and may unfit them for the perusal of very young people. But this is simply because the standard in such matters has changed, and not because the novels were purposely made dissolute. Their coarseness was adapted to the lack of refinement in thought and speech characteristic of that time. Fielding wished to “laugh mankind out of their follies and vices.” In his coarseness there is always an open, frank laughter. There is none of that veiled pruriency which lurks underneath the more conventionally expressed, but really vicious sentiments that are to be found in too many novels of our own day.

The novel was well defined in character and well established in popularity when Smollett entered the field so well occupied by Richardson and Fielding. On this account his works have a less important place in the history of fiction than those of his predecessors. While he added greatly to the store of fictitious writing, he developed no new ideas concerning it. Fielding had announced at the outset of his career as a novelist that he had taken Cervantes as a prototype, and the influence of the great Spanish writer is plainly visible in “Joseph Andrews.” But in the literary workmanship of his two later novels, Fielding’s entire originality is undeniable. Smollett, however, is plainly an imitator of Le Sage. He did not aim at that artistic construction of plot, which is Fielding’s chief merit. The novel, in his hands, became rather a series of adventures, linked together by their occurrence to the same individuals. “A novel,” he said, “is a large, diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of a uniform plan and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient. But this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success, without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene by virtue of his importance."[178] But Smollett presents the “different groups” and “various attitudes” of his “diffused picture” with a luxuriance of imagination, a fidelity to nature, and an exuberance of broad humor which inspire interest even when they occasion disgust. If he added nothing new to the novel from a purely literary point of view, his works have an exceptional historical value.

His life was well adapted to educate him as an observer and student of human nature. Of a good Scotch family, but obliged by poverty to rely on his own efforts for a living, he mixed familiarly with varied classes of men. As a surgeon in London, he came in contact with the middle and lower ranks of the city, from which many of his best characters are taken. As surgeon’s mate on board a man-of-war, he obtained that acquaintance with a seafaring life which was afterward turned to such excellent account.

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Of Smollett's works, "Humphrey Clinker" is the most humorous, "Roderick Random" the simplest and most natural, "Perigrine Pickle," the most elaborate and brilliant. The reader is conducted from adventure to adventure with an unfailing interest, sustained by the distinctness of the picture and the brightness of the coloring. The characters met with are natural and well studied. Trunnion, Hatchway, Pipes, Lieutenant Bowling, and Jack Rattlin are all distinctly seamen, and yet each has a marked individuality of his own. Matthew Bramble and Winifred Jenkins are among the best-drawn and most entertaining of fictitious personages. Smollett's humor is usually of the broadest and most elementary kind. It consists largely of hard blows, *a-propos* knockdowns, and practical jokes. More than any novelist, he illustrates the coarseness of his time. His pages are filled with cruelties and blackguardism. Many of his principal characters are dissolute without enjoyment, and brutal without good nature. Modern taste is shocked by the succession of repulsive scenes and degrading representations of vice which are often intended to amuse, and always to entertain. But it is because life in the eighteenth century had so many repulsive features, that the novels of the time often repel the modern reader, There is nothing strained or uncommon in the experiences of Miss Williams while in prison:

There I saw nothing but rage, anguish, and impiety; and heard nothing but groans, curses, and blasphemy. In the midst of this hellish crew, I was subjected in the tyranny of a barbarian, who imposed upon me tasks that I could not possibly perform, and then punished my incapacity with the utmost rigor and inhumanity. I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it, during which miserable intervals I was robbed by my fellow-prisoners of every thing about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings; I was not only destitute of necessaries, but even of food, so that my wretchedness was extreme. Not one of my acquaintance, to whom I imparted my situation, would grant me the least succor or regard, on pretence of my being committed for theft; and my landlord refused to part with some of my own clothes, which I sent for, because I was indebted to him for a week's lodging. Overwhelmed with calamity, I grew desperate, and resolved to put an end to my grievances and life together; for this purpose I got up in the middle of the night, when I thought everybody around me asleep, and fixing one end of my handkerchief to a large hook in the ceiling that supported the scales on which the hemp is weighed, I stood upon a chair, and making a noose on the other end, put my neck into it with an intention to hang myself; but before I could adjust the knot, I was surprised and prevented by two women who had been awake all the while, and suspected my design. In the morning my attempt was published among the prisoners, and punished with thirty stripes, the pain of which co-operating

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with my disappointment and disgrace, bereft me of my senses, and threw me into an ecstasy of madness, during which I tore the flesh from my bones with my teeth, and dashed my head against the pavement.[179]

While Smollett mingled such scenes of misery with coarse adventures and coarse humor, he is yet always true to nature and always picturesque. He keeps the reader's attention even when he offends his taste. He impaired the literary merit of "Perigrine Pickle," but at the same time added to its dissolute character and its immediate popularity by the forced insertion of the licentious "Memoirs of a Lady of Quality." Now a serious blemish, these memoirs formed at the time an added attraction to the book. They were eagerly read as the authentic account of Lady Vane, a notorious woman of rank, and were furnished to Smollett by herself, in the hope, fully gratified, that her infamous career might be known to future generations.[180]

That the standard of public taste was rising, would appear from the fact that in the second edition of "Perigrine Pickle," Smollett found it advisable to "reform the manners and correct the expression" of the first; but when "he flatters himself that he has expunged every adventure, phrase, and insinuation that could be construed by the most delicate reader into a trespass upon the rules of decorum," he does not give a high idea of the standard of the "most delicate reader." But Smollett has left an account of his own views regarding the moral effect of the pictures of vice and degradation which his works contain, and that account is a striking statement of contemporary feeling upon the subject:

The same principle by which we rejoice at the remuneration of merit, will teach us to relish the disgrace and discomfiture of vice, which is always an example of extensive use and influence, because it leaves a deep impression of terror upon the minds of those who were not confirmed in the pursuit of morality and virtue, and, while the balance wavers, enables the right scale to preponderate. * * * The impulses of fear, which is the most violent and interesting of all the passions, remain longer than any other upon the memory; and for one that is allured to virtue by the contemplation of that peace and happiness which it bestows, an hundred are deterred from the practice of vice, by the infamy and punishment to which it is liable from the laws and regulations of mankind. Let me not, therefore, be condemned for having chosen my principal character from the purlieus of treachery and fraud, when I declare that my purpose is to set him up as a beacon for the benefit of the inexperienced and the unwary, who, from the perusal of these memoirs, may learn to avoid the manifold snares with which they are continually surrounded in the paths of life; while those who hesitate on the brink of iniquity may he terrified from plunging into that irremediable gulph, by surveying the deplorable

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fate of Ferdinand Count Fathom.[181]

This passage illustrates with remarkable fidelity the attitude, not only of Smollett, but of the other novelists and the general public of the first half of the eighteenth century, toward vice and crime. The consciousness of evil and the desire for reformation were prominent features of the time. But to deter men from wrong-doing, fear was the only recognized agent. There was absolutely no feeling of philanthropy. There was no effort to prevent crime through the education or regulation of the lower classes; there was no attempt to reform the criminal when convicted. The public fear of the criminal classes was expressed in the cruel and ineffective code which punished almost every offense with death. The corruptions which pervaded the administration of justice made it almost impossible to punish the wealthy and influential. When Smollett declared that the miserable fate of Count Fathom would deter his reader from similar courses by a fear of similar punishment, when Defoe urged the moral usefulness of “Moll Flanders” and “Roxana,” the two novelists simply expressed the general feeling that the sight of a malefactor hanging on the gallows was the most effective recommendation to virtue. In the same spirit in which justice exposed the offender in the stocks to public view, the novelist described his careers of vice ending in misery, and Hogarth conducted his Idle Apprentice from stage to stage till Tyburn Hill is reached. The same moral end is always in view, but the lesson is illustrated by the ugliness of vice, and not by the beauty of virtue. In our time we have reason to be thankful for a criminal legislation tempered by mercy and philanthropy. We have attained, too, a standard of taste and of humanity which has banished the degrading exhibitions of public punishments, which has largely done away with coarseness and brutality, and has added much to the happiness of life. In fiction, the writer who wishes to serve a moral purpose attains his end by the more agreeable method of holding up examples of merit to be imitated, rather than of vice to be shunned.

But when the great novelists of the eighteenth century were writing, the standard of taste was extremely low. The author knew that he was keeping his reader in bad company, and was supplying his mind with coarse ideas, but he believed that he might do this without offense. Defoe thought that “Moll Flanders” would not “offend the chastest reader or the modestest hearer”; Richardson, that the prolonged effort to seduce Pamela could be described “without raising a single idea throughout the whole that shall shock the exactest purity”; Fielding, that there was nothing in “Tom Jones” which “could offend the chastest eye in the perusal.” Nor, as concerned their own time, were they mistaken. They clearly understood the distinction between coarseness and immorality. The young women who read “Tom Jones” with enthusiasm were not less moral than the women who now avoid it, they were only less refined. They did not think vice less reprehensible, but were more accustomed to the sight of it, and therefore less easily offended by its description.

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While the novels of which we have been speaking were making their first appearance, there lived in Kent a charming young lady who went by the name of “the celebrated Miss Talbot.” She had attained this distinction by her great cultivation. She had studied astronomy and geography, was “mistress of French and Italian,” and knew a little Latin. When she was only twenty years of age, the Dean of Canterbury spoke of her with high admiration. Her acquaintance was eagerly sought by accomplished young ladies, and by none more successfully than “the learned” Miss Carter. Both of these girls read the novels of the day, and fortunately recorded some of their opinions in the letters which passed between them.[182] “I want much to know,” wrote Miss Talbot, “whether you have yet condescended to read ‘Joseph Andrews.’” “I must thank you,” replied Miss Carter, “for the perfectly agreeable entertainment I have met in reading ‘Joseph Andrews.’ It contains such a surprising variety of nature, wit, morality, and good sense, as is scarcely to be met with in any one composition, and there is such a spirit of benevolence through the whole, as, I think renders it peculiarly charming,” Some years later the Bishop of Gloucester came to visit Miss Talbot’s family, and read “Amelia,” the young lady wrote, while he was nursing his cold by the fireside. Miss Carter replied that “in favor of the bishop’s cold, his reading ‘Amelia’ in silence may be tolerated, but I am somewhat scandalized that, since he did not read it to you, you did not read it yourself.” “The more I read ‘Tom Jones,’” wrote Miss Talbot, “the more I detest him, and admire Clarissa Harlowe,—yet there are in it things that must touch and please every good heart, and probe to the quick many a bad one, and humor that it is impossible not to laugh at.” “I am sorry,” replied Miss Carter, “to find you so outrageous about poor Tom Jones; he is no doubt an imperfect, but not a detestable character, with all that honesty, good-nature, and generosity.” Miss Talbot, in a later letter, said that she had once heard a lady piously say to her son that she wished with all her heart he was like Tom Jones.[183] In 1747 “Clarissa” was read aloud at the palace of the Bishop of Oxford, Miss Talbot’s uncle. “As for us,” she wrote, “we lived quite happy the whole time we were reading it, and we made that time as long as we could, too, for we only read it *en famille*, at set hours, and all the rest of the day we talked of it. One can scarcely persuade one’s self that they are not real characters and living people.” Even “Roderick Random” made part of the young ladies’ reading. “It is a very strange and a very low book,” commented the Bishop’s celebrated niece, “though not without some characters in it, and, I believe, some very just, though very wretched descriptions.”

[Footnote 162: Mrs. Barbauld’s “Life of Richardson,” vol. 1, p. 42. Scott’s “Life of Richardson.”]

[Footnote 163: Mrs. Barbauld’s “Life of Richardson,” vol. 1, p. 37.]

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[Footnote 164: *Edinburgh Review.* Oct., 1804. Scott's "Life of Richardson," note.]

[Footnote 165: Richardson's correspondence, 1748.]

[Footnote 166: Richardson's correspondence. Forsyth's "Novels and Novelists," p. 251.]

[Footnote 167: See the interesting "Glimpses of Our Ancestors," by Charles Fleet, p. 33.]

[Footnote 168: Mrs. Barbauld's "Life of Richardson."]

[Footnote 169: W.M. Thackeray, "Nil Nisi Bonum", *Cornhill Mag.*, No. 1.]

[Footnote 170: D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature," art. "Richardson."]

[Footnote 171: Mrs. Barbauld's "Life of Richardson," vol. I, p. 40. Scott's "Life of Richardson."]

[Footnote 172: The reader may find some curious examples of the fidelity with which Fielding portrayed contemporary character and manners in comparing passages in "Tom Jones," with "Glimpses of our Ancestors," by Charles Fleet, pp. 38, 39, *et passim*.]

[Footnote 173: "Joseph Andrews," book III, chap. 9.]

[Footnote 174: "Tom Jones," book iv, ch. 8.]

[Footnote 175: Samuel Rogers, "Table Talk," p. 227.]

[Footnote 176: Coleridge, "Table Talk," p. 339, vol. 2, London, 1835.]

[Footnote 177: Preface to "Debit and Credit" ("Soll und Haben"), by Gustav Freitag.]

[Footnote 178: "Adventures of Count Fathom," letter of dedication.]

[Footnote 179: "Roderick Random," chap. xxiii.]

[Footnote 180: 'The wife of William, second Viscount Vane, "was the too celebrated Lady Vane; first married to Lord William Hamilton, and secondly to Lord Vane; who has given her own extraordinary and disreputable adventures to the world in Smollett's novel of 'Perigrine Pickle,' under the title of 'Memoirs of a Lady of Quality.'"—Walpole to Mann, Nov 23, 1743. "The troops continue going to Flanders, but slowly enough. Lady Vane has taken a trip thither after a cousin of Lord Berkeley, who is as simple about her as her own husband is, and has written to Mr. Knight at Paris to furnish her with what money she wants. He says she is vastly to blame, for he was trying to get her a divorce

from Lord Vane, and then would have married her himself. Her adventures are worthy to be bound up with those of my good sister-in-law, the German Princess, and Moll Flanders."—Walpole to Mann, June 14, 1742.]

[Footnote 181: "Adventures of Count Fathom," letter of dedication.]

[Footnote 182: "The Carter and Talbot Correspondence," Ed. by Rev. Montagu Pennington, 1809.]

[Footnote 183: See "The Carter and Talbot Correspondences."]

CHAPTER VII.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CONTINUED.
I.—THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL.
II.—STERNE, JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH, AND OTHERS.
III.—MISS BURNEY, AND THE FEMALE NOVELISTS.
IV.—THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL.

I.

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We have observed in the earlier works of fiction of the eighteenth century, together with great coarseness of thought and manners, the reflection of a strong moral and reforming tendency. As early as the reign of William III, Parliament had requested the king to issue proclamations to justices of the peace, instructing them to put in execution the neglected laws against open licentiousness.[184] In 1698, Collier published his "Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage," a powerful and effective protest against the depravity of the drama. At about the same time had been formed the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, which energetically attacked the more flagrant forms of crime. "England, bad as she is," wrote Defoe in 1706, "is yet a reforming nation; and the work has made more progress from the court even to the street, than, I believe, any nation in the world can parallel in such a time and in such circumstances." Toward the middle of the century, these tendencies took effect in the Methodist Revival, a movement destined to exert a profound influence on society. Accompanying this revival, or resulting from it, were many important reforms. The corruption of political life gradually diminished. A new patriotism and unselfishness began to appear in public men. A spirit of philanthropy arose which corrected some of the worst social abuses. Under the leadership of the noble John Howard, the prisons, so long the abandoned haunts of squalor, oppression, and misery, were considerably redeemed from their shameful condition. Beau Nash marked the progress of peaceful and law-abiding habits by formally forbidding the wearing of swords wherever his fashionable authority was recognized. In the fiction of the latter half of the eighteenth century is illustrated a gradual transition of morals and taste from the unbridled coarseness of the century's earlier years to the comparative refinement of our own times.

There lived in Sussex about the time of the Methodist revival, a thriving shopkeeper named Thomas Turner. He had received a good education, and in early life had been a schoolmaster. On reading "Clarissa" he had exclaimed, what would have gladdened the heart of Richardson: "Oh, may the Supreme Being give me grace to lead my life in such a manner as my exit may in some measure be like that divine creature's!" His literary tastes were so pronounced and varied that in the space of six weeks he had read Gray's "Poems," Stewart "On the Supreme Being," the "Whole Duty of Man," "Paradise Lost and Regained," "Othello," the "Universal Magazine," Thomson's "Seasons," Young's "Night Thoughts," Tournefort's "Voyage to the Levant," and "Perigrine Pickle." This scholarly tradesman kept a diary, in which he recorded his thoughts, his studies, and his amusements with a frankness which deserves the thanks of posterity. Some passages of his diary, in their illustration of the combination of licence, coarseness, and moral earnestness characteristic of the writer's time may greatly assist us in appreciating the power and influence of the religious revival.[185]

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“I went to the audit and came home drunk. But I think never to exceed the bounds of moderation more. * * * “Sunday, 28th, went down to Jones’, where we drank one bowl of punch and two muggs of bumboo; and I came home again in liquor. Oh, with what horrors does it fill my heart, to think I should be guilty of doing so, and on a Sunday, too! Let me once more endeavour, never, no never, to be guilty of the same again. * * * I read part of the fourth volume of the *Tatler*; the oftener I read it, the better I like it. I think I never found the vice of drinking so well exploded in my life, as in one of the numbers.” In January, 1751, “Mr. Elless (the schoolmaster), Marchant, myself, and wife sat down to whist about seven o’clock, and played all night; very pleasant, and I think I may say innocent mirth, there being no oaths nor imprecations sounding from side to side, as is too often the case at cards.” February 2, “we supped at Mr. Fuller’s, and spent the evening with a great deal of mirth, till between one and two. Tho, Fuller brought my wife home on his back, I cannot say I came home sober, though I was far from being bad company. I think we spent the evening with a great deal of pleasure.” March 7th, a party met at Mr. Joseph Fuller’s, “drinking,” records our diarist, “like horses, as the vulgar phrase is, and singing, till many of us were very drunk, and then we went to dancing, and pulling of wigs, caps, and hats; and thus we continued in this frantic manner, behaving more like mad people than they that profess the name of Christians.” Three days after, the same amusements are enjoyed at the house of Mr. Porter, the clergyman of the parish, except “there was no swearing and ill words, by reason of which Mr. Porter calls it innocent mirth, but I in opinion differ much therefrom.” Mr. Turner had no great reason to respect the opinion of clergymen on such matters. Soon after, “Mr. ——, the curate of Laughton, came to the shop in the forenoon, and he having bought some things of me (and I could wish he had paid for them), dined with me, and also staid in the afternoon till he got in liquor, and being so complaisant as to keep him company, I was quite drunk. How do I detest myself for being so foolish!” A little later, Mr, Turner attended a vestry meeting, at which “we had several warm arguments, and several vollies of execrable oaths oftentime redounded from almost all parts of the room.

“About 4 P.M. I walked down to Whyly. We played at bragg the first part of the even. After ten we went to supper, on four broiled chicken, four boiled ducks, minced veal, cold roast goose, chicken pastry, and ham. Our company, Mr. and Mrs. Porter, Mr. and Mrs. Coates, Mrs. Atkins, Mrs. Hicks, Mr. Piper and wife, Joseph Fuller and wife, Tho. Fuller and wife, Dame Durrant, myself and wife, and Mr. French’s family. After supper our behaviour was far from that of serious, harmless mirth; it was downright obstreperious, mixed with a great deal of folly and stupidity. Our diversion

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was dancing or jumping about, without a violin or any musick, singing of foolish healths, and drinking all the time as fast as it could be well poured down; and the parson of the parish was one among the mixed multitude. If conscience dictates right from wrong, as doubtless it sometimes does, mine is one that I may say is soon offended: for, I must say, I am always very uneasy at such behavior, thinking it not like the behaviour of the primitive Christians, which, I imagine, was most in conformity to our Saviour's gospel.

