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THE CHRONICLERS AND HISTORIANS OF THE TUDOR AGE

I

THE chroniclers and antiquaries of the Tudor period, various as they were in style and talent, shared the same sentiment, the same ambition. There breathed in each one of them the spirit of nationality. They recognised that the most brilliant discovery of a brilliant age was the discovery of their own country. With a full voice and a fervent heart they sang the praise of England. They celebrated with what eloquence they possessed her gracious climate, her fruitful soil, her brave men, and her beautiful women. Both by precept and by example they did honour to their native speech. 'Our English tongue,' said Camden, 'is as fluent as the Latin, as courteous as the Spanish, as Court-like as the French, and as amorous as the Italian.' Camden praised by precept alone, and composed all his works, save one, in Latin. The other chroniclers, discarding Latin and writing in their own English, paid the language a far higher tribute—the tribute of example. All agreed with Plutarch that 'a part of the Elisian

Fields is to be found in Britain.' And, as they regarded these fair fields with enthusiasm, so they looked back with pride upon Britain's legendary history and the exploits of her kings. Steadfast in observation, tireless in panegyric, they thought no toil, no pæan, outran the desert of England. Topographers, such as Camden and Leland, travelled the length and breadth of England, marking highroad, village, and township, collecting antiquities, copying inscriptions, and painting with what fidelity they might the face of the country. The ingenuity of Norden and Speed designed the maps which have acquired with time an unexpected value and importance. The popular historians, gentle and simple, gathered the truth and falsehood of the past with indiscriminate hand, content if they might restore to the world the forgotten splendour of England, and add a new lustre to England's ancient fame.

Their goodwill and patriotism were limited only by their talent. Zealous in intention, they were not always equal to the task they set themselves. The most of them had but a vague sense of history. They were as little able to sift and weigh evidence as to discern the true sequence and meaning of events. Few were even dimly interested in the conflict of policies or in the science of government. What they best understood were the plain facts of battle and death, of plague and famine, of sudden comets and strange monsters. Their works, for the most part, are the anecdotage of history, and not to be wholly despised

on that account, since an anecdote, false in itself, is often the symbol of the truth, and since, in defiance of research, it is from the anecdotes of the Tudor chroniclers that we derive our knowledge of English history. For that which had been said by others they professed an exaggerated respect. They accepted the bare word of their predecessors with a touching credulity. In patient submission and without criticism they followed the same authorities. There is no chronicler, who did not use such poor light as Matthew Paris and Roger Hoveden, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas, Giraldus Cambrensis and Polydore Vergil could afford. Each one of them borrowed his description of Agincourt from Titus Livius, and, with a wisdom which deserves the highest applause, they all adapted to their purpose the account of Richard III.'s reign, attributed to Sir Thomas More. With one or two exceptions, then, the *Chronicles* are not so much separate works as variations of the same legend. Their authors pillaged with a light heart and an unsparing hand, and, at times, did what they could to belittle their robberies by abusing the victims.

If their sense of history was small, small also was their tact of selection. They looked upon the world with the eye of the modern reporter. They were hot upon the discovery of strange 'stories.' They loved freaks of nature, and were never so happy as when a new star flashed into their ken. Their works, indeed, hold a place midway between history and what we should now call journalism. Stow, for in-

stance, tells us that, in 1505, 'on S. Thomas Day at night, afore Christmas was a bakers house in Warwike Lane brent, with the Mistres of the House, ii women servants, and iii other'; and he brings his *Chronicle* to an end, not upon the praise of England or of Queen Elizabeth but upon a monstrous birth. 'The xvii day of June last past,' he writes in the year 1580, 'in the parish of Blamsdon, in Yorkshire, after a great tempest of lightning and thunder, a woman of foure score yeares old named Ales Perin, was delivered of a straunge and hideous Monster, whose heade was like unto a sallet or heade-peece. . . . Whiche Monster,' adds Stow devoutly, 'brought into the world no other newes, but an admiration of the devine workes of God.' Not even Camden, scholar though he was, rose always superior to the prevailing habit of gossip. 'I know not,' he writes, under the year 1572, 'whether it be materiall or no, here to make mention, as all the Historiographers of our time have done, how in the moneth of November was seene a strange starre.' And, presently, he interrupts his account of a mission to Russia, in 1583, with this comment upon Sir Hierome Bowes, the ambassador: 'Hee was the first that brought into England, where the like was never seene (if an Historian may with good leave make mention of so small a thing) a beast called *Maclis*, which is a creature likest to an Alçe, very swift, and without joynts.'

Camden at least apologised for his amiable irrelevancy, and it is not for modern readers to regret a

practice which has preserved for them the foolish trivial excitements of the moment. But it is a truth not without meaning that the chroniclers, who might have kept before their eyes the example of the classics, who might have studied the two masters of what was then modern history—Machiavelli and Commines—should have preferred to follow in the footsteps of the mediaeval gossips and of the ambling Fabyan. And, as they thought no facts too light to be recorded, so they considered no age too dark for their investigation. They penetrated, with a simple faith, 'the backward and abysm of time.' Many of them begin their histories with Brute, who, they say, was born 1108 B.C., and thus prove that, for all their large interests and their love of life, they were not without a spice of that pedantry which delights to be thought encyclopaedic.

II

The chroniclers, then, share the same faults and the same virtues. Beyond these similarities of character there is room enough for the display of different temperaments and personal talents. Each one will be found to possess a quality or an interest which the others lack, and it is by their differences rather than by their resemblances that they must be judged. The first of them, Edward Hall, holds a place apart. Of the man himself we know little. Of gentle parentage, he was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. He entered Gray's Inn in due course,

was appointed common sergeant of the city of London in 1532, and was afterwards a judge in the sheriff's court. The first edition of his *Chronicle* was printed by Berthelet, in 1542, and was so effectively burnt by the orders of Queen Mary that it exists only in fragments. Reprinted by Grafton, in 1548 and 1550, it won and deserved esteem, and is now commonly regarded, for one reign at least, as an authority at first hand. The truth is, Hall wrote as an eye-witness as well as a chronicler, and his work is naturally divided into two parts, far distant from one another both in style and substance. The title of the book gives an instant clue to this natural division. 'The Union of the two noble and illustrate famelies of Lancastre and Yorke,' thus Hall describes it in his grandiloquent language, 'beeyng long in continual discension for the croune of this noble realme, with all the actes done in bothe the tymes of the Princes, both of the one linage, and of the other, beginnyng at the tyme of Kyng Henry the Fowerth, the first aucthor of this devision, and so successively proceadyng to the reigne of the high and prudent prince, King Henry the Eight, the indubitate flower and very heire of both the sayd linages.'

So far as the death of Henry VII., Hall is a chronicler after the fashion of Holinshed and Stow. He accepted the common authorities, and translated them into his own ornate English, or embellished them with new words and strange metaphors. With the accession of Henry VIII. he began a fresh and original work.

Henceforth he wrote only of what he saw and thought from day to day. And, in thus writing, he revealed most clearly what manner of man he was. His patriotism equalled his loyal worship of King Henry VIII., the greatest monarch, in Hall's eyes, who had sat upon the English throne. The reformation won his full sympathy, and he looked ever upon the see of Rome with Protestant suspicion. When the King was proclaimed supreme head of the Church, Hall's enthusiasm was unbounded. Hereafter, he says, 'the Pope with all his college of Cardinalles with all their Pardons and Indulgencies was utterly abolished out of this realme. God be everlastyngly praysed therefore.' And if he was a patriotic Englishman first, he was, in the second place, a proud and faithful Londoner. He championed the interests of his fellow-citizens with a watchful eloquence. When, in 1513, the fields about Islington, Hoxton, and Shoreditch were enclosed by hedges and ditches, that youth might not shoot nor old age walk abroad for its pleasure, Hall triumphantly records that a mob of citizens, armed with shovels and spades, levelled the hedges and filled the ditches with so diligent a speed that the mayor bowed in submission, and that the hateful restraints were never afterwards set in the way of young or old. He was, moreover, the first to raise the cry of 'London for the Londoners.' He hated the alien with a constant heart, and in the many quarrels which arose between the citizens and the foreign artificers, Hall was always on the side of the citizens.

With full sympathy, for instance, he tells the story of the honest broker, John Lyncoln, who, in 1516, exhorted Dr. Bale, a canon in St. Mary Spittall, to speak for the people, lamentably declaring to him, 'howe miserably the common artificers lyved, and skase coulde get any worke to fynde them, their wyfes and chyldren, for there were such a number of artificers straungers, that tooke awaye all the lyvynge in maner. And also howe the Englyshe marchauntes could have no utterance, for the marchaunt straungers brynge in all Silkes, clothes of Golde, Wyne, Oyle, Iron, and suche other marchaundyse, that no man almoste byeth of an Englyshman. . . . Wherefore, sayed Lyncolne, master Doctor, syth you were borne in London, and se the oppression of the straungers, and the great misery of your awne natyve countrey, exhorte all the cytezens to joyne in one against these straungers, raveners, and destroyers of your countrey.' And, added Lyncoln, the case was worse than he had declared, 'for the Duchemen bryng over Iron, Tymber, lether and Weynskot ready wrought, as Nayles, Lockes, Baskettes, Cubbordes, Stooles, Tables, Chestes, girdels, with paintes, sadelles and painted clothes so that if it were wrought here, Englishmen might have some worke and lyvynge by it.' Doctor Bale preached a sermon to the text, *pugna pro patria*, and when a riot followed was apprehended, and sent to the Tower. John Lyncoln fared worse than his fellows; for him alone there was no pardon; and though the others were respited, he was hanged at the standard in Chepe.

It was, in truth, this feeling of love and reverence for London which intensified Hall's dislike of the proud Cardinal. A champion rather of prosperity at home than of a spirited policy abroad, he could not appreciate at their proper worth the grandeur of Wolsey's schemes. He knew only that Wolsey was extortionate, that, whenever he was in need of money, he came to the city, and loudly did Hall echo the cry of the aldermen: 'For Goddes sake remembre this, that riche merchauntes in ware be bare of money.'

It has been thrown at Hall for a reproach by some of his critics that he was too keenly interested in the pomp of the court, in the shows and sights of the streets. One of his editors has gone so far in misunderstanding as to expunge or curtail many of his characteristic descriptions. This perversity seems the stranger, because a love of display was in Hall's blood. He belonged to an age and to a city of pageants. King and Cardinal vied with one another in splendour and ingenuity. They found a daily excuse for some piece of well-ordered magnificence. May Day, Christmas, and Twelfth Night each had its appointed festival. The King and his friends lived in a perpetual masquerade, and Hall found the right words for their every extravagance. No writer has employed a more variously coloured vocabulary. Turn his pages where you will, and you will find brave pictures of banquets and disguises. Here, for instance, is a description of a Twelfth Night festival: 'This yere the Kyng kept his Christmas at his maner of Grenewiche,

and on the xii night, according to the old custome, he and his quene came in to the hal, and when they were set, and the quene of Scottes also, there entered in to the hall a Gardeyn artificiall, called the Gardeyn of *Esperance*. This Gardeyn was towred at every corner, and railed with railes gilt, all the bankes were set with floures artificiall of silke and gold, the leves cut of grene sattyn, so that they semed very floueres. In the middest of this Gardeyn was a piller of antique worke, al gold set with perle and stone, and on the toppe of the piller, which was vi square, was a lover or an arche embowed, crouned with gold: within whiche stode a bushe of Roses red and white, al of sylke and golde, and a bushe of Pomegranates of like stuf. In this gardeyn walked vi knights and vi ladyes rychely appareyled, and then they discended and daunsed many goodly daunses, and so ascended the gardeyn agayne, and were conveighed out of the hal, and then the Kyng was served of a great banket.' And Hall's style rises with the occasion. The Field of the Cloth of Gold inspires his masterpiece. The pages dedicated to this royal meeting-place are brilliant with jewels and the precious metals. Gold and the Cloth of Gold, tissue and hangings of cramosyn, sackbuts and clarions flash and re-echo like the refrain of a ballade, and everywhere 'Bacchus birls the wine,' which 'by the conduyctes in therth ranne, to all people plentiously with red, white, and claret wyne, over whose hedde was writen in letters of Romayn in gold, *faicte bonne chere quy vouldra*.'

I have said that Hall's *Chronicle* is made up of two separate works. With a wise sense of propriety he employs two separate styles. If this distinction be not made, it is not easy to admit the justice of Ascham's famous criticism. Now, Ascham, in urging the use of epitomes, illustrates his argument thus from Hall's *Chronicle*: 'As if a wise man would take Halles Cronicle, where moch good matter is quite marde with Indenture Englishe, and first change strange and inkhorne tearmes into proper, and commonlie used wordes: next, specially to wede out, that, that is superfluous and idle, not onelie where wordes be vainlie heaped one upon another, but also where many sentences, of one meaning, be so clowted up together, as though M. Hall had bene, not writing the storie of England, but varying a sentence in Hitching schole.' The censure implied in this passage is amply justified by the first part of Hall's *Chronicle*. Where he is adapting the words of other writers, he does not check his love of 'Indenture Englishe'; he exults in 'inkhorne tearmes'; and he 'clowtes' up his sentences with superfluous variations. But no sooner does he describe what he sees, no sooner do his brain and hand respond to his eye, than he forgets the lessons of 'Hitching schole,' and writes with a directness, which in no sense deserves the reproach of Ascham. Though it is true that the simplicity of his time was not the simplicity of ours, Hall employs with excellent effect the words of familiar discourse, and records that of which he was an eye-witness with an

intimate sincerity, which separates him, on the one hand, from journeymen like Stow, and, on the other, from scholars like Camden and Hayward, whose ambition it was to give a classic shape and form to their prose.

III

Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* are wider in scope and more ambitious in design than the work of Hall. Though they are not more keenly critical, they are, at least, more widely comprehensive than any of their rivals. They begin with Noah and the Flood, and the history of the British Isles descends wellnigh to the day of the book's publication. And, if Richard Stanyhurst may speak for them all, the industrious compilers took a lofty view of their craft. 'The learned,' says Stanyhurst, 'have adjudged an historie to be the marrow of reason, the cream of sapience, the sap of wisdome, the pith of judgment, the librarie of knowledge, the kernell of policie, the unfoldresse of treacherie, the kalendar of time, the lanterne of truth, the life of memorie, the doctresse of behaviour, the register of antiquitie, the trumpet of chivalrie.' If Holinshed's history were all these, it is not surprising that it was fashioned by many hands, and in nothing did the editor prove his wisdom more clearly than in the selection of his staff. Of Holinshed himself little is recorded. He came of a Cheshire family, and is said by Anthony à Wood to have been educated at Cambridge and to have

been 'a minister of God's word.' All that is certain is that he took service with Wolfe, the publisher, to whom, says he, he was 'singularly beholden,' and under whose auspices he planned the *Chronicles* which bear his name. The death of Wolfe, in 1573, was no interruption to the work, and in 1578 appeared the first edition, dedicated, in the familiar terms of adulation, to Sir William Cecil, baron of Burghley. Each portion of the *Chronicles* is assigned to its author with peculiar care. The Description of England is William Harrison's. It is Holinshed himself who compiled the *Historie of England* from the accustomed sources. The *Description of Scotland* is a 'simple translation' made by William Harrison, whose vocation, he tells us, calls him to a far other kind of study; 'and this the cause,' he writes, 'wherefore I have chosen rather, onlie with the loss of three or foure daies to translate Hector out of the Scotish (a toong verie like unto ours), than with more expence of time to devise a new, or follow the Latine copie. . . . How excellentlie if you consider the art, Boetius hath penned it, . . . the skilfull are not ignorant, but how profitablie and compendiouslie John Bellenden Archdeacon of Murrey his interpretor hath turned him from the Latine into the Scotish toong, there are verie few Englishmen that know.' From the same Hector Boece, together with Johannes Major and 'Jovian Ferreri Piedmontese,' 'interlaced sometimes with other authors,' Holinshed digested his *Historie of Scotland.* The *Description of Ireland*

was the work of Richard Stanyhurst and Edward Campion, his 'first friend and inward companion,' while Richard Hooker provided the translation of Giraldus Cambrensis, which served Ireland for a chronicle.

The work, done by many hands, preserves a uniformity of character. Holinshed, it is true, made the apology which his age seems to have demanded. 'The histories,' he says, 'I have gathered according to my skill . . . having had more regard to the manner than the apt penning.' Again, declaring that his speech is plain, he disclaimed any rhetorical show of elegance. Thus the Elizabethans deceived themselves. Plainness was the one virtue beyond their reach. They delighted in fine phrases and far-sought images. Even while they proclaimed their devotion to truth unadorned, they were curious in the selection of 'decking words,' and Holinshed and his colleagues wrote with the colour and dignity which were then within the reach of all. The history which was of his own compiling is of a better scholarship than we expect of the time. He cites his authorities at first hand, though he still accepts them without question; he avoids the trivialities which tempt many of the chroniclers; and he concludes the reign of each king with a deftly drawn character. And in these characters he tries his hardest to hold the balance true and fair. King John, for instance, has not been kindly treated in our annals, and yet Holinshed admits that he 'had a princelie hart in him, and wanted

nothing but faithfull subjects, to have assisted him in revenging such wrongs as were done and offered by the French King and others.' Moreover, he says, 'he was comelie of stature, but of looks and countenance displeasant and angrie; somewhat cruell of nature, doubtfull in time of perill and danger. . . . Howbeit some give this witnesse of him: that he was a great and mightie prince, but yet not verie fortunate, much like to Marcius the noble Romane, tasting of fortune both waies; bountifull and liberall unto strangers, but of his oune people (for their dailie treasons practised towards him) a great oppressour; so that he hasted more to forreners then to them, and therefore in the end he was of them utterlie forsaken.'

The popularity which the work achieved is not surprising. The simple citizen found in its pages the panegyric of England which was grateful to his patriotism. The poet sought therein, and sought not in vain, a present inspiration. 'Master Holinshed,' said Spenser, 'hath much furthered and advantaged me.' The unknown author of *Arden of Feversham* also found his material in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, and amply justified the forced loan. Shakespeare borrowed from his pages the substance of his historical plays, and, paying him the same compliment which he paid to North, did not disdain to turn his rugged prose into matchless verse —a compliment which, of itself, is sufficient for immortality. In all his English plays from *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* to *Richard III.* and *Henry VIII.* Shakespeare

is Holinshed's debtor. Not only does he follow the story faithfully, which is presented to him; he takes such words and phrases as befit his purpose. The witches in *Macbeth*, as well as the hopeful prophecies that Macbeth 'should never be vanquished till Bernane wood was brought to Dunsinane; nor yet to be slaine with anie man, that should be or was born of anie woman,' come straight from the *Chronicle*. The famous speeches upon the evil and the good of Wolsey delivered by Katharine and the honest Griffith may be traced to the same source. Thus Shakespeare transmuted Holinshed's decent, if baser, metal to the pure gold of his own poetry. Where he found narrative he left drama, and breathed into the dry bones of fact the spirit of immortal character.

As Hall's *Chronicle* is memorable chiefly for the vivid sketch it affords of life as it was lived in the reign of Henry VIII., so it is Harrison's *Description of England* which gives a separate distinction to the history of Raphael Holinshed. No work of the time contains so vivid and picturesque a sketch. In his first book, Harrison makes the customary concession to the encyclopaedic habit of the Elizabethans. He begins with a description of the whole earth, accepts with a simple credulity the homely legends, and wonders gravely whether the land was ever inhabited by giants. But no sooner does he leave the province of fairyland for the province of fact, than he displays a knowledge as wide as his interest is deep. His is a very vigilant treatise. His theme is whatever was

done or thought in the England of his day. Nothing is alien from his interest. He is as learned in the history of the Church as in the speech and rascality of the Egyptian rogues, his account of whom closely follows Harman's *Caveat, or Warening for Commen Cursetors.* He is eloquent concerning either university, as in duty bound, since he belonged to both. For fine and excellent workmanship he praises 'the moold of the king's chapell in Cambridge,' next to which in beauty he sets the divinity school at Oxford. For the rest, he finds perfect equality between them; they are the body of one well-ordered commonwealth, divided only by distance: 'they are both so deere unto me,' says he, 'as that I can not readilie tell unto whether of them I owe the most good will.'

Thereafter, he discusses the food and diet of the English, approving 'our tables plentifully garnished,' and deploring the cooks of the nobility, who are 'for the most part musicall headed Frenchmen and strangers.' Our apparel and attire suggest to him a chapter of fine invective. He is the resolute enemy of foreign fashions. He cannot bear the fantastical folly of our nation more easily than Shakespeare. He is at pains to prove that nothing is constant in England like inconstancy of attire. 'Such is our mutabilitie,' he writes, 'that to-day there is none but to the Spanish guise, to morrow the French toies are most fine and delectable, ere long no such apparell as that which is after the High Almaine fashion, by and by the Turkish maner is generallie best liked of, otherwise

the Morisco gounes and the Barbarian sleeves make such a comelie vesture that except it were a dog in a doublet, you shall not see anie so disguised, as are my countrie men of England.' In the same spirit he describes the building and furniture of Englishmen, their cities and towns, their fairs and markets, their gardens and orchards, their woods and marishes, their dogs, especially the mastiff or banddog, 'stubbourne, ougly, eagre, burthenous of body (and therefore but of little swiftnesse), terrible and feareful to behold, and more fearse and fell than any Archadien curre.' And to all things animate and inanimate he brings the criticism of an active and humorous mind, which not even patriotism can warp to a false judgment.

In describing England, Harrison has half-knowingly described himself. It is our own fault if this amiable, shrewd, and scholarly parson be not our familiar friend. Born in London in 1534, he was educated at Westminster school and (as has been said) took his degrees at both universities. Henceforth he lived the tranquil life of a country clergyman, endowed with forty pounds a year, which, *computatis computandis*, he thought no great thing. He was household chaplain to Sir William Brooke and rector of Radwinter in Essex, and, wherever he sojourned, he pursued most zealously the calling of scholar and antiquary. He devised the chronology which served as a guide to Holinshed. He collected coins, he examined monuments; in brief, he neglected nothing which could throw a light upon the history

of his country. While his wife and her maids brewed his beer with such skill and economy 'that for my twentie shillings I have ten score gallons of beere or more,' he boasted of his garden, whose whole area was little above 300 foot of ground, and which yet contained three hundred simples, 'no one of them being common or usuallie to be had.' An untravelled man, he wrote often of what he knew only by hearsay. 'Untill nowe of late,' he confesses to Sir W. Brooke, 'except it were from the parish where I dwell, unto your Honour in Kent; or out of London where I was borne, unto Oxford and Cambridge where I have bene brought up, I never travelled 40 miles foorthright and at one journey in all my life.'

And not only was he something of a recluse, but he wrote his *Description*, when his books and he 'were parted by fourtie miles in sunder.' Nevertheless, he managed to consult the best authorities. He was one of the unnumbered scholars who owed a debt to Leland's famous notes. Stow and Camden were of his friends, and, doubtless, lent him their aid, and he acknowledges a debt to 'letters and pamphlets, from sundrie places and shires of England.' Yet, if we leave his first book out of our count, he was far less beholden than the most of his contemporaries. He had the skill of making the facts of others his own. And as the substance, so the style, of the book belongs to him. Though he proffers the same apology as Holinshed, he proffers it with far less excuse. He protests that he never made any choice of words,

'thinking it sufficient truellie and plainlie to set foorth such things as I minded to treat of, rather than with vaine affectation of eloquence to paint out a rotten sepulchre.' And then straightway he belies himself by describing his book as 'this foule frizeled Treatise of mine,' which single phrase is enough to prove his keen interest, and lively habit, in the use of words.

In love of country he yielded to no man of his age. Herein, also, he was a true Elizabethan. The situation of the island, its soil, its husbandry ('my time fellows can reape at this present great commoditie in a little roome'), the profusion of its hops, 'which industrie God continue,' the stature of its men, the comeliness of its women—all these he celebrates in his dithyrambic prose. He is one of the first to exalt the English navy. 'Certes,' says he, 'there is no Prince in Europe that hath a more beautifull and gallant sort of ships than the Queenes Majestie of England at this present.' And, like many other patriots, he fears the encroachment of softer manners and of growing luxury. Comfort he holds the foe of hardihood. The times, in his view, were not what they were. When, indeed, have they been? He contemplates the comely houses and the splendid palaces which made a paradise of Tudor England with a kind of regret. He sadly (and unreasonably) recalls the past, when men's houses were builded of willow, plum, hornbeam, and elm, when oak was dedicated to churches, palaces, and navigation. 'And yet see

the change,' says he in a characteristic passage, 'for when our houses were builded of willow, then had we oaken men; but now that our houses are come to be made of oke, our men are not onlie become willow, but a great manie, through Persian delecacie, crept in among us, altogither of straw, which is a sore alteration.' Harrison's lament was ill-founded. In little more than ten years, the men of willow, or of straw, defended their oaken ships with oaken hearts against the Armada.

Withal, Harrison was of an ingenuous mind and simple character. When he had wandered in fancy the length and breadth of England, he wrote down in all gravity the four marvels of his country. And they were: a strong wind, which issueth out of the hills called the Peak; Stonehenge; Cheddar Hole; and 'Westward upon certaine hilles'—this may be cited only in his own words—'a man shall see the clouds gather togither in faire weather unto a certeine thicknesse, and by and by to spread themselves abroad and water their fields about them, as it were upon the sudden.' These wonders surprise by their simplicity. Simple, also, are Harrison's wishes, yet all save one are still ungratified. 'I could wish,' he wrote, 'that I might live no longer than to see foure things in this land reformed, that is: (1) the want of discipline in the Church; (2) the covetous dealing of most of our merchants in the preferment of the commodities of other countries, and hinderence of their own; (3) the holding of faires and markets upon the

sundaie to be abolished, and referred to the wednesdaies; (4) and that everie man in whatsoever part of the champaine soile enjoieth fortie acres of land and upwards, after that rote, either by free deed, copie hold, or fee farme, might plant one acre of wood, or sow the same with oke mast, hasell, beech, and sufficient provision be made that it may be cherished and kept.' Thus, in his wishes as in his life, Harrison was a wise patriot. He sought nothing else than a knowledge of his country, and her advantage. A scholar and a man of letters, he was master of a style from which the wind of heaven has blown the last grain of pedantry. Best of all, he painted an intimate portrait of himself, in painting also the truest picture that has come down to us of the England that Shakespeare knew and sang.

IV

John Stow and John Speed were chroniclers of a like fashion and a like ambition. They were good citizens, as well as sound antiquaries, and, by a strange chance, they followed the same craft. 'We are beholding to Mr. Speed and Mr. Stow,' writes Aubrey, echoing Sir Henry Spelman, 'for *stitching* up for us our English history. It seems they were both tailors—quod N.B.' And if Speed found a pleasanter employ, a tailor Stow remained unto the end of his days. One in their pursuits, they were one, also, in disinterestedness. The love of England and of letters brought neither of them any profit. Stow

'made no gain by his travail,' and died poor. With a sort of pathos, he pleads that men who 'have brought hidden histories from duskie darkness to the sight of the world' deserve thanks for their pains, and should not be misrepresented. 'I write not this,' says he, 'to complain of some men's ingratitude towards me (although justly I might).' There is the pith of the matter enclosed within parentheses, and Stow, may be, was thinking of Grafton's reckless animadversion on 'the memories of superstitious foundacions, fables and lyes foolishly stowed together.'

Speed lags not far behind in reproach of the world, and felicitation of himself. He describes his work as 'this large Edifice of Great Britain's Theatre,' and likens himself to the silkworm, that ends her life in her long-wrought clue. 'So I in this Theatre have built my owne grave,' he writes; 'whose Architecture howsoever defective it may be said to be, yet the project is good, and the cost great, though myselfe have freely bestowed this paines to the Presse, without pressing a penny from any man's purse.' Neither the one nor the other complained justly of neglect. Stow won all the honour, both in his lifetime and after, which belongs to the lettered citizen. He grew into a superstition of homely wit and genial humour. Henry Holland, Philemon's son, calls him 'the merry old man,' and Fuller celebrates his virtues as Stow himself would have them celebrated. He admits that he reported toys and trifles, *res in se minutas*, that he was a smell-feast, who could not pass

by the Guildhall without giving his pen a taste of the good cheer, and he excuses this on the ground that 'it is hard for a citizen to write history, but that the fire of his gun may be felt therein.' So much may be truly said in gentle dispraise. For the rest, Fuller has nothing but applause. He declares that our most elegant historians have thrown away the basket and taken the fruit—even Sir Francis Bacon and Master Camden. And 'let me add of John Stow,' he concludes, 'that (however he kept tune) he kept time very well, no author being more accurate in the notation thereof.' Nor did Speed, even if he pressed no penny from any man's purse, ask the aid of any scholar in vain. Sir Robert Cotton opened his library and his collections to the chronicler's eye. Master John Barkham gave such help as he alone could give, while Master William Smith, Rouge Dragon, was ever at hand to solve the problems of heraldry. Surely no citizen ever found better encouragement, especially in the telling of a thrice-told tale.

Stow was the more industrious of the two. In 1561 he published an edition of Chaucer's works. Four years later came his *Summarie of Englysh Chronicles*, and then, in 1580, he dedicated to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a far better book, *The Chronicles of England from Brute until this present yeare of Christ* 1580. His purpose it is to celebrate 'the worthie exploits of our Kings and governors,' and of that purpose he takes a lofty view. He regards

himself not only as a historian, but as an inculcator of sound morals. 'It is as hard a matter,' he says in pride, 'for the Recorder of Chronicles, in my fansie, to passe without some colours of wisdome, invitements to vertue, and loathing of naughtie factes, as it is for a welfavoured man to walk up and downe in the hot parching Sunne, and not to be therewith sunburned.' His knowledge is not often better than that of his predecessors. He believes in the same fairy-tales; he accepts without question the same rumours. But, in one respect, he differs from all his rivals: he possesses an interest in literature which they lack. Under 1341 he records the fact that this year John Malvern, fellow of Oriel College, made and finished his book entitled *The Visions of Pierce Plowman*; and, in due course, he laments Geoffrey Chaucer, 'the most excellent poet of Englande, deceased the xxv of October, 1400.' His knowledge of literature did not give him a lettered style. His prose is the plainest and most straightforward of his time, and he deserves whatever praise may be given to the diligent and conscientious journeyman.

John Speed, on the other hand, was a born rhetorician. His love of words outstripped his taste. When Richard I. dies, 'now ensued,' says he, 'the fatall accident, which drew the blacke cloud of death over this triumphal and bright shining Starre of Chivalrie.' The battle of Agincourt inspires him to such a piece of coloured writing as Hall would not

have disdained. 'And surely,' thus he writes, 'the beauty and honourable horrour of both the Armies, no heart can judge of, unlesse the eye hath seene it, the *Banners*, *Ensigns*, and *Penons*, streaming in the ayre, the glistening of armours, the varietie of colours, the motion of Plumes, the Forrests of Lances, and the thickets of shorter weapons, made so great and goodly a show; but the silent expectation of the bloudy blast was as the bullet ramd into the Canon, whose roaring voyce is not so soone heard, as the stroake of death felt by the aimed-at marke.' Whatever the occasion be, he is determined to attain what he thinks is a brilliant effect, and his *Historie of Great Britaine* is marred by a monstrous ingenuity. One virtue he has which must not be passed over: he supports his narrative more often than the others from unpublished documents. He quotes the *Life of Wolsey*, which Stow had quoted before him without acknowledgment, and ascribes it honourably to George Cavendish. Hs character of Henry VII. is borrowed, with some verbal differences, from the manuscript of Sir Francis Bacon, 'a learned, eloquent knight, and principall lawyer of our time.' And, of whatever he writes, truth and patriotism are his aims. Like all the chroniclers, and with an unrestrained eloquence, he hymns the glory of England, 'the Court of Queene Ceres, the granary of the Western world, the fortunate Island, the Paradise of Pleasure and Garden of God.'

V

With William Camden, the chronicle reached its zenith. His *Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum Annales, regnante Elizabetha* is by far the best example of its kind. Though it is 'digested into annals,' according to the practice of the time, though its author bundles marriages, deaths, embassies, and successions together, like the common 'stitchers of history,' though he does not disdain strange stars and frozen rivers, it is informed throughout with a sense of history and with a keen perception of conflicting policies. Old-fashioned in design alone, the work is a genuine piece of modern history, in which events are set in a proper perspective, and a wise proportion is kept of great and small. Its faults are the faults inherent in the chronicle: no sure plan of selection, a rigid division into years, an interspersion of the text with documents. Its virtues are its own: clearness of expression, catholicity of interest, a proud consciousness of the great events, whereof Camden was at once the partaker and the historian.

He declares in his preface that William Cecil, baron Burghley, 'opened unto him first some memorials of state of his own,' and that afterwards he 'sought all manner of help on every side . . . for most of which (as I ought) I hold myself chiefly bound to Sir R. Cotton, who with great expense and happy labour hath gathered most choice variety of Histories and antiquity; for at his torch he willingly suffered me

to light my taper.' He learned much, also, by his own observation and by converse with those who had played their part in affairs, and, heedless of himself, he made no sacrifice save to truth. Nor does he vaunt his achievement in any lofty terms. He will be content, he says, with professional modesty, to be 'ranked amongst the lowest writers of great things.' He would have been placed far higher in the general esteem if he had not, by an unhappy accident, composed his book in Latin. This misfortune, the greater because he was one of the last to inflict so grave an injustice upon himself, was mitigated by the skill and loyalty of his translators. The first part of his *Annales*, the substance of which had already been communicated to Thuanus, was published in 1615, and, ten years later, translated out of the French into English by Abraham Darcie, who gave his own flourishing title to the book: 'The True and Royall History of the famous Empresse Elizabeth, Queene of England, France and Ireland &c. True Faith's defendresse of Divine renowne and happy Memory.' The second part, which describes the affairs of the kingdom from 1589 to the queen's death, was printed posthumously in 1627, and translated into English by Thomas Browne, student of Christ Church, under the title of *Tomus Idem et Alter* (1629).

Though Camden did himself the injustice to write in Latin, he was fortunate in his translators, each one of whom might boast his own particular gift. Abraham Darcie, or, as he liked to call himself,

'Abraham de Villa Adrecie, alias Darcie,' was a fantastic, something akin in style and character to John Florio. His father was Peter Darcie, of Geneva, and having no Latin he made his version of Camden, as I have said, out of the French. He delighted in elaborately decorated phrases, and he was a pretty hand at funeral odes. The death of Ludovick, Duke of Richmond and Lennox, inspired him to his highest flights of eloquence. He composed in English and in French, equally unreadable, the 'Funerall Teares' or 'Larmes Funèbres' of the sorrowing widow; and he was the author of 'A Monumentall Pyramide to all Posterities: Erected to the ever-living memory and perpetuall Honour of the All-vertuous and Ever-glorious Prince, Lodowick, late Duke of Richmond and Lenox' (1624). Beyond the title it is great rubbish; 'all posterities' set little store by poems, shaped pyramidally, and 'the all-vertuous Prince' is otherwise remembered. Still more pompous is his work entitled 'Honor's True Arbor; or the Princely Nobilitie of the Howwards,' which gives 'the Source and Originall of their mightye Name,' and duly celebrates all the Howards, 'since the first man that was knowne in England by the name of Howard.' That he was not wholly without courage in his sycophancy is proved by a dedication to the daughter of Overbury's murderess. 'To honour and illustrate also,' thus runs the characteristic passage, 'the most Noble birth of the right gracefull and beautifull young Lady, the Lady Anne Carr, the onely Daughter and Co-heere

apparent to the right Religious, truly gracious and most noble Lord Sir Robert Carr, Knight of the most Royall Order of the Garter, Baron of Branspeth, Viscount Rochester, Earle of Somerset, etc., by the Princely Lady, Frances Howard, his gracious Comtesse, second daughter to Tho: Howard, Earle of Suffolk &c., and Grandchild to Tho: Howard late Duke of Norfolk, to whose immortal goodnesse and greatnesse, these my poor Endeavours are by me humbly consecrated.' It must be admitted that Darcie did the work of adulation with skill and without stint. To applaud 'the greatness and goodness' of the wickedest woman of her time is as high a feat of obsequious oblivion as it is to call the infamous Robin Carr 'right religious, truly gracious, and most noble.' However, Darcie performed his task of translation with accuracy and spirit, and we need not grudge him his humorous extravagance.

A very different man was Thomas Browne, to whom we owe the second volume of Camden's *Elizabeth*. A student of Christ Church, he was proctor of the University of Oxford in 1636, and a year later was appointed chaplain to Archbishop Laud. By that time he had already published his one experiment in letters, and the rest of his life and energy was given to religious and political controversy. The high hopes which he had of preferment in the Church were dashed by the Civil War: he was stripped of his benefices, and accompanied the King to Oxford as his chaplain. Like many another he suffered for his

loyalty, and found safety overseas. At the Restoration he returned to England, and was given a Canonry at Windsor, where he died. He was not a mere translator, being something of an historian as well, and he equipped his version with a set of annotations, far beyond the reach of his fantastic colleague.

Such is the history of the book and its translators. Its purpose and motive are apparent upon every page: to applaud the virtues of the Queen and to uphold the Protestant faith. In devising fitting titles for Elizabeth, Camden exhausts his ingenuity. She is the Queen of the Sea, the North Star, the restorer of our naval glory. He defends her actions with the quiet subtlety which suggests that defence is seldom necessary. His comment upon the death of Mary of Scotland is characteristic. Thus were achieved, he thinks, the two things which Mary and Elizabeth always kept nearest their hearts: the union of England and Scotland was assured in Mary's son, and the true religion, together with the safety of the English people, was effectively maintained!

But Camden was not wholly engrossed in the glory and wisdom of the Queen. He looked beyond her excellences to the larger movements of the time. None understood better than he the spirit of enterprise, which was founding a new England across the sea. He pays a just tribute of honour to Drake and Hawkins, he celebrates the prowess of John Davis and William Sanderson, and he hails the rising colony of Virginia.

Of Shakespeare and the drama he has not a word to say. The peculiar glory of his age escaped him. The death of Ascham, it is true, tempts him to a digression, and persuades him to deplore that so fine a scholar should have lived and died a poor man through love of dicing and cock-fighting. He fires a salute over the grave of Edmund Spenser, who surpassed all English poets, not excepting Chaucer, and into whose tomb the other poets cast mournful elegies and the pens wherewith they wrote them.[1] And, in the end, he returns to his starting-place, concluding, as he began, with a panegyric of the Queen. 'No oblivion,' he says, 'shall ever dim the glory of her name: for happy and renowned memory still lives, and shall forever live in the Minds of Man to all posterity, as of one who (to use no other than her successor's expression) in Wisedome and Felicitie of government surpassed (without envy be it spoken) all the Princes since the days of Augustus.'

Master Camden, as his contemporaries call him with respect, was well fitted for his task by nature and education. He was a man of the world as well as a scholar. Born in 1551, he was brought up at

[1] In his *Remaines concerning Britaine*, Camden does make some attempt to celebrate the glory of his age. 'If I would come to our time,' says he, 'what a world could I present to you out of Sir Philipp Sidney, Ed. Spencer, Samuel Daniel, Hugh Holland, Ben. Johnson, Th. Campion, Mich. Drayton, George Chapman, John Marsten, William Shakespeare, and other most pregnant witts of these our times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire.'

the Blue Coat School, and sent thence, as chorister or servitor, to Magdalen College, Oxford. Presently he migrated to Broadgate's Hostel, now Pembroke College, and, afterwards, to Christ Church. In 1582 he took his famous journey through England, the result of which was his *Britannia*; ten years later he was made head master of Westminster School; and in 1597 was appointed, successively, Richmond Herald, and Clarencieux King of Arms. His life was full and varied; his character, as all his biographers testify, candid and amiable. The works he left behind speak eloquently of his learning and industry. To our age he is best known as the historian of Elizabeth. To his own age he was eminent as an antiquary, and it was his *Britannia*, published in 1582, and rescued from Latin by the incomparable Philemon Holland in 1610, which gave him his greatest glory. Anthony à Wood calls him 'the Pausanias of the British Isles.' Fuller, not to be outdone in praise, says that 'he restored Britain to herself.' Like all the other topographers of his century, he made use of Leland's notes, but the works of the two men are leagues apart. Camden's *Britannia* is, in effect, a real piece of literature. It is not intimate, like Harrison's *England*. It is not a thing of shreds and patches, like the celebrated *Itinerary*. Wisely planned, nobly written, and deliberately composed, it is the fruit of deep and diligent research. 'It is most worthy observation,' says Fuller, 'with what diligence he inquired after ancient places, making Hue and Crie

after many a City which was acres away, and by certain marks and tokens proving to find it.' Camden loved England and loved to embellish her with his phrases. He carried his readers along the high-roads, through the towns and cities of his native country, revealing, as he went, her natural scenery, her antiquities, her learning, and her strength. And if to-day we shared his pride in England, we should still echo, with all sincerity, the praises lavished upon his work by his contemporaries.

VI

Ralph Brooke, with more malice than discretion, charged Camden with making an unacknowledged use of Leland's *Collectanea*. The acknowledgment was generously given, and Leland's Collections were made but to be used. Camden, in fact, was only following the general practice of his age. There was no topographer who did not take what he wanted from Leland, and there was none who did not improve what he took. If Leland's inchoate notes were of service to Harrison and Camden, they were all that could be expected of them. The truth is, Leland was a superstition. He received the inordinate praise which is easily given to those of whom it is said that they might achieve wonders if they would. The weight of learning which he carried was thought to be so great that he could not disburden it in books. He aroused great expectations, and never lessened them by performance. His erudition was

inarticulate; his powers were paralysed by ambition; he knew so much that he feared to give expression to his knowledge; and he won the greater glory because the masterpiece never achieved was enveloped in an atmosphere of mystery.

His career, however, the career of the silent scholar, is not without its interest and its tragedy. Born in 1506, he studied both at Christ's College, Cambridge, and at All Souls' College, Oxford, and, after some years spent in Paris, where he was the friend of Budé, and may, through his mediation, have encountered Rabelais, he was appointed chaplain and librarian to Henry VIII., and rector of Papeling in the marches of Calais. In 1533 his great opportunity came, for, in that year, he was given a commission, under the broad seal, to travel in search of England's antiquities, to examine whatever records were to be found and to read in the libraries of cathedrals, colleges, priories, and abbeys. For some six years he gave himself to this toil with tireless diligence, and in 1546 presented to the King the only finished piece of his writing that exists in English: 'The laboriouse Journey and Serche of Johan Leylande, for Englande's Antiquitees, geven of hym as a newe yeares gyfte to Kyng Henry the VIII. in the xxxvii yeare of his raigne.' In this somewhat ornate pamphlet Leland extols the Reformation, reproves the usurped authority of the bishop of Rome and his complices, and sets forth the extent and result of his many journeys. In no spirit of pride, but with a simple truth, he describes his peregrination. 'I have

so traveled in your domynions,' he writes, 'both by the see coastes and the myddle partes, sparynge neyther labour nor costes by the space of these vi yeares past, that there is almost neyther cape nor baye, haven, creke or pere, ryver or confluence of ryvers, breches, washes, lakes, meres, fenny waters, mountaynes, valleys, mores, hethes, forestes, woodes, cyties, burges, castels, pryncypall manor places, monasterys, and colleges, but I have seane them, and noted in so doynge a whole worlde of thynges verye memorable.'

It is a formidable list, and we may well believe that this old pedant on the tramp omitted nothing in his survey. Whatever he saw or heard he committed to his note-book, and carried back with him the vast undigested mass of facts from which many wiser heads are said to have pilfered. His ambition was commensurate with his industry. He trusted shortly to see the time when the King should have his 'worlde and impery of Englande set forthe in a quadrate table of sylver,' and, knowing that silver or brass is impermanent, he intended, as he told the King, 'by the leave of God, within the space of xii moneths folowyng, such a descripcion to make of the realme in wryttinge, that it shall be no mastery after, for the graver or painter to make the lyke by a perfect example.' Nor would his work end here. He determined to restore the ancient names which Caesar, Tacitus, and others employed. In brief, said he, 'I trust so to open the wyndow, that the lyght shal be seane, so long, that is to say by the space of a whole thousand yeares,

stopped up, and the glory of your renoumed Britain to reflorish through the worlde.'

Alas for the vanity of human hopes! It is easy to travel; it is not easy to convert a traveller's note-book into literature; and John Leland, elegant poet though he was in the Latin tongue, found the work of arrangement and composition beyond his powers. Unhappily, he seems to have known the limit of his talent. He complains that 'except truth be delycately clothed in purpure her written veryties can scant fynde a reader.' This purple vesture it was not his to give, and the world looked in vain for his expected masterpiece. When, at last, he recognised that it was for others he had gathered the honey of his knowledge, he went mad, 'upon a foresight,' said Wood, 'that he was not able to perform his promise.' Some charged him with pride and vainglory without justice. He was not proud, merely inarticulate. The work he designed for himself was done by Camden. And, now that his *Itinerary* is printed, it is difficult to understand the enthusiasm of his contemporaries. It makes no pretence to be written. It is the perfection of dryasdust, and the only writer with whom Leland may profitably be compared is the author of Bradshaw's Guide. Here are two specimens of his lore, chosen at random: 'Mr. Pye dwellit at . . . a little from Chippenham, but in Chippenham Paroche.' 'One told me that there was no notable Bridge on Avon betwixt Malmesbyri and Chippenham. I passed over 2 Bekkes betwixt Malmesbyri and Chippenham.'

The statements are superbly irrelevant, and it is clear that even the old tailors had the better of the vaunted scholar.

As a topographer, indeed, it is Stow who takes his place by Camden's side. The *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (1598 and 1603) is a diligent and valuable piece of work, at once faithful and enthusiastic. For Stow, London was the fairest, largest, richest, and best inhabited city in the world, and he gave it all the care and study which he thought it deserved. Other travellers went further afield. To Richard Carew we owe *A Survey of Cornwall* (1602); to William Lambarde an industrious *Perambulation of Kent* (1570); and John Norden cherished the wider ambition of composing a series of county histories. Only a fragment of his vast design which he would have entitled 'Speculum Britanniae' has come down to us—a 'preparative' to the whole work, together with brief sketches of Middlesex and Hertford (1593). The failure is more to be regretted because Norden himself was a man of parts. He came of a 'gentile family,' says Wood, was authorised in 1593 by a privy council order to travel through England and Wales, 'to make more perfect descriptions, charts, and maps,' and was a very deft cartographer, as is shown to all in Camden's *Britannia*. The liveliest of his works, the *Surveyor's Dialogue* (1608), may still be read with pleasure. Therein Norden deplores, like many another, the luxury which had come upon the country under the rule of the Tudors; he ob-

serves with sorrow the enhanced prices of all commodities, the smoke of many chimneys, which 'hinders the heate and light of the Sunne from earthly creatures,' and the many acres of deforested land. The farmers, he says, are not content unless they are gentry and 'gentlemen have sunke themselves by rowing in vanities boate.' In truth, he sees about him all the signs of ruin and desolation, and his treatise may aptly be compared with some passages of Harrison's *Description of England.*

VII

What the travellers did for their country, Sir Thomas Smith, in his *Common Wealth of England* (written in 1565, printed in 1583), did for its laws and government. No treatise ever written owed less to ornament. As the author himself says, he has 'declared summarily as it were in a Chart or Map' the form and manner of government and the policy of England. His is no feigned commonwealth such as never was nor shall be, no vain imagination, no fantasy of philosophers, but England as she 'standeth and is governed at this day the eight and twentie of March, Anno 1565, in the seventh yeere of the Raigne and Administration thereof by the most religious, virtuous, and noble Queene Elizabeth.' In style and substance the book is as concise as a classic. It wastes no words and betrays few emotions. Only once or twice does Sir Thomas Smith permit himself a touch of humanity or a hint of observation. The

yeomen of England, the good Archers, 'the stable troupe of Footemen that affraid all France,' arouse him to a fitful enthusiasm, and, in the discussion of England's malefactors, he reveals a flash of real insight, namely that Englishmen, while they neglect death, will not endure torture.[1] 'The nature of our Nation is free, stout, hault, prodigall of life and blood,' says he, 'but contumely, beating, servitude, and servile torment, and punishment it will not abide.' The popularity of the book is easily intelligible. It appealed to a people hungry for knowledge of itself; it gives no hint of the erudite Greek professor, the adroit ambassador, the wise secretary of state, the curious astrologer, all whose parts Sir Thomas Smith played with distinction and success.

In a full age few had a fuller life than Thomas Smith. In him courage and scholarship were equally matched, and erudite though he was he threw himself with untiring energy into the fierce politics of his age. Born in 1514, he was educated at Queens' College in

[1] Unhappily for him, he was once bidden to impose the torture, which he with other Englishmen could not endure. After the Duke of Norfolk's conspiracy in 1571, he was ordered to examine Barker and Bannister, and if necessary to bring them to the rack. He obeyed very much against the grain, and made a formal protest to Burghley. 'Though we be importune to crave Revocation from this unpleasant and panefull Toile, I pray yow be not angry with us. I assure, for my Part, I wold not wish to be one of Homer's Gods, if I thought I should be Minos, Aeacus, or Radamanthus; I had rather be one of the least Umbrae in Campis Elysiis.'

Cambridge, of which foundation he became a fellow in 1529. A fighter always, he aided Cheke in the long battle for the new pronunciation of Greek, and took the side of Erasmus against Bishop Gardiner.[1] Being reader in Greek and Public Orator, Smith spoke with authority, but he found in Gardiner, who would not be 'deluded and contempned,' a doughty opponent. Though the *etists* won in the end, and though in the hour of victory Smith was following another craft than the scholar's, it is to him and to Cheke that we owe the fashion of pronouncing Greek which prevails to-day. Meanwhile Smith, in accord with the custom of his age, had increased his learning by foreign travel. He had disputed in Paris, he had argued in Padua, and a year after his return to Cambridge, in 1543, he was elected Vice-Chancellor. Other offices fell to him; he was clerk of Queen Catherine Parr's council; and he showed such state as his high dignity demanded of him. 'And this was the port,' says Strype, 'he lived in before his leaving of Cambridge: He kept three servants, and three guns, and three winter geldings. And they stood him in £30 per annum, together with his own board.'

At the death of Henry VIII. he threw in his lot with the Lord Protector, by whom he was appointed master of requests, steward of the stannaries, provost of Eton, and dean of Carlisle. His loyalty to this

[1] Gardiner and his friends allowed but two sounds to all the vowels and diphthongs of the Greek language, which become, said Ascham, 'a feeble piping like that of sparrows.'

generous patron was further recompensed by imprisonment in the Tower, where he translated some of the Psalms into English verse, and by a fine of £3000. But, even under the sovereignty of Mary, who owed him no complaisance, his good luck did not desert him. True, he was stripped of his preferments and benefices. On the other hand, he was saved from persecution by an indulgence from the Pope, and lived in secure retirement until Elizabeth, his best friend of them all, ascended the throne. Henceforth he became the Queen's Envoy, and the success with which he accomplished the tasks entrusted to him, the persistent energy wherewith he addressed the princes and statesmen of France, are duly set forth in Digges' *Compleat Ambassador*. In 1567 he was sent to demand the surrender of Calais from the French King, and he acquitted himself nobly in a hopeless business. He made the demand, 'first at the gates of Calais, next the sea, in a loud voice in French, by the sound of a trumpet,' and repeated it presently to the King himself. And in vain. A partisan always of a French alliance, he did his best to promote the marriage of Elizabeth first with the Duke of Anjou, then with the Duke of Alençon, and it was not his fault that the negotiation failed. In all the parleyings with Catherine de Medici he held himself like the man and the statesman that he was, and if he did not attain his purpose, his blunt speech and ready wit got the better of the argument.

In whatever field he tried his talents he re-

mained a humanist, delicate and refined. For the rest, he had something of the same spirit which animated Walter Ralegh. He was ready for any enterprise, except the torturing of others. With Sir Humphrey Gilbert's aid he obtained a patent for 'The Society of the New Art,' whose purpose was to transmute iron into copper. Meadley, the Alchemist, who was to perfect the design, failed his patrons, which need not surprise us, and Sir Thomas Smith made as a comment what he should have pronounced as a warning. 'Trust little to words and promises and accounts of men of that faculty,' he said. 'Fain would they be fingering of money; but when it is once in their hands, we must seek it in the ashes.' Nor was this his only failure. Unabashed by Meadley's cunning, he sent forth a colony, not so far as Virginia, but to the Ardes in County Down, where a vast tract of land had been granted him by the Queen. His natural son, who was in charge of the adventure, was killed by a wild Irishman, and the estate presently passed out of the hands of Smith's family. But it was part of his life's ambition to try all things, and to-day, by a stroke of irony, this busy man of affairs is remembered chiefly by a wise tract, which first saw the light six years after his death.

VIII

An encyclopaedic method claims for John Foxe, the martyrologist, a place among the chroniclers. Not that his aim and purpose resembled theirs. It

was not for him to exalt his country, or to celebrate the triumphs of her past. His was the gloomier task of recounting the torments suffered by the martyrs of all ages, and he performed it with so keen a zest that it was not his fault if one single victim escaped his purview. In other words, he was content only with universality, and how well he succeeded let Fuller tell: 'In good earnest, as to the particular subject of our English martyrs, Mr. Foxe hath done everything, leaving posterity nothing to work upon.' So he goes back to the beginning, describing the martyrdoms of the early Church, and of those who suffered in England under King Lucius. As he passes by, he pours contempt upon Becket, attempting to prove that he, at least, was no true martyr, being the open and avowed friend of the Pope. And it is when he arrives within measurable distance of his own time that he finds the best food for his eloquence. The prowess of Henry VIII., the exploits of Thomas Cromwell, his prime hero, the magnanimity of Anne Boleyn, 'who, without controversy, was a special comforter and aider of all the professors of Christ's gospel,' tempt him to enthusiasm, and he rises to the highest pitch of his frenzy when he recounts the tortures of those who suffered death in the reign of Queen Mary.

He is no sifter of authorities; he is as credulous as the simplest chronicler; he gathers his facts carelessly, as Grafton and Stow gathered theirs, and he makes no attempt to test their accuracy. His sin

is the greater because he is not writing to amuse or to enlighten his readers, but to prove a point in controversy. He is, in brief, a violent partisan. His book is the longest pamphlet ever composed by the hand of man. It is said to be twice as long as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and never for one moment does it waver from its purpose, which is to expose the wickedness of 'the persecutors of God's truth, commonly called Papists.' It is idle, therefore, to expect truth or a quiet statement from Foxe. If any one belong to the other side, Foxe can credit him neither with honesty nor with intelligence. Those only are martyrs who die for the Protestant cause. The spilt blood of such men as Fisher and More does not distress him. For the author of *Utopia*, indeed, he has a profound contempt. He summarily dismisses him as 'a bitter persecutor of good men, and a wretched enemy against the truth of the gospel.' It follows, therefore, that Foxe's mind also was enchained. It was not liberty of opinion which seemed good in his eyes, but the vanquishing of the other side. Though he interceded for certain anabaptists condemned by Queen Elizabeth, it was his object to rescue them not from punishment but from the flames, which was, he thought, in accord with a Roman rather than with a Christian custom.

