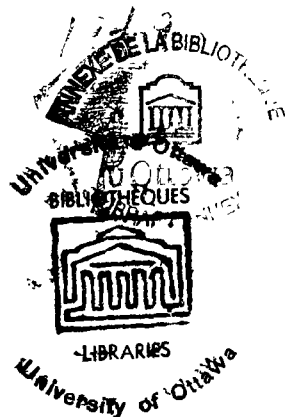


THE QUEST

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS
PORTRAYED IN
POETRY

MA



Sister Mary Lenore

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CHAPTER ONE

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THY WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET

.....

Over a weary world steeped in darkness - a darkness deeper than that of the physical universe - a star of wondrous brilliancy shone forth while the heavens rang with the echoes of angelic song. "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy", spoke the angel to the terrified shepherds, and with the tidings of the birth of Christ, hope was born anew in the hearts of men. Divinity was united with humanity, and man realized the value of his immortal soul.

From Asia the light of Christianity spread over Europe, dispelling the dark night of paganism. With the dawn of reason, children were taught the meaning of life. They learned that the purpose of their creation was to know, love, and serve God, and to be happy with Him for all eternity. Surefooted in the light of a strong and glowing faith, these children of God went about the fulfilment of their destiny, knowing that there, and there alone, true happiness was to be found. The fleeting joys of life could not hold their souls captive, nor could pain, sorrow or loss rob them of that deep inner joy of spirit which looks

to eternity to restore all losses and to dry all tears. Poets and philosophers alike proclaimed the fact that happiness and holiness cannot be separated - that linked together are those things which possess the highest values of which man can conceive: morality, duty, happiness, holiness, God. God was the centre of all. These children of light knew that in Him "we live and move and have our being". (1)

This security, this peace of soul, this child-like trust and confidence in the goodness of God and in the protection and friendship of our Blessed Mother and the saints is reflected in the art of the Catholic world. Catholicism it was which inspired poets, painters, and architects to produce those wonders which still amaze the world by their perfection. Magnificent cathedrals reared their lofty towers heavenwards; masterpieces of painting almost invariably dealt with sacred themes; poetry sang the praises of God, the wonders of the Mass and the Sacraments, the beauty and grace of Mary, the Mother of God.

The gloom and sadness of Anglo-Saxon pagan poetry gave place to the joy of the early Christian poetry of

(1) Acts of the Apostles - St. Paul's Discourse to the Athenians, Chapter XVII - 28.

England. Christ and his Saints became the heroes instead of Odin and Thor. Religion, which so profoundly affected the minds of the people that it was to them as the air they breathed, naturally found expression in literature. For two centuries the great bulk of Anglo-Saxon poetry was religious in nature. Even when it was not religious in subject, it reflected in some measure the high ideals of the time. Over and over again is expressed the desire for eternal happiness "higher than that of the mead-hall or spear play." (1)

Thus Caedmon, the first known English poet, was inspired to sing verses to the glory of his Creator. He sang likewise of the "all of the Angels, of our First Parents, and of the joys of Heaven.

Cynewulf, too, has left us a legacy of poems which breathe the spirit of Catholicism. Traces of personal confession in his poems lead us to believe that he was at one time a wandering singer or poet leading a gay and worldly life, until, converted by a vision of the Holy Cross, he changed his life and chose nobler themes for his songs. In his poem Christ he sings of the Birth,

(1) English Literature;
Brother Leo.

the Ascension, and the second coming of Our Saviour
in the last Judgment. Intense religious feeling
is evident throughout this poem. In its final passage
is described the heavenly home where the poet hopes
to find perfect happiness in union with his God.

Rest for righteous doers, rest withouten
strife,

For the good and blessed. Without gloom
the day,

Bright and full of blossoming; bliss that's
sorrowless,

Peace all friends between ever without enmity;
Love that envieth not in the union of the
saints

For the happy ones of Heaven! Hunger is not
there nor thirst,

Sleep nor heavy sickness, nor the scorching of
the sun,

Neither cold nor care, but the happy company
Sheenest of all hosts shall enjoy for aye
Grace of God their King, Glory with their Lord. (i)

In the Dream of the Rood, Cynewulf tells of

(i) English Literature Through the Ages;
Cruse

his vision in which the Holy Cross appears to him and tells him of its life from the day it was cut down until the day it bore "the young Hero, brave and strong", and trembled as it received the kiss of God in Man. Now the cross reveals itself as the beacon-light to all men and the cure of all their ills, while to the poet it brings comfort and happiness.

After the Norman Conquest the songs of the poets were silenced for over a hundred years. When once more their voices were heard, we find again the same expression of intense religious fervour, and we see the same true sense of values. Thomas of Hales, in the Luce Ron, tells of the transitory character of earthly joys and the passing away of worldly fame.

Where is Paris and Helen
That were so bright and fair of face,
Amadis, Tristram and Dido,
Isoud and all they,
Hector with his sharp strength,
And Caesar rich of world's wealth,
They both glided out of the realms,
As the shaft is off the cliff. (1)

It is difficult for us, who live in an age of conflicting religious beliefs, to understand how deeply the light of the Catholic faith penetrated the minds of the people of Mediaeval England. In those unhurried times, so far removed from the neurotic haste of to-day, men had leisure for contemplation, so that the seed of God planted in their hearts, vivified by the light of faith and the dew of grace, blossomed forth into an abundant harvest. Typical of this period of intense religious feeling is the work of the hermit Richard Rolle of Hampole, born about 1290. Some of his prose work is so exalted in feeling and so rhythmic in expression that it could claim the title of poetry. In his Nominis Jesu Encomion he describes his soul's search for happiness:

I gede abowte hy covatyse of reches
and I fande noghte Jhesu. I rane be
the wantonnes of flesche and I fande noghte
Jhesu. I satt in companyes of worldly
myrthe and I fande noghte Jhesu....There-
fore I turnede by anothir waye, and I ran
abowte be poverte, and I fande Jhesu,

pure borne in the worlde, laid in a
crybe and lappid in clathis." (1)

In the poem Pricke of Conscience, generally attributed to the same author, we find a series of meditations on death, heaven, purgatory, hell, and on the fleeting character of life.

Most beautiful of the poems of this period is the delightful Pearl, written by some unknown poet of the fourteenth century. The author has lost his "pearl of great price". Most critics agree that this lost pearl is his young daughter who died at a very early age. "I lost it - in an harbour - alas! it passed from me from grass to earth", he laments. The lonely father mourned long for his lost treasure. One day, overcome with grief, he sank into a dream in which he was transported to a glorious realm. Across a stream in this marvellous land he sees his daughter, "so smooth, so small, so sweetly slight", adorned with pearls and wearing upon her bosom a pearl of wondrous beauty. "Thy pearl is not lost", she assures him, "but in this joyful garden, free from sin and sorrow, is safely

(1) A History of English Literature;
Legouis and Cazamian.

treasured. " (1) When he attempts to cross the stream to reach her, she warns him that he can enter this land only through the gates of death. For his consolation she shows him a vision of this New Jerusalem where she lives in bliss as the Spouse of Christ, and where, she assures him, endless happiness awaits him after the troubles of life. The father awakens comforted and resigned to the Will of God. Later trials which beset his path, poverty, distress, the loss of friends - are powerless to dim the light of his faith and rob him of his happiness.

Langland, a dreamer by nature, was puzzled by the hardness and cruelty of the life of the "poor folk in cots" in contrast with the luxurious and easy life of the wealthy. Why, he asks, should the poor man " swynke and sweat and sow for both? " (1) Somewhere truth and righteousness must dwell, and he determined to seek them. Falling asleep one May morning on the Malvern hills, he sees in vision the world as a "faire Felde" which was "ful of folke":

Of al manner of men, the mean and the rich,
Working and wandering as the world asketh,

(1) English Literature Through the ages-
Cruse

Some put to the plow, full seldom

they play,

In setting and in sowing labour too hard

And win that which wasters with gluttony

destroy. (1) .

Lady Holychurch appears to him, complaining that the people are busy only with things of the world, giving no thought to their eternal happiness. Man, she says, must seek Truth. Reason preaches to the people moving them to repentance, whereupon they determine to set out in search of the sanctuary of Truth, but none of them knows the way. Finally a ploughman, Piers, steps forward and offers to guide them to Truth, whom he has served for fifty years.

In this lengthy poem, Langland expresses his high ideals of what life should be. Having begged of Holy Church to help him to save his soul and thus procure his eternal happiness, he receives a three-fold answer: Do Well, Do Better, and Do Best. Edward Hutton in Catholicism and English Literature points out that this is the same answer which Christ Himself gave; Keep the Commandments - Do Well; Sell what you

(1) English Literature Through the Ages;
Cruse.

have and give to the poor - Do Better; Come, follow Me - Do Best. These are allegories of the Active Life, the Contemplative Life, and the Mystical Life - the union of the soul with God. The poet tells us that as a young man he abandoned his search for Do Well, but in later life he repented, returned to the search and to humble obedience to Holy Church, and finally succeeded in his pilgrimage to Do Better and Do Best. The poem shows deep religious feeling, and bitterly denounces such vices as Sloth and Avarice. The poor, Langland believes, are nearer to Christ than are others because they are less burdened with those vices which bring separation from Him.

The Christian philosophy of life is evident also in the writing of Geoffrey Chaucer, whose work represents the real flowering of the rich Catholic culture of England in the Middle Ages. In his House of Fame he reveals to us reflections born of deep thought and rich experience. Carried through the air by an eagle, he is brought to the House of Fame, and looking down from this vantage point upon "the little threshing floor" of the earth he sees human

affairs in their right perspective. From this experience he is convinced that reputation is but an empty bubble, and earthly fame but fleeting vanity.

In Good Counsel Chaucer points out the road to happiness:

Flee from the prees, and dwelle with
sothfastnesse,

Suffyce unto thy good, Though hit be small;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal;
Savour no more than thee bihove shal;
Werk wel thy-self, that other fôlk canst rede;
And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede.

.....

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse,
The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
Her nis no hoom, her nis but wildernessee:
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste out
of thy stal!

Know thy cntree, look up, thank God of al;
Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost thee lede:
And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede. (1)

The Canterbury Tales are among the greatest poetry in the world. The very setting - a pilgrimage

(1) English Verse; The World's Classics;
Peacock; Vol.I.

to the shrine of a saint- belongs only to Catholic civilization, and shows the firm hold which their faith had upon the people of "merrie" England of this time. Their religion was to them a source of comfort in trial, provided them with a means of expressing their innermost longings, united them with their own loved departed ones, and assured them of the interest and protection of that glorious army of saints of the Catholic Church. In the Canterbury Tales we see a group of people, gathered from the various walks of life, setting out on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. The portraits of the various pilgrims are drawn with kindly humour, for there was nothing morose in Chaucer's piety. Indeed he has been censored for a lack of religious feeling by later writers because of the absence of gloomy pessimism which they associate with religion. Chaucer's world is distinguished by its happiness. True, there is pain and perplexity, but never rebellion and despair. Fortune is fickle, but the world is still a pleasant place. Chaucer's note was one of joy - joy soon to be torn from English literature

by the Reformation.

Paving the way for the Reformation was the movement known as the Renaissance. The term rebirth is not accurate because the study of Greek and Roman Literature had been carried on all through the Catholic Middle Ages; it was to the monks that the people were indebted for the preservation of this culture. In this new enthusiasm which swept over Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, the humanist scholars, particularly of Italy, not only steeped themselves in the literature of Greece and Rome, but began also to admire the pagan manner of living and to adopt pagan ideals of conduct. In this pagan ideal the individual human being became the centre of all considerations. The Catholic Church has always recognized the dignity and the importance of the individual, but Renaissance writers stressed the importance of the natural man without considering his greatest dignity and happiness, which are to be found in his relations with the Divinity. In England the two Renaissance scholars, Thomas More and John Fisher, might have produced a

more balanced interest in the classics had they not been beheaded by Henry VIII.

These canonized saints of the Catholic Church died because they would not recognize Henry VIII as head of the Church in England. In truth, England was then going through a time that tried men's souls. In the spread of Protestant teaching, Catholic humanists saw the ruin of all the things they held most dear and precious. the things that brought happiness and joy to their lives. The wells of truth were poisoned; Catholic unity was destroyed; Church and nation were torn by the debates of fanatics. Distress, doubt, uncertainty darkened the minds of the people. No longer did they walk surefooted in the bright radiance of faith. Ignorance of the doctrines of the Church, perplexity of mind, timidity which shrank from bodily torture, all these factors contributed to the renunciation of old loyalties. No longer would groups of pilgrims meet to pay homage at the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket, for to honour a saint was now superstition, and the shrine at Canterbury had been destroyed. The old stories of saints were derided.

Monasteries had been despoiled, and violence put an end to the quiet and calm of religious contemplation.

The Catholic Middle Ages did not represent a paradise upon earth. The voice of woe was heard, but the all-embracing love of God comforted those who mourned and taught them the blessedness of pain. There was ample room for joy, cheerfulness, and wholesome self-expression in the moral life of the people. It is true, not all lived virtuous lives; some were proud, covetous, impure, but all knew that "the robes of their destiny were about them". As George N. Shuster points out in Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature, the people of the Middle Ages created one mighty and unforgettable monument to happiness - laughter. The holy mirth of Christian Europe broke forth spontaneously from the lips of the multitude. With the coming of the Reformation, however, that laughter was silenced. Peace and unity gave way to a fanatical hatred of all things Catholic.

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CHAPTER TWO

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ADVENTURE AND PATRIOTISM

.....

The thunder clouds of the Reformation darkened the paths of life, and in the dim light the vision of eternal blessedness was obscured. As the brightness of faith was dimmed in the hearts of men, the temporal quickly gained ascendancy over the eternal. Ambition was fired by tales of discovery - stories of a vast continent of fabulous wealth. English seamen were heralded and feted for their adventures on the high seas - deeds, in fact, of theft and murder. The invention of printing facilitated the circulation of strange tales which captivated the imagination. The Great Adventure was neglected in the interest of worldly adventure.

Among those fired with an insatiable desire for the adventures of life are numbered that extraordinary group of writers known as the University Wits. Drifting to London from the Universities, they had but one desire - to drink life to its dregs. They were willing to sacrifice position, hopes of

advancement, everything, in their desire to taste, to feel, to enter into every experience which life could offer. Forced by poverty to settle in the poorer districts of London, they spent their time in revelry, rioting and feasting until what money they had was gone; then they starved until the sale of a story, pamphlet, or poem brought them another opportunity to satisfy their passion for adventure. Of this group, among whom were to be found George Peele, Thomas Nash, Thomas Kyd, and Robert Greene, the most daring, the most reckless, and also the greatest genius was Christopher Marlowe.

In his poetic dramas Faustus, Tamburlaine, and The Jew of Malta, Marlowe depicts the Renaissance conception of a hero. This hero is not one of high estate who fails because of some flaw in his own character, but one who rises to a high position through his own will and ambition, only to fall because fate or the forces of nature are too strong for him. Marlowe's ideal was the individual who could rise above all conventions - above all morality, in other words - in seeking the utmost satisfaction

of all his desires. Marlowe prided himself on his paganism, and cut himself off from all restraint. He chose his heroes as the spokesmen of his ideas. For this purpose, no better choice could he have made than Tamburlaine, that fourteenth century Tartar who from a lowly shepherd slashed his way to world conquest. Far from making of him a creature of horror and contempt, Marlowe glorifies his atrocities, even though they included the slaying of a hundred thousand captives before the walls of Delhi, and the setting up before Bagdad an obelisk of ninety thousand severed heads. (1) To Marlowe, this inhuman creature was a superman, a demi-god, above the exactions of morality, as he massacred women and children, forced defeated kings to pull his chariot, and carried with him an enormous cage in which a conquered emperor was kept like a wild beast. The author exalts the atrocities of this despiser of men and gods in startling scenes, such as the one in which Tamburlaine comes upon the stage, whip in hand, driving a team of kings before his chariot, and crying:

Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia!