"Thursday, Feb, 25th. This morning, about six o'clock, just as my wife was got to bed, we was awaked by Mrs. Porter, who pretended she wanted some cream of tartar; but as soon as my wife got out of bed, she vowed she should come down. She found Mr. Porter (the clergyman), Mr. Fuller, and his wife, with a lighted candle, and part of a bottle of port wine and a glass. The next thing was to have me down stairs, which being apprised of, I fastened my door. Up stairs they came, and threatened to break it open; so I ordered the boys to open it, when they poured into my room; and as modesty forbid me to get out of bed, so I refrained; but their immodesty permitted them to draw me out of bed, as the phrase is, topsy-turvey; but, however, at the intercession of Mr. Porter, they permitted me to put on * * * my wife's petticoats; and in this manner they made me dance, without shoes and stockings, until they had emptied a bottle of wine, and also a bottle of my beer. * * * About three o'clock in the afternoon, they found their way to their respective homes, beginning to be a little serious, and, in my opinion, ashamed of their stupid enterprise and drunken perambulation. Now let any one call in reason to his assistance, and reflect seriously on what I have before recited, and they will join me in thinking that the precepts delivered from the pulpit on Sunday, though delivered with the greatest ardour, must lose a great deal of there efficacy by such examples."

Such were the amusements and such the moral reflections of a country tradesman in the middle of the last century, Fielding, Smollett, and the other novelists described the same kind of life: the same succession of brawls, drunken sprees, cock-fights, boxing matches, and bull-baitings. It would be difficult to imagine a state of society more ripe for a revival. Mr. Thomas Turner had moral and religious aspirations, but these could not be satisfied by the clergyman of his parish or the curate of Laughton, the companions of his debauches but not the sharers of his remorse. When the clergy were sincere and moral, they were still too cold and commonplace to seriously influence their flocks. The sermons of the time were at best, moral essays, teaching little, as Mr. Lecky says, "that might not have been taught by disciples of Socrates and Confucius." They might encourage honesty and temperance where those virtues already existed, but they had no spell to arouse religious

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feelings, nor to reclaim the vicious. How great, then, must have been the effect of the impassioned eloquence of a Whitefield, which could draw tears from thousands of hardened colliers, upon such a society as that of Mr. Turner and his friends, accustomed only to the discourses of their boon companion, the Rev. Mr. Porter. The prevailing licence and the prevailing moral consciousness were elements especially adapted to the work of the religious revivalist. The effect of the sermons of Berridge is thus described by an eye-witness[186]:

I heard many cry out, especially children, whose agonies were amazing. One of the eldest, a girl of ten or twelve years old, was full in my view, in violent contortions of body, and weeping aloud, I think incessantly, during the whole service. * * * While poor sinners felt the sentence of death in their souls, what sounds of distress did I hear! Some shrieking, some roaring aloud. The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life. And indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish. Great numbers wept without any noise; others fell down as dead; some sinking in silence; some with extreme noise and violent agitation. I stood on the pew seat, as did a young man in an opposite pew—an able-bodied, fresh, healthy countryman. But in a moment, when he seemed to think of nothing less, down he dropped with a violence inconceivable. The adjoining pews seemed shook with his fall. I heard afterward the stamping of his feet, ready to break the boards as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew. * * * Among the children who felt the arrows of the Almighty I saw a sturdy boy about eight years old, who roared above his fellows, and seemed, in his agony, in struggle with the strength of a grown man. His face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid his hand turned either red or almost black. * * * A stranger, well dressed, who stood facing me, fell backward to the wall; then forward on his knees, wringing his hands and roaring like a bull. His face at first turned quite red, then almost black. He rose and ran against the wall till Mr. Keeling and another held him. He screamed out “Oh! what shall I do? what shall I do? Oh, for one drop of the blood of Christ!”

These were violent remedies, but they were applied to a powerful disease. If the revivalists did harm by the religious terrorism which they excited, they yet had a powerful and wide-spread influence for good. They awakened religious feelings among the people, and diffused a new earnestness among the clergy. A spirit of philanthropy was born with their teachings which has gone on growing until it now extends a protecting arm even to brutes. The societies for the prevention of cruelty to children and to animals are part of a great philanthropic movement which began at the end of the eighteenth century, which has carried into

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practical, every-day life the spirit of Christianity, and has given to the words mercy and charity, the signification of real and existing virtues. Horses, dogs, even rats, are now more safe from wanton brutality than great numbers of men and women in the eighteenth century. To any one who studies that period, the stocks, the whipping post, the gibbet, cock fights, prize-fights, bull-baitings, accounts of rapes, are simply the outward signs of an all-pervading cruelty. If he opens a novel, he finds that the story turns on brutality in one form or other. It is not only in such novels as those of Fielding and Smollett, which are intended to describe the lower classes of society, and in which blackened eyes and broken heads are relished forms of wit, that the modern reader is offended by the continual infliction of pain. Goldsmith gives Squire Thornhill perfect impunity from the law and from public opinion in his crimes. Mackenzie does not think of visiting any legal retribution on his “Man of the World.” Godwin wrote “Caleb Williams” to show with what impunity man preyed on man, how powerless the tenant and the dependent woman lay before the violence or the intrigue of the rich. And it is not only that a crime should be committed with perfect security which would now receive a severe sentence at the hands of an ordinary judge and jury which surprises the reader of to-day, but that scenes which would now shock any person of common humanity or taste, were, in the last century, especially intended to amuse. In Miss Burney’s “Evelina,” Captain Mirvan continually insults and maltreats *Mme*. Duval, the grandmother of the heroine, in a manner which would not only be inconceivable in a gentleman tolerated in society, but in a blackguard, not entirely bereft of feelings of decency or good-nature. While she is a guest in his own house, he torments her with false accounts of the sufferings of a friend; sends her on a futile errand to relieve those sufferings in a carriage of his own, and then, disguised as a highwayman, he assaults her with the collusion of his servants, tears her clothes, and leaves her half dead with terror, tied with ropes, at the bottom of a ditch. When *Mme*. Duval relates her ill-treatment to her granddaughter, Evelina could only find occasion to say: “Though this narrative almost compelled me to laugh, yet I was really irritated with the captain, for carrying his love of tormenting—sport, he calls it to such harshness and unjustifiable extremes.” And Miss Burney expected, no doubt with reason, that her reader would be amused by all this.

In the same work a nobleman and a fashionable commoner are described as settling a bet by a race between two decrepit women over eighty years of age. “When the signal was given for them to set off, the poor creatures, feeble and frightened, ran against each other: and neither of them being able to support the shock, they both fell on the ground. * * * Again they set off, and hobbled along, nearly even

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with each other, for some time, yet frequently, to the inexpressible diversion of the company, they stumbled and tottered. * * * Not long after, a foot of one of the poor women slipped, and with great force she came again to the ground. * * * Mr. Coverley went himself to help her, and insisted that the other should stop. A debate ensued, but the poor creature was too much hurt to move, and declared her utter inability to make another attempt. Mr. Coverley was quite brutal; he swore at her with unmanly rage, and seemed scarce able to refrain even from striking her." It would be impossible perhaps to find a party of the upper ranks gathered at a country house at the present time, composed of persons who could have endured, without remonstrance, such treatment of a pair of superannuated horses; yet Miss Burney describes the efforts and sufferings of these old women as affording inexpressible diversion to the ladies and gentlemen who figure in her novel, and she evidently expects the reader to be equally entertained. "Evelina" was written by a young woman who saw the best society, who was maid of honor to Queen Charlotte, who was universally admired for her delicacy and her talents, and whose novels are among the most refined of the time.

The higher ranks were much less influenced by the religious revival than the lower. Although certainly not less in need of reformation, they were far less inclined to welcome it. The fashionable indifference to religion was an obstacle which Wesley found much more difficult to overcome than the brutal ignorance of the inmates of Newgate. After listening to a sermon by Whitefield, Bolingbroke complimented the preacher by saying that he had "done great justice to the divine attributes." The Duchess of Buckingham's remarks on the preaching of the Methodists, in a letter to Lady Huntingdon, are an amusing commentary on the times. "I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect toward their superiors, in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good-breeding."[187] High rank and good-breeding, however, in the society of which the Duchess of Buckingham was so proud, were not considered inconsistent with habitual drunkenness, indecency, and profanity. The vices which "the common wretches that crawl the earth" practised in addition to these, her Grace would have had difficulty in mentioning.

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Still, in the latter half of the eighteenth century is to be traced a continual improvement, which is reflected in contemporary fiction. As a remarkable example of the change which took place may be mentioned the instance of the Earl of March. "As Duke of Queensberry, at nearer ninety than eighty years of age, he was still rolling in wealth, still wallowing in sin, and regarded by his countrymen as one whom it was hardly decent to name, because he did not choose, out of respect for the public opinion of 1808, to discontinue a mode of existence which in 1768 was almost a thing of course" among the higher ranks.[188]

[Footnote 184: Wilson's "Memoirs of Daniel Defoe."]

[Footnote 185: For the diary of Thomas Turner, see "Glimpses of our Ancestors," by Charles Fleet, pp. 31-52.]

[Footnote 186: For these manifestations, see Wesley's "Journal," and Lecky's "History of England in the Eighteenth Century," vol. II, chap. ix.]

[Footnote 187: Lecky, "Hist. of England in the 18th Century," vol. ii, chap. 9.]

[Footnote 188: See Trevelyan's "Early History of Charles James Fox," Harper's ed., p. 75.]

II.

In 1759, were published the first two volumes of "Tristram Shandy," a singular and brilliant medley of wit, sentiment, indecency, and study of character. Laurence Sterne was a profligate clergyman, a dishonest author, and an unfaithful husband. He wrote "Tristram Shandy," and he wrote a great many sermons. He descended to the indulgence of low tastes, and rose to an elevated strain of thought, with equal facility. He was a man who knew the better and followed the worse. His talents made him a welcome guest at great men's tables, where he paid for his dinner by amusing the company with a brilliant succession of witticisms and indecent anecdotes, which, to his hearers, derived an additional piquancy from the fact that they proceeded from the mouth of a divine. But although the man was in many respects contemptible, although he disgraced his priestly character by his profligacy, and his literary character by a shameless plagiarism,[189] he possessed in a high degree a quality which must give him a distinguished place in English fiction. His borrowed plumage and his imitation of Rabelais' style apart, Sterne had originality, a gift at all times rare, and always, perhaps, becoming rarer. As a humorist, he is to be classed with Fielding and Smollett, but as a novelist, his position in the history of fiction is separate and unique.

"Tristram Shandy" has all the elements of a novel except the plot. The author has no story to tell. His aim is to amuse the reader by odd and whimsical remarks on every

subject and on every personage whose peculiarities promise material for humor and satire. Sterne is perpetually digressing, moralizing commenting on every trivial topic which enters into his story, until the story itself is completely

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lost, if, indeed, it can be said ever to have been begun. The absence of arrangement is so marked that it is very difficult to turn to a passage which in a previous perusal has struck the eye. The eccentricity and whimsicality of the book contributed greatly to its immediate popularity. But the same characteristics which seem brilliant when novel, soon become dull when familiar, and although "Tristram Shandy" will always afford single passages of lasting interest to the lover of literature, the work as a whole is not a little tedious when read continuously from cover to cover.

In the course of his literary medley, Sterne introduces his reader to a group of characters amongst the most odd and original in fiction. Mr. Shandy, with his syllogisms and his hypotheses, his "close reasoning upon the smallest matters"; Yorick, the witty parson, whose epitaph, *Alas! Poor Yorick!* expresses so tenderly the amiable faults for which he suffered; Captain Shandy, that combination of simplicity, gentleness, humanity, and modesty, are all creations which deserve to rank with the most individual and happily conceived of fictitious personages. Sterne makes a character known to the reader by a succession of delicate touches rather than by description. He seems to enter into an individual, and make him betray his peculiarities by significant actions and phrases. Thus Mr. Shandy exposes at once the nature of his mind and the vigor of his "hobby-horse," when he exclaims to his brother Toby: "What is the character of a family to an hypothesis?"

The combination of sentiment, pathos, and humor which Sterne sometimes reached with remarkable success, is particularly apparent in every incident which concerns the celebrated Captain Toby Shandy, for the creation of which character this author may most easily be forgiven his indecencies and his literary thefts. Uncle Toby's sympathy with Lefevre, a poor army officer, on his way to join his regiment, who died in an inn near Shandy's house, is exquisitely painted throughout, and the colloquy between the captain and his faithful servant, Corporal Trim, when the death of the officer is imminent, is probably the finest passage which ever fell from the skilful pen of Laurence Sterne:

A sick brother-officer should have the best quarters, Trim; and if we had him with us,—-we could tend and look to him.—Thou art an excellent nurse thyself, Trim: and what with thy care of him, and the old woman's, and his boy's, and mine together, we might recruit him again at once, and set him upon his legs.—In a fortnight or three weeks, added my uncle Toby, smiling, he might march.—He will never march, an' please your Honour, in this world, said the Corporal.—He *will* march, said my uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed with one shoe off.—An' please your Honour, said the Corporal, he will never march but to his grave. He *shall* march, cried my uncle Toby, marching the foot which

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had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—he *shall* march to his regiment.—He cannot stand it, said the Corporal.—He shall be supported, said my uncle Toby.—He'll drop at last, said the Corporal, and what will become of his boy? He *shall not* drop said my uncle Toby, firmly,—Ah, well-a-day!—do what we can for him, said Trim, maintaining his point,—the poor soul will die.—*He shall not die, by G*—, cried my uncle Toby.—The *accusing spirit*, which flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in;—and the *recording angel*, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.[190]

"Ye, who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia." Thus begins the famous tale which Dr. Johnson made the repository of so much of his wisdom, and so beautiful an example of English style. Rasselas and his royal brothers and sisters live in a secluded portion of the earth known as the Happy Valley, where, completely isolated from the world, they await their succession to the crown of the imaginary land of Abyssinia, surrounded by every luxury which can make life agreeable, and shut off from all knowledge of those evils which can make it painful. The aim of the story is to show the vanity of expecting perfect happiness, and the folly of sacrificing present advantages for the delusive promises of the future.

The scene opens in the Happy Valley, where there is all that labor or danger can procure or purchase, without either labor to be endured or danger to be dreaded. Rasselas illustrates the habitual discontent of man by wearying of the monotonous happiness of his royal home, and, together with his sister Nekayah, who shares his ennui, and Imlac, a man of learning, he escapes from the abode of changeless joys and perpetual merriment.

Once beyond the barriers of the Happy Valley, Rasselas and Nekayah seek in the various ranks and conditions of men the abode of true happiness. It is sought in vain amidst the hollow and noisy pleasures of the young and thoughtless; in vain among philosophers, whose theories so ill accord with their practice; in vain among shepherds, whose actual life contrasts so painfully with the descriptions of the poet; in vain in crowds, where sorrow lurks beneath the outward smile; in vain in the cell of the hermit, who counts the days till he shall once more mix with the world. The task becomes more hopeless with each new disappointment. Rasselas pursues his investigation among the higher ranks, in courts and cities; Nekayah, hers among the poor and humble, in the shop and the hamlet. But when the brother and sister meet to share their experiences, they both have the same tale to tell of human discontent. Finally, in returning disappointed to Abyssinia, they illustrate the tendency among men to look back with regret on the early pleasures of life, abandoned for the impossible happiness which discontent had taught them to seek.

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On this slight thread of narrative, Johnson strung his thoughts with great felicity. The characters, by the different view which they entertain of life, are distinct and individual. The book is filled with pregnant and beautiful passages, which leave a deep impression on the reader. The words in which Imlac describes to the Prince and Princess the dangers of an unrestrained imagination, might, with equal propriety, find a place in a scientific treatise on the causes of insanity, and in a collection of beautiful literary extracts:

To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wing, is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. When we are alone, we are not always busy; the labour of excogitation is too violent to last long; the ardour of inquiry will sometimes give way to idleness or satiety. He who has nothing external that can divert him, must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not; for who is pleased with what he is? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind dances from scene to scene, unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow.In time, some particular train of ideas fixes the attention; all other intellectual gratifications are rejected; the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favorite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees, the reign of fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious, and in time, despotic. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish.[191]

The resemblance between Johnson's "Rasselas" and Voltaire's "Candide" is so marked, that had either author seen the other's work, he must have been suspected of imitation. But while both these great minds were writing at nearly the same time on the same theme of human misery, the lessons they taught differed in a manner which is strongly illustrative of the differences between the two men and their respective surroundings. French scepticism and distrust of divine power led Voltaire to impute human griefs to the incapacity of the Creator. But Johnson, writing "Rasselas" in an hour of sorrow, to obtain means to pay for his mother's funeral, taught that that happiness, which this world can not afford, should be sought in the prospect of another and a better.[192]

All readers of Boswell know how the "Vicar of Wakefield" found a publisher. How Goldsmith's landlady arrested him for his rent, and how he wrote to Johnson in his distress. How the kind lexicographer sent a guinea at once, and followed to find the guinea already changed, and a bottle of Madeira before the persecuted but philosophical author. How Johnson put the cork in the bottle, and after a hasty glance at the MS. of the "Vicar of Wakefield," went out and sold it for sixty pounds. And how triumphantly Goldsmith rated his landlady.

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In the hands of that bookseller, who purchased the novel as much out of charity as in hope of profit, the “Vicar of Wakefield” remained neglected, until the publication of “The Traveler” had made the author famous. This interval would have afforded Goldsmith ample time to correct the obvious inconsistencies and faults which his work contained. But in the spirit of a man who depended on his pen for his bread, he made no effort to improve what had already brought him all this remuneration for which he could hope. This is the more to be regretted, that very little revision would have been sufficient, to make the “Vicar of Wakefield” as perfect in its construction as in its style and spirit. “There are a hundred faults in this thing,” says the preface, “and a hundred things might be said to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity. The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth;—he is a priest, a husbandman, and the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey—as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity.”

These few words are not an inaccurate statement of the merits and demerits of the “Vicar of Wakefield.” Faults there are, certainly. The improbability of Sir William Thornhill’s being able to go about among his own tenantry *incognito*, without other disguise than a change of dress; the inconsistency of the philanthropist’s allowing his villainous nephew to retain possession of the wealth which he used only to assist him in his crimes; and, finally, the impossibility of that nephew’s being so nearly of an age with Sir William himself, when he must have been the son of a younger brother, are all blemishes which Goldsmith might easily have removed, had he not relied on the opinion which he expressed in Chapter xv, “the reputation of books is raised, not by their freedom from defect, but by the greatness of their beauties.”

Such a rule would be an obviously dangerous one for an author to follow. But Goldsmith’s confidence in the beauties of his novel was fully justified by the verdict of the world. No novelist has more deeply imbued his work with his own genius and spirit, and none have had a more beneficent genius, nor a more beautiful spirit to impart than the author of “The Deserted Village.” The exquisite style, the delicate choice of words, the amiability of sentiment, so peculiarly his own, and so well suited to express the simple beauty of his thoughts, give a charm to the work which familiarity can only endear. Dr. Primrose, preserving his simplicity, his modesty, and his nobility of character alike when surrounded by the pleasures of his early and prosperous home, when struggling with the hardships of his ruined fortune, and when rewarded at last by the surfeit of good-fortune which follows his trial, stands high among the most noble conceptions of English fiction. “We read the ‘Vicar of Wakefield,’” said the great Sir Walter, “in youth and in age. We return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.”

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Goethe, when in his eighty-first year, declared that Goldsmith's novel "was his delight at the age of twenty, that it had in a manner formed a part of his education, influencing his tastes and feelings throughout life, and that he had recently read it again from beginning to end, with renewed delight, and with a grateful sense of the early benefit derived from it." "Rogers, the Nestor of British literature, whose refined purity of taste and exquisite mental organization rendered him eminently calculated to appreciate a work of the kind, declared that of all the books, which, through the fitful changes of three generations he had seen rise and fall, the charm of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' had alone continued as at first; and could he revisit the world after an interval of many more generations, he should as surely look to find it undiminished." So wrote Washington Irving; and if the reader is inclined to look for the causes of the extraordinary endurance of Goldsmith's work, he can find them nowhere better stated than in the words of John Forster: "Not in those graces of style, nor even in that home-cherished gallery of familiar faces can the secret of its extraordinary fascination be said to consist. It lies nearer the heart. A something which has found its way *there*; which, while it amused, has made us happier; which, gently interweaving itself with our habits of thought, has increased our good-humour and charity; which, insensibly it may be, has corrected wilful impatiences of temper, and made the world's daily accidents easier and kinder to us all; somewhat thus should be expressed, I think, the charm of the 'Vicar of Wakefield.'"