However, the success of his *Actes and Monuments* was immediate. It was universally read, it aroused a storm of argument, it was ordered to be chained in churches for the general edification

of the people. The temper in which it is written, the inflexible judgment which, throughout, distorts the facts, no doubt with the best motive, have rendered the book less valuable in modern than in contemporary eyes. If we read it to-day, we read it not for its matter or for its good counsel, but for its design. As a mere performance, the *Actes and Monuments* is without parallel. Foxe was an astounding virtuoso, whose movement and energy never flag. With a fever of excitement he sustains his own interest (and sometimes yours) in his strange medley of gossip, document, and exhortation. The mere style of the work—homely, quick, and appropriate—is sufficient to account for its favour. The dramatic turn which Foxe gives to his dialogues, the vitality of the innumerable men and women, tortured and torturers, who throng his pages—these are qualities which do not fade with years. Even the spirit of bitter raillery which breathes through his pages amazes, while it exasperates, the reader. From the point of view of presentation, the work's worst fault is monotony. Page after page, the martyrologist revels in the terms of suffering. He spares you nothing, neither the creeping flames, nor the chained limb, until you begin to believe that he himself had a love of blood and fire.

The man was just such a one as you would expect from his book. Born in 1517, to parents 'reputed of good estate,' sent to Oxford in 1533 by friends who approved his 'good inclination and towardness to learning,' and elected fellow of Magdalen College, he

was presently accused of heresy and expelled from Oxford. He was of those who can neither brook opposition nor accept argument. Henceforth, though he never stood at the stake, he suffered the martyrdom of penury and distress. Now tutor in a gentleman's house, now in flight for the sake of his opinions, he passed some years at Basle reading for the press, and in 1559 he published at Strassburg the first edition of his masterpiece, in Latin. In 1563 it was printed in English by John Day, with the title *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perilous times touching matters of the Church.* With characteristic ingenuity, Foxe composed four dedications: to Jesus Christ, to the Queen, to the learned reader, and to the persecutors of God's truth, commonly called Papists. The last is a fine example of savage abuse, and, as Foxe wrote in safety and under the protection of a Protestant Queen, its purpose is not evident. No more can be said than that rage and fury are in his heart and on his tongue, that he possessed a genius of indignation which he had neither wish nor power to check, and that he bequeathed to us a larger mass of invective than any writer in any age has been able to achieve.

IX

Francis Bacon's masterpiece, *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henrie the Seventh*, is separated from the Chronicles by its author's gifts of thought and expression. The prose, apt for its purpose, is never

without dignity, and the thought contained therein is deliberate and profound. Bacon was a politician as well as a writer, and he knew well how to reveal the secrets of the statecraft, which he understood. Moreover he does not disdain the simple arts of narrative. Nowhere more exactly than in this history may you follow the movements of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, and though the author professes an admiration for Henry VII., he is not blind in his partiality. He names him 'this Solomon of England,' and hastens to add that 'Solomon also was too heavie upon his People in Exaction.' Yet, despite its many merits, *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henrie the Seventh* (1622) is still in thrall to the fashion of the time. It tells its story year by year, sometimes month by month, and intersperses the text lavishly with documents. Bacon is still a chronicler, though he rises easily above his kind. In nothing does he show his superiority more clearly than in the character of the King, which brings the work to a close. And if you compare this with the brief, if sometimes balanced, enumeration of qualities, affected by Holinshed, you may measure how far Bacon has travelled along the road which leads from the chronicle to the history.

'The King,' he says, '(to speak of him in Tearmes equall to his Deserving) was one of the best sort of wonders: a Wonder for Wisemen.' And thereafter he writes not as a courtly panegyrist, but as a man doing his best, without fear, to understand the Wonder. He pitches his intelligence against Henry

VII.'s, so to say, and comes not off the worse for the encounter. Equally sensible of the monarch's strength and weakness, he is unsparing of praise or blame. 'Hee professed alwayes to love and seeke Peace,' thus he writes: 'And it was his usuall Preface in his Treaties, That when CHRIST came into the World, Peace was sung; and when HEE went out of the World, Peace was bequeathed. And this Vertue could not proceede out of Feare, or Softnesse; for hee was Valiant and Active, and therefore (no doubt) it was truly Christian and Morall. Yet hee knew the way to Peace was not to seeme to bee desirous to avoide Warres.' He makes no attempt to gloss over the King's extortion. 'The lesse Bloud he drew,' says he, 'the more hee tooke of Treasure. And (as some construed it) he was the more sparing in the One, that hee might bee the more pressing in the Other; for both would have been intollerable. Of Nature assuredly hee coveted to accumulate Treasure, and was a little Poore in admiring Riches.' For Henry's grandeur Bacon has a frank admiration: 'Hee was of an High Mind, and loved his owne Will, and his owne Way; as One that revered himselfe, and would Raigne indeed. Had hee beene a Private-man, hee would have beene termed Proud. But in a wise Prince, it was but keeping of Distance, which indeed hee did towards all; not admitting any neare or full Approach, either to his power, or to his secrets. For hee was governed by none.' Thereafter in a close, antithetical style Bacon marks the qualities of

his hero: a prince 'Sad, Serious, and full of Thoughts and secret Observations,' wholly given to his affairs, in aspect 'a little like a Churchman,' whose face was 'to the Disadvantage of the Painter, for it was best when he spake.' Thus has he sketched a great and famous king, and set a fashion in character-drawing which many have sought in vain to follow.

X

The most of the writers hitherto discussed have been intent either to amuse or to inform. They have composed their works, for the most part, in sound and living English, because they spoke and wrote a language that had not yet been attenuated by the formality of pedants and grammarians. Few of them, save Bacon, were sensible of an artistic impulse. They began at the beginning, and pursued their task patiently unto the end, unconscious of what the next page would bring forth. But there are three writers, the author of the *History of King Richard the thirde*, George Cavendish, and Sir John Hayward, who are separated from the chroniclers, even from Camden himself, both by ambition and by talent. Each of them set before him a consistent and harmonious design; each of them produced, in his own fashion, a deliberately artistic effect. The *History of Richard the thirde* has been generally ascribed to Sir Thomas More, on hazardous authority. An incomplete manuscript of the book was found among his papers, and printed as his both in Hall's

Chronicle and in Grafton's edition of Hardyng. Sir George Buck, in his *History of the Life and Reigne of Richard III.*, published in 1646, but written many years earlier, declares that 'Doctor Morton (acting the part of Histiaeus) made the Booke, and Master Moore like Aristagoras set it forth, amplifying and glossing it.'[1] Where the evidence is thus scanty, dogmatism may appear inapposite, but it may be said that the book itself does not chime with the character and temper of More. It is marked throughout by an asperity of tone, an eager partisanship, which belong more obviously to Morton than to the humane author of *Utopia*. And it is reasonable to believe that More took the Cardinal's Latin history, written to placate the house of Tudor, and turned it into his own living English prose.

[1] Buck, being, like the author of the *History of Richard the thirde*, an open partisan, denounces More in round terms. He denies him 'the attributes of learning and religion,' declaring that 'in both he came short of what was ascribed to him'; for if he understood 'the Latine and Greeke (then held great learning), yet was he so farre under the desert of an excellent Scholler, as the learned censured him a man of slender reading, and generous Brixius, "Irruditus," *i.e.* unlearned.' Erasmus did not agree with Brixius. And for 'the sanctity of his life,' Buck quotes John Baleus, who calls More 'hic Harpagus,' and thus 'gives us his draught': 'Hoc nos probe novimus qui eramus eidem Thomae Moro viciniores, quod pontificum, et pharisaeorum crudelitati ex avaritia subserviens omni tyranno truculentior ferociebat, imo insaniebat in eos qui aut Papae primatum, aut purgatorium, aut mortuorum invocationes, aut imaginum cultus aut simile quiddam diabolicarum imposturarum negabant, a vivifica Dei veritate ita edocti.' This vituperation is in the region not of truth but of political controversy.

From beginning to end Richard III. is painted in the blackest colours. No gossip is overlooked which may throw a sinister light upon the actions of the prince. It is hinted not only that he slew Henry VI., but that he was privy to Clarence's death. The most is made of his deformed body and cunning mind, the least of his policy. If accuracy be sacrificed, the artistic effect is enhanced. The oneness of Richard's character gives a unity and concentration to the portrait which cannot be overpraised. For the first time in English literature, we come upon a history which is not a mere collection of facts, but a deliberately designed and carefully finished whole. The author has followed the ancient models. He knows how fine an effect is produced by the putting of appropriate speeches in the mouths of his characters. The value of such maxims as sum up a situation and point a moral does not escape him. 'Slipper youth must be underpropped with elder counsayle,' says he. And again: 'The desire of a kingdome knoweth no kindred. The brother hath been the brother's bane.' Here we have the brevity and the wise commonplace of the Greek chorus.

Above all, he proves the finest economy in preparing his effects. The great scene in which Richard arrests Lord Hastings opens in a spirit of gentle courtesy. 'My Lord,' says the Protector to the bishop of Ely, 'you have very good strawberries at your gardayne in Holberne, I request you let us have a messe of them. Gladly, my lord,

quod he, woulde God I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that.' And then the storm breaks. The author's sense of what is picturesque never slumbers. The sketches of the Queen and Shore's wife are drawn by a master. The persistence with which Richard tightens his grasp upon the throne is rendered with the utmost skill. Nor is the sense of proportion ever at fault. You are given the very essence of the tragedy, and so subtle is the design that, at the first reading, it may escape you. The style is marked by a strict economy of words and a constant preference of English before Latin. From beginning to end, there is no trace of flamboyancy or repetition, and, while we applaud the wisdom of the chroniclers who made this history of Richard their own, we cannot but wonder that one and all failed to profit by so fine an example of artistry and restraint.

XI

Few books have had a stranger fate than George Cavendish's *Life and Death of Thomas Wolsey*. Written when Queen Mary was on the throne, it achieved a secret and furtive success. It was passed in manuscript from hand to hand. Shakespeare knew it and used it. As I have said, both Stow and Speed leaned upon its authority. First printed in 1641, it was then so defaced by interpolations and excisions as to be scarce recognisable, and it was not until 1657 that a perfect text was given to the world. And then, for no visible reason, it was ascribed

to William, not to George, Cavendish. The uncertainty had no other excuse save that William, the better known of the two, was the founder of a great family. Speed yields the credit where it is due, to George—and Speed's word was worth more than surmise. However, all doubt was long since removed, and to George Cavendish, a simple gentleman of the cardinal's household, belongs the glory of having given to English literature the first specimen of artistic biography.

Steadfast in devotion, plain in character, Cavendish left all to follow the fortunes of the cardinal. He was witness of his master's pomp and splendour; he was witness of his ruin and his death. He embellished his narrative with Wolsey's own eloquence; he recorded the speech of Cromwell, Northumberland, and others; and he imparted to his pages a sense of reality which only a partaker of Wolsey's fortunes could impart. But he was not a Boswell, attempting to produce a large effect by a multiplicity of details. His book has a definite plan and purpose. Consciously or unconsciously, Cavendish was an artist. His theme is the theme of many a Greek tragedy, and he handles it with Greek austerity. He sets out to show how Nemesis descends upon the haughty and overbold, how the mighty are suddenly cast down from their seats, how the hair-shirt lurks ever beneath the scarlet robes of the cardinal. This is the confessed end and aim of his work. He is not compiling a 'life and times.' He discards

as irrelevant many events which seem important in the eye of history. The famous words which he puts in the mouth of Wolsey dying might serve as a text for the whole work: 'If I had served God as diligently as I have done the King, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs.'

That his readers may feel the full pathos of Wolsey's fall, he paints the magnificence of his life in glowing colours. Titles are heaped upon titles. The boy bachelor grows to the man of affairs, the ambassador, the King's almoner, the chancellor of England, the archbishop of York, the cardinal. In lavish entertainment, in noble pageantry, the cardinal surpassed the King. His banquets 'with masks and mummers it was a heaven to behold.' The officers of his chapel and of his household were like the sands in number. He moved always in a procession. 'He rode like a cardinal, very sumptuously, on a mule trapped with crimson velvet upon velvet, his stirrups of copper and gilt; and his spare mule following him with like apparel.' Is it any wonder that fortune 'began to wax something wroth with his prosperous estate'? Almost at the outset the note of warning is struck. The sinister influence of Anne Boleyn begins to be felt from the moment that the cardinal comes between her and the love of Lord Percy. In other words, fortune 'procured Venus, the insatiate goddess, to be her instrument.' The King's displeasure at the slow process of divorce is heightened by the whisperings of Mistress Anne.

And then, at Grafton, the blow falls. The cardinal is ordered to give up the great seal and to retire to Esher. Henceforth, misfortunes are heaped upon him, as they were heaped upon Job, and he bears them with an equal resignation. He is stripped of wealth and state. His hopeless journey from town to town brings him nearer only to death. The omens are bad. A cross falls upon Bonner's head as he sits at meat. When the Earl of Northumberland, charged to arrest him of high treason, visits him, 'Ye shall have such cheer,' says the cardinal, with the true irony of Sophocles, 'as I am able to make you, with a right good will . . . hoping hereafter to see you oftener, when I shall be more able and better provided to receive you with better fare.' So, at last, he dies at Leicester, dishonoured and disgraced, stripped of his splendour, abandoned by his train. And Cavendish, speaking with the voice of the tragic chorus, exhorts his readers to behold 'the wondrous mutability of vain honours, the brittle assurance of abundance, the uncertainty of dignities, the flattery of feigned friends, and the fickle trust to worldly princes.'

XII

Talent and opportunity were given to the simple, unlettered Cavendish, and he made the fullest of them. Sir John Hayward was a historian of another

kind. He was not driven by accident or experience to the practice of his craft. He adopted it as a profession, and resembled the writers of a later age more nearly than any of his contemporaries. Born in Suffolk about 1560, he was educated at the University of Cambridge, and devoted himself with a single mind to the study of history. He was in no sense a mere chronicler. He aimed far higher than the popular history digested into annals. His mind was always intent upon the example of the ancients. His style is concise, as the style of his models, and his syntax is closely allied to the syntax of Latin. He liked to trick out his narratives with appropriate speeches, after the manner of Livy. He delighted in the moral generalisations which give an air of solemnity to the art of history as it was practised by the Greeks and the Romans. His first work, in which are described the fall of Richard II. and the first years of Henry IV. (1599), and which is dedicated to the Earl of Essex, incurred the wrath of Elizabeth, and cost him some years of imprisonment. The Queen asked Bacon if he could find any passages in the book which savoured of treason. 'For treason surely I find none,' said Bacon, 'but for felony very many.' And when the Queen asked him 'Wherein?' he told her that 'the author had committed very apparent theft; for he had taken most of the sentences of Cornelius Tacitus, and translated them into English, and put them in his text.' This criticism is as true as it is witty. Hayward aims at sententiousness with an

admirable success, and did his best to make himself the Tacitus of England.[1]

In the 'Epistle Dedicatorie' to his *Lives of the Three Normans, Kings of England* (1613), he declares that, though he had written of the past, he 'did principally bend and binde himself to the times wherein he should live.' His performance did not agree with his bent. Concerning the times near which he lived he has left but a fragment, *The beginning of the Raigne of Queene Elizabeth*, of which beginning he had no more personal knowledge than of the *Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixt* (1630), which in some respects is his masterpiece. But, whatever was the period of his choice, he treated it with the same knowledge and impartiality. He made a proper use of unpublished material. The journal of Edward VI. gives an air of authenticity to his biography of that King, and in

[1] How right was the judgment of Bacon may be seen in every page of Hayward's writing. It is thus that he describes the sack of Tunis: 'here streams of bloud, and heapes of slaughtered bodies, hard by dissolute and licentious wantonnesses in some, all the miseries of a cruell warre, and the looseness of a secure peace.' The comment on the Londoners, which follows, sounds like a translation direct from Tacitus: 'Thus did the Londoners manifest in themselves a strange diversity of disposition, both licentiously to committe offence, and patiently to endure punishment; having rashnesse and rage so tempered with obedience, that they were easily punished, who could not possibly bee ruled.' So when he describes John of Gaunt as 'liking better safe courses with reason than happy by chance,' or says of Henry IV. that 'he seemed rather worthy of a kingdom than desirous,' we know well where he has committed his felonies.

treating of William I. he went back to sources of information which the chroniclers had overlooked. In brief, he was a scholar who took a critical view of his task, who was more deeply interested in policies and their result than in the gossip of history, and who was always quick to illustrate modern England by the examples of Greece and Rome. His pages are packed with literary and historical allusions. He was, moreover, always watchful of his style, intent ever upon producing a definite effect, and if he errs, as he does especially in his *Henry IV.*, on the side of elaboration, it is a fault of which he is perfectly conscious, and which he does not disdain. Thus at last, with the author of *Richard III.* and Sir John Hayward, England reverted to the ancient models, and it is from them and not from the chroniclers that our art of history must date its beginnings.

TUDOR TRANSLATORS

I

THE translators of Elizabeth's age pursued their craft in the spirit of bold adventure which animated Drake and Hawkins. It was their ambition to discover new worlds of thought and beauty. They sailed the wide ocean of knowledge to plant their colonies of intellect where they might, or to bring back to our English shores some eloquent stranger whom their industry had taught to speak with our English tongue. Holland justly describes his enterprise as a conquest. He 'would wish rather and endeavour,' says he in the preface to his translation of Pliny, 'by all means to triumph now over the Romans in subduing their literature under the dent of the English pen, in requitall of the conquest some time over this Island, atchieved by the edge of their sword.' And, harbouring this sentiment of conquest, the translators were strongly impelled also by the desire to benefit their native land and its rulers. They had learned from the classics deep lessons of policy and statecraft, which they would impart to their Queen and her magistrates. Their achievement

was, indeed, the real renascence of England, the authentic recovery of the ancient spirit.

That they were keenly conscious of what they were doing is clear from their dedications and their prefaces. The choice of the great personages to whom they presented their works was made with a deliberate purpose. When North and Holland asked the Queen's protection for their masterpieces, it was in the full hope and knowledge that Plutarch and Livy would prove wise guides unto her footsteps. Nor was it with the mere intent of flattery or applause that other translators offered the fruits of their toil to Cecil, Leicester, and Christopher Hatton. They wished to give counsel where they deemed it useful. Thomas Wilson, for instance, the translator of Demosthenes, thought that every good subject should compare the present and the past; that, when he heard of Athens and the Athenians, he should remember England and Englishmen; that, in brief, he should learn from the doings of his elders how to deal with his own affairs. John Brende, who Englished Quintus Curtius, in presenting his book to the Duke of Northumberland, thus explained his purpose: 'There is required in all Magistrates,' says he, 'both a faith and a feare in God, and also an outward pollicie in worldly thinges:[1] whereof, as the one is

[1] Geffraie Fenton showed his approval of this sentiment by borrowing it word for word in his preface to *The Tragicall Discourses*.

to be learned by the Scriptures, so the other must chiefly be gathered by reading of histories.' Wherever you turn, you find the same admirable excuse; and, as the translators gave to England wellnigh the whole wisdom of the ancients, they provided not merely grave instruction for kings and statesmen, but plots for the dramatists, and entertainment for lettered ease.

As their interest lay chiefly in the matter of their originals, they professed little desire to illustrate a method of translation. They had neither the knowledge nor the sense of criticism, which should measure accurately the niceties of their craft. They set about their work in a spirit of sublime unconsciousness. In their many prefaces, and they delighted in prefaces, there is scarce a hint that they are pursuing a delicate art. The most of them were indifferent to, or ignorant of, Horace's maxim:

> Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus
> Interpres,

though, for the best of reasons, they followed the poet's liberal counsel. They would not have understood the scientific care with which Dryden presently distinguished metaphrase and paraphrase. Chapman, it is true, knew the end at which he aimed, and, in the preface to his Homer, lucidly describes what should be the ambition of the translator: 'The work of a skilfull and worthy translator,' says he, 'is to observe the sentences, figures, and formes

of speech proposed in his author, his true sence and height, and to adorn them with figures and formes of oration fitted to the originall in the same tongue to which they are translated.' And one W. R., in an eloquent epistle addressed to the translator, wittily defends Lodge against the charge that he had not parrot-like spoken Seneca's own words and lost himself in a Latin echo. But both Chapman and Lodge's defender wrote when the art of translation had been pursued for two generations and was falling, not unnaturally, into a habit of self-criticism. In general, the translators of the heyday were accurate neither in word nor in shape. They followed the text as remotely as they imitated the style of their originals.

I have said that North and his colleagues were inspired by a love of adventure. They resembled the pioneers of our empire also in a splendid lack of scruple. As the early travellers cheerfully seized upon the treasure of others, painfully acquired, and turned to their own profit the discoveries of Spaniard and Portuguese, so the translators cared not by what intermediary they approached the Greek and Latin texts. Very few were scholars in the sense that Philemon Holland was a scholar. Like Shakespeare, the most had little Latin and less Greek. When Thomas Nicolls, citizen and goldsmith of London, set out to translate Thucydides (1550), he went no further than the French of Claude de Seyssel, and Claude de Seyssel made his version not from the Greek but

from the Latin of Laurentius Valla. Between Thomas North and Plutarch stands the gracious figure of Jacques Amyot. Thomas Underdowne derived his *Aethiopian Historie* from the Latin of Stanislaus Warschewiczki, a Polish country gentleman, who translated the Greek of Heliodorus, *rure paterno*, in 1551. Thus Adlington, in interpreting *The Golden Ass*, was misled by *Lasné Doré* of Guillaume Michel. Thus Aristotle came into our speech through the French of Leroy, and even Bandello crossed from Italy to England by the courtly bridge of Belleforest.

The result of this careless method is that the translations of Elizabeth's age (in prose, at any rate) are unsoiled by pedantry. They do not smell of the lamp; they suggest nowhere the laborious use of the pedestrian dictionary. They call up a vision of space and courage and the open air. That they are inappropriate seems no fault in them. If they replace the restraint of the classics with the colour and sentiment of romance, it is because the translators have done their work thoroughly. They have turned the authors of Greece and Rome not merely into a new language but into the feeling of another age and clime. In other words, their books carry with them the lively air of brave originals. And this natural impress is the deeper, because translation was not then an exclusive craft, pursued in the narrow spirit of mere scholarship. Many of the most ingenious craftsmen were men of the world,

who made their versions to beguile a leisure snatched from the conduct of affairs.

Sir Thomas Hoby, who gave us *The Courtier*, was an ambassador; Danett, who put Commines in an English dress, practised the art of diplomacy loftily exemplified in his original; with a fine sense of propriety, Peter Whitehorne translated Machiavelli's *Arte of Warre* when he was in Barbary with the emperor, 'at the siege and winning of Calibbia'; Thomas North himself played his part as a magistrate in the policies of the larger world. Even those who, like Holland and Golding, adopted translating as a profession, practised a style all untrammelled by the schools. The reproach of Dryden, that 'there are many who understand Greek and Latin, and yet are ignorant of their mother-tongue,' might not be brought with justice against them. Few men of the century knew Greek and Latin. Many were masters of English, which they wrote with an eloquence and elaboration rarely surpassed.

II

The translators' range of discovery was wide. They brought into the ken of Englishmen the vast continent of classical literature. Only a few provinces escaped their search, and, of the few, one was the province which should have had the quickest attraction for them. It is not a little strange that the golden age of our drama should have seen the translation of but one Greek play. Of Aeschylus and

Sophocles there is nothing. A free paraphrase of the *Phoenissae*, presented at Gray's Inn under the name of *Jocasta* in 1566 by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh, and made not from the Greek but from the Italian of Ludovico Dolce, is the Elizabethans' only and fragile link with Euripides. Plautus fared not much better: we have no more than the *Menaechmi* of William Warner (1595), which may have given Shakespeare a hint for *The Comedy of Errors*. More popular were Seneca and Terence—Seneca, no doubt, for his ingenious maxims, and Terence because he was appointed to be read in schools. Of the historians, both Greek and Latin, there is a long list. An unknown translator, who hides his name under the initials B. R., and who may be Barnabe Rich, published two books of Herodotus in 1584, and Thomas Nicolls, already mentioned, gave to England a complete Thucydides in 1550. Of Livy, we have a fragment by Antony Cope (1544), and a version of all that remains by the incomparable Philemon Holland (1600), to whose industry also are due Suetonius (1606), Ammianus Marcellinus (1609), and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (1632). Sallust, as might be expected, was a favourite of Tudor England. His *Catiline* was translated by Thomas Paynell (1541), his *Jugurtha* by Alexander Barclay, and both histories by Thomas Heywood, the dramatist (1608). Golding's Cæsar (1565), Brende's Quintus Curtius (1553), and Stocker's Diodorus Siculus (1569), by no means complete the tale. What Sir Henry Savile

did for the *Histories* and the *Agricola* of Tacitus (1591), Richard Greenway did for the *Annals* and the *Description of Germany* (1598), and there is no author Englished for us in fuller and worthier shape than the wisest of Roman historians. Xenophon found other translators besides Holland, and Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* fell happily into the hands of Sir Thomas North, whose skill gave them a second and a larger immortality.

The philosophers and moralists of the ancient world chimed with the humour of Tudor England. Their simple disputations possess the charm of freshness and curiosity. The problems of conduct posed by Cicero and Plutarch are of a kind that found an eager solution in the minds of men, still simple enough to love casuistry for its own sake. Such questions as how a man may praise himself without incurring envy or blame, or whether philosophers ought to converse with princes and rulers, were met, it is certain, with many arguments and various answers. And the translators supplied those ignorant of the dead languages with a mighty armoury of intellectual weapons. Of Plato, to be sure, there is little enough. Besides Sir Thomas Elyot's *Of the Knowledge which maketh a wise man* (1533), distantly inspired by the philosopher, immediately suggested by Diogenes Laertius, there is but a version of the *Axiochus* (1592), a doubtful dialogue. Aristotle received more generous treatment. His *Ethics* were translated from the Italian by John Wylkinson (1547), and, as has been

said, one J. D. made a version of the *Politics* from the French of Loys Leroy, dit Regius (1598).

Far more popular were Cicero and Seneca, the chief instructors of the age. Tully's *Offices*, translated by Robert Whittington, laureate in grammar (1533), and by Nicholas Grimalde (1553), were confidently commended to rulers, schoolmen, orators, and rhetoricians: 'At few words,' says the ingenious Grimalde, 'al men, that of wisdome be studious, may gette sommewhat herein to sharpe the wyt, to store the intelligence, to fede the minde, to quicke the sprite, to augment the reason, to direct the appetite, to frame the tounge, to fashion the maners.' Nor were the two treatises on Friendship and Old Age overlooked. The one was translated by John Harington (1550), the other by Thomas Newton (1569), and both have as handsome an appearance in their English dress as any books of the time; and, in 1561, John Dolman 'englysshed these fyve Questions, which Marke Tullye Cicero disputed in his Manor of Tusculanum.' Upon Seneca, also, Whittington tried his hand, to whom we owe *The Fame and Rule of Honest lyvynge* (1546), and *The Remedyes against all casuall Chances*. For the rest, Arthur Golding translated *The Woorke concerning Benefyting* (1558), and, in 1614, Thomas Lodge published his monumental version of Seneca's prose, a work undimmed by comparison even with Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Morals* (1603).

III

The modern world yielded as rich a spoil as the ancient. The Italianate Englishman, bitterly reproached by his contemporaries, brought back from Italy, with his fantastic costume and new-fangled manners, a love of Italian literature and of Italian romance. From across the Alps came our knowledge of the court, of arms, and of the arts. In a famous passage, Ascham deplored the encroaching influence. Evil as he thought the *Morte Arthure*, 'the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye,' he declared that 'ten Morte Arthure do not the tenth part so much harme as one of these bookes, made in Italie, and translated in England.' Yet their growing popularity could not be gainsaid: 'That which is most to be lamented'—again Ascham speaks —'and therefore more nedefull to be looked to, there be mo of these ungratious bookes set out in Printe within these fewe monethes, than have been sene in England many score yeare before.' Ascham wrote in 1567, and there is no doubt that he had in his mind William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, of which the first volume was published in 1566, the second in 1567, and Geffraie Fenton's *Certaine Tragicall Discourses* (1567). Few books of the time had a more immediate and profound influence than these. They entertained the court, and were an inspiration to the poets. Had it not been for Painter, the English

drama would have taken another path. The stories of blood and lust, appropriate to the ferocity of the Italian republics, were eagerly retold by our dramatists, avid of the fierce emotions which Elizabeth's peaceful England did not encourage in act.

The tale of borrowings from Painter's *Palace* is a long one. Shakespeare and Webster, Marston and Massinger, all owe a debt to the ingenious writer whom Ascham savagely condemned. And they could not have gone for their plots to a better source. For Painter was a true child of his age. His ambition, like the ambition of the chroniclers, was encyclopaedic. He aimed, not at telling one story, but at telling all stories. He began at the beginning and carried his work to the very end. It would be difficult to find a plot that has not its origin, or its counterpart, in Painter's treasure-house. His earliest stories are taken from Livy, Herodotus, and Aulus Gellius; and, presently, he seeks his originals in the works of Queen Margaret and Boccaccio, of Bandello and Straparola. Whatever were the origin and substance of his tales, he reduced them all to a certain plainness. He had a ready talent for story-telling; he cultivated a straightforward style; and, unlike the most of his fellows, he avoided embroidery. His popularity, therefore, is easily explained: his work was quickly intelligible to simple folk, and the dramatists had no difficulty in clothing his dry bones with their romantic imagery. But they acknowledged their debt with a difference.

Shakespeare did not scruple to borrow the very words of North and Holinshed. He took no more than the plot from Painter's version of *Rhomeo and Julietta.*

Ascham's judgment of Painter and Fenton, foolish and unjust as it is, seems to have been anticipated by the translator of the *Tragicall Discourses* of Bandello. Fenton, indeed, securely defends himself against the detraction of the puritan. In an epistle dedicatory, addressed to the Lady Mary Sidney, he professes that his choice of stories was made with the best motive. He had no other desire than to improve the occasion. 'Albeit, at the firste sighte,' says he, 'theis discourses maye importe certeine vanytyes or fonde practises in love, yet I doubte not to bee absolved . . ., seinge I have rather noted diversitie of examples in sondrye younge men and women, approvynge sufficientlye the inconvenience happenynge by the pursute of lycenceous desyer, then affected in anye sorte suche uncerteyne follyes.' If Bandello incurred censure, what sentence would have been passed upon Boccaccio? Though his *Decameron* was involved in the harsh judgment passed upon Painter's *Palace*, though some stories found a place in Turbervile's *Tragical Tales*, it was not known to England, save in fragments, until 1620. His *Philocopo* was translated in 1566 by H. Grantham, and, twenty years later, Bartholomew Young did into English the *Amorous Fiammetta*, 'wherein is sette doune a catalogue of all and singular passions of love and jealosie incident to an enamoured yong gentle-

man.' Of the other Italian books, thus early done into English, the most famous was Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, of which Hoby's version (1561) won the difficult approval of Ascham himself. This book, he said, 'advisedlie read, and diligentlie folowed, but one yeare at home in England, would do a yong gentleman more good, I wisse, then three yeares travell abrode spent in Italie.' And then came Machiavelli, whose *Arte of Warre*, as has been said, was Englished by Peter Whitehorne (1560), and of whose *Florentine Historie* we owe an excellent version to Thomas Bedingfield (1598). But there is no *Prince* in English until 1640, and thus we are confronted by a literary puzzle.

No work had a profounder influence upon the thought and policy of Tudor England than Machiavelli's *Prince*. It was a text-book to Thomas Cromwell; its precepts were obediently followed by Cecil and Leicester. The mingled feare and respect in which its author was held converted him into a monstrous legend. No writer is more frequently cited, generally with disapproval, than Machiavelli, and it is always the *Prince*, which was not translated, and not the *Arte of Warre* and the *Florentine Historie*, which were, that arouses the ire of Englishmen. A German scholar has counted more than three hundred references to the *Prince* in the works of the dramatists alone, and has traced them to the celebrated treatise of Gentillet: *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un royaume . . . contre*

N. Machiavel le Florentin (1576), a work translated into English by Simon Patericke (1602). Thus the hostility of the Elizabethans against the Florentine was inspired not by the study of the original but by the violent partisanship of a Huguenot. However, if the accident which tooke the *Arte of Warre* and left the *Prince* remains unexplained, the preference of French to Italian is natural enough. The truth is, French was the language best understood by the English of the sixteenth century. Not merely was it the avenue through which many of the classics passed into our language and our literature; its familiar use tempted the translators to make known in England the learning and philosophy of France. The French books which we find in English are many and of many kinds. First in importance is Florio's *Montaigne* (1603), after which may be placed Danett's *Commines* (1596), a finished portrait of the politician, which partly atones for the absence of the *Prince*.[1] The indefatigable Arthur Golding translated the *Politicke, Moral, and Martiall Discourses*, written in French by Jacques Hurault (1595), while Henri Estienne, La Noue, and La Primaudaye all found their way into our English speech. And France, also, like Italy, has her paradox. As we have no *Prince* before Dacres,

[1] That masterpiece of satiric observation, de la Sale's *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, should surely have found a translator in the sixteenth century. And, though the earliest version noted bears the date 1694, it is a fourth edition, and earlier in style than the year of its publication.

so we have no Rabelais before Sir Thomas Urquhart. The influence of Gargantua, now the legendary giant, now Rabelais's own creation, and of Pantagruel, is plain for all to see. They are among the commonplaces of our dramatists, and, but for the example of Rabelais, at least two masters of prose, Nashe and Harvey, would have written far other than they did. Though a version of *Gargantua his Prophecie* is entered in Stationers' registers (1592), either it was never published, or it has disappeared, and those who studied the style and gospel of Messer Alcofribas must have studied them in the original.

There remains Spain, united to England in the bonds of enmity, and then, as now, the land of curiosity and romance. Her influence, widely felt, was deepest in the realms of discovery and mysticism, of manners and chivalry. The great masterpieces, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and *Exemplary Novels*, and the *Celestina* of Fernando de Rojas, came to England when the Stewarts sat upon the throne. But the sixteenth century knew no more popular book, no more potent influence than *The Diall of Princes*, translated from Guevara by Thomas North (1557), in which may be detected the first seeds of euphuism. Vives taught philosophy, rhetoric, and civil law orally at Oxford, and, by his translated works, to England. The 'spiritual and heavenly exercises' of Granada brought comfort and inspiration to the devout; it was through Spain that Amadis and Palmerin came to England; and many of the bravest adventures

chronicled in Hakluyt's treasury of voyages were sought and found in the peninsula. The earliest example of the picaresque novel, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, was 'drawen out of Spanish' by David Rowland (1576), and, among many others, Bartholomew Young, already mentioned as a scholar in Italian, translated from its native Spanish the *Diana* of Gorge de Montemayor (1598).

Thus it will be seen that the translators into prose of Elizabeth's reign were impartial, as they were courageous, in their choice. They were appalled neither by the difficulty of strange tongues nor by the freedom of foreign tales. And, various as was their excuse, their style is uniform. As I have said, they made no attempt to represent the niceties of the original in their own tongue. They cut and clipped French and Roman, Spanish and Greek, to the same form and shape. Some were simpler than others; some were less cunning in the search after strange words. William Adlington, for instance, who might have found in Apuleius an opportunity for all the resources of Elizabethan vigour and Elizabethan slang, treated his author with a certain reserve. But, for the most part, the colour of the translations is the colour of the translator's time and country, and if we study the method of one or two chosen examples, we shall get an insight into the method of them all.

*

IV

The most famous, and perhaps the best, of Elizabethan translations is Sir Thomas North's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579). That Shakespeare used it in patient obedience, borrowing words as well as plots, is its unique distinction. But if Shakespeare had never laid upon it that hand of Midas, which transmuted whatever it touched into pure gold, the version had yet been memorable. It is not Plutarch. In many respects it is Plutarch's antithesis. North composed a new masterpiece upon Plutarch's theme. As I have said, he saw Plutarch through Amyot's eye. And the result is neither Amyot nor Plutarch. No book, in truth, ever had a stranger history. There came out of Chaeronea in the first century after Christ a scholar and a writer who was destined to exert a powerful, if indirect, influence upon the greatest of our poets. Thus was Boeotia avenged of her slanderers; thus did a star of intelligence shine over despised Thebes. The Boeotian wrote a book, which, in due time, fell into the hands of Jacques Amyot. What Amyot did with the book, Montaigne, himself a humble debtor, shall proclaim: 'Je donne avec raison,' he writes, 'ce me semble, la palme à Jacques Amyot, sur touts nos escrivains françois. . . . Nous, aultres ignorants estions perdus, si ce livre ne nous eust relevé du bourbier; sa mercy, nous osons a cett'heure et parler et escrire: les dames en regentent les maistres d'eschole: c'est nostre breviaire.'

And Plutarch's good fortune did not rest here. Amyot's book, which was Montaigne's breviary, came to Thomas North, who embellished Amyot, as Amyot had embellished Plutarch. North's Plutarch is as far from Amyot's as Amyot's is from its original. Not merely the words, but the very spirit is transformed. Change the names, and you might be reading in North's page of Philip Sydney and Richard Grenville, of Leicester and of the great Lord Burghley. For North, though he knew little of the classics, was a master of noble English. He was neither schoolman nor euphuist. As he freed his language from the fetters which immature scholars had cast upon it, so he did not lay upon its bones the awkward chains of a purposed ingenuity. He held a central place in the history of our speech. He played upon English prose as upon an organ whose every stop he controlled with an easy confidence. He had a perfect sense of the weight and colour of words; pathos and gaiety, familiarity and grandeur resound in his magnificently cadenced periods. It was his good fortune to handle a language still fired with the various energy of youth, and he could contrive the effects of sound and sense, which had neither been condemned nor worn out by the thoughtful pedant. Above all, his style had a dramatic quality, which suggests to the reader a constant movement, and the value of which, no doubt, was candidly recognised by Shakespeare.

An example will best illustrate this peculiar skill

of the translator. Here is the prelude to the immortal discourse of *Coriolanus*: 'It was even twy light when he entred the cittie of Antium, and many people met him in the streetes, but no man knewe him. So he went directly to Tullus Aufidius house, and when he came thither, he got him up straight to the chimney harthe, and sat him downe, and spake not a worde to any man, his face all muffled over. They of the house spying him, wondered what he should be, and yet they durst not byd him rise. For, ill-favoredly muffled up and disguised as he was, yet there appeared a certaine majestie in his countenance, and in his silence: whereupon they went to Tullus who was at supper, to tell him of the straunge disguising of this man.' The beauty of this passage is incontestable, and yet it is hard to explain. There is no striving after effect. There are no strange words. If it has a modern air, it is because the words used are of universal significance, and belong neither to this age nor to that. And, simple as they are, they breathe the very spirit of romance. They move and throb with life, as if they were not mere symbols, but were the very essence of drama and of action. Now turn to the French of Amyot, and you will discern the same quality sternly subdued to the finer classicism of the language: 'Ains s'en alla il droict à la maison de Tullus, là où de primsault il entra jusques au fouyer, et illec asseit sans dire mot à personne, ayant le visage couvert et la teste affublée: de-

quoy ceulx de la maison feurent bien esbahis, et neantmoins ne l'ozerent faire lever: car encores qu'il se cachast, si recognoissoit on ne sçay quoy de dignité en sa contenance et en son silence, et s'en allerent dire à Tullus, qui souppoit, ceste estrange façon de faire.'

At first sight the economy of the French is apparent. The words are fewer and are held together by a firmer thread than in the English version. And North has contrived by a touch here and there to give a picturesqueness to the scene which neither the French nor the Greek warrants. For instance, 'they of the house spying him' introduces a new image. *Ceulx de la maison* is in Amyot's version and corresponds to οἱ κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν. The spying is North's own legitimate invention. And again, the words 'ill-favoredly muffled up and disguised as he was,' which give an accent to the whole passage, represent no more than a particle in the Greek (ἦν γάρ τι καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν, κ.τ.λ.), and are far more finely dramatic than the French: *encores qu'il se cachast.* Moreover, the last words of the English passage, 'the straunge disguising of this man,' find their excuse neither in French nor in Greek. There is a commonness of phrase in τὴν ἀτοπίαν τοῦ πράγματος as in *ceste estrange façon de faire*, which finds no echo in North's splendidly inaccurate rendering. He instantly calls your attention from the thing to the man, and asks you to look once again at the strange muffled figure sitting by

the hearth. And this, perhaps, is one of his secrets: an intent always to flatter the eye as well as the ear, and to reveal in pictures the meaning of his author. At any rate, there are few who, were the choice given them, would not rather read Plutarch in the noble English of North than in the restrained and sometimes inexpressive Greek of Plutarch. North, it is true, turned Plutarch's men into heroes of English blood and bone, but, in separating them thus ruthlessly from their origin, he endowed them with a warm, pulsing humanity, of which their author dreamed not.

V

Philemon Holland was a translator of another kind. His legendary pen was apt for any enterprise. He was a finished master *utriusque linguae*, and so great was his industry that he is not the hero of one but of half a dozen books. It was not for him to ask the aid of French or Italian. He went straight to the ancient texts—Greek or Latin—and brought back with him to his native English spoils which were legitimately his own. His whole career was a proper training for the work of his mature years. Born in 1552, he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and, having studied medicine, settled at Coventry in the practice of his profession. But humane letters had laid a stern hand upon him, and, while he cured the poor in charity, he became usher in the Coventry Grammar School, and gave his life to scholarship and

the Muses. Fuller, who had a genius for devising names, called him 'the Translator Generall in his age,' and it is thus that he will be remembered unto the end of time.

As I have said, his knowledge of Greek and Latin was accurate and profound. Still rarer was his knowledge of English. True, he did not possess the tact and simplicity of North. He could not produce wonderful effects by the use of a few plain words. His was the romance not of feeling, but of decoration. He loved ornament with the ardour of an ornamental age, and he tricked out his authors with all the resources of Elizabethan English. The concision and reticence of the classics were as nothing to him. He was ambitious always to clothe them in the garb which they might have worn had they been not mere Englishmen, but fantastics of his own age. Like all his contemporaries, he was eager to excuse his own shortcomings. 'According to this purpose and intent of mine,' he wrote, 'I frame my pen, not to any affected phrase, but to a meane and popular stile. Wherein, if I have called againe into use some old words, let it be attributed to the love of my countrey language: if the sentence be not so concise, couched and knit togither as the originall, loth I was to be obscure and darke; have I not Englished every word aptly? ech nation hath several maners, yea, and tearmes appropriate by themselves.'

His phrase is often affected, his style is neither mean nor popular; and thus far he speaks the lan-

guage of convention. The rest of the passage is the soundest criticism. Holland had a natural love of the old words and proverbs which distinguished his country language. His sentences are seldom concise or knit together, and his translations, though not apt to their originals, are apt enough to the language of their adoption. If he seldom echoed the sound of Greek and Latin, he never missed the sense, nor did he feare a comparison of his own work with the classical texts. When it was said that his versions were not in accord with the French or Italian, he knew that he was in the right of it. 'Like as Alcibiades said to one'—thus he wrote—'*πάταξον οὖν καὶ ἄκουσον, i.e.* strike hardly (Euribiades), so you hear me speake: even so I say; Find fault and spare not; but withal, read the original better before you give sentence.' Let his own test be applied to him, and he will not fail. Take, for instance, a famous passage in the fifth book of Livy, which describes the salvation of the Capitol from the Gauls. Here is the Latin, simple and straightforward: 'Anseres non fefellere, quibus sacris Junonis in summa inopia cibi tamen abstinebatur. Quae res saluti fuit; namque clangore eorum alarumque crepitu excitus M. Manlius, qui triennio ante consul fuerat, vir bello egregius, armis arreptis simul ad arma ceteros ciens vadit.'

Holland's English, close as it keeps to the text of Livy, has its own colour and quality: 'But they could not so escape the geese'—thus it runs—

'which were consecrated unto Juno, and for all the scarcitie of victuals were spared and not killed up. And this it was that saved them all. For with their gagling and fluttering of their wings, M. Manlius, who three yeares before had been Consul, a right hardie and noble warriour, was awaked. Who taking weapon in hand, speedily went forth and raised the rest withall to take armes.' The English has a plainness to which Holland very rarely attains; but it is not its plainness nor its perfect harmony that gives it a character of its own. In the first place, 'gagling' arrests the ear so sharply, that the reader is as wide awake as M. Manlius himself. And then how admirable in sound and sense is the equivalent of *vir bello egregius*—'a right hardie and noble warriour!' It is by such touches as this, and by a feeling of what is musical in prose, which never deserted him, that Holland produced his effects.

His failing from a pedantic point of view is an excess of ornament. He was not always content to say what he had to say once. He delighted to turn a statement about—to put it now in this light, now in that. 'Jacta est alea,' writes Suetonius. 'The dice be thrown,' says Holland; 'I have set up my rest; come what will of it.' His variety and resources are endless. In a single passage he makes Vitellius his own contemporary. 'Being given most of all to excessive bellie cheere and crueltie,' he writes, 'he devided his repast into three meales every day at least, and sometimes

into foure, to wit, Breakefast, Dinner, Supper, and rere-bankets.' From this, the last drop of Latin austerity is gone. And you can hear Vespasian rioting with his friends when Holland writes: 'given exceedingly hee was to skoffs, and those so skurrile and filthy, that he could not so much as forbeare words of ribaudrie. And yet there be many right pleasant conceited jests of his extant.'

In such terms as these might Rabelais have composed the lives of the Roman Emperors. Excellent in tone and movement as is the *Suetonius*, in some respects his *Pliny* is Holland's masterpiece. The difficulty of this enterprise was far greater. If the obstacle in the way of a familiar rendering might have seemed insuperable, Holland has easily surmounted it. He has thawed the frigid original at the fire of his romantic temper. 'Sirrah (quoth he) remember you are but a shoemaker, and therefore meddle no higher I advise you than with shoes.' The mere 'Sirrah' carries you leagues away from Apelles, and the shoemaker whom he bade look to his last, and reminds you of the truth that Holland, like the old painters, put the noblest of his Greeks and Romans into doublet and hose.

His industry was universally applauded. He composed folios with as little toil as other men give to the writing of pamphlets. The two largest of his works are separated by a bare year. It was said that he wrote the whole of Plutarch's *Morals* with one pen—a pen which became mythical. 'It seemed that

he leaned very lightly on the Neb thereof,' says Fuller, 'though weightily enough in another sense, performing not slightly but solidly what he undertook.' Fuller, with his usual good sense, puts his finger upon the truth. It was the solidity of Holland's achievement, not its extent, which was remarkable. His industry was always well directed. Few writers have ever kept so consistently at a high level of excellence. He was no master in the art of sinking. His narrative never flags; his argument knows no failure. His style was apt alike for history or reflection. And if he did not accurately represent in English the prose of Livy and Plutarch, of Suetonius and Pliny, he left us a set of variations upon ancient motives, to which we may listen with an independent and unalloyed pleasure.

VI

John Florio's Montaigne holds a place apart. This translator had neither the sentiment of North nor the scholarship of Holland. He brought to his task that which neither the one nor the other of these masters possessed—a curious fantasy, which was all his own. He was of the stuff whereof pedants are made. He delighted in eccentricity and extravagance. His prefaces are masterpieces of pomp and decoration. Asking, in a breathless refrain, 'Madame, now do I flatter you?' he exhausts the language of adulation, until at last he falls back upon ecstatic repetitions. He dedicates the first book of his Montaigne 'to the

Right Honourable my best-best Benefactors, and most-most honoured Ladies, Lucie Countesse of Bedford; and hir best-most loved-loving mother Lady Anne Harrington.' He plays upon words; he lets sound take the place of sense; he cultivates alliteration, and pleads guilty to 'a jirke of the French jargon.' A plain simplicity is beyond his reach; he fetches his frequent images from afar. He declares that in his translation he serves 'but as Vulcan, to hatchet this Minerva from that Jupiter's bigge braine.' When he contemplates his finished work, he strikes an attitude of valiance. 'I sweat, I wept, and I went-on, til now I stand at bay.' He is modest only when he thinks of his original. 'Him have I set before you,' says he, 'perhaps without his trappings,' and his 'meate without sauce.' He keeps a stern face even in the presence of his 'peerlesse, and in all good gifts unparagonised Ladies'; he tells his reader that he is 'still resolute John Florio'; and there is always more of Bobadill in his bearing than of Holofernes.

Upon his version of Montaigne's *Essays* he exhausted his gifts and lavished his temperament. He loved words for their own sakes with a love which Montaigne would not have appreciated, and which will be easily intelligible to all who know Florio's famous *Worlde of Wordes*. Turn where you will in his translation, and you will find flowers of speech, which grow not in the garden of the original. 'Je n'y vauls rien,' says Montaigne, and Florio interprets: 'I am nothing worth, and I can never fadge well.'

For *soufflet* Florio can find nothing simpler than 'a whirret in the ear'; for *finesses verbales* he gives us 'verbal wily-beguilies,' surely a coinage of his own. *Fade* becomes 'wallowish,' and *crestez* is admirably rendered by 'pert and cocket.' The 'jirke of the French jargon,' already mentioned, is evident in such borrowed words as 'tintamare,' 'entrecuidance,' 'friandize,' and 'mignardize.' He is as fond as Montaigne himself of proverbial phrases. 'I will have them to give Plutarch a bob upon mine own lips' has precisely the same sense and sound as the French: 'Je veux qu'ils donnent une nazarde à Plutarque sur mon nez.' And, though the metaphor is changed, 'he hath had the canvas' (as who should say 'he hath had the sack') is an excellent match for 'cettuy-cy aura donné du nez à terre.' It will be seen that Florio's method was neither just nor accurate. He made no attempt to suppress himself as we are told a good translator should. The reader never forgets that 'resolute John Florio' is looking out from the page as well as Montaigne. He is often inaccurate, and not seldom he misses the point. But compare his version with Cotton's, and you will not hesitate to give the palm to Florio. Cotton's translation is a sound and scholarly piece of work; Florio's is a living book.

VII

The translations in verse made in the age of the Tudors may not be compared with the translations

in prose. For their inferiority there are many plain reasons. Only a poet can render in another tongue the works of a poet, and even a poet cannot ensure a just interpretation. Between one language and another there are many obstacles of metre and style, of temper and music, which are most often insuperable. Moreover, in the sixteenth century, the translating of prose was governed by so wise a convention, that mere journeymen could attempt a delicate task without risking conspicuous failure. The secret of verse could not be thus easily imparted, and much that won the approval of its own time appears to us the saddest of doggerel. Of the one or two poets who were content to take the invention of others for the theme of their verse, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, is the first in age and interest. Born in 1517 he displayed in the highest measure the restless curiosity of his time. Courtier, soldier, poet, jouster, lover of chivalry, he held nothing beyond the reach of his skill and courage. Apt for experiment, he was always eager to try and to test whatever was new, and in his translations from the *Aeneid* he comes before us as the inventor of English blank verse.

It is said that Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* was an example to him, and though he was plainly a pupil of Chaucer, the twisted specimens of blank verse supposed to have been detached from that piece of prose are not enough to take from Surrey the pride of discovery. And after all the invention would have been natural enough, even

had the Italians not anticipated it. Surrey was a true classic in temperament, and he was familiar with the unrhymed verse of the ancients. What is more to the point than how he found the metre is what he did with it when he had found it, and it cannot be said that he used it with a marvellous success. Some innovators there are who leave little enough for their followers to accomplish. Van Eyck, the only begetter of painting in oil, showed himself not a primitive but a finished craftsman. You might think from *Tamerlane* and *Dr. Faustus* and *Edward II.* that Marlowe was at the end, not at the beginning, of a great tradition. Fielding was the first of our novelists, and is still unsurpassed. Surrey's translations, on the other hand, are remembered, not for their mastery, but because they are composed in the metre, which Marlowe and Shakespeare and Milton presently endowed with their own immortal music.

Having invented blank verse, Surrey used it timidly and with caution. Rarely does he run one line into another, and his version gives the mournful impression that it was cut into lengths, as it were, mechanically. His love of monosyllable is as constant as Tennyson's, and he varies his caesura as seldom as he strengthens his line with long and weighty words. He keeps close enough to the Latin original, and for all his neatness fills his reader with wonder that so poor an instrument, as he wields, should have attained in the hands of Shakespeare

and Milton the effect, which it did, of variety and pomp. The familiar passage from the fourth *Aeneid*, which follows, is characteristic in monotony and sparseness :

'It was then night; the sound and quiet sleep
Had through the earth the wearied bodies caught;
The woods, the raging seas are fallen to rest;
When that the stars had half their course declined;
The fields whist, beasts, and fowls of divers hue,
And what so that in the broad lakes remained,
Or yet among the bushy thicks of brier,
Laid down to sleep by silence of the night
'Gan swage their cares, mindless of travails past.'

These lines show none of the colour and riot dear to the poets of Elizabeth's age. Skimped of effect, they wear the aspect of a modern experiment.

Lord Surrey's version of Virgil was followed half a century later by the *First Book of Lucan*, Englished by Marlowe, and it would not be easy to find a clearer contrast than is evident between these two works. Marlowe tackled his difficult enterprise with fire and spirit. He delighted in the closely serried bombast of his author, with whose style his own was in sympathy. Those there are who find Marlowe's version too 'slow and dignified.' But it is a poet's comment upon a poet, and is many leagues removed from Surrey's pallid version of Virgil. The movement of the English grows swifter with the movement of the Latin, for Marlowe, not content to tell the story in his own tongue, did his best to represent the

sound and fashion of the original. It is thus that he renders the famous lines at the end of the book:

'These sad presages were enough to scare
The quivering Romans; but worse things affright them.
As Maenas full of wine on Pindus raves,
So runs a matron through the amazèd streets,
Disclosing Phoebus' fury in this sort:
"Paean, whither am I haled? where shall I fall,
Thus borne aloft? I see Pangaeus' hill
With hoary top, and under Haemus' mount,
Philippi plains. Phoebus, what rage is this?
Why grapples Rome, and makes war, having no foes?
Whither turn I now? thou lead'st me toward th' east,
Where Nile augmenteth the Pelusian sea:
This headless trunk that lies on Nilus' sand
I know. Now throughout the air I fly
To doubtful Syrtes and dry Afric, where
A Fury leads the Emathian bands."'