(1) A History of English Literature;
Legouis and Cazamian.

What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day? (1)
 Such was Marlowe's ideal - the man who, unhampered
 by morality, seeks the maximum of strength and enjoy-
 ment by sensuality, impiety, and crime.

Marlowe's play The Jew of Malta again portrays
 the lust of power, but now it is the power bestowed
 by great riches. For a time the author identifies
 himself with the Jew Barabas, who rules the world
 by the power of gold, and who avenges himself on the
 world by an extraordinary series of crimes.

Still more is Marlowe's character projected into
 the character of Doctor Faustus, who sells his soul
 to the devil for the possession of sovereign knowledge
 and sovereign power, and who for twenty years is able
 to fully satisfy his every wish. This was a subject
 most congenial to the restless, insatiable curiosity
 of the poet-dramatist. Faustus had become a learned
 doctor, but this cannot satisfy his desire for knowledge
 and power. Of him we are told:

That shortly he was graced with doctor's name,
 Excelling all whose sweet delights disputes
 In heavenly matters of theology;

(1) A History of English Literature;
 Legouis and Cazamian.

Till swollen with cunning, of a self-conceit,
 His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
 And, melting, Heavens conspir'd his overthrow;
 For, falling to a devilish exercise
 And glutted (now) with learning's golden
 gifts,

He surfeits upon cursed necromancy. (1)
 Nothing so sweet as magic is to him:
 Which he prefers before his chiefest bliss.

In magic alone Faustus sees the promise of happiness:
 O what a world of profit and delight
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence.
 Is promised to the studious artisan.
 All things that move between the quiet
 poles
 Shall be at my command

.....

A sound magician is a mighty god. (1)
 Intoxicated by the promises of the Evil Angel,
 Faustus breaks forth in rapturous expression of the
 power which is to be his:

How am I glutted with conceit of this!
 Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,

(1) British Poetry and Prose; Vol. I;
 Lieder, Lovett, Root.

Resolve me of all ambiguities,
 Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
 I'll have them fly to India for gold,
 Ransack the ocean for orient pearl
 And search all corners of the new-found
 world

For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.
 I'll have them read me strange philosophy
 And tell the secrets of all foreign kings.

.....

I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
 And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
 And reign sole king of all the provinces. (i)

But the twenty years flew by, and the day
 approached when Faustus must pay his part of the
 bargain. In this last terrifying and poignant
 scene, Marlowe reaches the heights of lyrical beauty
 as he pours out the terror and horror which must
 at times possess his own soul. For, as Emile Legouis
 says: "the very vehemence of his professions of
 impiety was a sign that his emancipation was incom-
 plete. He shook his fist at Heaven and feared at
 the same time that Heaven might fall and crush him." (ii)

(i) British Poetry and Prose; Lieder, Lovett, Root. Vol.I	(ii) A History of English Literature; Legouis and Cazamian
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Ah, Faustus

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
The stars move still, time runs, the
clock will strike,

The Devil will come, and Faustus must be
damn'd.

O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down
See, see where Christ's blood streams in the
firmament!

One drop would save my soul - half a drop:
ah, my Christ!

Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on him: O spare me Lucifer!
Where is it now? 'Tis gone; and see where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful
brows!

Mountain and hills come, come and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God

.....

Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years -
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!
O, no end is limited to damned souls.

.....

O, soul be chang'd into little water-drops
 And fall into the ocean - ne'er to be found.
 My God! my God! look not so fierce on me! (1)

Like Faustus, Marlowe also ate of the forbidden fruit, and his short, dissipated life was rudely and sordidly ended. We may say of him, as of his hero:

Cut is the branch that might have grown
 full straight,
 And buried is Apollo's laurel bough. (1)

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

Hand in hand with this spirit of adventure went an upsurge of patriotic feeling. A triumphant Protestantism regarded the material advance as the fruit of freedom from the shackles of the church. With the break from the spiritual leadership of Rome, a strong aggressive spirit of nationalism arose. This was the beginning of that nationalism which today sets nation against nation, and makes it seem impossible to secure that harmonious blending which is necessary for world peace. Queen Elizabeth encouraged this spirit of nationalism by playing up the threat of Spain and by building up the English

(1) British Poetry and Prose - Vol. I;
 Lieder, Lovett, Root.

Navy. The defeat of the Spanish Armada threw Englishmen into a frenzy of patriotism - a patriotism expressed in their enthusiasm for their Queen.

This enthusiasm was manifest in the poetry of the day. Edmund Spenser devoted himself to singing the glories of his race and the praises of his sovereign. He wished to do for England what Dante had done for Italy. But, as Brother Leo points out in his English Literature, the nationalism which Dante so passionately championed was the continuation and perpetuation of the Roman Empire, with the Pope supreme in spiritual affairs, and one universal monarch supreme in temporal affairs. It was sheer impossibility for Spenser to share this comprehensive vision. He knew that since the "Reformation" the spiritual unity of the world was shattered. Though he dreamed and sang of a world-conquering England, he knew in the depths of his soul that such a dream had scant possibility of realization. He was destined to feel that disillusionment which is experienced by all who mistake the mirage for reality in their quest for happiness.

To the noble soul the native land is forever dear, both in the joys of prosperity and in the chains of slavery. True patriotism goes hand in hand with religion. Catholics have ever been taught to render to Caesar...the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (i) It is exaggerated nationalism, based on egoism, which is false, and that patriotism which expends itself in servile worship of a Prince

Such is the patriotism displayed in the poems of Spenser. He sought the favour of Elizabeth by glorifying her, at the same time allowing his work to be sullied by religious prejudice. Dean Church has remarked that there is nothing in history which can be compared to the "gross, shameless, lying flattery" which Spenser offered to Elizabeth. (ii)

The Faerie Queene, Gloriana, is, of course, Queen Elizabeth, while Duessa is falsehood and the "Roman Catholic" religion. Archimago, who typifies hypocrisy, is also a "Roman Catholic". The work was published with an introduction to the Queen which reads:

(i) St. Matthew
Chapter XXII-21

(ii) English Literature;
Brother Leo.

TO
 THE MOST HIGH, MIGHTIE, AND MAGNIFICENT
 EMPRESSE
 RENOWNED FOR PIETIE, VERTVE, AND
 ALL GRATIOVS GOVERNMENT
 ELIZABETH
 BY THE GRACE OF GOD
 Queene of England, Fravnce, and
 Ireland, and of Virginia
 Defender of the Faith Etc.
 HER MOST HVMBLE SERVAVNT
 EDMVND SPENSER
 DOTH, IN ALL HUMILITIE,
 DEDICATE, PRESENT, AND CONSECRATE
 THESE HIS LABOVRS,

TO LIVE WITH THE ETERNITIE OF HER FAME. (1)

This fulsome flattery thus continues through-
 out the poem:

And with them eke, O Goddesse heavenly bright!
 Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine,
 Great ladie of the greatest Isle, whose light
 Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine,

(1) British Poetry and Prose;
 Revised Edition Vol. I;
 Lieder, Lovett. Root.

Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,
 - And raise my thoughtes to humble and to vile,
 To thinke of that true glorious type of thine,
 The argument of mine afflicted stile;
 The which to heare vouchsafe, O dearest dread,
 a-while! (i)

.....

Upon a great adventure he was bond;
 That greatest Gloriana to him gave,
 (That greatest Glorious Queene of Faery lond)
 To winne him worshippe, and her grace to have.
 Which of all earthly things he most did crave. (i)

This sovereign worship is continued in Colin Clout's Come Home Again, the most autobiographical of Spenser's poems. Here he tells of Raleigh's visit to him in Ireland while Raleigh was for awhile out of favour with the queen. Spenser shows him the first three books of the Faerie Queene, and yields to his friend's suggestion to bring this poem to the Court of Elizabeth. How avidly the vain and arrogant Queen must have read his description of the impression she made on the poet:

(i) British Poetry and Prose;
 Revised Edition, Vol.I;
 Lieder, Lovett, Root.

But if I her like ought on earth might read,
 I would her liken to a crown of lillies
 Upon a virgin brydes adorned head,
 With Roses dight and Goolds and Daffadillies. (1)

Finally exhausting his store of praise for her amazing qualities, Spenser concludes:

More fit it is t'adore with humble mind
 The image of the heavens in shape humane. (1)

To this has it come - the song of praise of the Immaculate Queen of Heaven must die on men's lips, to be replaced by this abject worship of the Virgin "Queen" of England!

The same narrow patriotism and flattery is to be found in Prothalamion: (lines 145-160)

Yet therin now doth lodge a noble Peer,
 Great England's glory, and the world's
 wide wonder,

Whose dreadfull name late through all Spaine
 did thunder,

And Hurcules two pillors standing neere
 Did make to quake and feare:

Faire branch of Honour, flower of Chevalrie,

(1) Quoted in
 English Through the Ages;
 Cruse.

That fillest England with thy triumphs fame,
 Joy have thou of thy noble victorie,
 And endlesse happinesse of thine owne name
 That promiseth the same:
 That through thy prowesse and victorious armes,
 Thy country may be freed from forraïne harmes:
 And great Elisaes glorious name may ring
 Through all the world, fil'd with thy wide alarmes.
 Which some brave muse may sing
 To ages following. (1)

Spenser learned in his Irish exile how poorly
 the queen rewarded his flattery. The worldly advance-
 ment for which he worked was indeed disappointing, as
 his only reward was an annual pension of fifty pounds.
 Neglected by the Sovereign whom he had served so abjectly,
 and driven from his burning home by the people whom
 he had exploited and insulted, Spenser died a dis-
 illusioned man.

For most men of this time, the exactions of God
 did not extend beyond those of patriotism. The pride
 of prosperity, the increasing consciousness of strength,
 caused Englishmen of this ere to look upon themselves

(1) British Poetry and Prose;
 Revised Edition, Vol. I;
 Lieder, Lovett, Root.

as a chosen people. This religious egoism was expressed by Lyly in 1580, when he declared that God always had a tender care "of England, as of a new Israel, his chosen and peculiar people", and that "the living God is only the English God". (1)

This assurance and optimism of Britian is manifest likewise to the nineteenth century in the works of Rudyard Kipling, who discovered in himself a patriotic vocation. He regarded himself as a prophet, and incorporated himself with the moral destiny of the British race. In a History of English Literature, Louis Cazamian describes the background of ideas which find expression in the writings of Kipling. The clash between strong races and weak ones is inevitable, and the victory of the strong is the wish of Nature. Britain's expansion is a proof of its superiority in the struggle. By extolling the vigour which unites the scattered branches, you increase the sense of this vigour and thus bring about an increase in the vigour itself. The conquering nation has a moral obligation towards those under its control, but it has the right to secure

(1) A History of English Literature;
Legouis and Cazamian.

their good by ways of its own choosing. In the mutual intercourse of the British, stress is laid more plainly on reciprocal duties. The individual shall submit to the laws of the pack. He shall know how to suffer and to keep silent, how to sacrifice himself to the safety of the group. (1) "In course of time", says Cazamian, "this soldier-like code of ethics is eked out with the rough outline of a religious idealism. A providence glimmers through the struggle for life. The mysterious restlessness which drives the sons of the race beyond the boundries of the known, is the call of a holy mission. The Empire is a disinterested responsibility; it is the 'white man's burden'. Towards the God of the Bible, who has lavished His gifts upon His chosen people, their thanksgivings must rise, so that He may never forsake them." (1)

Kipling's patriotism did not show itself in an abject worship or sovereigns. He might have had, at one time or another, every honour which it is in the power of the British government to bestow, but self-aggrandizement was not the motivating force.

(1) A history of English Literature;
Legouis and Cazamian.

Kipling regarded himself as a man with a gospel to preach, and nothing must interfere with his mission.

Returning to England from India, Kipling endeavoured to arouse in Englishmen that sense of the right to Empire because of their fitness for it. Though he criticised the English people and many of their institutions, he believed that among them was to be found the best leadership which the world could produce. It was essential that they be recognized as the ruling class. He loved England and sang her praises because he believed that England fostered the virtues necessary for the world. In all his poems, from the Barrack Room Ballads (1892) to the Seven Seas (1896), Kipling celebrates the glories of his country. In the latter, his doctrine is more clearly manifest: the English are the chosen people, called upon to explore, to rule the waves, and to exploit the continents:

For the lord our God Most High
He hath made the deep as dry,
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends
of all the Earth. (i)

(i) A song of the English;
The Seven Seas;
Kipling.

In the Recessional a new note creeps into the poetry of Kipling. Gone is the arrogance which characterizes his earlier work. On this occasion of pomp and splendour, when a self-confident people were celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the poet sounds a warning that the English people must humbly regard their mission as a solemn trust.

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart;
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice;
An humble and contrite heart.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget!

Far called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Ninivah and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget! (i)

Though Kipling became less optimistic, he never abandoned his doctrine. The South African War was the crucial event in his life. Believing that the British Empire was the main instrument of

(i) Recessional; Kipling.
Quoted in The Literature of England; Vol. II
Woods. Watt, Anderson.

civilization in the world, he felt that it would be justified in taking any steps necessary to accomplish its work. In the White Man's Burden (1899) he writes: (i)

Take up the White Man's burden -
 Send forth the best ye breed -
 Go bind your sons to exile
 To serve your captives' need;
 To wait in heavy harness,
 On fluttered folk and wild -
 Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
 Half-devil and half-child,

.....

Take up the White Man's burden -
 The savage wars of peace -
 Fill full the mouth of famine
 And bid the sickness cease;
 And when your goal is nearest
 The end for others sought,
 Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
 Bring all your hope to nought.

.....

Take up the White Man's burden

(i) The Five Nations;
 Rudyard Kipling

Ye dare not stoop to less -
 Nor call too loud on Freedom
 To cloak your weariness;
 By all ye cry or whisper,
 By all ye leave or do,
 The silent, sullen peoples
 Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Kipling continues to believe that civilization alone could free men's souls, as it alone could deliver them from famine and plague. But he no longer had faith in the ability, or at least the willingness, of the British people to carry out this mission. His reaction to the World War 1914-18 is shown in his lines:

No easy hope or lies
 Shall bring us to our goal,
 But iron sacrifice
 Of body, will and soul.

There is but one task for all -
 One life for each to give.
 What stands if Freedom fall?
 Who dies if England Live? (1)

(1) Quoted in Rudyard Kipling;
 Edward Shanks.

In his scholarly biography of Kipling, Edward Shanks, speaking of this period of disillusionment, calls attention to the deep meaning in another line of this same poem: "Our world has passed away". Kipling had made for himself images of two worlds: in the first, the White Man carried his burden towards the millenium; in the second, England blossomed, and by her example regenerated the world. Now the foreboding of the Recessional has been realised, and his hopes are shattered by steel and fire and stone.

