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READINGS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

OTHER ANTHOLOGIES BY GERALD BULLETT

THE ENGLISH GALAXY OF SHORTER POEMS

THE JACKDAW'S NEST\

THE TESTAMENT OF LIGHT

Mr Bullett is also the author of novels and poems

READINGS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

from Chaucer to Matthew Arnold

chosen and edited by

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sometime Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge

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PREFACE

THOUGH not unsuitable for older students as well, this collection of chosen passages from Chaucer to Matthew Arnold is designed first as a school reader, for use in senior classes, and second as an introduction or invitation to the larger study of literature. The editorial commentary aims mainly at helping the reader to see his authors in their historical context, and this without burdening him with a mass of indigestible detail. In any such enterprise some degree of over-simplification can hardly be avoided. On the other hand, while excluding many writers of the first order because of the comparative 'difficulty' of their matter, the editor has not scrupled to touch on ideas which may be supposed at first blush to be a little beyond the intellectual compass of the average young reader; believing that, as 'a man's reach should exceed his grasp', so should—and normally does—that of the maturing human mind.

Much, necessarily, is left to the teacher's discretion. Only he or she can decide whether, for example, any given group of boys or girls is likely to profit by an attempt to read Chaucer aloud in class. Some teachers may prefer to begin at a later stage of the book, and work backwards, so leading their pupils from the comparatively recent and familiar to the earlier and more exacting pieces, few and brief though these are. That done, a straightforward re-reading from beginning to end will provide a conspectus of the whole and a grasp of the chronological sequence. This way of proceeding has much to recommend it. For it would be a fatal mistake to give a young student the impression that he must learn to enjoy Chaucer, or Spenser, or even Shakespeare himself, before approaching writers who are nearer our own day. He may begin, if he will, with the Victorians, or with his own contemporaries, so long as he does not end there.

He will not, however, find his own contemporaries represented here. Literature is a way of sharing imaginative experi-

ence. It is a living and broadening stream of communication. It began we know not when, and that it must come to an end, except with time itself, we cannot believe. Certainly it did not end with Arnold, where this book ends. The literature of the twentieth century may well have first claim on twentieth-century readers, young or old; but the evaluation of recent and living writers is so much a matter either of passing fashion or of unsupported personal opinion that it cannot without impertinence be attempted in summary form; and since no one can fully appreciate the work of the best modern writers without some acquaintance with their great predecessors, the present volume, though it stops at yesterday, has something to tell us, by implication, of today as well.

One word more. A few textual notes are appended for the convenience of teachers and of any others who want them; but in the editor's opinion it would be a grave mistake to impose their use on young readers, whose native delight in literature is all too easily chilled by an academic approach to the subject.

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READINGS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

I

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340?-1400) was born in the reign of Edward the Third, and lived to see that king's successor, Richard the Second, deposed in favour of Henry of Lancaster. His father was a prosperous wine merchant in the City of London, having premises in Thames Street, where, about 1340, Chaucer first saw the light. The poet's childhood was spent in London, a London (largely destroyed by fire three centuries later) of narrow crowded streets, full of noise and colour, violence and filth. He must have been well schooled, an eager listener to travellers' tales, and a no less eager reader of such books (in manuscript) as he could get hold of. His father had business connexions with the court, and at the age of seventeen Geoffrey was appointed page to a great lady, wife of one of the king's sons. Later, in the king's service, he added new worlds to his fancy by visiting foreign countries and coming into more intimate contact with foreign cultures. These experiences, and his own catholic temperament, made him a citizen of the world. Influences both Italian and French had a part in his making. Petrarch and Boccaccio were alive in his young manhood; but at the end of his life he was alone in his glory, the greatest literary figure in Europe.

If we knew three times or ten times as much about Chaucer's personal life as we do know, it is still to his work that we should have to look to discover what kind of man he really was. He does not obtrude himself; but before we have read many pages we know we are in the presence of a man gentle, shrewd, and humorously tolerant. He has an air of serene good temper, of quiet geniality. He knows a rascal when he sees him, and will describe him for you with a kind of loving particularity that is the

more effective for being neither sentimental nor censorious. He can be sharp on occasion, but irony is more natural to him than satire. Though he is never effusive about it, he evidently finds rich pleasure in observing the qualities, whether sublime or absurd, of his fellow-men. At the Tabard Inn at Southwark there gathered a company of men and women on the point of riding to Canterbury, to visit the shrine of 'the hooly blisful martir', Thomas à Becket. They are a very mixed lot: a gentle knight, a monk, an elegant prioress, a learned 'clerk of Oxenford', a robust red-bearded miller, a 'slender cholerick' reeve, a five-times-wedded wife of Bath, and so on, twenty-nine of them, each brought to life under our eyes. It is the spring season, when new green buds are breaking in the hedges, and the birds are excited with love, and a desire for change and adventure stirs again in the hearts of men.

Whan that Aprillè with his shoures soote
 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his swetè breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendré croppes, and the yongé sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfé cours y-ronne,
 And smalè fowlès maken melodye,
 That slepen al the nyght with open eye
 (So priketh them Nature in their corages),
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages . . .

To a reader unaccustomed to Chaucer's English this passage will seem at first sight difficult. The words will not baffle him; for he will know enough French to guess that *corages* means *hearts*, and it will interest him to discover that our word *courage*, which now retains only one of the meanings of *heart* ('Be of good heart'), in Chaucer's day carried all its meanings. But his first impression will be that the lines are anything but musical and that they do not scan. This is a mistaken impression, but a

natural one. The music of verse depends on many things. Pattern or metre, rhyme, the variation of vowel-sounds, the delicate use of alliteration—these are not equally important, but here they each contribute something to the total musical effect. The most of our small initial difficulty in appreciating the music of Chaucer vanishes as soon as it dawns on us that his way of speaking must have differed from ours in two vital respects, often in the pronunciation of vowels, and occasionally in the accentuation of syllables. His English, we remember, was still a young language, with French for one of its parents; and, though we do not pretend to know precisely how it was spoken, there can be no doubt that many of the French-derived words were still pronounced in a more or less French way, just as words that we ourselves borrow from French at first retain their foreign pronunciation, and only later in their career become plain English. Any attempt to speak these twelve lines as Chaucer spoke them must be partly a matter of guesswork, but it is certain that his vowels were not always ours, and probable that they were often more or less French. So let us rewrite the lines, as best we can, in a simple sort of phonetic spelling. Where for a final *e* we substitute an italic *a*, this *a* is to be pronounced very lightly, as in *china*: so lightly as to be almost whispered. And where the fall of the stress is not obvious, it is indicated by an accent. In *corages* and in the last syllable of *pilgrimages*, the *g* is the soft French *g*, and the *a* is the long French *a*. By *eh* (as in *sweh-ta* for *swete*) we mean something like the French *è*, as in *brève*.

Whán that Apréela with his shoor-es soote
 The drochte of March hath pair-sed to the roote,
 And bah-thed every veyne in swich likóor
 Of which vairtóo engénd-red is the floo-r;
 Whan Zéphirus eek with his sweh-ta breeth
 Inspeer-ed hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendra cropp-es, and the yong-a sonne
 Hath in the Ram his hal-fa coorse i-ronne,
 And smah-la fowl-es mah-ken melodye,

That sleh-pen al the neecht with open eye
 (So preeketh them Natóor in their coráges),
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimáges . . .

All verse should be read with the voice as well as with the eye. If reading aloud happens to be inconvenient, it should at least be spoken very clearly in the mind.

Chaucer is the greatest of all storytellers in English verse, large-minded, genial-hearted, full of curious lore, rich in experience, with a humour that never fails, and a genius for vivid description. He is sympathetic but largely dispassionate, a man of serene temper and subtle irony. If we are looking for the sublime in literature, it is not to Chaucer that we first go, but to Shakespeare and to Milton. Chaucer has his sublime moments, but they are exceptional: there is nearly always the hint of a smile on his lips.

In reading the passages from Chaucer that follow, it will be a help to know in advance that *-en* (as in *been*) is sometimes a sign of the infinitive mood, and *-eth* (as in *harkneth*) a sign of the imperative.

A Canterbury Pilgrim

THER was also a nun, a Prioress,
 That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
 Her greatest oath was but by séint Loy,
 And she was clepéd Madame Eglentine.
 Full well she sang the servicé divine,
 Entunéd in her nose full semely,
 And French she spak full fair and fetisly
 After the school of Stratford-attè-Bowe,
 For French of Paris was to her unknowe.
 At meté well y-taught was she with-all,
 She let no morsel from her lippès fall,
 Ne wet her fingrès in her saucé deep.
 Well coud she carry a morsel and well keep,

cleped: called.

fetis: neat, graceful.

That no dropè ne fell upon her breast;
 In courtesy was set full much her lest.
 Her over-lippè wipèd she so clean
 That in her coppe ther was no ferthing seen
 Of grecé, when she drunken had her draught.
 Full semèly after her mete she raught,
 And sikerly she was of greet disport,
 And full plesáunt and amiable of port,
 And peynèd her to counterfetè cheer
 Of Court; and been estatlich of manere,
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But, for to speaken of her conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous
 She woldè weep, if that she saw a mous
 Caught in a trap, if it were deed or bled.
 Of smalè houndès had she that she fed
 With roasted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed;
 But sore wept she if oon of them were deed,
 Or if men smoot it with a yerdè smert;
 And all was conscience and tendrè hert.
 Full semèly her wimple pinchèd was,
 Her nose tretys, her eyen grey as glass,
 Her mouth full small, and ther-to soft and reed,
 But sikerly she had a fair forheed,
 It was almost a spannè broad, I trowe.
 For, hardily, she was not undergrowe.
 Full fetys was her cloak, as I was war.
 Of small coral about her arm she bar
 A peire of bedès, gauded all with green,
 And ther-on hung a brooch of gold full sheen,
 On which there was first writ a crownèd A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

[THE PROLOGUE]

ferthing: morsel.*raught*: reached.*sikerly*: certainly.*port*: deportment.*peyned her*: she took pains.*estatlich*: stately.*yerde*: rod, stick.*tretys*: well-made.*hardily*: certainly.

So there is our Prioress: one of the many, brilliantly portrayed, characters of the Prologue. Let us take a look now at Chauntecleer and Pertelote, the chief figures in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Chaucer, like Shakespeare after him, took his tales where he could find them; and they vary very much in kind and interest. Chaucer's tale of the Cock and Hen owes everything to the poetry and rich humour of its telling.

A POVRE widwè, somdel stape in age,
 Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage
 Beside a grovè, stonding in a dale.
 This widwè, of which I tellè yow my tale,
 Sin thilkè day that she was last a wife,
 In pacience ladd a ful simple life,
 For litel was hir catel and hir rent.
 By husbandry of such as God hir sent
 She foond herself, and eek hir doughtren two. . .

A yerd she had, enclosed al aboute
 With stikkès, and a dryè ditch withoute,
 In which she had a cok, hight Chauntecleer;
 In al the land of crowing nas his peer.
 His voice was murier than the murie orgon
 On messè-days that in the chirchè gon;
 Wel sikerer was his crowing in his logge
 Than is a klokke, or an abbey orlogge.
 By nature knew he each ascencioun
 Of the equinoxial in thilkè toun;
 For when degrees fiftene weren ascended,
 Then crew he, that it might not been amended.
 His coomb was redder than the fine corall,
 And batailled, as it were a castel wall;
 His bill was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;
 Like azure were his leggès and his toon;

somdel stape: somewhat advanced. *narwe*: narrow. *nas*: was not.
messe-days: mass-days. *toon*: toes.

His naylès whiter than the lily flour,
And like the burnèd gold was his colour.

This gentil cok had in his governaunce
Seven hennès, for to doon al his plesaunce,
Which were his sustres and his paramours,
And wonder like to him, as of colours;
Of which the fairest-hewèd on hir throte
Was clepèd fairè damoyssel Pertelote.
Curteys she was, discreet and debonaire,
And compainable, and bar himself so faire
Sin thilkè day that she was seven night oold,
That trewèly she hath the herte in hoold
Of Chauntecleer, loken in every lith;
He loved hir so, that wel him was therwith;
But such a joy it was to hear them singe,
Whan that the brightè sonnè gan to springe,
In sweet accord, 'My lief is faren in londe';—
For thilkè time, as I have understonde,
Beestès and briddès koudè speke and singe. . .

Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
That hightè March, whan God first makèd man,
Was compleet, and y-passéd were also,
Sin March bigan, thritty dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer in all his pride,
His seven wivès walking by his side,
Cast up his eyen to the brightè sonne
That in the sign of Taurus had y-ronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore,
And knew by kind, and by none other loore,
That it was prime, and crew with blisful stevene.
'The sonne,' he seyde, 'is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore iwis.
Madamè Pertelote, my worldès blis,

Herkneþ these blisful briddès how they singe,
 And see the fressshè flourès how they springe;
 Ful is myn hert of revel and solas!¹
 But sodeynly him fell a sorweful cas;
 For ever the latter end of joy is wo.
 God woot that worldly joy is soon ago,
 And if a rethor coudè faire endite
 He in a cronicle sauþly might it write,
 As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
 Now every wise man, lat him herkne me;
 This storie is al so trewe, I undertake,
 As is the book of Launcelot de Lake
 That wommen hold in ful greet reverence.
 Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence. . . .

cas: chance.*rethor*: rhetorician.*sentence*: purport.

And there we must leave them: the reader who wants to know what happens next will know where to look for it. . .



II

IN Chaucer's day there existed no English prose comparable in quality to Chaucer's verse. Two of Chaucer's own tales are in prose, but a prose for the most part as formless and prolix as his verse is vivid, witty, and well-wrought. In general, prose was used only for didactic works, theological treatises, and the like; and such things were still being written in Latin. But somewhere about 1320 (that is, a little before Chaucer, though both dates are conjectural) there was born a man who was destined to give a great impetus to the writing of vernacular prose, not by writing it himself particularly well, but by writing a great deal of it and making himself and his works the centre of raging controversy. John Wyclif, the spiritual forerunner both of the

Reformation and of Puritanism, was a theologian of a startlingly independent and critical turn of mind. His wish to give the widest possible currency to his doctrine and the wholesome respect he had for the common people impelled him to write in English what others would have been content to write in Latin.

The search for a prose comparable in quality to Chaucer's verse carries us into the latter part of the fifteenth century. Not much is known of SIR THOMAS MALORY beyond the fact that he was the author of that great bible of mediaeval chivalry, the *Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Malory's sources were probably numerous and almost certainly French. In the way of story he invented little or nothing, but no one nowadays would undervalue him on that account. He brought a great number of the already ancient tales of King Arthur and his Knights into a large harmonious scheme, and retold them in beautiful prose. The name of Malory conjures up at once a lovely, strange, unreal world of mediaeval legend, a world simple and heroic, formal and vivid, filled with bird-song and the clash of sword on sword, bright with the red and green of an illuminated missal. The spirit of the book is both noble and childlike. It is a book of marvels, of plots and counterplots, of honour and treachery. The supernatural is never far away, but the colours are the colours of nature seen in their primal vividness, as the eye of innocence sees them. The fundamental virtues are applauded, and nothing receives heartfelt condemnation except meanness, malice, and cruelty. Here at last we have prose moving with a rhythm not less beautiful than the more regular and recurring rhythms of verse, and for its own purposes more effective. The beauty of cadence in Malory is no laboured thing: it sustains itself without effort. We open the book haphazard, and our eye falls upon this:

And then Sir Launcelot said: Now have good day, my lord the king, for wit you well ye win no worship at these walls; and if I would my knights outbring, there should many a man die.

Therefore, my Lord Arthur, remember you of old kindness; and, however I fare, Jesu be your guide in all places.