In 1760 was published "Chrysal, the Adventures of a Guinea," by Charles Johnstone, the author of several deservedly forgotten novels.[193] The first volume was sent to Dr. Johnson for his opinion, who thought, as Boswell tells us, that it should be published—-an estimate justified by the considerable circulation which the book enjoyed.

Chrysal is an elementary spirit, whose abode is in a piece of gold converted into a guinea. In that form the spirit passes from man to man, and takes accurate note of the different scenes of which it becomes a witness. This is a natural and favorable medium for a satire, which Johnstone probably owed, in some measure, both to the "Diable Boiteux" of Gil Blas, and the "Adventures of a Halfpenny" of Dr. Bathurst. The circulation of the guinea enables the author to describe the characteristics of its possessors as seen by a truthful witness, and he has taken advantage of his opportunity to produce one of the most disgusting records of vice in literature. A depraved mind only could find any pleasure in reading "Chrysal," and whoever is obliged to read it from cover to cover for the purpose of describing it to others, must find himself, at the end of his task, in sore vexation of spirit. Human depravity is never an agreeable subject for a work of entertainment,

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and while Swift's genius holds the reader fascinated with the horror of his Yahoos, the ability of a Manley or a Johnstone is not sufficient to aid the reader in wading through their vicious expositions of corruption. It must be said that Johnstone had some excuse. If he were to satirize society at all, it was better that he should do it thoroughly; that he should expose official greed and dishonesty, the orgies of Medenham Abbey, the infamous extortions of trading justices, in all their native ugliness. It must be said that the time in which he lived presented many features to the painter of manners which could not look otherwise than repulsive on his canvas. But his zeal to expose the vices of his age led him into doing great injustice to some persons, and into grossly libelling others. He imputed crimes to individuals of which he could have had no knowledge; and he shamefully misrepresented the Methodists and the Jews. If Johnstone had wished to see how offensive a book he might write, and how disgusting and indecent a book the public of his day would read and applaud, he might well have brought "Chrysal" into the world. If he had intended, by exposing crime, to check it, he had better have burned his manuscript. He has added one other corruption to those he exposed, and one other evidence of the lack of taste and decency which characterized his time. No man can plead the intention of a reformer as an excuse for placing before the world the scenes and suggestions of unnatural crime which sully the pages of "Chrysal," and if men do, in single instances, fall below the level of brutes, he who gloats over their infamy and publishes their contagious guilt deserves some share of their odium.

The novels of Henry Mackenzie have a charm of their own, which may be largely attributed to the fact that their author was a gentleman. Whoever has read, to any extent, the works of fiction of the eighteenth century, must have observed how perpetually he was kept in low company, how rarely he met with a character who had the instincts as well as the social position of a gentleman. A tone of refined sentiment and dignity pervades "The Man of Feeling," which recalls the "Vicar of Wakefield," and introduces the reader to better company and more elevated thoughts than the novels of the time usually afford. "The Man of Feeling" is hardly a narrative. Harley, the chief character, is a sensitive, retiring man, with feelings too fine for his surroundings. The author places him in various scenes, and traces the effect which each produces upon his character. The effect of the work is agreeable, though melancholy, and the early death of Harley completes the delineation of a man too gentle and too sensitive to battle with life.

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In his next novel Mackenzie described the counterpart of Harley, “The Man of the World.” Almost any writer of the present day who took a man of the world for his hero, would draw him as a calm, philosophical person, neither very good nor very bad,—one who took the pleasures and troubles of life as they came, without quarrelling with either. But the man of the world as Mackenzie paints him, and as the eighteenth century made him, was quite another individual. Sir Thomas Sindall is a villain of the heroic type. Not one, simply, who does all the injury and commits all the crimes which chance brings in his way. He labors with a ceaseless persistency, and a resolution which years do not diminish, to seduce a single woman. Without any apparent passion, he finally accomplishes his object by force, after having spent several years in ruining her brother to prevent his interference. The long periods of time, the great expenditure of vital energy, and the exhaustless fund of brutality which are consumed by the fictitious villains of the eighteenth century in gratifying what would seem merely a passing inclination, astonish the reader of to-day. The crime of rape, rarely now introduced into fiction, and rarely figuring even in criminal courts, is a common incident in old novels, and as commonly, remains unpunished. In Sir Thomas Sindall, Mackenzie meant to present a contrast to the delicate and benevolent character of Harley. Both are extremes, the one of sensibility, the other of brutality. Harley was a new creation, but Sindall quite a familiar person, with whom all readers of the novels of the last century have often associated.

It was suggested very sensibly to Mackenzie, that the interest of most works of fiction depended on the *designing* villainy of one or more characters, and that in actual life calamities were more often brought about by the innocent errors of the sufferers. To place this view before his readers, Mackenzie wrote “Julia de Roubigne,” in which a wife brings death upon herself and her husband by indiscreetly, though innocently, arousing his jealousy. Sir Walter Scott ranked this novel among the “most heart-wringing histories” that ever were written—a description which justly becomes it. Mackenzie’s aim was less to weave a complicated plot, than to study and move the heart; and to the lover of sentiment his novels may still be attractive.

The “Fool of Quality,” by Henry Brooke, has had a singular history. The author was a young Irishman of a fine figure, a well-stored mind, and a disposition of particular gentleness. He was loved by Pope and Lyttleton, caressed by the Prince of Wales, and honored by the friendly interest of Jonathan Swift. Married before he was twenty-one to a young girl who presented him with three children before she was eighteen, his life was a constant struggle to provide for a family which increased with every year. After a long period of active life, passed in literary occupations, he retired to an obscure

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part of Ireland, and there died, attended by a daughter, the only survivor of twenty-two children, who remembered nothing of her father “previous to his retirement from the world; and knew little of him, save that he bore the infirmities and misfortunes of his declining years with the heroism of true Christianity, and that he was possessed of virtues and feelings which shone forth to the last moment of his life, unimpaired by the distractions of pain, and unshaken amid the ruins of genius."[194]

The “Fool of Quality” was first published in 1766, and received a moderate share of public attention. Its narrative was extremely slight. Harry, the future Earl of Moreland, was stolen from his parents by an uncle in disguise; and the five volumes of the work consist almost entirely of an account of the education of the child, and the various incidents which affected or illustrated his mental growth. One day John Wesley chanced to meet with it, and although he required his followers “to read only such books as tend to the knowledge and love of God,” he was tempted to look into this particular novel. The “whimsical title” at first offended him, but as he proceeded, he became so enthusiastic over the moral excellence of the work, that he expunged some offensive passages it contained, and republished it for the benefit of the Methodists. “I now venture to recommend the following treatise,” said Wesley to his people, “as the most excellent in its kind that I have seen either in the English or any other language. * * * It perpetually aims at inspiring and increasing every right affection; at the instilling gratitude to God and benevolence to man. And it does this not by dry, dull, tedious, precepts, but by the liveliest examples that can be conceived; by setting before your eyes one of the most beautiful pictures that ever was drawn in the world. The strokes of this are so delicately fine, the touches so easy, natural, and affecting, that I know not who can survey it with tearless eyes, unless he has a heart of stone. I recommend it, therefore, to all those who are already, or who desire to be, lovers of God and man.” It was not as a good novel that Wesley either enjoyed or republished the “Fool of Quality.” He recommended it for the excellence of its moral, and the “Fool of Quality” would have been allowed to slumber forever on Methodist book-shelves, had it not been revived by a man who was an equally good judge of a moral and a work of fiction.

But, in regard to this novel, it must be admitted that Charles Kingsley’s judgment was seriously at fault. He saw both its qualities and its faults, but he did not realize that a good purpose will not make up for a poor execution. The causes of the neglect of the book, said the Canon in his preface, are to be found “in its deep and grand ethics, in its broad and genial humanity, in the divine value which it attaches to the relations of husband and wife, father and child, and to the utter absence,

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both of that sentimentalism and that superstition which have been alternately debauching of late years the minds of the young. And if he shall have arrived at this discovery, he will be able possibly to regard at least with patience those who are rash enough to affirm that they have learnt from this book more which is pure, sacred, and eternal, than from any which has been published since Spenser's 'Fairy Queen.'"[195] On the testimony of Wesley and of Kingsley, all the merits of a moral nature which they claim for the "Fool of Quality" will readily be accorded to it. But it is very doubtful that such qualities would necessarily interfere with the success of a work of fiction. The real reason why very few who can help it will read this novel, lies in those characteristics which Kingsley himself admitted would appear to the average reader. "The plot is extravagant as well as ill-woven, and broken, besides, by episodes as extravagant as itself. The morality is quixotic, and practically impossible. The sermonizing, whether theological or social, is equally clumsy and obtrusive. Without artistic method, without knowledge of human nature and the real world, the book can never have touched many hearts and can touch none now."[196]

It is singular that Kingsley should have expected that a book with so many and so evident faults could have remained popular simply because its moral was a good one. If he had sat down to warn the world against Henry Brooke's novel, he could hardly have expressed himself with more effect. Whatever merit it may have is buried under a mass of dulness almost impossible to penetrate, and a silliness pervades the characters and the conversations which makes even the lighter portions unreadable. The "Fool of Quality" has all the drawbacks of a novel of purpose in an exaggerated form. The improvement of his reader is a laudable object for a novelist. But it is an object which can be successfully carried out in a work of art, only very indirectly. An author may have a great influence for good, but that influence can be obtained, not by deliberate sermonizing, but only by tone of healthy sentiment which insensibly elevates the reader's mind.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the number and variety of works of fiction rapidly increased. William Beckford, whom Byron calls in "Childe Harold," "Vathek, England's wealthiest son," wrote in his twentieth year the oriental romance "Vathek," which excited great attention at the time. It was composed in three days and two nights, during which the author never took off his clothes. Byron considered this tale superior to "Rasselas." It represented the downward career of an oriental prince, who had given himself up to sensual indulgence, and who is allured by a Giaour into the commission of crimes which lead him to everlasting and horrible punishments. "Vathek" gives evidence of a familiarity with oriental customs, and a vividness of imagination which are remarkable in so youthful an author. The descriptions of the Caliph and of the Hall of Eblis are full of power. But in depth of meaning, and in that intrinsic worth which gives endurance to a literary work, it bears no comparison to "Rasselas." The one affords an

hour’s amusement; the other retains its place among those volumes which are read and re-read with constant pleasure and satisfaction.

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The novels of Richard Cumberland, “Henry,” “Arundel,” and “John de Lancaster,” contain some well-drawn characters and readable sketches of life. But Cumberland had little originality. He aimed without success at Fielding’s constructive excellence, and imitated that great master’s humor, only to reproduce his coarseness. The character of Ezekiel Daw, the Methodist, in “Henry,” is fair and just, and contrasts very favorably with the libellous representations of the Methodist preachers in Graves’ “Spiritual Quixote,” and other contemporary novels. Another writer of fiction of considerable prominence in his day, but of none in ours, was Dr. Moore, whose “Zeluco” contained some very lively “Views of human nature, taken from life and manners, foreign and domestic,” but also some very disagreeable exhibitions of human degradation and vice.

The influence of the French Revolution in England is apparent in the works of several novelists who wrote at the end of the eighteenth century. Thomas Holcroft embodied radical views in novels now quite forgotten.[197] Robert Bage has left four works containing opinions of a revolutionary character—“Barham Downs,” “James Wallace,” “The Fair Syrian,” and “Mount Henneth.” These novels are written in the form of a series of letters and have little narrative interest. The author has striven, sometimes successfully, at a powerful delineation of character, but his works are too evidently a vehicle for his political and philosophical opinions. He represents with unnatural consistency the upper classes as invariably corrupt and tyrannical, and the lower as invariably honest and deserving. His theories are not only inartistically prominent, but are worthless and immoral. He looks upon a tax-gatherer as a thief, and condones feminine unchastity as a trivial and unimportant offence.

The novelist most deeply embued with the doctrines of the French Revolution was William Godwin—a man of great literary ambition, and less literary capacity. His “Life of Chaucer” has the merits of a compilation, but not those of an original literary work. His political and social writings were merely reproductions of French revolutionary views, and were entirely discredited by Malthus’ attacks upon them. The same lack of originality and of independent power characterized Godwin’s novels. They all have a patch-work effect, and in all may be found the traces of imitation. “St. Leon” and “Mandeville"[198] are dull attempts in the direction of the historical novel. “Fleetwood, or the New Man of Feeling” embodies some of the author’s social views, and contains evidence of an imitation of Fielding and Smollett, in which only their coarseness is successfully copied.

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But Godwin gave one book to the world which has acquired a notoriety which entitles it to a more extended notice than its intrinsic merits would otherwise justify. "Caleb Williams" was first published in 1794, and was widely read. Lord Byron is said to have threatened his wife that he would treat her as Falkland had treated Caleb Williams, and this fact brought the novel into prominence with the Byron controversy, and occasioned its republication in the present century. The author tells us that his object was "to comprehend a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man." And this was to be done "without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort (a novel) ought to be characterized." In both his didactic and his artistic purpose the author must be said to have failed. The story is briefly as follows: Falkland, who is represented as a man whose chief thought and consideration consist in guarding his honor from stain, stabs Tyrrel, his enemy, in the back, at night. He then allows two innocent men to suffer for the murder on the gallows. His aim, during the remainder of his life, is to prevent the discovery of his crime and the consequent disgrace to his name. Caleb Williams enters his employment as a secretary, discovers the secret with the greatest ease, and promises never to betray his patron. Williams soon becomes weary of his position, and attempts to escape. He is accused by Falkland of robbery and is imprisoned. He escapes from prison, and wanders about the country, always pursued by the hirelings of his master who use every means to render his life miserable. Finally he openly accuses Falkland of his crime, who confesses it and dies. The story is full of the most evident inconsistencies. There is no adequate reason for Tyrrel's hatred of Falkland, which leads to the murder. It is inconceivable that a man of Falkland's worship of honor should commit so dastardly a crime, and should suffer two innocent men to pay its penalty. The facility with which Falkland allows his secretary to discover a secret which would bring him to the gallows is entirely inconsistent with the strength of mind which the author imputes to his hero. Finally, the confession of crime, after so many years of secrecy, and when conscience must have been blunted by time and habit, is without adequate cause. The characters are very slightly sketched, and excite neither interest nor sympathy. Emily Melville resembles Pamela too closely, and Tyrrel is a poor reproduction of Squire Western.

Godwin tells us that, when thinking over "Caleb Williams," he said to himself a thousand times: "I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before." The effort, and straining after effect which this confession implies, are evident throughout the work. The reader's curiosity is continually excited by the promise of new interest and new developments, but he is as continually disappointed. The main idea of the story is certainly a striking one, but it is feebly carried out. The constitution of society cannot be effectively attacked by so improbable and exceptional an illustration of tyranny as the persecution of Caleb Williams.

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[Footnote 189: It would be difficult to find a more bare-faced and impudent literary theft than the case in which Sterne appropriated to himself the remonstrance of Burton ("Anatomy of Melancholy"), against that very plagiarism which he (Sterne) was then committing. Burton said: “As apothecaries, we make new mixtures, every day pour out of one vessel into another * * * We weave the same web, still twist the same rope again and again.” Sterne says, with an effrontery all his own: “Shall we forever make new books, as apothecaries make new medicines, by pouring only out of one vessel into another? Are we forever to be twisting and untwisting the same rope—forever in the same track? forever at the same pace?” For Sterne’s plagiarism, see Dr. Ferriar’s “Essay and Illustrations,” also Scott’s “Life of Sterne.”]

[Footnote 190: “Tristram Shandy,” orig. ed., vol. viii, chap. 8.]

[Footnote 191: “Rasselas,” chap. xliv. Contrast with Porter on “The Human Intellect,” pp. 371-2.]

[Footnote 192: See Scott’s “Memoir of Johnson.”]

[Footnote 193: “The Reverie,” “The History of Arbaces,” “The Pilgrim,” “The History of John Juniper.”]

[Footnote 194: The facts of Brooke’s life are taken from the introduction to the “Fool of Quality,” by Rev. Charles Kingsley, New York, 1860.]

[Footnote 195: Charles Kingsley, preface to the “Fool of Quality.”]

[Footnote 196: Kingsley’s preface to “Fool of Quality.”]

[Footnote 197: “Alwyn,” “Anna St. Ives,” “Hugh Trevor,” “Bryan Perdue.”]

[Footnote 198: Published in 1817, when the author was far advanced in years.]

III.

The publication of “Evelina,” in 1778, made a sensation which the merits of the work fully justified. The story of Miss Burney’s[199] early life, her furtive attempts at fictitious composition, the great variety of artistic and political characters who passed in review before her observant eyes at Dr. Burney’s house have been made familiar by her own diary and letters. Petted and admired by Johnson, Mrs. Thrale, and the brilliant literary society of which they formed the centre, she lived sufficiently far into the present century to see the works of her early friends enrolled among the classics or consigned to oblivion, and to recognize that the approval of posterity had been added to the early fame of her own writings. As a very young girl, unnoticed by the distinguished persons who frequented her father’s house, she had studied with careful attention the characters

and manners of those who talked and moved about her. A strong desire to reproduce the impressions which filled her mind induced Miss Burney in her sixteenth year to devote her stolen hours of seclusion to fictitious composition. Discouraged in her early efforts by her stepmother, her habits of observation remained active, and took form, when the authoress was twenty five years old, in the famous novel of “Evelina.” The book was issued secretly and anonymously, the publisher even being ignorant of the writer’s true name. But the immediate popularity and admiration which greeted the work soon led to its open acknowledgment by the happy young authoress.

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And “Evelina” fully deserved the praise and interest which it obtained and still excites. The aim was to describe the difficulties and sensations of a young girl just entering life. The heroine chosen by Miss Burney was one whose circumstances particularly well suited her to form the centre of a varied collection of characters and of a comprehensive picture of contemporary society. Well connected on her father’s side, Evelina moved in fashionable circles with the Mirvan family. On account of the origin of her mother she was brought into close contact with humbler personages, with Madame Duval and the Brangtons. Hence this novel presents to the reader a variety of social scenes which gives it a value possessed by no other work of fiction of the eighteenth century. No novelist has described so well or so fully the aspect of the theatres, of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, of Bath in the season, of the ridottos and assemblies of the London fashionable world. The shops, the amusements and the manners of the middle classes are made familiar to Evelina by her association with the Brangtons, and add greatly to the breadth of this valuable picture of metropolitan life. With a feminine attention to detail, and a quick perception of salient characteristics, Miss Burney described the world about her so faithfully and picturesquely as to deserve the thanks of every student of social history. The novel of “Evelina,” the letters of Horace Walpole and Mrs. Delany corroborate each other, and may be appropriately placed on the same shelf in a well-ordered library.

In the painting of manners Miss Burney was eminently successful. But she was hardly less so in a point in which excellence could not have been expected in so youthful a writer. The plot of “Evelina” is constructed with a skill worthy of a veteran. Fielding alone, of the eighteenth century novelists, can be said to surpass Miss Burney in this respect. The whole story of the mischances and misunderstanding of Evelina’s intercourse with Lord Orville, the skill with which the various personages are brought into contact with each other and made to contribute to the final *denoument*, compose a truly artistic success. The introduction of Macartney and his marriage to the supposed daughter of Sir John Belmont form a very happy and effective invention.

In regard to her sketches of character, it may be objected that Miss Burney lacked breadth of treatment, that she dwelt on one distinctive characteristic at the expense of the others. But still, Lord Orville, though somewhat too much of a model, and Mrs. Selwyn, though somewhat too habitually a wit, are vivid and life-like characters. The Brangtons and Sir Clement Willougby are nature itself, and the girlish nature of Evelina is betrayed in her letters with great felicity.