As this same author points out, the themes which interested Kipling at the end of his life were the immortal problems of evil and retribution, of death, religion, and the next world. Kipling, he declares, appears to be asking: "But, what does it all mean?" In his story A Madonna of the Trenches, he puts on the lips of the sergent the following words: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" (1) In various directions, Kipling sought an answer to his question - some consolation for the pain and weariness of life. "During most of

(1) Rudyard Kipling;
Edward Shanks

his life", Edward Shanks says, "Kipling showed a desire to be accepted by almost every freemasonary that he encountered. Towards the end of it he sought quite plainly for one in which he could find fulfilment and peace, the answer to the questions which old age put inexorably before him." (i)

Unfortunately, he did not look to the Church of Christ for the assurance and comfort for which his soul cried out. In company with the masses whose eyes were closed to the light of faith, he went his disillusioned way, a stranger to true happiness.

(i) Rudyard Kipling;
Edward Shanks.

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CHAPTER THREE

.....

PURITANISM

.....

The upheaval of the sixteenth century darkened man's vision in his quest for happiness, not only by the humanistic elevation of the natural with the consequent lowering of the supernatural, but also by the gloomy menacing outlook of Puritanism. Cut off from union with the sovereign Pontiff, deprived of the life-giving sacraments of the Catholic Church, the people were as sheep without a shepherd, wandering hopelessly in the dark, unable to find their way back to the fold. The private interpretation of the Scriptures inevitably resulted in the multiplication of sects, one warring against the other. Thus Puritanism could never attain a consistent theology. To supply for this lack, its members laid stress on the obligation of serving God in spirit and in truth, by feeling and conduct rather than by doctrine.

Among this well-meaning though deluded class we number that great literary genius John Milton. Deprived of his rightful heritage by his father who severed himself from his Catholic family Milton

was lost to that Church whose brilliant ornament he might have been, and in which he could have found the answer to his eager questing.

Milton's life may be divided into three periods, showing the progressive change in his character. First we see the earnest young student following his courses at Cambridge, and in the five following years studying in the peace of his father's home in Horton, or leisurely travelling in Europe, preparing himself for the work to which he felt himself dedicated. Believing that the preparation for the creation of poetry destined to become immortal was high living and noble thinking, this high-minded young man earnestly strove to make his life a poem. How much to be regretted it is that he cut himself off from the source of inspiration for that poem.

It was at this period, while he was still at Cambridge, that he wrote his first masterpiece, the magnificent Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, which deals with the signs and portents filling the world at our Saviour's birth. Here

we see the young man of twenty-one already consecrating his art to the services of religion. The serenity of his soul is reflected in his song:

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the
 charmed wave. (1)

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso reveal the author's state of mind during the quiet years spent at Horton amid the beauties of woods, meadows and streams. The poems represent two attitudes towards life - the cheerful and social; the reserved and melancholy. In them we see the two sides of Milton's own temperament. His frank delight in the harmless pleasures of the world is shown in L'Allegro:

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,

(1) English Verse;

W. Peacock
The Worlds Classics; Vol. II;

Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
 Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
 Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
 And love to live in dimple sleek;
 Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
 And Laughter, holding both his sides,
 Come, and trip it as ye go
 On the light fantastic toe,
 And in thy right hand lead with thee,
 The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
 And if I give thee honour due,
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew
 To live with her and live with thee,
 In unreproved pleasures free.(1)

The attraction of solitary contemplation and
 the quiet aspects of human existence are set forth
 in Il Penseroso. Here the young poet invites
 Melancholy to keep him company:

But, hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
 Hail, divinest Melancholy,
 Whose saintly visage is too bright
 To hit the sense of human sight;

(1) English Verse;
 The World's Classics, Vol. II;
 W. Peacock

And therefore to our weaker view
 O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue.

.....

And join with thee calm peace, and quiet,
 Spare fast, that oft with gods doth diet.

.....

And the mute Silence hist along,
 'Less Philomel will deign a song,
 In her sweetest, saddest plight,
 Smoothing the rugged brow of night. (1)

On the one hand, Milton describes the joys which Nature can bring in happy mood; the joys of spring, the song of the lark, the glorious sunrise, pleasures afforded by the plays of Jonson or Shakespeare, and by music's soft strains. On the other hand, he considers the joys of solitary meditation, the sad song of the nightingale, the sunset and midnight hour, the study of philosophy, and the reading of tragedy. After weighing these two aspects of life, he finally chooses melancholy. The gloomy outlook of Puritanism, with its condemnation of harmless joys, is fastening its hold on the young author's soul.

(1) English Verse;
 The World's Classics, Vol. II;
 W. Peacock

In Comus, too, we catch a glimpse of the inner soul of the poet. In this pure hymn to virtue, Milton reveals the appeal which he has experienced for the things of sense, and his triumphant victory over temptation. But his is a solitary virtue, remote, disdainful. It is a virtue too sure of itself, unmindful of the warning against pride.

The last of the Horton poems is Lycidas, an elegy written on the death of a friend, Edward King.

Here we see this moral strenuousness deepen into severity, and we catch a glimpse of that religious fanaticism which was soon to sweep, in its restless torrent, all peace and joy from the poet's soul. Into the mouth of Saint Peter he puts the bitter denunciation of unworthy shepherds of the Established Church, with a bitter allusion to the Catholic Church, which to Milton is the "grim wolf".

Enow of such as for their bellies sake,
 Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold!
 Of other care they little reckoning make,
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.

Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know

how to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else

the least

That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!

What recks it them? What need they? They

are sped;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;

The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.

But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they

draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:

Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw

Daily devours apace, and nothing said,

But that two-handed engine at the door,

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.(1)

Between the age of thirty and fifty, all Milton's energies were used up in civil and religious controversy. At first, he fought with the Presbyterians against the Episcopalians, finally with the Independents against the Presbyterians. The proud independent

(1) English Verse;
The world's Classics, Vol. II;
W. Peacock

spirit, which considered the accusation of "popery" the greatest insult which could be offered, took up the cudgels against all prelates, and also defended the execution of his King. In controversy, Milton showed himself bitter and sarcastic, stooping to vulgar scurrility and libel. There is no peace of soul for Milton in the path he has chosen, and in his polemics are heard the cries of an angry and disappointed man. Following his first marriage—an ill-starred one—Milton wrote four treatises in favour of divorce. He did not urge the intervention of law, but considered that the head of the family should have the power to grant divorce, the consent of the husband alone being essential. Woman he held in contempt, regarding her as inferior to man, to be kept under his subjection. In proof of his arguments he quoted pagan and Jewish authorities. As it was veneration for our our Immaculate Mother which raised the status of woman, it is reasonable to expect a lowering of that status when the cult of the Blessed Virgin was abolished.

Milton's untiring zeal in writing his con-

troversial pamphlets cost him the loss of his eyesight which failed completely, leaving him totally blind. It was an embittered, fanatical Milton, a harsh father and an unsympathetic husband who finally undertook the great work in which he attempted to portray God's ways to men - the writing of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained.

Lamartine has described Paradise Lost as "the dream of a Puritan fallen asleep over his Bible. "(1)
In this masterpiece of English literature, Milton scarcely succeeded in his avowed intention to

asest Eternal providence

And justify the ways of God to men.(11)

The history of the Fall of Man as found in Genesis is intended to teach the lesson of obedience to the law of God. Milton, however, himself a rebel against authority in church and state, glorifies, in spite of himself, the independent spirit of that greatest of all rebels. Thus it is that the majority of critics consider that he has made Satan the hero of his epic. Milton, the survivor of a lost cause - poor, despised, blind, but yet undaunted - projects something of himself into his lines:

(1) Quoted in English Literature; Brother Leo	(11) English Verse; The world's Classics W. Peacock
--	--

Yet not for those,
 Nor what the potent victor in his rage
 Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,
 Though changed in outward lustre. that
 fixed mind
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend. (1)

Milton's private interpretation of the Bible has led him far afield from the path which leads to truth and happiness. Edward Hutton, in his excellent study Catholicism and English Literature, regards Milton's Paradise Lost as the watershed between the Catholic and Protestant civilizations. He remarks that, as after a star dies its light travels and continues to irradiate our world, so for some indeterminate period after the loss of the true faith, the literature of England still bore the mark of its Catholic origin. In Milton we find the dividing line. In his earliest poem, the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity, the light of that civilization still shines. In it there is nothing to be found against Catholic doctrine. When we examine Paradise Lost, however,

(1) English Verse;
 The World's Classics, Vol. II; .
 W. Peacock

we are plunged into a cavern of doubt and denial.
 Many years before, Milton had decided on his
 magnificent theme:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat. (1)

It would seem that it was the poet's intention to portray not only the Fall of man, but also his Redemption through the Crucifixion and Death of Our Divine Lord. As Milton was steeped in the poetry of Homer and Virgil, Edward Hutton concludes that it was his intention to base his poems Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained on the Iliad and the Odyssey. Paradise Lost was to be the Iliad - the war in heaven and the Fall of man was to parallel the defeat and death of Hector. Paradise Regained was to be the Odyssey - the return, portraying the wanderings of our Lord on the earth, His Crucifixion and Resurrection, and , through this, Man's triumphal return to Paradise. The first part of the story

(1) English Verse;
 The World's Classics, Vol. II;
 Peacock

is told in Paradise Lost, but Paradise Regained ends with the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Why did Milton not carry out his intention? In answer to this question, Mr. Hutton says: "I think it is possible from the text of Paradise Lost to see that since the first inception of the poem, and even during its composition, his mind has changed, was in fact continually uncertain and in a state of flux in regard to the fundamental theology of the poem.... He falls into a deeper pit than even Protestantism had dug when in Paradise Lost he writes:

God and his Son except

Created things naught valued he nor shunned."

Milton becomes more and more uncertain about the nature of the Son of God. In Book III, lines 62 and 167, he refers to Him as God "the only begotten Son", while in line 383 He is "of all creation first." The Divinity of Christ is finally denied, and the glory of the vision fades. Milton, blind in soul as well as body, cannot pierce the darkness which hides from him the glory of the Resurrection.

Milton's own personal bitterness found expression

in his last poem; Samson Agonistes. For his hero he chooses the blind Samson, betrayed by his wife, the prisoner of the Philistines, compelled to listen to the sound of their revelry and feasting. The poem is almost completely retrospective. As we read, we picture the old blind Puritan, betrayed by a wife from the hostile camp, defeated by his enemies, forced to listen to the triumph of the Cavaliers. Gone are the genial human qualities of his youth; his heart has been seared by the fires of disappointment, and the melancholy man awaits the final summons. Surely it is to be regretted that this dauntless genius could not hear the voice of the Good Shepherd rather than the harsh tones of the Task-master.

The blight of Puritanism lay heavy also on the soul of another poet, William Cowper, born a century later than Milton. The errors of Knox, Luther, and Calvin persisted long after their death, robbing their followers of all true joy in the service of God, and turning others away in disgust and discouragement from a religion which made no allowance for the composite nature of man. Never had religion seemed

at so low an ebb as in the early eighteenth century. Wearied by the theological strife of the Civil Wars, the leaders of the nation were anxious to avoid all that could reawaken the slumbering forces of bigotry and fanaticism. In the higher circles of society, "every one laughs", said Monlesquieu on his visit to England, "if one talks of religion." (1) In the middle class the Puritan spirit lived on unchanged, and it was from this source that there burst forth the religious revival under John Wesley. The survival of the Puritan spirit in this Methodist movement is seen in its dread of social enjoyments and its aversion to the gayer and sunnier side of life. This revival resulted not only in the creation of a new religious sect, but also in the evangelical movement within the Established Church, shaking the lethargy of the clergy, and attacking the fox-hunting parson and the absentee rector.

Cowper belonged to the evangelical movement within the Church of England, which in its insistence on long devotions and puritan standards of religion was closely akin to the old Puritanism. The rigidity

(1) A Short History of the English People;
J.R.Green

of its discipline is evident in Cowper's condemnation
of the "fiddling pastor" and of Sunday relaxation:

Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
A cassock'd huntsman, and a fiddling priest!

.....

When he has pray'd and preach'd the Sabbath down,
With wire and catgut he concludes the day,
Quavering and semiquavering care away.

.....

Will not the sickliest sheep of every flock
Resort to this example as a rock;
There stand and justify the foul abuse
Of Sabbath hours with plausible excuse;
If apostolic gravity be free
To play the fool on Sundays, why not we?
If he the tinkling harpichord regards
As unoffensive, what offence in cards?
Strike up the fiddles, let us all be gay!
Laymen have leave to dance, if parsons play.

Oh Italy! Thy Sabbaths will be soon
Our Sabbaths, closed with mummeries and buffoon. (1)

Cowper's life is one of the most tragic in the

(1) The Progress of Error;
The Poetical Works of William Cowper;
Cowper.

history of English men of letters. This gentle, shy, sensitive poet needed above all else the consolations and help of the Catholic Faith. His soul turned to God as naturally as the sunflower to the sun. His realization of the fundamental need of every soul is shown in many sections of The Task, as in those beautiful lines concluding Book V:

Then liberty, like day,
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from Heaven
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ear hears not,
Till thou has touch'd them; 'tis the voice
of song.

A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works;
Which he that hears it with a shout repeats.
And adds his rapture to the general praise.
In that blest moment Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.

Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
 Their only point of rest, eternal Word!
 From thee departing they are lost, and rove
 At random without honour, hope, or peace.
 From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
 His high endeavour and his glad success,
 His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
 But O thou bounteous giver of all good,
 Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!
 Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor;
 And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away. (1)

This is Catholicism. The poet reechoes the words of St. Augustine: "Our hearts were made for Thee, O God, and they can never rest until they rest in Thee." Safe in the Church of Christ, Cowper would have found that rest, but unfortunately religion, which should have brought some comfort and hope, brought him only worry and despair. So thoroughly had he been taught to believe in the falsity of the Catholic faith that he delighted in his countrymen's repudiation of the only thing which could have lifted his broken spirits.

(1) The Task; Book V;
 Cowper's Poetical Works;
 Wm. Cowper.

The reader of Cowper's poems and letters cannot fail to be attracted by the beauty and charm of his character. They reveal his love of man and nature, his broad sympathies, and a playful humour which religious fanaticism was powerless to destroy. There is in them no sign of the pride which stamped the character of Milton. Cowper's lack of vanity is shown in the following lines from The Task:

Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtues, temper, understanding, taste
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity; to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure and ere long
Found there that leisure and that ease I wish'd.(1)

(1) The Task, Book IV
Cowper's Poetical Works;
Wm. Cowper

His attitude is one of strict renunciation of all that is superfluous in life. In speaking of his lengthy poem The Task, Cowper says: "Except the fifth book which is rather of a political nature, the whole has one tendency, to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life. and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue. " (i) This poem was written during the most tranquil period of the author's life. Unfitted by nature for the profession of law which he had chosen at his father's wish, he withdrew from the struggle. and found sanctuary in the home of the Unwin family.

It was when Mrs. Unwin moved to Olney, after the death of Mr. Unwin, that Cowper came under the influence of the Rev. John Newton, an influence too harsh and stern for the sensitive spirit of the poet, who was too prone to nervous despondency. Urged on by this impetuous man, Cowper spent almost the entire day in private or public devotions, exhortations, and meditations on the Scripture. Periods of mild gaiety and states of mystical ex-

(i) Quoted in A. History of English Literature; Buchan.

altation were succeeded by morbid anguish of soul and protracted attacks of religious melancholia. In 1773 the dread conviction took possession of his mind that he was predestined to eternal damnation, and that the Blood of Christ could purchase no redemption for him. Under this strain the weak nerves gave way, and the cloud of insanity settled over his mind. With utmost charity, Mrs. Unwin cared for the poor invalid for four years until his illness had passed.