It is possible that some portion of Malory's material was drawn direct from a narrative poem, bearing the same title, which is believed to have been written towards the end of the fourteenth century (that is, about a hundred years before Malory's book). Another possibility is that Malory and the anonymous poet worked from the same (French) original. Let us compare two parallel passages. After King Arthur's death Guenever retires in sorrow to a nunnery. Here Launcelot, her lover, comes to speak with her. At sight of his approach the Queen swoons, and when she recovers herself she makes confession to the nuns and sends Launcelot away.

Abbess, to you I knowlache here
That through this ilke man and me
(For we together have loved us dear)
All this sorrowful war hath be;
My lord is slain that had no peer,
And many a doughty knight and free;
Therefore for sorrow I dyed near,
As soon as I ever him gan see—
Whan I him see, the sooth to say,
All my heart began to colde,
That ever I should abide this day,
To see so many barons bold
Should for us be slain away. . . .

I-set I am in such a place,
My soul-heal I will abide,
Till God send me some grace
Through mercy of his woundis wide
That I may do so in this place
My sins to amend this ilke tide,

After to have a sight of His face
At Domys-day on His right side.
Therefore, Sir Launcelot du lake,
For my love now I thee pray,
My company thou aye forsake
And to thy kingdom thou take thy way;
And keep thy realm from war and wrake,
And take a wife with her to play,
And love well then thy worldys make.
God give you joy together, I pray!

make: mate.

And this is what Malory makes of the same material:

When Sir Launcelot was brought to her, then she said to all the ladies: Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust through God's grace that after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side, for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I command thee, on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack; for as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee, for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed; therefore, Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss.

And now for a longer passage, Malory's account of the death of King Arthur. This was the source of Tennyson's poem, *Morte d'Arthur*, which will be found in a later chapter.

The Death of Arthur

THEN the king gat his spear in both his hands, and ran towards Sir Mordred, crying: Traitor, now is thy death-day come. And when Sir Mordred heard Sir Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand. And there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foin of his spear, throughout the body, more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death wound he thrust himself with the might that he had up to the bur of King Arthur's spear. And right so he smote his father Arthur, with his sword holden in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brainpan, and therewithal Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oftentimes. And Sir Lucan the Butler and Sir Bedivere oftentimes heaved him up. And so weakly they led him betwixt them both, to a little chapel not far from the seaside. And when the king was there he thought him well eased.

Then heard they people cry in the field. Now go thou, Sir Lucan, said the king, and do me to wit what betokens that noise in the field. So Sir Lucan departed, for he was grievously wounded in many places. And so as he yede, he saw and hearkened by the moonlight, how that pillers and robbers were come into the field, to pill and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches, and beads, of many a good ring, and of many a rich jewel; and who that were not dead all out, there they slew them for their harness and their riches. When Sir Lucan understood this work, he came to the king as soon as he might, and told him all what he had heard and seen. Therefore by my rede, said Sir Lucan, it is best that we bring you to some town. I would it were so, said the king. But I may not stand, mine head works so. Ah Sir Launcelot, said King Arthur, this day have I sore missed thee: alas, that I ever was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawaine me warned in my dream.

Then Sir Luçan took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting the king swooned; and Sir Lucan fell in a swoon with the lift, that the parts of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart brast. And when the king awoke, he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth, and part of his guts lay at his feet. Alas, said the king, this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me, that had more need of help than I. Alas, he would not complain him, his heart was so set to help me: now Jesu have mercy upon his soul! Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. Leave this mourning and weeping, said the king, for all this will not avail me, for wit thou well an I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast, said the king. Therefore, said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again.

So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself: If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And so, as soon as he might, he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword in the water. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the king; therefore go thou lightly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword, and so eft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing

but the waters wap and waves wan. Ah, traitor untrue, said King Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so lief and dear? and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead.

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. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hove a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the King. And so he did softly; and there received him three queens with great mourning; and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said: Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold. And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried: Ah my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies? Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayst, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and ladies wept and

shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all that night.



III

AMONG the books which Shakespeare certainly knew was Froissart's *Chronicles* in the translation of John Bouchier, better known as LORD BERNERS (1467-1533). The full title of the English version was *Sir John Froyssart of the Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spayne, Portyngale, Scotland, Bretayne, Flaunders, and other places adjcynynge, translated out of the Frenche into our maternall Englysshe tonge*. Berners, a grand-nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury who crowned Henry the Seventh, was much at court in his youth and became intimate with Henry the Eighth, after whose accession in 1509 he was employed in various diplomatic missions, and ultimately appointed Deputy of Calais, an office which he held till his death. The translation of Froissart, his best-known but not his only literary work, was undertaken at the king's suggestion. Of our four examples, the first three are taken from the hundred-and-thirtieth chapter, which describes 'the battle of Cressy between the king of England and the French king'.

A Blind Warrior

THE valiant king of Bohemia called Charles of Luxembourg, son to the noble Henry of Luxembourg, for all that he was nigh blind, when he understood the order of the battle he said to them about him: 'Where is the lord Charles my son?' His men said: 'Sir, we cannot tell; we think he be fighting.' Then he said: 'Sirs, ye are my men, my companions and friends in this journey: I require you bring me so far forward, that I may

strike one stroke with my sword.' They said they would do his commandment, and to the intent that they should not lose him in the press, they tied all their reins of their bridles each to other and set the king before to accomplish his desire, and so they went on their enemies. The lord Charles of Bohemia his son, who wrote himself king of Almaine and bare the arms, he came in good order to the battle; but when he saw that the matter went awry on their party, he departed, I cannot tell you which way. The king his father was so far forward that he strake a stroke with his sword, yea and more than four, and fought valiantly and so did his company; and they adventured themselves so forward, that they were there all slain, and the next day they were found in the place about the king, and all their horses tied each to other.

King Edward and the Prince

THEN the second battle of the Englishmen came to succour the prince's battle, the which was time, for they had as then much ado; and they with the prince sent a messenger to the king, who was on a little windmill hill. Then the knight said to the king: 'Sir, the earl of Warwick and the earl of Oxford, sir Raynold Cobham and other, such as be about the prince your son, are fiercely fought withal and are sore handled; wherefore they desire you that you and your battle will come and aid them; for if the Frenchmen increase, as they doubt they will, your son and they shall have much ado.' Then the king said: 'Is my son dead or hurt or on the earth felled?' 'No, sir,' quoth the knight 'but he is hardly matched; wherefore he hath need of your aid.' 'Well,' said the king, 'return to him and to them that sent you hither, and say to them that they send no more to me for any adventure that falleth, as long as my son is alive: and also say to them that they suffer him this day to win his spurs; for if God be pleased, I will this journey be his and the honour thereof, and to them that be about him.' Then the knight returned again to them and shewed the king's words, the which greatly encouraged

them and [they] repointed in that they had sent to the king as they did.

journey: day.

repointed: Fr. *se reprisent*.

The End of a Battle

IN the evening the French king, who had left about him no more than a three-score persons, one and other, whereof sir John of Hainault was one, who had remounted once the king, for his horse was slain with an arrow, then he said to the king: 'Sir, depart hence, for it is time; lose not yourself wilfully: if ye have loss at this time, ye shall recover it again another season.' And so he took the king's horse by the bridle and led him away in a manner perforce. Then the king rode till he came to the castle of Broye. The gate was closed, because it was by that time dark: then the king called the captain, who came to the walls and said: 'Who is that calleth there this time of night?' Then the king said: 'Open your gate quickly, for this is the fortune of France.' The captain knew then it was the king, and opened the gate and let down the bridge. Then the king entered, and he had with him but five barons, sir John of Hainault, sir Charles of Montmorency, the lord of Beaujeu, the lord d'Aubigny and the lord of Montsault. The king would not tarry there, but drank and departed thence about midnight, and so rode by such guides as knew the country till he came in the morning to Amiens, and there he rested.

The Siege of Calais

IN the town of Calais there was captain a knight of Burgoyne called sir John de Vienne, and with him was sir Arnold d'Audrehem, sir John de Surie, sir Baldwin de Bellebrune, sir Geoffrey de la Motte, sir Pepin de Wierre and divers other knights and squires. When the king of England was come before Calais, he laid his siege and ordained bastides between the town and the river: he made carpenters to make houses and lodgings of great timber, and set the houses like streets and covered them

with reed and broom, so that it was like a little town; and there was everything to sell, and a market-place to be kept every Tuesday and Saturday for flesh and fish, mercery ware, houses for cloth, for bread, wine, and all other things necessary, such as came out of England or out of Flanders; there they might buy what they list. The Englishmen ran oftentimes into the country of Guines, and into Ternois, and to the gates of Saint-Omer's, and sometimes to Boulogne; they brought into their host great preys. The king would not assail the town of Calais, for he thought it but a lost labour: he spared his people and his artillery, and said how he would famish them in the town with long siege, without the French king come and raise his siege perforce.

When the captain of Calais saw the manner and the order of the Englishmen, then he constrained all poor and mean people to issue out of the town, and on a Wednesday there issued out, of men, women and children, more than seventeen hundred; and as they passed through the host they were demanded why they departed, and they answered and said, because they had nothing to live on: then the king did them that grace that he suffered them to pass through his host without danger, and gave them meat and drink to dinner, and every person two pence sterling in alms, for the which divers many of them prayed for the king's prosperity.



IV

IN 1557, ten years after the death of Henry the Eighth, appeared a volume of poems by various authors which later, from the name of the publisher, came to be known as *Tottel's Miscellany*. With this volume two poets of Henry's time are specially associated: SIR THOMAS WYATT (1503-1542), and HENRY HOWARD (EARL OF SURREY), who was born about twelve years later and executed on a trumped-up charge of treason in 1547.

When Wyatt and his friend Surrey began writing, Chaucer had been dead for well over a century, the language had changed, and verse-technique was in a bad way. Wyatt and Surrey are coupled together in the literary histories because they both appeared in Tottel and because they made a gallant attempt to restore measure and grace to our poetry. Yet perhaps the least important fact about Wyatt is that he introduced into English an adaptation of Petrarch's sonnet-form and wrote three satires in Dante's triple rhyme. The best of him is in his lyrics, which, though written on conventional themes (love unrequited and love forsaken), have poetic integrity and often a quite individual freshness and beauty. His diction and cadence, at his best, capture the very quality of living, intimate speech. Singing to the lute and other instruments was among the more agreeable of court fashions in Tudor times, and the form of Wyatt's lyrics shows the influence of the song-books. Surrey, Wyatt's pupil, was the lesser poet of the two. His *Give place, ye lovers* (see below) foreshadows the Elizabethan lyric. But Surrey's distinctive and historically most important achievement was the invention of English blank verse, the medium in which some of the greatest works in our literature were to be written. Below will be found a specimen passage of his translations from Virgil. In translating the Second Book of the *Aeneid* Surrey had before him the version in rhymed couplets of an earlier translator, Gawin Douglas (died 1522), and helped himself freely to lines and phrases; but the originality of his verse-form is incontestable. Surrey's blank verse, though inevitably lacking the energy and rhythmic variety of a Shakespeare or a Milton, on the whole escapes the flat pedestrianism of some later verse-writers. Such a line as 'The Greeks' chieftains, all irked with the war' (which happens to be one of those borrowed from Douglas) should be read with its natural stresses, not forced into an iambic strait waistcoat.

Here follow a lyric by Wyatt, a lyric by Surrey, and a passage from Surrey's Virgil.

BLAME not my lute, for he must sound
Of this and that as liketh me;
For lack of wit the lute is bound
To give such tunes as pleaseth me;
Though my songs be somewhat strange,
And speaks such words as touch thy change,
Blame not my lute.

My lute, alas, doth not offend,
Though that perforce he must agree
To sound such tunes as I entend,
To sing to them that heareth me;
Then though my songs be somewhat plain,
And toucheth some that use to feign,
Blame not my lute.

My lute and strings may not deny,
But as I strike they must obey;
Break not them then so wrongfully,
But wreak thyself some wiser way;
And though the songs which I endite
Do quit thy change with rightful spite,
Blame not my lute.

Spite asketh spite and changing change,
And falsed faith must needs be known;
The fault so great, the case so strange,
Of right it must abroad be blown:
Then since that by thine own desert
My songs do tell how true thou art,
Blame not my lute.

Blame but thyself that hast misdone
And well deserved to have blame;
Change thou thy way so evil begone,
And then my lute shall sound that same:
But if till then my fingers play

By thy desert their wonted way,
Blame not my lute.

Farewell, unknown, for though thou break
My strings in spite with great disdain,
Yet I have found out for thy sake
Strings for to string my lute again.
And if perchance this stilly rhyme
Do make thee blush at any time,
Blame not my lute.

[Wyatt]

GIVE place, ye lovers, here before
That spent your boasts and brags in vain;
My lady's beauty passeth more
The best of yours, I dare well sayen,
Than doth the sun the candle light,
Or brightest day the darkest night.

And thereto hath a troth as just
As had Penelope the fair,
For what she saith, ye may it trust
As it by writing sealed were,
And virtues hath she many moe
Than I with pen have skill to show.

I could rehearse, if that I wold,
The whole effect of Nature's plaint
When she had lost the perfit mold,
The like to whom she could not paint:
With wringing hands how she did cry,
And what she said, I know it, I.

I know she swore with raging mind,
Her kingdom only set apart,
There was no loss, by love of kind,
That could have gone so near her heart.

And this was chiefly all her pain:
She could not make the like again.

Sith Nature thus gave her the praise
To be the chiefest work she wrought,
In faith me think some better ways
On your behalf might well be sought
Than to compare, as ye have done,
To match the candle with the sun.

[Surrey]

The Trojan Horse

THEY whisted all, with fixed face attent,
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak: 'O Queen, it is thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told,
How that the Greeks did spoil and overthrow
The Phrygian wealth and wailful realm of Troy,
Those ruthfull things that I myself beheld
And whereof no small part fell to my share:
Which to express, who could refrain from tears?
What Myrmidon? or yet what Dolopes?
What stern Ulysses wagèd soldiari?
And lo, moist night now from the welkin falls,
And stars declining counsel us to rest.
But since so great is thy delight to hear
Of our mishaps and Troy's last decay,
Though to record the same my mind abhors
And plaint eschews, yet thus will I begin.
The Greeks' chieftains, all irkèd with the war,
Wherein they wasted had so many years
And oft repulst by fatal destiny,
A huge horse made (high raised like a hill . . .

whisted: became silent.

delight (mistranslation): desire.

Of cloven fir compacted were his ribs),
For their return a feignèd sacrifice . . .
In the dark bulk they closde bodies of men
Chosen by lot, and did enstuff by stealth
The hollow womb with armèd soldiars.

There stands in sight an isle, hight Tenedon,
Rich and of fame while Priam's kingdom stood
But now a bay and road unsure for ship.
Hither them secretly the Greeks withdrew,
Shrouding themselves under the desert shore.
And weening, we, they had been fled and gone
And with that wind had fet the land of Greece,
Troyè discharged her long continued dole.
The gates cast up, we issued out to play,
The Greekish camp desirous to behold,
The places void and the forsaken coasts.
Here Pyrrhus' band, there fierce Achilles, pight;
Here rode their ships, there did their battles join.
Astonnied, some the scathefull gift beheld,
Behight by vow unto the chaste Minerve,
All wondering at the hugeness of the horse.