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It is no small triumph for Miss Burney, who has had so many and so deserving competitors in the department of literature to which she contributed, that her novels should have remained in active circulation for more than a century after their publication. "Cecilia" has much the same merits which distinguished "Evelina," and the two novels bid fair to hold their own as long as English fiction retains its popularity. Johnson considered Miss Burney equal to Fielding. But although she possessed qualities similar to his—constructive power and picturesqueness—she possessed them in a lesser degree. In the management of the difficulties of the epistolary form of novel-writing, she surpassed Richardson in verisimilitude and concentration.

Some readers of the present day object to Miss Burney's novels that they contain so many references to "delicacy" and "propriety" that an air of affectation is produced. But at the time when "Evelina" was written, a perpetual discretion in actions and words was absolutely necessary to a young woman who did not wish to be subjected to libertine advances. Society is now so much more generally refined that there is far less danger of such misconstruction, and far less need for a young girl to be always on her guard. A sound objection, on the ground of taste, may be made against the excessively prolonged account of Captain Mirvan's brutalities. The effect might have been as well produced in a much shorter space, and the reader spared the uninteresting scenes which now fill so many repulsive pages. For this defect, however, we must blame the times more than the author.

Charlotte Lennox was the daughter of Sir James Ramsay, Lieutenant governor of New York, where she was born in 1720. When fifteen years of age she was sent to London, and there supported herself by her pen. Johnson said that he had "dined at Mrs. Garrick's with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney: three such women are not to be found. I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all." Such high praise was not called forth by Mrs. Lennox's novels, which have little originality or power. "The Female Quixote" is an entertaining satire on the old French romances, but "Sophia," and "Euphemia" are without any special interest.

A writer of more ability, whose name is still remembered by novel-readers, is Mrs. Inchbald. She was overcome in early life by an enthusiasm for the stage; ran away from home to find theatrical employment, and remained for many years a popular London actress. Although possessed of great and durable beauty, and the object of constant attention from aristocratic admirers, it is believed that her reputation continued unsullied. Her poverty, largely caused by a worthless husband, obliged her to perform the most menial labors. She rejoiced on one occasion that the approach of warmer weather released her from the duty of making fires, scouring the grate, sifting the cinders, and of going up and down three pair of long stairs with water or dirt. All this Mrs. Inchbald thought that she could cheerfully bear, but the labor of being a fine lady the remainder of the day was almost too much for her. "Last Thursday," she wrote to a

friend, “I finished scouring my bed-chamber, while a coach with a coronet and two footmen waited at the door to take me an airing.”

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The same courage and industry were carried by Mrs. Inchbald into her literary labors, the profits of which enabled her to live with considerable comfort toward the end of her life. She left a large number of plays, many of which had been acted with success, and two novels, “A Simple Story,” published in 1791, and “Nature and Art,” published five years later. Neither of these works has much merit from a critical point of view. They are faulty in construction, and give frequent evidence of the authoress’ lack of education.

Yet, in her ability to excite the interest and to move the feelings of her reader, Mrs. Inchbald met with great success. Her novels are of the pathetic order, and appeal to the sympathies with a sometimes powerful effect. Maria Edgeworth was deeply moved by the “Simple Story.” “Its effect upon my feelings,” she said after reading it for the fourth time, “was as powerful as at the first reading; I never read *any* novel—I except none,—I never read any novel that affected me so strongly, or that so completely possessed me with the belief in the real existence, of all the persons it represents. I never once recollected the author whilst I was reading it; never said or thought, *that’s a fine sentiment*,—or, *that is well expressed*—or, *that is well invented*; I believed all to be real, and was affected as I should be by the real scenes, if they had passed before my eyes; it is truly and deeply pathetic.”

The sisters, Harriet and Sophia Lee, wrote a number of stories gathered together under the rather unfortunate title of “The Canterbury Tales,” which had a long-continued popularity. “The Young Lady’s Tale,” and “The Clergyman’s Tale” were written by Sophia; all the others, together with the novel “Errors of Innocence,” belonged to Harriet. These stories have great narrative interest, and contain some powerfully drawn characters. Byron was deeply affected by some of them. Of the “German’s Tale,” he confessed: “It made a deep impression on me, and may be said to contain the germ of much that I have since written.” It not only contained the germ of “Werner,” but supplied the whole material for that tragedy. All the characters of the novel are reproduced by Byron except “Ida,” whom he added. The plan of Miss Lee’s work is exactly followed, as the poet admitted, and even the language is frequently adopted without essential change.

Charlotte Smith was a woman of talent and imagination who was driven to literature for aid in supporting a large family abandoned by their spendthrift father. She was among the most prolific novelists of her time, but only one work, “The Old Manor House,” enjoyed more than a passing reputation, or has any claim to particular mention here. The chief merit of Charlotte Smith’s novels lies in their descriptions of scenery, an element only just entering into the work of the novelist.

Clara Reeve and the celebrated Mrs. Radcliffe did much to sustain the prominent position which women were taking in fictitious composition, and their works will be commented upon in connection with the romantic revival, to which movement they were eminent contributors.

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Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the number and variety of works of fiction increased with remarkable rapidity. The female sex supplied its full share, both in amount and in excellence of work. But those who desire to see the advent of women into new walks of active life on the ground that their presence and participation add to the purity of every occupation they adopt, can find no illustration of the theory in the connection of women with fictitious composition. Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Manley, and Mrs. Heywood, the earliest female novelists, produced the most inflammatory and licentious novels of their time. At a later period, during the eighteenth century, although some female writers exhibited a very exceptional refinement, the majority showed in this respect no marked superiority to their masculine contemporaries. In our own time, whoever would make a list of those novels which are most evidently immoral in their teachings and licentious in their tone, would be obliged to seek them almost quite as much among the works of female writers, as among those of the rougher sex.

To write a really excellent novel, is among the most difficult of literary feats. But to write a poor one has often been found an easy undertaking. The apparent facility of fictitious composition has deceived great numbers of literary aspirants, and has filled the circulating libraries with a vast collection of thoroughly worthless productions. This unfortunate fecundity, to which the department of fiction is subject, began to be conspicuous at the end of the eighteenth century,[200] and excited much opposition to novels of all kinds. Hannah More, in her essays on female education, inveighed against the evil in terms which are quite as applicable at the present day. “Who are those ever multiplying authors, that with unparalleled fecundity are overstocking the world with their quick-succeeding progeny? They are *novel-writers*; the easiness of whose productions is at once the cause of their own fruitfulness, and of the almost infinitely numerous race of imitators to whom they give birth. Such is the frightful facility of this species of composition, that every raw girl, while she reads, is tempted to fancy that she can also write. And as Alexander, on perusing the Iliad, found by congenial sympathy the image of Achilles stamped on his own ardent soul, and felt himself the hero he was studying; and as Correggio, on first beholding a picture which exhibited the perfection of the graphic art, prophetically felt all his own future greatness, and cried out in rapture: ’And I, too, am a painter!’ So a thorough-paced novel-reading miss, at the close of every tissue of hackneyed adventures, feels within herself the stirring impulse of corresponding genius, and triumphantly exclaims: ’And I, too, am an author!’ The glutted imagination soon overflows with the redundance of cheap sentiment and plentiful incident, and, by a sort of arithmetical proportion, is enabled by the perusal of any three novels, to produce a fourth; till every fresh production, like the prolific progeny of Banquo, is followed by

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‘Another, and another, and another!’”

[Footnote 199: Afterward Madame D’Arblay.]

[Footnote 200: See the “Progress of Romance,” by Clara Reeve, for the names of many now forgotten novels, for which room cannot be spared here.]

IV.

The writers who took the chief part in originating and sustaining the romantic revival in English fiction were Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and Mrs. Radcliffe. As we have called upon the testimony of Walpole so often in this work, and as we are now to consider him as an author, some account of his personal appearance may be of interest. “His figure,” says Miss Hawkins, “was not merely tall, but long and slender to excess; his complexion, and particularly his hands, of a most unhealthy paleness. His eyes were remarkably bright and penetrating, very dark and lively:—his voice was not strong, but his tones were extremely pleasant, and, if I may so say, highly gentlemanly. I do not remember his common gait; he always entered a room in that style of affected delicacy which fashion had then made almost natural; *chapeau bras* between his hands as if he wished to compress it, or under his arm; knees bent, and feet on tiptoe, as if afraid of a wet floor. His dress in visiting was most usually, in summer, when I most saw him, a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver, or of white silk worked in the tambour, partridge silk stockings, and gold buckles, ruffles and frill generally lace. I remember, when a child, thinking him very much under-dressed, if at any time, except in mourning, he wore hemmed cambric. In summer, no powder, but his wig combed straight, and showing his very smooth, pale forehead, and queued behind; in winter, powder.”

Posterity has cause to regret that Horace Walpole, of all men best fitted by personal knowledge and ability to draw a picture of the brilliant society of his time, should have contributed no work in the department of realistic fiction. Had the keen observation and experience of the world so conspicuous in his letters been brought to bear on a narrative of real life not less ably constructed than that of “The Castle of Otranto,” an addition of no little value to the social history of the eighteenth century must have been the result. But although Walpole attempted no novel in which he might have depicted the fashionable life of which he was so faithful a chronicler, he yet tried an experiment in fiction for which he was peculiarly qualified by his antiquarian studies and his fondness for the arts and customs of feudal times.

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The object of “The Castle of Otranto” was to unite the characteristic elements of the ancient romance with those of the modern novel. It was attempted to introduce into a narrative constructed with modern order and sequence, such supernatural events as controlled the incidents of romantic fiction. To accomplish this result, it was necessary that the *mise en scene* should be impressive and awe-inspiring, that the reader’s mind should be insensibly prepared by strange surroundings for extraordinary incidents. In his selection of age and scene, Walpole was highly judicious. He chose the feudal period, when superstition accorded the most ready belief to supernatural agencies. He introduced his reader to a huge, gloomy castle, furnished with towers, donjons, subterranean passages, and trapdoors. He took for his hero, Manfred, a fierce and cruel knight, who had obtained his lands by duplicity and blood; whose chief aim in life was to continue his posterity in possession of wrongfully acquired power. He added subordinate characters of a kind to aid the effect of supernatural phenomena: a monk in a neighboring convent, who threatened Manfred with divine visitation for his crimes; superstitious servants, whose easy fears exaggerated every unusual sound or foot-fall. He gave an interest to his narrative by the love passages of Manfred’s daughters which were perpetually at the mercy of the fate which hung over the castle. He introduced his supernatural effects in the form of a gigantic gauntlet seen on the stair-rail; a gigantic helmet which crushed the son and heir of the house as he was about to be married and to carry out his father’s hopes; a skeleton monk who urged the rightful owner of the castle to take his own from the usurper’s hands.

In attempting to make a regularly constructed narrative depend on supernatural agencies, Walpole undoubtedly succeeded as far as success was possible. But it may be said without hesitation that real success was unattainable. The very merits of “The Castle of Otranto” sustain this decision. The experiment had a fair trial. The narrative of Manfred’s crimes and the punishments visited upon them, the characters and actions of subordinate personages are all managed with skill; while the supernatural agencies are introduced at the proper times and have the expected effects. But the real test of success in such an attempt must lie in the impression made on the reader’s mind. And this impression may be of two kinds. Let us imagine a group of young people sitting about the dying embers of a fire on a winter’s evening, listening to a ghost story. The black darkness, the sound of the wind howling without, accord with the low tones, the dim light, and the tale of horror within. The minds of the listeners insensibly cast off their ordinary trains of thought, and give themselves up to the unreal impressions of the moment. The incredible circumstances of the apparition are accepted without question or criticism; the impression of the supernatural occurrences is alone thought of and enjoyed. But now, let the same tale be read aloud after breakfast, from a newspaper, with the affidavits of the witnesses of the apparition duly attached, and only laughter can be the result.

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Now let us apply the same test to romance. We open the “Morte d’Arthur”; we find ourselves at once in an unreal, almost nameless land; we meet with knights whom we only know apart by their armor, and queens ambling through pathless forests on white palfreys; we attend brilliant tournaments and witness superhuman deeds of arms. Our minds, untroubled by scepticism and thoughtless of unreality, yield themselves to the poetical illusion. Who stops to think of the incredible when Sir Bedivere hurls into the lake the dying Arthur’s sword Excalibur?

Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and an hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water.

But when we are introduced to the castle of Otranto, when we know its dimensions and appearance, when we have become acquainted with its inmates, and have been made to realize that they are flesh and blood like ourselves, we cannot receive without a shock the account of the supernatural occurrences by which they are affected. It is as if we listened to a ghost story in the glare of daylight, and in the full activity of our critical faculties.

“Thou art no lawful prince,” said Jerome; “thou art no prince—go, discuss thy claim with Frederic; and when that is done——” “It is done,” replied Manfred; “Frederic accepts Matilda’s hand, and is content to waive his claim, unless I have no male issue.” As he spoke these words three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso’s statue.

“The Castle of Otranto” is an entertaining, well-constructed romance which may absorb the attention of young people, and indeed of all readers who delight in tales of superstitious horror. But looked upon as a work of art, it contains discordant elements. The realistic manner in which the scene and characters are made known, the exactitude with which the incidents are combined, are in constant opposition to that poetical ideality without which the supernatural cannot take possession of the mind. In reading the “Morte d’Arthur” we are insensibly penetrated by an atmosphere of the marvellous which makes a giant a natural companion, and a magic sword a necessary part of a warrior’s outfit. But Manfred and his family are so essentially human, and their surroundings are so realistic, that the reader’s sense of congruity is shocked by the introduction of a bleeding statue or a skeleton monk.

This was evident to Miss Clara Reeve, who hoped to attain success in the attempt to unite the romance and the novel by limiting all supernatural occurrences to the verge of probability. It is obvious that the line would be difficult to draw. Miss Reeve drew it at ghosts. In the “Old English Baron,” she took a story similar to that of Walpole. She presented to the reader a castle whose real owner had been murdered, and of which

the rightful heir, ignorant of his birth, lived as a dependent on the wrongful possessor. The story turned on the revelation of the secret by the ghost of the murdered knight.

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“God defend us!” said Edmund; “but I verily believe that the person that owned this armor lies buried under us.” Upon this a dismal, hollow groan was heard, as if from underneath. A solemn silence ensued, and marks of fear were visible upon all three; the groan was thrice heard.

To the average mind of the present day Clara Reeve’s ghost is not less improbable and incredible than Walpole’s gigantic helmet. If the reader is prepared by the poetic nature of a narrative for the influence of the supernatural, he will receive all marvels with equal ease; but if he be not prepared, if his mind be occupied during the greater part of the work with actual and ordinary occurrences, any supernatural event is rejected. Miss Reeve introduced far less of the incredible than her predecessor, but she did not approach Walpole in the adaptation of her scenes to supernatural effects. It requires less imagination to see a figure walk out of a portrait in the gloomy castle of Otranto, than to hear the groan of Miss Reeve’s spectre.

The incompatibility of the real and the unreal in the same work is sufficiently shown by the course pursued by the different writers who took part in the romantic revival. Walpole had boldly introduced a skeleton monk, and had crushed one of his characters by a gigantic helmet which fell from the sky. Clara Reeve’s sense of congruity was shocked by so strong a contrast between the usual and the extraordinary, and therefore limited herself to a single supernatural effect, which might inspire fear while yet remaining within the bounds of superstitious credulity. The next and greatest contributor to the romantic revival still further modified the methods of her predecessors, and in so modifying them, testified her doubts of their efficacy. Mrs. Radcliffe’s plan was not to summon a spectre from his resting-place and to make him move among flesh and blood personages. She simply described the superstitious fears of her heroes and heroines, and sought to make her reader share in them. She excited the imagination by highly wrought scenes of horror, but instead of ascribing those scenes to the intervention of supernatural beings, she showed them to proceed from natural causes. The terror felt, by her fictitious characters and shared by the reader, was not so much inspired by real dangers from without, as by superstitious fear within. The following passage will illustrate Mrs. Radcliffe’s method of dealing with the supernatural:

From the disturbed slumber into which she then sunk, she was soon awakened by a noise, which seemed to arise within her chamber; but the silence that prevailed, as she tearfully listened, inclined her to believe that she had been alarmed by such sounds as sometimes occur in dreams, and she laid her head again upon the pillow.A return of the noise again disturbed her, it seemed to come from that part of the room which communicated with the private staircase,

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and she instantly remembered the odd circumstance of the door having been fastened during the preceding night by some unknown hand. The late alarming suspicion concerning its communication also occurred to her. Her heart became faint with terror. Half raising herself from the bed, and gently drawing aside the curtain, she looked toward the door of the staircase, but the lamp that burnt on the hearth spread so feeble a light through the apartment, that the remote parts of it were lost in shadow. The noise, however, which she was convinced came from the door, continued. It seemed like that made by the undrawing of rusty bolts, and often ceased, and was then renewed more gently, as if the hand that occasioned it was restrained by a fear of discovery. While Emily kept her eyes fixed on the spot, she saw the door move, and then slowly open, and perceived something enter the room, but the extreme duskiness prevented her perceiving what it was. Almost fainting with terror, she had yet sufficient command over herself to check the shriek that was escaping from her lips, and, letting the curtain drop from her hand, continued to observe in silence the motions of the mysterious figure she saw. It seemed to glide along the remote obscurity of the apartment, then paused, and, as it approached the hearth, she perceived, in the stronger light, what appeared to be a human figure. Certain remembrances now struck upon her heart, and almost subdued the feeble remains of her spirit. She continued, however, to watch the figure, which remained for some time motionless, but then, advancing slowly toward the bed, stood silently at the feet, where the curtains, being a little open, allowed her still to see it; terror, however, had now deprived her of the power of discrimination, as well as that of utterance.[201]

This scene is an excellent example of Mrs. Radcliffe's power of depicting and exciting fear. The loneliness of Emily in the castle, her dread of real dangers inclining her mind to expect the unreal, are shown with an art of which neither Walpole nor Reeve were capable. But, while these writers would have introduced a real spectre as the disturber of Emily's slumber, Mrs. Radcliffe is contented with the terror she has aroused, and hastens to explain its cause.

Having continued there a moment, the form retreated towards the hearth, when it took the lamp, held it up, surveyed the chamber for a few moments, and then again advanced towards the bed. The light at that instant awakening the dog that had slept at Emily's feet, he barked loudly, and, jumping to the floor, flew at the stranger, who struck the animal smartly with a sheathed sword, and springing towards the bed, Emily discovered—Count Morano.

These passages afford evidence of both the strength and the weakness of Mrs. Radcliffe's work. She chose a scene calculated to inspire horror, she subjected to its influence a lonely female, and she then described with blood-curdling minuteness each

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detail which could enhance the sense of hidden danger which it was her purpose to excite. While the reader follows such portions of her writings, he is carried by the force and picturesqueness of Mrs. Radcliffe's language into a condition of sympathy with the fears of the fictitious personage. But the moment that the scene of horror is past, that the hidden danger is revealed, that, it turns out to be no ghost but only a Count Morano, all Mrs. Radcliffe's power is required to prevent an anti-climax. This weakness is very different from that of Walpole or Reeve. They failed to excite the feeling of superstitious fear. Mrs. Radcliffe excited it, but she destroyed its effect by revealing the inadequacy of its cause. The works of Walpole, Clara Reeve, and particularly of Mrs. Radcliffe, contain very decided merits. They made a school which has found many admirers and has given a vast deal of pleasure. But the school was founded on wrong principles and could not endure. It is impossible for the mind to enjoy the supernatural while it is chained down to every-day life by realistic descriptions of scenes and persons. And it is equally impossible to permanently please by fear-inspiring narratives, when the reader is aware that all the while there is no sufficient cause for the hero's terror.

But what Mrs. Radcliffe attempted, she carried out with a very great skill. She placed the scenes of her narratives in Sicily, in Italy, or the south of France, and made good use of the warm natures and vivid imaginations which are born of southern climates. Every aid which an effective *mise en scene* could supply to her supernatural effects was most skilfully brought into play. Lonely castles, secret passages, gloomy churches, and monkish superstitions,—all were adapted to the tale of unknown dangers and fearful predicaments which Mrs. Radcliffe had to tell. She kept up with remarkable strength a supernatural tone which insensibly aids the imagination. In her descriptions of scenery, she chose nature in its most awe-inspiring forms, and instilled into the reader's mind the same sense of the insignificance of man, under the influence of which her heroes and heroines so continually remain. We are reminded of Buckle's description of the effect of nature upon human imagination and credulity when we notice the striking manner in which Mrs. Radcliffe moulded the surroundings of her heroes and heroines, and made their minds susceptible to superstitious terror.