Here is a bold attempt to transmute the close, congested Latin into English, not as a scholar, but as a poet, might transmute it.

VIII

The enterprise of translation into verse was yet further hampered by a vain love of experiment. An age which desired to leave nothing untried did its best to introduce the hexameter into English verse, and, as Virgil and Ovid composed their poems in hexameters, it seemed proper to some translators to follow an alien example. Ascham began an eager con-

troversy both by practice and precept. In his *Toxophilus*, he gave the world some poor specimens of the kind. The exercise of some ingenuity may scan the lines which follow:

'What thing wants quiet and meri rest endures but a smal while.

Both merie songs and good shoting deliteth Apollo.'

His precept was better than his practice. He condemned the English hexameter far more effectively than he wrote it. *Carmen exametrum*, said he, 'doth rather holte and hoble than run smothly in an English tong.' The question, once posed, was hotly debated. Gabriel Harvey wished no other epitaph than this: 'the inventor of the English hexameter.' Spenser gave Harvey a ready approval, and Nashe, of course, took the other side. 'The Hexameter verse,' says he, with excellent sense, 'I grant to be a gentleman of an auncient house (so is many an English beggar); yet this clyme of ours hee cannot thrive in.' Time has proved the justice of Nashe's opinion. The experiments of Spenser and Harvey were long since forgotten, and those who turned Virgil and Ovid into their own measures are remembered only as curiosities.

By far the bravest of them was Richard Stanyhurst, who, in 1582, published *the First Foure Bookes of Virgil his Aeneis translated intoo English heroical verse.* He was an Irishman, born in Dublin, and entered University College, Oxford, as a Commoner in 1561. He wrote the Irish Chronicle for Holinshed,

as well as commentaries on Porphyry and other works in Latin. He presently found his way to Louvain, where he studied in the English College, and to Antwerp, where he professed alchemy, and 'took upon him to make gold.' Thence he found his way to Spain, where he practised as a physician, and ended a life of adventure as a 'massing priest' in the Low Countries. His life and his work are of one piece. Whether he wrote in prose or verse, he surpassed in a fantastic eccentricity the vainest of his contemporaries. Never was there a stranger mixture of pedantry and slang than is to be found in his work. His criticism is his own and expressed in his own terms. The verses of Ennius, he says, 'savoure soomwhat nappy of thee spigget,' and he classes him with Horace, Juvenal, and Persius among a 'rablement of cheate Poëtes.' Virgil, on the other hand, 'for his peerlesse style, and matchlesse stuffe doth beare thee prick and price among al thee Roman Poëts.' He declares that, if any hold that Phaer's version lightened his enterprise, they 'are altogether in a wrong box.' He offers to go over these books again, and give them a new livery, which shall neither 'jet with Mr. Phaer his badges, ne yeet bee clad with this apparaile wherewith at this present they coom furth atyred.' Indeed, he makes light of his labour. Phaer took fifteen days to translate the fourth book. He 'huddled up' his in ten. And for this he asks no praise but pardon, adding, characteristically, that 'forelittring bitches whelp blynd puppies.' But,

though he wasted not his time, he did nothing at haphazard. He expounds his theory of the hexameter with great care, and gives every syllable its proper quantity, varying its length according to its termination and to the consonant or vowel which follows it. His labour is lost. Even if his theory were admissible, it would not save his version from ridicule.

Yet, absurd as it is, Stanyhurst's Virgil is worth examination. It is a work which owes no debt to anything save to its author's perverted ingenuity. Orthography, metre, vocabulary, are each unique. Stanyhurst aimed, not merely at a new prosody, but at a new language. He invented a set of onomatopoeic symbols, which you cannot match elsewhere in literature. What can we make of such lines as these :

> 'Theese flaws theyre cabbans wyth stur snar jarrye doe ransack.
>
> Now doe they rayse gastly lyghtnings, now grislye reboundings
> Of ruffe raffe roaring, mens harts with terror agrysing,
> With peale meale ramping, with thwick thwack sturdelye thundring?'

Not content with these mimicries of sound, he invented whatever new words seemed useful for his purpose. 'Mutterus humming,' 'gredelye bibled,' 'smacklye bebasse thee,' 'boucherous hatchet'—these are a few of his false coins. And he used the slang which was modern in his day for the inter-

pretation of Virgil without scruple or shame. Imagine Dido, queen of Carthage, asking in fury: 'shall a stranger give me the slampam'! With an equal contempt of fitness he renders *pollutum hospitium* by 'Paltock's Inn,' and so pleased is he with 'Scarboro warning,' for the blow before the word, that he uses it with no better excuse than *incautam*, and, in another place, he is guilty of 'Scarboro scrabbling,' without any excuse at all. As little did he hesitate to mar the epic dignity of Virgil with the popular proverbs of every day, such as 'in straw there lurketh some pad,' or 'as wild as a March hare.' And, being bound in the chains of the hexameter, he distorts the order of the words out of all semblance to English, until his version is wholly unintelligible without the friendly aid of the Latin.

His monstrous incongruities pleased the taste of his time. Harvey is proud to have been imitated by 'learned Mr. Stanyhurst'; and Phaer fell, that this 'thrasonicall huffe snuffe' might rise. Richard Carew mentions him in the same breath with Sir Philip Sidney, and Francis Meres cites him without disapproval. But critics there were who saw through his pretence. Nashe, above all, rated him at a proper value; and Barnabe Rich did him ample justice in few words: 'Among other Fictions,' says Rich, 'he tooke upon him to translate Virgill, and stript him out of a Velvet gowne into a Fooles coate, out of a Latin Heroicall verse into an English riffe raffe.' The question of

the English hexameter has received a final answer, and, for us, Stanyhurst is but an episode in the history of literature. What an episode! His very gravity makes him the more ludicrous, and his only pupils are Charles Cotton, Captain Alexander Radcliffe, Thomas Bridges, and the other writers of burlesque. It is still a wonder that even the Elizabethans, avid as they were of eccentricity, should have relished such stuff as this description (from the *Third Aeneid*) of Mount Aetna :

'Soomtyme owt yt balcketh from bulck clowds grimlye bedymmed.
Lyke fyerd pitche skorching, or flash flame sulphurus heating :
Flownce to the stars towring thee fire, like a pellet, is hurled,
Ragd rocks up raking : and guts of mounten yrented
From roote up hee jogleth : stoans hudge slag molten he rowseth :
With route snort grumbling, in bottom flash furye kendling.'

To Stanyhurst, Thomas Phaer seemed an insignificant competitor. He had enjoyed twenty years of fame before Stanyhurst's version was printed, and, though momentarily depressed, he survived the absurd fashion of the hexameter in the esteem of his contemporaries. Webbe praises his 'most gallant verse,' and chooses him as an example to prove 'the meetnesse of our speeche to receive the best forme of poetry.' The proof is deficient. Phaer was no

poet, and very ill-skilled to present the beauty of Virgil in English verse. As Anthony à Wood says, he was 'a person of a mutable mind,' who addicted his muse to many studies. Educated at Oxford, he studied law, wrote a work *Of the Nature of Writts*, and presently adopted medicine as his profession. Translation was his pastime, and, doubtless, his knowledge of the healing art was profounder than his knowledge of English or Latin. His Virgil, composed in lines of fourteen syllables, like Golding's Ovid and Chapman's Homer, never rises above a facile mediocrity. The translator constantly sacrifices taste and sense to the demands of rhyme, and mixes in a kind of familiar jingle the easy stateliness of the original. Even in the rare passages which display some movement and energy, he descends suddenly upon the wrong word, and sets the reader on his guard. Here, for instance, is his rendering of the celebrated lines, *Monstrum horrendum ingens*, etc., in the fourth book:

'A monster gastly great, for every plume her carkas beares
Lyke number leering eies she hath, like number harckning eares,
Lyke number tounges and mouthes she waggs, and wondrous thing to speake;
At midnight fourth she flies, and under shade her sounde doth squeake.'

If the first two lines might pass muster, no word can be said in defence of the others. With the word 'squeake,' Phaer descends into bathos, and the best

that can be said for him is that, while Stanyhurst always lets his reason go, Phaer is sometimes sane.

IX

The best loved of all the ancient poets was Ovid, whose popularity is attested by many translations of varying worth. The first version in point of date is *The Fable of Ovid treting of Narcissus, translated oute of Latin into Englysh Mytre, with a moral therein to, very pleasante to rede.* This was followed, five years later, by the first edition of Arthur Golding's work (1565), of which more will be said presently. In 1567 George Turbervile translated *The Heroycall Epistles of the learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso*, and in 1577 there came from the press two versions of *Ovid his Invective against Ibis*, one of which is the work of Thomas Underdowne, to whom, also, we owe the *Aethiopian Historie* of Heliodorus. Marlowe turned the Elegies into rhymed couplets with a clumsiness, which proves that he was attempting a work ill-suited to his genius, and George Chapman in 1595 published *Ovid's Banquet of Sence, with a Coronet for his Mistresse Philosophy, and his Amorous Zodiak. De Tristibus* was Englished by Churchyard (1572), and Francis Beaumont gave proof of his skill in a lively version of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602). The cause of Ovid's popularity is not far to seek. He was an efficient guide to the Greek and Roman mythologies, and he furnished the poets with theme,

sentiment, and allusion. Of all the translations, by far the most famous was Arthur Golding's rendering of the *Metamorphoses*. The first edition (1565) contained but four books. In 1567 the work was complete. It is described on the title-page as 'a worke very pleasaunt and delectable,' and a stern couplet warns the reader against frivolity:

'With skill, heede, and judgment, thys work must be red,
For els to the reader it stands in small stead.'

Golding's motive, in truth, was above suspicion. His work was 'pleasaunt and delectable' by accident. He wished to improve the occasion before all things. In a long epistle, addressed to Robert, Earl of Leicester, he clearly sets forth his purpose. There is no fable of Ovid which does not make for edification. For instance:

'In Phaeton's fable untoo syght the Poet dooth expresse
The natures of ambition blynd, and youthful wilfulnesse.'

So a little ingenuity will interpret every book in a sense most profitable to the reader. That Ovid and his readers were paynims he confesses with regret, and takes heart in the reflection that they may all be reduced 'too ryght of Christian law.' In the same spirit, he hopes that the simple sort of reader will not be offended when he sees the heathen names of feigned gods in the book, and assures him that every living wight, high and low, rich and poor, master and slave, maid and wife, simple and brave, young and old, good and bad, wise and foolish, lout and

learned man, shall see his whole estate, words, thoughts, and deeds in this mirror. It is a bold claim of universatility, which Ovid himself would not have made. But it was in tune with the temper of the age, and, doubtless, added to the popularity of the work.

The chief characteristic of the translation is its evenness. It never falls below or rises above a certain level. Turn whichever page you choose, and you will come upon lines unhampered by the Latin original. Take, for instance, the description of Envy's House:

'It standeth in a hollow dale where neyther light of Sunne,
Nor blast of any winde or Ayre may for the deepnesse come.
A dreyrie sad and dolefull den ay full of slouthfull colde,
As which ay dimd with smoldring smoke doth never fire beholde.
When Pallas that same manly Maide approched nere this plot,
She staide without, for to the house in enter might she not.
And with hir Javelin point did give a push against the doore.
The door flue open by and by, and fell me in the floore.
There saw she Envie set within, fast growing on the flesh
Of Snakes and Todes, the filthie foode that keepes hir vices fresh.
It lothde hir to beholde the sight.'

The craftsmanship is neither slovenly nor distinguished. The narrative flows through its easy channel without the smallest shock of interruption.

In other words, the style is rapid, fluent, and monotonous. The author is never a poet and never a shirk. You may read his mellifluous lines with something of the same simple pleasure which the original gives you. Strength and energy are beyond Golding's compass, and he wisely chose a poet to translate, who made no demand upon the qualities he did not possess. He chose a metre, too, very apt for continuous narrative—the long line of fourteen syllables, and it is not strange that his contemporaries bestowed upon him their high approval. Puttenham paid him no more than his due when he described him as 'in translation very cleare and very faithfully answering his author's intent.' He won the rare and difficult praise of Thomas Nashe, and he was honoured by Shakespeare, who did not disdain to borrow of his verses. The lines which follow will recall to every one a celebrated passage in *The Tempest*:

> 'Ye Ayres and windes: ye Elves of Hills, of Brookes, of Woods alone,
> Of standing Lakes, and of the Night approche ye everychone.

And Golding was by no means a man of one book. Educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, he had a scholar's qualification for his many tasks. He turned Latin and French into English with equal facility. Had it not been for Holland, he might justly have been called the 'Translator Generall in his age.' A friend of Sir Philip Sidney, he completed that poet's

translation of De Mornay's *Worke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion.* To him we owe our earliest and best version of Cæsar's *Gallic War* (1565), besides *The abridgemente of the Historie of Trogus Pompeius, gathered and written in the Latin tung by the famous Historiographer Justin* (1570), several works translated from Calvin and the *Politicke, Moral and Martial Discourses* written in French by M. Jacques Hurault (1595). He set his hand to many enterprises, and failed in none, and Webbe's panegyric might still stand for his epitaph: 'For which Gentleman surely our Country hath greatly to gyve God thankes: as for him which hath taken infinite paynes without ceasing, travelling as yet indefatigably, and is addicted without society by his continuall laboure to profit this nation and speeche in all kind of good learning.'

X

Though Ovid and Virgil were the favourites the other poets were by no means neglected. Though another reign than Elizabeth's saw the completion of Chapman's vigorous and faithful Homer, which Pope should never have displaced, Chapman published a translation of seven books of the *Iliad* in 1598, and a word must be said here of his splendid achievement. To do full justice to Chapman's work a continuous reading is necessary. It shines less brightly in isolated passages than in its whole surface, various

and burnished, like the shield of Achilles. It is a poet's echo of a poet—loud and bold. Justly may the same indulgence be granted Chapman which he would claim for Homer: he 'must not bee read for a few lynes with leaves turned over caprichiously in dismembred fractions, but throughout, the whole drift, weight, and height of his workes set before the apprensive eyes of his judge.' Then shall we perceive the true merit of Chapman's masterpiece. From end to end it gives proof of an abounding life, a quenchless energy. There is a grandeur and spirit in Chapman's rendering, not unworthy the original, 'of all bookes extant in all kinds the first and best.' The long, swinging line of fourteen syllables, chosen for the *Iliad*, is the fairest representative of Homer's majestic hexameters, and it is a matter for regret that Chapman preferred the heroical distich in his rendering of the *Odyssey*.

See, from a single scene, how Chapman pictured the shield of Achilles:

'He set neare this, a vine of gold; that crackt beneath the weight
Of bunches, blacke with being ripe, to keepe which, at the height,
A silver raile ranne all along; and round about it flow'd
An azure mote; and to this guard, a quick-set was bestow'd
Of Tin, one onely path to all; by which the pressemen came
In time of vintage; youths, and maids, that bore not yet the flame

Of manly Hymen; baskets bore, of grapes, and mellow fruite.
A lad that sweetly toucht a harpe, to which his voice did suite,
Centered the circles of that youth; all whose skill could not do
The wantons pleasure to their minds, that danc't, sung, whistl'd to.'

Moreover, Chapman claimed an advantage over his fellows in that he translated his author without a French or Latin intermediary. His knowledge of Greek was not impeccable. Errors due to ignorance or haste are not infrequent, nor need they cause us surprise, if it be true, as he asserts, that he translated the last twelve books in fifteen weeks. As little need they incur our censure. If Chapman, the scholar, sometimes nodded, Chapman, the poet, was ever awake, and his version of Homer will remain one among the masterpieces of his age and country.

In his prefaces he vindicates both Homer and himself from the detraction of enemies. Admitting proudly that his manner of writing is 'farre fecht, and, as it were, beyond sea,' he defends, as well he may, his 'varietie of new wordes.' If 'my countrey language were an usurer,' says he, 'hee would thanke mee for enriching him.' Chaucer had more new words than any man since him need devise, 'and therefore for currant wits to crie from standing braines, like a broode of Frogs from a ditch, to have

the ceaseless flowing river of our tongue turnde into their Frogpoole, is a song farre from their arrogation of sweetnes.' And, ready as he was, in his 'harmlesse and pious studie,' to esteem the policies and wisdoms of his enemies at no more value than a musty nut, he was readier still to champion the fame of Homer, especially against the 'soule-blind Scaliger' and his 'impalsied diminuation.' He did not belittle the beauty of the *Aeneid*, but, with perfect truth, declared that Homer's poems were 'writ from a free furie,' Virgil's out of a 'courtly, labourious, and altogether imitatorie spirit.' Thus he was loyal alike in commentary and interpretation, and, as he hailed Homer 'the Prince of Poets,' so he himself may justly be styled the prince of poetical translators.

Even he had his forerunners. In 1579 Thomas Purfoote gave to English what he calle *The Croune of Homer's Works, or The Battel of the Frogges and Myce*, and, in 1581, Arthur Hall, M.P. for Grantham, translated ten books of the *Iliad* from the French. Hall was of a turbulent spirit, in politics or out of it, a gambler and a brawler, but courageous withal, and untamed by his upbringing in Cecil's household. He had no Greek, and approached Homer through the timid version of Solel, whose timidity he found no difficulty in avoiding. He says that Ascham (he calls him Richard), 'a verie good Grecian, and a familiar acquaintance of Homer,' animated him much 'with great entreatie to goe forwarde with my begun enterprise.' Ascham, who seems to have heard some of

Hall's verses, should have known better. For his model he took Phaer's Virgil, and used that writer's metre of fourteen syllables to the line, known as Poulter's measure. 'When I lighted on M. Thomas Phaer's Virgilian English,' thus he writes with great respect, 'quoth I, what have I done? am I become senselesse, to travaile to be laughed at, to presume and to be scorned, and to put forth myself and not to be received?' And, speaking of his Homer as 'Satiricall,' he shows a glimpse of true self-criticism. His Homer is 'satiricall,' as were the travesties. As he followed Phaer in metre, in style, and vocabulary, so he gave a hint to Stanyhurst, who followed him. He is inapposite as only slang could make him. Jove in his doggerel warns Juno to 'talk no more so fonde and foolishly':

'Least moved I, with both my fistes I give you banging lawes,
And in such sort, as no god here can save you from my clawes,'

and he rises to his greatest height when he says of Aeneas, gazing on the prowess of Diomedes, that he

'Thus behelde the Trojans go to wracke,
With wounds and slaughter only one to put them al to sacke,
And at his pleasure play the Bug.'

Truly Hall had travelled far on the road away from Homer, and he cannot plead in excuse that Solel was his guide.

Of Horace, Thomas Drant Englished both Satires and Epistles, and Ben Jonson translated, in his own stiff fashion, the *Ars Poetica*; 'which Book amongst the rest of his Strenuous and Sinewy Labours, for its rare profundity, may challenge a just admiration of the Learned in this and future Ages, and crowne his name with a lasting memory of never-dying glory'; while Timothy Kendall's *Flowres of Epigrammes* (1575 and 1577) were gathered out of sundry authors, and particularly from Martial. The deficiency in Greek drama, as has been said, was made up for by many versions of Seneca, and there was no reason why an Englishman of the sixteenth century, who had not the ancient tongues, should have been deprived of a fair knowledge of the Greek and Latin poets.

XI

There is not so long a tale to tell of modern poets. Dante was unknown, and Petrarch was revealed for the most part surreptitiously under the names of his translators. The most widely read of them all was Du Bartas, styled by Gabriel Harvey 'the Treasury of Humanity and the Jewell of Divinity,' whose *Divine Weekes and Workes* were translated into rhymed decasyllabic verse by Joshua Sylvester (1590-2). The popularity which this version enjoyed is not easily intelligible, and the fact that Milton sought therein some sort of inspiration is not enough to tempt a modern curiosity. Tasso's masterpiece found two

translators in Edward Fairfax and Richard Carew, and Sir John Harington, at the behest of Queen Elizabeth, made a version of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1591) in eight-lined stanzas. His translation, like the other verse translations of the time, displays ease and fluidity without distinction. Its rapid course knows neither check nor variety. Its style is rather familiar than dignified, and Harington errs like Stanyhurst in the use of modern slang. Such lines as—

> 'They tooke them to a fort, with such small treasure,
> And in so Scarborow warning they had leasure,'

suggest the barbarism of the barbarous *Aeneid*.

Harington, moreover, embellished his text with a set of notes, in which he extols his family and his friends. He was a pedant and a courtier, who took to letters as a pastime, and practised them after the fashion of his kind. In a characteristic preface, he defended the craft of the poet, his chosen author, and his own enterprise. Though the craft, as he knew well enough, needed no apology, he could not refrain from breaking a lance with Puttenham, whose treatise had recently been published, and who had withheld the 'high and supernatural' title of maker from mere translators. In his defence of Ariosto, Harington appeals to authority and to sound morals. The Italian poet, says his translator, follows the rules of Aristotle. More than this, he follows Virgil with a patient fidelity. 'Virgill extolled Aeneas to please

Augustus; Ariosto prayseth Rogero to the honour of the house of Este.' And does not Alcina beguile Rogero, as Dido beguiled Aeneas? It is clear, therefore, that Ariosto should share the common eulogy of Virgil. Indeed, he may claim a higher praise, because there may be found in his many writings passages of which Virgil was incapable—such as the Christian demeanour of Charlemagne in the fourteenth book, and the conversion of Rogero to the Christian faith in the forty-first. Thus Harington treats Virgil as Golding treats Ovid, and reproves him, in sorrow rather than in anger, for his inevitable paganism. As for the mention of himself and his kinsmen in his notes, to which Harington pleads guilty, he made them because Plutarch blamed Homer for nowhere explaining of what stock he was, of what town, or of what country. 'Excuse me, then,' says he, 'if I in a work that may perhaps last longer than a better thing, and being not ashamed of my kindred, name them here and there to no man's offence.' No excuse is necessary. Who would blame a whimsical scholar for chattering of himself, and for interrupting a serious work with amiable anecdotage?

Besides the translations openly made and avowed, there are others which masquerade as fresh, unborrowed works. In his *Elizabethan Sonnets*, Sir Sidney Lee has traced to their origin in France or Italy a vast number of English sonnets. He has proved the debt which the poets of the sixteenth century owed to their predecessors. He has set side

by side in a close parallel the sonnets of Lodge and Ronsard, of Daniel and Desportes. He has shown most clearly what Wyatt and many others took from Petrarch. He has illustrated the 'influence' of Marot, du Bellay, de Pontoux, Jacques de Billy, and Durant upon our bards, great and small. As an episode in the history of translation this 'influence' is of the greatest interest. We should not consider its moral aspect too censoriously. In Puttenham's despite, the Elizabethans do not seem to have regarded plagiarism as a heinous sin. If they had, who would have escaped condemnation? No doubt Soothern, who pilfered from Ronsard, and spoiled what he pilfered, deserved all the censure which Puttenham heaped upon him.[1] But there are indications not merely that plagiarism was thought respectable, but

[1] 'Another of reasonable good facilitie in translation,' writes the wise critic in his *Arte of English Poesie* of Soothern, 'finding certaine of the hymnes of *Pyndarus* and of *Anacreons odes*, and other Lirickes among the Greekes very well translated by Rounsard the French poet, and applied to the honour of a great Prince in France, comes our minion and translates the same out of French into English, and applieth them to the honour of a great noble man in England (wherein I commend his reverend minde and duetie) but doth so impudently robbe the French Poet both of his prayse and also of his French termes, that I cannot so much pitie him as be angry with him for his injurious dealing. . . . And in the end (which is worst of all) makes his vaunt that never English singer but his hath toucht Pindar's string which was neverthelesse word by word as Rounsard had said before by like braggery.' Thus Puttenham justly trounced the bungling pickpocket of letters.

that a translator might claim as his own that which he had put into English. 'I call it mine,' says Nicholas Grimald of his translation of Cicero's *De Officiis*, 'as Plautus and Terence called the comedies theirs which they made out of Greek'; and, doubtless, Wyatt, Daniel, Lodge, Spenser, and the rest called the sonnets theirs which they had made out of French and Italian, because they had made them. Ben Jonson did not think it worth while to give Philostratus credit for his 'Drink to me only with thine eyes,' and he left it for the critics of a later age to track every chapter of his *Discoveries* to its lair. In neither case need the morality of his method be discussed, and Dryden's defence of him may stand as a defence for all save for such burglars as Soothern: 'he has done his robberies so openly, that we may see that he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him.'

ROGUES AND VAGABONDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

I

IN the sixteenth century rogues and vagabonds infested every corner of England. They packed the towns, they haunted the countryside to the common danger of peaceful citizens. 'Worke is left at home undone,' wrote Rowlands in his *Martin Mark-all* (1610), 'and loyterers laze in the streete, lurke in the Ale-houses, and range in the high-waies.' It is difficult to say by what means these vagabonds inflicted the heavier injury on the commonwealth—by their idleness or their depredations. Of many kinds, they were driven by many causes to their shiftless, wandering life. The largest class of all was the 'masterless' men, who refused to come beneath the yoke of labour, and who hoped by threats or begging to extort the bread which they would not earn with their hands. 'Work they will not,' wrote Edward Hext, a justice of the peace for Somersetshire in 1596; 'neither can they, without extreme pains, by reason their sinews are so benumbed and stiff through idleness, as their limbs being put to any

hard labour will grief them beyond measure: so as they will rather hazard their lives than work.' In brief, they preferred death before toil, and thought it better to confess a felony which was a hanging matter, than to perform the tasks allotted them in the house of correction.

Another dangerous mob of 'vagrom men' (*Much Ado*, III. iii. 26) consisted of the disbanded soldiers, who esteemed it a disgrace, after the free life of the camps, to resume their humble crafts. They, like their masterless fellows, refused to abandon the liberty of idleness, and since they were strong in arm and resolution they deprived of peace and comfort all those, who dwelt in upland towns and little villages. And after them came the bands of adventurers, whose trades made vagabondage inevitable, men whole and mighty in body, who used no 'merchandise, craft, or mystery whereby they might get their living.' These were of various character and many pursuits—fencers, who for centuries were accounted the promoters of idleness, ballad-mongers, and minstrels, who carried sedition up and down the country in their songs, bearwards, whose bears devoured many a child playing at the roadside, common players, who belonged to no baron of this realm, 'bawkers,' who haunted bowling-alleys to cozen the poor fools who resorted thither for sport, scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, who went abroad begging, without the authority of the Vice-Chancellor, shipmen, pretending losses at sea, together with a vast mob of jugglers,

tinkers, and petty chapmen. A motley crew indeed, which, while it levied an infamous toll upon rich and poor, endued the roads of England with the colours of romance, and lent the excitement of uncertainty to the lives of the people.

Thus year by year the rogues and vagabonds increased in number, until in 1596 it could be said with truth that 'the able men that were abroad, seeking the spoil and confusion of the land, could, if they were reduced to good subjection, give the greatest enemy her Majesty hath a strong battle, and (as they were then) were so much strength to the enemy.' In the meantime the gipsies were gathering in force, and leading their free lawless life under the stars. It was in the beginning of the sixteenth century that they made their first appearance, and the mystery of their coming and going was still unsolved. Though they were called Egyptians, or in derision, Moonmen, there were few who believed in their eastern origin. 'Ptolomy, I warrant,' says Dekker, 'never called them his subjects, no, nor Pharao before him.' And the same writer, declaring that their complexion is filthier than the tawny face of a red-ochre man, is sure, in defiance of the truth, that it is not their own. 'Yet are they not borne so,' says he, 'neither has the Sunne burnt them so, but they are painted so.'

Concerning their organisation and pursuits there is little difference of opinion. Their headquarters were in the Derbyshire Peak, whence they travelled southward over the country — 'Egyptian grass-

hoppers that eate up the fruites of the earth'—frequenting fairs and pillaging farmyards. It was an order among them, that 'none eate meat, as Pigges, Capons, Geese, or such like, unlesse he purchaise it by privie pilfery, or cleanly conveyance.' They travelled in companies of a hundred or more, men and women, and detached flying squadrons of four or five to do the work of cozenage by which they eked out the living they made by the roadside. They lightly deceived the common people, 'wholly addicted and given to novelties, toyes, and new fangles,' whom they delighted with the strangeness of their headgear, and of whose credulity they took an easy advantage. Wherever they went they practised legerdemain, or fast and loose, they professed a knowledge of physiognomy, palmistry, and other abused sciences, and by foretelling in the hand destinies, deaths, and fortunes, they robbed poor country girls of money and linen. Truly, they were 'charmers,' as Othello called the Egyptian, who gave the fatal handkerchief to his mother:

> 'She was a charmer, and could almost read
> The thoughts of people; she told her, while she kept it,
> 'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
> Entirely to her love.' (*Othello*, III. iv. 58-61.)

Shakespeare, as always, took the humaner view. That the gipsies were more harshly spoken of in general than they deserved is not wholly strange. They were enemies at once of the law-maker and the law-

breaker. The sturdy rogue, thinking that they took the bread out of his dishonest mouth, hated them as bitterly as did the constable, whose duty it was to arrest them. And so strong was the general feeling against them that they would have one and all gone to the gallows, had not the lawyers declared them not chargeable with felony, because, Scotland being their last home, they had not come into England from beyond the sea.

II

Many causes contributed to the vast increase of rogues and vagabonds. The old spirit of almsgiving, lavish and improvident, was no more. The territorial aristocracy had not yet recovered from the heavy blow dealt by the Wars of the Roses. The dissolution of the monasteries had destroyed the aristocracy of the Church. Stow unfeignedly regrets the ancient habit of generosity, which persuaded the great men of our realm to give relief to the poor. 'I myselfe,' he writes, 'in that declining time of charity, have oft seene at the Lord Cromwel's gate in London, more than two hundred persons served twise every day with bread meate and drinke sufficient, for hee observed that auncient and charitable custome as all prelates, noble men, or men of honour and worship his predecessors had done before him.' For good or evil this ancient custom was dead. The poor, brought up to rely upon the munificence of others, found the doors of their benefactors closed suddenly

against them, and were forced into the devious paths of begging and extortion.

The abbots, moreover, had been kindly landlords. They had always been ready to come to the aid of their tenants, and had done their best to lessen the risks which still beset the craft and mystery of farming. They did not hesitate to remit their rents, when bad seasons had made payment a hardship, and the confiscation of their land drove many an honest tiller of the soil to begging. But, great as was the injury inflicted upon agricultural England by Henry VIII.'s policy, there was another and deeper reason for the prevailing distress. Though it was hardly recognised at the time, a silent and far-reaching revolution was in progress. The merchants of England were acquiring a wealth and influence which had never been theirs, and they marked the first step which they took in prosperity by the purchase of land. With all speed they bought farms 'out of the hands of worshipful gentlemen, honeste yeomen, and poor laborynge husbands.' An immense increase of manufactures, had it not been checked at will by extortionate taxation, might have provided fresh work for idle hands, but the moment of transition, as always, was attended with great difficulty, and the new owners of the soil felt no inherited responsibility for the welfare of those, who had served their predecessors. The old relations which had bound the husbandman to his land were passing away; the merchant, proud of the wealth which he had acquired himself, did not under-

stand the obligation of generosity; the labourers whom he found attached to the soil were as nothing to him, nor did he scruple to turn them straightway adrift. 'Some also,' wrote Harrison, 'doo grudge at the great increase of people in these daies, thinking a necessarie brood of cattell farre better than a superfluous augmentation of mankind.' Such men he likened unto the pope and the devil, and rightly did he see in them a danger for the future. 'If it should come to passe,' he added, 'that any forren invasion should be made, which the Lord God forbid for his mercies sake!—then should these men find that a wall of men is farre better than stackes of corne and bags of monie, and complaine of the want when it is too late to seeke remedie.'

And they were likely to find more money than corn. For everywhere the plough was being suppressed, pasture was replacing arable, and many a labourer was driven upon the pad, to learn in starvation the hard shifts of beggary and crime. A single boy can mind a flock of sheep; the fair tillage of the soil was work for many men. The danger in which the ruin of agriculture placed the country was early understood. A petition presented to Edward VI.'s Council in 1550 boldly attributed the decay of England to the great multitude of sheep which were fed on her pastures. Its authors saw no profit either in sheep or shepherds. They demonstrated that the increase of sheep meant dearer wool, dearer mutton, dearer beef, and fewer eggs for a penny. Moreover, it caused 'great decay

to artyllary ; for that do we reken that shepherdes be but yll artchers.' And even then, thought they, we were but on the threshold of the havoc wrought by these silly sheep. They declared that since the reign of Henry VIII. every town and village in England, to the number of fifty thousand, had suppressed one plough. And of these fifty thousand ploughs—such is their tragic conclusion—' everye ploughe were able to maintain 6 persons : that is to saye, the man, the wyfe, and fower other in his house, lesse and more. 50 thousande plowes, six persons to every plough, draweth to the nomber of three hundred thousand persons were wont to have meate, drynke, and rayment, uprysing and down lying paying skot and lot to God and to the Kynge. And now they have nothynge, but goeth about in England from dore to dore, and axe theyr almose for Goddes sake. And because they will not begge, some of them doeth steale, and then they be hanged, and thus the Realme doeth decay, and by none other wayes els, as we do thynke.'

Such were the main causes of roguery and vagabondage. Ingenious persons, who did not always separate causes from symptoms, were not at a loss to discover others. This one declared it was the fault of the tippling houses, that one ascribed all the evils of the commonwealth to the sorry justice that was meted out to the wrongdoer ; and many others were sure that the only begetter of England's poverty and distress was the ever-increasing size of London.

There was, indeed, a steady, unceasing influx of artificers, unskilled labourers, and insolvent loafers into the metropolis. The suburbs were infested with loose, dissolute people, harboured in 'noysom and disorderly howses.' This overcrowding involved a double loss. The smaller towns in the kingdom with difficulty found enough labourers to do their proper work, while London swarmed with idle rogues, who hung about the taverns, ordinaries, dice-houses, and bowling-alleys to do what mischief they might. And thus it was that the statesmen of Elizabeth's reign attempted the hopeless task of checking the growth of London. They devised the most ingenious schemes. They passed what they deemed the wisest bills, and all in vain. They ordered that no new house should be built within three miles of London or Westminster, that no single house should be converted into two, that all shops and sheds, erected within seven years, should be razed to the ground, and that all unfinished buildings should be pulled down, and new foundations abolished. Schemes and Acts of Parliament were alike ineffective. Nothing could check the growth of London, and with her growth the rogues and vagabonds marvellously increased.

III

If it was impossible to get rid of the prevailing poverty, the statesmen of the sixteenth century did their best to mitigate it. They spared no pains to

come at an exact knowledge of the wandering rogues, who covered England like a plague of locusts. In 1571 a determined effort was made in every parish, in every wapentake, in every county, to make a census of all 'rogues, vagabonds, and mighty valliant beggars,' and to examine, whip, stock, and punish them according to law. And the punishment was in no sense indiscriminate. The poor were distinguished and classified with care and prudence. They were divided, as Harrison tells us, into three sorts. First came those who were poor by impotency—the fatherless child, the aged, the blind and the lame, the incurably diseased. Then there were those impoverished by casualty—the wounded soldier, the decayed housekeeper, the sick person grievously visited. And finally the thriftless poor had to be reckoned withal, the rioters who had consumed their livelihood, the vagabonds that would abide nowhere, the canting crew of rogues and strumpets, who lived on the high-road or in the woods, and levied a shameless toll upon society.

For all these was decreed relief or restraint according to their needs. The threefold object of Elizabeth's poor-laws was to feed the hungry, to punish the evildoer, and to exact payment from the unwilling rich. They were thus an inglorious mixture of enforced charity and the branding-iron. The first Act of Elizabeth's reign, for instance, provided that all who would not work should be adjudged vagabonds, that the poor and aged, forbidden to beg, should be

relieved in the parishes of their birth, that collectors of alms should be appointed on the Sunday after Midsummer Day, and fined £10 if they refused to serve, that the Bishop or his Ordinary should exhort the wealthy to subscribe, each according to his means, for the relief of the poor. Those who declined to pay were treated none too harshly. For their amiable guidance the statute enacted that if any person, properly exhorted, should, 'of his froward, wilful mind, obstinately refuse to give weekly to the relief of the poor, according to his ability; the Bishop, or his Ordinary, shall bind him, by recognisance, to appear at the Quarter Sessions; and at the said Sessions, the Justices shall charitably and gently persuade and move him.' If gentle persuasion were of no effect, the recalcitrant almsgiver was taxed a weekly sum, and shut up in prison until it was paid. One other necessary provision was added: if a parish was cursed with more poor than it could support, certain persons were licensed to beg within the limits of the county, and were bidden for their better control to wear badges on their breast and back. Here was a great loophole for corruption. The forgery of licences became a profitable trade, carried on by a set of scoundrels, called 'Jarkemen' in the canting tongue, whose skill, as Harman testifies, might have been more worthily and profitably employed.

Such was the Act which formed the basis of legislation for many years. Its scope was increased and modified from time to time. Now, to prevent the

increase of 'masterless' men, wages were regulated by law, and no person was permitted to depart out of service, 'onles he had a Testemoniall under the Seale of City or Towne corporate.' Now the definition of vagabond was so widely extended as to include every man and woman who did not follow an acknowledged trade, craft, or mystery. Again, the punishment of vagrancy varied in severity from year to year, which proved that legislation was still in the region of experiment. In 1572 rogues and vagabonds were condemned to be 'grevouslye whipped, and burnte through the gristle of the right Eare with a hot Yron of the compasse of an ynche about.' At a second offence they were adjudged felons without benefit of clergy. Even these penalties were too light for James I., who in the first year of his reign ordained that rogues should be branded in the left shoulder with a great roman R of the breadth of an English shilling, and when this failed to cleanse the highroad, he bade them summarily be banished to Virginia.

Charity and the branding-iron were, as might have been expected, wholly ineffectual. The severest punishments meted out to the scoundrel, the heaviest tolls levied upon the wealthy, neither cured nor discouraged the crime of vagabondage. A larger measure of relief was deemed necessary, and so it was that in 1598, in the thirty-ninth year of Elizabeth's reign, overseers were appointed in every parish, who should impose a rate, to provide sufficient flax, thread, wool, and iron, on which the poor might work, to

apprentice destitute children, and to keep the aged, lame, and blind from starvation. As an offset to this humane provision, the penalties against roguery were made yet harsher. 'Every vagabond found begging' —thus ran the law—'is to be stripped naked from the middle upwards, and openly whipped, until his or her body be bloody, and then be passed to his or her birthplace or last place of residence, and in case they know neither, they are to be sent to the House of Correction for a year, unless some one gives them employment sooner.' This Act, important of itself, gains increased importance from the fact that, with certain changes and additions, it was presently converted into the celebrated Act of 1601, which for more than three centuries has shaped our policy. Passed as an experiment, and, according to the general practice of England, in the panic caused by several bad harvests, it was made perpetual in the reign of Charles I., and remains, despite the many changes of thought and creed, upon our Statute-book.

IV

Meanwhile, the line which separated vagabondage from crime grew thinner with the years. The wanderers, whose very idleness was an offence against the law, turned readily to more evil practices. Many a simple trade, innocent of itself, assumed an air of roguery, when it was pursued on the high-road. 'The tinker in his budget, the pedlar in his hamper, the glass-man in his basket, and the lewd proctors

which carry the broad seal and green seal in their bags, cover an infinite number of felonies.' And whatever trifles these scoundrels picked up they disposed of easily enough. There were receivers in every ale-house, in every bush, who not merely sold the 'purchases' of their colleagues, but, like the old Jew whom Edward Wakefield found in Newgate, and Dickens's own Fagin, instructed the youth in light-fingered arts. 'These rabble are,' in fact, 'the very nurseries of rogues,' and the canting tongue was their fruitful method of instruction. 'If you can cant,' wrote Rowlands, 'you will never worke,' and true it was that they who had been long enough on the road to learn the dialect of the canting-men, never settled themselves to labour again. Thus the vast army of outlaws ever increased, and England won an unenviable supremacy in the kingdom of crime.

Yet all men were not permitted to come within the guilty circle. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thievery was a science as well as an art. It was hedged about with a hundred technicalities; it was organised strictly into a close corporation; it imposed on all those who embraced it its own laws, its own customs, its own language. Before a rascal could be admitted of the tribe, he underwent a sort of apprenticeship, he performed the proper rites of initiation. The Upright Man, of whom more presently, could make whom he would free of the guild. Did he meet a rogue, sturdy or impotent, who still dwelt without the pale, he carried him straightway

to the bousing-ken. 'Then,' says Harman, 'doth this upright man call for a gage of bowse, whiche is a quarte pot of drinke, and powres the same upon his peld pate, adding these words: "I. G. P. do stalle thee W. T. to the Roge, and that from hence forth it shall be lawefull for thee to Cant"—that is, to aske or begge—"for thy living in al places."' After this the initiate might be promoted to the highest order of roguery; with talent and courage he might even become an Upright Man himself, and administer the laws of his tribe to all the 'rowsey, ragged rabblement of rakehelles' which followed him.

That we possess so precise a knowledge of the fraternity of vagabonds, of its kinds and craft, is due to Thomas Harman, whose *Caveat, or Warening for commen cursetors vulgarely called Vagabones* (1567) bears upon every line the stamp of truth and authenticity. Harman, in truth, is the Hakluyt of roguery. He did for the underworld of Shakespeare's England that which the author of the *Voyages* achieved for the world of adventure. Like the honest man that he was, he acknowledges the good work done by Awdeley, his predecessor. 'There was a fewe yeares since a small breefe,' says he, 'set forth of some zelous man to his countrey, of whom I knowe not, that made a lytle shewe of there names and usage, and gave a glymsinge lyghte, not sufficient to perswade of their pevishe peltinge and pickinge practyses, but well worthy of prayse.' This is a fair estimate of Awdeley's *Fraternitye*. It is a 'glimsing light' and

'well worthy of praise.' Harman cherished a larger ambition. His book is a book of acute observation and varied experience. He sets down nothing that he has not seen with his eyes and heard with his ears. There is an intimacy in his descriptions which convinces the reader that he writes out of a fullness of knowledge. He has met his rogues face to face, has spoken with them, and marked well their peculiarities. When in his list of names he sets down John Stradling with the shaking head, and Harry Walles with the little mouth, when he records that Robert Brownswerd weareth his hair long, and that John Browne is a great stammerer, he intensifies the impression of truth.

Who and what he himself was remains uncertain. The few hints which he gives us are insufficient for a portrait. He lived at Crayford in Kent, a near neighbour of the right honourable and singular good lady, Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, to whom his dedication is addressed. He had been in the Commission of the Peace, and bore arms, which he tells us were engraved upon his pewter plate. Indeed, says he, 'beinge placed as a poore gentleman, [I] have kepte a house these twenty yeares, where unto poverty dayely hath and doth repayre, not without some reliefe, as my poore callinge and habylytie maye and doth extende.' And having occasion through sickness to tarry at home, he talked and conferred daily with many wily wanderers of both sorts, men and women, boys and girls. He had no difficulty

in surprising their secrets and measuring their ambitions, which he reveals, with no other motive (he is sure) than that 'their undecent, dolefull dealing and execrable exercyses may apere to all as it were in a glasse.' But no sooner does he take pen in hand than the artist which is in him gets the better of the Justice of the Peace, and he describes his fleeting fellowship, his Cursetors, with the zest and enthusiasm which are bred of sympathy. It is true that he preserves scrupulously and unto the end the farce of moral sentiments, but these sentiments carry no more weight than do the dull, inapposite moralisings of the Newgate Calendar.

Like most of his contemporaries, he disclaims any attempt at fine writing. He is content to be neither 'homely' nor 'darke.' He refuses to use such words, like 'robardesmen' and 'drawlatches,' as were familiar in Edward III.'s time. For the rest he confesses a love of plain order and common words. 'Eloquence have I none,' he says; 'I never was acquaynted with the muses; I never tasted of Helycon.' Here he strays from the truth. Throughout his book he betrays a love of artifice and ingenuity. He has a pretty taste for alliteration, and his sense of style is so acute that we owe to him our first vocabulary of the pelting speech. And what a gallery of portraits he has bequeathed to us, drawn each one of them with a cunning hand and a sureness of technical knowledge unsurpassed! The Ruffler is first of 'this odious order,' 'the worthiest of this unruly

rablement.' He has either fought in the wars or has been a serving-man, and, having shaken off all toil, lives by extorting defiantly where he thinks he may be bold, or by asking elsewhere a tearful charity for his maimed and bruised limbs. If twined hemp do not prevent him, he becomes in due course an Upright Man, a hero of great authority, whose behest all rogues obey, who travels the country, attended by his Mort or Doxy, who will turn his hand to pilfering clothes or breaking houses, and whose pride it is that, scorning the offer of meat and drink, he will accept nothing in charity save money.

Then follow the Hookers or Anglers, habited in frieze jerkins and gally slops, who mark by day what they carry off at night on their iron-hooked staves; the Priggers of Prancers, who lurk in the highways, and ride away on their booty threescore miles or more; the Palliards or Clapperdogens, ragged in patched clothes, who for gain and to be pitied blister their legs with spear-wort or arsenic; the Abraham Men, who feign to have been mad, and ask at the farmhouses for bacon, cheese, or wool, or anything that they may turn to money; the Fresh-water Mariners, whose ships have sunk in Salisbury Plain; the Counterfeit Cranks, who pretend sickness and never go abroad without a piece of white soap, which should make them foam at the mouth, and so deceive the common people; the Dummerers, who hold their tongues downdoubled, and show a forged writing that they were dumb,

together with a vast mob of Tinkers and Swadders, of Morts, Doxies, and Dells, who practise their trade of theft and beggary in every shire of England. And in their wake come an army of roaring boys and bullies, Corinthians or Ephesians of the true Church, as Shakespeare called them, who bouse in taverns, ruffle it at ordinaries, take their pleasure at their 'manner of Picked Hatch,' and who are always ready to empty a pocket or cog the dice.

Varying in skill and livery, they had a common purpose—to live without work, and a common end—the gallows. Harrison cites Cardan, an insecure authority, as saying that Henry VIII. hanged up threescore and twelve thousand of them in his time, and admits that there is commonly not one year 'wherein three hundred or foure hundred of them are not devoured and eaten up by the gallows in one place and other.' But wherever they went, whatever they did, they remained a class apart, separated from the rest of the world by strange names and a secret speech. No better means of defence against the realm of honesty, no better method of helping the hopeless beggar along the high-road, could have been devised than the Canting tongue or Pedlars' French, 'compact thirtie yeares since,' says Harrison, 'of English, and a great number of od words of their owne devising, without all order or reason: and yet such is it as none but themselves are able to understand.'

If we might believe Harrison, 'the first deviser thereof was hanged by the necke'; a just reward no doubt for

his deserts. But we may not believe Harrison. The pelting speech was not devised by one man, and cant words came into our English language long before the sixteenth century. They were derived from many and far distant sources. Each influx of foreign beggars added something to the Pedlars' French. Ireland and Wales contributed a large share to the slang of the Canting Crew. French words crossed the Channel, or travelled southward from Scotland. The vagrant monks, sent tramping up and down England at the dissolution of the monasteries, invented many a useful Latinism, and the old soldiers brought back from their campaigns strange, foreign words, half remembered and sometimes misunderstood. Above all, it should not be forgotten that the dialect of the rogues and vagabonds was not the same as the gipsy tongue, which did but increase its variety, and that it kept alive many specimens of provincial English, which otherwise had perished.

Thus the rogues and vagabonds, a close body, were walled about with a language and a nomenclature of their own. In the same spirit of technical exclusiveness each manifestation of their skill was controlled by rule and described in terms, of which the people, their victims, knew nothing. The cony-catchers, cross-biters, and shifters, who haunted London, chased their prey and played their confidence-tricks in obedience to an inexorable convention, which proves that the skilled industries of the underworld were highly organised, and that their practitioners

were closely banded together. 'If you marvel at these misteries and queynt words,' says Greene, 'consider, as the carpenter hath many terms familiar enough to his prentices, that others understand not at al, so have the cony catchers, not without great cause; for a falsehood once detected can never compass the desired effect.'

So they called their knaveries by the names of arts or laws,[1] of which names the most have long since lost their meaning. For instance, the craft of cheating at cards was called Barnard's law, and those who took part in it went by strange titles. The first of the cozens was called the Taker-up or Setter. 'O! 'tis our setter: I know his voice,' says Poins of Falstaff in 1 *Henry IV.* (II. ii. 56). His business it was to decoy the victim. Then came the Verser to his help, a man of more worship than the Taker-up, and wearing the countenance of a landed man. And when they were set the Barnard stumbles in, habited like an aged farmer, and a pretended stranger to them all. Those who in our own days have seen the three-card trick played will recognise the procedure, and know that for the cozen there is no way of escape. The rest, in fact, was easy, and if the cozen lost ungraciously at cards, there stood a Rutter at the door with drawn sword ready to force a quarrel on an ostler or on his own shadow, so that, in the turmoil

[1] In the eighteenth century the word 'law' was changed to 'lay.' The figging law of the cony-catchers became the figging lay of Jonathan Wild.

of the fray, the Barnard may steal away with the spoil.

That is a typical example of cheating law, and Vincent's law matches it in curiosity. This was a species of cozenage practised by those who frequented bowling-alleys, and it explains why those resorts, innocent enough of themselves, were condemned as lewd and unlawful places. The Bawkers, as they were called, who took the chief part, came into the alley, like honest citizens eager for the sport. No sooner does the game begin, than the Gripes, who are their accomplices, shout the odds aloud, and quietly take up whatever bets are offered. Thus they entice the Vincent, who is their victim, to his undoing. 'I take six to one,' says the Gripe. 'I lay it,' answers the Vincent, and one thing only was certain, that he lost whom the Vincent backed. In the same lingo the simple practice of shoplifting was known as the Lifting Law, and they who followed it are thus described: he that steals the parcel is known as the Lift; he that receives it is the Marker; the Santar stands without and carries it off; and the goods thus stolen, or purchased, to use the euphemism of Bardolph and Nym, was known as the garbage.

The High Law was the most famous of all—the law of robbing on the highway—which gave England a perverse celebrity until the end of the eighteenth century. The adventurer who practised this dangerous art was called a High Lawyer, and to succeed he needed nothing less than a bold, stern look, a stout

heart, and a good sword. He was, in truth, the plain antithesis of the palliards and dummerers, who mumped at the roadside; yet he, too, though freedom was the essence of his craft, subscribed to the articles, and used the jargon of his law. The names and duties of his accomplices were duly set forth. He who set a watch was called a Scripper; the watch was known as the Oak, and the victim was the Martin, who, when he yielded, was said to stoop. From these confused images and the restraints which they imposed the High Lawyer presently emancipated himself, and he remained for two centuries the independent sovereign of the road.

V

Thus in the sixteenth century the science of roguery was patiently studied and thoroughly understood by its professors. The art, as happens often, lagged far behind the science. When men analyse their handicraft too closely they are wont to forget their skill. Yet signs of improvement were not lacking, and the fact that the pickpocket was throwing the cutpurse into contempt proves that at least one branch of roguery was pursued with lightness of hand and courage of heart. The historians, indeed, separate, by a sharp contrast, the Nip and the Foist. The object of both was the same—a heavily laden purse; but while the Nip was content to use a knife and cut the purse, the Foist drew the pocket into his

hand. The artistic superiority of the Foist was evident, and he was not slow to claim it. He called himself always a Gentleman Foist, and so bitterly did he disdain the clumsiness of his brother Nip, that he would not carry a knife in his pocket, wherewith to cut his meat, lest he might be suspected of putting it to any improper use. Here breathes the spirit of true artistry; and it is not surprising that the rhapsodist describes the perfections of the Foist with a thinly veiled enthusiasm.

'An exquisite Foist,' says Greene, 'must have three properties that a good surgion should have, and that is an Eagles eie, a Ladies hand, and a Lyons heart: an Eagles eie to spy a purchase, to have a quick insight where the boung[1] lies, and then a Lyons heart not to feare what the end will bee, and then a Ladies hand to be little and nimble, the better to dive into the pocket.' In short, the true Foist had nothing to help him save what Hamlet called his 'pickers and stealers' (*Hamlet*, III. ii. 355-6), and he deserved all the credit that his sleight of hand won for him. The Nip, on the other hand, could not work without a clumsy apparatus. Ben Jonson calls him a 'knight of the knife,' or 'a child of the horn-thumb,' referring of course to the guard or stall which was his protection against the sharp edge of the knife. And even the Nip was forced to do his work with celerity. 'I warrant him a quick hand,' says Overdo of Ezekiel Edgworth

[1] The boung is the purse, still known as the bung in the flash speech of to-day.

in *Bartholomew Fair*, and quick as he was Ezekiel did not escape the eye of the critic. However, it was a time of change, and some there were who employed both methods. If the Foist would never stoop to nip, the Nip sometimes aspired to higher game. Autolycus, a finished artist only in speech, used the knife as well as his hand. 'In this time of lethargy,' said he, 'I picked and cut most of their festival purses' (*Winter's Tale*, IV. iii. 628-30). And, despite the jealousy which divided them, the Foists and the Nips met on common ground. As has been said, they sought the same end by different roads, and so they instituted a kind of brotherhood amongst themselves, and kept their own meeting-place. Once their hall was near Bishop's Gate, if we may believe Greene, and, when that became too familiar, they removed to Kent Street, to the house of one Laurence Pickering, the brother-in-law of Ball, the hangman, who accounted for the most of them in the end.

Both the Foist and the Nip worked with an accomplice, whom they called a Stall, and whose business it was to jostle and perplex the victim while his purse was being removed. Oftentimes, too, the ballad-monger was their ally, who gathered a crowd about him and held its attention. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Nightingale, the ballad-man, calls Edgworth, the civil cutpurse, his secretary, and, as Mooncalf says, 'they are never asunder.' By a fine irony Edgworth tickles Cokes in the ear with a straw, to make him draw his hand from his pocket, at the very moment when the

ballad-man is singing his 'Caveat for Cutpurses' to the famous tune of 'Paggington's Pound.' 'Repent then,' says Nightingale,

'Repent then, repent you, for better, for worse,
And kiss not the gallows for cutting a purse.
Youth, youth, thou hadst better been starv'd by thy nurse,
Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.'

And Cokes cries aloud, 'O Lord! my purse is gone, my purse, my purse, my purse!'