And first of all Timoetes gan advise
Within the walls to lead and draw the same
And place it eke amid the palace court:
Whether of guile, or Troyès fate it would.
Capys, with some of judgment more discreet,
Will'd it to drown, or underset with flame
The suspect present of the Greek deceit,
Or bore and gauge the hollow caves uncouth.
So diverse ran the giddy people's mind.
Lo, foremost of a rout that followed him,
Kindled Laocoön hasted from the tower,
Crying far-off: 'O wretched citizens,
What so great kind of frenzy fretteth you?
Deem ye the Greeks our enemies to be gone?

fet: fetched, arrived at.

pight: pitched,

Or any Greekish gifts can you suppose
 Devoid of guile? Is so Ulysses known?
 Either the Greeks are in this timber hid,
 Or this an engine is to annoy our walls,
 To view our towers and overwhelm our town.
 Here lurks some craft. Good Troyans, give no trust
 Unto this horse, for, whatsoever it be,
 I dread the Greeks; yea, when they offer gifts!
 And with that word, with all his force a dart
 He launchèd then into that crokèd womb
 Which trembling stack, and shoke within the side,
 Wherewith the caves gan hollowly resound.
 And, but for Fate's and for our blind forecast,
 The Greeks' device and guile had he descried,
 Troy yet had stand, and Priam's towers so high.

[Surrey: VIRGIL'S AENEID]

stack: stuck.



V

IN 1558 Elizabeth became Queen of England. In 1564 William Shakespeare was born. Something like a century earlier there had occurred in Italy that revival of classical learning, that discovery or rediscovery of the Greek and Latin literatures, which is associated with the Renaissance. New worlds of the mind were laid open to the inquiring spirit of man; new ideas and curiosities quickened into life. The mediaeval mind had lived in a world of wonder and aspiration, but compared with that of the Renaissance it was a small world. The new learning was brought to England by such scholars as Colet (who became Dean of Saint Paul's in 1505) and Thomas More (the author of the Latin *Utopia*), and during the reign of Henry the Eighth it flourished mightily. Aristotle and Plato, Homer and Virgil

were the new gods in literature, and Italian manners invaded our society and our language. 'The enchantment of Circe brought out of Italy to mar men's manners in England,' said Roger Ascham, Princess Elizabeth's tutor. But foreign blood continued to flow in the veins of the English language, and the campaign against 'strange inkhorn terms' was ineffectual in its attempt to stifle the new spirit. The child born of that spirit was lusty and a little freakish: it swaggered while yet in its swaddling-clothes. But even its absurdities were symptoms of energy, curiosity, a delight in experiment. A craze for novelty grew up side by side with a worship of the ancients. In 1579 and 1580 appeared the two parts of John Lyly's *Euphues*, in which this love of strangeness for its own sake, puns, verbal flourishes, fantastic similes, variety of allusion, is shown at its most extreme. From the title of this book is derived the word 'euphuism', but when we find (as we shall) traces of euphuism scattered all over early Elizabethan literature, we must not suppose Lyly or his book to be directly responsible. No doubt the book had a great influence; but what Lyly did was not to invent something quite new, but to give startlingly full expression to something that was in the literary air of his times; there would have been euphuism in Elizabethan literature even had *Euphues* never been written. If we want to find the spirit of those times embodied in a single figure, it is to a greater than Lyly that we must look: SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586), who lives in our fancy as the pattern of Elizabethan chivalry and learning. His death at Zutphen, in an unnecessary action against the Spaniards, ended a literary career even more dazzling in its promise than in its already fine achievement. As a writer of lyrics and sonnets Sidney had few equals in his day. He wrote also the pastoral prose romance *Arcadia* (which contains a great deal of incidental verse) and a famous essay in defence of poetry against the violent, ill-considered, puritanical attacks of Stephen Gosson, a playwright (of no importance) and pamphleteer. This last, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, ends with the following fine flourishes:

From 'An Apologie for Poetrie' (1591)

... SITH the ever-praiseworthy Poesie is full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning; sith the blames laid against it are either false or feeble; sith the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of Poet-apes, not Poets; sith, lastly, our tongue is most fit to honour Poesie and to be honoured by Poesie; I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of Poesie; no more to laugh at the name of Poets, as though they were the next inheritors to Fools; no more to jest at the reverend title of a Rimer; but to believe with Aristotle that they were the ancient treasurers of the Grecians' Divinity; to believe with Bembo that they were the first bringers-in of all civilitie; to believe with Scaliger that no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil; to believe with Clauserus, the translator of Cornutus, that it pleased the heavenly Deity, by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, natural and moral and *quid non*; to believe with me that there are many mysteries contained in Poetry which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused; to believe with Landin that they are so beloved of the gods that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury; lastly, to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops; thus doing, you shall be akin to many a poetical preface; thus doing you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all, you shall dwell upon superlatives. Thus doing, though you be *Libertino patre natus*, you shall suddenly grow *Hercules proles*:

Si quid mea carmina possunt.

Thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrice or Virgil's Anchises. But if (fie of such a but!) you be born so near

Even such is Time

EVEN such is Time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wand' red all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days.
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

[Sir Walter Raleigh]

IT is therefore Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but *Abjects*, and humbles them at the instant; makes them cry, complain, and repent, yea, even to hate their forepassed happiness. He takes the account of the rich and proves him a beggar; a naked beggar which hath interest in nothing but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein their deformity and rottenness; and they acknowledge it.

O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet*.

[Sir Walter Raleigh: A HISTORY OF THE WORLD]

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

QUEEN AND HUNTRESS

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

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
 And thy crystal-shining quiver;
 Give unto the flying hart
 Space to breathe, how short soever:
 Thou that mak'st a day of night,
 Goddess excellently bright.

[Ben Jonson, 1574-1637]

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part—
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
 Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
 And when we meet at any time again
 Be it not seen in either of our brows
 That we one jot of former love retain.
 Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
 When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
 When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes,
 Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

[Michael Drayton, 1563-1631]

WEEP you no more, sad fountains;
 What need you flow so fast?
 Look how the snowy mountains
 Heaven's sun doth gently waste!

But my Sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping,
That now lies sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that peace begets;
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at ev'n he sets?
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes!
Melt not in weeping,
While she lies sleeping
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.



VIII

THE Bible is known to most of us in two versions only: the Authorized Version (1611) and the Revised Version (1881 and 1885). We are apt to think of the first as the work of 'translators' and of the second as the work of mere 'revisers'; but in fact the men responsible for the Authorized Version, no less than their nineteenth-century revisers, had before them an (incomplete) English text which in many places it was impossible to improve on. WILLIAM TYNDALE (died 1536) was the first, and until modern times the last, direct translator of the Bible into English; for Wyclif's translation two centuries earlier was of the Latin Vulgate, and Miles Coverdale, who followed Tyndale, was a devoted collator and adapter. To Coverdale we owe indeed many beautiful and familiar Bible phrases, but it was Tyndale's work which determined the character of all subsequent English

versions. A comparison of the 1525 text of Tyndale's New Testament with his own revision of it (1534) proves him to have been a diligent literary artist as well as a great scholar; and a comparison of his final text with that of King James's men gives the measure of their immense debt to him. In the following passages from Tyndale's Matthew vi nothing has been changed but the spelling.

From Tyndale's New Testament

TAKE heed to your alms. That ye give it not in the sight of men, to the intent that ye would be seen of them. Or else ye get no reward of your father which is in heaven. Whensoever therefore thou givest thine alms, thou shalt not make a trumpet to be blown before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, for to be praised of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth, that thine alms may be secret: and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, because they would be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and shut thy door to thee, and pray to thy father which is in secret: and thy father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

And when ye pray, babble not much, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much babbling's sake. Be ye not like them therefore. For your father knoweth whereof ye have need, before ye ax of him. And after this manner therefore pray ye.

O our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy will be fulfilled, as well in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive

us our trespasses, even as we forgive our trespassers. And lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

See that ye gaddre [gather] you not treasure upon the earth, where rust and moths corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But gaddre ye treasure together in heaven, where neither rust nor moths corrupt, and where thieves neither break up nor yet steal. For wheresoever your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.

The light of the body is thine eye. Wherefore if thine eye be single, all thy body shall be full of light. But and if thine eye be wicked then all thy body shall be full of darkness. Wherefore if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.

No man can serve two masters. For either he shall hate the one and love the other: or else he shall lean to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, be not carefull [i.e. full of care] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more worth than meat, and the body more of value than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither reap, nor yet carry into the barns: and yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you (though he took thought therefor) could put one cubit unto his stature? And why care ye then for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They labour not neither spin. And yet for all that I say unto you that even Solomon in all his royalty was not arrayed like unto one of these.

Wherefore if God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow shall be cast into the furnace: shall he not much more do the same unto you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought saying: what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? After all these things seek the gentiles. For your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But rather seek ye first the king-

dom of heaven and the rightwisnes [i.e. *rightwiseness*, now corrupted to *righteousness*] thereof, and all these things shall be ministered unto you.

Care not then for the morrow, but let the morrow care for itself: for the day present hath ever enough of his own trouble.



IX

WE do not know the precise order in which the plays of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616) were written, but we know enough to be able to place any one of them as early, middle, or late. Scholars have unearthed a great deal of evidence concerning dates of production, topical allusions, and so on; but the most interesting and perhaps the most convincing evidence is to be found in the actual workmanship of the plays. The earliest of them show us a Shakespeare still unsure of himself in a technical sense, still highly susceptible to the prevailing euphuism of the time, content with very artificial situations and very simple character-drawing, and frequently lapsing from blank verse into rhyming couplets. Shakespeare never rested content with what he had done; with every play he breaks new ground and achieves new triumphs; his range widens, his insight deepens, his verse increases in subtlety and flexibility; in short, the history of his work is the history of a continuous development. It should be remembered, however, that nearly everything he wrote was written at a double high pressure: there was not only the immense compulsion of his genius but the endless appetite of his theatre for new plays. Moreover, he was a hard-working actor as well as a playwright.

Shakespeare excels all other poets and dramatists in imaginative power and wealth of mind. He excels in the power of suspending moral judgment: he can enter intimately into the souls of all sorts and conditions of men while a part of him remains detached

and dispassionate: he knows his people both from the inside and in the round. But most of all he excels in that power of words which is specifically the power of poetic creation, the very heart of the poet's mystery. Keats's much-misunderstood statement that 'beauty is truth, truth beauty' is pre-eminently true of poetry, for in poetry, as nowhere else, the two are indistinguishable. Poetry does not consist of great thoughts or beautiful fancies, though it may incidentally contain and adorn such things. A poem is poetic by virtue not of what it says but of what it is. The magic of diction and cadence can make beauty out of the grimmest facts of life and death. They do not make the facts any the more beautiful: the beauty is in and of the poetry, which has nothing to do with facts, though everything to do with truth. 'Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay.' The 'thought' here expressed is an uncomfortable one: its expression is a delight. 'The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy,' writes Sir Thomas Browne; and we shiver, not in fear of the desolating fact, but with a deep pleasure. And Macbeth's

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death—

is not a 'beautiful thought': it is merely majestic poetry.

The readings from Shakespeare that follow consist of (i) a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (ii) a scene from *Macbeth*, which cannot have been written less than ten years later, (iii) the first two of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, and (iv) perhaps the greatest of his lyrics. Most readers of this book will no doubt have read these plays and much else of Shakespeare; but that is no reason for not reading parts of them again, and aloud.

A Wood near Athens

Enter a FAIRY from one side, and PUCK from the other

PUCK. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

FAIRY. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moone's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslips ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits: I'll be gone.
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.
PUCK. The king doth keep his revels here to-night;
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath.
Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling:
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild:
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove, or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled star-light sheen,
But they do square; that all their elves, for fear,
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

FAIRY. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,

Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Good-fellow: are you not he
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometimes make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

PUCK. Fairy, thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night,
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips and loff;
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon.

FAIRY. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

*Enter OBERON from one side, with his Train; and TITANIA
from the other, with hers*

OBERON. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA. What! Jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON. Tarry, rash wanton; am not I thy lord?

TITANIA. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steep of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded? And you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON. How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna, whom he ravishèd?
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,
With Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA. These are the forgeries of jealousy
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which, falling in the land,
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The plowman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine-men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green

For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter cheer;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The chilling autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension:
We are their parents and original.

OBERON. Do you amend it then; it lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

TITANIA. Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following (her womb then rich with my young squire)
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON. How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

TITANIA. Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[Exit TITANIA with her Train

OBERON. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.

PUCK. I remember.

OBERON. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west;
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness.

Fetch me that flower, the herb I show'd thee once:
 The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
 Will make or man or woman madly dote
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.
 Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again,
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

PUCK. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
 In forty minutes. [Exit

OBERON. Having once this juice,
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
 And ere I take this charm off from her sight,
 As I can take it, with another herb,
 I'll make her render up her page to me.



The Murder of Duncan

INVERNESS. COURT WITHIN THE CASTLE

*Enter BANQUO and FLEANCE, with a Servant bearing a torch
 before him*

BANQUO. How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE. The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

BANQUO. And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE. I take't, 'tis later, sir.

BANQUO. Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven:
 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.
 A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
 And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers!
 Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
 Gives way to in repose.

Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch

Give me my sword.—

Who's there?

MACBETH. A friend.

BANQUO. What, sir! not yet at rest? The king's a-bed:
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
Sent forth great largess to your offices.
This diamond he greets your wife withal,
By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up
In measureless content.

MACBETH. Being unprepar'd,
Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO. All's well.
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH. I think not of them:
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO. At your kind'st leisure.
MACBETH. If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.

BANQUO. So I lose none
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear,
I shall be counsell'd.

MACBETH. Good repose the while.

BANQUO. Thanks, sir: the like to you.

[*Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE*]

MACBETH. Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. [*Exit Servant*]
Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch,
Thus with his stealthy pace toward his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives. [*A bell rings*
I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell. [*Exit*

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH. That which hath made them drunk hath
made me bold,
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark!
Peace!
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,

Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it:
The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their possets,
That death and nature do contend about them,
Whether they live or die.

MACBETH [*within*]. Who's there? What, ho!

LADY MACBETH. Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,
And 'tis not done; the attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss them. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept I had done 't. My husband!

Enter MACBETH

MACBETH. I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

MACBETH. When?

LADY MACBETH. Now.

MACBETH. As I descended?

LADY MACBETH. Ay.

MACBETH. Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?

LADY MACBETH. Donalbain.

MACBETH [*looking on his hands*]. This is a sorry sight.

LADY MACBETH. A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH. There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried
'Murder!'

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them;
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH. There are two lodg'd together.

MACBETH. One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other:
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH. Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH. These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH. Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

LADY MACBETH. What do you mean?

MACBETH. Still it cried, 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!'

LADY MACBETH. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy
thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them, and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH. I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH. Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;
For it must seem their guilt. [*Exit. Knocking within*]

MACBETH. Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here! Ha! they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH. My hands are of your colour, but I shame
To wear a heart so white.—[*Knocking within*] I hear a knocking
At the south entry; retire we to our chamber;
A little water clears us of this deed;
How easy is it, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. . . . Hark! more knocking.
Get on your night-gown, lest occasion call us,
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH. To know my deed 'twere best not know myself.
[*Knocking within*]
Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!



Two Sonnets

I

FROM fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's Rose might never die,
But, as the ripper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy life's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou, that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

II

WHEN forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held:
Then, being askt where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's use
If thou couldst answer, 'This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse,'
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new-made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

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

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
 Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
 Fear not slander, censure rash;
 Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
 All lovers young, all lovers must
 Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
 Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
 Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
 Nothing ill come near thee!
 Quiet consummation have;
 And renownèd be thy grave!



X

SIR THOMAS BROWNE was born in 1605. The first of his five books was written before he reached the age of thirty; the last did not appear till after his death, which occurred in 1682. He was a practising physician, not a professional writer, and for the last forty-six years of his long life he lived in quiet prosperity at Norwich. His house and garden, we learn from Evelyn the diarist, were 'a paradise and cabinet of rarities', and the same might be said of the mind that is so candidly and curiously revealed in his writing. His is a prose saturated in the rich colours of melancholy, carrying a load of odd learning but quickened with poetic imagination and moving in grave and noble cadences. It comes as a shock to learn that a man so gifted, and apparently so gentle, could share the current belief in witchcraft, and actually on at least one occasion appeared as a witness against some wretched woman accused of practising it.