With the restoration of his health there followed one of the happiest periods of his life. To escape the danger of idleness, Cowper turned his thoughts to writing for publication. In this project he received the needed encouragement from Mrs. Unwin and a new-found friend, Lady Austin. The humorous ballad John Gilpin shows a return of gaiety to his sad life. It was at this period also, and at the suggestion of Lady Austin, that he wrote his greatest work, the famous poem already mentioned - The Task.

His innocent enjoyments brought reproof from Mr. Newton, who chided him for supposed dissipation and neglect of his evangelical duties. This reproof

must have brought much anxiety to one of Cowper's sensibilities. Had he but received the sympathetic and gentle guidance which Catholics receive in the Sacrament of Penance, and the supporting grace of the Holy Eucharist, he could have been saved from the terrible gloom which again settled over him during his last years. In his poem On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture out of Norfolk we read the anguished cry:

So thou, with sails how swift! hast reach'd
the shore,
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar";
And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
Of life long since has anchor'd by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distress'd -
Me howling blasts drive devious. tempest-toss'd,
Sails ripp'd , seams opening wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
Yet O the thought. that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me. (1)

(1) Cowper's Poetical Works;
William Cowper

Cowper's last years were ones of almost
unbroken misery. He was tortured by visions of
the flames of hell reaching out to envelop him.
His last despairing cry is heard in The Castaway:

I therefore purpose not, or dream

Descanting on his fate.

To give the melancholy theme

A more enduring date:

But misery still delights to trace

Its semblance in another's case

No voice divine the storm allay'd

No light propitious shone;

When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,

We perish'd, each alone:

But I beneath a rougher sea,

And whelm'd in deeper gales than he. (i)

It is said (ii) that peace came to him suddenly
at the end. We hope that in the dispelling of the
gloom he had a vision of the Infinite Mercy of the
God Whom he had sought.

(i) Cowper's Poetical Works; (ii) A History of English
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CHAPTER FOUR

.....

BACK TO NATURE

.....

Deprived of the sunlight of God's grace and the vivifying dew of His Sacraments, man stumbled on in his spiritual blindness, the prey of false ideologies, bewildered and frustrated. In the eighteenth century we find a reaction against the fetters of a civilization which could not satisfy the yearnings of the human heart. Vague ideas emerged concerning a "return to nature" - ideas which presently gained strength through the teachings of Rousseau.

During the first years of the eighteenth century, Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, asserted in his Enquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit the fundamental tenet of the School of Sensibility - that orthodoxy drew too black a picture of the nature of man; that man had an instinctive moral sense which made him recognize good and delight in it; that only custom and education in opposition to nature stood in the way of morality. (1) This

(1) Guide Through the Romantic Movement;
Bernbaum

Shaftesburian philosophy found its way into the poetry of the day as well as into the sentimental comedy, which based its plot upon the natural goodness of the human heart. Shaftesbury was a forerunner of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who has exerted an incalculable influence on English literature.

The central point of Rousseau's teaching is that all unhappiness, all crime and misery are the result of civilization; only in the natural state - the savage state of innocence and simplicity - is man really happy. Everything that raises him above this savage state makes him unhappy and discontented. Whatever is natural is good; whatever is opposed to nature is bad. Rousseau is the foe of reason, which, he says, corrupts man and leads him astray from the virtue to which his heart is naturally inclined. "Reasoning", he writes, "far from enlightening us, blinds us; it does not raise our soul, it enervates and corrupts the judgment, which it should perfect." (1) The infallible guide to truth is feeling. Man, Rousseau believed, was created good; he became vicious through education and man-made institutions. While

(1) Catholic World; December 1946;
Rousseau - Mother Nature's Bad Boy

retaining his belief in a personal God, Rousseau discards the doctrine of original sin: "Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible rule", he insists, "that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart."⁽¹⁾ Thus not reason but feeling determines the goodness or evil of an act - the urgings of animal nature decide what is right and what is wrong.

Rousseau developed his theories in Nouvelle Heloise and Emile. In his romance Nouvelle Heloise he contrasts the pleasures of sentimental life of nature with the perverted relations of actual existence and the restraints and requirements of society. Emile is the story of a boy's education from his birth until his marriage. Emile was to be the child of nature, unfettered, unthwarted, irresponsible. He was to be unrestrained by reason - instinct and emotion alone were to be cultivated. Hence, since reason is the cause of error, Emile must always be right and happy. (ii). Rousseau's writings were widely read in England and gave great impetus to the spread of sentimentalism which had

(I) Catholic World, Dec. 1946;
Rousseau - Mother Nature's
Bad Boy.

(ii) Standard History of
the world; Vol.VII

already begun in that country.

The poetry of sentiment had for its first element the emotional theme of nature. Poets began to turn more and more from the town to rural life and natural surroundings. Of William Shenstone, Gray wrote: "Poor man! he was always wishing for money; for fame, and other distinctions; and his whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in retirement, and in a place which his taste had adorned, but which he enjoyed only when people came to see and commend it."(1)

From the beginning the poets of this school showed themselves keenly desirous of tender emotions. and soon we observe the striving for a mournful pathos. The aspects of Nature which are dealt with are wind-swept moors, lonely crags, storms and darkness. It was this cult of feeling which caused many poets of this time to derive their inspiration from night, melancholy, death, and the grave.

A central figure among this group of "Graveyard Poets" who consciously cultivate tragic thrills is Edward Young. His Night Thoughts is a meditation

(1) Quoted in A History of English Literature;
Buchan.

in nine cantos, dealing with the themes of life, death, and immortality - orthodox themes, it is true, but the author strains to lash the imagination of the readers into a nightmare terror inconsistent with serious thought. The mood throughout is one of pessimism:

I wake: how happy they who wake no more!
 Yet that were vain, if dreams infest the grave.
 I wake, emerging from a sea of dreams
 Tumultuous; where my wretched desponding thought
 From wave to wave of fancied misery,
 At random drove, her helm of reason lost;
 Though now restored, 'tis only change of pain,
 A bitter change; severer for severe:
 The day too short for my distress! and night
 Even in the zenith of her dark domain,
 Is sunshine to the colour of my fate.

(Night Thoughts; Introduction.) (i)

In an effort to demonstrate convincingly the belief that virtue and happiness are the natural state of man, many poets turned to a happy past. Ill-satisfied with the present, they cast longing glances on a past, vague, distant, and different.

(i) English Verse;
 The World's Classics; Vol.III

In the work of Collins we find a fusion of the love of Nature and melancholy with the attraction to the past. The atmosphere of melancholy pervades all of Collins' work, and the taste for ruins, for the past, are everywhere in evidence. The Ode to Evening has the pensive colouring of fading lights and oncoming darkness:

Now teach me, maid composed
To breathe some softened strain

Whose numbers, stealing through thy
darkening vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return!

For when the folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant hours, and elves
Who slept in buds the day,

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows
with sedge

And sheds the freshening dew, and,

lovelier still,

The pensive pleasures sweet,

Prepare the shadowy car.(1)

The poet asks for a hut on the mountain side
from which he

Views wilds and swelling floods.

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,

And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all

Thy dewy fingers draw

The gradual dusky veil. (1)

In his Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the
Highlands of Scotland, Collins shows his interest
in the strange and remote conditions of human life.
He describes the wild Northern islands whose inhabitants
lead an unfettered life far from civilization. Here
too we find the straining for unusual feelings of
awe or horror:

For him, in vain, his anxious wife shall wait.

Or wander forth to meet him on his way;

For him, in vain, at to-fall of the day,

(1) English Verse;
The World's Classics, Vol.III;
W. Peacock

His babes shall linger at th'unclosing gate!
 Ah, ne'er shall he return! Alone, if night
 Her travelled limbs in broken slumbers steep,
 With dropping willows dressed, his mournful sprite
 Shall visit sad, perchance, her silent sleep:
 Then he, perhaps, with moist and wat'ry hand
 Shall fondly seem to press her shudd'ring cheek
 And with his blue swoln face before her stand
 And, shiv'ring cold, these piteous accents
 speak:

'Pursue, dear wife, thy daily toils pursue
 At dawn or dusk, industrious as before;
 Nor e'er of me one hopeless thought renew,
 While I lie welt'ring on the oziered shore.
 Drowned by the kelpie's wrath, nor e'er shall
 aid thee more." (i)

Melancholy marked Collins for her own. His
 life was passed under the shadow of constitutional
 despondency, with "the gradual dusky veil" deepening
 into insanity.

James Macpherson was another eighteenth century
 poet who turned longing eyes on a past age where man

(i) English Verse;
 The World's Classics, Vol.III;
 W. Peacock

enjoyed that happiness which was his by virtue of his natural goodness. In his two epic poems Fingal and Temora, which he claimed to have translated from a third-century Scottish bard Ossian, Macpherson presented a world of simplicity set in a landscape of wild torrents, crags, and mists. The dominant note is one of regret for what has been. The warriors of Fingal lead a simple life close to nature, careless of money or luxuries. In them are all manly virtues; brave in battle, they are yet merciful to their enemies, never revengeful or inhuman. Their generous clemency is depicted in the following passage:

"By the side of a rock on the hill, beneath the ancient trees, old Ossian sat on the moss; the last of the race of Fingal. Dull through the leafless trees he heard the voice of the north.....Fair with her locks of gold, her smooth neck, and her breasts of snow; fair as the spirits of the hills when at silent noon they glide along the heath - came Minvane the maid. Fingal, she softly saith, loose me my brother Gaul. Loose me

the hope of my race, the terror of all but Fingal....
 Take thy brother, O Minvane, thou fairer than the
 snows of the north. "(1)

The fact that this was a gross misrepresentation of the barbarous third-century Colt did not hinder the popularity of the Ossian poems. They were widely acclaimed, not only in England but also on the Continent. The gloomy wild landscapes, the heroic chivalrous warriors, loyal maidens dying on the tombs of their betrothed, all charmed the hearts of the followers of Rousseau.

In this backward glancing for the key to happiness, the Middle Ages presented a supreme attraction. The joy and light-heartedness of those days contrasted violently with the melancholy and pessimism of the present. In the dark night of spiritual blindness, soul-hungry people strained to catch a ray of light from those days of faith. The visible relics of this period - the great cathedrae, stripped and bare, the innumerable village churches - all spoke of a time capable of satisfying the cravings of the human heart.

(1) Quoted in A History of English Literature;
 Moody and Lovett

So it was with Thomas Chatterton, whom Wordsworth calls "the marvelous boy". (i) Chatterton's childhood had been spent under the shadow of St. Mary Redcliffe, that beautiful Bristol cathedral of which his forefathers had been sextons for many generations. The precocious child learned to love this church as though it were a human being. He pictured it in all its ancient glory, peopling it with knights and ladies and humble folk of a Catholic past. His lonely sensitive soul was filled with enthusiasm for the religious ideals and the social institutions of the age of faith. Comparing these ages with his own time in all its dullness, drabness, and hypocrisy, he found them good. Eagerly he read the parchments found among the archives of the Church, and was inspired to write a series of poems which would bring these days to life. Were he to write as a sympathiser with and a believer in Catholicism, his poems would receive but a cold reception from his contemporaries. Instead, he wrote in mediaeval style, pretending that his poems were the work of a fictitious fifteenth-century priest whom he called

(i) The Leech-Gatherers;
William Wordsworth

Rowley. His poems were grouped about the figure of William Canynge, mayor of Bristol under Henry VI. The best known are Aella, The Bristowe Tragedy, and the Ballade of Charitie. Soon the forgery was discovered. Repulsed by those to whom he had looked for assistance and friendship, the unfortunate boy, penniless, starving, and despairing, took his own life at the age of eighteen. Our pity must go out to this tragic youth, out of sympathy with his surroundings, leaning wistfully to the Catholic Church, but held back from it because of the prejudices of his environment.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century brought strange applications of Rousseau's doctrine that only in the savage state of innocence and simplicity is man really happy. To it may be ascribed the admiration for and the rhapsodies about "the noble savage". Lord Monboddo maintained that the life of a savage was nobler and happier than that of ^aLondon shopkeeper. In his Origin and Progress of Learning, he asserted that the ideal conditions of existence were to be found in the South

Seas, "where the inhabitants live without toil or labour upon the bounty of nature" (1) In 1774 an anonymous poem Otaheite described the "gentle tribes" who lived in a natural state, free from labour, constraint, and so-called false modesty. In the same year a South Sea Islander was brought to London and became the hero of society. In him was seen nothing but gentleness and charm. To Sir Joshua Reynolds he was the incarnation of dignity and virtue.

The idea that primitive men lead a happier and nobler life than those spoiled by civilization caused many of the poets to seek their inspiration in untutored peasants rather than in courtiers and people of the town. When Robert Burns published his first volume of poems, his poetic genius was ascribed to his lack of culture. Henry MacKenzie described him as "this heaven-sent ploughman from his humble and unlettered station. " (1) He overlooked the fact that though Burns had received little formal schooling he had educated himself through his reading.

The influence of Rousseau's teaching may be observed in much of the poetry of the early nineteenth

(1) Guide Through the Romantic Movement;
Bernbaum

century. In religion Rousseau was a sentimental deist. "To him, God is a spirit working ever for good - not a supernatural being in the image of man, but a beneficent, paternal force that has created the world and man. Any contemplation of this spirit must necessarily be inspiring, emotionally stimulating, and exalting. Since this creating spirit is manifest in nature and in man, it must follow that man in a natural setting, as free as possible from artificial restraints imposed by the demands of society is in his happiest possible state. Hence the contemplation of nature, of natural landscape and natural phenomena, was the surest way in which man could approach God; the more primitive man's environment, the closer he was to perfection, which was by no means impossible of attainment on earth, because man was essentially good."(1)

To the contemplation of nature Wordsworth turned. He is called the "poet of the return to nature." His poetry testifies to the minute care with which he observed and brooded over every detail of the landscape. In The Prelude (Book VIII), Wordsworth describes the successive stages of his love of nature:

(1) The Literature of England; Vol.II;
Woods, Watt, Anderson.

Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
 Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped
 And gradually expired, and Nature prized
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then -
 And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than two-and twenty summers had been told -
 Was Man in my affections and regards
 Subordinate to her, her visible forms
 And viewless agencies: a passion, she
 A rapture often, and immediate love
 Ever at hand: he, only a delight
 Occasional, an accidental grace. (i)

The progression from his boyhood love of nature
 to his later nature worship is revealed in the lines
 from Tintern Abbey:

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when
 first

I came among these hills; when like a roe
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,

(i) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
 Hutchinson Edition

Wherever nature led; more like a man
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)
 To me was all in all.- I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye. - That time is past.

.....

For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And in the blue sky, and in the minds of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all that we behold
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world
 Of eye, and ear.- both what they half create,
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
 In nature and the language of the sense,
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.

In the same poem Wordsworth says:

I, so long
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came
 Unwearied in that service: rather say
 With warmer love - oh! with far deeper zeal
 Of holier love. (I)

(i) Tintern Abbey;
 The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth

Wordsworth peopled his poems with the unsophisticated and the humble rustic people living close to nature, because in them we can trace "the primary laws of our nature"....Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. (i)

The Lucy of Wordsworth poems seemed to him to "incarnate both the impulses and the laws of nature". (ii)

Three years she grew in sun and shower,

Then Nature said "A lovelier flower

(i) Preface to the Lyrical Ballads; (ii) A History of
The Poetical Works of English Literature;
William Wordsworth. Buchan

On earth was never sown;
 This Child I to myself will take;
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A Lady of my own.