Wherever men were gathered together on business or pleasure, there the Foists and the Nips plied their trade. Paul's was their favourite haunt at the hour of noon, and during Term time they found great profit at Westminster Hall. The Tiltyard knew them, and Tyburn on execution days. They frequented fairs, and assemblies of all sorts. So rapidly did their fame increase, that to lose a purse seemed as intimately a part of London as its fog. In 1598 Paul Hentzner visited Bartholomew Fair, and thus recorded his experience: 'While we were at this show, one of our company, Tobias Salander, Doctor of Physic, had his pocket picked of his purse, with nine crowns, which, without doubt, was so cleverly taken from him by an Englishman, who always kept very close to him, that the Doctor did not perceive it.' Poor Salander, the first foreigner to suffer from a craft which ever since has won for England a world-wide renown!

VI

The High Lawyers, if more highly respected, were less famous than the Foists. Their day was still to come, yet there was one exponent of the High Law in Shakespeare's time who is worth more than a passing notice. Gamaliel Ratsey was his name, and though he might not hold a candle to such heroes as Captain Hind, he was a man of infinite humour, who looked further than the profit of the moment. Born at Market Deeping, in Lincolnshire, of prosperous parents, he was bred a scholar, like many of his kind, and renounced scholarship to follow the Earl of Essex to Ireland. He retired a disbanded soldier, with nothing to help him to a living save a love of fight and a resolution to repel any injury that might be offered him. His first exploit was at Spalding, and was little to his credit. Putting up at an inn, he soon became free of the landlady's parlour, saw where on a market-day a farmer put £40 for safety, and stole it. And then he made the gravest mistake of his life. He fled straight to Market Deeping, confessed his crime to his mother, who gave him up, and was lodged in gaol. However, he lost no time in breaking prison, escaped in his shirt, and eluded his pursuers by swimming 'a very dangerous great water.' Being an outlaw, he took to the road, and presently had the good fortune to rob a serving-man of his horse. Henceforth his way was easy, and having fallen in with George Snell and Henry Shorthose, two likely

confederates, he played his game in accord with all the rules of the High Law.

It is recorded of him that he had his intelligencers abroad and robbed by system. His best aids were the ostlers and chamberlains of the wayside inns, who felt the weight of the traveller's capcase, and knew well the road he would take. The fraudulent ostlers were familiar to Harrison. They 'make such packs,' said he, 'with slipper merchants which hunt after preie (for which place is sure from evill and wicked persons) that manie an honest man is spoiled of his goods as he travelleth to and fro, in which feat also the counsell of the tapsters or drawers of drinke and chamberlains is not seldome behind or wanting.' So, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV.* the chamberlain of the inn at Rochester was in league with the 'pick-purse.' 'Good morrow, Master Gadshill,' says he. 'It holds current that I told you yesternight: there 's a franklin in the wild of Kent hath brought three hundred marks with him in gold: I heard him tell it to one of his company, last night at supper; a kind of auditor; one that hath abundance of charges too, God knows what. They are up already, and call for eggs and butter; they will away presently.' 'Sirrah,' replies Gadshill, 'if they meet not with Saint Nicholas' clerks, I 'll give thee this neck' (1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 52-60).

Such were the accomplices who aided the ingenious Gamaliel on his predatory journeys, and Gamaliel

had no lack of talent to improve their aid. He wore a mask, which struck terror into the minds of all beholders. 'A face worse than Gamaliel Ratsey's,' writes Ben Jonson in *The Alchemist*. And his courage took quick advantage of the terror which he inspired. Thus with 'a base and boisterous sword' he enforced for many years 'a thievish living on the common road.' But it was his humour and sense of oratory which gave Ratsey his greatest fame. In the gallant High Lawyer that he became there was lost a man of letters or, at least, a rhetorician. The right word was ready on his tongue for every occasion. When he faced nine men alone and took £200, 'it is well known,' said he curtly, 'that I rob not for trifles.' His encounter with a scholar from Cambridge was conducted with a graver pomp. The two ambled on together a summer's day, and passed the time in amiable discourse. At last cried Ratsey, turning curtly to business: 'We will have money if it walke upon the earth.' The scholar surrendered what he had, and would have been gone. But Ratsey stayed him, saying that he liked his discourse so well, he would have him preach him 'some short sermon of repentance.' The scholar perforce complied, and preached for two hours to such purpose that the rascal gave him two of his own angels back, and promised him that if ever patronage were his he should come to preferment.

It was in the same spirit that Ratsey conducted the pretty prank he put upon some actors whom he met

in an inn. Nothing would satisfy him but they must play before him, and a magnificent reward of forty shillings marked his approval. The next morning the actors rode off, well content, but Ratsey soon overtook them, with a very different tale to tell. 'Therefore, be short,' said he, 'deliver mee your money; for I will turne usurer now; my fortie shillings again will not serve without interest.' And he in exchange gave the players the benefit of his advice. 'Get thee to London,' he bids the better of them, 'for if one man were dead, they will have much neede of such a one as thou art. . . . And when thou feelest thy purse well lined, buy thee some place or lordship in the country, that, growing weary of playing, thy money may there bring thee to dignitie and reputation; then thou needest care for no man, nor not for them that before made thee prowd with speaking their words on the stage.' 'Sir, I thank you,' quoth the player, 'for this good counsell; I promise you I will make use of it, for I have hearde, indeede, of some that hath gone to London very meanly, and have come in time to be exceeding wealthy.' 'And in this presage and propheticall humour of mine,' says Ratsey, 'kneele downe. Rise up, Sir Simon two Shares and a Halfe; thou art now one of my knights, and the first knight that ever was player in England.' The obvious reference to Burbage and Shakespeare has raised this prank above the common level of the jest-book.

Thus Ratsey rode up and down the country in true

merriment of spirit, and all the while there lay upon him the shadow of the tree. The fatal hour overtook him at Bedford, where he and Snell robbed a gentleman after a desperate encounter. Ratsey, gravely wounded, rode off with the spoil, and might never have been charged with the crime, had not Snell, who was caught stealing a horse at Gravesend, thought to save his skin by giving up his companion. His treachery was unavailing, and all three, Ratsey, Snell, and Shorthose, 'suffered' at Bedford on the 26th of March 1605. As for Ratsey, not merely did he make a noble and dignified end, but he composed in gaol just such a copy of verses, unimpeachable alike in sentiment and scansion, as we should expect from one who, even on the pad, never lost touch with scholarship.

Just such another as Gamaliel Ratsey was Luke Hutton, a scholar also and a knight of the road. He, too, cried 'stand and deliver'—already the classic formula—on every highway in England. Of gentler birth than Ratsey, for in Fuller's despite he seems to have been a younger son of the Archbishop of York, he was educated at Trinity College in Cambridge, and left that honourable foundation in 1584 without a degree. He instantly became an adept at the High Law, repented more than once of his profession, and each time took to the highway again, until in 1598 he was hanged for robbing at York. There is a certain indelicacy in thus being brought to justice within his father's diocese, and the Archbishop's refusal to interrupt the course of justice was perhaps not unreason-

able. It is thus that Sir John Harington excuses the severity. Luke, he says, was 'so valiant that he feared not men nor Laws, and for a robbery done on St. Luke's Day, for name's sake he died as bad a death, I hope with a better mind, than the Theef of whom St. Luke writes, that he bad our Saviour, if he were Christ, to save himself and him. The Archbishop herein show'd the constancy and severity worthy of his place; for he would not endeavour to save him (as the world thought he easily might) and deserved herein the praise of justice, which Eli wanted, that was too indulgent of his sonnes vices.' In his last days Hutton's scholarship profited him not a little. He composed a ballad of *Repentance*, which he dedicated to Henry Earl of Huntingdon, and in *The Blacke Dogge of Newgate* he produced a work, 'pithie and profitable for all readers,' which has kept his memory green unto this day.

The age of Shakespeare produced many admirable artists in crime; yet none of them was more bravely characteristic of the age than was Mary Frith, the famous Moll Cutpurse, a true Elizabethan in courage and flamboyancy of spirit. Everything about her was great—her knowledge, her voice, her heart. She was born four years after the destruction of the Armada, and she died a brief year before the return of Charles II. to his rightful throne. Her activities thus covered a long period, and as she was the heroine of a comedy of Middleton, so, says rumour, with her own voice she bade the rebel Fairfax stand and deliver. A

woman neither in kind nor manner, she well earned her title of 'Roaring Girl,' and she was ready to drink her tobacco or use her sword with any roysterer in London. 'She has the spirit of four great parishes,' says the dramatist, 'and a voice that will draw all the city.' She cherished also a natural love of skill, and did her best, by discouraging the Nip, to admit the Foist to the fullness of his glory. 'The best signs and marks of a happy industrious hand,' she wrote, 'is a long middle finger usually suited with what they call the fool's or first finger.' Later artists called these twain 'the forks.' And it was not long before Moll retired from the eager practice of her craft. She quickly discovered that hers were the gifts of command and government, and thus she made herself the head of a vast gang, which for many years was a terror to Brentford and Shooter's Hill. Not merely did she plan the robberies which her henchmen carried out, but she disposed of their purchases, either to their just owners, if the reward were sufficient, or to certain cunning merchants whom she knew. Thus for many years she ruled the underworld of England with an iron hand, and in the heyday of her youth shared the sovereignty of the realm not unfittingly with the austere, implacable Elizabeth herself.

VII

Such are some of the rogues who trampled honesty under foot in Shakespeare's time. That he knew them and their exploits is certain; it is certain also

that he saw them, as he saw all men, in an atmosphere of romance. Ben Jonson, stern realist that he was, paints them in their true colours. You know that Jordan Knockem and Zekiel Edgworth plied their trade in the streets and fairs of London. Falstaff is the High Lawyer purged of reality. The fat knight bade no man stand and deliver save on the highroad of poetry. His humour throws a radiance over his worst villainies. A word elevates his greed, his cowardice, his falsehood, to sublimity. No sooner does he come upon the stage than 'nimble fiery and delectable shapes' (*2 Henry IV.*, IV. iii. 108) emanate from his brain. 'We that take purses,' says he, 'go by the moon and the seven stars, and not by Phoebus, he, "that wandering knight so fair"' (*1 Henry IV.*, I. ii. 15-17). Himself and his friends are 'Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon' (*ibid.*, I. ii. 29-30). Even when he would mend his ways it is but in thought and for a moment. 'I must give over this life,' he says, 'and I will give it over; by the Lord, an I do not, I am a villain: I'll be damned for never a king's son in Christendom' (*ibid.*, I. ii. 106-9). Before the end of the sentence his humour has changed, and there follows a dialogue which sets this wayward 'tun of a man' vividly before us:

PRINCE. 'Where shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?'

FAL. 'Zounds! where thou wilt, lad, I'll make one; an I do not, call me a villain and baffle me.'

PRINCE. 'I see a good amendment of life in thee; from praying to purse-taking.'

FAL. 'Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation' (*ibid.*, I. ii. 110-17).

So robbery and repentance are alike the fruit of his fancy. Why should he rob, if he may not repent? Why should he repent, if he may not rob again? It is but as the mood takes him, and for all his fat body, for all the weight of flesh that 'lies three fingers on the ribs' (*ibid.*, IV. iii. 78-81), he is capricious as a child, mobile as the changing wind.

Thus the plot is laid. In Poins's exhortation is summarised the whole art and science of the road: 'My lads, my lads, to-morrow morning, by four o'clock, early at Gadshill! There are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings, and traders riding to London with fat purses: I have vizards for you all; you have horses for yourselves. Gadshill lies to-night in Rochester; I have bespoke supper to-morrow night in Eastcheap: we may do it as secure as sleep. If you will go I will stuff your purses full of crowns; if you will not, tarry at home and be hanged' (*ibid.*, I. ii. 137-47). Such is the prelude to the famous episode of the man in buckram.

Gadshill is a match in vaunting cowardice for the fat knight. He is a true Trojan, a veritable roaring boy. 'I am joined with no foot-land-rakers,' he brags, 'no long-staff sixpenny strikers, none of those mad mustachio-purple-hued malt worms'

(*ibid.*, II. i. 81-3). For all his brave words he loves fighting as little as the others, and, like Peto, cares not who sees his back. And it is Bardolph that is the mean-souled, irredeemable villain of the gang. A born rogue, he has lived in the hedgerow. Falstaff has seen other days, and loves adventure as he loves sack. When he is out at heels, he must cony-catch. As he says, 'I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch' (*Merry Wives*, II. ii. 23-6).

Bardolph has no honour to hide. He shuffles willingly and by the light of nature. Purse-picking is for him a plain promotion. He confesses that he has been a clapperdudgeon and feigned wounds. Seven years before he had tickled his nose with spear-grass to make it bleed, and beslubbered his garments with it. Even when the warlike Harry 'assumed the port of Mars,' it was the hope of petty theft that drove him and Nym to France. 'They will steal anything and call it purchase,' complains the Boy. 'Bardolph stole a lute-case, bore it twelve leagues, and sold it for three-halfpence. Nym and Bardolph are sworn brothers in filching, and in Calais they stole a fire-shovel: I knew by that piece of service the men would carry coals. They would have me as familiar with men's pockets as their gloves or their handkerchers' (*Henry V.*, III. ii. 45-53). And their very meanness makes Bardolph and the rest the best foil for Falstaff, whose gay-hearted mag-

nanimity not even cowardice can impair, who, old as he is, confronts the travellers on Gadshill with a 'What! ye knaves, young men must live' (1 *Henry IV.*, II. ii. 99-100); and in the midst of riot cries, 'a plague of sighing and grief! it blows a man up like a bladder' (*ibid.*, II. iv. 370-1).

VIII

Falstaff is of an heroic mould. He transcends the scale of human life. Autolycus brings us back to the earth again. Save in speech, he goes not beyond the general experience of his time. This 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles' is, as it were, an epitome of vagabondage; he resumes the rogueries of Harman's 'Caveat' in his proper person; he is a cozener, that will turn his hand to anything. His traffic is sheets. 'When the kite builds,' says he, 'look to lesser linen' (*Winter's Tale*, IV. ii. 23-4). And being born of Shakespeare's fancy, he cannot but set his cozenage to music:

'The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!
Doth set my pugging teeth on edge;
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king'
(*ibid.*, IV. ii. 5-8).

When the Clown surprises him, he is grovelling on the ground, playing a trick that the counterfeit crank did not disdain. 'O! help me, help me!' he cries, 'pluck but off these rags, and then death, death!'

(*ibid.*, IV. ii. 56-7). To courage and virtue he makes no pretence. 'I must confess to you, sir, I am no fighter,' says he: 'I am false of heart that way' (*ibid.*, IV. ii. 116-17). Much as he loves the crime, he dreads its consequences. 'Gallows and knock are too powerful on the high road,' he admits, 'beating and hanging are terrors to me' (*ibid.*, IV. ii. 28-30). At the same time he finds Honesty a fool, and 'Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman' (*ibid.*, IV. iii. 608-10). If he is honest himself, it is 'by chance,' and he takes a noble pride in his own superiority, when he envisages the Clown and the Shepherd:

> 'How bless'd are we that are not simple men!
> Yet nature might have made me as these are'
> (*ibid.*, IV. iii. 744-5).

Nor does he underrate the difficulties of his craft: 'to have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, is necessary for a cut-purse; a good nose is requisite also, to smell out work for the other senses' (*ibid.*, IV. iii. 688-91). In just such words as these does Greene appreciate the qualities of the Foist, and it is evident that Autolycus had the whole duty of the cony-catcher at his fingers' ends. Above all, this filcher, this ballad-singer, this counterfeit crank, is endowed with a fine sense of irony. When the Clown picks him up after his feigned beating, he empties the Clown's pocket, and then gallantly refuses the offer of money:

'No, good sweet sir: no, I beseech you, sir . . .

offer me no money, I pray you! that kills my heart (*ibid.*, IV. ii. 85-9).

In *King Lear* we may watch the same process at work, yet more intimately. Mad Tom is at once closer to and more remote from his model than Autolycus. The hapless figure, strange to us, was familiar in its essence to all those who frequented Shakespeare's theatre.[1] Awdeley, in *The Fraternitye of Vacabondes*, gave Shakespeare the rough sketch: 'An Abraham man'—thus he writes—'is he that walketh bare armed, and bare legged, and fayneth hym selfe mad, and caryeth a packe of wool, or a stycke with baken on it, or such lyke toy, and nameth himselfe poore Tom.' Harman adds that the Abraham men beg at farmers' houses, and that if they espy small company therein 'they wyll with fierce countenaunce demaund somewhat.' Now see what Shakespeare makes of the Abraham man in the person of Edgar:

> 'The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
> And with this horrible object, from low farms,
> Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
> Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
> Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod, poor Tom!'
> (*King Lear*, II. iii. 13-20).

[1] That there was no doubt about the personage whom Edgar represented is evident in Act IV. sc. i. l. 26, where the Old Man at his first appearance on the stage recognises the Bedlamite. ''Tis poor mad Tom,' he says.

There is a close resemblance of fact between the verse and the prose, but in fancy how far are they remote! By every touch Shakespeare emphasises poor Tom's madness, and suppresses the beggar that is in him. It is the Bedlamite, not the rogue, that stands before us.

'Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom!
(*ibid.*, III. iv. 37).

Thus he sings on the borderland of sense and nonsense. Even when he begs, his voice rather claims pity than utters threats. 'Who gives anything to poor Tom?' he asks. '. . . Tom's a-cold. . . . Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes' (*ibid.*, III. ii. 49-61). He shows his misery and hunger through a veil of fancy. 'Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water' (*ibid.*, III. iv. 132-4). The revenge which society takes upon him seems actual. He is 'whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished, and imprisoned' (*ibid.*, III. iv. 138-9). Yet even this toll of vengeance is levied by the imagination. You cannot believe that it is Shakespeare's Poor Tom who is whipped and stocked. He still remains etherealised, a poetical symbol of Bedlam. Lear, with the intuition of madness, sees through his rags, 'his Persian attire,' to the disembodied spirit within, and says: 'thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume . . . Thou art the thing itself;

unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art' (*ibid.*, III. iv. 106-11).

IX

After crime the punishment. And though of old it was a commonplace that every rogue was at last 'trussed up in a Tyburn tip,' Shakespeare fills us with surprise that so many vagabonds were called to account. The skill of the rogue was ill-matched by the pompous simplicity of the law. 'The thief doth fear each bush an officer,' says Shakespeare (3 *Henry VI.*, v. vi. 12), and if the officer were no better than Dogberry or Elbow, he was less formidable even than a bush. The constable, the headborough, and the watch are mere figures of fun in the plays. 'If we know him to be a thief,' asks the watch, 'shall we not lay hands on him?' 'Truly, by your office, you may,' answers Dogberry, 'but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled. The most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is, to let him show himself what he is and steal out of your company' (*Much Ado*, III. iii. 58-64). Shakespeare's constables, in truth, are no better able to keep the peace than a constable in a modern pantomime. Their skill is an inspired misuse of words, the utmost of their endeavour is to raise the parish. Again, the poet indulged his fancy, proving his humorous sympathy for the thief by his ridicule of the thief-taker. For in

Dogberry's despite the rascals who levied toll on rich and poor went not unpunished.

When once the malefactor was caught, he suffered summary punishment. The prisons of the seventeenth century were for criminals places of brief resort. There the thief sojourned on his way to the gallows, and the debtor lingered until he had satisfied the demands of his creditors. Nor were they managed with any regard to the comfort of their occupants. Those who had no money in their pockets found in them little enough to eat. There remains a prisoner's petition, which reveals their pitiful condition. It runs thus: 'in all lamentable manner, most humbly beseecheth your good Worship, wee, the miserable multitude of very poore distressed prisoners, in the hole of Wood-street Counter, in number fiftie poore men or thereabouts, lying upon the bare boordes, still languishing in great neede, colde, and miserie, who, by reason of this daungerous and troublesome time, be almost famished and hunger-starved to death; others very sore sicke, and diseased for want of reliefe and sustenance, by reason of the great number, which dayly increaseth, dooth in all humblenes most humbly beseech your good worship, even for Gods sake, to pitie our poore lamentable and distressed cases; and nowe helpe to relieve and comfort us with your Christian and Godly charitie against this holie and blessed time of Easter.' [1]

[1] *A Collection of Seventy-nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broadsides, printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth between the Years 1559 and 1597.* London, 1867, pp. 16-17.

This is a sincere cry from the heart, which went not unregarded. To alleviate the distress a humane clause was inserted in the famous Act of the forty-third year of Elizabeth's reign, directing a sum of money to be raised by a weekly rate for the relief of the poor prisoners in the King's Bench and Marshalsea. On the other hand, a prison was not too harsh a dwelling-place for those who had money to spend. There was at least the freedom of squalor. Barnardine in *Measure for Measure* 'hath evermore had the liberty of the prison.' If leave were given him to escape he would not take it. 'Drunk many times a day, if not many days entirely drunk,' he was unmoved even when he saw the warrant of execution (IV. ii. 154-60). And when at last the hangman calls for him in seeming earnest he is deaf to the summons. 'I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brains with billets. I will not consent to die this day, that 's certain' (*ibid.*, IV. iii. 57-61).

In the jails of the sixteenth century, if there was greater cruelty, there was, to be sure, less formality than to-day. Crime and the law were more closely connected. A prisoner, if he would turn hangman, had a fair chance of saving his life. 'Thou shalt have the hanging of the thieves,' says the Prince to Falstaff, 'and so become a rare hangman' (1 *Henry IV.*, I. ii. 75-6). And in *Measure for Measure* Pompey is offered his freedom on the familiar condition. But

Abhorson, the executioner, likes not his new colleague. 'A bawd, sir?' says he to the Provost. 'Fie upon him! he will discredit our mystery' (IV. ii. 29-30). The jailers, whether pardoned criminals or not, erred not on the side of clemency. They were made, says William Fennor, of the same stuff as the fabric, stone and iron; and, as the jails themselves were 'noisome and unsavoury,' it was well that they were for the most part mere halting-places between the crime and the scaffold. The ancient laws of England were like the laws of Draco in their simplicity. Rogues and vagabonds were, at their first offence, branded, or stocked. They might be whipped at the cart's tail, or be asked to preach in a pillory for lack of pulpit. But a second offence brought them within the reach of felony, and felony meant the gallows. So even a poor, masterless man, if he disdained work, was compelled at last to groan out of a cart up the heavy hill.

Truly, felony was a large and comprehensive term. Breach of prison, hunting by night with painted faces, carrying of horses into Scotland, stealing of hawks' eggs, conjuring and witchcraft, diminution of coin, stealing of cattle, robbing by the highway, or on the sea, or of dwelling-houses, letting out of ponds, cutting of purses, deer-stealing by night, counterfeiting of coins, impenitent roguery and idleness—all these were felonies and punishable according to law with a hempen rope. In England, then, the gibbet was, with one exception, universal. At Halifax alone the

felon climbed no triple tree. If he was convicted of stealing thirteen-pence-halfpenny or upwards he was beheaded upon the next market-day. The instrument of his suffering was, as Harrison describes it, not unlike the guillotine; and, it is satisfactory to reflect, when the pin was pulled out 'the head blocke wherein the ax is fastened dooth fall downe with such a violence, that if the necke of the transgressor were so big as that of a bull, it should be cut in sunder at a stroke, and roll from the bodie by an huge distance.' The felon's death, if brutal, was instantaneous, and it was probably only the honourable tradition of the gallows that made the malefactors of England beware of Halifax.

The malefactors of England, though they feared not death, refused obstinately to be tortured. By an ancient statute jailers were held guilty of felony, if they inflicted pain upon any prisoner for the revealing of his accomplices. 'The nature of Englishmen,' says Sir Thomas Smith, 'is to neglect death, to abide no torment.'[1] And with a just pride the author of *The Commonwealth of England* declares that 'in no place shall you see malefactors goe more constantly, more assuredly, and with less lamentation to their death than in England.' It was not a time of sentimentality. He who had done wrong thought it no shame to pay the penalty. And the scoundrels of Elizabeth's reign, though they were a burden on the country, though in artistry they yielded

[1] See above, p. 40.

to their successors, yet knew how to make a noble and becoming end. If it were their fate to dance without the music or to tend the sheep by moonlight, they did not whine of wasted opportunities, they did not complain of the harshness of the law.

*

SIR WALTER RALEGH

THREE hundred years ago[1] Sir Walter Ralegh, a hero eminent in arms and arts, perished on the scaffold. The infamy of his belated and judicial murder turned to his favour the current of popular opinion, yet the voice of detraction was not silenced, and even to-day the scandal of his death casts a shadow upon his greatness. Therefore are we of this present day bound in gratitude to remember, at the tercentenary of his disgrace, the eminent services which he did to his Queen and his native land. A true Elizabethan, he engrossed the activities of his age. There breathed within him the very spirit of English enterprise. No field of adventure was closed to his courage and energy. He was courtier, soldier, seaman, and poet; he set his hand to no task which he had not well considered, nor, when fortune failed him, did he lose heart or renounce faith in the future. To him, among other boons, we owe our Empire overseas, and it is fitting that we should do him honour when we have been fighting, with that Empire's

[1] This chapter was written in October 1918.

help, a foe bitterer and more implacable than the Spaniard, to whom Ralegh gave neither rest nor mercy.

I

Walter Ralegh was born in 1552 at Hayes Barton, in Devonshire. The son of a country gentleman, he is said by John Hooker to have carried the blood of the Plantagenets in his veins, and even if this be a fable, as some assert, no slur can be cast upon his honourable descent. His boyhood he spent among the sailors of the Devon coast, heard what stories they had to tell him of the mysterious West, and caught from them that love of adventure which left him only with his death. For a while he sojourned at Oxford —a commoner of Oriel College, where, says Wood, 'his natural parts being strangely advanced by Academical learning under the care of an excellent tutor, he became the ornament of the Juniors, and was worthily esteemed a proficient in Oratory and Philosophy.' Oxford did not detain him long. He was of those who pick up their learning as they go, who read on shipboard or in the field, and he was no more than seventeen when he took service as a volunteer with the Huguenot army. He fought at Jarnac, and in Languedoc helped to smoke out the Catholics. 'I saw in the third civil war in France,' he wrote many years afterwards in his *History of the World*, 'certain caves which had but one entrance, and that very narrow, cut out in the midway of high rocks, which we knew not how to enter by any ladder or

engine, till at last by certain bundles of straw let down by an iron chain, and a weighty stone in the midst, those who defended it were so smothered as they rendered themselves with their plate, money, and other goods therein hidden.' For at least six years he remained in France, since Hakluyt, in a dedication, calls to mind that Ralegh had 'spent more years in France than he,' and we know that five years were the term of Hakluyt's sojourn. At any rate, in 1576 Ralegh was in London again, contributing a copy of verses to the *Steel Glass* of Gascoigne, whom he may have met in the Low Countries, and prophesying in an aphorism his own future:

> 'For whoso reaps renown above the rest,
> With heaps of hate shall surely be opprest.'

After an ineffectual voyage of discovery, in which he commanded the *Falcon*, whose motto—*Nec mortem peto, nec finem fugio*—might have been his own, Ralegh sailed, the captain of a hundred men, for Ireland. That country was proving its intense love of independence, as it has proved it since, by welcoming the enemies of England to land upon its shores. So there came to Munster seven hundred Spaniards and Italians, who told the Lord-Deputy roundly that 'they were sent, some from the most holy Father the Pope of Rome,' as Camden reports, 'and the rest from the most Catholic King of Spain, to whom he had given Ireland: Queen Elizabeth being fallen from it by reason of her Heresy.' This kindly forethought

of the Pope brought a due reward to his emissaries. Then happened what has always happened in Ireland. The foreigners, seeing no hope of succour from Desmond, put forth a white flag, crying 'Misericordia! Misericordia!' Mercy was not shown them, and there seems no reason why they should have been treated with forbearance. At Lord Grey's command, and with the approval of the gentle Spenser, Ralegh put six hundred of them to the sword, acting in accord with his just belief that 'leniency to bloody-minded malefactors is cruelty to good and peaceable citizens.'

II

Such was Walter Ralegh's apprenticeship to life, and having served it he came triumphantly to Court. That his triumph should have been instant is not strange. Elizabeth loved a man, and a man Ralegh assuredly was. He was also a Devonshire gentleman, and Oxford's ill-humoured jest that he was a Jack and an Upstart savours of jealousy. He was tall, handsome, and bold. He was, moreover, of a boisterous temper, one who brooked not insult nor opposition.[1] Already he had been committed to the Fleet for a quarrel with Sir Thomas Perrott, and to the Marshalsea with one Wingfield 'for a fray beside the Tennis-

[1] Ben Jonson tells us that when Ralegh's son, of whom he was governor in Paris, made a scandal in the street, 'young Ralegh's mother delighted much (saying his father young was so inclined) though the father abhorred it.'

Court at Westminister.' His pride and arrogance were the wonder of a proud age. 'Old Sir Robert Harley of Brampton-Brian Castle,' so Aubrey tells us, 'who knew him, would say 'twas a great question who was the proudest, Sir Walter or Sir Thomas Overbury, but the difference that was, was judged on Sir Thomas's side.' To yield to Overbury in pride need have shamed no man, and we may take it that Ralegh was furnished with that triple brass which was necessary to protect him against the slings and arrows of a hard extravagant age. And not only was he a man of action, he was a man of speech also. Aubrey says his voice was 'small,' but it was persuasive; and the broad Devonshire accent, which Ralegh never lost, added to its effectiveness. His first meeting with the Queen, at Greenwich, was fortunate for him. He came from Ireland to urge his policy against Lord Grey's, and so much the better had he in the telling of his tale, that, in Naunton's words, 'he had gotten the Queen's ear in a trice, and she began to be taken by his elocution, and . . . took him for a kind of oracle, which nettled them all.'

Morever, Ralegh chimed with his Queen and her age in his love of magnificence. He loved humility neither of apparel nor of life. He was no starveling soul content with a crust. His fixed intent was to get out of the world whatever of honour and wealth it had to give. 'Shall we value honour and riches,' he asks in the preface to his *History*, 'at nothing, and neglect them, as unnecessary and vain?' As to the

answer he is in no doubt. 'Certainly no: for that infinite wisdom of God, which hath . . . made differences between beasts and birds; created the eagle and the fly, the cedar and the shrub; and among stones, given the fairest tincture to the ruby, and the quickest light to the diamond; hath also ordained kings, dukes, or leaders of the people, magistrates, judges, and other degrees among men.' He was an eagle who would always soar sunwards, leaving the poor fly happy upon the window pane. At the very first he showed his wit in his apparel, and well it became him. Drexelius, the Flemish Jesuit, says that the mere jewels in his shoes were estimated to be worth six thousand six hundred gold pieces; yet so fine was his delicacy that when he was appointed to attend Biron, the French ambassador, he instantly conformed to the fashion of his guest. 'The French,' said he, 'wear all black, and no kind of bravery at all; so as I have only made me a black taffeta suit to be in, and leave all my other suits.'

Walter Ralegh, then, a man and a courtier, was welcomed naturally by a Queen who had inherited her father's love of pageantry and a splendid life, who was never so happy as when upon a progress, and who loved to see what she called 'proper men' about her. The legends preserved by Fuller of Ralegh's sudden rise need not be accepted literally. They are, nevertheless, fitting symbols of the truth. Who would willingly part with the story of the cloak, for instance? 'This

Captain Ralegh,' says Fuller, 'coming out of Ireland to the English Court in good habit (his clothes being then a considerable part of his estate) found the Queen walking, till meeting with a plashy place, she seemed to scruple going thereon. But presently Ralegh cast and spread his new plush cloak on the ground, whereon the Queen trod gently, rewarding him after with many suits for his so free and seasonable tender of so fair a foot-cloth.' So Fuller writes with essential truth. Had Ralegh met the Queen in a plashy place, he would surely have flung his cloak upon the ground; and why should not fate have given an occasion for his courtliness?

The other anecdote of Fuller suggests a knowledge of the after-event, and is justly suspect. 'Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall'—such are the words that Ralegh is said to have scratched with a diamond upon a window, obvious to the Queen's eye, and they might have carried a heavy burden of meaning for him when he looked back across the years to his happy beginning. He knew himself then to have been what many called him, a mere tennis-ball of fate, and he had wise words to say about the tricks of destiny. 'As fortune's man rides the horse,' thus he wrote in the Tower, 'so fortune herself rides the man who, when he is descended on foot, the man taken from his beast, and fortune from the man, a base groom beats the one, and a bitter contempt spurns the other with equal liberty.' But, assuredly, he did not foresee, in the exulting flam-

boyancy of his youth, the misery which was to overtake him.

A man of his sanguine temper and gay adventurousness was troubled by no doubt. It was enough for him to bask in the sun of Gloriana's smiles, and Gloriana did more than smile upon him. When once she had taken him for a favourite, she loaded him with benefits. He was given a licence to export woollen broadcloths; the Farm of Wines was granted him. In rapid succession he was appointed Lord Warden of the Stannaries, Lieutenant of Cornwall, Vice-Admiral of Cornwall and Devon, and Captain of the Queen's Guard. With the increase of honour he increased marvellously in worldly possessions. The acquisition of Babington's forfeited estates made him a landowner in five English counties. The castle of Lismore and the manor of Youghal gave him a position in the Ireland, which he had helped to punish and to pacify. And at last he established himself in the place he loved best—at Sherborne, where his beautifying hand may still be marked. Wherever he went he builded and he planted. He took a natural delight in fine houses and handsome gardens. They were the outward expression of the grandeur which he deemed his right, and as intimate a part of him as the ships which he knew well how to build and to sail, and which he hoped always against hope would bring him a vast store of gold and precious stones from the Orinoco.

To be a favourite of Elizabeth was an ill trade, as

Ralegh presently discovered to his cost. Not only did the Queen for her sport play one favourite off against the other, but in her eyes the rising star seemed always to shine more brightly than the risen. And Ralegh aroused the jealousy of his rivals the more easily because they recognised in him an intellectual superior. He had a better head, as well as a better heart, than they. If he did not yield to Leicester in the graces, he was a master of a knowledge and a courage, of which that courtier knew nothing. But Leicester's power was already waning when Ralegh first encountered his Queen, and it was the advent of Essex at Court which threatened his supremacy. When he was but twenty-one, Essex was already writing to Elizabeth of that knave Ralegh, and it was only the threat of the Armada which interrupted his plottings against the man, in whose influence he saw the chief obstacle to his omnipotence.

In the battle against Spain, who in her pride thought she could overthrow the might of England, Ralegh took the ample share that belonged to him. He was of those who planned the defence of the country; he stirred to patriotism the men of Cornwall and Devon, who, for the love they bore him, would have followed him to the death; and when the time of fighting came, his ship hung on to the skirts of the retreating Spaniards until the end. Moreover, when certain hotheads urged Howard of Effingham straightway to board the Spanish ships, Ralegh threw his influence into the scale of prudence and good sense; and in his

History seized upon the siege of Agrigentum as an excuse for a wise comment on the greatest of sea-battles. 'To clap ships together,' thus he wrote, 'without consideration belongs rather to a madman than to a man-of-war. By such an ignorant bravery was Peter Strozzi lost at the Azores when he fought against the Marquess of Santa Cruz. In like sort had Lord Charles Howard, Admiral of England, been lost in the year 1588, if he had not been better advised than a great many malignant fools were that found fault with his demeanour. The Spaniards had an army aboard them, and he had none. They had more ships than he had, and of higher building and charging, so that had he entangled himself with those great and powerful vessels he had greatly endangered this kingdom of England, for twenty men on the defence are equal to a hundred that board and enter. Whereas, then, contrariwise, the Spaniards had an hundred for twenty of ours to defend themselves withal. But our Admiral knew his advantage and held it, which had he not done he had not been worthy to have held his head.' There speaks one who combines with the authority of an expert a rare gift of lucid exposition.

III

The great year of our history, 1588, saw Ralegh at the zenith of his fortune. So high had he climbed that envy and malice were already fitting their slings with pebbles. Nevertheless, at the zenith of his fortune, he was but at the beginning of his great

career. So long as the Queen smiled upon him, his work remained unaccomplished. When he did his native land his noblest services, he was thwarted at every step by jealousy and intrigue. The mere favourite triumphed; the patriot found fiercer enemies at home than abroad. A brief year after the Armada, Ralegh left the Court, driven thence, it is said, by the plots of a rival. 'My Lord of Essex,' wrote Sir Francis Allen to Anthony Bacon, 'hath chased Mr. Ralegh from the court, and hath confined him in Ireland.' Whether this be true or not, it is certain that Ralegh withdrew himself to Kilcolman, and there renewed his ancient friendship with Spenser. It was a happy meeting for the poets and for poetry, a meeting which Spenser has commemorated in undying verse. As he sat by the Mulla's shore,

> 'There a strange shepherd chanced to find me out,
> Whether allured by my pipe's delight,
> Whose pleasing sound yshrilled far about,
> Or thither led by chance, I know not right,
> Whom, when I asked from what place he came,
> And how he hight, himself he did ycleepe,
> The Shepherd of the Ocean, by name,
> And said he came far from the Mainsea-deep.'

'The Shepherd of the Ocean'—what better name could be found for Walter Ralegh? Thus by Mulla's shore the two friends talked and sang. They exchanged compliments in verse, and Ralegh, enthusiastic always for fresh enterprises, insisted that Spenser should forthwith accompany him to Court, there to

win the patronage of Elizabeth, and to publish the first part of the *Faerie Queene*. Of Ralegh's fidelity to Spenser there is ample proof. He gave him praise, and, what is rarer and more useful, he gave him practical aid. Had it not been for his intervention, the *Faerie Queene* would have made a late appearance, and when in 1590 she saw the light of day under his auspices, he appended his sonnets to the poem, which show clearly enough his appreciation. That which begins 'Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay' is universally acclaimed, and has won from Milton the high tribute of imitation. In the other, Ralegh sounds the trumpet of generous applause:

'Of me no lines are loved nor letters are of price,
Of all which speak our English tongue, but those of thy device.'

This friendship, then, was pleasant and honourable to them both, and, be it remembered, they sang in amœbæan strains, not as patron and poet, but as equals. For Ralegh also was himself a true poet. Careless, like the rest of his contemporaries, about the fate of his verses, he wrote them to please himself, and did not trouble to gather them together. Some of them appeared in *England's Helicon*, signed by Ignoto, others have been discovered by the research of scholars. That they were known to his own age and highly esteemed we know from Puttenham. 'For ditty and amorous ode,' says he in his *Arte of English Poesie*, 'I find Sir Walter Ralegh's vein most lofty,

insolent, and passionate.' His style is concise and forcible. He had that love of aphorism which was natural to his time and kind. And none but a true poet could have written his 'Pilgrimage':

> 'Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
> My staff of faith to lean upon,
> My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
> My bottle of salvation,
> My gown of glory, hope's true gage;
> And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.'

These lines, beautiful in themselves, are a foreshadowing of the mystical poetry of the seventeenth century.

Yet it is his prose rather than his verse which has given Ralegh an immortality of letters. The enforced leisure of his voyages taught him to be a scholar, and the friendship of Cotton persuaded him to join Bishop Parker's Society of Antiquaries. Of his masterpiece in prose—*The History of the World*—something will be said presently. Of his voyages he wrote like a man of action, who was also a poet; his political pamphlets are marvels of sound doctrine and clear statement; and there is not one of his letters—'lofty, insolent, and passionate,' like his verse—that does not reveal the touch of the true craftsman. If you would have an example, turn to the letter which he wrote to Cecil on the death of his wife. 'It is true,' said he, 'that you have lost a good and virtuous wife, and myself an honourable friend and kinswoman. But there was a time when she was unknown to you,

for whom you then lamented not. She is now no more yours, nor of your acquaintance, but immortal, and not needing or knowing your love or sorrow. Therefore you shall but grieve for that which now is as then it was, when not yours; only bettered by the difference in this, that she hath passed the wearisome journey of this dark world, and hath possession of her inheritance.' And again, in the same letter: 'The minde of man is that part of God which is in us, which, by how much it is subject to passion, by so much it is farther from Him that gave it us. Sorrows draw not the dead to life, but the living to death.'[1] Here is noble thought matched with noble words, written by one who did not lay aside his gift of literature when he addressed his friends.

Indeed, courtier and adventurer though he was, Ralegh lived on easy terms with the writers of his time. It is said that he proposed those meetings at the Mermaid Tavern which had a legendary influence upon English poetry and English wit. He befriended

[1] It is strange that the fanatical persons who can believe in nothing so obvious as that Shakespeare wrote his own plays, should have pitched upon Bacon for a substitute. Ralegh would have been a far wiser choice. And here is a parallel ready to their hand. 'Sorrows draw not the dead to life, but the living to death,' writes Ralegh; and Shakespeare in *All's Well that Ends Well* puts these words in Lafeu's mouth: 'Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead; excessive grief the enemy of the living.' Shakespeare could not have known Ralegh's words, and Ralegh was far too sincere to plagiarise in an hour of deep emotion.

Hakluyt, and aided him in his epic enterprise. That Marlowe should have been his associate is not surprising, since they are close akin in temperament. In Marlowe's plays there has been noted a love of the impossible. A love of the impossible was the inspiration of Ralegh's active life; and he was content to suffer for the friendship of Marlowe as he suffered for his loyalty to other friends. A foolish charge of atheism was brought against him, who never wrote a word nor did a deed that was not a refutation of the foul calumny. Truly, jealousy of those who rise too quickly is always ingenious, and Ralegh paid a heavier penalty for his virtues than the most of men pay for their vices.

IV

However, it was not intrigue that at last caused Ralegh's downfall at Court. He had withstood the devilish machinations of Essex; he could not withstand the Queen's anger at his marriage with Elizabeth Throgmorton, one of her maids of honour. The Queen did not easily forgive the defection of her favourites, and she fell upon Ralegh with an unrestrained fury. With no better reason than her displeasure, she sent both Ralegh and his lady to the Tower, and enlarged him only when his services were needed to save the great carrack, the *Madre de Dios*, which his expedition, commanded by Martin Frobisher, had brought home, from indiscriminate pillage. Then the Queen's avarice got the better of her resentment, and Ralegh was permitted to go to

Dartmouth, 'still the Queen of England's poor captive.' He liked his imprisonment as little as the eagle likes its cage. This foretaste of suffering, whose cup he was to drink to the dregs, was bitter in his mouth. He protested, he cajoled, he flattered. He tells Cecil that he has become 'like a fish cast on dry land, gasping for breath, with lame legs and lamer lungs.' Angrily he protests to Admiral Howard at the chafing of captivity. 'Would God it were all concluded,' says he, 'that I might feed the lions as I go by, to save labour. For the torment of the mind cannot be greater, and for the body, would others did respect themselves as much as I value it not little.' And then it was that he wrote the letter to Cecil about the Queen, which seems to the modern eye abject in its abandonment. He laments to hear that she has gone far off. When she was near at hand, and he might hear of her, his sorrows were less. 'I that was wont to behold her,' he writes in a famous passage, 'riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometime sitting in the shade like a goddess; sometime singing like an angel; sometime playing like Orpheus. Behold the sorrow of the world! "Once amiss, hath bereaved us of all!"'

The very extravagance of the tirade proves its insincerity, and we, in the full knowledge of the truth, need not take it seriously. Intended for the Queen's eye, it is overcharged in colour and design. But

Elizabeth, who never saw her face in the mirror unfarded, cared not for the finer shades. She demanded always an excess of praise, and she got it. Nor was Ralegh under any illusion. Freedom was what he longed for, and there were no words which he would not have used to attain it. The Court and the Queen's favour were for him but means to an end. He knew that without them he could not achieve the lofty purposes of his life, and the work to which he had put his hand was so vast in scope that he would sacrifice its fulfilment to no scruple of reticence. It was for his career that he abased himself before the Queen. For the rest, he was a gainer by her frowns. If he had lost her patronage, he had won the loyal and constant support of his wife, whose broken letters to Cecil attest the depth of her affection, who stood by Ralegh in the hour of his peril and distress, and who fought without rest for the inheritance of her son. And Ralegh generously repaid her fidelity. 'I chose you,' he said, in a letter which he thought would be his last, 'and I loved you, in my happiest times.'

V

To two policies Ralegh was always faithful—the discomfiture of Spain, whom he recognised truly as the enemy of England, and the foundation of another England across the seas. The policies were so closely interlocked as to be sometimes indistinguishable, for the Spaniards claimed the right of sovereignty over all America, and were supported in their impudent

claim by the authority of the Pope. That we should be at war with Spain, then, was inevitable, and Ralegh fought the Spaniards with sword or tongue as long as he had breath. His letters are packed with warnings against the enemy. He watched their activities in Ireland unceasingly. 'The King of Spain,' he wrote to Cecil in 1593, 'seeking not Ireland for Ireland, but having raised up troops of beggars in our backs, shall be able to enforce us to cast our eyes over our shoulders, while those before us strike us on the brains.' He watched the coast anxiously for Spanish vessels, knowing that his own Plymouth was in danger, and he urged Parliament not to wait the coming of the Spaniard, but to go forth and meet him.

'Let us send a royal army,' said he to the House of Commons in 1593, 'to supplant him in Brittany, and to possess ourselves there; and send also a strong navy to sea, and lie with it upon the Cape and such places as his ships bring his riches to, that we may set upon all that come. This we are able to do, and we shall undoubtedly have fortunate success if we undertake it.' This is the speech of a fighting sailor who knew full well what sea-power meant to England. 'There are two ways by which England may be afflicted,' he wrote in *A Discourse Touching a War with Spain*. 'The one by invasion, being put to the defensive, in which we shall cast lots for our own garments. The other by impeachment of our trades, by which trades all commonwealths flourish and are enriched. Invaded or impeached we cannot be lost

but by sea, and, therefore, that enemy that is strongest by shipping is most to be suspected and feared.' Nor was he willing to hold out his hand for a premature peace. 'After the Spaniards shall have repaired his losses,' said he, 'I know not how your Majesty may be assured of his enmity, for the Kings of Spain are not wont to keep either promises or oaths longer than they may prove profitable to themselves.' This is a wise counsel, which the rulers of England will always do well to ponder.

And Ralegh did not only speak against Spain; he fought against Spain. As I have said, he gallantly played his part in the defeat of the Armada. At Cadiz, in the *War-Spright*, he led the van, captured the *St. Andrew* and the *St. Matthew* before the Spaniards could blow them up, and brought them home with him to serve in the English navy. When the victory was won, merciful as always, he helped to beat off the Flemings, who, having done nothing in the fight, afterwards used pitiless slaughter, and he sketched the scene indelibly in two or three lines. 'Withal,' wrote he, 'there was so huge fire, and such tearing of the ordnance in the great *Philip* and the rest, when the fire came to them, as, if any man had a desire to see Hell itself, it was there most livelily figured.' Thus Walter Ralegh was justly accounted the great antagonist of Spain, and nowhere did he fight her more resolutely than in America. He would forestall her everywhere, and see to it that a new England and not a new Spain should come into being.

For it is his great glory to have sought always the welfare of the natives in such lands as he discovered. The Spaniards of the sixteenth century, like the Germans of our own time, thought it enough to make a desert and to call it peace. Ralegh contemned the vindictive fury of such colonists. He would bring prosperity wherever he went; he would encourage trade, and exchange the commodities of the old world for the rich produce of the new. Obsessed as he was with the constant vision of gold and precious stones, he did not disdain the humbler solace of tobacco and the potato. If Drake and Hawkins first brought tobacco to these shores, it was Ralegh who made its use fashionable, and thus not only increased our stock of harmless pleasures, but added vastly to the wealth of the country.[1] And by planting potatoes at Youghal he supplied the land, where he had great possessions, with its staple food.

Ralegh's first enterprise across the seas was shared with his gallant brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who had less hope of establishing colonies than of finding the North-West Passage—a hope which lured many a brave man to his death. That was in 1583, and Ralegh, already a favourite, was forbidden by the Queen to risk his life in 'dangerous sea-fights.' But to Sir Humphrey she gave her blessing, and for a token 'an anchor guided by a lady,' which he wore at his

[1] Aubrey was assured by Mr. Michael Weekes of the Royal Society, 'out of the custom-house books, that the custom of tobacco all over England was £400,000 per annum' (1682).

breast. Like all the early voyagers, Gilbert met with a series of mishaps, and was fortunate only in making Newfoundland, of which he took possession in the Queen's name. Sailing southward, he was overtaken by a violent storm; two of his ships were wrecked, and he himself went down, 'sitting abaft with a book in his hand,' and telling his men to be of good cheer, since 'we are as near to Heaven by sea as by land.'

It is characteristic of Ralegh that failure never daunted him, and after his brother's heroic death he applied for instantly and was granted a charter to discover unknown lands. In 1584, though he was still kept at home, an English colony was established, under his auspices, by Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlow at Roanoake, and to this colony was given the name of Virginia. Amadas and Barlow, as bidden by Ralegh, treated the natives with justice and consideration, exchanged such goods as they had for sweet-smelling timber and other commodities, and then sailed for home, bringing with them two of the natives. A year later, Sir Richard Grenville was dispatched with 'a fleet of seven sails, with one hundred householders and many things necessary to begin a new state.' But no sooner were the householders landed than discontent overtook them. They encountered a tribe of savages less easily managed than those whom their predecessors had traded with, and when Sir Francis Drake, 'coming thither from the sack of divers Spanish towns,' visited the colony, they

did not scruple to accept his offer of a safe conduct to England.

Even then Ralegh did not despair. He sent expedition after expedition, sparing neither his wealth nor his thought. As Hakluyt said, 'it required a prince's purse to have it thoroughly followed out,' and Ralegh must needs depend chiefly upon himself. Cecil blew hot and cold upon the project, according to the whim and temper of the Queen. But with the prescience of a great statesman, Ralegh permitted no check and no discouragement. In 1602, the year of the Queen's death, a few months before ruin overtook him, Ralegh wrote to Cecil protesting against the seizure of part of a cargo of sassafras for the tenths. 'It were pity to overthrow the enterprise,' said he, 'for I shall yet live to see it an English nation.' His prophecy came true, though his charter had by then reverted to the Crown, and he had been deprived of the reward which should in justice have been his. He did see it an English nation, and thus did more to change the history of his own country and of the world than any victorious captain that ever laid low a barbarous enemy. For, foiled himself, he pointed out the true way of colonial enterprise, and proved himself, in effect, the only begetter of our dominions oversea.

VI

Meanwhile his thoughts were turning always towards the fabled wealth of Guiana. El Dorado,

first conceived of as a gold-besprinkled king, and then as the golden city of Manoa, had captured his imagination. His ambition was stirred by Francisco Lopez' account of the Emperor of Guiana, all the vessels of whose home, table and kitchen, were of gold and silver. 'He had in his wardropp,' said Lopez, 'hollow statues of gold which seemed giants, and the figures in proportion and bigness of all the beasts, birds, trees, and herbs that the earth bringeth forth, and of all the fishes that the sea or waters of his kingdom breedeth.' Such was a dream of wealth which easily touched the fancy of the Elizabethans. Marlowe, of like temperament to Ralegh's, had dreamed the same dream, after his own fashion, and had told it in immortal verse:

> 'Give me the merchants of the Indian mines,
> That trade in metal of the purest mould;
> The wealthy Moor, that in the Eastern rocks
> Without control can pick his riches up,
> And in his house heap pearls like pebble-stones,
> Receive them free, and sell them by the weight.'

What limit was there to the power of such merchants as these? And if Ralegh thought of the power which the master of El Dorado might possess, he thought of much else besides. He knew that to limit the Spaniard's wealth was to ensure the peace of England. 'For we find,' said he, 'that the Spanish King vexeth all the Princes of Europe, and is become in a few years from a poor King of Castile the greatest

monarch of this part of the world, and likely every day to increase if other princes forslow the good occasions offered and suffer him to add this empire to the rest.' Thus Ralegh believed that his voyage to Guiana would not only enrich England, but check the power of his and England's inveterate enemy, Spain. For once the Queen and Cecil smiled upon his enterprise. The crafty Cecil risked money for the scheme, and the Queen granted Ralegh a commission to attack the Spaniards. Only Lady Ralegh was fearful of her husband's safety. 'I hope you will rather draw Sir Walter towards the east than help him towards the sunset, if any respect to me, or love to him, be not forgotten.' Alas for Lady Ralegh's peace of mind! The Queen would not restrain a man who was no longer her favourite. Cecil had yielded to the hope of gain, and all was made easy for Sir Walter's experiment in high romance.

At first he was delayed by adverse weather. 'This wind breaks my heart,' he wrote to Cecil from Sherborne in December 1594. 'That should carry me hence now stays me here, and holds seven ships in the river of Thames. As soon as God send them hither I will not lose one hour of time.' And he did not. In February he set sail, arrived at Trinidad, made his expedition with five small boats in search of Manoa, the golden city, and though he found it not, brought back an earnest of wealth and an exact knowledge of the country through which he passed. It was a pioneer's voyage, and had it been followed up

much of Ralegh's promising might have been fulfilled. Nor was it in vain, even if we measure it by the results attained. Wherever he went Ralegh was seen by the natives in the guise of a liberator. He struck the Spanish fetters from the kindly, ill-treated inhabitants, and won their confidence for England and himself. He lost no chance of gathering the facts which would be useful in the future. He sought out all the aged men and greatest travellers in the country, and, questioning them narrowly, he 'came to understand the situations, the rivers, the kingdoms from the East Sea to the borders of Peru, and from Orinoco southward as far as the Amazon or Maragnon.' Wherever he went he sang to the natives the praises of England and her Queen, 'dilating at large her Majesty's greatness, her justice, her charity to all oppressed nations, with as many of the rest of her beauties and virtues as either he could express or they conceive,' until they were ready idolatrously to worship her. And the rest of the things that he saw and did on his voyage, are they not written in *The Discovery of Guiana*, an admirable discourse, which he printed on his return to England?

He came home, content with what he had achieved, and implored Cecil 'to move her Majesty that none be suffered to soil the enterprise.' He implored in vain. The Kings of the borders, which were by his peril, labour, and charge won to her Majesty, were 'by other pilferers lost again.' Worse than this, Ralegh's enemies contrived to throw doubt upon the

whole enterprise. They spread a rumour about that he had remained hidden in Cornwall, while his friends risked their lives in 'the broken islands and drowned lands' of Guiana. They charged him with having 'salted' the new discovered country with gold from Barbary. In their envy they hoped that any lies were good enough to besmirch the honest fame of Ralegh, and doubtless were content to see their malice prevent the proper furthering of his scheme. To-day we know that Ralegh's own story went not an inch beyond the truth, that it has been amply confirmed by later travellers. But Ralegh was one upon whose head the tile always fell, and it was decreed that he should sow what others were to reap. *Sic vos non vobis.*

VII

Hitherto Ralegh had borne without complaint the alternations of fortune, high and low, and now, after a few years more of royal favour, he approached the long fifth act of his life's tragedy. His fall, which came with the accession of James I., was in due accord with the ordered catastrophe of the Elizabethan drama. Ruin came upon him with astonishing swiftness. The new King, poisoned in his mind by Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, the wickedest man of a wicked age, received Sir Walter Ralegh with coldness, and straightway began to deprive him of his offices. The captaincy of the guard was taken from him; he was bidden instantly to resign the wardenship of the Stannaries and the government of Jersey, though he

had established there a land system which survives to-day, and, faithful to his own colonial policy, had encouraged the trade in fish between Jersey and Newfoundland. Past services weighed not a feather in the scale against the displeasure of the King. As a worse insult than those that had gone before, he was commanded to leave Durham House, of which he had held possession for nearly twenty years. 'I am of opinion,' he told Cecil, 'that if the King's Majesty had recovered this house, or the like, from the meanest gentleman he had in England, that his Majesty would have given six months' time for the avoidance, and I do not know but that the poorest artificer in London hath a quarter's warning given him by his landlord.'