Of Charity

NOW, for that other virtue of charity, without which faith is a mere notion and of no existence, I have ever endeavoured to nourish the merciful disposition and humane inclination I borrowed from my parents, and regulate it to the written and prescribed laws of charity. And, if I hold the true anatomy of myself, I am delineated and naturally framed to such a piece of virtue,—for I am of a constitution so general that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy, in diet, humour, air, any thing. I wonder not at the French for their dishes of frogs, snails, and toadstools, nor at the Jews for locusts and grasshoppers; but, being amongst them, make them my common viands; and I find they agree with my stomach as well as theirs. I could digest a salad gathered in a church-yard as well as in a garden. I cannot start at the presence of a serpent, scorpion, lizard, or salamander; at the sight of a toad or viper, I find in me no desire to take up a stone to destroy them. I feel not in myself those common antipathies that I can discover in others: those national repugnancies do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch; but, where I find their actions in balance with my countrymen's, I honour, love, and embrace them, in some degree. I was born in the eighth climate, but seem to be framed and constellated unto all. I am no plant that will not prosper out of a garden. All places, all airs, make unto me one country; I am in England every where, and under any meridian. I have been shipwrecked, yet am not enemy with the sea or winds; I can study, play, or sleep, in a tempest. In brief I am averse from nothing: my conscience would give me the lie if I should say I absolutely detest or hate any essence, but the devil; or so at least abhor any thing, but that we might come to composition. If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do condemn and laugh at, it is that great enemy of reason, virtue, and religion, the multitude; that numerous piece of monstrosity, which, taken asunder, seem men, and the reasonable

creatures of God, but, confused together, make but one great beast, and a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra. It is no breach of charity to call these fools; it is the style all holy writers have afforded them, set down by Solomon in canonical scripture, and a point of our faith to believe so. Neither in the name of multitude do I only include the base and minor sort of people: there is a rabble even amongst the gentry; a sort of plebeian heads, whose fancy moves with the same wheel as those; men in the same level with mechanicks, though their fortunes do somewhat gild their infirmities, and their purses compound for their follies. But, as in casting account three or four men together come short in account of one man placed by himself below them, so neither are a troop of these ignorant Doradoes of that true esteem and value as many a forlorn person, whose condition doth place him below their feet. Let us speak like politicians; there is a nobility without heraldry, a natural dignity, whereby one man is ranked with another, another filed before him, according to the quality of his desert, and pre-eminence of his good parts. Though the corruption of these times, and the bias of present practice, wheel another way, thus it was in the first and primitive commonwealths, and is yet in the integrity and cradle of well ordered polities: till corruption getteth ground;—ruder desires labouring after that which wiser considerations contemn;—every one having a liberty to amass and heap up riches, and they a licence or faculty to do or purchase any thing.

[RELIGIO MEDICI]

The World and the Dream

NOW for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate, were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other, I use it but like my globe,

and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas's shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty. Though the number of the ark do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me, I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man. Let me not injure the felicity of others, if I say I am as happy as any. *Ruat coelum, fiat voluntas tua*, salveth all; so that, whatsoever happens, it is but what our daily prayers desire. In brief, I am content; and what should providence add more? Surely this is it we call happiness, and this I do enjoy; with this I am happy in a dream, and as content to enjoy a happiness in a fancy, as others in a more apparent truth and reality. There is surely a nearer apprehension of any thing that delights us, in our dreams, than in our waked senses. . . . And surely it is not a melancholy conceit to think we are all asleep in this world, and that the conceits of this life are as mere dreams, to those of the next, as the phantasms of the night, to the conceit of the day. There is an equal delusion in both; and the one doth but seem to be the emblem or picture of the other. We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleeps; and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul. It is the ligation of sense, but the liberty of reason; and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleeps. At my nativity, my ascendant was the earthly sign of *Scorpio*. I was born in the planetary hour of *Saturn*, and I think I have a piece of that leaden planet in me. I am no way facetious, nor disposed

for the mirth and galliardise of company; yet in one dream I can compose a whole comedy, behold the action, apprehend the jests, and laugh myself awake at the conceits thereof. Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams, and this time also would I choose for my devotions: but our grosser memories have then so little hold of our abstracted understandings, that they forget the story, and can only relate to our awaked souls a confused and broken tale of that which hath passèd. Aristotle, who hath written a singular tract of sleep, hath not methinks thoroughly defined it; nor yet Galen, though he seem to have corrected it; for those *noctambulos* and night-walkers, though in their sleep, do yet enjoy the action of their senses. We must therefore say that there is something in us that is not in the jurisdiction of Morpheus; and that those abstracted and ecstasick souls do walk about in their own corpses, as spirits with the bodies they assume, wherein they seem to hear, see, and feel, though indeed the organs are destitute of sense, and their natures of those faculties that should inform them. Thus it is observed, that men sometimes, upon the hour of their departure, do speak and reason above themselves. For then the soul begins to be freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality.

We term sleep a death, and yet it is waking that kills us, and destroys those spirits that are the house of life. 'Tis indeed a part of life that best expresseth death; for every man truly lives, so long as he acts his nature, or some way makes good the faculties of himself. Themistocles therefore, that slew his soldier in his sleep, was a merciful executioner: 'tis a kind of punishment the mildness of no laws hath invented; I wonder the fancy of Lucan and Seneca did not discover it. It is that death by which we may be literally said to die daily; a death which Adam died before his mortality; a death whereby we live a middle and moderating point between life and death. In fine, so like death, I dare not trust it without my prayers, and an half adieu unto the world, and take my farewell in a colloquy with

God. . . . This is the dormitive I take to bedward; I need no other *laudanum* than this to make me sleep; after which I close mine eyes in security, content to take my leave of the sun and sleep unto the resurrection.

[RELIGIO MEDICI]



XI

JOHN MILTON (1608–1674) had already reached his eighth year when Shakespeare died, and his earliest lyrical verse is decidedly Elizabethan in character, as may be seen in the delicately stepping couplets of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Even in *Comus* there is much—this, for example:

The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move,
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves;
By dimpled brook and fountain brim
The wood-nymphs, deckt with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?

—which is not very far removed from the rhymed music of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But the point must not be overstressed. Milton was not insensible (how could he be?) to the influence of a great poetic tradition, but more important than what was given him is what he himself gave. At twenty-one he wrote the *Nativity Ode*, which, with its strong consonantal music and its metal-bright diction ('helmèd cherubim', 'polisht car', 'moonèd Ashtaroth', 'bright-harnest angels'), foreshadows future triumphs. Earlier still ('anno aetatis 17') he had written *On the Death of a Fair Infant*:

O fairest flower no sooner blown but blasted,
Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,
Summer's chief honour if thou hadst outlasted
Bleak Winter's force that made thy blossom dry;
For he, being amorous on that lovely dye
That did thy cheek envermeil, thought to kiss,
But kill'd, alas, and then bewail'd his fatal bliss . . .

the last three lines embodying a typical Elizabethan 'conceit'; and in his twenty-fourth year we find him meditating on the flight of time:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to ripeness am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it more or less, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even,
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to make it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

If Milton had died at thirty he would even then have been assured of immortality. But his major work remained to be done, and to be done late in life. Saturated in classical culture, with a mind powerful and independent and innocent of humour, he was aggressively protestant, puritan, and didactic. A poet, however, is not the mere sum of his opinions: both because poetry is not concerned with opinions as such, and because a man's conscious opinions may often be more or less at variance with his deeper intuitions, moral or spiritual. And so, when ultimately we come to *Paradise Lost*, we have to be prepared to distinguish between its professed intention—'To justify the ways of God to men'—

and the larger and profounder poetic impulse which is its true life-source. But *Paradise Lost* is for older readers.

The finest poem of Milton's young maturity is *Lycidas*. It is a poem of exquisite artifice in which personal bereavement is translated into terms of a pastoral-dramatic convention that goes back to Theocritus. 'In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drown'd in his Passage from *Chester*, on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height.' The learned friend was Edward King, but the poem celebrates the loss of the shepherd Lycidas, whose fellow-shepherds are met together to lament him. It is put into the mouth of one of them, as we are belatedly told at the end: 'Thus sang the uncouth swain . . .'

Lycidas is the third poem in our selection from Milton. We begin with the earlier and livelier *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the one celebrating gaiety of heart, the other pensiveness.

L'Allegro

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
Find out some uncouth cell
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There, under ebon shades, and low-browed rocks
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:

Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolick wind that breathes the Spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There, on beds of violets blue
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathèd smiles
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unprovèd pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:

Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometimes walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest,
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;

Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade,
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale:
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat:
She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end,
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

Il Penseroso

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred:
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys:

Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail, thou Goddess sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestick train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy wrapt soul sitting in thine eyes:

There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;

Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds of what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.
Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptered pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek;
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,

That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frownced, as she was wont
With the Attick boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To archèd walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heavèd stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream

Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid;
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embow'd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give;
And I with thee will choose to live.

Lycidas

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude

Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour *my* destined urn,
And as he passes turn
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud,
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;
Temper'd to the oaten flute,
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!

Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen

Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.

As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?

For neither were ye playing on the steep

Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,

Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,

Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.

Ay me! I fondly dream

'Had ye been there'—for what could that have done?

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,

The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,

Whom universal nature did lament,

When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,

His gory visage down the stream was sent,

Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with uncessant care

To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,

And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?

Were it not better done, as others use,

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,

Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise

(That last infirmity of noble mind)

To scorn delights and live laborious days;

But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,

And think to burst out into sudden blaze,

Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistening foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea.
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beakèd promontory.
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
'Ah! who hath reft,' quoth he, 'my dearest pledge?'
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain

(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—
‘How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies’ sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers’ feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman’s art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.’

Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white-pink, and the pansy freckled with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,

With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise,
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;

Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.



XII

OF those seventeenth-century poets known to literary historians as the Metaphysicals, ANDREW MARVELL (1621-1678) is not the best or most typical example, but he is the nearest to our present purpose. His enduring fame rests on a handful of beautifully wrought poems, nearly all of them written during his young manhood, after his appointment in 1650 as tutor to the twelve-year-old daughter of Lord Fairfax, and before his incursion into politics. In 1652 he became acquainted with John Milton, who was at that time Latin Secretary to Cromwell, and five years later he was appointed to be Milton's assistant in that office. The fifth, sixth, and seventh stanzas of *The Garden*, a poem which he first wrote in Latin, have a subtle and luminous quality nowhere excelled, and seldom matched, in the whole of our literature. The seventh stanza, where inspiration reaches its climax, gives us poetry of the purest excellence. *Bermudas*, in its music and radiance, is scarcely less wonderful. But both poems shall speak for themselves.

The Garden

HOW vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their uncessant labours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow-vergèd shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all the flowers and trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose!

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy sister dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men:
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow:
Society is all but rude
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So amorous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name:
Little, alas! they know or heed
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees! wheres'e'er your barks I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passions' heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat:
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race;
Apollo hunted Daphne so
Only that she might laurel grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx speed
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wondrous life in this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide;
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and combs its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy Garden-state
While man there walk'd without a mate:
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one,
To live in Paradise alone.

How well the skilful gard'ner drew
Of flowers and herbs this dial new!
Where, from above, the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run:
And, as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckon'd, but with herbs and flowers!

Bermudas

WHERE the remote Bermudas ride
In the ocean's bosom unespied,
From a small boat that row'd along
The listening woods received this song:

‘What should we do but sing His praise
That led us through the watery maze
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own?
Where He the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs,
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms' and prelates' rage:
He gave us this eternal Spring
Which here enamels everything,
And sends the fowls to us in care
On daily visits through the air:
He hangs in shades the orange bright
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows:
He makes the figs our mouths to meet
And throws the melons at our feet;
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice.

With cedars chosen by His hand
From Lebanon He stores the land;
And makes the hollow seas that roar
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.
He cast (of which we rather boast)
The Gospel's pearl upon our coast;
And in these rocks for us did frame
A temple where to sound His name.
O, let our voice His praise exalt
Till it arrive at Heaven's vault,
Which thence (perhaps) rebounding may
Echo beyond the Mexique bay!

Thus sung they in the English boat
A holy and a cheerful note:
And all the way, to guide their chime,
With falling oars they kept the time.



XIII

DURING the last forty years of the seventeenth century, that is from the Restoration of the Stuarts almost to the accession of Queen Anne, the figure of JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700) largely dominates the literary scene. Dryden was undervalued in the nineteenth century, and now the pendulum of opinion has swung perhaps too far in the opposite direction. He is a great figure rather than a great author, or, to put it another way, he is a great author rather than the author of great literature. He cared passionately for literary form and was a brilliant practitioner of both verse and prose. His verse marks a transition between the eloquence of the previous period and the rather self-complacent 'good sense' of the later. He excelled in the heroic couplet and is in some sense the literary grandfather of Pope, to whom we

shall come presently. His greatest triumphs in verse were in the realm of satire. A laudable zeal combined with an astonishing blindness persuaded him to produce paraphrases of Chaucer, not scrupling to add 'somewhat of my own where I thought my Author was deficient'; and he committed, with Davenant, the folly of re-writing Shakespeare's *Tempest*, producing a version that contains, for our delight, two characters whom Shakespeare was not clever enough to think of: Dorinda, a second daughter of Prospero, and—by way of counterpart to Miranda—a young man called Hippolita who has never seen a woman.

The attitude that made such blunders possible is characteristic of more than Dryden: it is the symptom of a certain insensitivity and cocksureness that invaded literature during this period and did not leave it for a hundred years or so. The Restoration writers and their immediate successors were censorious of the 'conceits' that the previous age had delighted in; but they were plentifully supplied with conceit in the more everyday sense of the term. This overweening confidence in themselves produced, however, happy as well as lamentable results. Dryden's great service to his times, and indirectly to ours, is his decisive part in the establishment of a good, plain, serviceable prose, a medium flexible enough to serve all the diverse purposes to which prose may be put, from logical analysis and pedestrian narrative to impassioned rhetoric. Such a prose had to be established sooner or later if the essays of Addison, the comedy of manners, and the novels of Richardson and Fielding were to become possible. What English needed, and what Dryden helped it to get, was a prose that could fetch and carry all the varying moods of man.

Dryden's status as a poet is a point on which present-day critics differ sharply, according to their conceptions of poetry's nature and function. But none will be found to deny him the title of a great craftsman in verse and prose, or to dissent from Saintsbury's claim that his literary criticism reflects a 'wide, synoptic, appreciative, really historic and really literary, *savouring* of literature, in which no earlier critic had approached and in which few later have surpassed him'.

A Song for St Cecilia's Day, 1687

FROM harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
'Arise, ye more than dead!'
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound:
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly, and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

The trumpet's loud clangour
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger,
And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries Hark, the foes come!
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat!

The soft complaining flute,
In dying notes, discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion.
For the fair, disdainful dame.

But O, what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees unrooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre;
But bright Cecilia rais'd the wonder higher:
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd
Mistaking Earth for Heaven.

GRAND CHORUS

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the Blest above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.

Dryden on Chaucer

HE [Chaucer] must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta [a famous Italian physiognomist] could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing Lady-Prioress and the broad-speaking, gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this; there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days: their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of monks, and friars, and canons, and lady-abbesses, and nuns; for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered.