From Beaujeu the road had constantly ascended, conducting the travellers into the higher regions of the air, where immense glaciers exhibited their frozen horrors, and eternal snow whitened the summits of the mountains. They often paused to contemplate these stupendous scenes, and, seated on some wild cliff, where only the ilex or the larch could flourish, looked over dark forests of fir, and precipices where human foot had never wandered, into the glen—so deep that

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the thunder of the torrent, which was seen to foam along the bottom was scarcely heard to murmur. Over these crags rose others of stupendous height and fantastic shape; some shooting into cones; others impending far over their base, in huge masses of granite, along whose broken ridges was often lodged a weight of snow, that, trembling even to the vibration of a sound, threatened to bear destruction in its course to the vale. Around on every side, far as the eye could penetrate, were seen only forms of grandeur the long perspective of mountain tops, tinged with ethereal blue, or white with snow; valleys of ice, and forests of gloomy fir. * * * The deep silence of these solitudes was broken only at intervals by the scream of the vultures, seen cowering round some cliff below, or by the cry of the eagle sailing high in the air; except when the travellers listened to the hollow thunder that sometimes muttered at their feet.[202]

Lewis in “The Monk,” and Maturin in “The Family of Montorio,” carried the principles of the Radcliffe school beyond the verge of absurdity. Their novels are wild melodramas, the product of distorted imaginations, in which endless horrors are mingled with gross violations of decency. “The Monk” and “The Family of Montorio” had a great reputation in their day, and in contemporary criticism we find their praise sung and their immortality predicted. But, while they illustrate, on the one hand, the temporary vogue an author may acquire by highly-wrought clap-trap and flashy flights of imagination, they show very plainly, in the oblivion which has overtaken them, how little such characteristics avail in the race for enduring fame.

[Footnote 201: “The Mysteries of Udolpho,” chap. xix.]

[Footnote 202: “The Mysteries of Udolpho,” ch. iv.]

V.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the novel had become established as a popular form of literature, and the number of its votaries had begun to assume the proportions which have since made novelists by far the most numerous literary body. Some writers, perhaps, have been omitted who deserved mention as much as some who have been commented upon. But all have been spoken of, it is believed, who contributed any new ideas or methods to the art of fictitious composition.

The novel had, indeed, taken the place of the stage to a very great extent. If we compare the productions of the dramatist with those of the novelist, as regards both quantity and merit, during the last hundred and fifty years, we shall perceive a great preponderance in favor of the writer of fiction. Although there are some respects in which the novel cannot compete with the drama, there are obvious reasons why the former should be much better adapted than the latter to modern requirements. Great changes have come over the audience. With the progress of civilization, life has

become less and less dramatic, and affords fewer striking scenes and violent ebullitions of passion. It not only furnishes far less material for stage effects, but also supplies little of that sympathy which the dramatist must find in the minds of his audience. While life has become less dramatic, it has become far more complex, and requires a broader treatment in its delineation than the restrictions of the stage can allow.

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As we look back upon the fiction of the eighteenth century it is evident that the novel, like the play, is capable of great uses and of great abuses, according to the spirit in which it is written. In the hands of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Goldsmith, and Miss Burney, it reached a high position as a work of art. It retained, indeed, much of the manner of the story of adventure, inasmuch as the interest was more commonly made to depend on the fortunes of a chosen hero than on the development of a well constructed plot. But “Robinson Crusoe,” “Tom Jones,” “The Vicar of Wakefield,” and “Evelina,” are works which deserve and possess the interest of the present time. Such books as these are to be cherished as precious legacies from the years that have gone before. They have given, in the course of their long active circulation, an incalculable amount of pleasure. They have supplied posterity with a picturesque view of the life and manners of their ancestors which could not be acquired from any other source. But while the fiction of the eighteenth century includes much that is valuable from a literary and from a historical point of view, it includes also a great quantity of worthless and injurious writing. By far the larger number of novels published were of a kind likely to exert an evil influence on their readers. Their coarseness and licentiousness had a strong tendency to disseminate the morbid thoughts and unregulated passions which dictated their production. So general was the feeling that a work of fiction would probably contain immoral and debasing views of life, that the novel and the novelist, were both looked upon askance. “In the republic of letters,” said Miss Burney, “there is no member of such inferior rank, or who is so much disdained by his brethren of the quill, as the humble novelist; nor is his fate less hard in the world at large, since, among the whole class of writers perhaps not one can be named of which the votaries are more numerous but less respectable.” Miss Edgeworth, in the beginning of the present century, felt it necessary to call her first novel “a moral tale,” because so much folly, error, and vice are disseminated in books classed “under the denomination of novels.” A great part of the fiction of the last century, as indeed of our own time, possesses neither the value of a work of art nor that belonging to the description and preservation of contemporary manners. Nor could the excuse of the amusement they afforded be called up in their favor. No amusement is worth having which is not healthy and innocent. The general prejudice which formerly existed against novels very much lessened their circulation, and lessened the evil done by licentious productions. Careful parents did not allow a novel in their children’s hands which had not passed an examination—a precaution now too generally neglected.

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But notwithstanding all the trash, and worse than trash, which has gone into circulation under the broad and attractive term of novel, it is evident that the English speaking public on both sides of the Atlantic demand purity in the works of fiction which are submitted to its judgment. While no literary work can present a greater claim to permanent favor than a really good novel, none is more certain to be quite ephemeral than a bad one, whether its badness consist in the manner or the matter. For more than a hundred years “The Vicar of Wakefield” has held its own, while hundreds of novels which created more sensation at the time of their appearance have fallen into everlasting oblivion. And this triumph is not only due to literary excellence, but to the human excellence of the conception which Goldsmith gave to the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

I.—THE NOVEL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.
II.—THE NOVEL OF LIFE AND MANNERS.
III.—OF SCOTCH LIFE.
IV.—OF IRISH LIFE.
V.—OF ENGLISH LIFE.
VI.—OF AMERICAN LIFE.
VII.—THE HISTORICAL NOVEL.
VIII.—THE NOVEL OF PURPOSE.
IX.—THE NOVEL OF FANCY.
X.—USE AND ABUSE OF FICTION.

I.

Fiction has absorbed so much of the literary talent of the present century, and has attained so important a place in the lives and thoughts of the reading public, that, in this chapter, we will attempt a description of its varied forms, and an inquiry into its uses and abuses, rather than an extended criticism of individual writers. Allibone’s “Dictionary of Authors” contains two thousand two hundred and fifty-seven names of writers of fiction, by far the greater number of which belong to the nineteenth century, and every year adds to the list.

There is no better example of the closeness of the connection between society and its literature than is supplied by the novel. Every change in the public taste has been followed by a corresponding variety of fiction, until it is difficult to enumerate all the schools into which novelists have divided themselves. During the present century, life has become far more complex and the reading public far more exacting, varied, and extended than ever before. Steam and electricity have brought distant countries into close communion, and have awakened a feeling of fellowship among the different nations of the civilised world which has greatly widened the horizon of human interests.

The spread of education, the increase and distribution of wealth, together with the cheapness of printing, have largely increased the number and variety of those who seek entertainment from works of fiction. The novel-reader is no longer content with the description of scenes and characters among which his own life is passed. He wishes to be introduced to foreign countries, to past ages, and to societies and ranks apart from his own. He wishes also to find in fiction the reflection of his own tastes and the discussion of his own interests. He seeks psychology, or study of character, or the excitement of a complicated plot, or the details and events of sea-faring, criminal, or fashionable life. All of these different tastes the novelist has undertaken to gratify.

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Under the extensive head of the novel of life and manners, the habits, modes of thought, and peculiarities of language of Scotland, Ireland, England, and the United States, with many sub-divisions of provinces and cities, have been studied and described. The novelist has extended his investigations into Eastern countries, and has portrayed the customs and institutions of Oriental life. He has taken his characters from historic times, and has recommended the past for the instruction or amusement of the present. The experience of the soldier and the sailor have taken their place among the incidents of fiction; the adventures and crimes of blacklegs and convicts have been drawn upon to gratify palates sated with the weak *pabulum* of the fashionable novel.

Fiction has not been confined to the study of manners and character, but has been extensively used to propagate opinions and to argue causes. Novels have been written in support of religious views, Catholic, High-Church, and Low-Church; political novels have supported the interests of Tory, Whig, anti-slavery, and civil service; philosophical novels have exposed the evils of society as at present constituted, and have built up impossible utopias. Besides the novel of purpose, there has been the novel of fancy, in which the imagination has been allowed to soar unchecked in the regions of the unreal and the supernatural.

With so great a variety of works of fiction, it is not surprising to find a corresponding variety of authorship. Lords and ladies, generals and colonels have entered the lists against police court reporters and female adventurers. The novel is no longer the exclusive work of a professional author. Amateurs have attempted it to pass the time which hung heavily on their hands; to put into form their dreams or experiences; to gratify a mere literary vanity. The needy nobleman has made profitable use of his name on the title-page of a novel purporting to give information concerning fashionable life. But the most remarkable characteristic of novel-writing has been the important part taken by women. They have adopted fiction as their special department of literature, and have shown their capacity for it by the production of novels which fully equal in number and almost equal in merit the works of their masculine rivals. On her own ground, George Eliot has no superior, while the writings of Miss Austen, of Miss Edgeworth, of Miss Ferrier, of Mrs. Stowe, not to mention many others, are to be ranked among the best works of fiction in any language. But while women have contributed their full share of novels, both as regards quantity and merit, they have also contributed much more than what we think their full share of worthless and immoral writing. Bad women will have literary capacity as well as bad men, but it is doubly shocking to find that the prurient thoughts, the indecent allusions, and immoral opinions which are often met with in the novels of the day proceed from that sex which ought to be the stronghold of modesty and virtue.

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And this matter becomes very important when we consider the position which works of fiction have attained in the present century. In the days of Mrs. Behn, Mrs. Heywood, Fielding, or Smollett, coarseness of thought and language was so general that it naturally had a prominent place in novels. All persons who objected to licentious scenes and gross expressions in the reading of themselves or their children excluded works of fiction. As Miss Edgeworth said, most novels were filled with vice or folly, and as Miss Burney complained, no body of literary men were so numerous, or so little respectable as novelists. But, in the hands of such writers as Sir Walter Scott, as Miss Ferrier, as Miss Austen, as Dickens, as Thackeray, as Charles Kingsley, as Mr. Anthony Trollope, the novel has achieved for itself a position of respectability and dignity which seems to remain unimpaired, notwithstanding the efforts of many authors to destroy it. Works of fiction are to be found in every home, in the hands of parents, in the hands of young boys and girls. The word novel has been given so high a signification by the great names which are associated with it, that parental censorship has almost ceased. It is impossible that a form of literature to which so many and so great minds have been devoted, and which takes so prominent a place in the favor of the reading public, should not be without a powerful influence. Let us look more closely at the works of fiction of the nineteenth century, and then endeavor to determine how far their influence has been for good, and how far for evil.

II.

It is the especial province of the novel of life and manners to be as far as possible a truthful reflection of nature. And the more it approaches to this condition, the more realistic it is said to be. But the word realism is a vague term, and is constantly employed to express different ideas. As far as it applies to the novel, it usually signifies an author’s fidelity to nature. But even with this definition, the term realism has no very definite meaning unless all persons agree as to what constitutes nature. There is a great difference in men according as they are looked at with the eye of a Raphael or of a Rembrandt. There has been a strong tendency among novelists of the present century who have written since Scott, to devote themselves more to the common characters and incidents of every-day life; to describe the world as it appears to the ordinary observer, who rarely associates with either heroes or villains, and has little experience of either the sublime or the marvellous. Such was the expressed object of Thackeray, and such is the general character of the works of George Eliot and of Mr. Anthony Trollope. This tendency has been carried to an extreme by some English novelists, and above all by the Frenchman, Emile Zola, who have not only thrown aside entirely the romantic element in their fictions, but have shown their ideas of realism to consist in the base and the ignoble, and have confined their studies to the vices and degradation of the human species.

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An admirer of Thackeray and an admirer of Zola would consider the works of his favorite author to be realistic, and yet nature appears under very different aspects in the pages of the two novelists. But the partisans of Thackeray and those of Zola would probably unite in the opinion that Sir Walter Scott was not realistic; they would call him romantic, and claim that he painted ideal scenes and ideal characters. But among those who read and re-read the novels of Scott, by far the greater number believe that "The Wizard of the North" was true to nature, that Jeanie Deans and Rob Roy and Meg Merrilies were not impossible characters. There are many who enter into the scenes described by Scott with as much feeling of reality as is experienced by those who follow the career of a Pendennis, of a Duke of Omnium, or of a Nana. A novelist, then, is realistic or not realistic according to the views which he and his reader entertain of nature. To the optimist, to the youthful and romantic, "The Heart of Midlothian" and "Guy Mannering" will seem a truthful representation of life. The more worldly and practical will find their idea of reality in "The Mill on the Floss," in "Vanity Fair," in "The Prime Minister." And finally those whose taste or lot has kept them "raking in the dirt of mankind" will think their view of truth best expressed by "L'Assommoir" or "Nana."

But we would not be understood to mean that a novelist or a painter is realistic, because he represents nature as it appears to him, whether he look at it through a glass *couleur de rose*, or with the distorted eye of a cynic. He may describe the sublime, the ordinary, or the vile, as nature supplies examples of all three, and yet be realistic, so long as he presents any one of these conditions without exaggeration, and without too extended an application.

The writers who have devoted themselves to the novel of life and manners have all sought to be realistic, and the value of their work largely depends on the success which has attended their efforts in this direction. The enduring vitality of "Tom Jones" is due to Fielding's fidelity to nature, and it is safe to predict that no novel which fails in this respect can have more than an ephemeral reputation. Nothing could be more false than the views of contemporary life contained in a large part of the fiction of the present day, and the future historian who looks to the novel of the nineteenth century for information concerning morals and social habits will have to exercise a constant discrimination.

III.

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Scottish life and manners have been made familiar to the world by a series of brilliant novelists, first among whom stands the greatest figure in the history of English fiction. Sir Walter Scott was qualified to an extraordinary degree for the great work he was destined to perform for his country and for the novel. His ancestry, the traditions among which he grew up, his in-born love of legendary lore, his vivid imagination and keenness of sympathy all fitted him to appreciate and to put into enduring form the latent romance which pervaded his beloved Scotland. His practical experience as a lawyer and as a sheriff, gave him a clear insight into the institutions of his country. Previous to the publication of "Waverley," Scotland was a comparatively unknown land. Even Englishmen had little knowledge of its national habits, of its traditions, or its scenery. To Scotchmen, the history of their country was little more than a skeleton, till the magic wand of Scott it filled it with flesh and blood, and gave it new life and animation. "Up to the era of Sir Walter," says an eminent Scotchman, "living people had some vague, general, indistinct notions about dead people mouldering away to nothing, centuries ago, in regular kirk-yards and chance burial-places, 'mang muirs and mosses many O,' somewhere or other in that difficultly distinguished and very debatable district called the Borders. All at once he touched their tombs with a divining-rod, and the turf streamed out ghosts, some in woodmen's dresses, most in warriors' mail; queer archers leapt forth, with yew bows and quivers, and giants stalked shaking spears! The gray chronicler smiled, and taking up his pen, wrote in lines of light the annals of the chivalrous and heroic days of auld feudal Scotland. The nation then, for the first time, knew the character of its ancestors; for these were not spectres—not they, indeed,—nor phantoms of the brain, but gaunt flesh and blood, or glad and glorious;—base-born cottage churls of the olden time, because Scottish, became familiar to the love of the nation's heart, and so to its pride did the high born lineage of palace kings. * * * We know now the character of our own people as it showed itself in war and peace—in palace, castle, hall, hut, hovel, and shieling—through centuries of advancing civilization."

And it was not only to his countrymen that Scott made vivid and familiar the history of his native land. Since his genius described the Highland fastnesses, and peopled them with the chiefs and maidens of old, all the world feels at home in that land at once so small and so great. In Italy, in France in Germany, in America, Jeanie Deans and the Master of Ravenswood are household friends, and Scottish life and habits are known to tens of thousands who never leave their native town.

Besides making his country celebrated by his writings, Scott placed the novel on the firm foundation in public estimation which it has since retained. He redeemed its character from the disrepute into which it had fallen. He used it not only as a means of giving acute and healthful pleasure, but he made it the medium for moral and intellectual advancement. The purity of thought which pervades all his writings, the never-failing nobility of the views of life which he placed before his readers can have no other than an elevating influence.

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Scott's literary success was due both to genius and to industry. Of his early precocity Mrs. Cockburn has left a remarkable instance.[203] "I last night supped in Mr. Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on; it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. He lifted his eyes and hands: 'There's the mast gone!' says he. 'Crash it goes! They will all perish!' After his agitation he turns to me: 'That is too melancholy,' says he. 'I had better read you something more amusing.' I preferred a little chat, and asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, which he gave me wonderfully. One of his observations was: 'How strange it is that Adam, just new come into the world, should know every thing! That must be the poet's fancy,' says he. But when told he was created perfect by God, he instantly yielded. When taken to bed last night, he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady?' says she. 'Why, Mrs. Cockburn, for I think she is a virtuoso,—like myself.' 'Dear Walter,' says Aunt Jenny, 'what is a virtuoso?' 'Don't ye know? Why, it's one who wishes and will know every thing.' Now, sir, you will think this a very silly story. Pray, what age do you suppose this boy to be? Name it, now, before I tell you. 'Why, twelve or fourteen.' No such thing; he is not quite six years old. He has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick. You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

The vivid imagination and love of knowledge which Scott displayed from his earliest years were supplemented throughout his life by an assiduous self-cultivation. The great and varied body of legendary lore which he accumulated, together with his ever active and universal sympathy with mankind, made the chief elements in his fictions. There is no one respect in which the Waverley novels are pre-eminent. As regards plot, Scott has been frequently surpassed. While "Kenilworth," the "Bride of Lammermoor," and "Ivanhoe," are well constructed, the plan of "Rob Roy" and "The Monastery" are lacking in sequence. Other novelists, too, have drawn character with quite as much power. But the Waverly novels have attained their supreme position in public estimation by a rare and well balanced union of different qualities. They contain beautiful examples of the sublime, and amusing examples of the ludicrous. They reflect nature in various phases, and always with picturesqueness, power, and truth. Of Scott's historical novels we shall speak elsewhere. Of those which relate especially to his own country, the most remarkable merit consists in the fidelity with which they have reflected the Scotch nationality. On this account they will always possess a value for the student of social history.

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Of the estimation in which these novels have been held by the world, and the immense area over which their influence has extended, some idea may be formed from the fact that the actual profits which accrued from them to the author or to his estate shortly after his death, exceeded two millions of dollars. When we add to this sum the profits of the publishers, and when we consider the number of translations issued in Europe and the editions printed since Scott's death in Great Britain and America, we can realize how vast a sum the world has been glad to pay for the possession of these invaluable works.

Following the great Sir Walter in the description of Scottish life and manners, are many well-known writers. John Galt, in the "Annals of the Parish," gave many humorous descriptions of national character. In Wilson's "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life," in "The Ettrick Shepherd," in the works of Scott's son-in-law, Lockhart, are scenes and characters still very familiar to novel readers. Jane Porter embodied rather ideal views of history in "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and "The Scottish Chiefs." The talents of Miss Ferrier, of Mrs. Oliphant, and of Mr. William Black have kept up the interest which the world has learned to take in every thing appertaining to the land which Sir Walter Scott taught it to know and love so well.[204]

[Footnote 203: Mrs. Cockburn to Rev. Dr. Douglas, 1777; Lockhart's "Life of Scott."]

[Footnote 204: Other novelists belonging especially in Scotland and of considerable reputation, are Maria Porter, Elizabeth Hamilton, A. Cunningham, Mrs. Johnstone, Hogg, Picken, Moir, Sir T.D. Lauder, Hugh Miller, George MacDonald.]

IV.