Thus Ralegh was treated worse than a poor artificer; and, not content with insult, his enemies presently haled him, in their minds an already convicted criminal, before a court of justice. He was charged with attempting 'to deprive the King of his crown and dignity; to subvert the government, and alter the true religion established in England; and to levy war against the King.' It was idle for him to deny the charge. His cause was forejudged, his sentence foredetermined. A life spent in fighting Spain with all the weapons which came to his hand was no answer to his accusers, who, through Coke's malignant tongue, charged him with having an English face and a Spanish heart. 'Thou hast a Spanish heart,' screamed the Attorney-General, 'and thyself art a spider of hell.' The trial seems remarkable to-day for Coke's clumsy

insolence and Ralegh's dignity. Coke used not any other means than reiteration to prove the charges which he brought against Ralegh, who, when his voice was heard above the din of abuse, had no difficulty in getting the better of his antagonist. To put him to shame were impossible, and Coke had the Court upon his side. The wiseacres tell us that Ralegh was legally guilty, and I daresay he was. According to the rules of the game, a man was proved guilty by the unsupported evidence of one who claimed him for an accomplice, and who was not asked to confront him. That Ralegh was innocent morally and in truth there can be no doubt whatever. His life speaks for him and his character. Cobham, the sole witness to his dishonour, was a witness of falsehood, and he varied his tale as he would. But if half a dozen witnesses had sworn that Ralegh had conspired with Spain for the destruction of England, they should not have been believed.

However, the rules were not broken. Ralegh was duly condemned to death and duly reprieved. Imprisoned, he fought for his liberty as fiercely as he fought for his life, when the scaffold loomed ahead of him. He addressed Cecil and the other Lords in such terms of craven humility as must have been a cruel scourge to his pride. When death still faced him he implored pardon of the King 'on the knees of his heart,' and yet, in what he thought would have been his last letter to his wife, he proves that he repented him most bitterly of his petitions. 'Get those letters

(if it be possible),' he writes, 'which I writ to the Lords, wherein I sued for my life, but God knoweth that it was for you and yours that I desired it, but it is true that I disdain myself for begging it. And know it (dear wife) that your son is the child of a true man, who, in his own respect, despiseth death and all his misshapen and ugly forms.' Indeed, his son was the son of a true man, who turned even the weary years of his imprisonment to the worthiest account.

No sooner was Ralegh condemned than an ignoble scramble began for his worldly possessions. Even Sherborne, which he loved best, was taken from him at last, and conferred upon the infamous Carr. 'I maun ha' the land, I maun ha' the land,' was all that James replied to Lady Ralegh's protest, and Ralegh's noble letter to Carr himself was unregarded. 'And for yourself, sir,' he wrote, 'seeing your day is but now in the dawn, and mine come to the evening —your own virtues and the King's grace assuring you of many good fortunes and much honour—I beseech you not to begin your own buildings upon the ruins of the innocent; and that their griefs and sorrows do not attend your first plantation.' Carr in his heyday knew no scruple of compassion. He seized Sherborne, as he seized everything else that he could lay his hand upon. Nor did he remain long in honour to enjoy the stolen property. He was sent to the Tower, a disgraced and fallen man, as Ralegh was leaving it, and he never rose again. But to Ralegh's active mind his prison did but suggest another form

of energy. 'Sorrow rides the ass,' he wrote to Cecil, 'prosperity the eagle.' If the eagle were denied him, he would do what he could astride the ass. He turned him from a fearless adventurer into a patient, laborious scholar. In the ample leisure of captivity, he studied chemistry, he busied himself with the education of the wisest of Princes, Henry of Wales, whose early death alone prevented Ralegh's enlargement, and he wrote his *History of the World*.

A biographer of Ralegh has said that it is easier to praise *The History of the World* than to read it. It is impossible to turn over its pages without praising it. Whatever faults modern criticism may find with it, it remains an unexampled monument of English prose. The author can be grave or familiar as he chooses. On one page he calls Agathocles an 'eloquent knave,' and 'claps' a crown upon his head, on another he discourses of fate and death and life with a lofty seriousness. His style is apt equally for reflection and narrative. In the vast scope of his work he covers centuries with something of Gibbon's mastery; and all the while he illustrates the far-off past with modern instances. He weaves his own experience, his own practical knowledge, into the texture of his ancient history. When he compares the Roman and Macedonian, he turns his eyes willingly upon the valour of the English soldiers, levied in haste from 'following the cart, or sitting in the shop-stall.' And in his final invocation to Death, his constant theme—'O eloquent, just, and mighty

Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded'—he writes a prose which Donne could not surpass, and which may well have been a model to Sir Thomas Browne himself.

That James I. should have pounced upon the book, and been minded to suppress it is not strange. For not only did Ralegh in his preface sketch Henry VIII. in the colours of truth, but he preached always to this text: 'God is the sorest and sharpest schoolmaster that can be devised for such kings as think this world ordained for them without curtailment to turn it upside down at their pleasure.' Ralegh, enclosed within the Tower, thought himself free to express such thoughts as were in him, and he recked not of the King's disapproval. And all the while he was dreaming of Guiana and its gold. Even *The History of the World* was but an interlude in the constancy of his purpose. At last he moved the obduracy of the King, and in 1616 was liberated from the Tower to prepare for the last voyage, in which he risked all that was left of fortune to him and his wife. The voyage failed miserably. How could it succeed when its leader travelled with a halter about his neck? Scurvy and foul winds prepared for disaster. Mutiny ensured it. His ships were filled with the world's scum, and his disheartened followers refused to go on when triumph seemed within their reach. There is little doubt that the King increased his danger by warning the Spaniards of his coming. His son was killed, and Keymys, his friend, put an end to his own life.

So Ralegh came back with no hope, and the certainty in his heart of a shameful death. He was beheaded in October 1618 in Old Palace Yard, and he matched his heroic life with an heroic death. 'He was the most fearless of death that ever was known,' said the Dean of Westminster, who was with him at the scaffold, 'and the most resolute and confident, yet with reverence and conscience.' When he touched the edge of the axe with his finger, 'This gives me no fear,' said he; 'it is a sharp and fair medicine to cure me of all my diseases.' And the man of the crowd who cried as the head was shown to the people, 'We have not such another head to be cut off,' spoke with the voice of all his countrymen.

Thus died a great Englishman who, having many aims, fell not short of attaining them all—a true Elizabethan, faithful with an equal mind to words and deeds. His death, noble for himself, was infamous only for them who compassed it; and Ralegh, the hero, is still remembered with honour when the names of his murderers are but blots upon soiled parchment.

THE COURT POETS

I

THE career of the Court Poets is an episode not merely in the history of literature but in the history of manners. In their lives as in their art, they were an outspoken protest against the domination of the puritans. Whatever their predecessors in their stern morality had disdained, they pursued with a rare fervency of spirit. The chief end of their ambition was to catch pleasure on the wing, and they gave to pleasure a liberal interpretation. Gallantry was not enough for them. No courtier could hope to win the approval of his sovereign who had not given proof of his 'wit,' who had not publicly burned incense before the muse of frivolity. So it came about that, in Sedley's phrase, 'every fop wrote songs,' that few refrained from libelling their friends in satire, and that a freedom in written, as in spoken, speech matched the prevailing freedom of thought and conduct.

The court, in truth, cherished an ideal hitherto strange to English austerity. It no longer took a

keen interest in rival policies. The bitter conflict of the civil war, followed by the domination of Oliver, had obscured the spark of patriotism which burned only in a few loyal hearts. The King and his courtiers were determined to amuse themselves. They had learned in Paris how to temper their magnificence with wit and *politesse*, and, in the glamour of beauty and courage, they forgot the long, dark days when all the decorative arts of life had been banished, when even the smile of irony was deemed a disgrace. Charles II., a monarch to whom most things were easy save wisdom, led the band of revellers, preferred the ribaldry of Buckhurst and Sedley to the grave advice of Arlington, sauntered away his days in the society of his mistresses, and delighted in satire, even though it was directed against himself. It was a golden age, truly, in which life seemed desirable for its own sake, and in which nobody thought of its drearier purpose. 'Les plus honnêtes gens du monde,' says St. Évremond, 'ce sont les Français qui pensent, et les Anglais qui parlent.' And at Whitehall, which he graced by his presence for so many years, he might have encountered them both.

Such is one side of the medal. The reverse is less amiable. If it were frivolity whose muse reigned in Whitehall, it was a pompous frivolity. There was very little spontaneous gaiety in the court of the returned King. The intention to be gay was so loudly expressed that it seemed to come from the

head rather than from the heart. The sense of relief, the determination to be happy at all costs, suggest that a spice of malice flavoured the joyousness of the courtiers. In what they said and did there was no trace of the golden mean. Their merriment was too often the merriment of constraint. Rochester declares in one of his letters that it wasn't safe for a man to leave the court, if he didn't want to be hanged. The exploits, set forth in the *Mémoires de Gramont*, are, so to say, conscious of reaction. Their persistent monotony fatigues us who read of them, as perchance they fatigued the courtiers, who are their heroes. The King and his friends were too flagrantly industrious in the pursuit of pleasure. Gramont himself was not content to rely upon his own graces for success. He wooed his goddesses with 'gloves, pocket looking-glasses, elegant boxes, apricot paste, essences, and other small wares of love.' To be jealous without being in love, to play for stakes so high that they could not be paid without distress, to indulge in practical jokes which had no better excuse than physical infirmity—these are not the marks of happiness. They were the misfortunes of every one who came within the circle of Whitehall. The manners of the time thus proved the best material for satire and comedy. There was, perhaps, more joy in their contemplation than in their exercise. Pepys, who lived on the fringe of the court, was gay, because he carried his indomitable gaiety into the simplest

affairs of his life. We can believe that there was a flash of genuine gaiety at Epsom, when Nell Gwynn and Buckhurst 'kept mery house' there. But the pleasure of Charles II.'s court was marred by the inverse of puritanism. It was austere even in its love-making.

At times the courtiers broke through all bonds of restraint. They thought it no shame to commit acts of violence in the streets. Once upon a time, Buckhurst and his friends killed a tanner at Stoke Newington, whom they suspected of theft, and whose pockets they emptied, as of stolen goods. A far worse scandal was caused by Sir Charles Sedley's amazing apparition at Oxford Kate's in Bow Street. He came in open day, as Pepys tells us, 'into the Balconie and showed his nakedness . . . and abusing of scripture and as it were from thence preaching a mountebank sermon from the pulpit, saying that there he had to sell such a powder as should make all the women run after him, 1000 people standing underneath to see and hear him, and that being done he took a glass of wine, and drank it off, and then took another and drank the King's health.' It is not surprising that the unbridled conduct of Sir Charles Sedley and Buckhurst, who was of the company, came near to causing a riot, brought the offenders before the court, and received from the Lord Chief Justice 'a most high reproof.'

The news of these pranks, moreover, went abroad, and lost nothing, we may be sure, in the telling. The voice

of scandal was noisy and unscrupulous, then as now, and, though it is evident that the 'wits' were not innocent of brutality, it is unfair to judge all their lives by one or two episodes. Hasty generalisation is ever the foe of truth, and charges are more lightly made than refuted. No man, for instance, was ever so careless of his reputation as Rochester, and even he protests in a letter addressed to Savile against an unfounded indictment. Accused of the same folly as that of which Sedley and Buckhurst were guilty, he was eager in excuse. 'For the hideous deportment,' he writes, 'which you have heard of, concerning running naked, so much is true, that we went into the river somewhat late in the year, and had a frisk for forty yards in a meadow, to dry ourselves.' The trivial adventure was instantly turned to his disgrace, and so deeply sensible was he of the public contempt that he confessed himself 'extremely revived at the receipt of a kind letter from an old friend.' 'I ever thought you an extraordinary man,' says he, 'and must now think you such a friend, who, being a courtier, as you are, can love a man, whom it is the great mode to hate.'

II

Nor was exaggeration the only foe of the wits. Many there were, without a spark of talent, who imitated the vices of Rochester and Sedley, and who, by their senseless extravagance, brought their betters into contempt. When wit became a fashion, the

fools could ape it, and the poets have been compelled ever since to bear a weight of unmerited odium. Pepys once strayed into the society of these pretenders, and their talk made even his hard heart ache. 'But, Lord! what cursed loose company was this,' says he, 'that I was in to-night, though full of wit; and worth a man's being in once to know the nature of it, and their manner of talk, and lives.' Pepys' curiosity no doubt got the better of his judgment, and the wit of these men, who called themselves the 'Ballers,' was probably as false as their pretence. They are memorable only because they did the poets an injustice—an injustice which no less a man than Dryden has removed. None knew better than he the talents of the poets and their lives, and he treated them as true Augustans, praising their *eruditam voluptatem*.

'We have,' said he, like the poets of the Horatian age, 'our genial nights, when our discourse is neither too serious nor too light, but always pleasant, and for the most part instructive; the raillery neither too sharp upon the present, nor too censorious on the absent, and the cups only such as will raise the conversation of the night, without disturbing the business of the morrow.' As in duty bound, he who had been admitted to these banquets of wit and sense defended them against the detraction of pedants. The wits, said he, were insulted by those who knew them not. 'As we draw giants and anthropophagi'—to cite his

words—'in those vacancies of our maps, where we have not travelled to discover better, so those wretches paint lewdness, atheism, folly, ill-reasoning, and all manner of extravagances amongst us, for want of knowing what we are.' It was not difficult to rebut precise charges. The wits, described by the ignorant, were the fops whom Dryden and his friends banished. As for blasphemy and atheism, even if they were not ill manners, they were worn threadbare. In other words, the true wits are blamed for the excesses of those, who had never tasted the waters of Helicon.

If the court poets needed a defence, they could not have found a wiser, juster defence than Dryden's. And even when they have been relieved of the crimes of which others were guilty, there is another misunderstanding which should be dispelled. The brutalities of Rochester, Buckhurst, and Sedley were the brutalities of a fierce, unscrupulous youth, and mere incidents sometimes in long and honourable careers. To pretend that these courtiers carried their pranks into a ripe old age is to endow them with perpetual strength and high spirits. Rochester, it is true, died on the very threshold of middle life. The rest grew sober with the years. Buckhurst was presently transformed into a grave and taciturn man, well versed in affairs, and entrusted, in William III.'s absence, with the regency of the kingdom. Sedley, too, turned politician, was guilty of 'reflections on our late proceedings,' and delivered speeches upon ways and means. In brief, the court poets were

like those who, in other times, shared their talent and temperament. They seized life with both hands, and wrung from it at each stage whatever of varying ease and pleasure it held.

And they were men of action as well as men of letters. There was scarcely one of them that had not taken arms in the service of their country. They proved their gallantry on the field of battle as on the field of love. In later years, a charge of cowardice was brought against Rochester. The bravery of his youth is beyond dispute. He was but seventeen when he went to sea with Lord Sandwich, and, on board the *Revenge*, took part in the hopeless attack upon Bergen, where the Dutch ships had taken refuge. Of this action he left a spirited account in a letter addressed to his mother.[1] A year later he

[1] Rochester writes to his mother on August 3, 1665, 'from the coast of Norway amongst the Rocks aboard the *Revenge*.' Lord Sandwich had ordered twenty sail of fourth and fifth rate to take the Dutch East India fleet under de Ruyter. 'It was not fitt for mee,' says Rochester, 'to see any occasion of service to the King without offering myself,' and he sailed for Bergen, as full of hope as the rest, and already sharing in fancy the rich treasures of the East Indies. He was all for shirts and gold, 'what I had most need of,' and reckoned, like the others, without his host. 'However wee came bravely into the harbour'—thus he writes—'in the midst of the toune and castles, and there anchored close by Dutchmen; wee had immediately a message from the Governor full of civility and offers of services, which was returned by us, Mr. Mountague being the messenger. . . . It grew darke and wee were faine to ly still untill morning. All the night the Dutch carried above 200 pieces of Cannon into the Danish castles and forts, and wee were by morne draune into a very

was in the great sea fight, serving under Sir Edward Spragge, and there gave a signal proof of his courage. 'During the action,' says Burnet, 'Sir Edward Spragge, not being satisfied with the behaviour of one of the Captains, could not easily find a Person, that would cheerfully venture through so much danger, to carry his commands to that captain. This Lord offered himself to the service, and went in a little boat through all the shot, and delivered his message, and returned back to Sir Edward: which was much commended by all that saw it.'

Buckhurst was not a whit behind Rochester in courage: he was present, a volunteer, on the Duke of York's ship in the battle of 3rd June 1665, when the Dutch admiral's ship was blown up with all hands. But it was Mulgrave who saw more of active service than any of them. At the age of seventeen he was on board the ship which Prince Rupert and

faire halfe moone ready for both toune and ships. . . . Just upon the stroke of five wee lett flye our fighting coulours and immediately fired upon the shippes, who answered us immediately and were seconded by the castles and forts of the toune, upon which wee shot at all and in a short time beat from one of there greatest forts some thrée or four thousand men that were placed with small shott upon us; but the castles were not to be taken, for besides the strength of their walls they had soe many Dutch gunners (besides their owne), which played in the hulls and decks of our shipps that in 3 hours time wee lost some 500 men and six captains, our cables were cut, and wee were driven out by the winde.' And with a characteristic touch he concludes his letter: 'I have binn as good a husband as I could, but in spite of my best have binn faine to borrow money.'

Albemarle jointly commanded against the Dutch, and, when the war was brought to a close, he was given a troop of horse to guard Dover. At the next outbreak of war, he was again at sea with his kinsman, the Earl of Ossory, on board the *Victory*, when he chose, as Dryden says in a passage of unconscious humour, 'to abandon those delights, to which his youth and fortune did invite him, to undergo the hazards, and, which was worse, the company of common seamen.' And so bravely did he bear himself, that he was given the command of the *Katharine*, 'the best of all the second rates.' Nor was this the end of his military career. He was presently colonel of the regiment of foot which his own energy had raised, served for the sake of experience under Schomberg and Turenne, and, finally, in 1680, went to the relief of Tangier with two thousand men, and was triumphantly successful.

III

There is thus a clear uniformity in the lives of the wits; and poetry was even a closer bond between them than the service of their king. They essayed the same tasks, they sang the same tunes, each in accord with his own talent. They composed prologues for their friends, they laid sacrilegious hands upon the works of Shakespeare and Fletcher, which they changed to suit the humour of the 'quality.' They wrote songs in honour of Corinna and Phyllis,

Chloris and Olinda. They delighted in an insipidity of phrase, which kept their passion harnessed to 'good sense.' They played with the counters of an outworn classicism, and attempted to pass off 'Cupid,' 'Bacchus,' and the rest as the current coins of poetry. Only in satire did they give a free rein to their eager antipathies and generous impulses. They bowed the knee to the same masters, and believed that originality consisted in the imitation of Horace and Boileau. And, for all their study, they were, for the most part, amateurs.

'Wit is a good diversion but base trade,' said Sedley, and, with the exception of Rochester, a born man of letters, not one of them had the power of castigating his verses into perfection. It was not for these happy triflers to con their manuscripts by day and night, to guard them for ten years from the eager eye of the public. They threw them off in their hours of ease, and did not make them proof against the attack of time. They were precisians without being precise. They followed those whom they considered the best models. The Stagyrite is ever on their tongues, and if they could they would have obeyed his laws. Their highest ambition was to equal Horace. They could not be at the pains to use his file. It is the true mark of the amateur to begin a work as a poet and to end it as a versifier. They had happy thoughts these court poets; they hit upon ingenious images; an elegance of phrase was not beyond their reach. What they found

almost impossible was to sustain the level of their inspiration.

When Sedley begins a song with the lines,

> 'Love still has something of the sea,
> From whence his mother rose,'

you are reminded of the Greek anthology, and think you are in the presence of a little masterpiece. But the poet soon loses interest in his work, and relies upon the common words and familiar metaphors of his day. Even at the third line, 'No time his slaves from doubt can free,' the illusion is dispelled. And it is this carelessness, characteristic of them all, which makes it difficult to distinguish the works of one from another, and explains the many false ascriptions which perplex the reader. 'Lord Dorset and Lord Rochester,' says Pope, 'should be considered as holiday-writers, as gentlemen that diverted themselves now and then with poetry, rather than as poets.' From this condemnation Rochester must be excluded. His energy and concentration entitled him to be judged by the highest standard. The others cannot resent a wise and just sentence.

This union of poetry with the court had one evil result. It involved literature in an atmosphere of coxcombry. Social eminence appeared the very inspiration of Apollo. To deserve the bays nothing was necessary save to be a person of honour. All the resources of eloquent flattery were exhausted in the praise of noblemen who condescended to

poetry. Criticism was thus poisoned at its source. A poet should be judged by his poetry and by nothing else. The accidents of his life should not be permitted to cloud our judgment. To find a peculiar virtue in a courtier's verses is no better and no worse than to hail a farmer's boy as a man of genius merely because he follows the plough. And it is difficult to read the contemporary eulogies of Buckhurst, Mulgrave, and the rest with patience. Of course, the utmost latitude may be granted to dedications. No writer is upon oath when he addresses a dedicatory epistle to friend or patron; and if only he content himself with making a panegyric of his patron's character or person no harm is done, while a pleasant tradition is observed.

When, for instance, Sir Francis Fane assures Rochester that, after his charming and most instructive conversation, he 'finds himself, not only a better poet, a better philosopher, but, much more than these, a better Christian,' you smile, as, no doubt, Rochester smiled at Sir Francis Fane's temerity and lack of humour. You cannot smile when Dryden, who should have been a king among them all, stoops to the very servitude of praise, acclaiming in the language of extravagance not their graces, not their gallantry, not their wit flung lightly across the table, but their poetry. In thus honouring Buckhurst and Mulgrave, he dishonours the craft of which he was a faithful follower, and his offence is less against humour than against

truth. To confess at the outset, as Dryden confesses, that 'the Court is the best and surest judge of writing,' is a mere hyperbole, which may be excused. His praise of Rochester, vague though it be, displays all the vice of a false judgment. 'Wit,' he writes, 'seems to have lodged itself more nobly in this age, than in any of the former, and the people of my mean condition are only writers because some of the nobility, and your Lordship in the first place, are above the narrow praises which poesy could give you.' The statement is abject in humility, yet still without pretence to criticism.

He goes furthest astray when he speaks of Buckhurst. It is Buckhurst the poet, not Buckhurst the courtier, that he extols, and thus, upon every line that he devotes to his friend, he lays the foundation of error. He congratulates himself that he was inspired to foretell Buckhurst to mankind, 'as the restorer of poetry, the greatest genius, the truest judge, and the best patron.' Never for a moment does he hesitate to compare him with the greatest. He declares that Buckhurst forgives 'the many failings of those, who, in their wretched art, cannot arrive to those heights, that he possesses from a happy, abundant, and native genius: which are as inborn to him, as they were to Shakespeare, or for aught I know, to Homer.' So he sets him high above all living poets. 'Your Lordship,' says he, 'excels all others in all the several parts of poetry, which you have undertaken to adorn.'

And, again: 'the most vain, and the most ambitious of our age have . . . yielded the first place without dispute.' As his lyric poems are 'the delight and wonder of this age,' so they will prove 'the envy of the next.' And it is of satire that he is 'the most perfect model.' 'If I have not written better,' confesses Dryden, 'it is because you have not written more.' Finally, in a comparison of ancient and modern, he divides the wreath of glory between Shakespeare and Buckhurst. 'This age and the last,' he declares, 'especially in England, have excelled the ancients in both these kinds, and I would instance in Shakespeare of the former, in your Lordship of the latter sort.' What boots it, after this eulogy, to call Buckhurst the king of poets? It would have been less mischievous to call him the king of men.

With the same recklessness of adulation, Dryden praises Mulgrave's *Essay on Poetry*. He read it, he says, with much delight, as much instruction, and not without some envy. He assures his patron that the anonymity of the work was 'not altogether so fair, give me leave to say, as it was politic.' The motive was obvious. 'By concealing your quality,' writes Dryden, 'you might clearly understand how your work succeeded, and that the general approbation was given to your merit, not your title. Thus, like Apelles, you stood unseen behind your own Venus, and received the praises of the passing multitude; the work was commended, not the author; and I doubt not, this was one of the most pleasing

adventures of your life.' It was not like Mulgrave to remain long in the dark, and the adventure, if pleasing, was soon over. As for Dryden, he could sink lower (or rise higher) even than this in the scale of adulation. A couplet upon Mulgrave remains his masterpiece of bathos:

> 'How will sweet Ovid's ghost be pleased to hear
> His fame augmented by an English peer!'

IV

The poets themselves, being men of the world, knew what value to put upon Dryden's panegyrics. The best of them, Rochester and Buckhurst, treated their own poems with a light-hearted disdain. They left others to gather up the flowers which they scattered with a prodigal hand. If they are to be accounted artists, let it be in life not in verse. Poetry was but an episode in their multicoloured careers; and, though we may wisely neglect the lives of greater poets, with them, criticism inevitably becomes biography. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, the one man of undisputed genius among them, will ever be memorable for the waywardness and complexity of his character, for the vigour and energy of his verse. Few poets have suffered more acutely than he from the flattery of friends, or the disdain of enemies. The lofty adulation offered at his youthful shrine was soon turned to a violent malignity, and in the clash of opinions it is not easy to dis-

engage the truth. He was born in 1648 at Ditchley near Woodstock, the son of the pleasure-loving, wary, ambitious Henry Wilmot, who fought for his king, and who, after Worcester, shared the wanderings and hardships of Charles II. Educated 'in grammar learning' at Burford, in Oxfordshire, he entered Wadham College in 1659, was created a master of arts in 1661, 'at which time he, and none else, was admitted very affectionately into the fraternity, by a kiss on the left cheek from the Chancellor of the University (Clarendon), who then sate in the supreme chair to honour that Assembly.'

A veritable child of the muses 'he lisped in numbers.' At the age of twelve he addressed a respectable copy of verses 'to his Sacred Majesty on his Restoration,' and mourned in English and Latin the death of Mary, Princess of Orange. Having taken his degree, he travelled in France and Italy, and, at eighteen, returned to England and the court, a finished scholar and an accomplished gentleman. None of the courtiers who thronged Whitehall made so brilliant an appearance as Rochester. All the gifts of nature were his. 'He was a graceful, well-shaped person,' says Burnet, 'tall and well made. He was exactly well-bred, and what by a modest behaviour natural to him, what by a civility become almost as natural, his conversation was easy and obliging.' He had a talent of intimacy and persuasiveness, which none could resist. Even when his words lacked sincerity, they won the hearts of his hearers. 'Il entre dans

vos goûts,' said a woman, who was not in love with him, 'dans tous vos sentiments; et tandis qu'il ne dit pas un seul mot de ce qu'il pense, il vous fait croire tout ce qu'il dit.' He gained an easy ascendancy over the court and assumed all the freedoms of a chartered libertine. Once upon a time, as Pepys tells us, he had a difference with Tom Killigrew, whose ear he boxed in the presence of the King. This barbarous conduct, says the diary, 'do give such offence to the people here at court, to see how cheap the King makes himself, and the more, for that the King hath not only passed by the thing, and pardoned it to Rochester already, but this very morning the King did publicly walk up and down, and Rochester I saw with him as free as ever to the King's everlasting shame, to have so idle a rogue his companion.'

Not even the people at court could for long harbour a feeling of resentment against the insolence of Rochester. Charles himself was ever ready with a pardon. Though he banished Rochester many times from his presence, he as often recalled him. The truth is that, in Burnet's words, 'the King loved his company for the diversion it afforded him.' Little as Charles appreciated the bitter satires upon 'Old Rowley,' he could not but forgive the satirist. Though Rochester professed a hatred of the court, it was the only place in which his talents found a proper freedom, and he always returned thither, so long as his health lasted. And it was not only the

licence of his speech that involved him in disgrace. At nineteen, to repair the sole deficiency of his lot, he had seized upon Mrs. Mallet, a great beauty and a great fortune, 'by horse and foot men,' put her 'into a coach with six horses, and two women provided to receive her,' and carried her away. The King, who had tried in vain to advance the match, was 'mighty angry,' and sent Rochester to the Tower. But the *triste Héritière*, as Gramont calls her, did not long withstand the fierce suit of her lover, and Rochester, as his letters show, made a reasonably fond husband. Indeed, though after the adventure what most strongly attracted him was the lady's fortune, he honourably repented of his greed, and presently tells her that her money 'shall always be employed for the use of herself and those dependent on her . . . so long as he can get bread without it.'

Adventure, in truth, was the passion of his life. When he could not seek it in the field of battle, he must find it perforce in the tamer atmosphere of the court. He had a perfect genius for disguise, and delighted to assume the likeness now of a porter, now of a beggar. Like the true histrion that he was, he neglected no part of his craft, and entered into the very skin of the character he chose to impersonate. 'Sometimes to follow some mean amours,' says Burnet, 'which for the vanity of them he affected, at other times merely for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those who were in the secret

and saw him in these shapes could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.'

In one of his banishments, he and the Duke of Buckingham, also in disgrace, found an inn to let on the Newmarket road. Filled with the joyous spirit of masquerade, they took the inn, and each in turn played the part of landlord. Less with the purpose of selling their ale than to get what sport they might out of the ramble, they invited the whole countryside to frequent feasts, and with the help of their neighbours enacted a veritable comedy. At last Rochester became enamoured of a wood-nymph, compared with whom 'Salmacis was not more charming,' and whom he visited in the garb of an old gentlewoman, thus giving the court the matter of not a little gossip, before the King, passing by that road to Newmarket, took him into favour again.

But his greatest exploit in this kind was to set himself up in Tower Street for a German (or Italian) astrologer, who declared that he had discovered the profoundest secrets of nature and promised infallible remedies for every disease. His success in the city was immediate, and his fame so quickly spread to the other end of the town that the courtiers flocked to hear his eloquence and to profit by his wisdom. So well contrived was his disguise, that his nearest friends did not know him; and, as Hamilton tells us, but for an accident he would have numbered Miss

Jennings and Miss Price among his patients. None knew better than he how to beat the drum and to urge the passers-by into his booth. As Alexander Bendo, he put himself high above 'the bastard-race of quacks and cheats.' He was ready to cure the spleen and all the other ills of mankind. Before all, he declared that he had learned in a long sojourn abroad how art assists nature in the preservation of beauty. Under his treatment women of forty should bear the same countenance as girls of fifteen. There was no miracle of embellishment that he would not undertake. 'I will also preserve and cleanse your teeth,' he boasted, 'white and round as pearls, fastening them that are loose.' And he did not underrate the benefits which he was ready to confer. 'Now should Galen himself look out of his grave,' said he, 'and tell me these are baubles below the profession of a physician, I would boldly answer him, that I take more glory in preserving God's image in its unblemished beauty upon one good face, than I should do in patching up all the decay'd carcases in the world.' That is in the proper key of extravagance, and it is not wonderful that courtiers and citizens alike sought out Alexander Bendo at his lodgings in Tower Street, next door to the sign of the Black Swan.

Thus it was that Rochester spent the interludes of enforced exclusion from court. Nothing could tame the ardent gaiety of his spirits, or check his boisterous love of life and pleasure. His tireless wit came to

the aid of his inclination, and his deep knowledge of literature made him welcome even among the serious. Like Gramont, he sought joy everywhere, and carried it with him into every company. His unwearied curiosity sustained him in the most hazardous adventures, and taught him how to make light of the worst misfortunes. Burnet declares that he had conquered his love of drink while upon his travels, and that, falling once more into a society that practised every sort of excess, he was brought back to it again. It is probable that no vast persuasion was necessary. 'Do a charity,' he writes in an early letter to Henry Savile, 'becoming one of your pious Principles, in preserving your humble Servant *Rochester* from the imminent Peril of Sobriety; which for want of good Wine more than Company (for I can drink like a Hermit betwixt God and my Conscience) is very like to befall me.' His constant disposition was toward gaiety and mirth, and 'the natural bent of his fancy,' to quote Burnet's words, 'made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many, to be more diverted by that humour, studied to engage him deeper and deeper in intemperance, which at length did so entirely subdue him, that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually drunk.' When Burnet wrote these words, he desired, no doubt, to make the worst of Rochester. The greater the sin, the greater was the conversion. And thus it was that Rochester's vices became legendary, and Rochester himself was chosen as an

awful example of demoniacal passion, a kind of bogey to frighten children withal.

Yet far worse than his manifold intemperance, in the eyes of his contemporaries, were his principles of morality and religion. Evelyn found him 'a very profane wit,' and doubtless he took a peculiar pleasure in shocking that amiable philosopher. Worse than all, he was 'a perfect Hobbist,' and, upon his Hobbism, his glaring vices seemed but evanescent spots. He freely owned to Burnet, with a smile, let us hope, that 'though he talked of morality as a fine thing, yet this was only because he thought it a decent way of speaking, and that as they went always in clothes though in their frolics they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people, so though some of them found it necessary for human life to talk of morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it.'

As in prose, so in verse, Rochester delighted to outrage his critics. Dryden charged him with self-sufficiency, and out of his mouth he might have convicted him. Thus writes Rochester in *An Epistolary Essay*:

'Born to myself, I like myself alone;
And must conclude my Judgement good, or none:
For cou'd my Sense be nought, how shou'd I know
Whether another Man's were good or no?
If then I 'm happy, what does it advance
Whether to Merit due, or Arrogance?
Oh! but the World will take offence thereby!
Why then the World shall suffer for 't, not I.'

It was not the world which suffered. It was Rochester. Like all men who set out to astonish the citizen, to put the worst possible construction upon his own words and acts, he saw his self-denunciation accepted for simple truth.[1] Even Dr. Johnson did not rise superior to the prejudice of Rochester's own contemporaries. He, too, thought that Rochester's intervals of study were 'yet more criminal' than his 'course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality,' and thus proved how long endures the effect of mystification.

As has been said, it is difficult in the clash of opinions to disengage the character of Rochester. *Fort impie, fort ordurier dans ses propos et ses écrits*—such is Hamilton's judgment. 'There has not lived in many Ages (if ever) so extraordinary, and I think I may add so useful a Person, as most Englishmen know my Lord to have been, whether we consider the constant good Sense, and the agreeable Mirth of his ordinary Conversation, or the vast Reach and

[1] It was, thus, partly by his own fault, that all outrages committed in London were set down to Rochester. 'Last night,' writes Henry Savile to his butler Halifax on June 5, 1677, 'Du Puis, a French cook in the Mall, was stabb'd for some pert answer by one Mr. Floyd, and because my Lord Rochester and my Lord Lumley were supping in the same house, though in both different rooms and companys, the good nature of the town has reported it all this day that his Lordship was the stabber. He desired me therefore to write to you to stop that report going northward, for he says if it were to get as far as York the truth will not be believed for two or three years.' Thus his ill fame pursued him even along the road of innocence.

Compass of his Invention'—so says Wolseley, his loyal panegyrist. Somewhere between these two extremes the truth will be found. Rochester was as little 'useful' as he was *fort impie, fort ordurier*. He was a man, not a monster, a man of genius, moreover, and, in his hours, a man of rare simplicity and candour.

A good friend, a kind, if fickle lover, he has left behind in his letters a better proof of his character than either obloquy or eulogy affords. His correspondence with Henry Savile[1] does equal credit to them both. Though Rochester's letters are touched with the sadness which underlay his mirth, what spirit is in them, what courage, even when he confesses himself 'almost blind, utterly lame, and scarce within the reasonable Hope of ever seeing London again'! As sickness overtakes him, he rests the more heavily on Savile's friendship. 'Harry,' he writes, ''tis not the least of my Happiness, that I think you love me; but the first of my pretensions is to make it appear, that I faithfully endeavour to

[1] Henry Savile, Rochester's friend and correspondent, the 'Harry' of Rochester's letters, though no poet, was a friend of poets, and numbered Dorset as well as Rochester among his intimates. The brother of George Savile, the famous author of *The Trimmer*, he went early to Court, fought at sea with courage, like the rest, and presently proved his skill in the art of diplomacy. A handsome, pleasant-mannered, jovial courtier—'no man,' said he, 'shall keep company with me without drinking except Ned Waller'—he was typical of his age, and worthy to enjoy the companionship of Rochester.

deserve it. If there be a real good upon earth, 'tis in the name of Friend, without which all others are fantastical. How few of us are fit stuff to make that thing, we have daily the melancholy experience.'

His letters to his wife, moreover, exhibit us a Rochester, who has hitherto been obscured from view. Whimsical, humorous, ironic he appears in them also, but something else than the cynical hunter after pleasure. He shows himself curious concerning the details of household management. He discusses oats and coal, deplores the want of ready cash, which is hard to come by, and hopes his wife excuses him sending no money, 'for till I am well enough,' thus he writes, 'to fetch it myself, they will not give me a farthing, and if I had not pawn'd my plate I believe I must have starv'd in my sickness.' Here, indeed, is an unfamiliar Rochester, in dire straits of poverty, pawning his plate to keep his restless soul within its case, and nearer to the truth, perhaps, than the monster painted in their blackest colours by anxious divines.

Two episodes in Rochester's career have involved him in charges of dishonour, from one of which he cannot emerge with credit. In both, Mulgrave was engaged, and it is easy to believe that the antipathy which separated the two men was innate and profound. When neither of them was of age, Mulgrave, being informed that Rochester had said something malicious of him, sent Colonel Aston to call him to account. Rochester proved, even to Mulgrave's

satisfaction, that he had not used the offending words, but Mulgrave thought himself compelled by the mere rumour to prosecute the quarrel. He owned his persistence foolish, and Rochester, as it was his part to choose, elected to fight on horseback. They met at Knightsbridge, and Rochester brought with him not his expected second, but 'an errant life-guards-man, whom nobody knew.' Aston objected to the second as an unsuitable adversary, 'especially considering how well he was mounted.' And, in the end, they agreed to fight on foot. Whereon, Rochester declared that 'he had at first chosen to fight on horseback, because he was so weak with a certain distemper, that he found himself unfit to fight at all any way, much less on foot.' Accordingly, no fight took place, and Mulgrave's second lost no time in spreading a report injurious to Rochester, upon whom henceforth was fostered a reputation for cowardice. The charge is not fully sustained. Rochester, it seems, was too weak to fight afoot, Mulgrave objected to fight on horseback, being worse mounted. A little ingenuity might have turned the blame on either side, and Mulgrave, by his own confession, was persisting in a quarrel which had no justification. Rochester, with his customary cynicism, shrugged his shoulders, and replied to the charge of cowardice with a famous couplet:

> 'Merely for safety, after Fame they thirst,
> For all men would be Cowards if they durst.'

The origin of his quarrel with Dryden is by no means creditable to his honour or his generosity. 'He had a particular pique to him,' says St. Evremond, 'after his mighty success in the Town, either because he was sensible, that he deserved not that applause for his Tragedies, which the mad, unthinking audience gave him . . . or out of indignation of having any rival in reputation.' Whatever might be the cause of Rochester's malice, its effect was to set up Crowne in opposition to Dryden, a piece of impudence which nothing but Rochester's influence at court could have carried off. And no sooner had Crowne enjoyed his unwarranted success than Rochester withdrew his favour, 'as if he would still be in contradiction with the Town, and in that,' says St. Evremond with uncontested truth, 'he was generally in the right, for of all Audiences in polite Nations, perhaps there is not one which judges so very falsely of the drama.'

With this piece of injustice Rochester was not content. If he had been, *An Essay on Satire* soon gave him, as he thought, another ground of anger. That he should have attributed this piece of weak and violent spite to Dryden speaks ill of his critical sense. He might have discerned the hand of Mulgrave in every line. Perhaps he believed them accomplices. At any rate, as Dryden was going home one night from Will's to his lodging, he was waylaid by a pack of ruffians and soundly beaten. There is no doubt that Rochester

was guilty of the outrage. His guilt stands confessed in a letter to Savile. 'You write me word,' says he, 'that I am out of favour with a certain poet. . . . If he fall on me at the Blunt, which is his very good Weapon in Wit, I will forgive if you please, and leave the Repartee to Black Will, with a Cudgel.' The punishment he meted out to Mulgrave was better deserved, and delivered in verse:

> 'Half-witty, and half-mad, and scarce half-brave,
> Half-honest, which is very much a knave,
> Made up of all these Halves, thou canst not pass
> For anything entirely but an Ass.'

As for Dryden, whose genius, as whose years, should have protected him, he passed by Rochester with a single reference. 'An author of your own quality, whose ashes I will not disturb,' he wrote to Buckhurst after Rochester's death, with a magnanimity which, even at this distance of time, it is hard to condone.

At the age of thirty-one, Rochester died, his wild oats sown, and his mind turned to ampler purposes. Though his cynical temper was still unconquered, his wit began 'to frame and fashion itself to public business.' As Wolseley, the truest of his friends, tells us, he was 'informing himself of the Wisdom of our Laws and the excellent Constitution of the English Government, and spoke in the House of Peers with general Approbation.' That he would ever have grown into a statesman is unlikely. Though others escaped censure, the scandal of his life had destroyed his authority. Besides, he was a poet, to whom politics

would ever have seemed a base trade. What he did for the solace of his reputation was to make an edifying end, and to prove a chance of exhortation to two divines. That these worthy men made him out rather worse than he was is probable. Burnet, at any rate, told us something of him by the way, and set forth his views with impartiality. So much may not be said of the Rev. Robert Parsons, who considered him in a general sense and with a kind of unctuous awe, found 'something singular and paradoxical in his conflicts above the reach and thought of other men,' and handed him over, as an inverted hero, to the authors of the chapbooks.

V

Such was the life and death of one who set forth his character in his writings with the utmost candour. Though he was never at the pains to gather together his flying sheets, though he is said on his deathbed, one hopes falsely, to have desired the destruction of his poems, it is his poems which still give us the true measure of his genius. And, even here, misunderstanding has pursued him. The worst that he wrote has been acclaimed to be the best. Johnson declares that the strongest effort of his muse is his poem entitled *Nothing*,[1] a piece of in-

[1] 'Nothing' as a theme was long a commonplace. Johnson compares with Rochester's verses Passerat's Latin poem *Nihil* (1567). Two years before Passerat, Sir Edward Dyer had written a tract in prose, *The Prayse of Nothing*, which had suggested a popular broadside, with the same title, printed in J. P. Collier's *Book of Roxburghe Ballads* (1847).

genuity, unworthy his talent, as the first three lines are enough to testify:

> 'Nothing! thou Elder Brother ev'n to shade,
> Thou hadst a being ere the World was made,
> And (well fixt) art alone, of ending not afraid.'

Still more foolish has been the common assumption that Rochester's poems are unfit to be read. In some few he reached a height of outspoken cynicism, rarely scaled by an English poet. But the most of his works may be studied without fear, and judged upon their very high merits. Tonson's collection contains more than two hundred pages, and amply justifies the claim, made for it by Rymer, that it consists 'of such pieces only as may be received in a vertuous Court, and not unbecome the Cabinet of the severest Matron.'

It was in satire above all that Rochester excelled. For this kind, he was richly endowed by nature and art. He had studied the ancient models with constancy and understanding. The quenchless vigour of his mind found its best expression in castigating the vices and foibles of humankind, which he knew so well. His daring and malice equalled his vigour, and he attacked Charles II.,[1] the Royal Angler, or

[1] Though he dealt out the fiercest justice to the King in satire, it is in an epitaph that he comes nearest the truth:

> 'Here lies our Sovereign Lord the King,
> Whose word no man relies on,
> Who never said a foolish thing,
> Nor ever did a wise one.'

Nelly, the reigning favourite, with as light a heart as he brought to the demolition of Sir Car Scroop, the purblind knight. He wrote the heroic couplet with a life and freedom that few have excelled, and the most that can be said in his dispraise is that, like the rest of the courtiers, he knew not the use of the file. 'Rochester,' said Andrew Marvell, with the voice not of flattery but of criticism, 'is the only man in England who has the true vein of Satire,' and Marvell, in speaking of satire, spoke of an art which he himself had practised with success. And that Rochester looked upon satire as an art is evident from the answer, which he gave to Burnet, who objected that revenge and falsehood were its blemishes. 'A man,' said he, 'could not write with life, unless he were heated with Revenge, for to make a Satire without Resentments, upon the cold Notions of Philosophy, was as if a man would in cold blood cut men's throats, who had never offended him.' And he added: 'the lyes in these Libels came often in as ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the beauty of the Poem.'

His masterpiece, without doubt, is *A Satire against Mankind*. Imitated from Boileau, it bears in every line the impress of Rochester's mind. The energy of its thought and style separates it sharply from its original, and, if you compare the two works, you may find a clue to the difference between French and English. The one is marked by order, moderation, and good sense. The other moves impetuous

like a torrent, and sweeps out of its way the prejudices of all time. In cynical, closely argued contempt of man this satire is unmatched; in expression, it surpasses the most vivid of Rochester's works. The denunciation of reason,[1]

> 'an *ignis fatuus* of the Mind,
> Which leaves the light of Nature, Sense, behind,
> Pathless, and dang'rous, wand'ring ways it takes,
> Through Errour's fenny Bogs, and thorny Brakes,'

is a purple passage of English poetry, in which the optimist can take no delight. Its conclusion is the very essence of hopelessness:

> 'Whilst the misguided Follower climbs with pain,
> Mountains of Whimseys, heapt in his own Brain:
> Stumbling from thought to thought, falls headlong down
> Into Doubt's boundless Sea; where like to drown,
> Books bear him up a-while, and make him try
> To swim with Bladders of Philosophy:
> In hopes still to o'ertake the skipping Light,
> The Vapour dances, in his dazzled sight,
> Till spent, it leaves him to eternal night.

[1] Tennyson was a fervent admirer of Rochester. 'His taste,' wrote Lecky of the Laureate, 'lay chiefly in sixteenth and seventeenth century poetry, in which he was widely read, and which he used to quote with admirable power. I can still remember the almost terrible force he threw into the noble lines of Rochester on the "Vanity of Human Reason."'—Tennyson's *Life*, vol. ii. p. 201.

Then old Age, and Experience, hand in hand,
Lead him to Death, and make him understand,
After a Search so painful, and so long,
That all his Life he has been in the wrong.'

Like many of his contemporaries, Rochester followed Horace in making verse a vehicle of criticism. His 'Allusion to the Tenth Satire of the First Book' may be said to contain his literary preferences. With candour and sound judgment he characterises the most eminent of his contemporaries. He declines to be 'blindly partial' to Dryden, defends Jonson and Shakespeare against detraction, ridicules the 'tedious scenes' of Crowne, whom he had used as the instrument of his jealousy, and detects a sheer original in Etherege, who returned the compliment by painting him as Dorimant. He finds the right epithets for 'hasty Shadwell' and 'slow Wycherley,' chooses Buckhurst for pointed satire, and extols the 'gentle prevailing art' of Sir Charles Sedley. For the uncritical populace, he expresses his frank contempt. 'I loathe the rabble,' says he, ''tis enough for me

'If Sedley, Shadwell, Sheppard, Wycherley,
Godolphin, Butler, Buckhurst, Buckingham,
And some few more, whom I omit to name,
Approve my Sense, I count their Censure Fame.'

It is Rochester's added distinction that, almost alone in his age, he wrote lyrics touched with feeling, even with passion. Though, at times, he makes

sport of his own inconstancy, though, like the rest, he rhymes 'kisses' with 'blisses' and 'heart' with 'smart,' he could yet write:

'An Age in her Embraces past,
Would seem a Winter's Day;
Where Life and Light, with envious haste
Are torn and snatch'd away.

But, oh! how slowly Minutes roul,
When absent from her Eyes;
That fed my Love, which is my Soul,
It languishes and dies.

For then no more a Soul but Shade,
It mournfully does move;
And haunts my Breast, by Absence made
The living Tomb of Love.

You wiser men despise me not;
Whose Love-sick Fancy raves,
On Shades of Souls, and Heav'n knows what;
Short Ages live in Graves.'

Nor should ever be forgotten that masterpiece of heroic irony, *The Maim'd Debauchee*, who, like a brave admiral, crawling to the top of an adjacent hill, beholds the battle, in which he can take no part:

'As some brave Admiral, in former War
Depriv'd of Force, but prest with Courage still,
Two Rival Fleets appearing from afar,
Crawls to the top of an adjacent Hill;

From whence (with Thoughts full of Concern) he views
The wise and daring Conduct of the Fight:
And each bold Action to his Mind renews,
His present Glory, and his past Delight.

. . . . . .

So when my Days of Impotence approach,
And I 'm by Love and Wine's unlucky Chance,
Driv'n from the pleasing Billows of Debauch,
On the dull Shoar of lazy Temperance;

My Pains at last some Respite shall afford,
While I behold the Battels you maintain:
When Fleets of Glasses sail around the Board,
From whose Broad-sides Volleys of Wit shall rain.

Nor shall the Sight of honourable Scars,
Which my too forward Valour did procure,
Frighten new-listed Souldiers from the Wars;
Past Joys have more than paid what I endure.'

You can but say of it, as of much else, that it bears the stamp of Rochester's vigour and sincerity in every line, and that he alone could have written it.[1]

[1] By a strange irony the Seventh *Emblem* of Francis Quarles' Third Book has long been ascribed to Rochester, both in Editions of his works and in Anthologies. It is suggested by the verse of Job: 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' And thus begins:

'Why dost thou shade thy lovely face? O why
Does that eclipsing hand so long deny
The sunshine of thy soul-enlivening eye?'

How did the false ascription come about? By the folly of editors, or by Rochester's own desire to mystify his readers by converting an exquisite piece of devotion, written before he was born, to a love-song of his own?

VI

Sir Charles Sedley, if he lacked Rochester's genius, was more prosperously endowed. He was rich as well as accomplished, and outlived his outrageous youth, to become the friend and champion of William III. Born in 1639, he preceded Rochester at Wadham College, and came upon the town as a poet and profligate at the Restoration. Concerning his wit, there is no doubt. Pepys pays it a compliment which cannot be gainsaid. He went to the theatre to hear *The Maides Tragedy*, and lost it all, listening to Sedley's discourse with a masked lady, 'and a more pleasant rencontre I never heard,' and his exceptions 'against both words and pronouncing very pretty.' Dryden describes Sedley as 'a more elegant Tibullus, whose eulogy by Horace he applies to him:

> 'Non tu corpus eras sine pectore: Dii tibi formam,
> Dii tibi divitias dederant, artemque fruendi.'

He applauds above all the candour of his opinions, his dislike of censoriousness, his good sense and good nature, and proclaims the accusations brought against him as 'a fine which fortune sets upon all extraordinary persons.' It is certain that, with the years, his gravity increased, and the quip which he made to explain his hostility to James II., who had taken his daughter for his mistress, and made her Countess of Dorchester, was but an echo of

his lost youth. 'I hate ingratitude,' said he, 'the King has made my daughter a countess; I can do no less than try to make his daughter a Queen.'

As a poet, he followed obediently the fashion of the time. He wrote *The Mulberry Garden*, which failed to please Pepys or to provoke a smile from the King, and *The Tyrant King of Crete*. He perverted *Antony and Cleopatra* into rhyme, and permits the Egyptian queen to speak these last words:

> 'Good asp, bite deep and deadly in my breast,
> And give me sudden and eternal rest.' [*She dies.*

He translated Virgil's *Fourth Georgic* as well as the *Eclogues*, and composed a poem on matrimony called *The Happy Pair*, which was long ago forgotten. Such reputation as he has guarded depends wholly upon his songs. What Burnet said of his wit might be applied to his songs with equal truth: 'he had a sudden and copious wit, but it was not so correct as Lord Dorset's, nor so sparkling as Lord Rochester's.' He had far less faculty than either Rochester or Dorset of castigating his idly written lines. He was content with the common images of his day, with the fancy of *Gradus ad Parnassum*. The maids and shepherds of his songs like their 'balmy ease' on 'flowery carpets' under 'the sun's genial ray.' Their favourite weapons are 'darts and flames.' In the combination of these jejune words there can be no feeling and no surprise. But Sedley had his happy moments, in which he discarded the poor

artifices of his muse, and wrote like a free and untrammelled poet. 'Phillis is my only joy,' apart from its metrical ingenuity, has a lyrical sincerity which has kept it fresh unto this day. Written to be sung, it is the work not of a fop but of a poet, and it can still be heard gladly without the music:

'Phillis is my only joy,
Faithless as the winds or seas,
Sometimes cunning, sometimes coy,
Yet she never fails to please;
If with a frown
I am cast down,
Phillis, smiling
And beguiling,
Makes me happier than before.'

A near rival is 'Not Celia that I juster am,' memorable for its epigrammatic conclusion:

'When Change itself can give no more,
'Tis easy to be true.'

When he condescends to lyrical patriotism, Sedley is seen at his worst. Not even his hatred of James II. can palliate such doggerel:

'Behold the happy day again,
Distinguish'd by the joy in every face;
This day great William's life began,
Soul of our war and guardian of our peace.'

For the rest, Rochester's criticism of Sedley is not without truth. He praised the gentle Art

'That can with a resistless Power impart
The loosest wishes to the chastest Heart.'

Sedley's early ambition could not be more justly or delicately expressed.

VII

The reputation of Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and Earl of Dorset, is a puzzle of literary history. An age lavish of panegyric exhausted in his praise all its powers of flattery. In no other poet will you find so vast a disproportion between his works and the eulogies, which they evoked. Some specimens of Dryden's adulation have already been quoted. And Dryden did not stand alone. Prior was his friendly rival in exaggeration. 'The manner in which he wrote,' said he of Buckhurst, 'will hardly ever be equalled. . . . Every one of his pieces is an ingot of gold, intrinsically and solidly valuable; such as wrought or beaten thinner, would shine thro' a whole book of any author.' For every virtue of his friend's writings Prior found a happy image. 'There is a lustre in his verses,' he wrote, 'like that of the sun in Claude Lorraine's landskips; it looks natural, and it is inimitable.' And when we turn from the encomiasts to the poet's own works, we find them to be no more than what Johnson called them, 'the effusions of a man of wit, gay, vigorous, and airy.'