'Myself will to my darling be
 Both law and impulse; and with me
 The Girl, in rock and plain,
 Shall feel an overseeing power
 To kindle or restrain.

'She shall be sportive as the fawn
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs;
 And hers shall be the breathing balm,
 And hers the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things. (i)
 To his hero, Michael, Wordsworth thus introduces

us:

Upon the forest side in Grasmere Vale
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name,
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.

(i) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
 Hutchinson Edition.

His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes,
 While others heeded not, he heard the South
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills. (i)

Wordsworth's insistence on the value of natural feelings does not, however, lead to the gratification of every desire - to unchecked indulgence. Conscience tells us that the indulgence of feeling for its own sake is wrong. In Laodamia the poet says:

Control

Rebellious passion: for the Gods approve
 The depth, and not the tumult of the soul. (i)

Wordsworth betrays a keen regret for the gladness of yore, while struggling to support "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world. (Tintern Abbey) (i) He cries out in anguish:

(i) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
 Hutchinson Edition.

The world is too much with us; late and soon:
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lee:
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

In two earlier poems, Lines Written in Early Spring
 and The Fountain, he has written:

To her fair work did Nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it grieved my heart to think
 What man has made of man. (i)

and

The blackbird amid leery trees

(i) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth
 Hutchinson Edition

The lark above the hill
 Let loose their carols when they please,
 Are quiet when they will.

With Nature never do they wage
 A foolish strife; they see
 A happy youth, and their old age
 Is beautiful and free.

But we are pressed by heavy laws;
 And often glad no more,
 We wear a face of joy, because
 We have been glad of yore. (1)

Akin to Wordsworth in his love of nature is
 John Keats, whose delight in the sights and sounds
 of nature is described by Joseph Severn:

"Nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a
 bird and the undernote of response from covert or
 hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the
 green and brown lights and furtive shadows, the
 motion of the wind - just how it took certain tall
 flowers and plants - the wayfaring of the clouds;
 even the features and gestures of passing tramps,

(1) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
 Hutchinson Edition

the color of one woman's hair, the smile on one child's face....Certain things affected him extremely, particularly when a wave was billowing through a tree', as he described the uplifting surge of air among swaying masses of chestnut or oak foliage, or when, afar off, he heard the wind coming across the woodlands. 'The tide! The tide!' he would cry delightedly, and spring on to some stile, or upon the low bough of a wayside tree, and watch the passage of the wind upon the meadow-grasses or young corn, not stirring till the flow of air was all around him, while an expression of rapture made his eyes gleam and his face glow till he would look 'like a wild faun waiting for some cry from the forest depths', or like 'a young eagle staring with proud joy' before taking flight. (i)

I Stood Tiptoe upon a Little Hill is full of the author's simple delight in nature. The theme which rather loosely unites the descriptive passages is that it was the beauty of nature which gave rise to poetry; its loveliness had stimulated the imagination of the ancient Greeks to create their beautiful myths.

(i) Guide Through the Romantic Movement;
Bernbaum

Religion for Keats takes the form of adoration of the beautiful. Beauty is the supreme Truth. The phenomena of the world betrays everywhere eternal and divine laws, but only by the exercise of the imagination can they be discovered. God gave to man not a soul, but the power and opportunity of developing one. He endowed him with a mind capable of perceiving and understanding, and a heart with its desires and intuitions. If in an individual these two powers mutually cooperated, there would be gradually developed a soul, that is, a personality conscious of its individual integrity. In a letter to his friend Reynolds, Keats writes:

"I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not; - for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love; they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. However it may be, O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts! It is a Vision in the form of Youth, a shadow of reality to come...and this

consideration has further convinced me - for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine - that we shall all enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on earth repeated in a finer tone. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in sensation, rather than hunger as you do after truth." (i)

In the Ode on a Grecian Urn we read these concluding lines:

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou
say'st

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' (ii)

Keats was acutely aware of the social ills of his day, but he was not interested in reform. Disappointed in the world in which he lived, he turned towards the past to satisfy the cravings of his emotional nature. In the sonnet To Leigh Hunt, which begins

Glory and loveliness have passed away, (ii)
the author expresses his regret for the disappearance

(i) Quoted in Channels of
English Literature;
Lyric Poetry;
Rhys.

(ii) British Poetry and Prose;
Lieder, Lovett, Root;
Volume II

of the beautiful world of legend and romance. He betrays a yearning for the old Hellenic life in such poems as On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer, On Seeing the Elgin Marbles, and Ode on a Grecian Urn. To the Middle Ages also he turned, and in the opening stanzas of St. Agnes Eve we read:

St. Agnes' Eve - Ah', bitter chill it was.
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
 The hare limped trembling through the frozen
 grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
 Numb was the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his
 prayers he saith. (i)

H. W. Mabie in Essays in Literary Interpretation says that this poem is "a vision of beauty, deep, rich, and glowing as one of those dyed windows in which the heart of the Middle Ages still burns." (ii) This, however, is far from the truth, as the heart of the Middle Ages is the Catholic religion. In spite

(i) British Poetry and Prose;
 Lieder, Lovett, Root;
 Volume II.

(ii) Quoted In English
 Literature;
 Brother Leo

of some Catholic atmosphere, as in the stanza quoted, the poem is really pagan. Keats was antagonistic to Catholicism, so it was impossible for him to catch the vision of those days of faith.

Keats found that sensations could not bring him happiness. A deepening melancholy settled on his soul. In one of his early poems he wrote:

Stop and consider! life is but a day;
 A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
 From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
 While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
 Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
 Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
 The reading of an ever-changing tale;
 The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
 A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
 A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
 Riding the springy branches of an elm. (1)

Within the next two years the poet's life was clouded by many sorrows. One of his brothers left his native land for America, and the other fell a victim to tuberculosis. Financial troubles worried him, and

(1) Sleep and Poetry;
 English Verse;
 The World's Classics; Vol.IV

he himself was soon seized by the dread disease. The tragic climax came with his hopeless love for Fanny Brawne. Lacking the spiritual support which the Catholic faith would have given him in these trials, he is filled with despair. This gloom and darkness of soul is expressed in the Ode to a Nightingale:

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

This sadness is revealed also in the Ode to Melancholy:

Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

(i) English Verse;
 The World's Classics;
 Volume IV

Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine.
Though seen of none save him whose
strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung. (1)

(1) English Verse;
The World's Classics;
Volume IV

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CHAPTER FOUR

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THE QUEST

CHAPTER FIVE

.....

LIBERTY, FRATERNITY, EQUALITY.

.....

The advent of the French Revolution gave rise to high hopes of a new era of universal benevolence and peace. Weary of the social evils and oppressions of the time, England joined in the chorus of "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality." Of the French Revolution, Charles James Fox, the liberal statesman, exclaimed: How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best ! "(i) The time had come when the sun would shine only on free men, when tyrants, slaves, and priests would be no more. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was a rejection of Catholicism; the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw a rejection of Christianity. Faith, miracles, tradition, the priesthood, all were despised. Darkness had indeed settled over the face of England.

The revolutionary spirit is seen in many of the poems of Robert Burns, an ardent supporter of the French Revolution in its early phases. We follow sympathetically his insistence on the equality and

(i) Quoted in Guide Through the Romantic Movement;
Bernbaum

brotherhood of man in his poem For A' That :

Is there for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that.

....

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that. (1)

Less pleasing is the spirit of irreverence which dominates many of Burn's poems. The son of God-fearing parents, brought up in the Christian atmosphere portrayed in The Cotter's Saturday Night.

(1) English Verse; The World's Classics;
Volume III

the author has strayed far from the beaten paths of his childhood. He holds up to ridicule both church and clergy, makes light of the devil, and jests about eternal damnation. The most revolutionary of his poems are Holy Willie's Prayer and The Jolly Beggars - both harsh indictments of society. Holy Willie, an elder in the parish church in Mauchline in Ayrshire, is a whitened sepulchre who is thus overheard at his devotion:

O Thou, wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
 Wha, as it pleases best Thyself'
 Sends ane to heaven an' ten to hell
 A' for thy glory,
 And na for onie guid or ill
 They've done before Thee!

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
 Whan thousands Thou hast left in night
 That I am here before Thy sight,
 For gifts an' grace.
 A burning an' a shining light,
 To a' the place. (1)

(1) The Literature of England;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson

In The Jolly Beggars, "the graceless crew are raised above the level of gypsies, footpads and rogues and made, like Titans, to launch their thunder of rebellion against the world". (i) In a setting of disreputable squalor we find the Chorus singing:

A fig for those by law protected!

Liberty's a glorious feast!

Courts for cowards were erected,

Churches built to please the priest!

Burns knew the pangs of remorse for his lawless life, however, and felt the need of God "The great misfortune of my life", Burns wrote, "was to want an aim". The last years of his undisciplined life were dark and depressing, lacking the gleam of spiritual vision. Hearing the approach of death, he makes this pathetic plea:

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause

Of all my hopes and fear!

In whose dread presence, ere an hour,

Perhaps I must appear.

If I have wandered in those paths

Of life I ought to shun;

(1) The French Revolution and English Literature; Dowden.

(ii) The literature of England; Woods, Watt, Anderson.

As something, loudly, in my breast,
 Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
 With passions wild and strong;
 And list'ning to their witching voice
 Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
 Or frailty stept aside.
 Do Thou, All Good! for such Thou art,
 In shades of darkness hide;

Where with intention I have err'd
 No other plea I have,
 But Thou art Good; and goodness still
 Delighteth to forgive. (1)

Among other poets who were filled with enthusiasm for the French Revolution are Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. During their most impressionable years they came under the influence of William Godwin, he

(1) The Works of Robert Burns;
 Lockhart.

whom Hazlett has told us, "blazed in the last decade of the eighteenth century as the sun in the firmament of reputation.....No one was more talked of, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off." (i)

Brought up in the depressing environment of a Calvinistic home. Godwin looked upon religion as a supernatural despotism based on coercion. God assumed the character of a tyrant who must be deposed. Abandoning the doctrines of a religion which had become hateful to him, Godwin became an atheist and the blind guide of many an unhappy soul.

Like the School of Sensibility, Godwin was opposed to all restraint imposed by government. Government is an evil, and in the interests of human advancement must be dispensed with as quickly as possible. The sentimentalists, however, trusted instincts and emotions, while Godwin despised the emotions, and claimed that reason should be the sole guide of life. Godwin set forth his views in Political Justice, which soon exhausted its first edition of four thousand copies. Two other editions

(i) Quoted in Shelley, Godwin
and Their Circle;
H.N. Brailsford

followed, with revisions. Man, according to the author, had no soul, but was wholly a product of the physical universe by which his conduct was necessarily determined. His only hope lay in sharpening his intelligence and his power of reasoning, so that he may understand the circumstances in which he finds himself, and act accordingly. Vice and sin, as we understand them, have no real existence; vice is merely intellectual error. The principle of justice is this - that each individual should do unto others all the good that is in his power, and that society should do everthing for its members that can contribute to their welfare. All personal feeling must be repressed and eventually destroyed: family ties, friendship, gratitude to benefactors are all unworthy of an enlightened lover of humanity. Man has one duty only - that of benefiting his fellow-men to the utmost of his power. All institutions and customs which interfered with his proper adjustment to his environment were harmful and should be abolished. Since reason was the sole guide, there was no place for force - no place for laws, jails, or wars. Since

only in perfect freedom of action could man reason properly. there must be no marriage bond. The institute of marriage is a system of fraud and a violation of individual liberty. Once free from all repression, man would see the truth, would follow it, and thus would attain perfection. "In this state of philosophical anarchy, there would be no disease, no anguish, no harrassing emotions; the intellect would be supreme, and mind would master matter." (i)

Men would at last be

Sceptreless, free. uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself; just. gentle, wise. (ii)

For some years, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were caught in Godwin's web of logic. They read, studied, discussed continually Political Justice, the work of their prophet. Coleridge blesses Godwin's "holy guidance" in a sonnet which he afterwards suppressed:

For that thy voice in passion's stormy day
 When wild I roamed the bleak heath or distress

(i) Guide Though the Romantic Movement; (ii) Prometheus
 Bernbaum. Unbound; Shelley

Bade the bright form of Justice meet my way,
And told me that her name was Happiness. (1)

The Revolution captured the burning enthusiasm of Wordsworth when on a visit to France he met and talked with some of those ardent spirits to whom the Revolution seemed the hope of the world. To him
a glorious time

A happy time that was; triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
Their great expectancy. (The Prelude Book 6) (1)

The excesses of the later stages of the Revolution disappointed him and shook his faith in the moral grandeur and regenerating power of the movement. Losing first his trust in the leaders, he fastened them upon the people. But they too became intoxicated with the lust for blood. France attacked her neighbours in aggressive wars. Wordsworth then saw that it was no reign of universal brotherhood that was dawning upon the world, but a rule of tyranny and selfishness. It was in his despairing reaction that he turned to the Ultra-rationalistic philosophy of Godwin, which seemed to offer the only solution to the problems of life. Thus he says:

(1) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
Hutchinson

French had changed a war of self-defence
 For one of conquest losing sight of all
 Which they had struggled for: up mounted now
 Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore.

.....

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
 To depravation, speculative schemes -
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 Forever in a purer element -
 Found ready welcome. Tempting region that
 For zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work,
 But never heard the sound of their own names.
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes.

nor least

With that which makes our Reason's naked self
 The object of its fervor. What delight!
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,

To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place.
 Build social upon personal Liberty,
 Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
 Superior, magesterially adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect. (The Prelude;

Book 11) (1)

Wordsworth became a necessitarian, disbelieving in free will, hostile to religion and all institutions based upon orthodox ethics. But this rationalism could not satisfy the cavings of his soul, and he sank deeper and deeper into perplexity and gloom. It was only very slowly that this mood of despair passed from him. In *The Borderers*, Wordsworth tells of the abandonment of the doctrines of Godwin. In this poem the generous and high-minded young leader of the band of borderers comes under the influence of an elder man, Oswald. The latter, by the play of a sceptical intelligence and the promise of spiritual emancipation, darkens the conscience of the young Marmadukes and leads

(1) *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;*
 Hutchinson Edition

him into irreparable crime. Nothing is left to Marmaduke but the hope of expiation. Thus Wordsworth attempts to show that nothing but evil and suffering can come from a rationalistic system which crushes the feelings, sympathies, and affections.

'Twas nothing more than darkness, deepening
darkness,

And weakness crowned with the impotence of death.