First among the contributors to the novel of Irish life and manners may be mentioned Maria Edgeworth, by whose successful labors Scott was first inspired to undertake his own. In Miss Edgeworth's works, Ireland found a true exposition of her wrongs and her virtues; and also of her follies and errors. The evils of absenteeism were powerfully illustrated in the novel of the same name. In "Castle Rackrent," the trials and difficulties of landlord and tenant were described with genuine sympathy and dramatic force. The peculiarities of Irish temper and character have been studied by Miss Edgeworth with a fidelity which has given her novels the same national stamp and value which belong to those of Scott. Like him, too, she did much to raise fiction in character, scope, and influence. Whether describing Irish, English, or fashionable life, she is always true to nature, always pure and elevated in tone. Her works are neither marred by the coarseness of the past, nor by the false delicacy of the present. She studiously avoids error and exaggeration in every form. Sentimentality and mock heroism have no place in her pages. While she is wanting in poetry, she is singularly rich in the scenes and characters of every-day life, and her novels are marked by a common-sense knowledge of the world which never degenerates into commonplace.

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Miss Edgeworth has been ably followed by several students of Irish life. William Carleton's "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," the novels of Samuel Lover and of John Banim are still well known. Thomas Crofton Croker, with whose amusing description of the "Last of the Irish Sarpints," the reader is probably familiar, has studied his countrymen's superstitions and peculiarities with great success. Charles James Lever has long retained a well-deserved popularity by the production of about thirty jovial dashing novels, among which the most celebrated is "Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon."[205]

[Footnote 205: Among other novelists of Irish life and manners may be mentioned Lady Morgan, Mrs. S.C. Hall, Gerald Griffin, T.C. Grattan, Justin MacCarthy, and others.]

V.

Novels relating particularly to English life and manners have been greater in number and more varied in character than those of any other country. A large volume would be necessary to do any critical justice to the many distinguished writers whom we can only briefly notice here. The most considerable subdivision of the English novel has been that occupied with the study of domestic life,—a department for which women are particularly fitted, and in which they have been eminently successful.

Mrs. Opie's "Simple Tales," "Tales of Real Life," and "Tales of the Heart," although displaying no great talent in construction or style, excel in a natural pathos and a delicacy of sentiment which have made them popular for many years. Miss Edgeworth brought to the study of English life the same practical views and library talents which we have seen in her Irish novels. Her children's stories, "Frank," "Harry and Lucy," and "Rosamund" were among the first contributions to juvenile fiction. "Helen," in which she exposed the evils of untruthfulness, is a good example of the success with which this admirable woman could combine entertainment and moral elevation. Jane Austen's name has long been linked with that of Miss Edgeworth, as the two most powerful female novelists of the earlier part of the century. In "Pride and Prejudice," "Emma," "Mansfield Park," "Sense and Sensibility," she described the country gentry and middle classes of society. She depended neither on exciting scenes, nor on highly wrought effects of human passion for the interest of her stories, but studied every-day life and ordinary people with a sympathy and power of observation which imparted a deep interest to all her works. Miss Ferrier's novels, "Inheritance" and "Marriage," were greatly admired by Scott, and now, some sixty years later, are still widely read, and receive the honor of both cheap and expensive editions. Miss Ferrier's skill in the construction of a plot, her natural studies of character and the liveliness of her descriptions have kept her works popular, notwithstanding great changes in the public taste. Mrs. Trollope, the

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mother of a more celebrated son, contributed largely to the English domestic novel. The pathetic story of the lives of the Bronte sisters, supplied by Mrs. Gaskell, has deepened the interest excited by the early popularity of “Jane Eyre.” Charlotte was the most talented of the family, and won a widespread admiration by her knowledge of life, her freshness, her vigor, and her innocent disregard of conventionality. Mrs. Gaskell described the life and trials of the manufacturing classes with great ability in “Mary Barton” and other novels. Miss Yonge, author of the “Heir of Redclyffe,” Mrs. Henry Wood, author of “East Lynne,” and Mrs. Lynn Linton have added largely to this department of fiction. The Baroness Tautphoeus described English and German life in the particularly fascinating novels, “Quits,” “At Odds,” and “The Initials.” Miss Thackeray has made good use of talents inherited from her father. Mary R. Mitford and Mrs. Alexander have written many entertaining and popular novels. Miss Mulock began a long list of successful works with “The Ogilvies” and “John Halifax.”

But by far the greatest female novelist who has devoted her talents to the English domestic novel, and by far the greatest female writer in the language is undeniably George Eliot. Women almost invariably leave the stamp of their sex upon their work. But George Eliot took and held a man’s position in literature from the outset of her career. It was not that she was unfeminine. She brought to her work a woman’s sympathy and a woman’s attention to detail. But in breadth of conception, in comprehensiveness of thought, her mind was essentially masculine. Her appreciation of varieties and shades of character was almost Shakespearian. She could describe the self-indulgence of a Hetty Sorrel leading to cruelty, and that of a Tito leading to treachery, with perfect distinctness. She could enter into the generous aspirations of a Savonarola, and the selfish desires of a Grandcourt, with equal perspicuity. Her readers do not feel less familiar with the dull barrenness of Casaubon than with the pregnant vivacity of Mrs. Poyser. In the study of the inward workings of the human mind, George Eliot is unsurpassed by any novelist. Thackeray alone can dispute her pre-eminence in this respect. However much the reader may recoil from the horror of Little Hetty’s crime, he cannot deny that it follows as a natural consequence. Although Dorothea’s marriages are extremely disappointing, the train of thought which led her to enter into them is traced with unerring clearness.

An obstacle to the popularity of George Eliot’s novels lies in the slowness of their movement. The author’s soliloquies, comments, and reflections, which are so much valued by her especial admirers, constantly interrupt the course of the narrative, and prove cumbersome to such readers as enjoy a rapid, flowing story. But without these interruptions, how much of George Eliot’s best wisdom would

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be lost! How many significant phrases would be lost from familiar language! The commentaries of the authoress herself on the incidents of her tale give her works a value which inclines us to take up her volumes again and again, long after the stories themselves have become familiar. We never weary of such sentences as the following from “Adam Bede”: “There is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and to have recovered hope.” Not less beautiful and concentrated are those few words on woman’s love in “Middlemarch":—-“Those childlike caresses which are the bent of every sweet woman, who has begun by showering kisses on the hard pate of her bald doll, creating a happy soul within that woodenness from the wealth of her own love.”

A faculty which George Eliot possessed in common with Dickens and Thackeray was that of making very ordinary people interesting. And this is a talent characteristic of the best minds which have contributed to fiction or the drama. Shakespeare possessed it in a high degree, and the best creations of Scott are ordinary, unheroic persons. The faculty arises from superior powers of observation. Some people will take a walk through a picturesque country or a crowded city without having seen any thing worthy of remark. Others will pass over the same ground, and return overflowing with description. In the same manner, the great number of men and women pass through life finding every thing commonplace, and the observing sympathy of a Thackeray, a Miss Austen, or a George Eliot is necessary to light up the unnoticed figures which throng the path. George Eliot is particularly happy in drawing a really ordinary person, especially when a little pretension is added. She must have written Mr. Brooke’s opinion of women with true enjoyment: “There is a lightness about the feminine mind—-a touch and go—music, the fine arts, that kind of thing—they should study those up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know.” But though Mrs. Poyser be humble, she is far from ordinary. “Some folks’ tongues,” she says, “are like the clocks as run on strikin’, not to tell you the time o’ the day, but because there’s summat wrong i’ their own inside.”

So long as George Eliot confined herself to her own sphere of action, she exhibited the same remarkable powers. But even her great name could not command admiration for “The Spanish Gypsy.” Her limitations clearly appeared in “Daniel Deronda.” When describing the characters and intercourse of Grandcourt and Gwendolen, when dealing with every thing English in that variously estimated work, she remained the great author of “Adam Bede” and “Silas Marner.” But in undertaking the discussion of the religion and social position of the Jews, she mistook her own talents, and created in Daniel Deronda, an indefinite combination of virtues unworthy of her genius.

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We have now noticed fifteen women, from Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen to George Eliot, who have contributed to the single department of fiction concerned with English domestic life. Many other names almost equally deserving and equally celebrated might be added to the list. The enduring popularity of their works is sufficient commentary on the success with which woman's talent has been directed toward fiction. Not only have the productions of these writers a high literary value, but their widespread circulation has afforded a really healthful amusement to tens of thousands, and their influence has been uniformly for good.[206]

The novels of English domestic life written by men have been little more numerous or able, but much more extended in scope. "Tremaine" and "De Vere," of R. Plumer Ward, contain clever sketches of character, but the narrative is loaded down with political and philosophical disquisitions. Theodore Hook's stories were as unequal as his life. Almost all bear the marks of haste and carelessness, and yet very few are without some portion of that pointed wit and delicate humor which delineated Jack Brag, or described Mr. Abberley's dinner party in the "Man of Many Friends." Richard Harris Barham is well known as the author of the witty "Ingoldsby Legends," and Samuel Warren as the author of "Ten Thousand a Year." Charles Kingsley described the life and grievances of mechanics in "Alton Locke." Charles Reade began a long series of popular novels with "Peg Woffington" and "Christie Johnstone." His best work is "Never Too Late to Mend," in which he criticized prison discipline, and described the striking scenes of the Australian gold-fields. Few novels of the present day contain a more interesting story or more lifelike delineations of character. Wilkie Collins' greatest power lies in the construction of his plot; the "Moonstone" and the "Woman in White," are among the most absorbing narratives in the whole range of fiction. His studies of the morbid workings of the mind are often striking, but with the exception of Count Fosco and a few others, his characters are not strongly marked. Thomas Hughes accomplished a truly noble work in the composition of "Tom Brown's School Days" and "Tom Brown at Oxford,"—books which have found their way to every boy's heart, and have appealed to all that was most healthful and manly there. The novels of Benjamin d'Israeli are chiefly interesting in their relation to the character of their illustrious author. As works of art they are faulty in construction, exaggerated in description, and unnatural in effect. "Vivian Gray" and "Lothair" cannot pretend to be truthful studies of English life, nor would their author, probably, have represented them as such. But so much of the great statesman's power was instilled into his novels that they have a certain interest even for those who are most alive to their faults. They are the conceptions of a very rich imagination, and contain many pictures which, if untrue to nature,

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are still extremely vivid. D'Israeli's chief literary, and perhaps also his chief political characteristic, was a constant endeavor to make striking effects. The reader may be sure to find nothing commonplace in his writings. Every scene and every character is painted in the brightest of colors. If the background be sombre, it will simply throw out more brilliantly the figures in the foreground. It is said that most men have a favorite word. That of d'Israeli was "wondrous." He took his reader into wondrous baronial halls, filled with wondrous gems, with wondrous tapestries, with wondrous paintings, and introduced him to wondrous dukes and duchesses, looking out from wondrous dark orbs, and breathing through almond-shaped nostrils. He loved to bring the royal family on the scene, and to trace the awe-inspiring effect of their august presence. When we open a novel of d'Israeli's we are certain of moving in a brilliant society, although one belonging to a yet undiscovered world. Women whose political influence changes the map of Europe, irresistible Catholic priests are mingled with impudent adventurers and professional toad-eaters. And over every thing is cast, by d'Israeli's Eastern imagination, a glamour of unlimited wealth, of numberless coronets, and of soaring ambitions. The political career of the Earl of Beaconsfield is one of the most remarkable in history, and even his opponents cannot withhold admiration from the great abilities and undaunted resolution which brought that career to its triumphant close. But the novels of the Earl of Beaconsfield have little value beyond their reflection of his dreams and his ambition.

Among the most famous writers of fiction of the nineteenth century will always be mentioned the name of Sir Bulwer Lytton. More than any other writer, he studied and developed the novel as a form of literature. Almost every novelist has taken some special field and has confined himself to that. Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray made occasional incursions on historic ground, but still their chief work was expended upon the novel of life and manners. Lytton attempted, and successfully, every department of fiction. In "Zanoni," he gave to the world a novel of fancy; in "Pelham" and "The Disowned," fashionable novels: in "Paul Clifford," a criminal novel; in "Rienzi," "Harold," "The Last of the Barons," historical novels; in "What Will He Do With It?" a novel of familiar life. And he brought to each variety of fiction the same artistic sense, the same knowledge of the world, and keen observation. To describe English life in all its phases, he was particularly fitted. Born in a high rank, he was perfectly at home in his descriptions of the upper classes, and never slow in exposing their vices. His studies of men took so universal a form that he became familiar even with the slang terms of pickpockets and house-breakers. "What Will He Do With It?" combines examples of the heroic, the humorous, the pathetic, and the

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villainous, and affords, perhaps, the best general view of the author's varied talents. Sir Bulwer Lytton is one of the most voluminous writers of a very prolific class, and yet he has never repeated himself. Mr. Anthony Trollope and several other novelists have shown how fallacious is the idea that the imagination is a fickle mistress to be courted and waited for. They have proved that she can be made to settle down and accustomed by habit to working at stated hours and for regular periods. But Bulwer Lytton not only forced his imagination to continuous labor, but he was able to insure an unending novelty of conception. In each one of his novels we are introduced to an entirely new set of characters inhabiting quite unfamiliar scenes.

With a few exceptions, Mr. Anthony Trollope has confined himself to the novel of English social life, but that mine he has worked with wonderful assiduity and success. In "The Warden," in "Barchester Towers," are studies of clerical character for which this writer has won a special reputation. "The Small House at Allington" is a love story of particular fascination. Few writers have described the manifestations of love in the acts and thoughts of a modest, sweet girl as delicately as Mr. Trollope has done in the case of the deserted Lily. Her rejection of a second suitor is felt by the reader to be the inevitable consequence of so pure a passion, and the treachery of Crosbie is traced through its various gradations with true fidelity to nature. "Phineas Finn" is an excellent example of a parliamentary novel. That work and its companions, "Phineas Redux," "The Prime Minister," and "The Duke's Children," keep up our acquaintance with the family and connections of Plantagenet Palliser, Duke of Omnium, than which few groups of fictitious characters are more continuously interesting. Mr. Trollope's novels will have a special value for the future student of English social life in the nineteenth century. The race-course, the hunting field, the country seat, Piccadilly, Hyde Park, the life of clubs and parliament, are described by him with photographic minuteness. And the novel-reader of to-day derives a constant pleasure from his books, notwithstanding the fact that the monotony of modern life is somewhat too closely reflected in them.

The works of no writer in the English language, except those of Scott, have attained so immediate a reputation and have won so wide-spread a popularity as the novels of Charles Dickens. "In less than six months from the appearance of the first number of the 'Pickwick Papers,'" said the *London Quarterly Review* in 1837, "the whole reading public were talking about them, the names of Winkle, Warden, Weller, Snodgrass, Dodson and Fogg, had become familiar in our mouths as household terms; and Mr. Dickens was the grand object of interest to the whole tribe of 'Leo-hunters,' male and female, of the metropolis. Nay, Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-drapers' windows, and Weller corduroys

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in breeches-makers' advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the streets; and the portrait of the author of 'Pelham' or 'Crichton' was scraped down or pasted over to make room for that of the new popular favourite in the omnibuses." For forty years the writings of this great novelist have held their place in the public esteem without any sensible diminution. Hundreds of thousands, old and young, in Great Britain, in America, in every country of Europe, have followed the fortunes of Nicholas Nickleby, of David Copperfield, of Oliver Twist, and of numberless other celebrated characters with unflagging interest. Perhaps Dickens' most remarkable achievement lay in the number of his creations, and in the distinctness with which he could impress them on the memory of his readers. Of the great host of figures who throng his scenes, how many we remember! Their names remain stamped on our minds, and some of their characteristic phrases, like Micawber's "Something will turn up," or Tapley's "There's some credit in being jolly here," have passed into current phrases. Dickens' great object was to celebrate the virtues of the humbler ranks of life, and to expose the acts of injustice or tyranny to which they are subjected. This he did in a spirit of the truest philanthropy and most universal benevolence. The helpless victims of oppression, like little Oliver Twist, or the inmates of Dotheboys Hall, found in him an effective champion. Never has hypocrisy, the besetting vice of this age, been so mercilessly exposed as in the works of Dickens. It is not only in such a character as Pecksniff that its ugliness is revealed, but wherever pretence hides guilt behind a sanctimonious countenance, the mask is surely torn off. Dickens hated hypocrisy as Thackeray hated snobbism. And both, in their zeal, occasionally saw the hypocrite or the snob where he did not exist. Dealing, as Dickens did, so exclusively with common and low-born characters, it is remarkable that his books so rarely leave any impression of vulgarity behind them. And this result is due to the author's love of truth and detestation of all pretence. There can be no vulgarity without pretension. A great many novels of the day are extremely vulgar, because they describe ill-bred people and represent them to the reader as ladies and gentlemen. But Dickens' shopkeeper or street-sweeper makes no pretence to gentility, and therefore is as far from being vulgar as the man who has never known what it was to be any thing but a gentleman. The faults, like the merits, of Dickens' work resulted from the exuberance and power of his imagination. The same vividness of conception which gives such life to his description of a thunderstorm or of a quiet family scene, sometimes betrayed him into exaggeration and caricature. And yet when we consider the number and variety of the figures conjured up by his creative mind, from Paul Dombey to the Jew, Fagin, it is extraordinary that to so few this criticism will apply.

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Dickens' vast popularity resulted only in part from the artistic merit of his works. The breadth of his canvas, his intense realization of fictitious scenes, and his extraordinary descriptive power are qualities enough to win for him his eminent position in fiction. But the affection felt for Dickens as a man, which has made him occupy so much the hearts as well as the minds of the reading public, was attracted by qualities apart from those which excited admiration for the author. Dickens was essentially a national writer in the variety of the characters with whom he brought his readers into communion. He was essentially popular, from the fact that he dealt with the masses and not with any particular class. He was essentially English, in that he was the apostle of home. No novelist who has treated domestic life has so thoroughly caught its spirit, and has so sympathetically traced its joys and sorrows, its trials and recompenses. Family life has been for more than two centuries gradually supplanting the life of the camp and the court. It is in the domestic circle that men now find the interest which was formerly sought in adventure or publicity. Not only in the Christmas stories, especially devoted to the celebration of home, but through all his great fictions Dickens made domestic life his chief study. And he is, above all others, the favorite household novelist. While he lived, each new work of his was welcomed alike by parent and child, and when he died, there were few homes where books ever came that the loss of a friend was not felt.

Scott, Dickens, almost all the great English novelists described heroes and heroines. They made their chief character an embodiment of virtue or strength, and strove to win for him the admiration of the reader. Even Tom Jones was a hero to Fielding, and Roderick Random to Smollett. But Thackeray said to himself as he looked out on the world, that humanity was not made up of heroes and villains. He had never met with the truly heroic, nor with the utterly depraved. It seemed to him that human nature lay between the two extremes. In "Vanity Fair," in "Pendennis" and in "The Newcomes" he resolved to describe man as he was, with virtues and failings, with occasional glimpses of the noble, and more common exhibitions of the mean and the little. Young men were to appear in his pages with their weakness and selfishness; young girls with their silliness and affectation. Thackeray, in a word, was to be more realistic than his predecessors in fiction had dared to be. He was to show his readers what they really were, and not what they would wish to be.

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But in Thackeray's novels is evident the difficulty of establishing any generally accepted standard of realism. If this quality consists in representing a character as speaking and acting just as we should expect such a character to speak and act, Thackeray succeeded as perhaps no novelist, except Fielding, had done before him. Becky Sharp, Sir Pitt Crawley, Pendennis, Clive Newcome, all use such words as the reader would expect from them. Their actions are the natural results of the trains of thought into which the author has given us an insight. When the old reprobate, Lord Steyne, discovers that Becky Sharp had appropriated to herself the money which he had given her to restore poor Miss Briggs' stolen property, he is not indignant at the deception. The admiration of the noble rogue is only increased for the woman who has shown herself to be possessed of a more astute roguery than his own:—

"What an accomplished little devil it is!" thought he. "What a splendid actress and manager! She had almost got a second supply out of me the other day with her coaxing ways. She beats all the women I have ever seen in the course of all my well-spent life! They are babies compared to her. I am a green-horn myself and a fool in her hands—-an old fool. She is unsurpassable in lies." His lordship's admiration for Becky rose immeasurably at this proof of her cleverness. Getting the money was nothing—but getting double the sum she wanted and paying nobody—it was a magnificent stroke.