Buckhurst was, above all, a satirist. He had the mordant humour, the keen eye, the perfect closeness of phrase, essential to one who lashes the follies of his age. He knew not how to spare the objects

of his contempt. He left upon his enemies not the flicker of irony, but the indelible mark of his scorn. Rochester, in a line of praise, not of ill-nature, as Dryden took it, called him 'the best good man with the worst natur'd Muse,' a line which Buckhurst's addresses 'To Mr. Edward Howard' seem to justify. Of their skill and energy there can be no doubt. Their victim, assuredly, found them deficient in good taste. 'The gentleman,' says Prior, 'had always so much the better of the satirist, that the persons touched did not know where to fix their resentments, and were forced to appear rather ashamed than angry.' It was more anger than shame, I imagine, that attacked Edward Howard, when he read Buckhurst's ferocious lines upon his plays.

The best known of all his works is the celebrated song, 'To all you Ladies now at land,' a true ballad in form and rhythm, touched in every line with the inborn wit and sentiment of its author, who sees the sea with the eye of a landsman and courtier, and who sends his tears a speedier way than the post: 'The tide shall bring them twice a day.' Tradition has persuaded the world to believe that the poem was written at sea, in the first Dutch war, 1665, the night before the engagement of 3rd June. As Johnson says, 'seldom any splendid story is wholly true,' and this splendid story must be abandoned. The 'hereditary intelligence' of the Earl of Orrery half persuaded Johnson to believe 'that Lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only

retouched or finished it on the memorable evening.' Even this account, as Johnson admits, 'whatever it may subtract from his facility, leaves him his courage.' To-day we have surer intelligence even than had Lord Orrery. 'By coach to my Lord Brunker's,' wrote Pepys on 2nd January 1665, 'by appointment, in the Piazza in Covent-Guarding, where I occasioned much mirth with a ballet I brought with me, made from the seamen at sea to their ladies in town.' Though Pepys says that Sir W. Pen, Sir J. Ascue, and Sir J. Lawson 'made them,' it is evident that it is Buckhurst's 'ballet' that is in his mind, and as Pepys knew it six months before the battle, clearly Buckhurst did not write it at sea, with the expectation of an engagement upon him. The time and place of its writing, however, do not lessen the admirable quality of the ballad, which keeps its place in our anthologies by its own shining merits, and from which it is never inapposite to quote:

'To all you Ladies now at land
We men at sea indite;
But first would have you understand
How hard it is to write;
The Muses now, and Neptune too,
We must implore to write to you.

. . . . . .

Then if we write not by each post,
Think not we are unkind,
Nor yet conclude our ships are lost
By Dutchmen, or by wind;

Our tears we 'll send a speedier way,
The tide shall waft them twice a day.

. . . . . .

And now we 've told you all our loves,
And likewise all our fears,
In hopes this declaration moves
Some pity from your tears:
Let 's hear of no inconstancy,
We have too much of that at sea.'

Nevertheless, not his ballad, not his satires, not his songs, quick as they are with epigram and wit, justify the praises which have been generously bestowed upon their author. It may be that we have but a fragment of his work; that, as Prior suggests, he cared not what became of his verses when the writing of them had amused his leisure. Many of his happiest efforts may have been preserved only by memory, like the sayings of the ancient Druids. If that be so, they have perished as utterly as the Druids and their wisdom. The mere rumour of them cannot affect our judgment, and we are driven to conclude that it was Buckhurst the man, not Buckhurst the poet, who won the universal esteem. The follies of his youth were easily forgiven, as Rochester's were not, or perhaps it was his singular good fortune, that the excellences of his maturer years should show the brighter with his follies for a background. His character was amiable as his pen was acrid. Rochester, never lavish of compliments, paid him the highest that ingenuity could devise. 'He did not know how

it was,' said he, 'but my Lord Dorset might do anything, yet was never to blame.' His skill in diplomacy, his tact in affairs, are acknowledged by all, and he was evidently one of those who, without effort, claim and keep the respect and affection of their fellows. Prior's eulogy of his virtues is as sincere as it is eloquent, and if we estimate his poetry more modestly than his contemporaries, we may still echo their praises of his character and person.

VIII

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast to Buckhurst than John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave and Duke of Buckinghamshire, who was as little able to hold the sympathy of his age as to preserve the reputation of poet which once was his. Not even the tongues of flatterers can defend him successfully against the assault of truth. 'He is a nobleman of learning,' wrote Macky, 'and good natural parts, but of no principles. Violent for the High Church, yet seldom goes to it. Very proud, insolent, and covetous, and takes all advantages. In paying his debt unwilling, and is neither esteemed, nor beloved: for notwithstanding his great interest at Court, it is certain he has none in either House of Parliament, or in the country.' The conduct of his quarrel with Rochester, and whatever else is known of him, justify this harsh opinion. As a writer of verses, he is fluent and undistinguished. His 'Temple of Death'

has no better claim to be remembered than his 'Ode on Love.' In 'The Vision,' which was written during a voyage to Tangier, we come with surprise upon a line, 'odd antic shapes of wild unheard of things,' which is not made up of current phrases, and seems a piece of driftwood from the distant ocean of romance. His 'Essay on Satire,' which cost Dryden an encounter with Black Will, belies the principles which he himself has set forth: the accent of the scold is heard in every line.

The work by which he is best known is 'An Essay on Poetry,' a piece of rhymed criticism, then fashionable. It is neither profound nor original. Even as a chapter in the history of criticism it is not valuable, because whatever of wisdom it contains is borrowed from Boileau. It is full of commonplaces, his own and others. 'Nature's chief masterpiece,' says he, 'is writing well.' Number and rhyme he finds 'but vulgar arts,' and employed in vain without genius, 'for that 's the soul.' He discourses, without illumination, of satires, songs, odes, and epics. As for dialogue, he finds that 'Shakespeare and Fletcher are the wonders now,' pays a lofty tribute to Homer, 'Read Homer once, and you can read no more,' and in the second edition, published nine years after the first, in 1691, puts Milton on the topmost pinnacle of fame, above even Tasso and Spenser. This is the highest feat of his intelligence, and he would have deserved still greater credit for it, had not Roscommon anticipated him. In general, he leans

to the school of 'good sense'; he accepts Dryden's definition of wit, 'exact propriety of word and thought,' and would judge poetry by a rigid standard of life. In condemning 'such nauseous songs as the late Convert made,' he voided his spleen against his old enemy Rochester, and suggested his dislike of the sheer wit of Restoration Comedy. His condemnation inspired Robert Wolseley, in his preface to *Valentinian* (1685), valiantly to defend the memory of his friend Rochester, and to strike a blow for the freedom of poetry. 'It never yet came into any Man's Head, who pretended to be a Critick,' says Wolseley, 'except this Essayer's that the Wit of a Poet was to be measured by the worth of his Subject, and that when this was bad, that must be so too; the manner of treating the subject has hitherto been thought the true test, for as an ill Poet will depresse and disgrace the highest, so a good one will raise and dignifie the lowest.' None can doubt that Wolseley, the Convert's champion, had the best of the argument.

IX

Poetry, it may be assumed, was but an interlude in the life of Mulgrave. Politics were always his chief employment, from which he retired only while William III. was on the throne. The favourite of Queen Anne, he held high office during her reign, opposed the Duke of Marlborough, ill requited the Queen's amiability by inviting the Princess Sophia to England, and built the palace in the park, which,

more than his works, keeps green his name. Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, on the other hand, meddled in the affairs of the court as little as he practised its vices. Born in Ireland during the reign of Strafford, his kinsman, he was given the name of that statesman, who presently sent him to his own estate in Yorkshire to be educated. He showed an aptitude for learning, and, as his biographer says, 'attained to write in Latin with classical elegance and propriety.' When the blow fell upon Strafford, Roscommon sought refuge at Caen, there to complete his education, and spent the years of civil war in learning the life and language of foreign countries, 'applying himself particularly to the knowledge of medals, which he gained in perfection.'

He returned to England at the Restoration, a scholar, an honest man, and something of a prig. He had but one vice, the unamiable vice of gambling, with which he diminished his resources, and which once, in Dublin, went near to cause his death. 'As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table,' writes Fenton in his observations on Mr. Waller's poems, 'he was attack'd in the dark by three ruffians, who were employ'd to assassinate him: the Earl defended himself with so much resolution, that he dispatch'd one of the aggressors; whilst a Gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interpos'd, and disarm'd another; the third secur'd himself by flight.' This is a solitary adventure in a well-ordered, drab career. A friend of Dryden, Roscommon engaged

that great man's sympathy for his favourite project, the founding of a British Academy which should 'refine and fix the standard of our language.' And the academic bent of his mind is seen in his verses. His *Essay on Translated Verse* (1684) might well have been an exercise presented to an academy of letters. It is tame, frigid, and uninspired. Johnson says he is 'the only correct writer of verse before Addison,' a judgment which sets a strange meaning upon correctness. The poets to whom Roscommon owes the greatest debt are Horace, whom he says he has served more than twenty years, and Boileau, whose apologue of the quack he introduces into his poem without pertinence. The style of the *Essay* never rises above a prosaic commonplace. It is only by courtesy that we call such couplets as these poetry:

> 'Provok'd too far, we resolutely must
> To the few virtues that we have be just,'

or

> 'From hence our gen'rous Emulation came,
> We undertook, and we perform'd the same.'

The few precepts which he gives us would not prove of the smallest use to the translator. They are little else than the platitudes generally beloved by moral guides. Polonius himself might have composed this specimen:

> 'The first great work (a Task perform'd by few)
> Is, that yourself may to yourself be true.'

He was as resolute a champion of good sense as Rymer himself, and he treats Homer with the same scant courtesy which the author of *The Short View* meted out to Shakespeare :

> 'For who, without a qualm, hath ever lookt,
> On holy garbage, tho' by Homer Cookt,
> Whose rayling hero's, and whose wounded gods
> Make some suspect, He snores as well as nods.'

In the controversy between morality and art, he is strongly ranged on the side of morality. 'Want of decency is want of sense,' says he in a line that Mulgrave pilfered. He shines most brilliantly in aphorisms, but he cannot sustain his wisdom, and what most surprises us in *An Essay on Translated Verse* is its reception. In Granville's eyes, he, with Mulgrave's aid, had entirely eclipsed 'the Stagyrite and Horace.' Henceforth, said this too flattering critic, 'we need no foreign guide.' But let it not be forgotten that Roscommon, before Mulgrave, discerned the genius of Milton and the splendour of blank verse. 'Of many Faults,' he thought, 'Rhyme is (perhaps) the Cause,' and he brought his *Essay* to an end with a pious aspiration :

> 'O may I live to hail the glorious Day,
> And sing loud Pæans thro' the crowded Way,
> When in Triumphant State the British Muse,
> True to herself, shall barb'rous Aid refuse,
> And in the Roman Majesty appear,
> Which none know better, and none come so near.'

His theory was better than his precept. In his version of *Ars Poetica*, he proved that, however deep might be his admiration of Milton, he could not emulate the noble dignity of his style. Nevertheless, the merit of one who, in 1680, dared to write blank verse, is not that he uses it well, but that he uses it at all. Perturbed by the religious strife which followed James II.'s accession to the throne, Roscommon took the prudent resolution, says his biographer, 'to pass the remainder of his life at Rome, telling his friends it would be better to sit next to the chimney when the chamber smok'd.' He did not effect his purpose. Overtaken by the gout, he died suddenly in 1684, reciting as he died two lines of his own:

> 'My God, my father, and my friend,
> Do not forsake me at my End.'

CONGREVE AND SOME OTHERS

I

WILLIAM CONGREVE, a spoilt child of life and literature, was born in 1670 at Bardsey, near Leeds. He came of an ancient family, long settled in Staffordshire; and it was due to the accident of his father's commanding the garrison at Youghal that he sat upon the same bench with Swift at Kilkenny school, and finished his studies at Trinity College, Dublin. In 1691 he was admitted to the Middle Temple, presently deserted law for literature, like many another, composed a story called *Incognita, or Love and Duty Reconciled*, in which Aurelian, the son of a Florentine nobleman, plays an austere part, and of which Dr. Johnson rightly said that 'he would rather praise than read it,' and then, in 1693, came upon the town with *The Old Bachelor*.

It was Congreve's signal good fortune to appear at the right moment. The theatre then enjoyed a larger licence and a loftier repute than ever before. The town asked no other favour of its comic writers

than to be amused, and the interpreters of comedy rose to the full height of their opportunity. 'No stage,' said Cibber with perfect truth, 'at any one period, could show thirteen actors, standing all in equal light of excellence, in their profession,' and it was these actors who came loyally to Congreve's aid. The incomparable Betterton, the acclaimed master of them all, and the enchanting Mrs. Bracegirdle portrayed the two chief characters. The poet's colleagues endorsed the approval of the pit. Dryden, then in the plenitude of his power, generously hailed the rising star. He declared that he had never seen such a first play, and gave the young author the practical benefit of his advice. Congreve, after his wont, set no great value upon his achievement. 'When I wrote it,' said he, in his reply to Collier, 'I had little thoughts of the stage; but did it, to amuse myself, in a slow recovery from a fit of sickness.' If it amused its author, it amused, also, its spectators. Its success was triumphant, and the fortunate Congreve became famous in a day.

In his preface to the published play, Congreve pleaded in extenuation an ignorance of the town and stage. No plea was necessary; and, if his ignorance of the town were rightly confessed, the stage had left him no lessons to learn. With him, indeed, the craft of the stage was instinctive. From the very first he translated whatever he saw and heard in terms of the theatre. The comedy, which beguiled 'a slow recovery,' displays all the technical adroit-

ness of an old hand. The dialogue is polished to an even surface; the play of wit flashes like sunlight upon water; of the writing no more need be said than that it is Congreve's own. For the rest, *The Old Bachelor* wears upon it every sign of youth and inexperience. Neither of the two stories which are interlaced, none too closely, in its plot is fresh or original. Though none of Congreve's contemporaries could have written the play, any one of them might have devised its fable. In other words, Congreve is playing supremely well the tune of the time. Heartfree and Silvia are but the counters of artificial comedy. The marriage of the lady in the mask, which unties the knot of the play, is no better than an accepted convention of the stage. Bluffe, Sharper, and Wittol, who conduct the under plot, are stock characters of a still older fashion. They might have stepped out from Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. When Bluffe says, 'Sir, I honour you, I understand you love fighting, I reverence a man that loves fighting, sir, I kiss your hilts,' you recognise the authentic accent of Bobadill. Even Fondlewife, that 'kind of mongrel zealot,' owes less to life than to Zeal-of-the-land Busy. In the scene where Lucy, Silvia's maid, altercates with Setter, the pimp, the language is marked by all the bombast of youth, which Congreve presently laid aside. Says Setter: 'Thou art some forsaken Abigail we have dallied with heretofore, and art come to tickle thy imagination with remembrance

of iniquity past.' And Lucy replies: 'No, thou pitiful flatterer of thy master's imperfections! thou maukin, made up of the shreds and parings of his superfluous fopperies!' This is the language neither of life nor of comedy, and it was doubtless acceptable to the audience by its mere expectedness.

But, if we put aside the youthful extravagance of some passages and the too frequent reliance upon familiar types, we may discern in *The Old Bachelor* the true germs of Congreve's comedy. Not merely is the style already his own; his purpose and sense of character are evident on every page. Belinda, an affected lady, who 'never speaks well of Bellmour herself, nor suffers anybody else to rail at him,' might be a first, rough outline of Millamant. And Bellmour sketches, in a single speech, the whole philosophy of the poet: 'Come, come,' says he, 'leave business to idlers, and wisdom to fools: they have need of 'em: wit be my faculty, and pleasure my occupation, and let father Time shake his glass.' Henceforth, wit was Congreve's faculty, pleasure his occupation, and he succeeded so well that father Time still shakes his glass at him in vain.

II

In the same year (1693) *The Double-Dealer* was played at Drury Lane, and Congreve's reputation, great already, was vastly enhanced. In character, style, and construction *The Double-Dealer* is far above its predecessor. The one fault commonly

imputed to it is that it has too grave a motive for a comedy of manners. Lady Touchwood is in love with Millefont, to whom Cynthia is promised; Maskwell, Lady Touchwood's gallant, knows her secret, and attempts to use it for Millefont's discomfiture, and his own conquest of Cynthia. Such is the simple story, told with a simplicity of purpose in which Congreve himself took a proper pride. 'The mechanical part of it,' said he, in the dedication addressed to Charles Montague, 'is regular. . . . I designed the moral first, and to that moral I invented the fable, and do not know that I have borrowed one part of it anywhere. I made the plot as strong as I could, because it is single, because I would avoid confusion, and was resolved to preserve the three unities of the drama.'

That he succeeded in his design none will deny. *The Double-Dealer* is sternly classical in construction, and moves, from the rise of the curtain in the first act to the fall of the curtain in the fifth, to a settled end and with a settled purpose. Some machinery of the play is still conventional. A wrong letter given to Sir Paul by Lady Plyant, the villain surprised from behind a screen — these are the keys which unlock the plot. We might forget their simple artifice, were it not for the conscious villainy of Maskwell. That surpasses pretence and belief. Maskwell, indeed, is the familiar villain of melodrama. He is the ancestor in a direct line of Blifil and Joseph Surface, 'a sedate, thinking villain,' as Lady Touch-

wood calls him, 'whose black blood runs temperately bad.' The violence of his scenes with this lady exceeds the proper limit of comedy, and his discovery by Lord Touchwood verges upon the tragic: 'Astonishment,' he exclaims, 'binds up my rage! Villainy upon villainy! Heavens, what a long track of dark deceit has this discovered! I am confounded when I look back, and want a clue to guide me through the various mazes of unheard-of treachery. My wife! damnation! my hell!' There is no anti-climax. Congreve, with characteristic restraint, permits Maskwell after his unmasking to say no word.

Indeed, were it not for Maskwell's inveterate habit of soliloquy, he might trick us almost as easily as he tricks Millefont. 'Why, let me see,' he murmurs, 'I have the same force, the same words and accents, when I speak what I do think, and when I speak what I do not think—the very same—and dear dissimulation is the only art not to be known from nature.' And again, 'I will deceive 'em all and yet secure myself: 'twas a lucky thought! Well, this double-dealing is a jewel.' Here Congreve resolutely parts company with nature, and relies upon an artifice of the stage, an artifice which he defends with considerable ingenuity. 'A man in soliloquy,' he argues, 'is only thinking, and thinking such matter as were inexcusable folly in him to speak.' In other words, 'because we are concealed spectators of the plot in agitation, and the poet finds it necessary to let us

know the whole mystery of his contrivance, he is willing to inform us of this person's thoughts; and to that end is forced to make use of the expedient of speech, no other better way yet being invented for the communication of thought.' That is as good a defence of soliloquy as may be made, and, employed by Congreve, soliloquy had this advantage: it gave the author an opportunity, which he was quick to seize, of Sophoclean irony. None of the personages of the drama, except Lady Touchwood, knows what is evident to the audience, that Maskwell is a villain. When Millefont says, 'Maskwell, welcome! thy presence is a view of land appearing to my shipwrecked hopes,' the sense of irony is complete, and Congreve plays upon this note with the highest skill.

But it is not for its fable or for its Sophoclean irony that *The Double-Dealer* is chiefly admirable. Rather, we wonder to-day, as the town wondered then, at its well-drawn characters and its scenes of brilliant comedy. Lord and Lady Froth, who might have been inspired by the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, are masterpieces of witty invention. The scene is never dull when her ladyship, a true *précieuse*, counters the gallantry and bel air of Mr. Brisk, the most highly finished of coxcombs, with her coquettish pedantry. And is not Sir Paul Plyant, a kind of Fondlewife in a higher sphere, an excellent creature? And is not the vanity of his lady touched with a light and vivid hand? When she accepts

Millefont's addresses to Cynthia as an assault upon her own honour, bidding him 'not to hope, and not to despair neither,' our ear listens to the authentic voice of comedy.

That the play was ill-received, until it won the approval of the Queen, is surprising. Dryden, the omnipotent dispenser of reputations, had no doubt of its merit. He wrote such a set of commendatory verses as might have put a seal upon the highest fame. He pictured himself as worn with cares and age, 'unprofitably kept at Heaven's expense,' and living 'a rent-charge on his providence.' He implored Congreve to be kind to his remains, to defend his departed friend, and 'to shade those laurels, which descend to him.' Meanwhile, he lavishes the most generous praises upon him, whom he looked upon as his inevitable successor:

'In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise;
He moved the mind, but had not power to raise.
Great Jonson did by strength of judgment please;
Yet doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease.
In differing talents both adorned their age;
One for the study, t'other for the stage.
But both to Congreve justly shall submit,
One matched in judgment, both o'ermatched in wit.

. . . . . .

This is your portion, this your native store;
Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
To Shakespeare gave as much; she could not give him more.'

This, of course, is the hyperbole of friendship. Congreve was supreme in his own realm; it was not for him to match his prowess against greater monarchs.

With all good faith, Dryden adjured Congreve to maintain his post: 'that 's all the fame you need.' In *Love for Love*, his next comedy, Congreve did far more than maintain his post. He travelled one stage further towards the final triumph of *The Way of the World*. In 1695, Betterton and the best of his colleagues, having a just quarrel with the patentees of Drury Lane, and being empowered by the King's licence to act in a separate theatre for themselves, opened the famous house in Lincoln's Inn Fields with *Love for Love*. The success of the play was without precedent and well merited. At each step Congreve approached nearer to life as to the summit of his art. It is true that the pure comedy of *Love for Love* is intricated with a farce, in which Prue and Young Ben play their parts. It is true, also, that the hoyden's nurse had been a convention upon the stage ever since the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. But she affords a relief to the brilliant flash of Congreve's wit, and, as for the sailor, if he be not 'accounted very natural,' he is 'very pleasant,' as Dr. Johnson observed long ago.

Thus at last Congreve has entered into his kingdom. In every scene he shows himself a master of his craft. The exposition of the plot is perfect. Jeremy, although he speaks with Congreve's voice, is the best servant in the whole

range of comedy. You will search in vain for a truer picture of a curmudgeon than Sir Sampson Legend, compact of humour and ill nature, whose 'blunt vivacity,' as Cibber calls it, was marvellously portrayed by Underhill. Foresight, that 'peevish and positive' old fellow, with an absurd pretence to understand palmistry, astrology, physiognomy, dreams and omens, was familiar to all frequenters of the theatre in those days of occult and half-understood superstitions. When the two meet to discuss the marriage of Ben and Angelica they vaunt their excellence in alternate strains. 'But I tell you,' brags Foresight, 'I have travelled, and travelled in the celestial spheres, know the signs and the planets, and their houses . . . know whether life shall be long or short, happy or unhappy, whether diseases are curable or uncurable. If journeys shall be prosperous, undertakings successful; or goods stolen recovered, I know——' Sir Sampson's riposte is magnificent: 'I know,' thus he interrupts, 'the length of the Emperor of China's foot; have kissed the great Mogul's slipper, and rid a hunting upon an elephant with the Cham of Tartary—Body o' me, I have made a cuckold of a king, and the present Majesty of Bantam is the issue of these loins,' a valiant boast, the repartee to which—'thou modern Mandeville! Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was but a type of thee, thou liar of the first magnitude!'—seems singularly ineffective.

But it was upon Valentine, the lover of Angelica,

that Congreve lavished all the resources of his art. There is a nobility of phrase and thought in Valentine's encounters with his father, Sir Sampson, which may be called Shakespearean in no mere spirit of adulation. In these passages Congreve rises to a height of eloquent argument, which gives a tragic force to his work. 'Why, sirrah,' asks Sir Sampson, 'mayn't I do what I please? are you not my slave? did I not beget you? and might not I have chosen whether I would have begot you or not? ''Oons, who are you? whence come you? . . . Come, uncase, strip, and go naked out of the world, as you came into it.' 'My clothes are soon put off,' replies Valentine; 'but you must also divest me of reason, thought, passions, inclinations, affections, appetites, senses, and the huge train of attendants that you begot along with me.' Still better, as diction or invention, are the speeches of the mad Valentine, who speaks with the very voice of Hamlet. 'Alas, poor man! his eyes are shrunk, and his hands shrivelled; his legs dwindled, and his back bowed, pray, pray, for a metamorphosis. Change thy shape, and shake off age; get thee Medea's kittle and be boiled anew; come forth with labouring callous hands, a chine of steel, and Atlas shoulders.' But all is not on this high plane. Ben and Prue, Tattle and Scandal carry us away to the lower slopes of farce, and when Mrs. Frail meets her sister, Mrs. Foresight, it is a contest always of gaiety. No scene in Congreve's plays is touched with a lighter hand

than that in which Mrs. Foresight asks Mrs. Frail where she lost her gold bodkin: 'O Sister, Sister!' And Mrs. Frail demands in answer, 'If you go to that where did you find this bodkin? O Sister, Sister!—Sister every way.'

After the triumph of *Love for Love* at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Congreve agreed to give the managers a new play every year, if his health permitted, in exchange for a 'full share.' In 1697 he produced, not another comedy, but *The Mourning Bride*, a rash experiment in the later Elizabethan drama. To a modern ear *The Mourning Bride* is sad fustian. The action, such as it is, is enwrapped in impenetrable gloom. Prisons and burial-vaults are its sombre background. The artifice — disguise — upon which its plot turns is borrowed from comedy, with the simple difference that the wrong man is not married but murdered. In other words, Manuel, King of Granada, personates Alphonso for jealousy of Zara:

> 'There with his turbant, and his robe arrayed,
> And laid along as he now lies supine,
> I shall convict her to her face of falsehood.'

Were it not that Manuel is decapitated by his favourite, we might be assisting at Captain Bluffe's marriage with the masked Lucy. But the taste of the time hailed *The Mourning Bride* as a masterpiece. It was heard with enthusiasm, and held the stage for many years. Stranger still is it that Dr. Johnson said

of the description of the temple [1] in the second act that 'if I were required to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical passage, I know not what I could prefer to an exclamation in *The Mourning Bride*.' It is idle to discuss the vagaries of criticism, though few will be found now to mistake the Miltonic echoes of Congreve for the highest poetry. For the rest, the play opens with one of the oftenest quoted lines in English—'Music has charms to soothe a savage breast'; its third act concludes on a famous tag, the sense of which is borrowed from Cibber:

> 'Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned,
> Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned';

and its production was but an interlude in the career of Congreve.

III

Three years later, in 1700, Congreve's masterpiece, *The Way of the World*, was played at the theatre

[1] Here is the passage which called forth the ecstatic praises of Dr. Johnson, who maintained that it is a finer passage 'than any that can be found in Shakespeare':

> 'No, all is hushed, and still as death. 'Tis dreadful!
> How severed is the face of this tall pile,
> Where ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
> To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,
> By its own weight made steadfast and immoveable,
> Looking tranquillity! It strikes an awe
> And terror on my aching sight; the tombs
> And monumental caves of death look cold
> And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart.'

in Lincoln's Inn Fields. That it was a failure on the stage is not remarkable. It was written to please its author's fastidious taste, not to chime with the humour of the age. It was a new invention in English literature. It is deformed neither by realism nor by farce. The comic spirit breathes freely through its ample spaces. 'That it succeeded on the stage,' says Congreve, 'was almost beyond my expectation.' There is no hint of grossness in the characters. They are not of the common sort, 'rather objects of charity than contempt,' which were then popular on the stage. In brief, it was Congreve's purpose 'to design some characters which should appear ridiculous, not so much through a natural folly (which is incorrigible, and therefore not proper to the stage) as through an affected wit; a wit, which at the same time that it is affected, is also false.'

And so he set upon the boards a set of men and women of quick brains and cynical humours, who talked with the brilliance and rapidity wherewith the finished swordsman fences. They are not at the pains to do much. What Congreve calls the fable is of small account. It is difficult to put faith in the document, which unravels the tangle, and counteracts the villainy of Fainall. The trick played upon Lady Wishfort, that most desperate of all creatures, a lady fighting an unequal battle with time, does no more than interrupt the raillery, which, with a vivid characterisation, is the play's excuse.

The cabal nights, on which they all come together, and sit like a coroner's inquest on the murdered reputations of the week, and of which Sheridan's imitation fell far below the original, demonstrate at once what manner of men and women are the persons of the drama. Witwoud is the very triumph of coxcombry, with Petulant for his engaging foil. He never opens his lips without an epigram, and in his extravagant chatter climbs to the topmost height of folly. 'Fainall,' says he, 'how 's your lady . . . I beg pardon that I should ask a man of pleasure and the town, a question at once so foreign and domestic.' And again: 'A wit should be no more sincere than a woman constant; one argues a decay of parts, as t' other of beauty.' How light, and cynical, and well-bred it is, in spite of its purposed affectation! And the other characters, Mrs. Marwood and the Fainalls, though the deeper seriousness of intrigue inspires them, are drawn with a perfect surety of skill and knowledge.

Mrs. Millamant and Mirabell overtop them all. The warfare of their wits and hearts is the very essence of the drama. George Meredith has said with justice that the play might be called 'The Conquest of a Town Coquette'; and, when the enchanting Millamant and her lover are on the stage, our interest in the others fades to nothingness. By a happy stroke, Millamant does not appear until the second scene of the second act, but Mirabell has discoursed of her qualities, and you are all expectancy.

And nobly does the love-sick Mirabell hail her approach. 'Here she comes, i' faith, full sail, with her fan spread and her streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders; ha, no, I cry her mercy!' It is impossible to think of anything save the apparition of Dalila in *Samson Agonistes*, which surely was in Congreve's mind:

> 'That so bedeckt, ornate, and gay,
> Comes this way sailing
> Like a stately Ship
> Of Tarsus, bound for th' Isles
> Of Javan or Gadier
> With all her bravery on and tackle trim,
> Sails fill'd, and streamers waving.'

And Mrs. Millamant reveals herself at once as a woman of fashion, sated with life. Instantly she strikes the note of nonchalance in her famous comment upon letters. 'Nobody knows how to write letters and yet one has 'em, one does not know why. They serve one to pin up one's hair.' Then she and Mirabell fall bravely to the encounter. 'Nay, 'tis true,' says he, 'you are no longer handsome when you 've lost your lover; your beauty dies upon the instant; for beauty is the lover's gift.' 'Lord, what is a lover, that it can give,' asks Millamant. 'Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases; and then, if one pleases, one makes more.' Whenever Millamant is upon the stage, Congreve is at his best. The speeches which he

puts in her mouth are all delicately turned and finely edged. She is a personage by and of herself. She comes before you visibly and audibly. She is no profile, painted upon paper, and fitted with tags. Her creator has made her in three dimensions; and, as she always differs from those about her, so she is always consistent with herself. Mirabell knows her when he says that 'her true vanity is in her power of pleasing.' She is, indeed, a kind of Beatrice, who strives with a willing Benedick. But, though she loves her Mirabell, yet will she not submit. When he, lacking humour as a lover would in the circumstances, complains that 'a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman by plain-dealing and sincerity,' how deftly she turns his gravity aside! 'Sententious Mirabell!' And it is to Mrs. Fainall, not to her lover, that at last she acknowledges, 'well, if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am a lost thing—for I find I love him violently.'

But, before the end, there is many a battle to be fought. In her contest with Mrs. Marwood, the spurned beauty, she hides her passion behind a veil of malicious merriment. 'I detest him, hate him, madam,' declares Mrs. Marwood. 'O madam, why, so do I,' answers the defiant Millamant, 'and yet the creature loves me, ha! ha! ha! how can one forbear laughing to think of it.' Nor will she dwindle into marriage without an exaction at every step. She 'll be solicited to the very last, nay, and after-

wards. It is not for her to endure 'the saucy looks of an assured man.' And so she makes terms with Mirabell, and he, in turn, offers conditions of matrimony, in a scene which for phrase and diction Congreve himself has never surpassed. Thus the encounter begins in good earnest:

MRS. MILLAMANT: 'Ah! idle creature, get up when you will—and d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.'

MIRABELL: 'Names!'

MRS. MILLAMANT: 'Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of the nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that. Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis: nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never to be seen there together again; as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together; but let us be very strange and well-bred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a good while; and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.'

Thus the ball of wit is tossed from one hand to the other. Even at the last, Millamant will yield only with an impertinence. 'Why does not the man take me? would you have me give myself to

you over and over again?' And Mirabell replies, 'Ay, and over and over again.' Thus they share the victory; and, as you lay down the play, in which incense has been offered to the muse of comedy, you feel that *The Way of the World*, for all its malice, all its irony, all its merriment, is as austere as tragedy, as rarefied as thought itself.

IV

Congreve, then, carried to its highest perfection what is known as the artificial comedy or comedy of manners. He regarded himself as the legitimate heir of Terence and Menander, and claimed with perfect justice to paint the world in which he lived. Something, of course, he owed to his predecessors, and to the noble traditions of the English stage. Shakespeare, as has been hinted, was ever an example to him, and at the beginning of his career he worked under the domination of Ben Jonson. Of those nearer to his own time, he was most deeply indebted to the light-hearted Etherege. But, being himself a true master of comedy, he took for his material the life about him, a life which still reflected the gaiety of King Charles's court. The thirty years which had passed since the Restoration, when Congreve began to write, had not availed to darken 'the gala day of wit and pleasure.' A passage, in which he describes the composition of *The Way of the World*, reveals in a flash his aim and ambition. 'If it has

happened,' he writes in a dedication addressed to Ralph, Earl Montague, 'in any part of this comedy, that I have gained a turn of style or expression more correct, or at least, more corrigible, than in those that I have formerly written, I must, with equal pride and gratitude, ascribe it to the honour of your Lordship's admitting me into your conversation, and that of a society where everybody else was so well worthy of you, in your retirement last summer from the town.' When due allowance is made for the terms of a dedication, in which accuracy is asked of no man, it is easy to believe that, in Lord Montague's country house, Congreve found that wit and sparkle of life which he transferred to his scene, 'as upon a canvas of Watteau'—a Watteau whose gaiety and elegance are tempered by malice.

The life which he painted was not the life of common day. It was a life of pleasure and gallantry, which had a code and speech of its own. No man ever selected from the vast world of experience what served his purpose more rigorously than Congreve. He never cared for seeing things that forced him to entertain low thoughts of his nature. 'I don't know how it is with others,' said he, 'but I confess freely to you, I could never look long upon a monkey, without mortifying reflections.' Nor was he one who saw life whole. His sympathy was for 'persons of quality,' and he lived in a world situate on the confines of cynicism and merriment. Had he ever descended to realism, his comedies might have been

open to reproach. But the scene, in which his Plyants and Froths, his Mirabells and Millefonts, his Millamants and Angelicas, his Brisks and Tattles, play their parts, is, like their names, fantastic enough to justify the famous paradox of Charles Lamb. Even while we admit that Congreve painted what he chose to see, we may yet acknowledge that the persons of his drama 'have got out of Christendom into the land of—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, whose pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom.' [1]

It is in the interpretation of this gallantry that Congreve displayed his true genius. He was, above and before all, a man of letters. It was not enough for him, as for most of his contemporaries, to devise an ingenious situation or to excite the laughter of the pit by the voice of boisterous fun. He had a natural love and respect for the English tongue. He cared supremely for the making of his sentences. His nice scholarship had taught him the burden of association which time had laid upon this word or that. He used the language of his own day like a master, because he was anchored securely to a knowledge of the past. In point and brevity, his style is still unmatched in the literature of England. There is never in his writings a word too much, or an epithet that is superfluous. He disdains the worn and string-like artifices, wherewith the journeyman ties his poor

[1] See Lamb's essay *On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century*.

sentences together. As a rigorous castigator of prose, he goes far beyond the example of his master, Molière. And this rightly chastened prose, with its haunting memories of Shakespeare and Jonson and Milton, its flashing irony, and its quick allusiveness, is a clear mirror of Congreve's mind. The poet's phrase is penetrated and informed by the wit and raillery of the poet's thought.

In nothing does Congreve prove his art more abundantly than in the rhythm and cadence of his speech. His language appeals always to the ear rather than to the eye. So fine a master of comic diction was he, that, in every line he wrote, you may mark the rise and fall of the actor's voice. His words were written to be spoken; he sternly excludes whatever is harsh or grating; and we in our studies may still charm our ears with the exquisite poise of his lines, because the accent still falls where he meant that it should fall, because the stage effect may still be recovered in the printed page. He arranges his vowels with the same care which a musician gives to the arrangement of his notes. He avoids the clashing of uncongenial consonants, as a maker of harmonies refrains from discord. Open *Love for Love* or *The Way of the World* where you will, and you will find passages which, by the precision wherewith they fit the voice, would give you pleasure were they deprived of meaning.

Congreve was thirty when he gave *The Way of the World* to the theatre. He wrote no more for the

stage.[1] The history of literature shows no other instance of defection so great as this. Several reasons for his sudden abandonment of letters have been suggested—the cold reception of *The Way of the World*, or the blundering attack of Jeremy Collier. The reasons are insufficient. The natural aristocracy of Congreve's mind makes light of such rebuffs as these. A better reason is not far to seek. In depicting society Congreve had fallen in love with it. He turned willingly from art to life, for which his character and his studies alike fitted him. He was by temperament what himself would have called a man of quality. He might have sat for the portrait of Valentine or Mirabell. He lavished in talk his incomparable gifts as an intellectual gladiator, choosing only a quieter field for their display. The generosity of his friends placed him above and beyond the irking of want or debt. Soon after the production of *Love for Love* he was appointed commissioner for the licensing for hackney coaches, an office which he held until 1707. Commissioner of wine licences from 1705 to 1714, secretary for Jamaica from 1714

[1] We cannot reckon in his work the share he had in *Squire Trelooby*. Here for the sake of completeness is his account of the matter, given in a letter to Joseph Keatly on 20th May 1704: 'The translation you speak of is not altogether mine, for Vanbrugh and Walsh had a part in it. Each did an act of a French farce. Mine, and I believe theirs, was done in two mornings; so there can be no great matter in it. It was a compliment made to the people of quality at their subscription music, without any design to have it acted or printed further.'

onwards, he enjoyed also a place in the Paper Office, and lived in comfortable affluence upon £1200 a year.

Taking but a modest interest in politics, he kept aloof from the strife of parties, and neither side was urgent to strip him of his emoluments. When—in 1711—he feared to be deprived of his commissionership of wine licences, Swift waited upon 'my Lord-Treasurer,' successfully pleaded the cause of Congreve, and was able to reassure his friend. 'So I have made a worthy man easy,' he writes, 'and that is a good day's work.' Few of his contemporaries had more or more closely attached friends. Halifax accepted his dedication and guarded his interests. Of Dryden's generous sympathy towards him something has already been said. It was to him that Steele dedicated his *Miscellanies*, and that Pope addressed the famous epilogue of his *Iliad*, which does equal honour to himself and to Congreve.[1]

[1] This epilogue is ever memorable. 'For what remains,' thus it runs, 'I beg to be excused from the ceremonies of taking leave at the end of my work; and from embarrassing myself or others with Defences or Apologies about it. But instead of endeavouring to raise a vain monument to myself or others, of the Merits and Difficulties of it (which must be left to the World, to Truth, and to Posterity) let me leave behind me a memorial of my Friendship with one of the most valuable of men, as well as finest Writers, of my Age and Country: one who has try'd and knows by his own Experience, how hard an Undertaking it is to do Justice to Homer: and one, who (I am sure) sincerely rejoices with me at the period of my Labours. To him, therefore, having brought this long work to a conclusion, I desire to

Such were some of Congreve's intimates, nor did his wealth of friendship proceed from mere complacency. He was not every man's friend because he was no man's enemy. The social graces were active in him. His talk must have been a lively echo of his comedies. Swift, the severest of judges, 'dined with him and Estcourt' on one occasion, 'and laughed till six.' Though long before his death he was acclaimed the greatest man of letters in his time, though he lived in an atmosphere of grandeur, his kindly services were always at the disposition of others. 'On another visit he gave me a Tatler,' says Swift, 'as blind as he is, for little Harrison.' The courage and gaiety of his heart were undiminished by gout or by that fiercest scourge of a scholar, the loss of his eyesight. As the passage of the years separated him further from the triumphs of the stage, the writer was lost in the man of the world. 'He is so far from being puff'd up with vanity,' wrote Giles Jacob, 'that he abounds with humility and good nature. He does not show so much the poet as the gentleman.' It was this worldly front, which he showed to Voltaire in 1726, and which shocked the French philosopher, avid of literary fame. Congreve, in conversation, dismissed his masterpieces as trifles, and received Voltaire on the foot of a gentleman, who lived very plainly. Voltaire replied that,

Dedicate it; and to have the honour and satisfaction of placing together, in this manner, the names of Mr. Congreve and of A. Pope.'

had Congreve had the misfortune to be a mere gentleman, he would not have visited him. Both men spoke justly. But Voltaire did not sufficiently appreciate the natural reticence of the Englishman, who, without the slightest vanity, was still unwilling to discuss the masterpieces which lay a quarter of a century behind him.

Thus he lived a discreet, well-ordered life, visiting the country houses of his friends, gossiping at Will's, seeking such solace as Bath or Tunbridge Wells might afford him. Of Mrs. Bracegirdle, the enchantress, whose genius embellished his plays, he remained unto the end the friend and neighbour. To the Duchess of Marlborough, the wife of Francis Godolphin, he was bound in the bonds of a close attachment. When he died in 1729 he left £200 to the actress, and to the Duchess £10,000, a sum which might, as Johnson says, 'have given great assistance to the ancient family, from which he was descended.' For this disposal of his wealth Congreve has been rated by Macaulay in his best Orbilian manner. At this distance of time and with our imperfect knowledge of his motives, it seems rash to condemn the poet, whose generosity was rewarded after her own guise by the Duchess of Marlborough. Davies tells us that she had 'an automaton, or small statue of ivory, made exactly to resemble him, which every day was brought to table. A glass was put in the hand of this statue, which was supposed to bow to her Grace, and to nod in approbation of what she spoke to it.'

This is the mere frippery of fame. Posterity, content, like Voltaire, to forget the gentleman, remembers the poet, who used the English tongue with perfect mastery, and who, alone of his race and time, was fit to tread a measure in wit and raillery with Molière himself.

V

It would be difficult to find a more obvious contrast to Congreve than Sir John Vanbrugh. In the sense that Congreve was a man of letters Vanbrugh was not a man of letters at all. He was wholly unconscious of the diction, which for Congreve was a chief end of comedy. Cibber spoke the truth when he said that the best scenes of Vanbrugh's plays 'seem'd to be no more than his common conversation committed to paper.' In other words, Vanbrugh wrote as he talked, without reflection and with great good humour. But, if the gift of artistic expression were denied him, he lacked not compensations. He was a man of a bluff temper and vigorous understanding, who easily communicated to his works the energy and humour of his mind. Like many another of foreign descent, he was more English than the English, he engrossed in his own temperament the good and evil qualities of John Bull. Thus it was that he delighted in farce, not of situation but of character, and he separated himself from the other writers of comedy by a vivid talent of caricature. He overcharged the eccentricity of his personages with so bold a hand as to anticipate the excesses of

Gillray in another art. In brief, he was a highly competent gentleman, who found no enterprise too difficult for his courage and intelligence. He was a man of affairs, a soldier, a herald, an architect; and, no doubt, following the fashion, he sat himself down to write a comedy with the same easy carelessness wherewith he undertook to build a palace. Few men known to history were more of a piece than he. In his life, as in his works, he was a simple, sturdy, natural Englishman, devoid alike of affectation and concealment. Pope ranked him among the three 'most honest-hearted real good men' of the Kitcat Club, and his dignity wrung from Swift, not apt for apology, a public regret that he had once satirised 'a man of wit and humour.'

His grandfather, a merchant of Ghent, had found an asylum in London from the persecutions of the Duke of Alva, had followed his craft with success, and had left two sons, the younger of whom, Giles, was the father of the dramatist. Nothing is known of Sir John's youth and training. In 1691, when he was twenty-seven years of age, he was clapt up in the Bastille as a suspected spy, meditated a comedy within its comfortable walls, and, as Voltaire owns with surprise, was never guilty of 'a single satirical stroke against the country, in which he had been so injuriously treated.' Six years later, in 1697, he produced *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger*, and instantly established his reputation. This broad and lively farce, which at once caught the popular favour,

owed its inspiration to Cibber's *Love's Last Shift.* The character of Sir Novelty Fashion in that play made an instant appeal to Vanbrugh's fancy; he raised the beau to the peerage, with the title of Lord Foppington, and converted Cibber's puppet into a brilliant caricature. It is easy to find fault with the fable of *The Relapse.* It is less a play than two plays spliced into one. Loveless, 'resolved this once to launch into temptation,' and Berinthia, willing to abet him, cannot engage our interest. The farce exists for the proper display of Lord Foppington, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, and Miss Hoyden. Here, indeed, are three caricatures after Vanbrugh's own heart. What they do matters not. It is what they say that reveals their eccentricities.

Lord Foppington is the true fop of the period, with all his qualities exaggerated. His title gives him unfeigned delight. 'Strike me dumb—My lord—Your lordship— . . . Sure whilst I was a knight, I was a very nauseous fellow. Well 'tis ten thousand pawnd well given—stap my vitals.' He has the idle elegance of his kind. When the tailor tells him that if his pocket had been an inch lower down it would not have held his pocket-handkerchief, 'Rat my pocket-handkerchief!' he exclaims. 'Have I not a page to carry it?' So he finds his life a perpetual 'raund of delights,' and believes himself acceptable to all. When Amanda strikes him in her defence, 'Gad's curse, madam,' he cries, 'I am a peer of the realm!' No better foil could be found for him than Sir Tun-

belly, the ancestor in a direct line of Squire Western. That he bears a close resemblance to nature need not be admitted. That he is an excellent piece of fooling cannot be denied. He holds siege in his country house, asks at the approach of a stranger whether the blunderbuss is primed, and, when he and his servants at last appear on the scene, they come armed with 'guns, clubs, pitchforks, and scythes.' Miss Hoyden is first cousin to Prue, and shows you in a phrase her true character. 'It 's well I have a husband a coming, or i' cod, I 'd marry the baker, I wou'd so.' While these immortal three are on the stage, they excite our whole-hearted mirth. Their fate cannot touch us, for in ridicule they transcend the scale of humankind.

The Provok'd Wife, produced in 1697, is, in all respects, a better play. Sir John Brute is Vanbrugh's masterpiece. Caricature though he be, there are many touches of nature about him. He is the beau inverted, the man of fashion crossed with the churl. And he is fully conscious of his dignity. 'Who do you call a drunken fellow, you slut you?' he asks his wife. 'I 'm a man of quality; the King has made me a knight.' He would not give a fig for a song that is not 'full of sin and impudence.' His cry is 'Liberty, and property, and old England, Huzza!' He stands out in high relief by the side of Lady Brute and Belinda, who speak with the accent of every day, and who are far nearer to common life than are the fine ladies of Congreve. His servants

rival their master in impudence; and Rasor and Mademoiselle are worthy of all the praise which Hazlitt[1] has bestowed upon them.

It has been Sir John Vanbrugh's fate to prove an inspiration to our English novelists. Sir John Brute has long been a commonplace of fiction, and made a last appearance as Sir Pitt Crawley in *Vanity Fair*. Still more vivid as a painting of life than *The Provok'd Wife* is the fragment, *A Journey to London*, left unfinished at Vanbrugh's death. There is very little that is dramatic in this masterly sketch. It is but a picture of manners, of the impact of the country upon the town. Yet how well are the characters drawn! Sir Francis Headpiece, a softened Sir Tunbelly; John Moody, his servant, who 'stumps about the streets in his dirty boots, and asks every man he meets, if he can tell him where he may have a good lodging for a parliament man'; young Squire Humphrey the unlicked cub of the country-side—are painted in colours fresh to the drama. They have taken their place, one and all, in English fiction, and it is easy to measure the debt which Fielding and Smollett owed to Vanbrugh's happy fragment.

Like many others of his contemporaries, Vanbrugh did a vast deal of journeywork. He botched a comedy of Fletcher's; he translated plays from Boursault, from Dancourt, from Molière, and, through Le Sage, from the Spanish. None of his versions is memorable save *The Confederacy* (1705), englished

[1] See Hazlitt's lectures on *The English Comic Writers*.

from Dancourt's *Les Bourgeoises à la Mode*, and completely transformed in the process. As mere sleight of hand, *The Confederacy* claims our admiration. Closely as it follows the original, it is racy of our soil. As you read it, you think, not of the French original, but of Middleton and Dekker. It is as though Vanbrugh had breathed an English soul into a French body. Though he added but three scenes, though he never strays far, even in word, from the prose of Dancourt, he has handled his material with so deft a hand that he has made another man's play his own and his country's. Dick Amlet and Brass are of the true breed; Mrs. Amlet would not have disgraced the earlier age of comedy; and the quickness of the dialogue, the speed of the action carried the play for many a year down the current of success.

The last years of Vanbrugh's life were devoted to architecture, and to its consequent disputes. His first experiment in the art—Castle Howard—was finished under happy auspices. The theatre, which he built in the Haymarket, the single failure of a fortunate life, involved him in disaster, because he forgot that the chief end of a theatre is to transmit what was spoken on the stage to the audience, and because he did not foresee that the Haymarket would prove inaccessible to the quality. Blenheim, interrupted though it was by the meanness and temper of the implacable Duchess, was one of the triumphs of his career. Confused in construction, like *The Relapse*, it is as vividly effective as the most brilliant

of the author's comedies. A finished artist in neither medium, he was lifted high above such difficulties, as perplex smaller men, by his courage and good temper, and even though architects may easily discern his technical deficiencies, he won a lofty tribute of praise from Sir Joshua Reynolds, who speaking in the language of a painter declared that Vanbrugh 'had originality of invention, he understood light and shadow, and had great skill in composition.' He suffered the fate of the great Perrault, with whom he may fittingly be compared, from the wits of his time. But detraction never checked the buoyancy of his spirit, and he died, still untouched by the years, in 1726.

VI

Twenty-eight years before the death of Vanbrugh —in 1698—Jeremy Collier had startled the town with his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, and as Congreve and Vanbrugh are arraigned therein with especial bitterness, something must be here said of this unforgotten, acrid controversy. The attack upon literature was not new. Evelyn had already deplored the licence of the stage. In his preface to *Prince Arthur*, Sir Richard Blackmore had complained that the poets used 'all their wit in opposition to religion, and to the destruction of virtue and good manners in the world.' The old question of art and morals had been debated with rare intelligence by Robert Wolseley in 1685, by way of preface to *Valentinian*;

and Joseph Wright in his *Country Conversations* (1694) had protested against the attacks made by the stage upon virtue and the clergy. Jeremy Collier, then, addressed a public, inured to his argument, which he pressed with a ferocity beyond the reach of his immediate predecessors.

A clergyman and non-juror, Collier was indicted for absolving Friend and Parkyns at Tyburn, and, refusing to give himself up, was outlawed. As a critic, if critic he may be called, Collier was a patient pupil of Thomas Rymer, whose style, method, and paraded erudition he most faithfully mimicked. He did but apply the 'good sense,' wherewith Rymer demolished Shakespeare, to the comedies of his time. Indeed, it is not too much to say that had the *Short View of Tragedy* not been written, we never should have seen the *Short View of Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. When Rymer says, 'should the Poet have provided such a husband for an only daughter of any noble Peer in England, the Blackamoor must have changed his skin to look our house of Lords in the face,' and roundly declares that 'there is not a monkey but understands nature better, not a pig in Barbary that has not a truer taste of things' than Othello, you see the cupboard from which Jeremy Collier filched his good things.

Relying upon Rymer, Collier went boldly to the attack. The playwrights, he asserted, were immodest, profane, and encouragers of immorality. He made an appeal to universal history, that he might prove the baser wickedness of Englishmen. As little a

respecter of persons as Rymer, he lets his cudgel fall indiscriminately upon the backs of great and small. 'Aristophanes his own plays,' says he, 'are sufficient to ruin his authority. For he discovers himself a downright atheist.' He shares his master's contempt of Shakespeare, who, says he, 'is too guilty to make an evidence: but I think he gains not much by his misbehaviour; he has commonly Plautus's fate, when there is most smut there is least sense.' His comment on Ophelia matches Rymer's demolition of Desdemona. Having extolled Euripides for seeing to it that Phaedra's 'frenzy is not lewd,' he proceeds: 'had Shakespeare secur'd this point for his young virgin Ophelia, the play had been better contriv'd. Since he was resolved to drown the lady like a kitten, he should have sent her swimming a little sooner.' There we have the key to his 'criticism.'

Again, he will not permit the smallest reference to the Bible in a comedy. When Sir Sampson in *Love for Love* says, 'your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning,' Collier's comment is characteristic: 'Here you have the sacred history burlesqu'd, and Sampson once more brought into the House of Dagon to make a sport for the Philistines.' He is indignant that Lord Foppington should confess that 'Sunday is a vile day,' though the statement is perfectly consonant with the part. That Valentine, in *Love for Love*, should murmur 'I am truth' fills the nonjuror with fury. 'Now a poet,' says he, 'that had not been smitten with blasphemy would never

have furnished frenzy with inspiration.' The thought of *The Relapse* drives him to the verge of madness: 'I almost wonder,' says he, 'the smoke of it had not darkened the sun, and turned the air to plague and poison.'

The worst offence of all committed by the dramatists is, in his eyes, the abuse of the clergy. 'They play upon the character and endeavour not only the men but the business.' If he had his way, he would forbid the introduction of any priest, heathen or Christian, into literature. 'The author of *Don Sebastian*,' says he, 'strikes at the bishops through the sides of the Mufti, and borrows the name of the Turk to make the Christian ridiculous.' Then, with a tedious circumstance, he discusses the priesthood in all climes and ages, approves Racine, who brings a high priest into *Athalie*, but 'does him justice in his station,' and awards the true palm to Corneille and Molière, who set no priest upon the stage. 'This is certainly the right method, and best secures the outworks of piety.' And, after a priest, he best loves a man of quality. Plautus wins his approval because his boldest 'sallies are generally made by slaves and pandars.' He asks indignantly what quarter the stage gives to quality, and finds it extremely free and familiar. That Manly in Wycherley's play should call a duke a rascal he confesses is very much plain dealing. 'What necessity is there,' he demands, 'to kick the coronets about the stage, and to make a man a lord, only in order to make him

a coxcomb ?' Plainly there is no necessity; but the fact that Collier should put the question is the best measure of his irrelevance.