[Preface to FABLES]

XIV

DRYDEN's eminence in Restoration times is paralleled by that of ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744) during roughly the first half of the eighteenth century. Pope's verse embodies all the virtues and limitations of what is sometimes called the Augustan Age, an age which, even more decidedly than the Age of Dryden, deprecated 'enthusiasm' (the word has lost the suggestion of frenzy it then carried) and elevated the classical graces of order and restraint. We had had enough, they decided, of exuberance and ecstasy: literature, in future, was to be eminently reasonable, sensible, and polite: the sentiment was to be elevated but not extravagant, the expression a model of good sense. In brief it was an age of prose, and its verse has the virtues of good prose, including some measure of the virtue we call poetry. But it has not the general character of poetry as we have known it hitherto in these chapters. There is much to admire, and much to delight us, in the work of the Augustans. Pope's masterpiece of mock-heroic, *The Rape of the Lock*, tells with ingenious elaboration and exquisite artifice the story of how a bold admirer of the fair Belinda approached with 'fatal engine' (a pair of scissors) and stole a lock of her hair. It is a poem perfect in its kind, and without rival.

The Rape of the Lock

[Canto II: lines 1-46]

NOT with more glories, in th' ethereal plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair nymphs and well-dress'd youths around her shone,
But every eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:

Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget them all.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man's imperial race insnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

Th' adventurous baron the bright locks admired;
He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspired.
Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
For when success a lover's toils attends,
Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.

For this, ere Phœbus rose, he had implored
Propitious Heaven, and every power adored:
But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
And all the trophies of his former loves:
With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire.
Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.

An Essay on Criticism

[Lines 1-33, 201-252]

'TIS hard to say, if greater want of skill
Appear in writing or in judging ill;
But, of the two, less dangerous is the offence
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
A fool might once himself alone expose,
Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share,
Both must alike from Heaven derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.
Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.
Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not critics to their judgment too?

Yet, if we look more closely, we shall find
Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind:
Nature affords at least a glimmering light;
The lines, though touch'd but faintly, are drawn
right.

But as the slightest sketch, if justly traced,
Is by ill colouring but the more disgraced,
So by false learning is good sense defaced;
Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools.
In search of wit these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defence:
Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
Or with a rival's, or an eunuch's spite.

All fools have still an itching to deride,
And fain would be upon the laughing side. . . .

Of all the causes which conspire to blind
Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,
What the weak head with strongest bias rules,
Is PRIDE, the never-failing voice of fools.
Whatever Nature has in worth denied,
She gives in large recruits of needful pride;
For as in bodies, thus in souls we find
What wants in blood and spirits, swell'd with wind:
Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.
If once right reason drives that cloud away,
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day.
Trust not yourself; but your defects to know,
Make use of every friend—and every foe.
A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind,
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanced, behold with strange surprise
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
The eternal snows appear already passed,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
But, those attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!
A perfect judge will read each work of wit

With the same spirit that its author writ:
Survey the WHOLE, nor seeks slight faults to find
Where Nature moves, and rapture warms the mind,
Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight,
The generous pleasure to be charm'd with wit.
But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,
Correctly cold, and regularly low,
That shunning faults, one quiet tenor keep;
We cannot blame indeed—but we may sleep.
In wit, as Nature, what affects our hearts
Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts;
'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.
Thus when we view some well-proportion'd dome,
(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
No monstrous height, or breadth or length appear;
The whole at once is bold and regular.



XV

THE Novel as we know it today, and as we have known it for something like two hundred years, is a prose narrative showing characters in action. It contains, therefore, two main elements: the story or plot (in the sense of things happening), and the creation or portrayal of human characters. In the early prose romances, such as Sidney's *Arcadia* or Lodge's *Rosalind*, characterization played an insignificant part; Richardson and Fielding, in the eighteenth century, were almost the first writers of prose narrative to give it prominence. In the seventeenth century there had arisen a form of writing known as the Character. The handiest example is John Earle's *Microcosmography*, a series of

minute essays describing various human types: A Child, A Plain Country Fellow, a Meer Dull Physician, A Shee Precise Hypocrite, and so on. Types they are, not individuals. Half a century later, in the essays of Addison and Steele, a modification of this kind of thing is used to adorn or illustrate a more general argument. The character is still typical rather than individual, but at least an attempt is made to breathe life into it. Some historians of literature see in these things the germ of the novel of character, as it began to exist in the eighteenth century; but, apart from the difference in form, there is no essential constituent of the eighteenth-century novel that cannot be found in the Prologue and inter-prologues of *The Canterbury Tales*. Had Chaucer lived in the eighteenth century he might very well have written mainly in prose. He did not do so partly because, as we have seen, there was no English prose form ready to his hand. His Italian contemporary Boccaccio, having a long-established language for his instrument, wrote equally in prose and verse, according to his fancy. It can hardly be doubted that Chaucer would have done the same, given similar facilities.

The difference between the kind of novel that made its appearance during the eighteenth century and the numerous prose romances which earlier centuries had known is perhaps more easily seen than defined. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) has characters, plot, and structure; but he was hampered, as a 'novelist', which he was very far from wishing to be, by his severely didactic intention and by the allegorical form which that intention obliged him to adopt. When we come to Defoe no question of allegory arises, but even *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) differs in its kind from the fiction that was to come twenty years later, in that the book exists, and Crusoe exists, solely for the sake of the adventures it records, and not at all for the sake of displaying individual character. Crusoe is less real than the things that happen to him. He is generalized humanity, defined only by his adventures: he is man on a desert island. For us he may possess some intrinsic interest as a typical, middle-class, prudent, prosaic, moralizing, unimaginative man

of his times. His very limitations may amuse us, if we are in the mood to be amused. There is something diverting in the spectacle of that colossal ordinariness. But we may be very sure that Defoe was not diverted by it; nor could it ever have crossed his mind that the reader would be diverted. Defoe presented his fictions under the guise of fact, for he lived in a society which looked askance at mere invention. A prose-writer of far greater intellectual compass was Jonathan Swift, whose most famous book, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), is both an elaborate satirical allegory and a tale of fantastic adventure, but hardly, in our present sense, a novel.

The first work of Samuel Richardson, which has some claim to be regarded as the first 'modern' novel, appeared in 1740. Richardson, a prosperous printer of humble origin, was already over fifty when he was invited to compile 'a little volume of letters, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to those country readers who were unable to indite for themselves'. One of the subjects treated in this volume suggested to him the story of *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*: the story, told by herself in letters to her brother, of a maidservant who resists her master's attempts on her virtue to such good purpose that he is finally provoked into marrying her. It is characteristic of Richardson that this was his notion of a good moral and a happy ending. But with all its crudeness and its queasy morality the book foreshadows the emergence of something new in English fiction. A far better story and an incomparably finer work of art is *Clarissa*, his masterpiece, which followed in 1748. Whether we like Richardson or like him not, we cannot deny his prodigious talent or disregard the extent of his influence on the Novel's development both at home and abroad. His work set the fashion of intimate characterization and sentimental analysis.

Pamela exasperated HENRY FIELDING (1707-1754) into writing *Joseph Andrews*, which begins as a merciless and extremely funny parody of Richardson's novel. Joseph is the brother of Pamela, and, while she is engaged in resisting the

advances of her employer, he (Joseph) is defending his virtue against the assaults of Lady Booby, in whose household he is employed as a footman. His defence is so complete that the amorous lady has him turned out of the house. There follows a series of adventures on the road, most of them experienced in the company of Parson Adams, the first great comic character in prose fiction, and certainly one of the most lovable. Before he has written many pages Fielding forgets his merely satirical intention, his wish to make fun of Richardson's *Pamela*, and is carried away by his own creative genius. The characters come to life and take the control of the story out of his hands. That is an over-statement, for Fielding was too conscious an artist not to know what he was about; but it is quite evident that he did not do what he first set out to do, and that what he did do is something incomparably greater and richer than any mere burlesque could have been. *Joseph Andrews* is a fairly long novel by modern standards, but it is very much shorter than *Tom Jones*, which is the author's masterpiece and one of the greatest of all English novels. Fielding's fiction is full of vigour and broad comedy; nowhere else can we get so vivid a picture of the life of the eighteenth century, more particularly the vagabond life of highway and hostel.

The following chapter from *Joseph Andrews* shows Parson Adams innocently trying to borrow money from a brother clergyman. Joseph and Fanny (Joseph's beloved) are confidently awaiting him at the inn, where their reckoning has yet to be paid.

Parson Adams is entertained by a Brother Clergyman

PARSON ADAMS came to the house of parson Trulliber, whom he found stripped into his waistcoat, with an apron on, and a pail in his hand, just come from serving his hogs; for Mr Trulliber was a parson on Sundays, but all the other six days might more properly be called a farmer. He occupied a small

piece of land of his own, besides which he rented a considerable deal more. His wife milked his cows, managed his dairy, and followed the markets with butter and eggs. The hogs fell chiefly to his care, which he carefully waited on at home, and attended to fairs; on which occasion he was liable to many jokes, his own size being with much ale rendered little inferior to that of the beasts he sold. He was indeed one of the largest men you should see, and could have acted the part of Sir John Falstaff without stuffing. Add to this, that the rotundity of his belly was considerably increased by the shortness of his stature, his shadow ascending very near as far in height when he lay on his back, as when he stood on his legs. His voice was loud and hoarse, and his accent extremely broad. To complete the whole, he had a stateliness in his gait, when he walked, not unlike that of a goose, only he stalked slower.

Mr Trulliber being informed that somebody wanted to speak to him, immediately slipped off his apron, and clothed himself in an old night-gown, being the dress in which he always saw his company at home. His wife, who informed him of Mr Adam's arrival, had made a small mistake; for she had told her husband, 'She believed here was a man come for some of his hogs.' This supposition made Mr Trulliber hasten with the utmost expedition to attend his quest. He no sooner saw Adams, than, not in the least doubting the cause of his errand to be what his wife had imagined, he told him, 'he was come in very good time; that he expected a dealer that very afternoon;' and added, 'they were all pure and fat, and upwards of twenty score apiece.' Adams answered, 'He believed he did not know him.'—'Yes, yes,' cried Trulliber, 'I have seen you often at fair; why we have dealt before now, mun, I warrant you. Yes, yes,' cries he, 'I remember thy face very well, but won't mention a word more till you have seen them, though I have never sold thee a flitch of such bacon as is now in the sty.' Upon which he laid violent hands on Adams, and dragged him into the hog-sty, which was indeed but two steps from his parlour-window. They were no sooner arrived there, than he cried out, 'Do but handle them; step in, friend;

art welcome to handle them, whether dost buy or not.' At which words, opening the gate, he pushed Adams into a pigsty, insisting on it that he should handle them before he would talk one word with him.

Adams, whose natural complacency was beyond any artificial, was obliged to comply before he was suffered to explain himself; and laying hold on one of their tails, the unruly beast gave such a sudden spring, that he threw poor Adams all along in the mire. Trulliber, instead of assisting him to get up, burst into a fit of laughter, and, entering the sty, said to Adams, with some contempt, 'Why, dost not know how to handle a hog?' and was going to lay hold of one himself; but Adams, who thought he had carried his complacency far enough, was no sooner on his legs, than he escaped out of the reach of the animals, and cried out '*Nil habeo cum porcis*: I am a clergyman, sir, and am not come to buy hogs.' Trulliber answered, 'he was sorry for the mistake; but that he must blame his wife;' adding, 'she was a fool, and always committed blunders.' He then desired to walk in and clean himself; that he would only fasten up the sty, and follow him. Adams desired leave to dry his great-coat, wig, and hat, by the fire, which Trulliber granted. Mrs Trulliber would have brought him a basin of water to wash his face; but her husband bid her be quiet like a fool as she was, or she would commit more blunders, and then directed Adams to the pump. While Adams was thus employed, Trulliber, conceiving no great respect for the appearance of his guest, fastened the parlour door, and now conducted him into the kitchen; telling him he believed a cup of drink would do him no harm, and whispered his wife to draw a little of the worst ale. After a short silence, Adams said, 'I fancy, sir, you already perceive me to be a clergyman.'—'Ay, ay,' cries Trulliber, grinning, 'I perceive you have some cassock; I will not venture to caale it a whole one.' Adams answered, 'It was indeed none of in passing over a stile.' Mrs Trulliber, returning with the drink, the best; but he had the misfortune to tear it about ten years ago told her husband, 'She fancied the gentleman was a traveller, and

that he would be glad to eat a bit.' Trulliber bid her hold her impertinent tongue; and asked her, 'If parsons used to travel without horses?' adding, 'He supposed the gentleman had none by his having no boots on.'—'Yes, sir, yes,' says Adams; 'I have a horse, but I have left him behind me.'—'I am glad to hear you have one,' says Trulliber, 'for I assure you I don't love to see clergymen on foot; it is not seemly, not suiting the dignity of the cloth.' Here Trulliber made a long oration on the dignity of the cloth (or rather gown), not much worth relating, till his wife had spread the table, and set a mess of porridge on it for his breakfast. He then said to Adams, 'I don't know, friend, how you came to caale on me; however, as you are here, if you think proper to eat a morsel, you may.' Adams accepted the invitation, and the two parsons sat down together; Mrs Trulliber waiting behind her husband's chair, as was, it seems, her custom. Trulliber ate heartily, but scarce put anything in his mouth without finding fault with his wife's cookery; all which the poor woman bore patiently. Indeed, she was so absolute an admirer of her husband's greatness and importance, of which she had frequent hints from his own mouth, that she almost carried her adoration to an opinion of his infallibility. To say the truth, the parson had exercised her more ways than one; and the pious woman had so well edified by her husband's sermons, that she had resolved to receive the bad things of this world together with the good. She had indeed been first a little contentious; but he had long since got the better; partly by her love for this, partly by her fear of that, partly by her religion; partly by the respect he paid himself, and partly by that which he received from the parish. She had, in short, absolutely submitted, and now worshipped her husband, as Sarah did Abraham, calling him (not lord, but) master. Whilst they were at table her husband gave her a fresh example of his greatness; for as she had just delivered a cup of ale to Adams, he snatched it out of his hand, and crying out, 'I caal'd vurst,' swallowed down the ale. Adams denied it; it was referred to the wife, who, though her conscience was on the side of Adams, durst not give it against her husband. Upon which he said, 'No,

sir, no; I should not have been so rude to have taken it from you, if you had caal'd vurst; but I'd have you know I'm a better man than to suffer the best he in the kingdom to drink before me in my own house, when I caale vurst.'

As soon as their breakfast was ended, Adams began in the following manner: 'I think, sir, it is high time to inform you of the business of my embassy. I am a traveller, and am passing this way in company with two young people, a lad and a damsel, my parishioners, towards my own cure; we stopped at a house of hospitality in the parish, where they directed me to you, as having the cure.'—'Though I am but a curate,' says Trulliber, 'I believe I am as warm as the vicar himself, or perhaps the rector of the next parish too; I believe I could buy them both.'—'Sir,' cries Adams, 'I rejoice thereat. Now, sir, my business is, that we are by various accidents stripped of our money, and are not able to pay our reckoning, being seven shillings. I therefore request you to assist me with the loan of seven shillings, and also seven shillings more which, those peradventure, I shall return to you: but if not, I am convinced you will joyfully embrace such an opportunity of laying up a treasure in a better place than any this world affords.'