In his delineation of character, in the perfect naturalness with which all his personages act out their respective parts, no novelist is more realistic than Thackeray. But realism has a broader application. A novelist who takes every-day life for his subject has not only to give the stamp of nature to all his scenes and individuals, but he must so write, that at the end of his book the reader will have the impression that real life, with its due apportionment of good and evil, of happiness and grief, has been placed before him. Some readers will receive that impression from Thackeray's novels; but they will be those who think that the evil and the unhappiness predominate. So thought the author himself. But the world in general think differently, and agree to look upon Thackeray as a satirist.

As such, he ranks in English literature second only to Swift. To the great Dean, man was a lump of deformity and disease. He saw in humanity little besides its vice, and painted his species in colors under which few men have been willing to recognize a portrait. Thackeray's genial disposition naturally made him far less bitter than Swift. He neither saw nor portrayed the monstrous vice which excited the hatred of the satirist of the eighteenth century. To Thackeray, men were weak rather than bad, selfish rather than vicious. George Osborne braves the consequences of marrying poor Amelia Sedley, and yet prefers his own pleasure to that of his wife. Rawdon Crawley is ignorant, rude, and unprincipled, but yet is loving and faithful to Rebecca. Weakness, pettiness, self-deception were the main objects of Thackeray's satire. Where are the absurdities of youthful woman-worship held up to such derision as in Pendennis' love for Miss Costigan!

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Pen tried to engage her in conversation about poetry and about her profession. He asked her what she thought about Ophelia's madness, and whether she was in love with Hamlet or not? "In love with such a little ojus creature as that stunted manager of a Bingley?" She bristled with indignation at the thought. Pen explained that it was not of her he spoke, but of Ophelia of the play. "Oh, indeed, if no offense was meant none was taken: but as for Bingley, indeed, she did not value him—not that glass of punch." Pen next tried her on Kotzebue. "Kotzebue? who was he?" "The author of the play in which she had been performing so admirably." "She did not know that, the man's name at the beginning of the book was Thompson," she said. Pen laughed at her adorable simplicity.... "How beautiful she is," thought Pen, cantering homewards. "How simple and how tender! How charming it is to see a woman of her genius busying herself with the humble affairs of domestic life, cooking dishes to make her old father comfortable, and brewing him drink! How rude it was of me to begin to talk of professional matters, and how well she turned the conversation! ... Pendennis, Pendennis,—how she spoke the word! Emily! Emily! how good, how noble, how beautiful, how perfect she is!"[207]

Thackeray's satire is all the more powerful in that it is directed against foibles more than against vices. Many a reader who will reject Swift's portrait of man as a libel, cannot but feel a twinge at Thackeray's delicate pencillings. After dwelling on the worldliness, the hypocrisy, the self-seeking of the inmates of Queen's Crawley, how softly but how terribly he scourges them! "These honest folks at the Hall, whose simplicity and sweet rural purity surely show the advantage of a country life over a town one." His praise is the severest cut of all. "Dear Rebecca," "the dear creature," and we wince for Becky. "What a dignity it gives an old lady, that balance at the banker's! How tenderly we look at her faults, if she be a relative." "These money transactions, these speculations in life and death—these silent battles for reversionary spoil—make brothers very loving toward each other in Vanity Fair."

Thackeray is the novelist whose works depend in the least degree on narrative interest. The characters are so clearly drawn and so interesting, the manner of Thackeray's writing is so uniformly entertaining, that his books can always be opened at random and read with pleasure. "Henry Esmond" is the only novel in which the plot is carefully constructed. The others are a string of consecutive chapters, each one of which possesses its individual interest.[208]

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The novel of English life and manners includes many subdivisions. Among the writings of Miss Edgeworth, Miss Ferrier, Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Anthony Trollope, and others, are novels which deal to a greater or less extent with fashionable life. A number of novelists, principally female, have confined their studies to the aristocratic classes.[209] But the so called fashionable novel is most often the composition of adventurers whose catch-penny productions aim at affording, to the middle or lower ranks, information concerning the habits of the aristocracy. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that fashionable life in these novels is such as it might appear to an imaginative kitchen-maid whose idea of up-stairs existence is founded on the gossip of servants. When written by persons conversant with their subject, the fashionable novel forms a legitimate subdivision of the novel of life and manners. But it is most often a noxious weed. Its cultivators constantly make up for lack of talent by the excitement of immoral scenes, and give to their audience of sempstresses and grooms a most degraded view of aristocratic life. Even when harmless in matter, its rank luxuriance fills up space much better occupied by the flowers of literature.

The eminent criminal novel is taken as a tonic by minds satiated with the vapidity of fashionable fiction. From Lytton's "Paul Clifford," and Ainsworth's "Jack Sheppard," down to "Merciless Ben, the Hair-Lifter," criminal narrative has been occupied with endowing burglars and murderers with the graces of gentlemen and the moral worth of Christian missionaries. In its celebration of successful crime, and its representation under a heroic aspect of villains and blacklegs, no species of fiction is more false to nature or more injurious to youthful readers.

To such writers as George A. Lawrence and "Ouida" the world is indebted for the "Muscular Novel," which combines all the worst elements of both fashionable and criminal narrative. In "Guy Livingstone," "Strathmore," and a hundred similar fictions, the reader is introduced to men of extraordinary physical development, whose strength is proof against the wildest dissipation; to women of extraordinary beauty, whose charms are enhanced in proportion to their coarseness and lack of modesty. Jack Sheppard, reposing on a velvet couch, smoking a perfumed cigarette, and worshipped by two or three ornaments of the demi-monde, is the type most admired by the muscular novelist. Lawrence and "Ouida" have brought to their work a literary power which has given them considerable notoriety; and has placed them at the head of their particular school; but it is a school whose distinctive characteristics consist in extravagance, unhealthiness of tone, and falseness to nature.

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English military life has been ably described by such writers as E. Napier, G.R. Gleig, W.H. Maxwell, and James Grant. But as a maritime nation, England has been much more prolific of naval novelists. At the head of these stands Captain Marryat, who has celebrated the pleasures and described the incidents of sea-faring life in about thirty jovial, dashing books. Among the great number of odd and entertaining characters sketched by his hand, “Peter Simple” and “Midshipman Easy” are perhaps the most interesting. Marryat’s narratives are not carefully constructed, but flow on gracefully and easily, enlivened by an inexhaustible fund of humor, and enriched by an endless succession of bright or exciting scenes. The names of Captain Glassock, Howard, Trelawney, Captain Chamier, Michael Scott, and the author of the “Wreck of the Grosvenor,” are among those most prominently associated with the marine novel. These writers have not only dealt with the adventures of a sailor’s life and the peculiarities of a sailor’s character, but have studied the influence of the sea on the human mind.

Through the great interest felt by Englishmen in the manners and customs of Eastern nations, Oriental novels have become a recognized department of English fiction. In the eighteenth century, Johnson, in “Rasselas,” and Beckford, in “Vathek,” had drawn on the romantic features of Eastern life. In the present century successful attempts have been made to study Oriental character through the medium of the realistic novel. Hope, in “Anastasius,” described the vices and degradation of Turkey and Greece in the person of his hero. In James Morier’s “Hajji Baba of Ispahan” and “Ayesha,” are vivid delineations of Eastern character and highly humorous sketches of Persian life. James Baillie Fraser, in “The Kuzzilbash,” and Miss Pardoe in a number of tales, have still further enriched the department of Oriental fiction.

[Footnote 206: Other women who have contributed to the English domestic novel—. Mary K. Mitford, Mrs. Crowe, Mrs. Marsh, Lady Georgiana Fullerton, Miss Kavanaugh, Geraldine Jewsbury, Mrs. Alexander, S. Bunbury, C. Sinclair, A. Strickland, M.C. Clarke, L.S. Costello, C. Crowe, A.H. Drury, G. Ellis, M. Howitt, Mrs. Hubback, Hon. Mrs. Norton, M.A. Power, E. Sewell, Mrs. Marquoid, Hesba Stretton, Florence Marryat, Elizabeth Wetherell, Sarah Tytler, C.C. Fraser-Tytler, C. Craik, Hon. Mrs. Chetwind, M.M. Grant, A.E. Bray, and others.]

[Footnote 207: “Pendennis,” Chap. v.]

[Footnote 208: Many other well-known writers have contributed to the English domestic novel: Thomas Love Peacock, H. Coke, Samuel Philips, Angus B. Reach, Albert Smith, R. Cobbold, Edmund Yates, Thomas A. Trollope, Thomas Hardy, James Payn, George Augustus Sala, William Thornbury, the author of “The Bachelor of the Albany,” Mortimer Collins, G.H. Lewes, Shirley Brooks, Douglas Jerrold, C. Crowley, T. de Quincey, S.W. Fullom, J. Hannay, W. Howitt, C. Mackay, G.J. Whyte-Melville, T. Miller, L. Ritchie, F.E. Smedley, J.A. St. John, M.F. Tupper, F.M. Whitly, F. Williams, C.L. Wraxall, and others.]

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[Footnote 209: T.H. Lister, Marquis of Normanby, Lady Caroline Lamb, Countess of Morley, Lady Charlotte Bury, Lady Dacre, Mrs. Gore, Lady Blessington.]

VI.

James Fenimore Cooper said in regard to the materials for American fiction: "There is a familiarity of the subject, a scarcity of events, and a poverty in the accompaniments that drive an author from the undertaking in despair." But the truth of this statement has been greatly modified, if not quite refuted, by the work of that great novelist and of several others who have succeeded him. It is true that American life presents less salient characteristics than that of Europe; that class distinctions are less marked; and that the energies of the nation are still so much confined to strictly utilitarian objects, that life moves along with unpicturesque sameness and evenness. But mankind remains equally complicated and equally interesting under whatever circumstances it may be placed. The vast extent of American territory and the infinite variety of its inhabitants afford material to the novelist which yet remains almost untouched. New England, New York, the Southern States, and, above all, the Great West, are rich in special customs, traditions, and habits of thought with which fiction has only begun to concern itself. The visitor to Washington cannot fail to be struck by the variety of men who jostle each other in that cosmopolitan city. The New England farmer, the New York banker, the Southern planter, the Western herder or grain merchant, the California mine-owner, the negro, and perhaps a stray visiting Indian chief, represent widely differing and highly interesting forms of life and opinion. Whenever native genius has cast aside foreign influence and has found inspiration in American traditions and institutions, the extent and richness of its literary material have been made manifest.

The earliest examples of fiction in the United States were tentative and lacking in originality. At the close of the eighteenth century, Charles Brockden Brown began the career of the first American novelist with "Wieland." His pecuniary necessities and the slight encouragement offered at that time to American authors made it impossible for him to afford the time and care essential to artistic finish. His novels are of an imaginative and psychological character, often interesting in parts from the intense mental excitement which they describe. They were much admired by the English novelist Godwin, whose works they resemble in intensity of conception and faultiness of execution. A novel called "Charlotte Temple," by Susanna Rowson, obtained a wide circulation in the beginning of the present century, due much more to its foundation on a notorious scandal than to its own literary merit. "Modern Chivalry; or the Adventures of Captain Farrago and Teague O'Reagan, his Servant"—a poor imitation of "Don Quixote"—as a satire directed against the Democratic party by H.H. Brackenridge. R.H. Dana's "Tom Thornton" and "Paul Felton" have little claim to attention beyond the excitement of their rather sensational stories.

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But with the publication of “The Spy,” Cooper opened a thoroughly national vein, and began a literary career which showed how little native genius need rely on foreign influence or on foreign subjects. He described the stirring events and the moral heroism of the American Revolution with patriotic sympathy and original literary power. He touched the romantic chords of that great struggle with a delicacy which met with a world-wide response. Not only did Americans feel that in Cooper’s novels the picturesque and characteristic features of their country were delineated by a master-hand, but in almost every European land, translations of “The Spy,” “The Pioneers,” or “The Pathfinder,” testified to the universal interest excited by the examples of simplicity, endurance, and sagacity which formed the subjects of Cooper’s pen. In “The Pioneers,” “The Last of the Mohicans,” “The Prairie,” “The Pathfinder,” and “The Deer-slayer” figures the character of Leatherstocking, than whom no fictitious personage has a greater claim to interest. His bravery, resolution, and woodland skill make him a type of the hardy race who pushed westward the reign of civilization. The scenes among which he lived, the primeval forest, the great inland lakes, the hunter’s camp, and Indian wigwam were described by Cooper with a fidelity and picturesqueness which will always give to his works a national value. Now that farms and manufacturing towns cover what a century ago was a trackless wilderness, where backwoodsmen and Indians shot bear and deer, it would be almost impossible for us to realize the previous condition of our now populous country were it not for the novels of Cooper. And this great writer not only described the wild aspect of American scenery and the hardly less wild features of pioneer character. He painted with equal skill the life of the American sailor, at a time when that life had an interest and excitement it no longer possesses. Long Tom Coffin, Tom Tiller, Bob Yarn, belonged to a period when the United Stales was a maritime country, before American enterprise and industry were shut off from the sea by legislative imbecility. No marine novelist has given a more life-like impression of a ship than Cooper, and none have excelled him in descriptions of the sea and in studies of those peculiar forms of human nature produced by life on the ocean. So long as Cooper confined himself to purely national subjects, his success was brilliant and continuous; but many of his works show the effect of misdirected talent, and have fallen into neglect.

The “Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” and “Rip Van Winkle” are the specimens of American fiction most intimately associated with New York. In these stories the traditions and scenery of the Hudson River were treated by Washington Irving with all the richness of imagination and delicacy of expression of which he had so great a store. Some part of that romantic interest afforded to the traveller by the castles of the Rhine, has been imparted to the Hudson by the exquisite pages of the “Sketch Book.” The stories of Nathaniel P. Willis and some of the novels of Bayard Taylor and of J.G. Holland also belong especially to New York.

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At the head of New England, and, indeed, of American writers of fiction, stands Nathaniel Hawthorne. His three great works, “The Scarlet Letter,” “The House of the Seven Gables,” and “The Blithedale Romance,” are the finest specimens of imaginative writing which American genius has yet produced. The interest of Hawthorne’s novels lies almost entirely in their subtle and astute studies of the hidden workings of the human mind. His fictions are remarkable for their want of action. “The Scarlet Letter” can hardly be said to have a plot. The series of chapters which intervene between the exhibition of Hester Prynne on the scaffold and the voluntary self-exposure there of the Puritan minister, simply represent gradual changes from the first to the last situation of the principal characters. But narrative excitement was never Hawthorne’s object, and the want of it is never felt by his reader. Each scene is an appropriate sequel to the last, and a natural introduction to the next. Each chapter has its special interest,—the analysis of a condition of mind, a dramatic situation, or a highly finished domestic picture. It is in the delineation of character and the study of human motives that Hawthorne’s chief excellence as a novelist consists. Nothing can exceed the penetration and vividness with which such persons as Zenobia, in “The Blithedale Romance,” and Holgrave, in “The House of the Seven Gables,” are described. The homeward walk of the fallen young minister, in “The Scarlet Letter,” when he had resolved to desert his flock and to connect himself again with Hester Prynne, is an unsurpassed delineation of sudden moral degeneration. There is nothing of modern realism in Hawthorne’s novels, and yet they leave a realistic impression behind them. The greater number of his characters appear to us rather as representatives of certain mental conditions then as real flesh and blood. Neither in the dialogue, nor in what may be called the “properties” of his writing did Hawthorne strive at realistic effects. Still, when the reader lays down “The Scarlet Letter,” or “The House of the Seven Gables,” he insensibly feels himself embued with the spirit and atmosphere of Puritan New England. Hawthorne was so intensely a New Englander in his sympathies, prejudices, and habits of mind, that his writings were always colored by the thought and sentiment of his native land. In “The Scarlet Letter,” there is little evidence of the use of historical researches, and yet in that volume, colonial life has been made real and actual to us by the very intensity of the author’s national feeling.

New England fiction includes a number of other celebrated and honored names. Catherine M. Sedgwick began her literary career with “Hope Leslie,” a story founded on the early history of Massachusetts, which was followed by “Redwood” and “The Linwoods, or Sixty Years Since in America.” Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes studied New England village life in “Elsie Venner,” and Sylvester Judd that of the Maine backwoods in “Margaret.” Mr. T.W. Higginson has written “Malbone.” Mr. W.D. Howells, Rev. Edward Everett Hale, and Miss E.S. Phelps are still adding to their reputations.

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Among the novels relating to life in the Southern States, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” is the most prominent. The circulation and fame of this book have been the most remarkable phenomenon in the annals of literature. Within a year, more than two hundred thousand copies were sold in the United States, and fully a million in England. Thirteen different translations were issued in Germany, four in France, and two in Russia; the Magyar language boasted three separate versions; the Wallachian, two; the Welsh, two; and the Dutch, two; while the Armenian, Arabic, Romaic, and all the European languages had at least one version. The book was dramatized in not less than twenty different forms, and was acted all over Europe. In France, and still more in England, all other books and all other subjects became, for the time, secondary to “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.” This extraordinary popularity was chiefly due to the importance and novelty of the subject treated. Mrs. Stowe imparted a considerable narrative interest to her work, and gave to her characters a very life-like effect. Her pathetic and humorous scenes are natural and well arranged. The peculiarities of negro life and habits of thought are placed before the reader with genuine sympathy and truth. Uncle Tom and Topsy are fine and original creations. But taken simply as a novel, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” is not more remarkable than a hundred others, and cannot compete with such works as “Tom Jones,” “Adam Bede,” or “David Copperfield.” Mrs. Stowe’s extraordinary success was fully deserved, but it resulted less from the literary excellence of her work, than from the fact that when one great subject rose pre-eminent in the public mind, she was able to embody it in a popular and easily comprehended form. Gilmore Simms and John P. Kennedy have contributed largely to the novel of Southern life. Mr. G.W. Cable is now studying Louisiana characters, and Judge Tourgee the general condition of the South since the war.

Novels descriptive of Western life have been written by Charles Fenno Hoffman, James Hall, Timothy Flint, Thomas, and O’Connell. But none of these writers have given such original sketches of character, or have so graphically portrayed the spirit of life in the far West as Mr. Bret Harte. “The Luck of Roaring Camp” and the other stories of this talented writer have opened a vein of romance where it was least expected.

American fiction has been exceptionally rich in stories adapted to the juvenile mind, among which the most prominent are Mrs. Whitney’s “Faith Gartney’s Girlhood,” Miss Alcott’s “Little Women,” and Mr. T.B. Aldrich’s “Story of a Bad Boy.” Edgar Allan Poe’s “Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque,” are remarkable for intensity and vividness of conception, combined with a circumstantial invention almost equal to that of Defoe. Mrs. Burnett and Mr. J.W. De Forest are still writing excellent novels of American life; and Mr. Henry James, Jr., is studying that peculiar form of human nature known as the American in Europe.[210]

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[Footnote 210: Other American writers of fiction:—R.B. Kimball, Herman Melville, Dr. R. Bird, John Neal, H.W. Longfellow, Washington Allston, Maria S. Cummins, W.G. Simms, Theodore Winthrop, Mary J. Holmes, Mrs. Terhune, Augusta Evans Wilson, Catherine Sedgwick Valerio.]

VII.

The historical novel is obviously a subdivision of the novel of life and manners. But, dealing as it does with remote ages, with forgotten opinions and long-disused customs, it has to reconstruct where the novel of contemporary life has only to illustrate. Strict historical accuracy can hardly be expected in fiction concerned with the past. The details of life, always difficult to seize, are almost beyond the reach of the novelist who deals with a subject with which he has had no personal experience. A certain amount of accuracy concerning dress, customs, peculiarities of opinion and language are necessary to give to a historical novel the effect of verisimilitude. But what is chiefly requisite in such a work is that the general spirit of the period treated should be successfully caught; that the reader should find himself occupied with a train of associations and sympathies which insensibly withdraws his thoughts from their ordinary channels, and occupies them with the beliefs, opinions, and aspirations of a totally different state of society.