It was Collier's supreme error to confuse art with life. He had but one touchstone for the drama, and that was the habit of his kind. He laid it down for an axiom that nothing must be discussed upon the stage, which was contrary to the experience of his own blameless fireside. He assumed that the poet was an advocate for all the sins which he depicted; that, if he brought upon the stage a thief or an adulterer, he proudly glorified adultery and theft. Never once did he attempt to understand the artist's motive or point of view, to estimate the beauty or value of words, to make allowance for the changing manners of changed times. His mind was not subtle enough to perceive that, in Congreve's words, 'it is the business of the comic poet to paint the vices and follies of human kind.' As he could see no difference between art and life, so he could not separate satire from the thing satirised. That Lord Foppington is held up to ridicule did not hinder his condemnation. His famous comment upon Juvenal convicts him of absurdity: 'He teaches those vices he would correct, and writes more like a pimp than a poet. . . . Such nauseous stuff is almost enough to debauch the alphabet, and make the language scandalous.' And he does not understand that, if Juvenal be not justified, then he himself is guilty of the crimes which he imputes to Congreve and Vanbrugh.

So the worthy non-juror laid about him, fathering vice upon blameless words, and clipping wiser, better men than himself to fit his bed of Procrustes. And even if we allowed that there was no difference between deed and speech, that a writer who mentioned a crime had already committed it, that, in fact, every theatre should be supplied with a gallows, and a judge and jury sit permanently in the Green Room, it would still be easy to convict Collier of injustice, especially towards Congreve. Nothing can be said in a critic's favour who detects profaneness and immodesty in *The Mourning Bride*, who condemns the mere use of the words 'martyr' and 'inspiration,' who finds a depth of blasphemy in the sentence 'my Jehu was a hackney-coachman.' There can be no doubt, however, that Collier's pamphlet enjoyed all the success which scandal could bring it. For a while the town talked and thought of nothing else. The King issued a solemn proclamation against vice and profaneness. Congreve and D'Urfey were prosecuted by the Middlesex magistrates. Fines were imposed upon Betterton and Mrs. Bracegirdle. Then, alarmed at the publicity of the pamphlet, the poets began to write in their defence. More wisely guided, they would have held their tongues. The encounter could not be closely engaged. Jeremy, having said little to their purpose, should have been ignored. To have demolished his principles might have been worth while. To oppose him in detail was merely to incur another violent onslaught.

As they used other weapons, and fought another battle than Collier, neither Congreve nor Vanbrugh emerged with credit from the encounter. 'Congreve,' said Cibber, 'seemed too much hurt to be able to defend himself, and Vanbrugh felt Collier so little that his wit only laughed at his lashes.' Vanbrugh, indeed, had put forth an admirable defence in anticipation, and with an evident reference to Rabelais. 'As for the saints,' he wrote two years before the *Short View* in a preface to *The Relapse*, '(your thorough-pac'd ones, I mean, with skrew'd faces and wry mouths) I despair of them; for they are friends to nobody: They love nothing but their altars and themselves; they have too much zeal to have any charity; they make debauches in piety, as sinners do in wine; and are as quarrelsome in their religion, as other people are in their drink: so I hope nobody will mind what they say.' That is in the right vein. But it was Farquhar, who, in an ingenious little work, *The Adventures of Covent Garden* (1699), justly ascribed to him by Leigh Hunt, made the wisest comment of all, to the effect 'that the best way of answering Mr. Collier was not to have replied at all; for there was so much fire in his book, had not his adversaries thrown in fuel, it would have fed upon itself, and so gone out in a blaze.'

The others flung themselves into the controversy with what spirit they might. Dryden, worn with the battle of life and letters, looked wearily

on the fray. He owned that in many things Collier had 'taxed him justly,' and added 'if he be my enemy, let him triumph.' But he did not plead guilty, as is generally supposed, without extenuating circumstances and without the just condemnation of his adversary. 'It were not difficult to prove,' said he, 'that in many places he has perverted my meaning by his glosses; and interpreted my words into blasphemy and bawdry, of which they are not guilty. Besides that he is too much given to horseplay in his raillery; and comes to battel, like a dictator from the plough. I will not say, the Zeal of God's House has eaten him up; but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility.' D'Urfey rushed into the field with a preface to *The Campaigners*, like the light horseman that he was, and with a song of *The New Reformation* dismissed the non-juror from his mind:

'But let State Revolvers
And Treason Absolvers
Excuse if I sing:
The Scoundrel that chooses
To cry down the Muses
Would cry down the King.'

With far greater solemnity did Dennis, who himself was not attacked by Collier, defend the Usefulness of the Stage, to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government, and to Religion. Collier replied to Congreve with superfluous violence, to Vanbrugh

and Dennis with what seemed to him, no doubt, an amiable restraint. For years the warfare was carried on in pamphlet and prologue, and echoes of it may be heard to-day. The high respect in which Collier has been held remains a puzzle of criticism. Macaulay, for instance, finds him 'a singularly fair controversialist,' and at the same time regards Rymer as the worst critic that ever lived, not perceiving that their method is one and the same; that, if Collier is in the right of it, so is Rymer. No doubt the hand of tradition is strong, but to forget all that has been said in the non-juror's favour, and to return to his text, is to awaken rudely from a dream. There seems to me nothing of worth in Collier's pamphlet, save the forcible handling of the vernacular, which he owed, as has been said, to Rymer. Not even is his sincerity obvious. He strains his sarcasm as he strains his argument. His object was to abolish not to reform the stage, and he should have begun, not ended, with his *Dissuasive from the Playhouse* (1703).

If the respect lavished upon him is surprising, still stranger is the conviction which prevails of his influence. Scott and Macaulay, Leigh Hunt and Lecky, speak with one voice. And a brief examination of the facts proves that Collier's success was a success of scandal and no more.[1] The poets bowed their knee not an

[1] Oldmixon, in his *History*, accurately estimated the effect of Collier's attack. 'Neither the actors nor the poets,' he wrote,

inch in obedience to him. They replied to him, they abused him, and they went their way. Congreve's true answer was not his *Amendments* but *The Way of the World*. Vanbrugh showed in *The Confederacy* how lightly he had taken his scolding. Farquhar made his first flight in December 1698, and nobody can assert that he clipped the wings of his fancy with Collier's shears. Meanwhile, the old repertory remained unchanged in the theatres. The pages of Genest, a much surer guide than tradition or desire, make evident the complete failure of Collier's attack. Dryden and Shadwell, Aphra Behn and D'Urfey, Ravenscroft and Wycherley were still victorious. In the very year of Collier's supposed triumph, *The Mourning Bride*, the peculiar object of his attack, 'brought the greatest audience they have this winter.' Congreve, the most bitterly maligned of all, seized the highest popularity. *Love for Love* flourished in the nineteenth century. D'Urfey's *Don Quixote* (1694-6), which Collier thought he had left dead on the field, was still played a quarter of a century after the fray, and *The Country Wife* long outlived it.

Nor were the alterations, said to have been introduced into the plays, of a feather's weight. To change Valentine's 'I am truth' into 'I am honest' was to spoil a fine passage, not to recast the

'much regarded it. There was a little awe upon them at first, but it wore off, and this attempt to reform them was the sport of what wit they had in their plays, prologues, and epilogues.'

stage; and Vanbrugh's transformation of the drunken clergyman, in whose robes Sir John Brute disguised himself, into a drunken woman, was not made until 1725. The new plays were of no other fashion than the old. Cibber's *Careless Husband* (1704), Charles Shadwell's *Fair Quaker of Deal* (1710), Gay's *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), the comedies of Mrs. Centlivre and Fielding afford no evidence of a chastened spirit. Sir Richard Blackmore, who had anticipated Collier, did not conceal his disappointment. 'The stage has become impregnable,' he wrote in 1716, 'where loose poets, supported by numbers, power, and interest, in defiance of all rules of decency and virtue still provide new snares and new temptations to seduce the people, and corrupt their manners.' The reformation, in brief, was, as Tom Brown called it, 'a drowsie reformation,' and when it came in fact, it came not from the admonitions of Jeremy Collier, who was remembered only as a cat-o'-nine-tails of the stage, or as a proper jest for an epilogue, but from a change in the manners of the people.

VII

George Farquhar appeared too late to feel the parson's whip. He began his career as Congreve was closing his, and he could look upon the fierce dispute with an eye of contemptuous impartiality. That Collier would have spared him there is no reason to believe, for though in temperament as in

art he differed from his contemporaries, he claimed the full licence of his time. A man in whom there was no disguise, he unpacked his heart upon paper. Whatever he knew and saw, all the manifold experiments of his life, he put unrestrainedly into his comedies. Ireland, the recruiting officer, the disbanded soldier, love, the bottle, and the road—these he handled with the freedom and joyousness of one who knew them well. In a word, he broke the bonds of tradition, and declared, when he was truly himself, that gallantry was merely one aim of mankind. Of Congreve it is impossible to deduce anything from his plays. Like all great artists, he is enwrapped in a cloak of aristocratic impersonality. Farquhar, living and breathing without the shackles of art, reveals himself to us in every scene of his plays. Humour and high spirits were always his. He was lighthearted whatever befell him, and, having a natural propensity to ease, knowing, moreover, that he had very little estate 'but what lay under the circumference of his hat,' he expected misfortune and faced it without a murmur.

His love of ease made him impatient of study, and this impatience is discernible in his works. He knew not how to polish his dialogue. If it advanced the action of his piece or gave an additional touch to character he was content. Though he manifestly owed something to Thomas Heywood in his sense of the open air and his treatment of the countryside; though, like the rest of his age, he had read

Molière, and could borrow a scene of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* for his *Love and a Bottle*, it is not by his literary preferences that you judge him. Few comic poets who keep a place in the history of the stage were less truly men of letters than he. For the rules of his craft he cared not a jot. He used, without shame, all the threadbare expedients of the theatre. There is not one of his plays whose plot is not unravelled by disguise. Leanthe, Oriana, and Silvia all masquerade as men. Clincher and Tom Errand in *The Constant Couple* exchange their clothes. Even the blameless Angelica, in *Sir Harry Wildair*, not content with being a ghost, must don the finery of Beau Banter. But we let him trick us as he will. We know that he looks upon the world with honest eyes, and sees that herein which escaped the others. And, as for the critics, says he, they may go hang. He spurns the unities, roundly declaring that 'the rules of English comedy don't lie in the compass of Aristotle or his followers, but in the Pit, Box, and Galleries.'

If you would understand his plays, you must perforce know something of his life. Born at Londonderry in 1677, he composed a Pindarick ode at fourteen, went, in 1694, to Trinity College, Dublin, and, though intended for the Church, found his way eagerly to the stage. To be an actor was his earliest ambition, and he appeared at the Smock Alley Theatre in the part of Othello. The discomfiture caused him by stage-fright was greatly enhanced by an

accidental wound which he inflicted upon a fellow-player, and he gladly took the advice of Robert Wilks, who remained his lifelong friend, and who played the chief part in all his plays save one, to write a comedy. So it was that, in 1698, he came to London with *Love and a Bottle* in his pocket, and made an instant conquest of the theatre. The comedy, which has little to commend it, save a vivid sense of life and movement, is, doubtless, autobiographical. Farquhar himself must have sat for Roebuck, the young Irishman freshly arrived in town, and it is easy to believe that the artifice wherewith Lyrick, the dishevelled poet, escaped his creditors, was part of Farquhar's own experience. The dramatist, in truth, whose youth would excuse grosser absurdities than are here exhibited, displays more energy than skill. His comedy is crude and filled with crudities, but a bluff sincerity shines through it all, and it is not surprising that an audience, accustomed to disguises as the traditional trappings of the stage, should have received it with favour.

A year later followed *The Constant Couple, or a Trip to the Jubilee*, which owed something of its plot to an imitation of Scarron's *City Romance*, entitled *The Adventures of Covent Garden*, rightly ascribed to Farquhar, as has been said, by Leigh Hunt. This comedy, a clear advance in workmanship, was hailed as a masterpiece with acclamation. Though it is not free from artifice, it is far better constructed than *Love and a Bottle*, and its hero, Sir Harry Wildair,

appeared a beau of a new breed to a generation sated with Foppingtons. He has honour and courage, he has lived abroad, and he does not bound his horizon, like Sir Novelty Fashion, with the creations of his tailor. And Clincher, the false beau, the discreet Colonel Standard, and Lady Lurewell herself, though not quite unknown to comedy, have something in them of the blood and bone of humankind. In 1701 Sir Harry Wildair appeared in another play, of which he is the eponymous hero, and renewed his career of wit and cynicism. Truly 'the gentleman from France,' as Farquhar called his Wildair, enjoyed the freedom of the British stage, and brought fame if not wealth to the author of his being.

Thereafter came two failures, and then, in 1705, a piece of good fortune sent Farquhar on military duty to Shrewsbury. His recruits, as he tells us, were reviewed by his general and his colonel, and could not fail to pass muster. More than that, he brought back with him a comedy, *The Recruiting Officer*, which he dedicated 'to all friends round the Wrekin,' and which, for him, was the beginning of a new drama. Henceforth he has done with the town and its gallants for ever. The example of Congreve and Vanbrugh compels him no more. He takes for his material the episodes of a broader life, and helps to bridge the chasm which lies between the comedy of manners and the English novel, upon whose beginnings he had a profound influence. He has done what he could to make

an end of disguise, though Silvia must perforce put on the breeches. The most of his characters are natural men and women, not above nor below the stature of mankind. His soldiers, as has been pointed out, are no longer *Milites gloriosi*, pale reflections of Bobadill, but such as himself, whom he paints as Captain Plume, and his comrades. Costar Pearmain and Thomas Apple-tree are true men of the soil. Even Silvia is far remote from the fine ladies who for twenty years had railed and bantered on the stage. 'The common jealousy of her sex,' as Plume says, 'which is nothing but their avarice of pleasure, she despises.' Thus Farquhar had at last found his way. He had put a new set of characters in a new scene. He had added something fresh to the material of comedy.

A year later was played *The Beaux' Stratagem*,[1] in construction as character the masterpiece of its author. Full of the gaiety and bustle of the road, it depicts the life of taverns and the highway. Here are travellers burdened with trunks and bandboxes. There is Boniface to fleece them, with his gag and his cunning, and Gibbet to take what Boniface has left. The whole comedy moves in an atmosphere of boisterous merriment. Aimwell and Archer

[1] In 1704 he had produced, with the aid of Peter Motteux, a farce in three acts called *The Stage-coach*. It was adapted from *Les Carrosses d'Orléans*, by Jean de la Chapelle, and its chief interest is that it seems a rough sketch for *The Beaux' Stratagem*.

are beaux drawn from the life, not taken from a comedy, generous, gallant, and lighthearted. And Cherry and her catechism: is there not humour there? Throughout the play, Farquhar criticises life in a humaner fashion than any dramatist since the author of *The English Traveller*. He does not possess the artistry of Congreve; he was, perhaps, a beginner of the sentimental comedy, of that passion to be both merry and wise which has been the ruin of our stage; but he looked upon life with the eye not of Will's coffee-house but of a man, and the result is that *The Beaux' Stratagem* is not indelibly marked with the date of its birth.

His muse was happier than his life. An ill-provided pocket could not keep pace with the joyousness of his heart. A lack of pence interrupted the course of his harmless pleasures. He took delight always in fresh scenes and quick impressions; the pictures of Holland, which he drew in his letters, prove how well he understood the art of travelling; and, held fast in the bonds of penury, he was seldom able to escape from Covent Garden. If misfortune were abroad, it was certain to fall on him. A noble patron persuaded him to pay his debts by the sale of his commission, promising him another: that other never came. In 1703 he married a lady who pretended to be a fortune, and who, for love of Farquhar, had concealed her poverty. Here was a plot which might have served him for a comedy, and which, with him cast for the chief rôle, could

have had only a tragic ending. Being Farquhar, he harboured no resentment for the trick that had been put upon him, but 'behaved to her with all the delicacy and tenderness of an indulgent husband.' Nothing could daunt the brave serenity of his spirit. If he clung to the gaiety of the beau, he never knew the beau's cynicism. He has sketched himself in a page which you may well believe is without flattery, and he confesses himself so great an epicure that he 'hates all pleasure that 's purchas'd by excess of pain.' He, at any rate, did not accept Sir Harry Wildair's theory of life. 'I would have my passion,' he writes in a passage of evident sincerity, 'if not led, at least waited on by my reason; and the greatest proof of my affection that a lady must expect is this: I would run any hazard to make us both happy, but would not for any transitory pleasure make either of us miserable.'

It was not within his compass to make them both happy. His friend Wilks, missing him at the theatre, discovered him lodged in a back garret in St. Martin's Lane. He advised him to write a play which should be instantly put upon the stage. 'Write!' says Farquhar, 'it is impossible that a man can write common sense who is heartless and has not a shilling in his pocket.' Wilks gave him twenty guineas, and, in six weeks, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, that marvel of merriment and good-humour, was finished. It hints by no sign that the author wrote it with 'a settled sickness upon him,' nor 'that before he finished

the second act he perceived the approaches of death.' It was produced on 8th March 1707, and Farquhar lived just long enough to hear of its triumphant success. A last note to the friend of his brief life, Wilks, was found among his papers: 'Dear Bob, I have not anything to leave thee to perpetuate my memory, but two helpless girls; look upon them sometimes, and think on him who was to the last moment of his life thine, G. Farquhar.' An epilogue fittingly spoken by a gallant man, whose life was in dire conflict with his theory of living, and whose courage, in suffering, sustained him to the end.

VII

Whenever this or that battle of literature is engaged, the leaders are attended by a vast mob of camp-followers, who without natural talent or obvious ingenuity, hope to share the spoils of victory. Thus it was that the masters of comedy saw their works mimicked, and the repute of their craft not enhanced by eager, industrious journeymen. The most of these preserve their names and no more in the annals of the stage. Now and again they emerge, for some quality of wit or good nature, from the rest and, with their half-forgotten works, prompt the curiosity of the historian. Thomas Shadwell, poet laureate, for instance, enjoyed a popularity in his own day which is not easily explicable in ours. Literary skill was not among the gifts of his mind. He had a trick of invention, and was determined to turn

the best models to account. And when he had invented (or adapted) his puppets, he handled them so carelessly that they long since lost their interest for us. The sense of style, the mastery of language, which might have tempered their extravagance, were lacking to him, and he resembled the facile playwrights of to-day in refusing to look upon the drama as a branch of literature. In his preface to *The Sullen Lovers* he proudly professed himself a pupil of Ben Jonson, whose variety of 'humours' he attempted to reproduce, and whom, he thought, 'all dramatic poets ought to imitate.' His debt to Ben Jonson was infinitely less than his debt to Molière. *The Sullen Lovers* (1668) is based upon *Les Fâcheux*; *Bury Fair* (1689), his masterpiece, owes its fantastic characters to *Les Précieuses Ridicules*; and *The Miser* (1672) is no more than a perversion of *L'Avare*. Yet so good a conceit of himself had Shadwell, that he thought he did his masters no discredit. ''Tis not barrenness of wit or invention that makes me borrow from the French,' he boasted, 'but laziness.' To be lazy is a greater sin, in the realm of art, than to be barren. He patronised Shakespeare as amiably as he patronised Molière. When he had mangled *Timon of Athens* (1678), 'I can truly say,' he wrote, 'that I have made it a play.' Yet with all his shortcomings he held the stage for a quarter of a century. His *Epsom Wells* (1673) was praised by St. Évremond. He had the wit to make Don Juan the hero of *The Libertine* (1676), and

with *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688) he scaled the topmost height of his popularity. This last play has many faults. Its story is incredible. The cant used by the rufflers of Whitefriars is handled with so little tact, that it seems an excrescence upon the dialogue rather than a part of it. Yet how much excellent material it contains was revealed by Sir Walter Scott, who made a free use of it in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Briefly, the vices and virtues of hasty Shadwell have been well summed up by Rochester in four lines:

> 'Shadwell's unfinished Works do yet impart
> Great Proofs of force of Nature, none of Art;
> With just bold Strokes he dashes here and there,
> Showing great Mastery with little Care.'

It is this judgment which, together with Dryden's satire, has preserved the name and fame of Shadwell from oblivion.

Another camp-follower was Thomas D'Urfey, a French Huguenot by descent and a habitant of Grub Street by profession, who turned his hand to prose or verse, composed songs, elegies, and panegyrics, wrote tales, tragical and comical, contrived operas and pantomimes, satirised ministers, cultivated the friendship of kings, changed his politics as he changed his coat, and left behind him a vast number of boisterous farces and bombastic melodramas. A scurrilous fellow in his life and speech, he was the familiar friend of all, was called 'Tom'

by high and low, and for nearly half a century played a part in the life of his time. Addison remembered 'King Charles the Second leaning on his shoulder more than once, and humming over a song with him.' He was important enough to incur Buckingham's disfavour, and lives undeservedly in the distich:

> 'And sing-song D'Urfey, placed beneath abuses,
> Lives by his impudence, and not the Muses.'

His more serious plays, mere burlesques of tragedy, are in 'Ercles' vein.' *The Siege of Memphis* (1676) and *The Famous History of the Rise and Fall of Massaniello* (1700) may scarcely be matched, for sheer fustian, in English literature. Thus it is that Genovino, the Jesuit, apostrophises the friends of Massaniello:

> 'Shout on, ye sons of clamour, louder still,
> And fright the Grandees with obstreperous noise,
> Whilst I secure in Darling Policies
> Am pleased with the success of my Designs
> Against this vile ungrateful City Naples.'

For two parts, of five acts each, D'Urfey sustains his rant at this high level, interrupting it, characteristically, with songs. The fourth act opens with a fisherman's rousing chorus, and the serious business of the fifth act is pleasantly beguiled by an encounter, in amœbean strains, between two fishfags. Thus the method and temperament of

D'Urfey are sufficiently displayed, and a mere glance at Massaniello will explain why his friends vastly preferred his songs to his tragedies.

The plays which he dignifies by the name of comedy are, one and all, the broadest of broad farces. There is no trick of the time which he does not employ. The thinnest disguises are sufficient to deceive his simple heroes. His country squires are guilty of wilder antics than any devised by Vanbrugh. As he borrowed from his contemporaries, so his poor treasury of wit was rifled by his successors. Madam Fickle, in the comedy of that name (1682), gave Farquhar a hint for the Lady Lurewell of *The Constant Couple*, and the well-deserved misfortunes of Beau Clincher and Old Smuggler owe something to the disaster which overtakes Beauford and Brainworm in *The Virtuous Wife*. Many years later, in 1709, D'Urfey astonished the town with a play of a wholly new pattern. It was called *The Modern Prophets*, and was described by Steele as 'a most unanswerable satire against the late spirit of enthusiasm.' The writer 'had by long experience observed,' wrote *The Tatler*, 'that, in company, very grave discourses had been followed by bawdry; and therefore has turned the humour that way with great success, and taken from his audience all manner of superstition, by the agitations of pretty Mrs. Bignell, whom he has, with great subtlety, made a lay-sister, as well as a prophetess.' Of the virtues that should grace a comic poet D'Urfey had none. He showed

not even a passing interest in human character; he knew no other wit than horseplay. Save in the writing of songs, he was a man of very slender talent, and it is a high tribute to his amiable qualities that his memory has been so long and so clearly preserved.

VIII

Colley Cibber was what D'Urfey was not, a born man of the theatre. An actor by temperament, a comic poet by accident, he took a perfect measure of the public taste, and he knew his colleagues as he knew the pit and boxes. He could fit himself and them with parts nicely suited to the talent of each. The result is that his plays are no more than delicately poised machines, which run easily enough upon the stage, but creak horribly in the study. Congreve's criticism of Cibber's first play, *Love's Last Shift* (1696), the justice of which Cibber in his candid way publicly acknowledged, would serve as a criticism for them all. 'It has only in it,' said Congreve, 'a great many things that were like wit, that in reality were not wit.' Even when he declared that he drew from life, he succeeded in making the portrait lifeless as stone. Lady Betty Modish, in *The Careless Husband* (1704), is said to have owed not a little to Mrs. Oldfield's manner of converse. 'There are many sentiments in this character,' the author confesses, 'that I may almost say, were originally her own, or only dress'd with a little more care, than when they negligently fell from her lively humour.' And Lady

Betty is essentially a puppet of the stage. As you listen to her wit, when it encounters the wit of Sir Charles Easy or Lord Foppington, your mind never flits for a moment to the talk of human beings. You are reminded, at every page, of that phrase-book of ironic genius, Swift's *Genteel Conversation.*

However, Cibber, being a man of the theatre, cared as little for human character as for literature. It was for him to fill the pit and boxes, and he filled them for two generations. In the making of plays he was an expert, and he cared not whose work it was that he adapted. He improved Shakespeare with as light a heart as he improved Mrs. Centlivre. His most important service to the stage of his time was the invention of a new kind of beau in Sir Novelty Fashion, who was accepted by Vanbrugh as a type, and held the stage until he was reincarnated as Lord Dundreary. Services such as this hardly outlast the author who does them, and Colley Cibber has a claim upon our regard which all his journeywork would not merit. He left us in his *Apology for his Life* an incomparable record (published in 1740). It is to his talent of observation, to his good-humour, and to his sense of justice that we owe the best set of theatrical portraits that ever came down to us. As much as words can tell, he has told us of Mrs. Bracegirdle and Betterton, of Leigh and Nokes, of Estcourt and Powell, of all the brilliant actors, who in our golden age of comedy made the representation of that comedy possible. And he has done this with

never a jealous word, with never a hinted dislike at a prosperous rival. Above all, he has drawn an imperishable portrait of himself, a man protected against insult by a triple brass of confidence, whose vanity smiled untouched at the fierce assaults of desperate enemies. That presently he was chosen by Pope to succeed Theobald on the throne of folly gave him a strange pleasure, and he discovered, I think, the real reason of Pope's choice. 'Right or wrong,' said he, 'a lick at the laureate will always be a sure bait, *ad captandum vulgus*, to catch him little readers.' It was, in effect, the laureate unworthy of his wreath that the great poet attacked, and the poet's shaft should have been directed against the Court which put Cibber in a false position. His laureate odes, sunk in the waters of oblivion, no longer trouble us. We may even forget the skilful maker of stage-plays. The historian of the theatre, the apologist, who has left behind him the best commentary that we have upon the comedy of manners, will still be entitled to the world's gratitude, though he wear the bays no longer on his brow.

AN UNDERWORLD OF LETTERS

I

AS the seventeenth century drew to its close, there came into being a strange underworld of letters, an inferno inhabited by lettered vagabonds, who matched, in scholarship and scurrility, the heroes of Petronius. Beggar students, tavern keepers, idlers from the inns of court, adventurers who had trailed a pike in Holland, flocked thither with spruce young squires who 'knew the true manage of the hat,' and loungers fresh from the universities. Thus, in the coffee-houses, there grew up a new public, for whose amusement a new literature was invented. The old days of dignity and leisure were past. The wits of the town wrote, not to please themselves, but to flatter the taste of their patrons, and many of them succeeded so well as to echo in prose or verse the precise accent of the tavern. A familiarity of speech and thought distinguished them all. They were noisy, they were agile, they were fearless. They insolently attacked their great contemporaries. They had, indeed, as little respect for high personages in

life or letters as for the English tongue, which they maltreated with lighthearted ribaldry. The slang which they used—and they were all masters in this kind—was not the curious slang of metaphor, such as is enshrined in the pages of Cotgrave's Dictionary; rather, it was composed of the catchwords which seemed worth a smile when they were heard in the coffee-house, which instantly lost their savour when they were put in print, and which to-day defy the researches of the archæologist. As they aimed, one and all, at the same mark—popularity—they exhibited in their works no subtle differences. The vanity of individual expression was not for them. They admitted that the booksellers, who paid the piper, had a perfect right to call the tune, and they sang and danced in loyal obedience to the fashion of the moment. They wrote the slippered doggerel, the easy prose, the flippant plays that were asked of them, and their names might be transposed on many title-pages without any violation of justice or probability.

In spirit and ambition, they were true cockneys. They readily shook off the influence and associations of their childhood. Though Tom Brown went to Christ Church from Shifnal, though Ned Ward was a loyal son of Oxfordshire, though Peter Motteux first saw the light at Rouen, London was their paradise. They saw through her eyes, they spoke with her tongue. Most intimately at home in Will's or Ned Ward's, they dragged their muse,

as they would still have called her, down to the level of sawdust and spilled wine. Before all things, and at all times, they were anti-heroic. Their jests never sparkled more brightly than when they aimed at authority. No poets, living or dead, were sacred in their careless eyes. It seemed to them a legitimate enterprise to ridicule Virgil, or to trick Homer out in the motley garments of the age. Æneas and Ulysses, esteemed heroes by many generations of men, were for them no better than those who frequented Grub Street or took their pleasure in the Mall. And they found in travesty or burlesque an admirable field for the exercise of their untidy talent.

In burlesque, Scarron was their openly acknowledged master. They did not make any attempt to belittle the debt which they owed to *Le Virgile Travesti*. They announced their obligation not merely in their style, but in their titles, and, if this antic form of poetry took some years in crossing the Channel, it flourished with amazing energy after its passage. The success of Scarron himself is a curiosity of literary history. The form was no new thing when Scarron made it his own. The reverse process, the exaltation of paltry subjects by august treatment, such as was afterwards employed by John Philips in his *Splendid Shilling*, was not unknown to the ancients. The trick of putting the gods and heroes of Greece and Rome into dressing-gowns had been practised in Spain and Italy before Scarron published, in 1648, the first book of his famous

Virgile. But, for France, and for England, Scarron was a real inventor. The artifice seemed simple enough when it was discovered. It depended for its triumph upon nothing else than an obvious contrast. To represent whatever had seemed sacred to the tradition of the race as trivial and ludicrous was not a difficult enterprise, while the anachronism which persuaded Virgil to speak of oil-paintings and to quote Corneille was assured of a laugh. The example of Scarron was quickly followed. Furetière, Dufresnoy, d'Assoucy hastened to prove themselves possessed of this new humour. Ovid, curled and barbered, was sent to pay his addresses to the ladies of the court with M. de Boufflers. Not even Lucan or Juvenal escaped the outrage of parody. And the style of the burlesques matched the irreverence of their thought. It was familiar to baseness; it flowed with the ease and swiftness of a turbid stream. As Boileau said, Parnassus spoke the language of the market, and Apollo, travestied, became a Tabarin.

The enthusiasm which Scarron's experiment aroused made an easy conquest of courtier and scholar alike. From the capital, it spread to the provinces, and, though none of his imitators is worth remembrance, Scarron deserves his meed of praise. He did an ill thing supremely well. In facility and suppleness, his *Virgile* has never been surpassed. His humour, such as it is, is tireless and inexhaustible. Moreover, if he be happy in his raillery, his work, as French admirers have said,

is not without some value as a piece of criticism. He touches with a light hand the weakness of the lachrymose hero. He turns the light of the prevailing good sense upon Virgil's many simplicities, for which few will thank him; and, even in the very act of burlesque, he pays his victim the compliment of a scrupulously close adherence to his text.

II

The fashion was already overpast in France, when Charles Cotton made his first experiment in English burlesque. In 1664 was published under the title *Scarronides, or Virgil Travestie*, a mock-poem on the first book of the *Æneid*. To this Cotton added the fourth book six years later, and, presently, put some of Lucian's dialogues into 'English fustian,' with the title *Burlesque upon Burlesque: or the Scoffer Scoff'd*. Of these experiments in the new craft, no more can be said than that they were better than the base imitations which speedily followed. Cotton, at any rate, was a man of letters, with a sense of style and variety, and if he stooped to play the tune which the tavern-haunters demanded, he played it with some skill and energy. He uses the artifices which they all use. He mixes ancient and modern inextricably. He measures the distance which Æneas rowed by a familiar standard, ''twixt Parson's Dock and Billingsgate.' As to Dido's temple, 'I cannot liken any to it,' says he, 'unless 't be Pancras, if

you know it.' It is thus that he turns into English a familiar passage of the first *Æneid*:

> 'But oh, my Muse, put me in mind,
> To which o' th' gods was he unkind:
> Or, what the Plague did Juno mean
> (That cross-grain'd, peevish, scolding Quean,
> That scratching, cater-wawling Puss)
> To use an honest Fellow thus?
> (To curry him like Pelts at Taners),
> Have goddesses no better manners?'

The last line, as the author proudly tells us in a note, is a translation of 'tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?' The humour is forced and barren; but those French critics are in the wrong who declare that Cotton was content merely to translate Scarron. If this theory of burlesque was Scarron's, the application of it was all his own.

Cotton's success did not long remain unchallenged. Within a year, one Monsey of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, gave to the world his own *Scarronides*, a mock-poem, being the second and seventh books of Virgil's *Æneid*, which he dedicated, by what, no doubt, he thought a great stroke of humour, to 'Lady Ann Dido, Countess of Carthage.' It is a work without character, scrupulously fashioned according to the pattern of the hour; and a reference to James Hind proves that this author also has learned the lesson of anachronism. Then John Phillips, a true denizen of Grub Street, paraphrased, in his *Maronides* (1672), the fifth and sixth books of the *Æneid*. In a

preface he attempts a timid defence of his temerity. 'I leave the world to determine,' says he, 'whether it be not reason that he that has caused us so often to cry when we were Boys, ought not to make us laugh as much now we are men.' As Phillips travestied him, Virgil does not make us laugh, and the justification fails. The experiment, in truth, differed little from the others, save that its author, for the moment a zealous royalist, put the puritans in hell. There they all lie, Haselrigge and Pym, Hugh Peters, the chief of English rogues, Bradshaw,

> 'in a Squarr
> Of burning Canvas, lined with Tarr,'

and Cromwell himself,

> 'that Devil of a Devil,
> Whose Noddle was the Mint of Evil.'

Thus did Phillips take vengeance upon Milton's severe discipline.

The licence which John Phillips allowed himself in his treatment of Virgil was vastly increased by James Farewell, the author of *The Irish Hudibras, or Fingallian Prince* (1698), who boldly adapted the sixth book of the *Æneid* to his own time, and turned it to a high encomium of William III., 'this present Monarch, England's timely Redeemer, whom Heaven long preserve.' Nor was Virgil the only one of the poets attacked in England with wanton insolence. In 1664, James Scudamore's *Homer à*

la Mode, A Mock Poem upon the first and second books of Homer's *Iliads*, came upon the town. The version is free from the brutality which disgraced many of its rivals, and gives promise of better things. The promise remained unfulfilled, for the author, who was bred at Christ Church, had but just taken his degree when he was drowned in the Wye, 'to the great reluctancy of all those who were acquainted with his pregnant parts.' The author of *Homerides: or Homer's First Book Moderniz'd*, who, some fifty years later, essayed Scudamore's task over again, need not awaken our curiosity. He showed a spark of self-knowledge when he called himself Sir Iliad Doggerell, and a complete ignorance of literary fitness when he regretted that Pope did not give Homer 'the English air as well as tongue.' Ovid, better suited to the methods of burlesque, did but tempt the makers of travesties to a wilder extravagance. 'Naso Scarronomimus,' the writer of *Ovidius Exulans* (1673), can scarcely persuade the sorry tit of his humour to move for all his thwackings, and even Alexander Radcliffe, a captain, an inns-of-court-man and a poet, who, in *The Ramble, An Anti-Heroic Poem*, gave proof of a rough vigour and freshness, fails to rouse a laugh by his *Ovid Travestie* (1680). To send Ulysses to Scotland as a volunteer, for the suppression of rebellion, and to leave him loitering at an inn on the homeward road, is an artifice which no literary fashion can justify. In

truth, the taste of the dying seventeenth century was not our taste, and we can only wonder at the indiscretion of our ancestors.

III

Even before Cotton wrote, Samuel Butler had discovered in *Hudibras* (1663) the real purpose of burlesque. If Scarron had done nothing else than to inspire, at a distance, this work of genius, we should still owe him a debt of gratitude. It was not for Butler to ridicule the ancient mythologies; he saw before his eyes the follies and pretensions of his own time and country awaiting castigation. And so, he turned the travesty magnificently to the uses of satire. He employed the artifices of contrast and anachronism beloved by the imitators of Scarron to exhibit in the clear light of absurdity the hypocrisy and meanness of Presbyterians. He, too, expressed the high in terms of the low. His work is the masterpiece of its kind, unique and incomparable. It is idle to praise its technical perfection. The resource and ingenuity of the author's rhymes, the tireless exuberance of his wit, his easy movement, his bold extravagance are qualities unmatched elsewhere in literature. Nor does his wisdom lag behind his wit. He concentrates into aphorisms the fruit of his keen observation with so happy a skill that a great part of his work has passed into the possession of all Englishmen. Thousands quote him with assurance who have never turned

the pages of *Hudibras*, who would care not a fig for his fable or his satire, even if they understood them. And, though he won instant acceptance, he defied imitation. When he had fashioned his masterpiece, he broke the mould; and, for that very reason, perhaps, he became the prey of the parodists.

IV

There is nothing that looks so easy as perfection, and the coffee-house poets, easily beguiled, thought it no shame to express themselves and their politics in Hudibrastic verse. If they could not rival the master, they could at least pretend to mimicry in halting octosyllabics. The boldest of them all was Ned Ward, who combined the crafts of publican and poet. Born in Oxfordshire in 1667, he was, says his biographer, 'of low extraction and little education.' Whatever his extraction may have been, he cleverly picked up his knowledge of letters as he went along. He did not scruple to call one of his books *Vulgus Britannicus*, and he believed in the singularity of 'an Egyptian Magi.' In his youth he had travelled in the West Indies, a fact commemorated by Pope: 'or shipp'd with Ward to Ape and Monkey Lands.' But he early settled to the professions which suited him best. His first experiment in inn-keeping was made in Moorfields. He presently moved to Fullwood Rents, where he opened a punch-shop and tavern, 'but in a genteel way,' says Giles Jacob, 'and with his wit,

humour, and good liquor, has afforded his guests pleasurable entertainment.' Whatever he did was, doubtless, done in 'a genteel way,' and the guests who found pleasure in his entertainment were, one and all, sound Tories and High Churchmen. A big, burly man, he showed a practical faith in his own ale and his own punch, and, while he gossiped at the fireside with his clients, never let a day pass without a verse:

> 'So Ned, divided, writes and brews,
> To try if darling gain accrues
> More from his Mash-tub than his Muse.'

His mash-tub had the better of it. Not only did it fill his pocket; it did not put him into the pillory. Twice, for his Muse's sake, he faced the angry mob at the Royal Exchange and at Charing Cross. 'As thick as eggs at Ward in pillory,' says Pope; but his humour carried him safely through the vicissitudes of politics, and he died at his tavern, a prosperous potman and scurrile poet, in 1731.

He was a journalist in verse. His *Hudibras Redivivus* (1708) is a gazette in rhyme, which was inspired by the moment, and was published in parts. The ingenious Ward begins his preface with an apology. 'Tho' I have made bold,' he says, 'to borrow a Title from one of the best poems that ever was published in the English Tongue—yet I would not have the world expect me such a wizard as to conjure up the spirit of the inimitable Butler.' He need not have been in doubt. He was no wizard, but a

pedestrian jogtrot writer of doggerel, or 'bitcherel,' as D'Urfey called it, whom criticism could not affright nor opposition baulk. Nevertheless his *Hudibras* is a wonderful achievement. Its facile, fluent ease marks the versifier who could write two hundred lines standing on one foot. His language is common enough. Neither Brown nor Motteux surpasses him in knowledge of the slang which was heard in the tavern or at the street corner. Had he lived to-day, he might have been an ornament of the sporting press. Living when he did, he supported the cause of Church and State in such couplets as jingled in the brain, and tripped readily to the tongue.

For popular government he had a hearty contempt:

> 'For he that will oblige the throng,
> Must ne'er hold one opinion long,
> But turn his doctrine and his creed,
> As often as the Cause has need.'

Among those upon whom he poured out his contempt are 'prophet Dan' with 'the scoundrel Freedom of his Pen,' all Whigs and all Dissenters. He believed, like an eminent statesman, that the one object of the Whigs was to make themselves 'masters for life' of England and all that it contained.

> 'A man of sense, with half an Eye,
> (Says he) may easily descry,
> Thro' all their conscientious Cant,
> What in reality they want;
> Which is, believe me, in a word,
> All that the Kingdom can afford.'

Compromise he hated, and impartiality. He professed a deep distrust of moderation, which was no better in his eye than a 'modish cant,' with which fools disguise 'their spite, their venom, and their lies.' The book is tedious in its facility. It weighs upon the reader's spirit with the heaviness of all dead controversies. Even where he protests against the debtors' prison, where

> 'men for poverty alone
> Must wear these doublets made of stone,'

he wins your reluctant approval.

He is at his best when he describes the taverns and shops of the town, their picturesque signs, and the strange characters who throng the streets, the campaign wenches and the ale-wives, the lame mumpers and the disabled seamen. Here, he speaks with an authority which none of his colleagues in Grub Street could rival. If he had but a casual acquaintance with the English tongue, he knew London and its slang like the tavern-keeper that he was. Whatever were his shortcomings, his industry was prodigious. *Vulgus Britannicus* (1710) rivalled his *Hudibras Redivivus* in dullness and prolixity. The *Republican Procession* (1714), in which, among others, he ridicules Marlborough, 'a great Pretender to the trick of State,' is merry only on the title-page. He poured forth broadsides, satires, prose, and verse with an equal hand. Impartially, he sang the praises of a

Derby-Ale-House and the New Tunbridge Wells at Islington. The love of good living and high principles breathes in all that he wrote. The pity is that a sound inspiration found so poor and graceless an expression. Now and then, he could sing a song in the true Rabelaisian strain, as in his *Wine and Wisdom: or The Tipling Philosophers* (1719):

> 'Wise Thales, the Father of all
> The Greek Philosophicall Crew,
> Ere he gaz'd at the Heavens, would call
> For a chirruping Bottle or two.'

In fifty stanzas, he thus extolled what was, assuredly, the more profitable of his two trades, and, for the moment, endowed his doggerel with a rollicking sincerity.

It is, as has been said, by his sketches of London and its streets that Ned Ward saves his Hudibrastic experiments from dullness, and there, in the sights and sounds about him, he found the material best suited to his talent. Whatever disloyalty the hacks of Grub Street may have shown to the English language, they were constant in their devotion to the London which was their world. Ned Ward, in his *London Spy*, and Tom Brown, in his *Amusements Serious and Comical*, have bequeathed to us a picture of the town whose merit is wholly independent of literature. They are the true descendants of Dekker and Nashe, from whom they are separated by less than a century of time. Between them are many

centuries of style and thought. The London which Dekker and Nashe described is enwrapped in an atmosphere of dark mystery and impenetrable gloom. They see the Seven Deadly Sins ever before them, and deplore the iniquity of their city with the solemn eloquence of prophets. Satire is their lightest weapon. They condemn even where they admire. It is in no spirit of flippancy that Dekker denounces the cruelty of this 'now once-againe New-reared-Troy.' Nashe's voice is the voice of a sincerely repentant sinner. 'London,' he cries, 'lay off thy gorgeous attire and cast downe thy selfe before God in contrition and prayer, least hee cast thee downe in his indignation into hell-fire.'

Ned Ward and Tom Brown could not look upon the life about them with the grave eyes of their predecessors. It was not for them to be censorious or to hope for better things. If only the city of their habitation were a place of pleasant resort, they cared not for its morals. And they wrote of it in the easy style of the trained reporter. Their temperament in no sense diminishes the value of their sketch. They have shown us a London infinitely more supple, infinitely commoner, and, at the same time, far closer to our own than the London of Dekker and Nashe. The cockney with his nimbler wit and paltrier ideals had intervened, and fixed for all time certain lineaments of the city. No longer is it dominated by gallant or beau or gull. Those who throng the taverns of the time are either im-

postors, such as Radcliffe paints in *The Ramble*, or mere citizens meanly ambitious of cutting a dash. It seems perfectly consonant with the prevailing manners that Ned Ward should keep an ale-house, or that Motteux, the translator of Rabelais, should desert literature for the selling of china goods.

The *London Spy* (1704-6) is, undoubtedly, Ward's masterpiece. After two centuries, it still keeps the fresh stamp of truth. Its design, if design it may be called, is of the simplest. A citizen, who, 'after a tedious confinement in a country Hutt,' breaking loose from 'the scholar's gaol, his study,' revisits London. There he meets an old schoolfellow, who shows him the sights, and especially the taverns, of the town. It is a *Gull's Horn-book* of another age, written with plain simplicity, and with scarce a touch of satire. The two friends range from Billingsgate, where they observe the 'oars' and 'scullers' who tout by the waterside, and note 'the stink of sprats and the untuneable clamours of the wrangling society,' to Hummun's Turkish bath. They wander from the Quaker's tavern in Fish Lane to that hideous inferno, the Poultry Compter, from the Wits' coffee-house, where the cockney sketches for his friend a character of the modern poets, to Bartholomew Fair, now stripped of its glory. By the way they encounter many strange personages, such as the highwayman, who 'has good friends in Newgate,' and is 'well acquainted with the ostlers about Bishopsgate and Smithfield, and gains from them intelligence of

what booties go out that are worth attempting.' The book is written with a directness and simplicity which command belief, and ends, as in duty bound, with a description of the death and funeral of Dryden, who was the master of them all, and who impressed his laws upon his liege subjects, like the dictator that he was.

V

Tom Brown preceded Ned Ward by a year or two, and, in his *Amusements Serious and Comical Calculated for the Meridian of London* (1700), pictured the London that he saw, with less truth than Ward, and greater wit. London he recognises to be a world by itself, and he pictures 'what an Indian would think of such a motley herd of people,' thus anticipating Macaulay's imagined New Zealander. He sketches the city, and those whom he and his Indian encounter—the alderman, the usurer, the broker, and the rest—with a good-humoured enthusiasm. For him, the playhouse is 'an enchanted island.' When they walk in the Mall, he persuades his Indian to exclaim: 'I never beheld in my life so great a flight of birds.' Much of the book is the comedy of the age translated into a light-fingered prose. Tom Brown finds it as hard as Ned Ward finds it to keep away from the taverns and gaming-houses, and, in his exposure of the many rascals, who lay in waiting for the unwary traveller, he sets a fashion speedily followed in *The Cheats of London* and a vast library of similar chapbooks.

He was, in truth, well fitted by character and training to do the work of Grub Street. Educated at Christ Church, he won an instant fame by a pleasant trick of writing Latin verse, and it is said that many pieces were extant of his composition, bearing other names. Even in his youth, his cynic temper preferred money to fame, and no sooner had he left the university for London than he was ready to hire himself out to the highest bidder. There was little of which his facile brain was incapable. To show his touch with the classics, he translated Persius and mimicked Horace. The example of Rabelais was ever before him, and he followed John Phillips in imitating the prognostications of Pantagruel. His epigrams, in Latin or English, are rather coarse than witty. The best of his work is journalism, illuminated always by the light of scholarship. There is no topic so bare that he will not embroider it with tags from the classics. His favourite trick was to indite letters from the dead to the living, a trick which gave him the chance to ridicule 'Tom' D'Urfey, 'Joe' Harris the player, and even the great Dryden himself. The death of 'the gallant Dundee' inspired him to imitate Cowley's pindarics, though, as he said himself, he was ill acquainted with that kind of writing.

He suffered at once from excessive praise and ill-deserved blame. 'Without partiality, we may say,' wrote Sam Briscoe, his bookseller, 'for satyrical Prose or Verse, Mr. Brown was not inferior to Petronius, Martial, or any other of

the witty ancients.' These were his models, truly; but his works testify how far he fell short of their performance. On the other hand, a grave injustice was done to him, as it has been to many another, by the thoughtless, who fathered upon him 'all the pamphlets good and bad, Lampoons, Trips, London Spies, and the like insignificant Trifles.' His lively humour won him the name of 'Tom Brown the facetious,' and the epithet, not wholly complimentary, still clings to him. The enemy, who said of him that 'he had less the Spirit of a Gentleman than the rest, and more of a Scholar,' spiced his malice with the truth. What, indeed, had a gentleman to make in Grub Street? However, with all his faults, Tom Brown was immeasurably superior to Ward and his other rivals, a real man of letters, who, had he not been 'too lazy in his temper to write much, would have builded himself a better monument.' In character, he was careless and independent. He did his best to live by his pen, and, when his pen failed him, he turned pedagogue. At no time would he rely upon the caprices of a patron. 'I am one of the first of the Suburban class,' he boasted, 'that has ventur'd out without making an application to a nobleman's porter, and tiring him out with showing him his master's name.' For the rest, he wrote the famous epigram upon Dr. Fell, and died, at last, repentant and absolved. He confessed on his death-bed that he had 'complied too much with the Libertinism

of the time,' and extorted a promise from his bookseller, who speedily went back upon his word, to expunge 'all prophane undecent passages' from his works, when he came to reprint them.

VI

The career of Tom Brown is characteristic of Grub Street and his age. From one — incomparably the best—you may learn all. And, by a curious irony, neither poverty nor the bottle impaired the tireless industry of the hacks. Though the standard of style which they set up for themselves was not high, they never feared to put their talent to the test. They fought for causes good or evil with a kind of ferocity. None of them disdained the weapons of the wits. We have seen how Ned Ward expressed his opinions and his prejudices in Hudibrastic verse. The gathered pamphlets of Roger L'Estrange, written, for the most part, in defence of himself and the High Church party, would fill a shelf. John Phillips, whom Milton trained for wiser purposes, disgraced himself for ever by selling a hireling pen to Titus Oates. If there is nothing so transient as dead controversy, it must yet be admitted that these writers were artists in their own style. Their skill in invective, their assumption of passionate conviction, their outspoken contempt for the enemy of the moment, cannot but claim our admiration.

And in nothing did they display their marvellous

energy so clearly as in the task of translation. Here, again, they recall the enterprise of the Elizabethans. They do not challenge comparison with their predecessors. They recognised that each age must look at the classics through its own eyes. They knew, also, that the France and Spain of their time had provided a treasure-house of masterpieces, which their skill and knowledge could unlock. And, when they had taken these masterpieces from their treasure-house, they did not scruple to trick them out in the familiar, parti-coloured style of their own Grub Street. It seems, indeed, as though the fashion of translation changed as rapidly as the fashion of hats and coats. Though the Plutarch of North and Holland, the Montaigne of Florio, the Seneca of Lodge were but a century old, they appeared fantastic, if not unintelligible, to the contemporaries of Dryden. The 'several hands,' the 'persons of quality,' who presumed to do again the tasks valiantly performed by their grandsires, aimed less at a splendour of effect than at a plain uniformity. The one licence they permitted themselves, as we shall see, was an incorrigible licence of slang. They thought that their habit of speech was perfectly suited to the heroes and gods of antiquity. They clipped their words in translating the classics, as they clipped them in an insolent pamphlet. They possessed not the smallest sense of propriety, and believed that there was no writer, ancient or modern, whose meaning could not be adequately expressed

in their vernacular. Thus, it mattered not who gazed in their mirror; it gave back always the same reflection. Their theory of translation was, of course, the theory of Dryden, who marshalled them for the fray. 'The Qualification of a Translator worth reading,' said he, 'must be a Mastery of the Language he translates out of, and that he translates into; but if a deficiencie be allowed in either, it is in the Original.' And it was in the original, were it Latin or Greek, that many of them were deficient. Like the Elizabethans, they, too, sought what help they could find in French versions of their author. Nor was it for them to disobey Dryden's second injunction. 'A Translator,' wrote the master, 'that would write with any force or spirit of an Original, must never dwell on the words of an author.' So lightly did they dwell upon their authors' words, that, in many specimens, it is not easy to distinguish between translation and burlesque.

By the preferences of these writers we come to know the taste of the booksellers and of the town. They were not animated by the spirit of adventure, or by that ambition of instructing kings and nobles in high policy, which moved the Elizabethans. Their sole object was to profit themselves by pleasing the public. Petronius, to whom they owed a special allegiance, was easily taught to speak their dialect. The first version (1694) we owe to William Burnaby and another hand. In the second (1708), Tom Brown, Captain Ayloffe, and others

are said to have given their aid, though it is not clear what they contributed, and a comparison of the two versions by no means justifies the bookseller's claim that the second is 'wholly new.' Though much of Petronius is lost in the process of translation, the work is done with a sympathy and an energy which we expect from the authentic descendants of Ascyltus and Encolpius. Here is no dwelling on the words of the author. The book may be read from beginning to end as though it were an independent and original romance.

The version of Lucian (1711) by several eminent hands displays precisely the same qualities. Deprived of its atmosphere, it has the look of an English work. The 'eminent hands'—Tom Brown, John Phillips, Walter Moyle, and the rest—handled the English tongue with ease and familiarity, and, if they owed more to the French of d'Ablancourt than to the Greek of Lucian, they had no difficulty in transposing their author into the guise of their own place and time. The work, done under Dryden's eye, was journeywork, if you will, and defaced by a tone of commonness. But it has a character which removes it by many leagues from the crib, and Dryden, no doubt, speaks truth when he places the translators among 'the finer spirits of the age.' Walter Moyle and Sir Henry Sheeres deserve whatever praise he could give them, and let it not be forgotten that it is the facetious Tom Brown, whom Dryden would not

mention with honour, that bore the brunt of the work.

VII

John Phillips, whose travesties have already been mentioned, was eminent among the translators of the time. He took his share in Englishing Lucian and Plutarch, and the folios to which he put his name were neither few nor slight. He was bred in classical learning by his uncle, John Milton, under whose grave auspices he had read the most of the Greek and Latin poets by the time he was twelve, and whose influence he early shook off. For many years he seems to have gained his livelihood by his pen, and was as versatile as he was industrious. What Aubrey calls his 'jiggish phancy' inspired him to the making of almanacks, to the inditing of satires, and to the conduct of political controversy. A loyal disciple of Rabelais, he composed a sermon with a passage from Gargantua for his text, and embraced the doctrine of Pantagruel with a constant heart. His policy shifted with the convenience of the hour. He approached Cromwell cap in hand when it suited him, and afterwards, in a travesty, set the Protector in hell. He shouted for the King at the Restoration, and hailed the infamous Oates as the saviour of his country. He naturally incurred the hatred of Anthony à Wood, both for his own sake and on account of Milton, 'that villainous leading incendiary.' But, whatever blots there may have been upon his honour, he was tireless in in-

dustry. He died, so to say, with a pen in his hand. At seventy years of age he is described by Dunton as 'a gentleman of good learning, and well born; and will write you a design off in a very little time, if the gout or claret does not stop him.' For many years he edited a grave periodical, *The Present State of Europe*, and, in the compass and extent of his translations, he was a near rival to Philemon Holland. To provide two vast folios in a year is a triumph of persistence, if no other merit be claimed for it.

And John Phillips's versions are always workmanlike. La Calprenède's *Pharamond* was once, no doubt, 'a fam'd romance,' though it is no more likely to find readers to-day than Madeleine de Scudery's *Almahide, or The Captive Queen*; and Phillips's task, in Englishing both (1677), was faithfully performed. His chief lack is a lack of distinction. There is not a page that most of the other hacks might not have written with equal ease. For ease is its chief characteristic—ease of phrase, ease of movement. With the same nonchalance, he translated Tavernier's *Voyages in the East*, Ludolphus's *History of Æthiopia*, Grelot's *Voyage to Constantinople* (1683), and many another forgotten work of travel or fiction. Besides these monuments of energy, a version of Scarron's *Typhon* (1665) seems but the solace of a summer's afternoon.