Suppose a stranger, who entered the chambers of a lawyer, being imagined a client, when the lawyer was preparing his palm for a fee, should pull out a writ against him. Suppose an apothecary, at the door of a chariot containing some greater doctor of eminent skill, should, instead of directions to a patient, present him with a potion for himself. Suppose a minister should, instead of a good round sum, treat my Lord—, or Sir—, or Esquire—, with a good broomstick. Suppose a civil companion, or a led captain, should, instead of virtue, and beauty, and parts, and admiration, thunder vice, and infamy, and ugliness, and folly, and contempt, in his patron's ears. Suppose when a tradesman first carries in his bill, the man of fashion should pay it; or suppose, if he did so, the tradesman should abate what he had overcharged on the supposition of waiting. In short,—suppose what you will, you never can nor will suppose anything equal

to the astonishment which seized on Trulliber, as soon as Adams had ended his speech. Awhile he rolled his eyes in silence; sometimes surveying Adams, then his wife; then casting them on the ground, then lifting them up to heaven. At last he burst forth in the following accents: 'Sir, I believe I know where to lay up my little treasure as well as another. I thank God, if I am not so warm as some, I am content: that is a blessing greater than riches; and he to whom that is given, need ask no more. To be content with a little, is greater than to possess the world; which a man may possess without being so. Lay up my treasure! what matters where a man's treasure is, whose heart is in the Scriptures? there is the treasure of a Christian.' At these words the water ran from Adams's eyes; and catching Trulliber by the hand in a rapture, 'Brother,' says he, 'heavens bless the accident by which I came to see you! I would have walked many a mile to have communed with you; and believe me, I will shortly pay you a second visit; but my friends, I fancy, by this time wonder at my stay; so let me have the money immediately.' Trulliber then put on a stern look, and cried out, 'Thou dost not intend to rob me?' At which the wife, bursting into tears, fell on her knees, and roared out, 'Oh dear, sir! for heaven's sake don't rob my master: we are but poor people.'—'Get up for a fool as thou art, and go about thy business,' said Trulliber: 'dost think the man will venture his life? he is a beggar, and no robber.'—'Very true, indeed,' answered Adams. 'I wish, with all my heart, the tithing-man was here,' cries Trulliber: 'I would have thee punished as a vagabond for thy impudence. Fourteen shillings indeed! I won't give thee a farthing. I believe thou art no more a clergyman than the woman there' (pointing to his wife); 'but if thou art, dost deserve to have thy gown stripped over thy shoulders, for running about the country in such a manner.'—'I forgive your suspicions,' says Adams; 'but suppose I am not a clergyman, I am nevertheless thy brother; and thou, as a Christian, much more as a clergyman, art obliged to relieve my distress.'—'Dost preach to me?' replied Trulliber: 'dost pretend to instruct me in my duty?'—'Ifacks, a good story,' cries Mrs Trulliber, 'to preach to my

master!’—‘Silence, woman,’ cries Trulliber. ‘I would have thee know, friend’ (addressing himself to Adams), ‘I shall not learn my duty from such as thee. I know what charity is, better than to give to vagabonds.’—‘Besides, if we were inclined, the poor’s rate obliges us to give so much charity,’ cries the wife.—‘Pugh! thou art a fool. Poor’s rate! Hold thy nonsense,’ answered Trulliber; and then turning to Adams, he told him, ‘He would give him nothing.’—‘I am sorry,’ answered Adams, ‘that you do not know what charity is, since you practise it no better: but I must tell you, if you trust to your knowledge for your justification, you will find yourself deceived, though you should add faith to it, without good works.’—‘Fellow,’ cries Trulliber, ‘dost thou speak against faith in my house? Get out of my doors: I will no longer remain under the same roof with a wretch who speaks wantonly of faith and the Scriptures.’—‘Name not the Scriptures,’ says Adams.—‘How! not name the Scriptures! Do you disbelieve the Scriptures?’ cries Trulliber.—‘No; but you do,’ answered Adams, ‘if I may reason from your practice; for their commands are so explicit, and their rewards and punishments so immense, that it is impossible a man should steadfastly believe, without obeying. Now there is no command more express, no duty more frequently enjoined, than charity. Whoever, therefore, is void of charity, I make no scruple of pronouncing he is no Christian.’—‘I would not advise thee,’ says Trulliber, ‘to say that I am no Christian: I won’t take it of you; for I believe I am as good a man as thyself:’ (and indeed, though he was now rather too corpulent for athletic exercises, he had, in his youth, been one of the best boxers and cudgel-players in the country). His wife, seeing him clench his fist interposed, and begged him not to fight, but show himself a true Christian, and take the law of him. As nothing could provoke Adams to strike, but an absolute assault on himself or his friend, he smiled at the angry look and gestures of Trulliber; and telling him, he was sorry to see such men in orders, departed without farther ceremony.

[JOSEPH ANDREWS]

XVI

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709–1784), the son of a bookseller, was born at Lichfield in Staffordshire. In his nineteenth year he was entered as a Commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, where, miserably poor, he continued to educate himself in his own way, by voracious, rapid, but unlaborious reading, following his inquisitive discriminating nose wherever it led him. In young manhood he seems to have maintained himself by teaching and desultory writing, but at the age of twenty-eight he migrated to London, to set up as an author in earnest, and from that day was never at home anywhere else. His reputation as literary critic, periodical essayist, compiler of a great *Dictionary*, and man of letters in general, has been overshadowed for later generations by the inexhaustible fascination of his personality, so minutely and copiously revealed in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. In that book, with a devotion and particularity sometimes comic but always rewarding, we get not only a brilliantly living portrait of the man, his looks, habits, gestures, and above all his talk, but also many pieces of his writing not to be found elsewhere: the famous letter in rebuke of Lord Chesterfield is only one of many good things of the kind. The most enduring of his works are *Rasselas* (first published in 1759 under the title of *The Prince of Abyssinia: a Tale*); a poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, as characteristic of its author as of its period; *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, on which journey he was accompanied by the faithful Boswell; and *The Lives of the Poets*. In his verse Johnson is a moral philosopher, not a poet. His prose, noble and moving though at times it is, suffers from the prevailing ponderousness of his period. The great man could be insufferably rude and overbearing when it pleased him, but—'No man alive has a more tender heart,' said Oliver Goldsmith of him. 'He has nothing of the bear but his skin.'

A Dissertation on the Art of Flying

AMONG the artists that had been allured into the happy valley to labour for the accommodation and pleasure of its inhabitants, was a man eminent for his knowledge of the mechanick powers, who had contrived many engines both of use and recreation. By a wheel, which the stream turned, he forced the water into a tower, whence it was distributed to all the apartments of the palace. He erected a pavilion in the garden, around which he kept the air always cool by artificial showers. One of the groves, appropriated to the ladies, was ventilated by fans, to which the rivulet that ran through it gave a constant motion; and instruments of soft musick were placed at proper distances, of which some played by the impulse of the wind, and some by the power of the stream.

This artist was sometimes visited by Rasselas, who was pleased with every kind of knowledge, imagining that the time would come when all his acquisitions should be of use to him in the open world. He came one day to amuse himself in his usual manner, and found the master busy in building a sailing chariot: he saw that the design was practicable upon a level surface, and with expressions of great esteem solicited its completion. The workman was pleased to find himself so much regarded by the prince, and resolved to gain yet higher honours. 'Sir,' said he, 'you have seen but a small part of what the mechanick sciences can perform. I have been long of opinion, that instead of the tardy conveyance of ships and chariots, man might use the swifter migration of wings; that the fields of air are open to knowledge, and that only ignorance and idleness need crawl upon the ground.'

This hint rekindled the prince's desire of passing the mountains; having seen what the mechanist had already performed, he was willing to fancy that he could do more; yet resolved to inquire further, before he suffered hope to afflict him by disappointment. 'I am afraid,' said he to the artist, 'that your

imagination prevails over your skill, and that you now tell me rather what you wish, than what you know. Every animal has his element assigned him; the birds have the air, and man and beasts the earth.' 'So,' replied the mechanist, 'fishes have the water, in which yet beasts can swim by nature, and men by art. He that can swim needs not despair to fly: to swim is to fly in a grosser fluid, and to fly is to swim in a subtler. We are only to proportion our power of resistance to the different density of matter through which we are to pass. You will be necessarily upborne by the air, if you can renew any impulse upon it, faster than the air can recede from the pressure.'

'But the exercise of swimming,' said the prince, 'is very laborious; the strongest limbs are soon wearied; I am afraid the act of flying will be yet more violent, and wings will be of no great use, unless we can fly further than we can swim.'

'The labour of rising from the ground,' said the artist, 'will be great, as we see it in the heavier domestick fowls, but as we mount higher, the earth's attraction, and the body's gravity, will be gradually diminished till we shall arrive at a region where the man will float in the air without any tendency to fall; no care will then be necessary but to move forwards, which the gentlest impulse will effect. You, Sir, whose curiosity is so extensive, will easily conceive with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with wings, and hovering in the sky, would see the earth, and all its inhabitants, rolling beneath him, and presenting to him successively, by its diurnal motion, all the countries within the same parallel. How must it amuse the pendent spectator to see the moving scene of land and ocean, cities and deserts! To survey with equal security the marts of trade, and the fields of battle; mountains infested by barbarians, and fruitful regions gladdened by plenty, and lulled by peace? How easily shall we then trace the Nile through all his passage; pass over to distant regions, and examine the face of nature from one extremity of the earth to the other!'

'All this,' said the prince, 'is much to be desired; but I am

afraid that no man will be able to breathe in these regions of speculation and tranquillity. I have been told, that respiration is difficult upon lofty mountains, yet from these precipices, though so high as to produce great tenuity of air, it is very easy to fall: therefore I suspect, that from any height, where life can be supported, there may be danger of too quick descent.'

'Nothing,' replied the artist, 'will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must be first overcome. If you will favour my project, I will try the first flight at my own hazard. I have considered the structure of all volant animals, and find the folding continuity of the bat's wings most easily accommodated to the human form. Upon this model I shall begin my task tomorrow, and in a year expect to tower into the air beyond the malice and pursuit of man. But I will work only on this condition, that the art shall not be divulged, and that you shall not require me to make wings for any but ourselves.'

'Why,' said Rasselas, 'should you envy others so great an advantage? All skill ought to be exerted for universal good; every man has owed much to others, and ought to repay the kindness that he has received.'

'If men were all virtuous,' returned the artist, 'I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly. But what would be the security of the good if the bad could at pleasure invade them from the sky? Against an army sailing through the clouds, neither walls, nor mountains, nor seas, could afford any security. A flight of northern savages might hover in the wind, and light at once with irresistible violence upon the capital of a fruitful region that was rolling under them. Even this valley, the retreat of princes, the abode of happiness, might be violated by the sudden descent of some of the naked nations that swarm on the coast of the southern sea.'

The prince promised secrecy, and waited for the performance, not wholly hopeless of success. He visited the work from time to time, observed its progress, and remarked many ingenious contrivances to facilitate motion, and unite levity with strength. The artist was every day more certain that he should leave

vultures and eagles behind him, and the contagion of his confidence seized upon the prince.

In a year the wings were finished, and, on a morning appointed, the maker appeared furnished for flight on a little promontory: he waved his pinions a while to gather air, then leaped from his stand, and in an instant dropped into the lake. His wings, which were of no use in the air, sustained him in the water, and the prince drew him to land, half dead with terror and vexation.

[RASSELAS]

Dr Johnson to Lord Chesterfield

February 7, 1755

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word

of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON

Boswell and Johnson: A Bad Beginning

MR THOMAS DAVIES the actor, who then kept a book-seller's shop in Russel-street, Covent-garden, told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him; but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us. . . .

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us,—he

announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord it comes.' I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary*. . . . Mr Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from.'—'From Scotland,' cried Davies roguishly. 'Mr Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to sooth and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expence of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression 'come from Scotland,' which I had used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies: 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings.' Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O, Sir, I cannot think Mr Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' 'Sir, (said he, with a stern look) I have known David Garrick longer than you have done: and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject.' Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil.

Their Second Encounter

A FEW days afterwards I called on Davies, and asked him if he thought I might take the liberty of waiting on Mr Johnson at his Chambers in the Temple. He said I certainly might, and that Mr Johnson would take it as a compliment. So upon Tuesday the 24th of May, after having been enlivened by the witty sallies of Messieurs Thornton, Wilkes, Churchill and Lloyd, with whom I had passed the morning, I boldly repaired to Johnson. . . .

He received me very courteously; but, it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of cloaths looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, 'Nay, don't go.' 'Sir, (said I,) I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you.' He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, 'Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me.'

A Visit to Greenwich

ON Saturday, July 30, Dr Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON. 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.' 'And yet, (said I) people go through the world very

well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.' He then called to the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir, (said the boy,) I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr Johnson then turning to me, 'Sir, (said he) a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.'

We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars, and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river. . . .

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose by way of trying my disposition, 'Is not this very fine?' Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of Nature, and being more delighted with 'the busy hum of men,' I answered, 'Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street.' JOHNSON. 'You are right, Sir.' . . .

Talking of a London life, he said [on another occasion], 'The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom.' BOSWELL. 'The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages.' BOSWELL. 'Sometimes I have been in the humour of wishing to retire to a desert.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland.'

Conversation before Dinner

HE honoured me with his company at dinner on the 16th of October, at my lodgings in Old Bond-street, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr Garrick, Dr Goldsmith, Mr Murphy, Mr Bickerstaff, and Mr Thomas Davies. Garrick played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on his good health which he seemed then to enjoy; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. One of the company not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served; adding, 'Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?' 'Why, yes, (answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity,) if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting.' Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. 'Come, come, (said Garrick,) talk no more of that. You are perhaps the worst—eh, eh!'—Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, 'Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of your being well or ill *drest*.' 'Well, let me tell you, (said Goldsmith,) when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, "Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane." ' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour.'

Talking of Money

ROUSSEAU'S treatise on the inequality of mankind was at this time [1763] a fashionable topick. It gave rise to an observa-

tion by Mr Dempster, that the advantages of fortune and rank were nothing to a wise man, who ought to value only merit. JOHNSON. 'If man were a savage, living in the woods by himself, this might be true; but in civilized society we all depend upon each other, and our happiness is very much owing to the good opinion of mankind. Now, Sir, in civilized society, external advantages make us more respected. A man with a good coat upon his back meets with a better reception than he who has a bad one. Sir, you may analyse this, and say what is there in it? But that will avail you nothing, for it is part of a general system. Pound St Paul's Church into atoms, and consider any single atom; it is, to be sure, good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together and you have St Paul's Church. So it is with human felicity, which is made up of many ingredients, each of which may be shewn to be very insignificant. In civilized society, personal merit will not serve you so much as money will. Sir, you may make the experiment. Go into the street, and give one man a lecture on morality, and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most. . . . Money, to be sure, of itself is of no use; for its only use is to part with it. Rousseau, and all those who deal in paradoxes, are led away by a childish desire of novelty. When I was a boy, I used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it. Sir, there is nothing for which you may not muster up more plausible arguments, than those which are urged against wealth and other external advantages. Why, now, there is stealing; why should it be thought a crime? When we consider by what unjust methods property has been often acquired, and that what was unjustly got it must be unjust to keep, and how much better use the thief may make of it, it may be defended as a very allowable practice. Yet, Sir, the experience of mankind has discovered stealing to be so bad a thing, that they make no scruple to hang a man for it. When I was running about this town a very poor fellow, I was a great arguer for the advantages of poverty; but I was, at the same time, very sorry to be poor. Sir, all the arguments which are brought to represent

poverty as no evil, shew it to be evidently a great evil. You never find people labouring to convince you that you may live very happily upon a plentiful fortune.

Dr Johnson as Foster-Mother

I KNOW not how so whimsical a thought came into my mind, but I asked, 'If, Sir, you were shut up in a castle, and a newborn child with you, what would you do?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, I should not much like my company.' BOSWELL. 'But would you take the trouble of rearing it?' He seemed, as may well be supposed, unwilling to pursue the subject: but upon my persevering in my question, replied, 'Why yes, Sir, I would; but I must have all conveniences. If I had no garden, I would make a shed on the roof, and take it there for fresh air. I should feed it and wash it much, and with warm water to please it, not with cold water to give it pain.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, does not heat relax?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you are not to imagine the water is to be very hot. I would not *coddle* the child.'