(The Borderers, Act V) (1)

Wordsworth never returned to his radical creed. He finally recovered his faith in God and his hope for mankind, but though he at times praises the Catholic Church as a thing of the past, his antagonism to it in the present remains. Though he claims to see God in every aspect of nature, his is not the light of faith which can pierce the veil and see the Godhead hidden within the Sacred Host. Hence in his poem Transubstantiation, in which he describes the sacred moment of the Consecration of the Mass, he asks to be defended

From rites that trample upon soul and sense. (1)

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge and his friend Southey

(1) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth;
Hutchinson Edition.

loudly proclaimed their democratic enthusiasm during the early days of the French Revolution, only to be sadly disillusioned later on. Beginning to doubt that the era of universal benevolence was soon to begin in France, and believing in Godwin's doctrine that men and women would be naturally virtuous provided that they lived in the right environment, they made a scheme for the establishment of an ideal community. This Utopia was to be founded on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. Here in the unspoiled American solitude a group of kindred spirits of both sexes were to try the experiment of perfectibility. Private property, social distinctions, schools, courts, churches, all were to be left behind with the unenlightened. In this ideal community everything was to be held in common. With two or three hours of labour a day the men would cultivate the fields and supply enough food for their simple wants; the same length of time would suffice for the women to attend to the domestic duties. Rest, discussion, and reading would fill the remaining time. Removed from all the evils of civilization, man's natural

goodness and intelligence would assert itself, and virtue and happiness would be the result. Twelve young couples were to constitute this Pantisocracy, as the adventure was to be called. Southey and Lovell had married two of the Fricker sisters; Coleridge decided to marry a third one. Hence three of the couples were in readiness. Lack of funds and disagreements concerning some points in the proposed plan prevented the realization of this dream, so the world was deprived of this example of perfectibility. Coleridge refers to this vain dream in his address to Chatterton:

O Chatterton! that thou wert yet alive,
 Sure thou wouldst spread the canvas to the gale;
 And love with us the tinkling team to drive
 O'er peaceful Freedom's undivided dale (1)

He promises the tragic youth that the Pantisocrats shall raise a cenotaph to his memory.

Where Susquehanna pours his untamed stream.(1)

Southey gives vent to his revolutionary hopes in his poem Joan of Arc:

Oppression shall be chained, and Poverty

(1) Quoted in
 Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle;
 Dowden.

Die, and with her, the Brood of Miseries;
 And Virtue and Equality preserve
 The reign of Love, and Earth shall once again
 Be Paradise, whilst Wisdom shall secure
 The state of bliss which Ignorance betrayed. (i)

In his subsequent reaction, Southey poured forth
 execrations against Imperial France, and became an
 earnest defender of the institutions of the past.

In France: an Ode, first printed as The Recantation,
 Coleridge tells of the budding and the blighting of
 his early hopes:

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,
 And with that oath, which smote air, earth,
 and sea,
 Stamped her strong foot and said she would
 be free,
 Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
 With what a joy my lofty gratulation
 Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band. (ii)

When Britain took up arms against France,
 Coleridge says he hung his head and wept at Britain's

(i) The French Revolution;
 and English Literature;
 Dowden.

(ii) The Literature of England;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson.

name. Then

Though Blasphemy's loud scream
 With that sweet music of deliverance strove,
 Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove
 A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream,

....

Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
 "AND soon," I said, "shall Wisdom teach her lore
 In the low huts of them that toil and groan!
 And, conquering by her happiness alone,
 Shall France compel the nations to be free,
 Till Love and Joy look round, and call the
 Earth their own." (i)

Disillusionment follows, and the poet admits his
 error:

O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
 And patriot only in pernicious toils!
 Are these thy boasts, 'Champion of human kind',
 To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway;
 Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
 To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
 From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

(i) The Literature of England;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
 They burst their manacles and wear the name
 Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain. (i)

Coleridge now realized that the ideal of individual liberty can be reached only through obedience to the moral law. Lacking the spiritual helps of Christ's Church, he was unable to struggle against his weakness of will, or to find comfort when weighed down with physical and mental distress. He fell a victim of the opium habit, and his life became a succession of half-hearted attempts ending in failure. His pathetic melancholy and sense of failure is expressed in his poems Dejection, Youth and Age, and Work Without Hope. In the last named poem we read the despairing lines:

Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may,
 For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
 With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll:
 And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
 Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
 And Hope without an object cannot live. (i)

(i) The Literature of England;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson.

The same hopelessness is expressed in the following lines from Youth and Age. It has an added poignancy when contrasted with the enthusiasm of youth.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
 When we are old:
That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismissed;
Yet hath outstayed his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile. (i)

In the Ode to Dejection the poet gives utterance to a mood of frustration. The sense of failure lies heavily on him; life cannot satisfy the craving of his soul.

A grief without a pang, wild, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,

(i) The Literature of England;
Woods, Watt, Anderson.

Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear.

....

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavor
 Though I should gaze forever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are
 within. (i)

We regret indeed that this "damaged archangel", as Lamb called Coleridge, (ii) did not, in his search for truth, come to a better knowledge of the true Fountain of Life. In our hearts we re-echo the wish he expressed in his Epitaph:

That he who many a year with toil of breath
 Found death in life, may here find life in death!
 Mercy for praise - to be forgiven for fame
 He asked, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou
 the same. (i)

(i) The Literature of England;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson;
 Volume II

Though the revolutionary ardours of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey cooled, new hearts were set on fire by the torch of revolution which had been lighted during their childhood. Though Byron and Shelley were not directly affected by the upheaval itself, the revolutionary ideas did not leave them untouched. They lived in a time of great moral confusion, as Edward Dowson points out. "At this time truth and justice were painfully divided between the party of order and the party of progress. There was no thinker, no man of action who could bring together and co-ordinate the several fragments of truth...., It was hard at such times to find a faith, and the danger was great that a mere assertion of egoism and self-will might take the place of faith." (i)

So it was with Byron. No religious teaching guided his intellect or controlled the impulses of his heart. So violent was his revolt against Christianity that his attitude has been given the name of Satanism. (ii) Byron was unfortunate in his ancestry and early training. With a spendthrift libertine father, and an impetuous and capricious mother, the good and

(i) The French Revolution; (ii) A History of English and English Literature; • Literature; Legouis and Dowden. and Cazamian

generous impulses of his heart lacked direction,
and the evil tendencies were allowed to run riot,
with the inevitable result:

And thus untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned. (i)

During his college days Byron came under the sceptical influence of Voltaire and Gibbon. He retained his belief in God, though not the Christian God, but a strange god of his own creation. He believed that the mystery of creation had in it something sinister, because mankind was miserable and God seemed to be utterly indifferent to the woes of His creatures. Since the purpose of this universe was shrouded in mystery, it was hard to know where man's hopes should be placed, to what his strivings should be directed. The only thing man could be sure of was the throb of his senses; the gratification of the senses was then the only indubitable pleasure. So Byron gratified to the full the abnormal sensuality which he had inherited, and paid the penalty in the inevitable satiety, disgust, and melancholy which follows such conduct.

(i) Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III;
The Works of Byron;
MacMillan Edition

Though an aristocrat, Byron was sympathetic with the Revolution; and was keenly resentful of the reaction which had set in. "I have simplified my politics into a detestation of all existing governments", he declared. (i) This hatred was extended to religion, law, and conventions - to everything which was generally regarded with veneration and esteem. His life and writings were a glorification of the proud hero who rises in revolt and scorn against society - the strong individual who uses his right to wrest happiness for himself from a world peopled with cowardly, timorous souls. Thus is his poetry he idolized all revolters against the moral and social order, people like Cain and Manfred who seek happiness in abandonment to personal passion, in disregard for all law whether human or divine. Byron loved freedom intensely, and to him freedom was the right of the individual to live as a law unto himself.

During the course of his life, Byron was profoundly affected by both Rousseau and Voltaire. He had the overweening egotism of Rousseau, as well as his interest in nature, his revolutionary tendencies,

(i) A History of English Literature;
Buchan

and his scorn of conventions. From Voltaire he learned much of his cynicism and his tendency to scoff at beliefs which are held sacred by others. "By a sort of miracle", says a Swiss professor, "Byron unites in his spirit the two opposing types of Voltaire and Rousseau." (i)

Even in his youth Byron felt the melancholy which follows sin. In Hours of Idleness he writes:

Few are my years, and yet I feel

The World was ne'er design'd for me:

Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal

The hour when man must cease to be?

Once I beheld a splendid dream,

A visionary scene of bliss:

Truth! - wherefore did thy hated beam

Awake me to a world like this? (ii)

In 1809 Byron began the journey of two years which he describes in the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. This poem tells of the adventurous voyage of a young chieftain whose race "had been glorious in another day."

(i) English Literature;
Brother Leo

(ii) The Works of Byron;
MacMillan Edition.

Worse than Adversity the Childe befell;
 He felt the fulness of Satiety.
 Then loathed he in his native land to dwell,
 Which seemed to him more lone than
 Eremite's sad cell.
 For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,
 Nor made atonement when he did amiss. (1)

This early melancholy is to some extent a pose. The fierce passions which he could not control he turned into a source of self-glorification. Childe Harold won for its author immediate fame, and made of him the petted darling of fashionable society. The Byronic melancholy became the fashion among young men, who assumed the gloomy and mysterious air of their hero.

Discovering that his licentious course was not bringing him happiness, Byron decided to marry an innocent young girl, Anne Isabella Milbank, who agreed to the union because of Byron's pleading that it was the only hope for his reform. The marriage ended miserably as the shocked young wife discovered the depths of her husband's vileness.

(1) The Works of Byron;
 MacMillan Edition.

Their separation and the ensuing scandal caused a revulsion in the general feeling, and Byron, now loaded with abuse, left England forever.

It was after this upheaval that Byron wrote the third and fourth cantos of Childe Harold. The half-fantastic melancholy of the first and second cantos has now deepened into acute suffering and bitterness. He now sounds more powerfully the notes of remorse and hopelessness, though defying the censure of the world.

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
 In fatal penitence, and in the blight
 Of our own soul turn all our blood to tears.
 And colour things to come with hues of Night;
 The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
 To those that walk in darkness: on the sea
 The boldest steer but where their ports invite -
 But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,
 Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored
 ne'er shall be. (1)

Byron is guilty and wishes the world to know he is guilty. His abnormal pride finds expression

(1) The Works of Byron;
 MacMillan Edition

in a craving for a greatness and strangeness in crime, an impelling urge to experience the forbidden. In his dramas he portrays only one hero - Byron, as he seemed to himself. His characters are all proud, lonely spirits, mysteriously wicked.

Manfred is a story of crime, remorse, and unconquerable pride. Haunted by remorse for some unspeakable crime, Manfred seeks relief through the indulgence of the senses. Loathing himself and all mankind, he seeks refuge in oblivion. He defies the abbot who tries to lead him to repentance, as well as the demons who try to torment him with thoughts of eternal punishment.

there is no power in holy men
 Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
 Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
 Nor agony - nor, greater than all these,
 The innate torture of that deep Despair,
 Which is Remorse without the fear of Hell,
 But all in all sufficient to itself
 Would make a hell of Heaven - can exorcise
 From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
 Of its own sins - wrongs - sufferance- and
 revenge

Upon itself; there is no future pang
 Can deal that justice on the self-condemned
 He deals on his own soul. (1)

This same desolation is to be found in The Two Foscari in which Byron chafes at the frustration of the individual will.

All is low,
 And false, and hollow-clay from first to last,
 The prince's urn no less than potter's vessel.
 Our fame is in men's breath; our durance upon days,
 Our days on seasons; our whole being on
 Something which is not us! - So, we are all slaves.
 The greatest as the meanest - nothing rests
 Upon our will; the will itself no less
 Depends upon a straw than on a storm;
 And when we think we lead we are most led,
 And still towards death, a thing which comes
 as much
 Without our act or choice as birth, so that
 Methinks we must have sinned in some old world,
 And this is hell; the best is that it is not
 Eternal. (1)

(1) The Works of Byron;
 MacMillan Edition

Blasphemous indeed is Byron's Cain, in which the author tries to justify man's revolt against God. Lucifer takes Cain on a flight through space and shows him that the God whom his parents and brother worship is really a tyrant who tries to keep in ignorance the creatures whom He had brought into being only to destroy. The murder is committed not through envy of Abel, but from rage and fury against the inadequacy of his state and his conceptions - a rage which discharges itself rather against life and the author of life than against the mere living. (i)

The futility of Byron's search for happiness along forbidden paths may be seen in his two pathetic birthday inscriptions. On his thirty-third birthday he writes:

Through life's dull road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragged to three-and-thirty.
What have these years left to me?
Nothing - except thirty-three. (ii)

Three years later, shortly before his death, he writes one of the saddest poems in English literature:

(i) Letter to Moore, Nov. 3, 1821; (ii) The Works of Byron;
The Works of Byron MacMillan Edition.

My days are in the yellow leaf;

The flowers and fruits of Love are gone:

The worm, the canker, and the grief

Are mine alone! (i)

We may say of Byron what he has his abbot say
of Manfred:

This should have been a noble creature: he

Hath all the energy which would have made

A goodly frame of glorious elements

Had they been wisely mingled; as it is

It is an awful chaos. (i)

Like his friend Byron, Shelley was also a revolutionist. He was intensely interested in the rights of man, and in spite of the setback to the hopes for a universal brotherhood, he believed that the dawn of a new era was approaching. "Mankind appears to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change." (ii) Shocked at the evil and misery which he saw around him, Shelley blamed the laws and institutions of the country for this sorry state. He decided that since the Christian religion had been

(i) The Works of Byron; (ii) Preface to the Revolt of Islam;
MacMillan Edition The Works of Byron.

established for many centuries and hatred and injustice still held sway, the Christian religion must be false and therefore must be abolished.

The mind of Shelley was formed by Godwin. While still a school-boy at Eton he read Political Justice, and his diaries show that scarcely a year passed in which he did not re-read it. (1) Shelley, with his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg, was expelled from University for the publication of a pamphlet entitled The Necessity of Atheism. Shortly after this he entered into that ill-fated marriage with Harriet Westbrook, whom he later deserted for Mary Godwin. Godwin's doctrines were bearing their bitter fruit.

It was chiefly Godwin who taught Shelley to hate all established institutions, to believe that reason was the only basis for morality, and who taught him the doctrine of perfectibility. Religion it was which kept man in a state of ignorance. Do away with faith, he taught; let reason be the guide, and man will speedily do away with all artificial institutions such as laws, customs, private property, and matrimony. Freed from all such restraints, and following his natural bent, man would become morally

(1) Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle;
H. N. Brailsford

perfect. It is Shelley who finds poetic expression for Godwin's doctrines. As Mr. Brailsford says: "Shelley is Godwin's fertile garden. From another standpoint he is the desert which Godwin laid waste." (i)

Queen Mab is indeed Godwin in verse. This poem is a violent expression of revolutionary faith. The peace of nature has been broken by the trappings of men, the greed of commerce, the tyranny of kings and priests.

Kings, priests and statesmen blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. (ii)

Terrible indeed is the description of the priests, and most blasphemous that of the God Whom they preach. The poet sees a new era of freedom, peace, love, and happiness about to dawn - an era in which all power will be rejected.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject, not the citizen: for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands.

(i) Shelley, Godwin and
Their Circle;
H.N. Brailsford

(ii) The Poetical Works
of Shelley;
Rossetti Edition.

Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
 Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
 Power, like a desolating pestilence,
 Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
 Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
 Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
 a mechanized automaton. (i)

The joy of the future is revealed by the Fairy
 Queen:

The present now is past;
 And those events that desolate the earth
 Have faded from the memory of Time.

.....

O human spirit! spur thee to the goal
 Where virtue fixes universal peace.

.....

The habitable earth is full of bliss. (i)

The sorrows of his life, most of them brought on
 by his own actions, led Shelley to doubt the doctrine
 that reason is a sufficient guide. He, the enlightened,
 had not found the happiness which he had sought, but

(1) Queen Mab;
 The Poetical Works of Shelley;
 Rossetti Edition

only misery, regrets, and unhappy memories. Thus he writes: "This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk and dispenses them from thinking". (1) Though believing that kings and priests were evils to be dispensed with, Shelley came to the conclusion that their overthrow would be gradual. It would be accomplished not only by the enlightenment of the understanding, but the feeling and imagination must play their part in the redemption of man. In the Revolt of Islam the poet describes this revolution as he thinks it should be - unselfish and bloodless.