None of these, as we have said, bears the sole and individual mark of Phillips's talent. There is one book — his translation of *Don Quixote*—

which, for good or evil, is all his own. Not even Ned Ward, whose inappropriate courage persuaded him to turn the masterpiece of Cervantes into Hudibrastic verse, committed so great an outrage on a noble original as did John Phillips when he made *The History of the most Renowned Don Quixote* English 'according to the humour of our Modern Language (1687).' It is difficult to describe this rash experiment. Imagine *Hamlet* turned into the lingo of the music hall, and fitted with occasional songs and dances, and you will have a faint impression of Phillips's impropriety. Little as he respected his author, he respected still less the time and place of his incomparable romance. He has reduced to the level of his own Grub Street the style and manner of Cervantes. His work is less a translation than a travesty. He has treated *Don Quixote* as Scarron treated the *Æneid*. He has composed a debased fantasia of his own upon a well-known and beautiful theme. In other words, he has employed an imagery as vulgar as the slang of the tavern can make it. Rosinante, in his eyes, is a 'Dover post-horse,' the inn-keeper is 'as true a thief as ever sung psalms at Tyburn.' The fish which Don Quixote has for his supper is 'so ill-dress'd as if it had been cook'd in Ram Alley or White-Fryers.' Such humour as anchronism will afford may be found on every page, and, as though it were not enough to create a confusion of time, Phillips never ceases to confound the Spain of the age of Cervantes with the England of his own.

The sail of the windmill throws the knight sprawling, says he, 'at the distance of more yards than would have measured Long Megg of Lincoln a gown and petticoat.' He likens the lovers to 'young citizens and their wives in an Epsom coach'; in his version Tolosa masquerades as Betty, 'the daughter of a Cobbler in Southwark, that kept a stall under a Chandler's shop in Kent street'; and, by way of a crowning absurdity, the lady tells Don Ferdinand 'to read Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest.*' Now, he merely hints at a false comparison, as when he says that Cardenio held his Lucinda 'as the Lobster held the Hair upon Salisbury Plain.' Now, he seems to exhaust his ingenuity in a single passage. When the inn-keeper tells Don Quixote that he, too, had been a knight errant, he boasts, in Phillips's travesty, how 'he himself had pursu'd the same Chance of Honour in his youth, travelling through all parts of the World in search of bold Adventures; to which purpose he had left no corner unvisited of the King's Bench Rules, the Skulking Holes of Alsatia, the Academy of the Fleet, the Colledge of Newgate, the Purliews of Turnbull, and Pickt Hatch, the Bordellos of St. Giles's, Banstead-Downs, Newmarket-Heath: . . . not a Publick Bowling Green where he had not exercis'd his heels; nor an Execution-crowd, nor a Hedge-Tavern, where he had not employ'd his pawning, topping, cogging fingers.' This is monumental, but it is not Cervantes. And by how many leagues is it removed from the splendour of Shelton!

Worse still, the ingenious Phillips makes *Don Quixote* an occasion for setting forth his preferences and his animosities. He packs his pages with modern instances. He drags in Hobbes and the Protector by the heels; nor does he lose a chance of insulting Milton, to whom he owed such scholarship as he possessed. Thus it is that Don Diego di Miranda describes his son's attainments: 'he is a great admirer of Horace, Juvenal, and Persius—but as for the modern poets he allows very few to be worth a straw; among the rest he has a particular Peek against Du Bartas, and *Paradise Lost*, which he says has neither Rhime nor Reason.' To defend such a work as Phillips's *Don Quixote* is not easy. There is a flippant irreverence in its jests and jibes, which criticism is forced to condemn. No man has a right thus licentiously to transform a masterpiece of literature. The very readiness, with which a writer of burlesque can achieve a laugh, should warn him that the laugh is not worth achievement. Yet, when all is said that can be said in dispraise, we cannot but acknowledge the supreme skill with which Phillips has performed his task. His zest never flags, his imagery never grows tired. On every page he has a fresh, if perverse, simile. With untiring energy he illustrates Cervantes from the life of the taverns which he frequented. The vigour and levity of his style are amazing; his understanding of the original is seldom at fault; and, though it may be said that the book should never have been

done, it must be added that it is done exceedingly well. For, if it gives us a very blurred picture of *Don Quixote*, it presents the clear image of the most flippant, restless, and debauched mind of an age which ill understood the punctilio of life or letters.

VIII

Peter Motteux, a fitting companion in literature for John Phillips, differed widely from him in blood and breeding. His youthful steps were not encouraged by a great poet. Thrown early upon a country whose language he did not understand, he was compelled to make a double conquest, first of a speech which was not his own, and then of the town in which he was an enforced exile. Born in 1663 at Rouen, he came to England when the edict of Nantes was revoked, and speedily found a place among English men of letters. So swift a change of nationality is almost without parallel in the history of literature. The author of Gramont is no near rival, since he was but four when he was carried to France, and a Frenchman he remained, in all save blood, till the end. Motteux left France at the age of twenty-two, probably with no training either in English or in literature, and, within a few years, he was writing with precisely the same accent as any other haunter of the coffee-houses. In the preface to his Rabelais, he fears that he has ' not given his Author the graces of the English language in every place,' and protests that he has not followed the example of Lucullus,

who wrote a book in Greek and scattered some false Greek in it, to let the world know it was not written by a Greek. Motteux was not guilty of a similar indiscretion. What errors may be found in his diction, he assures us, have crept in without his intent. He need have had no fear, nor have offered his reader any apology. Motteux had many faults. Gallicism was not among them. He compared himself, proudly enough, with Livius Andronicus, a Greek, and Terence, a Carthaginian, who chose Latin for their tongue, and if he could not vie with them in purity of style, he surpassed them, doubtless, in fluency.

There was no task to which he did not turn a ready hand. He made a loose paragraph of *Don Quixote*. He wrote plays, after the prescribed model, and without the smallest distinction. He furnished the plays of others with doggerel prologues. He edited *The Gentleman's Journal*, for which *Le Mercure Galant* of his own land served as a model, and was not refused the assistance of the great. Congreve and Prior both condescend to his pages, and, as it was Dryden under whose banner he fought, so it is the influence of Dryden which governs his journal. Frenchman though he was, he differs little enough from his neighbours in Grub Street. He might sign their works or they his without much detriment to either side. Nevertheless, he played a part in the literary history of his time. If he won the approval of Dryden and Steele, he was deemed

worthy the rancour of Pope, who celebrates him as a bore:

'Talkers I 've learned to bear, Motteux I knew';

and, in *The Art of Sinking*, puts him among the eels, 'obscene authors that wrap themselves up in their own mud, but are mighty nimble and pert.' And then, to prove an astonishing adaptability, Motteux turned an honest tradesman, and sold china and japan wares 'cheap for a quick return.' He did not go back to the craft of letters, and, after six years of honourable dealing, died a mysterious and shameful death.

Had it not been for his translation of the fourth and fifth books of Rabelais (1694), Motteux's name would not have outlived this crowning scandal. His translation gives him a place in history. The work has many faults. It is 'nimble and pert,' like its author, and Rabelais himself was never for a moment either pert or nimble. A still worse fault is its diffuseness, a fault of which Motteux appears to have been wholly unconscious. His style is as far from the Latin gravity of the original as from the humorous eloquence of Sir Thomas Urquhart. He is able neither to represent the one nor to carry on the tradition of the other. Between him and the knight of Cromarty there is not merely the difference which separates the English of Elizabeth (for Urquhart was a belated Tudor) from the English of Dutch William, but the difference which

parts an erudite and curious Scots pedant from the trivial, boisterous frequenter of Will's. Motteux's phrase is simple to tawdriness. He drags Rabelais down to his own level, and in nothing does he prove his lack of taste so clearly as in his use of slang.

Now, slang, to the translator of Rabelais, is indispensable. The romance of Pantagruel and Panurge cannot be turned out of its own into any other tongue save by an artist in strange words. Urquhart was perfectly equipped for the task, because his interest in oddly coloured speech never tired, and because, when he was himself at a loss, he made a liberal use of Cotgrave's Dictionary. Thus it was that his slang had ever a literary flavour; it had already won the freedom of humane letters; the dust of the street corner was not thick upon it. Motteux's slang was of another kind. It lacked literary association. The quickwitted Frenchman had picked it up in the gutter or the tavern; he had caught it fresh-minted from the vulgar brains of his friends; and, though it was lively enough to gain an instant laugh, it long since lost its humour. Motteux makes free and frank acknowledgment of the source of his common talk, as he calls it. 'Far be it from me,' he writes, 'for all this to value myself upon hitting the words of Cant, in which my drolling Author is so luxuriant, for though such words have stood me in good stead, I scarce can forbear thinking myself unhappy in having insensibly hoarded up so much Gibberish and Billingsgate trash in my memory;

nor could I forbear asking myself as an Italian Cardinal said on another account . . . Where the devil didst thou make up all these fripperies?' He made them up in Grub Street; and, when he had contrived them, they were ill suited to his purpose.

The only literary sources from which he gathered his 'words of Cant' were the travesties. He was no better able than John Phillips to escape the anachronisms of Cotton and Radcliffe. Though he had a finer restraint than the rascal who burlesqued *Don Quixote*, he could not forbear to treat the text of Rabelais with the same kind of wantonness. His version is full of allusions to his own time, which are wholly out of place in the Englishing of a masterpiece of the sixteenth century, and which to-day no man may understand. Nothing can be more impertinent than to interrupt the narrative of Rabelais with so foolish a catchword as 'his name's Twyford.' To translate *maître d'eschole* by 'the Busby of the place' is wofully to misunderstand the business of a translator. Still less excuse has Motteux, when, instead of the simple words 'at dawn,' he indulges his fancy thus extravagantly: 'when day, peeping in the East, made the Sky turn Black to Red, like a boiling Lobster.' The fact that he conveyed the image from *Hudibras*, where it was appropriate, to Rabelais, where it is a tiresome excrescence, does but heighten his sin. On every page he affronts the reader. He calls Panurge a 'sweet babe'; like the journalist that he was, he clips

'doctor' into 'doc.' Worse still, he can find no better equivalent for *c'est tout ung* than 'it 's all one to Frank.' Thus, he destroys the illusion of Rabelais, and, as though that were not enough, he drags in by the heels all the thievish gibberish that he could pick up in the purlieus of Newgate in Newgate's heyday.

IX

For Roger L'Estrange, the work of translation was but a profitable interlude in a busy, active life. He was by temperament a fighter; by habit, a man of affairs. No man loved the fray better than he; none defended his opinions more bravely. For the principles of an aristocratic Toryism, which he advocated fiercely and consistently, he suffered exile and imprisonment. The highest reward, which he obtained for his loyalty to the king, was to be appointed some years after the Restoration 'surveyor of the imprimery' and one of 'the licensers of the press.' To the end of his long life, therefore, it was to his pen alone that he could trust, and, though controversy was most to his taste, he fell to translating with the same brisk energy which made him formidable as a pamphleteer. It was for money, of course, that he wrote his many lively versions; he was paid for his Josephus, at so much a sheet, as he might be paid to-day; but he could show his tastes by his selection of authors, and a preface always gave him an opportunity of publishing his views. Thus, the face of the controversialist is

always seen through the mask of the translator. In his *Colloquies* of Erasmus, for instance, he roundly states that he made choice of this piece and subject for his own sake and not for the readers'. Writing at the time of the popish plot, and with a full consciousness of the suspicion that fell upon him, he makes clear his own position. 'Some will have the Translator to be a Papist in Masquerade,' says he, 'for going so far. Others again will have him to be too much of a Protestant, because he will go no farther: so that he is crushed betwixt the two Extremes, as they hang up Erasmus himself, betwixt Heaven and Hell.' In his preface to Seneca's *Morals*, he descends from truth itself to his own experience with yet greater clarity. For L'Estrange, though he spoke with another's voice, could still advocate the causes which for him were never lost.

He did his work of translation with the utmost thoroughness. He was the master of many tongues, and when, in Englishing Greek, he used the French version, which lay at his hand, he was very careful to compare the result with the original. And his chiefest qualification for the task was his mastery of his own language. Having spent fifty years in the service of letters, he had turned our English speech into the ready instrument of his thought. Whatever author he translated, he took him not only out of his own tongue, but out of his own land. He made him, for the moment, a true-born Englishman, speaking the slang of the day with the proper accent

of the cockney. As I have said, there are objections to this method. It is inevitable that all works, of whatever time or place, should wear the same aspect when they have undergone this equalising process. They cannot but lose much of their individual character if they are all brought to walk with the same gait, to use the same gesture.

When Nero 'looks big upon disaster,' and 'carries it on at a huffing note,' the reader loses sight of Rome and Judæa, and is instantly borne back to Gray's-inn-gate or Little Britain. And the mere fact that L'Estrange set upon all the works which he translated this very stamp and pattern of his own time, while it increased their momentary popularity, prevents their general acceptance as classics. They are translated not into English, but into the dialect of a particular time and place, and thus, with happy exceptions, they leave the work of interpretation to be done all over again. L'Estrange's method has one conspicuous merit. It removes all signs of halting uncertainty. You read a version, composed in accord with it, in the confidence that the idiom of the original will never disturb you, that you may judge it not as the tortured expression of a foreign tongue, but as a fresh and independent experiment in style. Pepys,[1] a critic of quick intelligence, was not blind

[1] On June 9, 1667, Pepys writes: 'And then to my boat again, and home, reading and making an end of the book I lately bought—a merry satyr, called *The Visions*, translated from Spanish by L'Estrange, wherein there are many very pretty

to the peculiar merit of L'Estrange, thus fortunate in the appreciation of his contemporaries, who saw and approved the end at which he aimed.

In the selection of his originals, L'Estrange displayed a true catholicity. He turned easily from Bona's *Guide to Eternity* (1672) to Tully's *Offices* (1680). He took a hand in the translation of Terence and Tacitus, and, by himself, was responsible for *The Visions of Quevedo* (1667) and *The Spanish Decameron* (1685). Far better than these are his *Select Colloquies out of Erasmus Roterodamus* (1680). The light touch and merry conceit of the author are qualities after L'Estrange's own heart. The original, moreover, being of a gay irony, was perfectly suited to L'Estrange's licentious method. Here, he could leave the word for the sense with a good heart; and, as Erasmus wrote for all time, looking through the foibles of his friends to the very nature of man, he wore, without difficulty, the garb of an English man of the world. By a hundred happy turns, such as 'spoken like a true tarpaulin' for *orationem vere nauticam*, the translator produces the impression of a living book—not the best of living books, truly, for there is sometimes a flippancy of phrase in L'Estrange's version, which is not merely irksome in itself, but wholly unwarranted by the text. However, L'Estrange was no verbal

things; but the translation is, as to the rendering it into English expression, the best that ever I saw, it being impossible almost to conceive that it should be a translation.'

copier 'encumbered with so many difficulties at once, that he could never disentangle himself from all.' He kept his freedom at the expense of propriety. Even so, he preserved a mean which eluded most of his contemporaries. To compare his *Colloquies* with those done in English by Tom Brown is to measure the distance between the scholar and the bookseller's hack. When Brown put his hand to the *Colloquies*, he forgot his scholarship, he showed no respect for Erasmus, little for himself. He declares that he 'keeps his Author still in sight'; but he has no scruple in making his version 'palatable to the English reader.' So, he sprinkles the text with the expletives of the hour, deems no absurdity too bold, and hopes, for instance, to win readers by rendering *nuptias Mortis, opinor, cum Marte* by 'not that of death and the Cobbler, I hope, nor of Bully-Bloody-Bones and Mother Damnable.' Thus, he too has produced, not a translation, but a travesty, and is guilty of the same outrage which John Phillips committed upon *Don Quixote*. L'Estrange has many faults; he never sank to the depth of Brown's ineptitude.

The work by which L'Estrange is best known, and by which he best deserves to be remembered, is his version of Æsop's *Fables*. His language, here also, is the language of talk rather than of literature; yet, for the most part, he observes a strict economy of words, and seldom commits the blunder of making his fables diffuse. 'A daw that had a mind to be sparkish,' says he; 'I had much rather be knabbing

of crusts,' his Country Mouse declares, 'without fear of danger in my own little hole, than be mistress of the whole world with perpetual cares and alarums.' In a sensible essay upon fables in general, he asserts that the foundation of knowledge and virtue are laid in childhood, and, presently, with an inapposite humour, makes his fables unfit for a child's comprehension. What child, we wonder, would read further after being confronted by such an opening as this: 'In days of old, when Horses spoke Greek and Latin, and Asses made Syllogisms'? The fault of taste is doubled when it is committed in defiance of a necessary simplicity. Yet, he sins not always, and his Æsop, stripped of its 'reflexions,' still remains the best that we have. In Seneca's *Morals* and the works of Josephus, he was less happily inspired. In the first place, he challenged comparison with the incomparably better versions of Lodge; in the second, neither Seneca nor Josephus gave the smallest scope for his peculiar humour: when he was most himself, in their case he was furthest from excellence. But, of his Josephus, it may, at least, be said that it was a marvellous achievement for a man of eighty-six, beset, as he tells us, by 'frequent troubles, and by ill-health.' Good or bad, it was a fitting conclusion to a career of rare vigour and energy, the crowning work of one whom Pepys found 'a man of fine conversation,' and whom even the grave Evelyn pronounced 'a person of excellent parts.'

X

Charles Cotton, in his translations, set before himself the same ideals as Roger L'Estrange. He hoped that his versions might have the air of true originals. And certain it is that you may read them without any thought of his texts. Though his style, too, errs, now and again, on the side of the tavern, he sternly avoids the excesses of slang which soil the works of his contemporaries. Moreover, he made a resolute attempt to keep close to the sense of the authors whom he translated, and, here again, he separated himself rigidly from the custom of his age. His versions are made one and all from the French, and, within the limits of this language, he permitted himself a great latitude of choice. Corneille's *Horace* (1671) is among his works, and Du Vair's *Moral Philosophy of the Stoics* (1664). To these he added Gerard's *History of the Life of the Duke of Espernon* (1670), and the admirable *Commentaries of Blaise de Montluc* (1674). In this last, perhaps, his talent found its worthiest expression. He had a natural sympathy with the original, and he translated it into an English that is both dignified and appropriate. Narrative was in closer accord with his temper than philosophical disquisition, and, though it is by his version of Montaigne's *Essays* that he is principally remembered to-day, his *Commentaries of Montluc* approach

more nearly in style and quality to what a translation should be.

In translating Montaigne, Cotton was at a disadvantage, of which he himself was wholly unconscious. He followed in the footsteps of a far greater adept in the difficult art, John Florio. Florio had all the virtues, save accuracy. If his book fails to represent the style of Montaigne, and not infrequently distorts his meaning, it is none the less a piece of living prose. Perhaps, it tells you more of Florio than of Montaigne; but it has that enduring quality, character, and it is unlikely that fashion will ever drive it from the minds of admiring scholars. Cotton's version is of other stuff. Though not always correct, though never close-knit as is the original, it is more easily intelligible than Florio's, and gives, may be, a clearer vision of the French. That, indeed, was Cotton's purpose. 'My design,' says he, 'in attempting this translation was to present my country with a true copy of a very brave original.' Both translators use too many words for their purpose, Florio because he delights in the mere sound of them, Cotton because he had not acquired the gift of concise expression, because he did not always know how to discard the tiresome symbols which encumber his sentences as with pack-thread. Florio, on the one hand, wrote like a fantastic, to whom embroideries were essential, Cotton, on the other, wrote like a country gentleman, who, after a day's fishing, turned an honest penny by the pursuits of scholar-

ship. The one lacks precision, the other distinction, and each man will decide for himself which he prefers.

Charles Cotton, in truth, holds a place apart in the literary history of his time. Though L'Estrange was born to an ancient house in Norfolk, the strife of art and politics, the necessities of his journals had driven him to London and the taverns. Cotton, well as he knew London, remained still faithful to his dale in Derbyshire. In Lamb's phrase, he 'smacked of the rough magnanimity of the old English vein.' It was in all sincerity that he praised his beloved caves,

> 'from Dog-star heats,
> And hotter persecution safe retreats.'

When poverty drove him to do the work of a hack, he did it with what skill and spirit he might. If *The Compleat Gamester* was unworthy his pen, his *Planter's Manual* is a pleasant and practical little treatise. His verses have won the deserved approval of Coleridge and Lamb and Wordsworth, and his lines to his 'dear and most worthy Friend, Mr. Isaac Walton' remind us of Horace and his Sabine farm:

> 'A day without too bright a Beam,
> A warm, but not a scorching Sun.
> A Southern gale to curl the Stream,
> And (master) half our work is done.'

These four lines are worth the whole of *Scarronides*,

and, doubtless, they will be remembered when the translation of Montaigne has faded utterly from the minds of men.

XI

The most industrious and by no means the least distinguished of the translators of his time was Captain John Stevens. Who and what he was we know not. Rumour says that he accompanied James II. in Ireland, and his own attainments suggest a sojourn in Spain. For the rest there is no record of him or his achievements, save on the title-pages of his many books. Without doubt he did a signal service to English letters. It was through his skill and learning that the history of Spain and Spanish literature was made known to his countrymen. His mere energy is astonishing. He translated nothing save the works of Spaniards, and he accommodated his style to the style of his originals with a variety which no other of his contemporaries could match. Where a light and easy manner was required, as by Quevedo, he knew how to give it, and when he brought Mariana's *History of Spain* 'to speak English,' as he said, under the auspices of the Earl of Dorset, to whom it is dedicated, he did it with a dignity and eloquence which befit the Muse of history. The one cause of complaint against him is that he could not keep away from Shelton's *Don Quixote*, which he 'revised and corrected' with a lavish hand. Nor

does his excuse better his ill-doing. He declares in a dedication that Cervantes's 'successful masterpiece has not prov'd happy in its translators, for though it has been made English twice the versions have neither time been proportionable to the Beauty of the Original.' As to Shelton's work, he pronounces it 'almost a literal version,' and then complains that it is 'in such unpolish'd language, and with so many Mistakes, that there seem'd to be nothing left but the outlines and rough Draught of this curious piece.' So Stevens took Shelton's masterpiece and amended it, bringing it, it is true, far nearer to the original, and robbing it of what is far higher worth than accuracy, its style and character.

With this single exception, Stevens touched little that he did not embellish. Though he did not disdain romance, though we owe to his pen *Pablo de Segovia, the Spanish Sharper*, and a collection of novels, with the title *The Spanish Libertines*, his preference, or the preference of his readers, was for history and travel. Sandoval's *History of Charles V.* followed *The Spanish Rule of Trade to the West Indies*, written by Don Joseph de Veitia Linage. He took his share in the English of a series of voyages, published in monthly parts, thus making a link between the old method of publishing and the practice of to-day. So far as we know, he was a translator and an antiquary, and no more. His dedications, couched in the terms of the loftiest flattery, afford us little clue to his career. Perhaps,

as he inscribes his translation of *The Portuguese Asia*, with humble adulation, to Catherine, Queen Dowager of England, he may have professed the Catholic faith. But, by his works we know him, and they tell us that he did the journeywork of translation with a sounder scholarship and with a more various style than any of the men of letters, his contemporaries, could boast.

JONATHAN SWIFT

THE most of writers are freed by death from the enmities and controversies of life. Of Swift alone it may be said that the evil opinion they held of him, who had felt his righteous scourge, was not interred with his bones. Ever since the light of his genius went out in the darkness of misery, he has been attacked, with a violent rancour, by critics who regarded him not as a great historical figure, but as a miscreant who had inflicted upon them a personal injury. These critics clamoured in a loud voice not for judgment, but for vengeance. The passage of a century did not mitigate their animosity nor soften their rage. For Macaulay, Swift was an apostate politician, a ribald priest, a perjured lover, a heart burning with hatred against the whole human race, a mind richly stored with images from the dunghill and the lazar-house. These expletives mean nothing more than that Macaulay was a Whig, and that Swift was a Tory, a kind of antiquated Croker, whose varlet's jacket it was the proper business of an Edinburgh Reviewer to dust. Thackeray's attack upon Swift is far more virulent

and less easily explained than Macaulay's. There is no vileness, of which a Yahoo might be capable, that the author of *Esmond* does not attribute to his foe. Indeed I do not know why the sinister figure, which Thackeray chooses to invent, should have been included in a gallery of English Humorists at all. There is little humour in the ruffian, whose very virtues were, according to Thackeray, vices in disguise, who insulted those whom he succoured, who flung his benefactions in poor men's faces, who was 'boisterously servile,' and who, a 'life-long hypocrite,' put his apostasy out to hire. Of Swift's *Modest Proposal* Thackeray has nothing wiser to say than that 'he enters the nursery with the tread and gaiety of an ogre.' Even *Gulliver*, which, defying time and place, is as fresh to-day as when it was written, and has found a home in every corner of the globe, which is read by children for its fable and by men for its satire, merely arouses the wrath of the critic. 'As for the moral,' says Thackeray, 'I think it horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous; and giant and great as this Dean is, I say we should hoot him.'

Hooting is perhaps not the soundest method of criticism, and yet were Swift all that he has been painted, hooting would seem mild and inefficient. 'If you had been his inferior in parts'—again it is Thackeray who speaks—'his equal in mere social station, he would have bullied, scorned, and insulted you; if, undeterred by his great reputation, you

had met him like a man, he would have quailed before you, and not had the pluck to reply, and gone home, and years after written a foul epigram about you—watched for you in a sewer, and come out to assail you with a coward's blow and a dirty bludgeon.' Of course this amazing invective, which has no touch with reality, is an expression of Victorian prejudice and no more. Thackeray himself does not attempt to justify it, and it is not worth refutation. But it makes us wonder why Swift, alone of men and writers, should be thus singled out for posthumous obloquy, and persuades us to discover if we can what definite charge has been brought against his character and his genius.

He was a misanthrope, says the Friend of Man. And Swift himself gave some colour to this charge. In a famous letter to Pope he explained the system upon which he had governed himself many years. 'I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities,' he says, 'and all my love is towards individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-One, and Judge Such-a-One. . . . But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth.' And which, indeed, is better: to love John, Peter, and Thomas with a constant heart, or, feigning a bland and general love of abstract humanity, to wreak a wild revenge upon individuals? We know well enough whither universal philanthropy leads us. The Friend of Man

is seldom the friend of men. At his best he is content with a moral maxim, and buttons up his pocket in the presence of poverty. '*I*, give thee sixpence! I will see thee damned first.' It is not for nothing that Canning's immortal words were put in the mouth of the Friend of Humanity, who, finding that he cannot turn the Needy Knife-grinder to political account, gives him kicks for ha'pence, and goes off in 'a transport of republican enthusiasm.' Such is the Friend of Man at his best. At his worst, he expresses his philanthropy most eloquently upon the scaffold. Robespierre and the infamous Joseph Le Bon, for instance, loved humanity so dearly that they delighted to see the heads of men and women too fall beneath the knife of the guillotine. Perhaps they thought of Humanity as a tree, which would grow in greater strength and beauty, the more savagely it was pruned.

For this philanthropy, then, Swift cared nothing. He loved such of his friends, as he deemed worthy of his love, with an unchanging loyalty. He did not close his eyes to the general infamy of mankind. He had lived at too close quarters with politics and politicians to harbour the genial, easy-going illusions of the philanthropist. While he knew the true worth of his friends, he admitted that such men as they were rare visitants upon this earth. 'Oh! if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my Travels'—thus he wrote to Pope soon after the publishing of *Gulliver*. But there were not a

dozen Arbuthnots, and the irony of *Gulliver* was abundantly justified.

And then we hear Thackeray objecting that he would not have liked to live with Swift, he would not have been a friend of the great Dean. As he lay in no danger of this awkward companionship, the objection seems irrelevant. But there is no doubt that the best of Swift's contemporaries were very eager to live with him. He was, so to say, a great centre of amiability and friendship. He held together, in pleasant bondage to himself, the most highly distinguished men of his time. Since he did not waste his affection upon the vague thing, called humanity, he had all the more to spare for those friends who loved and understood him. Even when he is as far from them as Dublin is from London, he dominates them by the mere force of his constancy. You feel that they would not have thought so warmly one of another, if they had not united in thinking warmly of him.

Nor did he take a light or trivial view of the bond which he believed should hold good men together. 'I have often endeavoured,' he wrote to Pope, in 1723, 'to establish a friendship among all men of genius, and would fain have it done. They are seldom above three or four contemporaries, and if they could be united would drive the world before them. I think it was so among the poets in the time of Augustus, but envy, party, and pride have hindered it among us.' Swift's was a dream which could

never come true. What could men of genius, held together by an indissoluble bond, achieve against the settled opposition of mediocrity? They could indulge their talent for friendship—that is all. And in this indulgence assuredly Swift never fell below his opportunity. Those friends he had, and their adoption tried, he kept until the last separation of death. They belonged to many worlds, and Swift was the captain of them all. If they were busied with affairs, Swift knew how to separate the man from the politician. 'I always loved you just so much the worse for your station,' he wrote to Harley in the hour of Harley's trial, 'for in your public capacity you have often angered me to the heart, but, as a private man, never once.' His affection for Harley survived all the chances and changes of life, even the bitter feud, which separated St. John from his leader; and the affection was transmitted faithfully to Harley's son.

So too Ormond, Peterborough, and Bathurst delighted in his companionship, without thought of self. But the four friends, whose names will ever be linked with Swift's, are Bolingbroke and Arbuthnot, Pope and Gay. There is nothing in the correspondence, which passed between these great men, that does not do them honour. Transparently sincere himself, Swift schooled even Pope to sincerity. When Swift is in Ireland, they are urgent one and all that he should visit them in London. They disclose their literary plans to him, as to one

who is always ready with counsel and never at fault. And Swift treated them, each after his kind, with the truthfulness of a friend.

Indulgent to Gay's foibles, he addresses him as a father might address a loved and careless son. He would have him save his money, that he might live happily independent of court and patronage. He is anxious always lest Gay should squander his talent unworthily, and be content to repeat himself and his old successes. And yet so nicely did he measure the limits of Gay's fancy, that it was he who suggested the theme of *The Beggar's Opera*. 'What think you of a Newgate pastoral,' wrote Swift to Pope, in his desire to fit Gay with a subject, 'among the thieves and whores there?' And Gay repaid his friend with a joyous devotion, sent him the news of the town, touched lightly as he alone could touch it, persuaded the Duchess of Queensberry to entertain the Dean with letters, and was tireless in transmitting the kindly messages of his friends. Nor did he forget Swift in the very presence of death. 'He asked for you a few hours before,' wrote Pope, and Swift showed his sensibility by endorsing Pope's letter, a sad messenger of woe, with the words: 'On my dear friend Mr. Gay's death; received December 15th, but not read till the 20th, by an impulse foreboding some misfortune.'

It mattered not which of the four Swift addressed. He wrote to him fully and faithfully what was in his mind. Now and again he seems to remember

that Pope is vastly superior to him in the artistry of verse. Of this superiority he makes full confession in the poem on his own death:

> 'In Pope I cannot read a line,
> But with a sigh I wish it mine;
> When he can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six.'

But otherwise his comradeship knows no restraint. Not unnaturally it is with Bolingbroke that he is on terms of closest intimacy. He had shared that great man's secrets from the time of their first acquaintance. Together they had lived through the last troubled years of the Queen's reign. Together they had fallen into disgrace, and had known the misery of exile. And thus retired, both of them, from the competition of life, they were free to discuss philosophy and to defy the Whigs. Whilst Bolingbroke affected a contempt of the world, Swift cried *Vive la Bagatelle*, and hoped to silence the voice of regret.

But, if Bolingbroke was most intimate to his understanding, Arbuthnot was nearest to Swift's heart. Though the two men were of the same temperament, scholars and ironists both, it was for themselves that Swift and Arbuthnot loved one another, not for their intellectual gifts. 'All your honour, generosity, good nature, good sense, wit, and every other praise-worthy quality,' wrote Swift to Arbuthnot in 1714, 'will never make me think

one jot the better of you. That time is now some years past; and you will never mend in my opinion. But really, brother, you have a sort of shuffle in your gait; and now I have said the worst that your most mortal enemy could say of you with truth.' And twelve years later, in complete forgetfulness, I am sure, of Swift's letter, and not in any competition with his characteristic humour, Arbuthnot echoed the compliment. 'I had a great deal of discourse,' said he, 'with your friend, her Royal Highness. She insisted upon your wit and good conversation. I told her Royal Highness, that was not what I valued you for, but for being a sincere honest man, and speaking truth when others were afraid to speak it.'

It has been said by Swift's enemies that he slunk away from his friends, and the truth is that the links of the chain which bound the five together were never weakened. Hear what Bolingbroke wrote to Swift after twenty years of companionship: 'I loved you almost twenty years ago: I thought of you as well as I do now, better was beyond the power of conception, or to avoid an equivoque, beyond the extent of my ideas. . . . While my mind grows daily more independent of the world, and feels less need of leaning on external objects, the ideas of friendship return oftener, they busy me, they warm me more. Is it that we grow more tender as the moment of our great separation approaches? Or is it that they who are to live together in another state, for

vera amicitia non nisi inter bonos, begin to feel that divine sympathy which is to be the great bond of their future society? There is no one thought which soothes my mind like this.' These words breathe the true spirit of loyalty, and assure us that *inter bonos* both Bolingbroke and Swift must be counted. And Arbuthnot too sent from his death-bed a last message to Swift. 'I am afraid, my dear friend,' he wrote, 'we shall never more see each other in this world. I shall, to the last moment preserve my love and esteem for you, being well assured you will never leave the paths of virtue and honour; for all that is in this world is not worth the least deviation from this way.' I do not think that we shall match elsewhere this record of noble friendships, at once gay and sincere. And there are those who condemn the gaiety, and doubt the sincerity. To one distinguished biographer a letter addressed by Bolingbroke to the three Yahoos of Twickenham, Pope, Gay, and Swift, and ending with the benediction, 'Mirth be with you,' suggests nothing happier 'than the mirth of Redgauntlet's companions, when they sat dead (and damned) at their ghastly revelry, and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made the daring piper's "very nails turn blue."'[1]

Swift was not content merely to write letters to his friends. He looked upon practical benevo-

[1] It is true that this letter was written during Stella's illness. But Bolingbroke knew nothing of this illness, and Swift was not one of those who unpack their sorrowful hearts to their friends.

lence as the first duty of friendship. If he could not command the preferment he wished for himself, he could at least help to ensure the preferment of others. The list of those whom he aided in the hour of his influence is long and various. As Mr. Lecky says, 'there is scarcely a man of genius of the age who was not indebted to him.' When service might be rendered, he forgot himself and the claims of party. He collected a thousand guineas for Pope's *Iliad*. Steele and Rowe and Parnell all owed places to his amiable pressure. He commended Congreve to Harley, and was able to write in a letter to Stella: 'So I have made a worthy man happy, and that is a good day's work.'

And no better example of Swift's kindliness can be found than his treatment of young William Harrison, a little pretty fellow and a Whig, who had come from the University of Oxford a year or two before Swift encountered him. Now young Harrison had more ambition than talent, more hopefulness than industry. He was witty and pleasant in company, and 'the fine fellows,' said Swift, 'invited him to the tavern, and asked him to pay his shot.' Such as he was Swift was resolved to make his fortune. He set him up in a new *Tatler*, when Steele's came to an end. He busied himself about printers and proofs. He suggested articles or wrote them. He persuaded Congreve to help the young editor, and Congreve, generous as Swift, wrote a paper for him, in spite of his blindness. Nothing was left undone

that might ensure the success of the venture. One night Swift confides in Stella that he is 'tired with correcting Harrison's trash,' and that he is afraid that the little toad has not the vein for it. Indeed he had not, and no sooner was Swift convinced of his inaptitude than he began to seek other employment for him. Already he had made him known to St. John and Harley, and through their influence obtained for him a secretary's post at the Hague; but young Harrison, doomed to misfortune, came back from Holland only to die. Swift, tireless in help until the end, has sketched the last scene in a letter to Stella. 'I took Parnell this morning,' he wrote, 'and we walked to see poor Harrison. I had the hundred pounds in my pocket. I told Parnell I was afraid to knock at the door; my mind misgave me. I knocked, and his man told me his master was dead an hour before.'

And when Swift went an exile into Ireland, he extended his literary patronage to all the sad poets and faded blue-stockings of Dublin. He corrected their poor copies of verses, he pretended to discover genius, where not a spark was shining, and he sent them off to London, with letters in their pocket to Pope and Bolingbroke and Gay. Their reception at Twickenham was not always gracious, and oftentimes the Yahoos by the Thames expostulated justly with the Dean. But Swift, commonly the sternest of judges, softened his criticism for the incompetent, and if he were pitiless to the pretentious impostor,

he had ever a word of over-kind sympathy for the modest aspirant.

Thus the charge that Swift was a misanthrope, if we interpret the term rightly, has, I think, no support in fact. The other charge of cynicism, which has oftentimes been brought against him, is equally insecure. Now the cynic may be defined as one who looks upon life and morals with an indifferent curiosity, whose levity persuades him to smile upon the vices of others, and to let them go to destruction each his own way. Of this kind of cynicism Swift was wholly innocent. He may be absolved also of that cynicism, which the dictionary defines as 'captious fault-finding.' The heart that was torn by *sæva indignatio*, to use a phrase from the epitaph he composed for himself, was no cynic's heart. The truth is that he was a born idealist, with no desire either to snarl or to smile at life. The master-passion of his mind was anger against injustice and oppression. To the articles of his own faith he was always loyal. The profitable changes of the renegade were as far beyond his reach as the wiles of the time-server. That he thought himself ill-used by the world, that he knew his preferment was incommensurate with his worth and talent, is evident. But he would rather have spoken out what was in his mind than have won the mitre of an archbishop.

Throughout a long career he wrote nothing that did not clamour for expression, and no consideration of prudence ever hindered him from doing what he

believed his duty. I will choose one incident out of many to illustrate his honesty. The Duke of Schomberg was killed at the battle of the Boyne, and was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral. When Swift was appointed Dean, no stone marked the soldier's resting-place, and Swift, to whom nothing was indifferent which touched the beauty and dignity of the church committed to his charge, demanded of Schomberg's heirs, by letters and by the intervention of friends, that they should put up a suitable monument. The demand was made in vain, and Swift punished the neglect and discourtesy by erecting a monument himself, and by commemorating in a lapidary inscription the careless ingratitude of Schomberg's descendants. Had Swift wished to stand well with the Court, he would not thus have risked its good opinion. George II. declared in a fury that Dr. Swift's design was to make him quarrel with the King of Prussia, and henceforth regarded the Dean of St. Patrick's with a still acuter suspicion. But Swift had done what he thought right, and made to Lord Bathurst a characteristic and ironical comment upon his own action. 'Thus I endeavour,' said he, 'to do justice to my station, and give no offence.'

It was in his Irish policy that Swift proved most clearly the pure and lofty idealism that burned within him. In defending the Irish from oppression he was not swayed by the motives of patriotism; he did not yield even to a personal prejudice. He

was not an Irishman. No drop of Irish blood flowed in his veins. As he said himself, he was born in Ireland by a mere accident, and he bitterly resented the superstition that the children of a man, living in Ireland, are all Irish, 'while a thief transported to Jamaica, and married to a battered Drury Lane hackney jade, should produce true Britons.' Nor did he love Ireland. He knew himself condemned to die there, as he said, 'like a poisoned rat in a hole,' and gladly would he have found an excuse to live out his life among his friends in England. But he hated injustice and dishonour, wherever he saw them, and so he became as wise and valiant a champion of Ireland as that unhappy country ever found.

With characteristic frankness he disclaimed the name of patriot. 'I do profess without affectation,' he wrote to Pope, 'that your kind opinion of me as a patriot, since you will call it so, is what I do not deserve; because what I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and baseness about me, among which I am forced to live.' He was furiously enraged against the Irish for not making the best of their resources, against the English for the unjust restrictions which they put upon Irish industries. It irked him that all the profitable offices in the country should be held by those to whom reversions had been granted, that the notorious Bubb Dodington, for instance, should be Clerk of the Pells, at a salary of £2500 a year. And when once he had been convinced of

the prevailing injustice, he put all the eloquence of his scorn at the service of Ireland. First came his proposal for the universal use of Irish manufactures, utterly rejecting and renouncing everything wearable that was made in England. He was in favour of total exclusion. 'I should rejoice to see an English stay-lace thought scandalous,' he said, 'and become a topic for censure at visits and tea-tables.' He applied the fable of Pallas and Arachne to England and Ireland, and thought England harsher than the goddess. He spoke in vain to a people, indifferent to prosperity, a people which would rather have kept in the fashion, by wearing foreign stuffs and silks, than have ensured the success of Irish manufactures.

Since he held ever in scorn the indifference of Ireland, the patent granted to William Wood, a gentleman eminent in the hardware trade, to impose a new copper coinage upon Ireland, stirred his savage indignation to its depths. That there was a great lack of pence and ha'pence in Ireland is certain. The want was not supplied most economically by promising comfortable bribes to many personages about the Court, and by making the egregious Wood a present of £3000 a year for eight years. In all these transactions the need and benefit of Ireland were forgotten, and Swift made it his business to paint in the darkest colours what he deemed an injustice done to a whole country. *The Drapier's Letters*, which were sold by the Flying

Stationers for twopence in the streets of Dublin, had their due effect. They forced the Government to withdraw Wood's ha'pence, and they set Swift, who, in Pope's phrase, had unbound 'Ireland's copper chains,' upon the topmost pinnacle of glory.

Henceforth he was the idol of the Irish people. Once when he returned from London to Dublin, bonfires were lit in his honour, and peals of bells rang out their welcome. In vain did Walpole and the Whigs clamour for his arrest. They were asked if they had 10,000 men to spare, for assuredly the Dean could not be taken with less. The utmost that Swift's enemies dared to do was to throw the printer into jail, though the secret of authorship was so ill kept that the whole of Dublin knew that it was Swift's hand and none other that had written *The Drapier's Letters*. A verse which was sent broadcast over the town, and which was at once a confession and a threat, made all doubt impossible: 'And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.'

And the same eyes of idealism, with which he looked on Ireland, Swift turned upon the larger world of morals in *Gulliver's Travels*. The sentimentalists have condemned the conclusions of this celebrated satire as hateful and blasphemous, and it

is not easy to follow their argument. If they pretend that it is the purpose of the famous fourth voyage to preach the superiority of all horses to all men, they have singularly misread the fable. Nor is Swift, when he makes the King of Brobdingnag a scourge, wherewith to beat the politicians and plotters of his own land, passing a universal sentence upon the human race. Gulliver himself is not represented as the only man who has escaped the vices of his country. And the King makes no more than a general comment upon the intrigues of politicians, when he says that, by the answers he has 'wringed and extorted' from Gulliver, he cannot but conclude 'the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin, that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.' What more do we find here than a picturesque interpretation of Walpole and his government?

It is plain, moreover, that Swift puts in the mouth of the Brobdingnagian King his own hopes and opinions. By a stroke of irony, he confesses that the learning most highly prized by the giants, being wholly applied to the improvement of agriculture and the mechanical arts, would be as little esteemed among us, as the ideas, entities, abstractions, and transcendentals, which we ourselves prized, would be esteemed among them. It is plain also that Swift accepts as his own the generous creed of the King of Brobdingnag, 'that whoever could make

two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.' Two hundred years after Swift we have rediscovered the truth of this simple doctrine, and nothing but a vain superstition of party can dismiss the moral of Gulliver as shameful, horrible, blasphemous.

Why, then, should Swift have been thus monstrously misunderstood? Why should he still be pursued after death, by a kind of personal venom? I think for the very reason that he was no cynic. He could not regard leniently the folly of those about him. He did not write for his own pleasure, or to put money in his pocket. He wrote in scorn of stupidity, or with a fixed desire to reform abuses. He does not temper the wind of his wrath to his shorn victims. He does not bring an easy message of perfectibility to a sanguine world. He is even cruel in his denunciations of abuses, and those who regard literature as an anodyne do not like cruelty. But let it be remembered that Swift's cruelty was always justified.

Secondly, Swift was a great master of irony—the greatest that ever was born in these isles. Great enough to teach a lesson to Voltaire himself, and to inspire the author of *Jonathan Wild*. And irony does not make for popularity. The plain man likes a plain statement, and resents it, if his idle brain

be confused. Swift was frankly conscious of his gift:

> 'Arbuthnot is no more my friend,
> Who dares to irony pretend,
> Which I was born to introduce,
> Refin'd it first, and shew'd its use.'

Thus he wrote with perfect truth. He was born to introduce irony, and he did not succeed in making it understood. Now irony has been described as the boomerang of literature, and assuredly it comes back upon the head of the hero who dares to wield it. Though we all know what it is when we see it, a definition is not easy. The wise author of *The Courtier* thus describes it: 'There is in like manner an honest and comely kind of jesting that consisteth in a certain dissimulation, when a man speaketh one thing and privily meaneth another. I speak not of the manner that is clean contrary, as if one should call a dwarf a giant, and a black man white, or one most ill-favoured beautiful, because they be open contraries. But when with a grave and dry speech and in sporting a man speaketh pleasantly that he hath not in his mind.'

Such a dissimulation, indeed, covers all the kinds of irony—the Sophoclean irony, in accord with which a secret, known to the audience, eludes the personages on the Stage; the Socratic irony, which is no more than a pretended lack of knowledge; and the irony of Swift, in which the word and the spirit are opposed to the sense, and in which a heightened effect is produced by overstating the other side of

the case. There is no artifice of literature more instantly effective for those who appreciate it. There is none more fertile in misunderstanding. In England especially it is used at the writer's peril. That wonderful masterpiece, *Jonathan Wild*, is still condemned as an affront upon sound morality. George Meredith was asked to wait twenty years for readers, because he could not resist an ironic presentation. And it is Swift who has suffered most bitterly for the irony which was in his blood. All the sins and vices which he castigated have been visited by the unwary upon his innocent head. When he wrote in *Mr. Collins's Discourse*, that 'the Clergy who are so impudent to teach the people the doctrines of faith, are all either cunning knaves or mad fools,' his enemies cried out upon him for an atheist. When in a second tract he declared that another 'advantage proposed by the abolishing of Christianity, is the clear gain of one day in seven, which is now entirely lost, and consequently the kingdom one-seventh less considerable in trade, business and pleasure,' he was denounced as a blasphemous hypocrite, who had gone into the Church with the base hope of gain. When, with his heart full of rage at the misery of Dublin, he wrote his *Modest Proposal*, he was charged with an unnatural hankering after human flesh. This obstinate refusal to understand the meaning and purpose of irony has turned *A Tale of a Tub*, that amazing riot of wit and satire, into a work of dangerous example. And Swift could no more avoid irony than Rabelais could avoid ridi-

cule. It was an integral part of his temper and his genius. Thus and thus only could he express the truth that was in him, and so fine an instrument did irony become in his skilful hands, that none has ever used it since with a like mastery and to the same effect.

It has been the custom to compare Swift with Rabelais. We all remember Pope's amiable criticism :

> 'Whether he choose Cervantes' serious air,
> Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair,
> Or praise the court or magnify mankind,
> Or his grieved country's copper chains unbind.'

The comparison is more kindly than just. Swift was not an English Rabelais. He rarely laughed; he never shook in an easy chair. He was as remote from the rollicking humour of Rabelais as he was from the light-fingered cynicism of Voltaire, who by the way was too much a Frenchman of the eighteenth century thoroughly to appreciate his brother in irony. Rabelais lived laughing, and died laughing, and when he laughed the laughter of scorn, he would still be merry. Even Coleridge's witty phrase for Swift, 'the soul of Rabelais, *habitans in sicco*,' is less luminous than it seems. For, as I have said, the master-passion of Swift is anger against injustice and oppression. As he seldom laughs, so he is seldom the cause of laughter in others. Rather he is one who, having no illusions himself, would strip away the illusions which mask the faces of men.

You marvel at the genius of *A Tale of a Tub*; you do not laugh at it.

Moreover, there is a certain dryness in Swift's style, in the perfection of his work, in the essential justice of his opinions, a dryness in which the soul of Rabelais could never dwell. The humour of Rabelais is wide and spacious as the universe; the wit of Swift is confined within the bounds of precision, and has no margin over. When in *Gulliver* he increases or diminishes the scale of life, that he may represent the small follies of his countrymen or picture their grosser, larger vices, he does it with a sort of mathematical accuracy which is wholly alien to the careless genius of Rabelais. In brief, the Frenchman and the Englishman fulfilled themselves, each in keeping with his own temper. They stand upon equal pinnacles of fame, and no good can come of their inapposite comparison.

The mathematical accuracy, with which in *Gulliver* Swift takes the measure of mankind, is allied to another faculty, which he shares with none other except Defoe. And that is the faculty of authentic and plausible narrative. By a hundred small touches, accurately designed, he renders the story of *Gulliver's Travels* credible to its readers. Neither the dwarfs nor the giants make too great a demand upon our faith. And thus Swift achieves, in the face of far greater difficulties, the difficulties of the supernatural, the same sort of triumph or reality which Defoe achieved in *Robinson Crusoe*. No sooner were

the *Travels* published than they were discussed gravely as a record of actual happenings. An Irish bishop, taking the view that was expected of him, said that the book was full of improbable lies, and that for his part he hardly believed a word of it. And Arbuthnot sent to Swift the best news of his *Travels*. He prophesied truly for the book as great a run as *John Bunyan*, and he gave gratifying examples of its literal acceptance. 'Lord Scarborough,' he wrote, 'who is no inventor of stories, told me that he fell in company with a master of a ship, who told him that he was very well acquainted with Gulliver, but that the printer had been mistaken, that he lived in Wapping, not in Rotherhithe. I lent the book to an old gentleman who went immediately to his map to search for Lilliput.' The simplicity of the Irish bishop, the master of the ship, and the old gentleman, proved to Swift that he had not failed in the art of verisimilitude, and explains for us why *Gulliver* after two centuries is still the delight of children.

Swift's highest gift of all was his gift of prose. It is this gift which has kept alive and fresh his political controversy, the kind of writing which is soonest withered by the blight of time. It is this gift which has ensured a lasting interest for every line which the Dean of St. Patrick's touched with his pen. He could write well about a broomstick, it was said with perfect truth; and assuredly he never wrote ill about anything. We care nothing to-day

about Wood's ha'pence or the restrictions put upon Irish manufactures, except that they gave an excuse for the solid eloquence of Swift. What then was the secret of his style? He has defined it himself: 'Proper words in proper places,' he tells a young clergyman, 'make the true definition of style.' He warns his fellows solemnly against the frequency of flat superfluous epithets, and the folly of using old threadbare phrases. He cited it as an eminent virtue in the Brobdingnagians that they avoided nothing more than multiplying unnecessary words, or using various expressions. And Dr. Johnson, in his own despite, has most clearly defined the virtue of Swift's simplicity. Now, Dr. Johnson did not like Swift, and a passage in Boswell's *Life*, dispraising *The Conduct of the Allies*, is an excellent comment upon the styles of the two great writers. Thus runs the passage: '*Johnson.*—"Sir, his *Conduct of the Allies* is a performance of very little ability." "Surely, Sir," said Dr. Douglas, "you must allow it has strong facts." *Johnson.*—"Why yes, Sir, but what is that to the merit of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts. Housebreaking is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact; but is great praise due to the historian of these strong facts? No, Sir, Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right. . . . Why, Sir, Tom Davies might have written *The Conduct of the Allies*." '

Of course Johnson knew better than any other that Tom Davies could not have written *The Conduct of the Allies*. Indeed, had Tom Davies written it, no passion of its readers could have supplied its efficacy. But Johnson was convinced that the 'wonder-working pamphlet' operated 'by the mere weight of facts, with very little assistance from the hand that produced them.' It is a strange opinion held dialectically and perhaps perversely. The strength of facts and the strength of their expression have little enough to do with one another. In flaccid hands that 'mighty strong fact,' murder, might appear like a simple story for the tea-table. And Johnson, in pretending that Swift's effects depended less upon himself than upon his matter, was, I think, contrasting Swift's style with his own. Johnson sought in a sentence a balance and an arrangement, which all eyes might see, which all ears might hear. He was unhappy if there was not, here and there, a polysyllable to hold the lesser words in subjection. And thus he fashioned for himself that highly elaborated instrument, with which he hammered his thought into others. In the writings of Swift, no doubt, he missed the balance and the arrangement which were for him synonymous with style. And, for the sake of argument, he was ready to assert that Tom Davies might have written *The Conduct of the Allies*.

Johnson, in thus criticising Swift, reveals what was the aim of his own style, and by its opposite

enlightens us about Swift's. The truth is that Swift's method of writing was at once more subtle and more just, if less nobly decorated, than Johnson's. That is to say, he was all for structure and not for ornament. Logic of thought, economy of phrase — these are the guiding principles of his prose. It is his great merit to have given a new force to the common forms of speech, to have set his words in so precise an order that the stress always falls where the sense demands it. His prose is not sonorous, save in pages; it is frequently inaccurate, as any pedant may see for himself. He depends not at all for his effect upon a curious vocabulary. He is as remote from the flamboyancy of his Elizabethan ancestors as from the prim elegance of Addison. His style is inevitably clear, direct and appropriate. There is, so to say, the briefest interval between his thought and its expression; and since his thought was commonly wit, it follows that the expression was witty also. Within the limits which he imposed on himself he could do what he liked with words. With greater ease than other men have attained he bent the stubborn English sentence to his will. He forged of English prose an instrument, which was apt for every enterprise: narrative and controversy were treated by him with equal happiness. The same hand, which lashed the follies and injustices of men, enlivened the loyal solitude of Stella with the incomparable journal. The same hand, which in the *Genteel Conversation* gave us a perfect exposi-

tion of the commonplace, and invented a set of personages not one of which might boast a shred of character, penned also the savage satire of the *Directions to Servants*. Any one of these achievements is sufficient for an enduring fame, and with their sum Swift shall defy death, so long as English prose is read and understood.

In conclusion: Jonathan Swift may be viewed from many points, and in many aspects. There are still those, who, with something of the eavesdropper's impertinence, would pierce the mystery of his loves. Others there are who would dwell willingly upon the tragic years in which he died slowly, like a tree from the top, and which seem to belong less to history than to medical science. But for those who care for humane letters the supreme interest and merit of Swift will always lie in the assured mastery wherewith he illustrates, as very few have ever illustrated them, the greatness and simplicity of our English tongue.

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