XVII

IT has been said that the purest (that is, the most purely poetical) poetry ever written by a child is to be found among the *Poetical Sketches* of WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827). Blake had reached his twenties before they were printed, but the earliest among them were written when he was twelve and the latest before he was twenty-one. Conspicuously young and fresh, they exhibit an astonishing technical originality, and even, if you like, a technical wilfulness. Blake, whether as man or boy, went his own way, spoke always in his own voice. He was not of his time, nor of any other time. There are indeed recognizable influences in his early verse, but they are the influences you would least expect to

find at work on a boy born only thirteen years after the death of Alexander Pope. In the first poem in our selection only one line, and that the worst ('And Phoebus fired my vocal rage'), is typical of the period in which it was written. The two that follow it—*My silks and fine array* and *Memory, hither come*—are such as one would be not in the least surprised to find among the songs of Shakespeare. We can well imagine Feste, the Fool in *Twelfth Night*, singing them to the lovesick Count Orsino.

HOW sweet I roam'd from field to field,
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the prince of love beheld,
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He shew'd me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair,
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fired my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

My silks and fine array

MY silks and fine array,
My smiles and languish'd air,

By love are driv'n away;
And mournful lean Despair
Brings me yew to deck my grave:
Such end true lovers have.

His face is fair as heav'n
When springing buds unfold;
O why to him was't giv'n,
Whose heart is wintry cold?
His breast is love's all worship'd tomb,
Where all love's pilgrims come.

Memory, hither come

MEMORY, hither come,
And tune your merry notes;
And, while upon the wind
Your music floats,
I'll pore upon the stream,
Where sighing lovers dream,
And fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

I'll drink of the clear stream,
And hear the linnet's song;
And there I'll lie and dream
The day along:
And, when night comes, I'll go
To places fit for woe,
Walking along the darken'd valley
With silent Melancholy.

In these last two lyrics, and especially in *My silks and fine array*, we encounter a metrical device very characteristic of the early Blake: a sudden and unexpected change of beat, as in the line 'Brings me yew to deck my grave'. A more sustained use of this principle is seen in one of the loveliest of the *Songs of*

Innocence. The eight-line stanza falls into two halves, the second half reversing the metrical beat of the first. Perhaps the best way to bring out this antiphonal effect is to have the poem read by two alternating voices.

Night

- 1st Reader* THE sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
- 2nd Reader* The moon like a flower
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night.
- 1st Reader* Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright;
- 2nd Reader* Unseen they pour blessing
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.
- 1st Reader* They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are covered warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm.
- 2nd Reader* If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.
- 1st Reader* When wolves and tygers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep;

2nd Reader But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

1st Reader And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold,

2nd Reader Saying 'Wrath, by his meekness,
'And by his health, sickness
'Is driven away
'From our immortal day.

2nd Reader 'And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
(continues) 'I can lie down and sleep;
'Or think on him who bore thy name,
'Graze after thee and weep.
'For, wash'd in life's river,
'My bright mane for ever
'Shall shine like the gold
'As I guard o'er the fold.'

In these last verses there is a reminiscence of Isaiah's vision, of an ultimate peace, 'when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them'. But Blake was a man of vision in a very special and unusual sense; for he claimed that he actually saw, with his mortal eyes, the angels, the prophets, the patriarchs, the demons, which he was so fond of depicting in his drawings. With his work as artist and engraver, the work by which he earned his bread, we are not here directly concerned. The *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* first appeared in editions printed from plates engraved by his own hand: both text and decoration. But we need no pictorial adjunct to help us to see Blake's lion:

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold.

How simple and splendid that picture is, and how direct and powerful the symbolism! It has a Miltonic splendour and a child's innocent robust delight in bold outline and primary colours. Blake, like some other poets of genius, retained always his power of seeing things with a child's unclouded vision, as though for the first time. In all his best work we enjoy the startled sense of being alive in the first morning of creation.

The best of him, without question, is to be found first of all among the lyrics, and second among the prose aphorisms contained in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and in comments and marginalia not written for publication. His letters to friends and his *Descriptive Catalogue* prepared for an exhibition of his own pictures are also very rewarding. In the cumbrous symbolism and resounding rhetoric of the so-called Prophetic Books, only a very resolute reader can find illumination, but where Blake is lucid he is luminous indeed, and where he is luminous he is profound. His vision is not of innocence alone, nor of experience alone, but of the two together, of the tension between these 'contrary states of the soul' (as he calls them), and of a progression *through* them to a higher innocence which is wisdom. It is an essentially religious vision. In the margin of another man's book he wrote the following comment: 'God is in the lowest effects as well as in the highest causes; for he is become a worm that he may nourish the weak. For let it be remembered that creation is God descending according to the weakness of man, for our Lord is the word of God and everything on earth is the word of God and in its essence is God.' It is in the light of such a pronouncement that we should read *The Divine Image*, which is the first of the poems that now follow.

TO Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

Holy Thursday

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,
Grey-headed beards walk'd before, with wands as white as
snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like 'Thames' waters flow.

O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

The Little Vagabond

DEAR Mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold,
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day,
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink, and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at Church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.

And God, like a father rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as he,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright

TYGER, Tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



XVIII

JANE AUSTEN (1775–1817) was born at Steventon in Hampshire, where her father was rector. She had a much-loved sister (Cassandra) and five brothers. Like Fielding, she seems to have

been led into novel-writing by an impulse to burlesque the novels of others. Among her juvenilia are some burlesque pieces evidently written for the amusement of herself and her family, and the impulse survived into her middle twenties, when she wrote the first draft of what was ultimately, and posthumously, published as *Northanger Abbey*. She had already, in 1796-1797, written the first version of *Pride and Prejudice*; and within a few months of its completion she set about rewriting, under the title *Sense and Sensibility*, a still earlier work which had consisted, like Richardson's novels, of a series of letters. Owing to the stupidity and dilatoriness of certain publishers, which allowed full scope to her admirable talent for reconsidering and rewriting, the dates of publication of her five beautifully finished novels afford no clue to the dates or order of their final composition. Only three of them appeared during her lifetime, and those during the last six years; and, though we know that versions of some of the five existed before the others were begun, we can seldom with any confidence put our finger on any particular page or paragraph and declare it to be, as a piece of writing, early or late. *Northanger Abbey*, for example, though unquestionably among the earliest in conception, may for all we know have been largely rewritten in 1816, in which year the author recovered her manuscript from the publisher who had bought but failed to publish it.

All five novels appeared anonymously. Jane Austen suffered no personal publicity and never acquired the habit of slick professional production. A consummate artist, patient and unhurried, knowing by instinct exactly what she could and could not do, she remained to the end a brilliant amateur, impelled by nothing but her own genius. Without consciously pursuing it, she achieved in the best of her works—in *Pride and Prejudice* and in *Emma*, let us say, though *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park* have their champions too—something as near perfection as we are ever likely to see. Any literary product of which that can be said must needs be concise in workmanship and of strictly limited scope. You can write, if you are Shakespeare, a perfect lyric, but

not a five-act play in which no minor blemish can be found. You can write, if you are Jane Austen, an exquisitely true, delicate, and entertaining prose fiction, creating a small and brilliantly 'real' world in which the author, no matter what subtleties of inflection are to be discerned in her deceptively prim narration, never obtrudes herself; but you can hardly, even though you are Tolstoy (the greatest of novelists), write a faultless *War and Peace*. Jane Austen knew precisely what she could do and was content to do it perfectly. She wrote of what she had intimately observed, and attempted no ambitious imaginative flights. No echo is heard in her fiction of the wars that were working havoc in the larger world. As a private person, exceptionally sensitive and alert, she cannot have been indifferent to those things; but in her art she ignored them, for the all-sufficient reason that they did not belong to her subject.

The first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, which follows here, is possibly the shortest, wittiest, and most workmanlike first chapter in English fiction.

The Bennet Family

IT is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr Bennet made no answer.

'Do not you want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife, impatiently.

'You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so delighted with it that he agreed with Mr Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.'

'What is his name?'

'Bingley.'

'Is he married or single?'

'Oh, single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!'

'How so? how can it affect them?'

'My dear Mr Bennet,' replied his wife, 'how can you be so tiresome? You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.'

'Is that his design in settling here?'

'Design? Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.'

'I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for, as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr Bingley might like you the best of the party.'

'My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.'

'In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.'

'But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.'

'It is more than I engage for, I assure you.'

'But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account; for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him, if you do not.'

'You are over scrupulous, surely. I daresay Mr Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.'

'I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others: and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference.'

'They have none of them much to recommend them,' replied he: 'they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.'

'Mr Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves.'

'You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least.'

'Ah, you do not know what I suffer.'

'But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood.'

'It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them.'

'Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all.'

Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain

temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news.

[PRIDE AND PREJUDICE]



XIX

It can perhaps be said of nearly every great poet, but it is pre-eminently true of WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850), that the poems by which he lives for us today bulk small in his collected works. He owed much, of stimulus and inspiration, to his five years of close friendship with SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, and incalculably much to his sister Dorothy, who appears from time to time in his poems, now as Lucy, now as Emmeline. *The Sparrow's Nest* contains an explicit acknowledgment of this debt:

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My Sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a Boy:

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

'She gave me eyes, she gave me ears'—it was no more than the truth. A hundred correspondences can be found between Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals and her brother's poems; and sometimes he transmutes what she gives him, sometimes not. She records, for example, how he wrote his lyric *To a Butterfly*. 'The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always feel at the sight of a butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little, but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, and did not catch them.' In Wordsworth's poem this becomes:

Oh, pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time when in our childish plays
My Sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the Butterfly.
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she—God love her!—feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

Although the poet in Wordsworth had too often to contend with a prosy and sententious other self, he seems never to have been aware of the conflict: the result, at any rate in his longer works, is that sometimes the most miraculous poetry seems to happen by inadvertence. In the famous *Intimations of Immortality* and in a large part of *Tintern Abbey* the inspiration (whether or not one accepts the 'philosophy' of these poems) is unfaltering; the note of sublimity, 'the echo of a great soul' as Longinus calls it, is heard again and again during the industrious narrative of *The Prelude*; and wherever we go with Wordsworth, into whatever regions of dullness and even bathos he may lead us, poetry

is always apt to break in, often when least expected.

The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is commonly held to mark the beginning of what is called, somewhat misleadingly, the Romantic Revival, though its contents were in no sense more truly 'romantic' than the best work of Blake. What the volume does stand for is a conscious resolve on Wordsworth's part to escape from the mechanical formalism of the eighteenth century by 'fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation'. The quotation is from his preface to the second edition. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose own *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* appeared in the *Lyrical Ballads*, years afterwards in *Biographia Literaria* severely criticized Wordsworth's theories. Our prose passage from Wordsworth (see below, page 162) is taken from a more general and less disputable part of that same preface. Coleridge's verse, small in bulk, includes two other poems of superb quality, *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*.

*Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of
Early Childhood*

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore:
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,

Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

Ye blessèd Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,

In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy:
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,

The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size.
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes.
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage; thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!

On whom those truths do rest
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life.

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive.
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy.
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song,
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May.
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;

In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,

Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye: ,
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch

The language of my former heart, and read
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh, yet a little while
 May I behold in thee what I was once,
 My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
 Knowing that Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy: for she can so inform
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
 And let the misty mountain-winds be free
 To blow against thee: and, in after years,
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
 Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh, then,
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
 And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
 If I should be where I no more can hear
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
 Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
 That on the banks of this delightful stream
 We stood together; and that I, so long
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came

Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh, with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake.

The Leech-Gatherer

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a traveller then upon the moor,
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could
name.

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no need at all?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,

When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a Man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
'This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.'

A gentle answer did the old Man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:
And him with further words I thus bespake,
'What occupation do you there pursue?
'This is a lonesome place for one like you.'
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance,
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.

—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
'How is it that you live, and what is it you do?'

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
'Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.'

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'



The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

PART I

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheer'd, the harbour clear'd,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon——'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

‘And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roar’d the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It crack’d and growl’d, and roar’d and howl’d,
Like noises in a swound.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hail’d it in God’s name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steer'd us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perch'd for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmer'd the white moonshine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—'With my crossbow
I shot the Albatross.

PART II

~~'The Sun now rose upon the right:~~
~~Out of the sea came he,~~
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo.

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averr'd I had kill'd the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averr'd I had kill'd the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow follow'd free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was wither'd at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah, well a-day, what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

'There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parch'd, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye!
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seem'd a little speck,
And then it seem'd a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it near'd and near'd:

As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged, and tack'd, and veer'd.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood;
I bit my arm, I suck'd the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See, see, (I cried) she tacks no more,
Hither to work us weal—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all aflame,
The day was wellnigh done,
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad, bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was fleck'd with bars
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!),
As if through a dungeon-grate he peer'd
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listen'd and look'd sideways up:
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seem'd to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleam'd white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogg'd Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan),
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropp'd down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly—
They fled to bliss or woe—
And every soul, it pass'd me by
Like the whizz of my crossbow.'

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribb'd sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand so brown.'—
'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I look'd upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I look'd upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I look'd to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
But the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they look'd on me
Had never pass'd away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh, more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide;
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoock'd the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt always
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watch'd the water-snakes:

They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coil'd and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gush'd from my heart,
And I bless'd them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I bless'd them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

'O sleep, it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole,
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remain'd,
I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew;
And when I awoke, it rain'd.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;

Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessèd ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life;
And a hundred fire-flags sheen;
To and fro they were hurried about,
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side;
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reach'd the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;

It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steer'd, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pull'd at one rope,
But he said naught to me.'

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
'Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest:
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawn'd—they dropp'd their arms,
And cluster'd round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sail'd on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The Spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fix'd her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life return'd,
I heard, and in my soul discern'd
Two voices in the air.

"Is it he?" quoth one, "is this the man?
By Him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow."

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

PART VI

First Voice:

"But tell me, tell me! speak again.
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?"

Second Voice:

"Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.

See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him."

First Voice:

"But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?"

Second Voice:

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fix'd on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died.
Had never pass'd away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And look'd far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fann'd my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sail'd softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

O dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn,
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steep'd in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck—
O Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but O, the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turn'd perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

'This hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat near'd: I heard them talk,
"Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?"

"Strange, by my faith," the Hermit said—
"And they answer'd not our cheer!
The planks look warp'd, and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-fear'd."—"Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirr'd;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reach'd the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shriek'd
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laugh'd loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see
The Devil knows how to row."

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit cross'd his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:

And hark, the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest, this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunn'd,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.

What is a Poet?

WHAT is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves:—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement. . . .

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by

the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathise with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of Science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere

objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of Science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare has said of man, 'that he looks before and after'. He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of men are, it is true, his

favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of Men of Science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.

[Wordsworth: Preface to LYRICAL BALLADS]



XX

WORDSWORTH, who lived to a ripe age, was in his middle years when Shelley and Keats, younger than he by over twenty years, published their first poems. These two are linked in our minds by the accident of chronology rather than by any resemblance in their characters or in their work. They were very nearly of an age, Shelley being the elder by two or three years only. Each came to an untimely end. Keats died of consumption in his twenty-sixth year, and Shelley in his thirtieth was drowned in the

Bay of Spezia. In social origin and in cast of mind they were as different as two poets of the same generation could well be.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822) was educated at Eton and Oxford. Full of fiery idealism he came early under the influence of William Godwin, the political philosopher who wrote *Political Justice* (1793) and who married the first conspicuous champion of woman's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft. After a boy-and-girl marriage which came to grief, Shelley wooed and won the daughter of these courageous and rebellious theorizers; and a great part of his poetry is permeated with the spirit of their doctrines. Hating tyranny in all its forms, he seems to have believed that the final overthrow of tyrants must necessarily inaugurate a golden age of universal love; but no summary statement of the ideas implicit in his work should be accepted as adequate until the work itself has been examined. In his personal life he enjoyed the raptures and suffered the inconveniences of his inflammable idealism. His prodigious lyrical gift tempted him towards a certain lushness and vagueness of expression, especially in his more consciously ambitious productions; but his best work (which includes much of *Adonais*, a magnificent lament for the death of Keats) is for all time.