In Prometheus Unbound Shelley expresses with more intensity the conceptions upon which he based his hopes for the future happiness of mankind. In this choral drama, man is symbolized by Prometheus, the gentle, heroic soul thirsting for freedom and happiness, who is chained and tortured by Jupiter, the ruler of Heaven. Eventually Jupiter is overthrown by Demogorgon. Prometheus is unchained and united with Asia, the spirit of love, and thus victory is achieved. Injurious and obnoxious

(1) Essay on Life;
Quoted in Guide Through the Romantic Movement;
Bernbaum.

institutions which flourished under Jupiter have
now been destroyed, and man is free:

Those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,
Which under many a name and many a form,
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world.

.....

The man remains,-

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man. (1)

Prometheus, chained to his rock, because he
loved, suffered, and defied, has by some mysterious
magic of destiny brought salvation to man. To
suffer, to forgive, to hope, and above all to
defy - that was Shelley's idea of the duty of man:

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;

(1) Prometheus Unbound;
The Poetical Works of Shelley;
Rossetti Edition.

Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory. (1)
 But hope for the eventual perfectibility of man
 in this world could not bring joy to the soul of
 the poet. This restless, perturbed spirit, fired with
 enthusiasm for reforming the world, could find no
 true comfort in sorrow, no strength in weakness,
 because he had cut himself off from the tender mercy
 and love of God our Father. Utterly weary of life,
 he tried to end it by swallowing a potion of laudanum.(11)
 His attempted suicide was discovered in time to save
 his life. Shelley gives expression to the sorrow
 and anguish which overcame him in Stanzas Written
in Dejection Near Naples.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
 Nor peace within nor calm around;
 Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
 The sage in meditation found,
 And walked with inward glory crowned;
 Nor fame nor power nor love nor leisure .

(1) Prometheus Unbound;
 The Poetical Works of Shelley;
 Rossetti Edition.

(11) English Literature;
 Brother Leo.

Others I see whom these surround -
 Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;-
 To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
 Even as the winds and waters are;
 I could lie down like a tired child,
 And weep away the life of care
 Which I have borne and yet must bear,-
 Till death like sleep might steal on me,
 And I might feel in the warm air
 My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
 Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony. (i)

Three years later the poet laments the loss of
 the measure of happiness which had once been his:
 Out of the day and night
 A joy has taken flight:
 Fresh Spring, and Summer, Autumn, and Winter hoar,
 Move my faint heart with grief,- but with delight
 No more, oh never more. (ii)

Shelley had many noble and generous impulses,
 but lacking religious guidance, his life was a

(i)The Poetical Works of Shelley; (ii)Lament; The Poetical
 Rossetti Edition. Works of Shelley.

succession of errors: he became an undutiful son,
an unfaithful husband, a preacher of atheism and
rebellion. Of him A. Clutton Brock says in
Essays on Literature and Life: He was "like an angel who
has lost his way back to heaven; and in his poetry,
as in the music of Mozart, we hear the wailing,
the questioning, the beatings of wings in the void." (1)

(1) English Literature;
Brother Leo.

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CHAPTER FIVE

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CHAPTER SIX

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THE PATHFINDERS

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Protestantism had accomplished its work.. Cut off from the life-giving Sacraments of the Catholic Church, men had drawn farther and farther away from God. Their minds, lacking the light of the Holy Spirit, sought truth in the dwellings of deceit. Their hearts sought rest in the pleasures of the sense and the gratification of inordinate desires. Ridicule was heaped upon the Church, and even the existence of God was denied. At one time man's natural goodness was overestimated, later no good was seen in him, nor did the future offer any hope for his happiness. Tossed by doubt and torn by anxiety, man wondered if life was worth living.

Yet through the darkest night some stars have shone. Though not a Catholic, George Herbert lived close enough to the age of faith to be guided by the rays of its light which still reached him, and which revealed to him the fact that the

human heart can find rest in God alone. Deprived of his Catholic heritage. Herbert, born near the close of the sixteenth century, nevertheless led a saintly life as an Anglican minister, after renouncing a distinguished career. In The Pulley sometimes called The Gifts of God, Herbert pictures God creating man, pouring His gifts upon him, but in His wisdom withholding one.

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone, of all His treasure
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My Creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me.
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast. (i)

(i) English Verse;
The World's Classics, Vol. II;
Peacock

Herbert's poem The Collar tells the story of a soul in rebellion against the restraints of religion. We think of Francis Thompson's Hound of Heaven as we read the beautiful climax:

But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wild

At every word,

Methought I heard one calling, Child;

And I replied, My Lord. (1)

Among the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we find some who were Catholics and who kept alight the torch of faith. Repeatedly their voices sound a warning against the rising spirit of nationalism and the lust of power.

James Shirley, an Anglican minister who became an ardent Catholic, reminds us that

The glories of our blood and state

Are shadows, not substantial things;

There is no armour against fate;

Death lays his icy hand on kings.

Sceptre and Crown

Must tumble down,

And in the dust be equal made

With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

(1) English Verse;
The World's Classics, Vol. II;
Peacock

and that

Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust. (i)

Francis Beaumont utters the same warning in
his poem Lines on the Tombs in Westminster:

Mortality, behold and fear!
What a change of flesh is here!
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones;
Here they lie had realms and lands,
Who now want strength to stir their hands;
Where from their pulpits sealed with dust,
They preach, "In greatness is no trust," (ii)

William Habington reads "The Almighty's Mysteries...
in the large volume of the skies", and describes
what there he sees:

It tells the conqueror
That far-stretched pow'r,
Which his proud dangers traffic for,
Is but the triumph of an hour.

(i) Our Blood and State; (ii) The Golden Book of
The Golden Book of Catholic Catholic Poetry.
Poetry; Noyes.

Other nations yet undiscovered, he says
 May be let out to scourge his sin,
 Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall
 Their ruin have;
 For as yourselves your empires fall,
 And every kingdom hath a grave. (i)

How different from the Puritan gloom and
 pessimistic view of religion is the tender devotion
 of the Jesuit martyr, Father Southwell, to the Divine
 Child:

While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot
 live amiss.
 Love's sweetest mark, laud's highest theme, man's
 most desired light,
 To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live
 in Him delight.
 He mine by gift, I His by debt, thus each to
 other due;
 First Friend He was, best Friend He is, all
 times will try Him true.

(i) Nox Nocti Indicat Scientiam;
 The Golden Book of Catholic Poetry;
 Noyes.

Though young yet wise, though small yet strong;

though man yet God He is;

As wise He knows, as strong He can, as God He

loves to bless.

His knowledge rules, His strength defends, His

love doth cherish all;

His birth our joy, His life our light. His death

our end of thrall. (1)

John Dryden was converted to the Catholic Church at the age of fifty-five. After following false lights for so many years he finally found his way home, and thus gives testimony to the truth of the Church:

But, gracious God, how well dost thou provide

For erring judgment an unerring guide!

Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light,

A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.

O teach me to believe Thee thus concealed,

And search no further than Thyself revealed;

But her alone for my director take

Whom Thou hast promised never to forsake!

My thoughtless youth was winged with vain desires,

(1) A Child My Choice;
The World's Great Catholic Poetry;
Walsh.

My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,
 Followed false lights; and when their glimpse
 was gone,
 My pride struck out new sparkles of her own. (i)

Because of his Catholic faith, Dryden was deprived of his laureateship and other official posts. However, he was ready to renounce his "darling fame" and all the joys of earth rather than lose eternal happiness.

If joys hereafter must be purchased here
 With loss of all that mortals hold so dear,
 Then welcome infamy and public shame,
 And, last, a long farewell to worldly fame.

.....

And what thou didst and dost so dearly prize,
 That fame, that darling fame. make that thy
 sacrifice. (ii)

Fainter grows the voice of Catholic song during the eighteenth century, and the note of bitterness is increasingly heard. A new and wide-spread scepticism in matters of religion bewildered the minds

(i) The Church's Testimony; (ii) Conversion;
 The world's Great Catholic Poetry; Walsh.

and depressed the hearts of men. Then the butchery of the French Revolution was at an end, and the hopes of a new era of brotherhood and peace based on the goodness of the natural man lay shattered, a great longing arose for the things of the spirit. The nostalgia for the days of faith resulted in a renewed interest in things mediaeval.

It was this awakened interest in the Middle Ages which played a large part in the conversion of the Cambridge scholar Kenelm Digby. To those who in their mad search for freedom urged the destruction of all religion, Digby proclaims that true liberty is found in the Catholic faith:

Its unobtrusive force leaves you so free
That none besides seems blessed with liberty.
Dear Heart! it is not a Procrustean bed
Whate'er by foes or silly friends is said;
The very name denotes it is for all,
And not more for the great than for the small.

.....

So like a wise and tender mother, still
Regarding less the action than the will,

Which, when it is in harmony with truth,
For all Faith cares may have its freaks in sooth.

.....

And one result of its great Presence there,
Of which or soon or late, men are aware.
Is that it tends to happiness on earth,
And to serene and constant thoughts gives birth. (i)

Twenty years after Digby's entry into the Church,
John Henry Newman received an answer to his earnest
plea:

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom

Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home -

Lead Thou me on. (ii)

Safe at home in the bosom of Christ's Church,
Cardinal Newman found the peace of soul for which he
longed. In his search for truth he discovered the
difference between substance and shadow.

They do but grope in learning's pedant round,

Who on the fantasies of sense bestow

An idol substance, bidding us bow low

(i) The Catholic Faith;
The world's Great
Catholic Poetry; Walsh.

(ii) The Pillar of the Cloud;
The Golden Book of
Catholic Poetry; Noyes.

Before those shades of being which are found,
 Stirring or still, on man's brief trial ground;
 As if such shapes and moods, which come and go,
 Had aught of Truth or Life in their poor show,
 To sway or judge, and skill to sane or wound.
 Son of immortal seed, high-destined man!
 Know thy dread gift, - a creature, yet a cause:
 Each mind is its own centre, and it draws
 Home to itself, and moulds in its thought's span
 All outward things, the vassals of its will,
 Aided by Heaven, by earth unthwarted still. (i)

The French Revolution, which aimed at the destruction
 of religion, inadvertently stimulated Catholicism in
 England. Some forty English Catholics schools and
 colleges abroad now returned to English soil, and
 persecuted French Catholics came in large numbers to
 England. In 1793 the number of clerical refugees
 alone numbered almost five thousand. (ii) These exiles
 set about the erection of churches for their own
 use; the congregations, which were at first French,
 gradually became almost entirely English. Even after
 the exodus which began in 1800 many French priests

(i) Substance and Shadow;
 The Golden Book of
 Catholic Poetry; Noyes.

(ii) The Catholic Revival
 in England;
 J. J. O'Connor.

remained in England to devote their lives to missionary work there. The increase in their numbers and the abolishment of some of the penal laws brought increased confidence to the English Catholics, who ventured more boldly into the open.

The Catholic Revival appeared. Of this period Shuster says:

"Wherever the religious spirit was strong, whether in poet or preacher, there developed a concern with the beautiful faith of the past, with its sacraments and saints, with its manifest confidence in the voice of God. The members of a creed long despised as impotent and ridiculous recruited some of the most brilliant minds of Britain...Singers took up the Catholic lyre with abounding and brilliant gifts. Christendom, as the Great Tradition that guarded the rights and guided the inspirations of common humanity, won crowds of men by its exposition of the beauties of faith and by the honesty of its literary effort." (1)

Aubrey de Vere and his friend Coventry Patmore,

(1) The Catholic Spirit in Modern
English Literature;
Shuster.

both converts to the Church, recognized in the Incarnation of Christ the bridge across the gulf which separated fallen man from an outraged God. They saw that it was the Incarnation which gave us the right to hope, the right to happiness. This mystery Aubrey de Vere honours in his May Carols, which he insists is not to be regarded as a group of poems, but as one poem on the Incarnation, dedicated to our Immaculate Mother.

Coventry Patmore, an agnostic in his earliest years, when eleven years of age was inspired by his reading with the thought "What an exceedingly fine thing it would be if there really was a God." (i) With deepening insight, he found his way into the Catholic Church, no more to be troubled by the shadows of doubt. He became engrossed in the subject of the identity of love and religion. In The Unknown Eros he portrays the analogy between the love of man and wife and the love of God for the human soul. Human love, Patmore points out, does not necessarily interfere with Divine love, but may

be a means to a greater love of God and to the joys of eternal blessedness.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was another favoured soul who through the mists of doubt caught the gleam which led him safely home. In his early years he delighted in the reading of poetry, separating himself from his sportive schoolmates. His earliest poems show traces of that melancholy displayed by Keats and others who isolate themselves from the world. At Oxford he was influenced by the rationalistic current of the time, but his religious instinct saved him. He became a Catholic in 1866, and two years later entered the Society of Jesus

Convinced that all was not too much to give to the Lover of Souls, the young convert resolved on the complete immolation of his senses in return for the eternal happiness promised to the faithful followers of Christ.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb -
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
 And find the uncreated light;
 This ruck and reel which you remark
 Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

.....

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
 That want the yield of plushy sward,
 But you shall walk the golden street
 And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
 And now the marriage feast begun,
 And lily-coloured clothes provide
 Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun. (i)

The complete renunciation of the world included the burning of his poems. We are grateful to the Superiors who later requested him to resume his writing. A lover of nature, keenly sensitive to all its variations and moods, Father Hopkins bequeathed us delightful poems which show forth not the worship of nature but the worship of the God of nature. Thus in Pied Beauty he says:

(i) The Habit of Perfection;
 The Literature of England, Vol. II;
 Woods, Watt, Anderson.

Glory be to God for dappled things -

For skies of couple-color as a brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout
that swim

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow,
and plow;

And all trades. their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows
how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise Him. (1)

In God's Grandeur the poet writes:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out¹, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is smeared with trade; bleared,

(1) The Literature of England;
Vol. II; Woods, Watt, Anderson.

smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's
 smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with
 Ah! bright wings. (i)

There was no cause for regret in such a choice
 as that of Father Hopkins. His last words before
 his death were, "I am so happy, I am so happy. " (ii)
 No doubt he was given some secret assurance of Our
 Lady's answer to his prayer:

In the gardens of God, in the daylight devine,
 Find me a place by thee, Mother of mine.

.....

In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine,
 Show me thy Son, Mother, Mother of mine. (iii)

(i) The Literature of England; (iii) Rosa Mystica; The
 Vol.II; Woods, Watt, Anderson. Golden Book of Catholic
 (ii) Quoted in The Catholic Poetry; Noyes.
 Literary Revival ; Alexander.

The last years of the nineteenth century brought a pathetic group of broken spirits and wrecked souls into the arms of Mother Church for comfort and pardon. Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, and Ernest Dowson were among the youth of this period who set out to taste life to the full, but who eventually discovered its bitterness when lived on the naturalistic level.

Oscar Wilde put into practice the doctrine of the evolutionary scientists who claimed that the moral law was merely a convention to be dispensed with according to utility. His striving for moral liberty and freedom of self-expression led him to the edge of the pit of despair. To save himself from final disaster he cries out:

Come down, O Christ, and help me! reach Thy hand
For I am drowning in a stormier sea

Than Simon on Thy Lake of Galilee:
The wine of life is spilled upon the sand.
My heart is as some famine-murdered land

Whence all good things have perished utterly,
And well I know my soul in Hell must lie
If I this night before God's throne should stand. (1)

(1) E. Tenebris:
The World's Great Catholic Poetry;
Walsh.