Such is the special merit of Scott's historical novels. Many inaccuracies of fact might be pointed out in them. His study of the character of James I, in "The Fortunes of Nigel," is in several respects entirely mistaken. His description of a euphuist in "The Monastery" bears no resemblance whatever to the followers of John Lyly. In "The Talisman" and in "Ivanhoe," of which the scenes are laid in the time of Richard Coeur de Lion, the reader recognises little realism of language. But as Scott's historical novels deal with periods extending from that of the crusades down to the Pretender's attempt in 1745, an intimate knowledge of the innumerable social changes and peculiarities is not to be expected.

It is, indeed, to be doubted that a novelist can so reproduce a distant epoch as to satisfy the ideas of careful historical students. He can, however, make familiar to his readers the general spirit of a time. And, in this, Scott was eminently successful. "Kenilworth" gives a vivid picture of the gay picturesqueness of Elizabeth's age. "Woodstock" contains a fine contrast between the Cavalier and the Puritan character. "Quentin Durward" affords a lasting impression of the times of Louis XI and Charles the Bold. Scott's strong national feeling and his intense sympathy with the traditions of his native land naturally gave to his Scotch fictions a particular historical value. "The Legend of Montrose," describing the civil war in the sixteenth century; "Old Mortality," dealing with the rebellion of the Covenanters; and "Waverley," occupied with the Pretender's

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troubles in the middle of the eighteenth century, threw into bold relief widely differing periods of Scotch history. Its is, indeed, extraordinary that one mind should have been able to seize so many and so varied historical conditions as are treated in the Waverley novels. Of these works, about fourteen deal with entirely distinct epochs, each one of which is given its individual character and obtains its appropriate treatment.[211]

Bulwer Lytton's "Last Days of Pompeii," and "Harold, the Last of the Saxon Kings," are both powerful, ingenious, and interesting narratives, and they give as definite an idea, perhaps, of the times of which they treat as is possible after so long a lapse of time. "Rienzi" leaves a greater impression of verisimilitude. "The Last of the Barons" is somewhat clogged by its superabundance of historic incident, but still affords a striking view of declining feudalism. In the "Tale of Two Cities" and "Barnaby Rudge," Dickens described the sanguinary scenes of the French Revolution and the Lord Gordon Riots with his never-failing power. Since the Waverley novels, the most perfect specimen of English historical fiction has been "Henry Esmond." The artistic construction of its plot, and the life-like reality of its characters, place it first among Thackeray's works. But its pre-eminence among historical novels is due to the fact that it reproduces so vividly the spirit and atmosphere of a past age. All the thoughts, opinions, and actions of the characters in "Henry Esmond" are such as we should expect from persons living in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Whoever is familiar with the pages of the "Spectator" will notice how faithfully Thackeray adopted the language of Steele and Addison. It is true that he had a far less difficult task before him in describing the age of Queen Anne than fell to the lot of Bulwer Lytton in "The Last Days of Pompeii." The latter work required far more historical research and a far greater effort of the imagination. But while in Lytton's novel the reader cannot divest himself of a certain sense of unreality, he feels that "Henry Esmond" really carries him back to the period it portrays.

George Eliot's "Romola" must always retain a high place in historical fiction. But its author's great creative power led her to bestow more pains on such of the characters as proceeded from her own imagination, than on those whom history provided ready-made. The reader's memory retains a more vivid impression of Tito than it does of Savonarola. Charles Kingsley's "Hypatia" and "Westward Ho!" are among the most prominent of recent historical novels. The latter aimed at describing the time of Elizabeth, but resembles more closely that of Cromwell. John Gibson Lockhart, in "Valerius," and Mr. Wilkie Collins in "Antonina," have studied the life of ancient Rome. James Fenimore Cooper in "The Spy" and "The Pioneers" threw into bold relief the stirring incidents of American colonial and revolutionary times. Nathaniel Hawthorne reproduced the spirit of Puritan New England in "The Scarlet Letter," of which mention has already been made.

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[Footnote 211: Horace Smith, Sir T.D. Lauder, and G.P.R. James are well-known historical novelists who have written under the influence of Scott. W. Harrison Ainsworth has made use of historical material in “The Tower of London,” and similar writings.]

VIII.

The novel of purpose may be defined as a work of fiction of which the main object is to teach a lesson or to advocate a principle. Strictly speaking, every good novel has a purpose, or some well-defined aim, if it be only that of affording entertainment. But the novel of purpose distinctly subordinates the amusement of the reader to his improvement or information. With a few exceptions, such as “The Fool of Quality,” this species of fiction is the product of the nineteenth century. It has special difficulties to contend against. To combine a didactic aim with artistic excellence is among the most difficult of literary experiments. If the lesson or principle to be inculcated be given too much prominence, the reader who opens the book for entertainment will shut it very soon in spite of any prospective self-improvement. If narrative interest or artistic beauty be the most striking feature of the work, its serious aim will be unnoticed. The safest plan for the writer of the novel of purpose to pursue, is to openly acknowledge his object, and to place that object before the reader in as attractive a manner as possible. But he cannot expect to attain success unless the principle he advocates be one of general interest and importance. Nor can he expect, when that principle has obtained acceptance, that the work in which it is urged can have any further prominence. He must be content that his object is attained, and that his book, having served its purpose, falls into obscurity.

Some of Miss Edgeworth’s tales, and such novels as Miss Brunton’s “Self-Control” and “Discipline,” were among the earliest specimens of fiction having the professed object of moral improvement. These books were very popular at a time when a well-justified prejudice against novels prevailed. But since the character of fiction has been raised to its present standard of purity, professedly moral novels have become unnecessary for general reading. The successors of Miss Edgeworth’s and Miss Brunton’s works now appear in the form of temperance novels and Sunday-school books. A curious form of the novel of purpose is that written in the interest of religious sects or special tenets, of which specimens may be found in the writings of Elizabeth M. Sewell, who advocated High Church doctrines. Harriet Martineau made very successful use of fiction in conveying her ideas on political economy. In “Ginx’s Baby,” by Mr. Edward Jenkins, the popularity and interest of a political pamphlet had been greatly increased by the assistance of a narrative form.

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The most important specimens of the novel of purpose are those written in the interest of some injured or suffering class. A mere recital of general grievances is not likely to have much effect on the public mind. But a novelist who can interest a considerable body of readers in a few well-chosen characters, who can subject his fictitious personages to the evils which he means to expose, and thus arouse the sympathy and indignation of a large number of people, can make a novel of purpose a very effective weapon of reform. Individuals are much more interesting than bodies of men, and the sufferings of little Oliver Twist or of the inmates of Dotheboys Hall, as related by Dickens, will arouse public attention far more actively than the report of an examining committee. But although a novelist may accomplish great results by such devotion to a philanthrophic object, he can hardly avoid injury to the artistic effect and permanent value of his work. Many passages in Dickens' novels which have had a great influence in the cause of reform, cannot fail, in the future, when the evil exposed is no longer felt, to be a drag on the works which contain them.

Charles Kingsley described the grievances of mechanics in "Alton Locke," a work in which the artistic elements are much subordinated to the didactic. A more powerful novel of purpose is Mrs. Gaskell's "Mary Barton," which enlists the sympathies of the reader very strongly with the trials of the manufacturing classes. Not of more literary excellence, but dealing with a subject of far wider interest than that of "Mary Barton," was the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" of Mrs. Stowe. This work is a wonderful example of the capacities of fiction for moving the public mind. Before its publication, great numbers of ordinarily humane people had a general, ill defined horror of slavery. It was felt to be a barbarous institution, a blot on American civilization. But to most people it was a distant abuse, with which they seldom or never came in contact, and of which they only heard the evil effects in a general way. But with the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" the whole Northern public were brought face to face with the question of slavery. Here were individuals, made real and interesting by the power of the novelist, subjected to tyranny and suffering from which every generous nature recoiled. Slavery then assumed a new and more personal aspect, and thousands who were indifferent to the rights of the negroes in general felt a sympathy with the fate of Uncle Tom which easily extended to the sufferings of the whole race. But the extraordinary reputation and circulation given to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by the world-wide interest in its subject, could not be sustained when public interest in that subject declined; and the volume which at one time occupied the attention of the whole civilized world, fell into comparative obscurity when its mission was accomplished.

IX.

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Works of fiction occupied with purely imaginary or supernatural subjects have been comparatively rare. While Byron, Shelley and his wife were living at the Lake of Geneva, a rainy week kept them indoors, and all three occupied themselves with reading or inventing ghost stories. Mrs. Shelley, who was the daughter of Godwin the novelist, and who inherited his intensity of imagination, reproduced the impressions then made upon her mind in the remarkable but disagreeable romance of “Frankenstein.” The story is related by a young student, who creates a monstrous being from materials gathered in the tomb and the dissecting-room. When the creature is made complete with bones, muscles, and skin, it acquires life and commits atrocious crimes. It murders a friend of the student, strangles his bride, and finally comes to an end in the Northern seas. While some parts of the story are written with considerable power, the general effect is exceedingly unpleasant. Bulwer Lytton’s “Zanoni,” a peculiarly fanciful work, unfolds the mysteries of the Rosicrucians. In “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” the freaks and vagaries of the imagination in sleep are vividly traced. The curious mixture of the actual and the unreal, the merging of wholly different ideas in one conception, so frequent in dreams, are described with extraordinary skill and delicacy. The childlike simplicity of Alice’s mind is charmingly maintained, and the exquisite vein of humor which runs through the whole book makes it one of the most delightful as well as one of the most remarkable of fictions.

X.

In an article published in *The Ninteenth Century*, Mr. Anthony Trollope expressed his views on the good and evil influences exerted by works of fiction, and he has repeated very much the same opinions in his interesting book on Thackeray.[212] “However poor your matter may be,” he says, “however near you may come to that ’foolishest of existing mortals,’ as Carlyle presumes some unfortunate novelist to be, still, if there be those who read your works, they will undoubtedly be more or less influenced by what they find there. And it is because the novelist amuses that he is thus influential. The sermon too often has no such effect, because it is applied with the declared intention of having it. The palpable and overt dose the child rejects; but that which is cunningly insinuated by the aid of jam or honey is accepted unconsciously, and goes on its curative mission. So it is with the novel. It is taken because of its jam and honey. But, unlike the honest, simple jam and honey of the household cupboard, it is never unmixed with physic. There will be the dose within it, either curative or poisonous. The girl will be taught modesty or immodesty, truth or falsehood; the lad will be taught honor or dishonor, simplicity or affectation. Without the lesson the amusement will not be there. There are novels which certainly teach nothing; but then neither can

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they amuse any one. I should be said to insist absurdly on the power of my own confraternity if I were to declare that the bulk of the young people in the upper and middle classes receive their moral teaching chiefly from the novels they read. Mothers would no doubt think of their own sweet teaching: fathers of the examples which they set: and schoolmasters of the influence of their instructions. Happy is the country that has such mothers, fathers, schoolmasters! But the novelist creeps in closer than the schoolmaster, closer than the father, closer almost than the mother. He is the chosen guide, the tutor whom the young pupil chooses for herself. She retires with him, suspecting no lesson, safe against rebuke, throwing herself head and heart into the narration as she can hardly do into her task-work; and there she is taught how she shall learn to love; how she shall receive the lover when he comes; how far she should advance to meet the joy; why she should be reticent, and not throw herself at once into this new delight. It is the same with the young man, though he would be more prone even than she to reject the suspicion of such tutorship. But he, too, will there learn either to speak the truth, or to lie; and will receive from his novel lessons either of real manliness, or of that affected apishness and tailor-begotten demeanor which too many professors of the craft give out as their dearest precepts."

Such are the views of a close observer of human nature, whose works have had an exceedingly wide and an always excellent influence. While Mr. Trollope has probably exaggerated the educational power of the novel, it cannot be denied that this form of literature takes a considerable part in moulding the opinions and standards of the young. The impressions of life derived from novels are almost as strong as those we receive from what is passing in the world about us. If a work of fiction form a truthful reflection of nature, it must hold up to the reader's view examples of evil as well as examples of good; it must deal with depravity as well as with virtue. And, therefore, all that can be expected from the novelist is that he should endeavor to represent life as it is, with its due apportionment of beauty and of ugliness. And so much is demanded not only by the moralist, but by the critic. Many writers who have described the life of criminals, who have endeavored to make infamous careers attractive, and have pandered to the lower tastes of the reading public, would urge in their own defence: that they have nothing to do with morality; that their object is to produce a work of art; that no question of the good or evil effect of their writing should be allowed to trammel their imagination. But the critic would rightly reply, that truth at least must be respected in a work of art; that the imagination must not be allowed the liberty of misrepresentation; and that the novelist in whose pages vice predominates, or is given an alluring

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aspect, is no more artistic than the writer of Sunday-school books. In judging the influence exerted by the great body of writers of fiction whose names have been mentioned in this chapter, I shall therefore proceed on the understanding that that novelist who writes almost exclusively of good people is not necessarily the one whose influence has been the best, nor that he who has drawn many weak or evil-doing characters has necessarily taught the worst lessons. The standard by which we must judge an author, as well from an artistic as from a moral point of view, must be founded on the recognition that both good and evil prevail in the world, and that whoever undertakes to give a picture of life must paint both the evil and the good in their true colors.

In commenting on the fiction of the eighteenth century, its prevailing coarseness was reprehended. But this characteristic was objected to on the score of taste, but not at all on that of truth or morality. The novelist of that time would not have faithfully represented the society about him had he not allowed himself that license which universally prevailed. Nor could the coarseness of the eighteenth-century writer be objected to on moral grounds. Morality is concerned with thoughts, not with expression. Whether we speak plainly the ideas in our mind, whether we communicate them by means of some, circumlocution, or whether we keep them wholly to ourselves, is a matter of fashion, not of morality.[213] Our great-grandmothers were not less chaste because they spoke of things regarding which we remain silent in a mixed society: they were simply less squeamish. Mrs. Behn in her day, and Fielding in his, described a licentious scene openly and honestly without a suspicion of evil.

But a great change has come over public taste, and I may even say over public morality, during the present century. Licentious conduct is no longer a venial offence; gross and immodest expressions are no longer allowed in respectable society. The improvement has certainly been great, although not as great as it seems. Out of our higher morality, out of our new and boasted refinement, has sprung a vice more ugly than coarseness, more degrading than sensuality, and that vice is hypocrisy, which shelters all others behind its deceptive mask. Many a parent now winks at the hidden vice of a son, the exposure of which would fill him with shame and indignation. Thousands of young men feel that they can privately lead a life of dissipation, so long as they keep a respectable face to the world. It is not the vice that society punishes, it is the being found out. So when we think of our improved morality and refinement, we must temper our pride with the reflection that we may be simply more hypocritical, and not more virtuous than our ancestors. Still, the fact that licentiousness must now wear a mask of respectability, that social status is now greatly affected by moral worth, shows that a real advance has been made. This advance has left plainly marked traces on the fiction of our time, where, too, we shall find plentiful evidence of that hypocrisy which has become our besetting sin.

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As we look back upon the list of the great authors who have written in the present century, it must be with a feeling of gratitude for the benefits they have conferred. They have devoted their lives to the production of literary works, the beauty and excellence of which have incalculably elevated the public taste. They have held up ideals and noble conceptions which insensibly impart a dignity to life, and an encouragement to youthful aspiration. They have described so truthfully and sympathetically the character and aims of different classes and different peoples, that whoever reads their works cannot but feel himself drawn nearer to great divisions of the human race, which he had hitherto regarded with an indifferent or a prejudiced eye. The novels of Scott, of Dickens, of Thackeray, of George Eliot, of Miss Austen, of Miss Ferrier, of very many others, have afforded to hundreds of thousands, young and old, a never failing source of healthful entertainment. Domestic life, as well in the cottage as the castle, has been cheered and enlivened by their presence. Their examples of heroism, of patience, of generosity, have excited the emulation of the young, while their pictures of selfishness and vice have stifled many an evil inclination and have given birth to many a good resolution.

Such writers as these have expressed the best tendencies of the age. And they have been able to do so because they themselves are among the best men and women of their time. But, unfortunately, as the nineteenth century has many evil characteristics, and as depraved and weak-minded persons are often endowed with some literary capacity, a great deal of poisonous matter has unavoidably come to the surface in English fiction. The writers who have prostituted their talents in pandering to the low tastes of their readers, have carefully avoided any such open representation of vice as was permissible in the last century. But they have hidden under an outward respectability of words the most immoral and degrading thoughts. They have recognized the fact that a not inconsiderable number of persons would be be glad to find in a work of fiction the same gross ideas which occupy their own minds. And thus a more dangerous, because a more insidious, species of literature has sprung up. The absence of parental censorship, the general freedom with which works of fiction are allowed to enter almost every household, permit these novels to fall into the hands of the youngest and most susceptible. The young girl or boy whose parents carefully put away the newspaper which contains an account of a divorce trial or a rape, is very possibly reading a novel of which the main interest lies in a detailed description of a seduction. It is not of the so-called “dime novels” or of the stories published in a police gazette to which reference is made, but to books issued by respectable publishers and often written by women. Of these novels, the subject is the unlawful gratification

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of the passions. Bigamy, seduction, adultery, are the incidents on which the story turns, and an effort is always made by the novelist to give to the sinners as attractive and interesting an aspect as possible, and to hold up any respectable people who may appear in the book to the contempt and derision of the reader. Perhaps we would be wrong in blaming a writer for his or her vulgarity. This is a fault into which some authors fall unconsciously, and is a part of their nature which they cannot shake off. If Rhoda Broughton or "Ouida" were to cease being vulgar in print, they would be obliged to stop writing altogether, a public benefit which we can hardly expect them to confer. But we have a right to severely call an author to task for representing vice in an attractive aspect, for condoning offences against morality, for depicting licentiousness as unattended by retributive consequences. In so doing, a writer is false to art and to nature, as well as to morality.

Critics have done their utmost to discourage and expose this kind of literature. The pages of *The Spectator*, of *The Saturday Review*, of *The Athenaeum*, of *The London Examiner*, of *The Nation*, are full of reviews which denounce in unmeasured terms the vulgarity and pruriency of much of the fiction of the present day. But their censure can have little practical effect. So long as a class of corrupt readers exists, so long will evil-minded men and women find a sale for the low conceptions of their depraved minds. Parents alone, by supervising the reading of their children, can prevent the evil effects of immoral novels. Some may think that I have exaggerated the bad characteristics of modern fiction. A few examples of objectionable works will be found at the foot of this page,[214] an acquaintance with which will sustain my remarks.

The reader may possibly object that these are obscure names in literature, and that they represent writers whose works are ephemeral. The names chosen are the most prominent in the class to which they belong. Their obscurity is a redeeming feature of the society which can tolerate their existence. Although writers are able to find a sale for the most disgusting productions; although the critic is continually obliged, in reviewing current literature, to wade through the nastiest mire, it yet remains certain that public taste is not pleased with the vile. A limited circulation will be found for immoral novels among a depraved class, but it is to be said, for the credit of the nineteenth century, that talents prostituted can never bring fame. The conceptions of a Goldsmith, a Scott, a Dickens, a Thackeray, a George Eliot, remain among the dearest possessions of all English-speaking people. But the unhealthy, unnatural, and hideous pictures given to the world by vicious men and women receive the same wages as the sin they portray.

[Footnote 212: In Mr. John Morley's edition of "English Men of Letters," chapter ix.]

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[Footnote 213: See Macaulay on “The Comic Dramatists.”]

[Footnote 214: See “Strathmore,” and others, by “Ouida”; “Not Wisely, But Too Well,” “Red as a Rose Is She,” “Joan,” by Rhoda Broughton; “Cherry Ripe,” by Helen Mathers; “The Lovels of Arden,” by Miss Braddon; “Under which Lord?” by Mrs E.L. Linton; “A Romance of the Nineteenth Century,” by W.H. Mallock; “Children of Nature,” by the Earl of Desart. A long list of very nasty books might easily be added, but these will be sufficient to illustrate the bad tendencies of fiction, and to show how thoroughly female authors have kept pace in immodesty and indecency with their rivals of the less pretentious sex.]

THE END.

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