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821) is a 'purer' poet, in the sense that poetry—not philosophy, not political theory, not the dissemination of ideas—was his aim first and last. He too was ardent and independent, with a rich, acquisitive, and very active intelligence. In the last years of his tragically short life his maturing mind, as may be seen in his *Letters* as well as in the later poems, exhibited a quickness, a range, a humour, and a capacity for imaginative experience, beyond the compass of Shelley. His earliest verse, full though it is of what Leigh Hunt called 'genuine though young poetry', is not the work by which he should be judged; and it is to be remembered that even his latest, even those few incomparable things which at this date it would be an impertinence to praise, were written by a very young man. Keats was the eldest of the four children of Thomas Keats, who by marrying his master's daughter had himself become master of a livery stable in

Finsbury Pavement, London, at the sign of the Swan and Hoop. Sent at the age of eight to a school at Enfield, he owed his first introduction to poetry to Charles Cowden Clarke, son of the headmaster. Clarke led him to Spenser, and Spenser fired him with the ambition to write poetry. He lost both parents in boyhood, and an ill-chosen guardian insisted on his becoming apprenticed to a surgeon; but he broke free as soon as he could and dedicated himself heart and soul to the arduous discipline of poetry. He published only three volumes, and it is the third, written largely in his twenty-fourth year and published in 1820, that contains his finest work.

Ode to the West Wind

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

· Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle is Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Stanzas from 'Adonais'

PEACE, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
 Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
 Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
 Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
 O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
 Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
 Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
 His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
 Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
 All new successions to the forms they wear;
 Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
 To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
 And bursting in its beauty and its might
 From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
 May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
 Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
 And death is a low mist which cannot blot
 The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought

Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry,
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng!'

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
 Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
 That ages, empires, and religions there
 Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
 For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
 Glory from those who made the world their prey;
 And he is gathered to the kings of thought
 Who waged contention with their time's decay,
 And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
 The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
 And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
 And flowering weeds, and fragrant corses dress
 The bones of Desolation's nakedness
 Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
 Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
 Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
 A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
 Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
 And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
 Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
 This refuge for his memory, doth stand
 Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
 A field is spread, on which a newer band
 Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
 Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
 To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
 Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
 Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
 Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find

Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.



The Eve of St Agnes

ST AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man:
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by, and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor.

But no—already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung;
His was harsh penance on St Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain new-stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere;
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy; all amorn,
Save to St Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things
have been.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell,
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's feverous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,

Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
 Whose very dogs would execrations howl
 Against his lineage; not one breast affords
 Him any mercy in that mansion foul,
 Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
 Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
 To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
 Behind a broad hall pillar, far beyond
 The sound of merriment and chorus bland.
 He startled her: but soon she knew his face,
 And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
 Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
 They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand:
 He had a fever late, and in the fit
 He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land:
 Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
 More tame for his grey hairs—Alas me! flit,
 Flit like a ghost away.'—'Ah, Gossip dear,
 We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
 And tell me how'—'Good Saints! not here, not here;
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

He follow'd through a lowly archèd way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
 And as she mutter'd 'Well-a—well-a-day!'
 He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
 'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 When they St Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

'St Agnes! Ah, it is St Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days.
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
As spectacted she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
'A cruel man and impious thou art!
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.'

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear!
Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face.

Good Angela, believe me, by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves
and bears.'

'Ah! wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd.' Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
'All cates and dainties shall be storèd there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while. Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.'

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St Agnes' charmèd maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No utter'd syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries,
Of fruits and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,

As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
 kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for Heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyr^o grew faint:
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

✓ Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
 Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
 Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
 In fancy, fair St Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

•
 Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
 Until the poppièd warmth of sleep oppress'd
 Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away;
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
 Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
 Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
 As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast she
slept!

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathèd silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—

'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
Open thine eyes, for meek St Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

Thus whispering, his warm, unnervèd arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as icèd stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entoil'd in woofèd phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd 'La belle dame sans mercy':
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayèd eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep.
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh,
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joinèd hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro,' said she, 'but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear.
O leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.'

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet,
'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!'
'Tis dark: the icèd gusts still rave and beat:
'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

'My Madeline, sweet dreamer, lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil-dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,

A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest,
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

'Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
The bloated wassailers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead.
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears.
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found;
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold. —

Ode on a Grecian Urn

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Ode to a Nightingale

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy:
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self.
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf,
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

[Keats]



XXI

IN thousands of Victorian households, for something like half a century, English poetry meant the poetry of Tennyson and no other. He did not leap into fame with his first published volumes (1830 and 1833), but the two-volume *Poems* of 1842 established for him a reputation which grew to gigantic proportions. Probably no poet in his own day has been held in higher critical esteem. Extravagant claims were made for him, and the reaction against Tennysonian mellifluousness has been correspondingly violent and often as ill-considered. ALFRED TENNYSON (1809–1892) was born at Somersby in Lincolnshire, where his father was rector; and fifty years after his death members of the family could still recall the thrill of hearing him read his poems aloud,

in a deep, resonant, rugged voice, agreeably tinged with the flavour of his native shire. Handsome and bardlike though he was, there was nothing in his personal effect to suggest the cultivated elegance of his verse. Zealous in craftsmanship, persistent in revision, planning every vowel-sequence and choosing carefully every consonant, Tennyson fashioned for himself a style of extraordinary grace and fluency; and because there was a true and deeply sensitive poet behind all this industry it bore fruit in a number of matchless lyrics, such as *Tears*, *Idle Tears* (see below), and in other comparatively short poems perfect in their kind. In his expression of a certain luminous pensiveness verging on melancholy, and in his power of describing the natural scene in terms of that prevailing mood, he is hardly excelled: *In Memoriam*, the most ambitious work of his maturity, abounds in such passages. But Tennyson's strength was also his weakness: verbal felicity, which he can practise with exquisite effect on occasion, sometimes runs to excess and becomes an end in itself, a sleek and empty prettiness. For story-telling in verse he had no great talent. The *Idylls of the King*, which present the heroic tales of the Round Table in wistful unvitalized blank verse that is all but unreadable today, show a sad falling-off from the high quality of his *Morte d'Arthur*, an epic fragment written some fifteen years before the first *Idyll* was attempted. Tennyson succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate in 1850 and was raised to the peerage in 1884.

Ulysses

IT little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this grey spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The Lotos-Eaters

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;

And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, 'We will return no more';
And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

CHORIC SONG

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm!'
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;

To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore tasks to hearts worn out with many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly

His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is
blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was
seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in
the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and
fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and pray-
ing hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;

Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in
hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Morte d' Arthur

SO all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm

That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd

Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fæalty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud.

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.

What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes

As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

Tears, idle tears

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.



XXII

THE central paradox of ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889) is divertingly summed up in one of Max Beerbohm's cartoons. Browning's first volume, *Pauline*, was published in 1833. Nearly half a century later, when he was approaching the seventieth year of his enormously productive life, a handful of zealous

Sohrab and Rustum

AN EPISODE

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep:
Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere:
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top
With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—
'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?'

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—
'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
Rustum, my father; who, I hop'd, should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hop'd, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man: if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.'

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—
'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,

In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go:—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires.'

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog

From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd
Into the open plain; so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd;
As when, some grey November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board: so they stream'd
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—
'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow;
Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up
To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counsell'd; and then Gudurz said:—
'Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—
'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;
And with a cry sprang up, and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—

'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
'Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords

To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.'

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—
'Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I
Am older: if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai-Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honours younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.'

He spoke, and smil'd; and Gudurz made reply:—
'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'*

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply:—
'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say,
What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man.'

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And from the fluted spine atop a plume
Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes

Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum ey'd
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,

And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—

‘O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven’s air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav’d.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be govern’d: quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.’

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Has builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak’d with its first grey hairs: hope fill’d his soul;
And he ran forwards and embrac’d his knees,
And clasp’d his hand within his own and said:—

‘Oh, by thy father’s head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?’

But Rustum ey’d askance the kneeling youth,
And turn’d away, and spoke to his own soul:—

‘Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab’s hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—

"I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank; only Rustum dar'd: then he and I
Chang'd gifts, and went on equal terms away."
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me.'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this;
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away.'

He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—
But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.

- And whether it will heave us up to land,
• Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know:
Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield: sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum, seiz'd his club, which none but he
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand:
And now might Sohrab have unsheath'd his sword,
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand:
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
'Thou strik'st too hard: that club of thine will float
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.

But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth am I:
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softening of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!

He ceas'd: but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heav'd; his lips foam'd; and twice his voice
Was chok'd with rage: at last these words broke way:—

'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.

Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valour: try thy feints
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.'

He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword: at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-spik'd spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,

And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand:—
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum rais'd his head: his dreadful eyes
Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form:
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.

Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:—
'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,
And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear!
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!'

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—

As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:—
‘What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.’

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
‘Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap’
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!!
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.’

He spoke; and as he ceas’d he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen’d, plung’d in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call’d back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,

Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon: tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge describes
A far bright City, smitten by the sun, •
Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old King, her father, who lov'd well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said:—
‘O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.

For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.'

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

'Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.'

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud:
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

'Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.'

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,

A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—
 'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'

He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—
O Boy—thy Father!—and his voice chok'd there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seiz'd
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said:—

 'Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it: but Fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find

My father; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, *My Son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'

So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—

'Ruksh, now thou grieve'st; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field.'

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—
'Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself

Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said—"O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!"—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I'die.'

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied:—
'Oh that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!'

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
'Desire not that, my father; thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age.
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come: thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,

And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—
And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
'Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be: for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.—
But now in blood and battles was my youth,

And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now:
Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said:—
'Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd
His wound's imperious anguish: but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call
From the hot fields at noon: his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd

By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal:
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward; the Tartars by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon: he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

NOTES

[THE aim of these few notes is so far as possible to add to the pleasure of reading, without interrupting it. No attempt is made to answer every question of fact or interpretation that may arise, or to supply the place of a general encyclopaedia. The textual obscurities that a beginner is likely to meet with are of two kinds: those which do, and those which do not, distract him or her from the enjoyment of poetry as poetry and of imaginative prose as imaginative prose. With the second kind these notes are not concerned. An excess of explanation, a too officious guide, will smother delight at its source and foster the lamentable idea that literature is an affair for the learned few. Better, therefore, no notes than too many. The right kind of reader, once started on the road, will prefer to make his own way in his own time. Nor should he have any difficulty in doing so. Any dictionary of classical allusions will tell him, for example, if he does not already know, that Cerberus was a many-headed dog, stationed by Pluto his master at the entrance to the infernal regions; that the Cimmerii (whom we meet in Homer) were the inhabitants of a gloomy western region; that Hebe, daughter of Jupiter and Juno, was cupbearer to the gods; that Corydon and Thyrsis are shepherds in the Greek pastoral tradition; that Orpheus, who married and lost and all but won back Eurydice, conjured such entrancing music from the lute given him by Apollo that when he played the rivers would stop flowing and the wild beasts grow tame. To understand such allusions certainly makes for a fuller appreciation of Milton's *L'Allegro*, in which they occur; but it would be a mistake to worry about them overmuch at a first reading. Poetry is for delight, and only such items of knowledge as may contribute to the delight are in point here.]

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THE TROJAN HORSE. Surrey was perhaps misled by Gawin Douglas's version into translating *amor* as delight. Gawin Douglas has: 'Bot sen thou has sic plesoure and delyte / To know our chancis . . .' The Latin runs: *sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros . . .* Here *amor* can only mean eager desire, or longing. Aeneas would hardly wish to imply that

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- Dido took *delight* in hearing of Troy's overthrow. Line 18 is a very slight modification of Douglas's 'The Grekis chiftanis irkit of the were'.
- 29 PROTHALAMION. *Nor Jove himself . . . for love of Leda.* Zeus (Jove), the chief of the gods, visited the princess Leda in the guise of a swan, and she became by him the mother of Helen (of Troy) and Clytemnestra. Helen became the wife of Menelaus, and Clytemnestra the wife of his brother Agamemnon. Jove's love for Leda may therefore be regarded as the true genesis of the Trojan War, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, and the matricide committed by her son Orestes (see Aeschylus, the *Oresteia*). W. B. Yeats has a poem, *Leda and the Swan*, embodying this idea.
- 61 ~ L'ALLEGRO. *Jonson's learned sock.* The comic actor's shoe, hence comedy: *learned* because Jonson had a strong classical bias.
- 66 IL PENNEROSO. *Prince Memnon's sister:* Helen of Troy, whose sister was wife of Agamemnon. Can you suggest a reason why the poet refers to her in this indirect fashion, instead of naming her outright?
- 71-74 LYCIDAS. *Sisters of the sacred well:* the Muses, born in Piera, and said to haunt the 'Pierian spring' at the foot of Olympus. *Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair:* possibly 'withe', meaning bind or twist. *The blind Fury with the abhorred shears:* Atropos, the eldest of the three Fates, who cuts with scissors the threads of individual human destiny which her sisters spin out. *O fountain Arethuse:* invoking the Greek pastoral tradition of Theocritus, by naming a fountain in Syracuse, where he was born. *Mincius:* river surrounding the island where Virgil lived. *Camus:* the river Cam, to remind us that the dead 'shepherd' was a son of Cambridge University. *The Pilot of the Galilean lake:* St Peter, the fisherman-disciple who came to be regarded as the first bishop of the Church. *Blind mouths:* blind where as spiritual shepherds they should be watchful, and greedy for gain or power where their concern should be for the feeding of the

- sheep. *Return, Alpheus*: Theocritan pastoral again, the stream Alpheus being supposed to connect with Arethuse (see above).
- 88 POPE. *Pierian spring*. See first note on LYCIDAS, above.
- 89 LODGE's *Rosalind*: the plot-source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.
- 103 JOHNSON. This letter to Lord Chesterfield, of which no copy had been kept, was dictated by Johnson to Boswell years afterwards. Boswell tells us that Johnson had 'a remarkable delicacy with respect to the circulation of this letter' and that when pressed by the Bishop of Salisbury to allow it to be read to the second Lord Hardwicke, on the understanding that no copy should be taken, he said with a smile, after pausing some time: 'No, Sir; I have hurt the dog too much already'—or 'words to that purpose', as Boswell puts it. In justice to Chesterfield, Boswell quotes a defence of him by Dr Adams, who said that Johnson's being not received at the house must have been due to some blunder or misunderstanding, Chesterfield having declared to Robert Dod'sley (said Adams) that 'he would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome'.
- 125-140 WORDSWORTH. In the earlier texts, spelling and punctuation have for the most part been modernized for this volume; but with so comparatively recent a writer as Wordsworth some editorial scruples intervene. Wordsworth belonged partly to the eighteenth as well as to the nineteenth century, and he—or his first printer—was lavish in the use of capital letters. Some of his initial capitals have point for us still; others seem to be mere relics of an eighteenth-century convention, to which, however, he is not consistently faithful. Our text retains only such capitals as seem to reflect a conscious intention on the poet's part.
- 140-161 THE ANCIENT MARINER, before and during its composition, was the subject of many talks between Coleridge and Wordsworth; and Wordsworth contributed a few lines.

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- 192 ULYSSES. The first line does not make it immediately apparent that the 'idle king' is himself speaking or soliloquizing. A comma before 'idle king' would have clarified the syntax, but at the expense of bringing the insignificant 'that' into ugly prominence.
- 205 MORTE D'ARTHUR. The five lines beginning *Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves* provide a conspicuous example of Tennyson's delight in onomatopoeia, the reinforcement of meaning by sound. Note the hard clash of consonants and the juxtaposition of short stark words.
- 213, 217 ANDREA DEL SARTO. *The Urbinate*: Rafael (1483-1520), born at Urbino. *Leonard*: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).
- 219 SOHRAB and RUSTUM. In a prefatory note to his poem Matthew Arnold quotes the following passage from Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*:
- "The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage. The second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father. The third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and

bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic: he cursed himself, attempted to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents, and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred. The army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. It was commanded by Haman: and Zoarrah attended, on the part of Rustum, to see that this engagement was respected by the Persians. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'

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