Aubrey Beardsley says of his entry into the Catholic Church: " I feel like someone who has been standing waiting on the doorstep of a house upon a cold day, and who cannot make up his mind to knock for a long while. At last the door is thrown open, and all the warmth of kind hospitality makes glad the frozen traveler...It is such a rest to be gathered after all my wanderings." (i)

In another letter he writes; "The Blessed Sacrament was brought to me here this morning. It was a moment of profound joy, of gratitude and emotion. I gave myself up entirely and utterly to feelings of happiness, and even the knowledge of my own unworthiness only seemed to add fuel to the flame that warmed and illuminated my heart. Oh, how earnestly I have prayed that the flame may never die out." (i)

Of himself Ernest Dowson says that he

"Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng

.....

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine. (ii)

Stricken with consumption, as was Aubrey Beardley

(i) Last Days of Aubrey Beardley; (ii) Non sum qualis eram
 Isabel C. Clarke; Thought; bonae sub regno Cynarae
 Vol. VII, No. 4 Catholic Literary
 Revival; Alexander.

Dowson likewise hastened the coming of death by a life of indulgence. Frustrated in his search for happiness, and burdened with sin, he turned at last to the Good Shepherd. His gratitude for the mercy of God is expressed in several poems. In Extreme Unction he reveals his appreciation of the comforting strength of this last sacrament.

Upon the eyes, the lips, the feet
On all the passages of sense,
The atoning oil is spread with sweet
Renewal of lost innocence.

The feet that lately ran so fast
To meet desire, are soothly sealed;
The eyes that were so often cast
On vanity are touched and healed. (1)

Hope has returned to the human heart. The note of true joy enters again into English Literature in the poetry of those who have found the lost secret of happiness. It was quite appropriate that Wilfred Meynell should give the title "Merry England" to his magazine, which bore the device "We shall try

(1) The World's Great Catholic Poetry;
Walsh.

to revive in our own hearts and in the hearts of others, the enthusiasm of the Christian Faith." (1)
 He understood that only with the return of the Catholic religion could England shake off her pessimism and be again "Merrie England."

The Meynell home was an example of the truly Catholic home where the sacrament of marriage united in the bonds of love husband and wife and gave them the grace to raise in the love of God their beautiful family of eight. In his loving devotion the father prays for the eternal happiness of his little flock:

I saw the shepherd fold the sheep,
 With all the little lambs that leap.

O Shepherd Lord, so I would be
 Folded with all my family.

Or go they early, come they late
 Their mother and I must count them eight.

And how, for us, were any heaven
 If we, sore-stricken, saw but seven?

(1) The World's Great Catholic Poetry;
 Walsh.

Kind Shepherd, as of old Thou'lt run
And fold at need a straggling one. (1)

The mother, Alice Meynell, a convert to the
Catholic faith, paints a picture of herself in
the lines she addresses to another:

She walks - the lady of my delight -
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
She guards them from the steep.
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.

She roams maternal hills and bright,
Dark valleys safe and deep.
Into that tender breast at night
The chasest stars may peep.
She walks-the lady of my delight -
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.

(1) The Folded Flock;
The Golden Book of Catholic Poetry;
Noyes.

She is so circumspect and right;
 She has her soul to keep.
 She walks - the lady of my delight -
 A shepherdess of sheep. (1)

This home was the rendezvous of all the Catholic writers of the day, and to it came Francis Thompson as to a haven after the storm. Declared to be temperamentally unfitted for the priesthood for which he longed, and feeling an insurmountable repugnance for the dissecting room to which his father's wishes consigned him, Thompson fled from his cultured home and became a penniless waif on the streets of London. Driven to despair by poverty and sickness he fell a victim to the dread opium habit. For three years he endured this wretched life of which he later says:

Once -in that night-mare time which still doth haunt
 My dreams, a grim unbidden visitant -
 Forlorn, and faint, and stark,
 I had endured through watches of the dark
 The abashless inquisition of each star,
 Yea, was the outcast mark
 Of all those heavenly passers' scrutiny;
 Stood bound and helplessly

(1) The Shepherdess;
 The Golden Book of Catholic Poetry;
 Noyes.

For time to shake his barbed minutes at me;
 Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
 In night's slow-wheeled car;
 Until the tardy dawn dragged me at length
 From under those dread wheels; and bled of strength,
 I waited the inevitable last. (i)

A poem which he sent to Wilfred Meynell's magazine Merry England aroused the interest of the editors, and eager hands were outstretched to help the outcast poet, then in the depths of despair and contemplating suicide. On the advice of his benefactor, Thompson went to Storrington Priory in Sussex, where he found peace as well as the courage to renounce narcotics. On his return to London most of his time was spent in the Meynell home as a friend and honoured guest. Here he found encouragement and inspiration.

It was in these surroundings that Thompson wrote his most famous poem, The Hound Of Heaven, a record of his own spiritual experience. The exceptional appeal of the poem is due in part, no doubt, to the fact that innumerable other souls

(i) Complete Poetical Works of
 Francis Thompson;
 Boni and Liveright.

find in it a record of their own rash flight from God. Here it is not man's quest for God which is presented, but God's quest for man. God is the pursuer under the daring title of the Hound of Heaven. He is not only the God Who awaits with outstretched arms to pardon the repentant sinner, but He is the urgent Lover Who unceasingly pursues the erring soul, "down the arches of the years" and "across the margin of the world."

Thompson represents himself as first seeking happiness in the love of his fellow-men:

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,

By many a hearted casement curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities.

....

But, if one little casement parted wide,

The gust of His approach would clash it to.

All things in which the author sought a selfish happiness betrayed him, because the purpose of their creation was to draw souls to God:

I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,

In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
 Their traitorous trueness, and their
 loyal deceit.

Then in the fellowship of little children the
 author placed his hopes. only to be again disappointed:

I sought no more that after which I strayed
 In face of man or maid;
 But still within the little children's eyes
 Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me!
 I turned me to them very wistfully;
 But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
 With dawning answers there,
 Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.

To the beauties of nature the poet now turns to
 slake the thirsting of his heart:

"Come then, ye other children, Nature's - share
 With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;

.....

So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one -
 Drew the bolt of Natures secrecies.

.....

But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
 In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
 For ah! we know not what each other says,

These things and I; in sound I speak -
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by
 silences.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drought.

In his wretchedness he hears the voice of the
 Pursuer:

"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me!"

His gift of song was the only hope left to the
 poet, but the fragile strands of poetry cannot support
 the world made heavy with sadness:

Even the linked fantasies, in whose blooming twist
 I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
 Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
 For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Thus all things fail the soul who flies from
 God. Suddenly, when he is utterly overcome, the
 poet hears the voice of the God of Love:

"Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,

Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take

Not for thy harms,

But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.

All which thy child's mistake

Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

The secret of pain and frustration are revealed
as

Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly,
and the poet understands that the yearning of his
heart can never be satisfied with anything less than
God:

"I am He Whom thou seekest!" (i)

Surrender to the love of God, Thompson has discovered, does not mean the forfeiting of all other joys, but the complete restoration of them; he has understood the meaning of the promise, "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (ii)

Thompson, too, had his visions of a new era, but

(i) Complete Poetical Works of Francis Thompson; Boni and Liveright. (ii) Saint Matthew; Chapter VI - 33.

they differed widely from those of Shelley and other disciples of Godwin. He looked forward confidently to the triumph of the Church over the materialistic doctrines which were stifling all true joy and hope in the human heart. One of his last poems he addresses to the Church, the guardian of truth, fortelling a fearful struggle ending in her glory.

Lift up thy head and hark what sounds are in
the dark,

For His feet are coming to thee on the waters.

O Lily of the King? I shall not see, that sing,

I shall not see the hour of thy queening!

But my song shall see, and wake like a flower
that dawn-winds shake

And sigh with joy the adours of its meaning.

O Lily of the King, remember then the thing

That this dead mouth sang; and thy daughters.

As they dance before His way, sing there on
the Day

What I sang when the Night was on the waters! (1)

Like Thompson, enlightened Catholics have always

(1) *Lilium Regis*;
Complete Poetical Works of
Francis Thompson
Boni and Liveright.

understood the true purpose of pain and suffering. They realize that these disguised blessings free our hearts from the pleasures of earth and draw them closer to the God of Love. Helen Parry Eden shows her understanding of the high purpose of sorrow in the following lines:

Of Sorrow, 'tis as saints have said -
That his ill-savoured lamp shall shed
A light to Heaven, when, blown about
By the world's vain and windy rout,
The candles of delight burn out.

....

Sweet Sorrow, play a grateful part,
Break me the marble of my heart
And of its fragments pave a street
Where, to my bliss, myself may meet
One hastening with pierced feet. (1)

The beautiful virtues of patience, courage, sympathy, hope, and many others, would be lost to this earth if pain and suffering did not exist. There would be no heroes in the physical or spiritual order without pain to be endured or obstacles to be

(1) Sorrow;
The World's Great Catholic Poetry;
Walsh

overcome; there would be no Christian knight to bravely fight for the cause of his King.

This was Gilbert Chesterton's ideal of life - the Christian knight on the royal quest for eternity, a quest attended by all the thrills of high adventure. His poems tell of battles, but all are symbolic of the battle being waged in our world to-day - the struggle to save our civilization from the forces of paganism. He calls to Christians to-day to

Follow the star that lives and leaps,

Follow the sword that sings,

For we go gathering heathen men,

A terrible harvest, ten by ten

As the wrath of the last red autumn - then

When Christ reaps down the kings. (i)

At sixteen years of age Chesterton was an Agnostic as he relates in Orthodoxy. (ii) Delving into spiritualism and mixing with evil companions. Chesterton ventured close to the abyss of spiritual ruin. In his Autobiography he says of this period of his youth:

"There was a time when I had reached that condition of moral anarchy within, in which a man says in the worlds of Wilde that 'Atys with the blood-

(i) Ballad of the White Horse; (ii) Gilbert Keith Chesterton;
The Collected Poems of Maisie Ward.
G. K. Chesterton;
Dodd, Mead & Co.

stained knife were better than the thing I am'...I had an overpowering impulse to record or draw horrible ideas and images. plunging deeper and deeper as in a blind spiritual suicide." (i)

Fortunately he drew back in time to avoid the disaster which threatened him. His questioning mind led him to the belief in a personal God. Chesterton felt the need for gratitude for personal gifts, and thought that the proper form of thanks was humility and restraint in addition to obedience. All good, Chesterton vaguely believed, was a remnant to be treasured out of some primordial ruin. Like Crusoe, man had saved his goods from a wreck. "All this", he says, "I felt and the age gave me no encouragement to feel it. And all the time I had not even thought of Christian theology." (ii) It was only when he found that the answers which he was discovering for his own questioning all conformed with the doctrine of Christianity that Chesterton began to turn towards it. This step was completed by his marriage to Frances Blogg, a deeply religious Anglican lady. To her he writes the dedication of his greatest poem:

(i) Autobiography;
G. K. Chesterton

(ii) Orthodoxy;
Quoted in Gilbert Keith
Chesterton;
Maisie Ward.

Wherefore I bring these rhymes to you
 Who brought the cross to me. (i)

Chesterton found life in this age a diseased thing. Pride, ambition, the greed for money are cankers driving peace from society. So he prays:

O God of earth and altar,
 Bow down and hear our cry,
 Our earthly rulers falter,
 Our people drift and die;
 The walls of gold entomb us,
 The swords of scorn divide,
 Take not thy thunder from us,
 But take away our pride. (ii)

It was evident to Chesterton that Christianity to-day, with its personal and national greed, is vastly inferior to the Christianity of the Middle Ages. Far stronger than the economic motive was the all-pervading power of religion. The Catholic religion it was which produced a civilization undreamed of to-day, and to which hungry hearts are turning longingly. In the Short History of England

(i) Ballad of the White Horse; (ii) Ahymn;
 The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton;
 Dodd, Mead & Co.

Chesterton points out that "The English people had been free and happy as a part of this great thing. cultivating their own land, establishing by their Guilds a social scheme based upon 'pity and a craving for equality', building cathedrals and worshipping God....All life was made lovely by 'this prodigious presence of the religious transfiguration in common life', and only began to darken with the successful 'Rebellion of the Rich under Henry VIII'. "(1) This rebellion was the great crime which darkened English history.

Chesterton was really a Catholic at heart when he wrote his poems The Battle of Lepanto and The Ballad of the White Horse, portraying Don John of Austria flinging back the heathen forces of Islam, and King Alfred struggling heroically to preserve his Christian land from the ravages of the heathen Danes. In the latter poem we hear, from the mouths of the Danish leaders and King Alfred, the expression of the pagan and the Christian ideal. The pagan philosophy is that of those who "hunger without hope".

(1) G. K. Chesterton;
Maisie Ward.

Elf, the Danish minstrel sings:

"There is always a thing forgotten
When all the world goes well";

....

And soundlessly as an arrow of snow
The arrow of anguish fell. (1)

And Ogier of the Stone and Sling sings in turn:

"And you that sit by the fire are young,
And true love waits for you;
But the king and I grow old, grow old,
And hate alone is true." (1)

Wearily, Guthrum the Danish King takes the harp,
and sad too is his message:

But the hour shall come after his youth,
When a man shall know not tales but truth,
And his heart fail thereat.

When he shall read what is written
So plain in clouds and clods,
Where he shall hunger without hope
Even for evil gods. (1)

....

(1) Ballad of the White Horse;
The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton;
Dodd, Mead & Co.

For this is a heavy matter,
 And the truth is cold to tell;
 Do we not know, have we not heard,
 The soul is like a lost bird,
 The body a broken shell?

And a man hopes, being ignorant,
 Till in white woods apart
 He finds at last the lost bird dead:
 And a man may still lift up his head
 But never more his heart. (1)

Only in inflicting death and devastation can
 the heathen show his power, and even for a short
 while win forgetfulness of the death without hope
 which awaits him. For the pagan there is no
 happiness:

There comes no noise but weeping
 Out of the ancient sky
 And a tear is in the tiniest flower
 Because the gods must die. (1)

When Guthrum's song was ended, Alfred seized

(1) The Ballad of the White Horse;
 The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton

the harp to sing his song of faith and hope:

When God put man in a garden,
 He girt him with a sword,
 And sent him forth a free knight
 That might betray his Lord. (i)

King Alfred tells the sad tale of man's betrayal
 of his God, and the glorious tale of Redemption through
 which joy returned to the world.

For our God hath blessed creation
 Calling it good, I know
 What spirit with whom you blindly band
 Hath blessed destruction with his hand;
 Yet by God's death the stars shall stand
 And the small apples grow. (i)

Chesterton describes the three stages through
 which he passed in his conversion: patronizing the
 Church, discovering the Church, and running away from
 the Church. (ii) In the last phase he was troubled,
 he says, by fears, "fears of something that had the
 finality and simplicity of suicide." Grace for the
 final step was given, and this greatest event of his

(i) Ballad of the White Horse; (ii) The Catholic Church and
 The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton Conversion. Quoted in
 G.K.Chesterton-Maisie Ward.

life took place in 1922. That day he expressed his feelings in his sonnet The Convert:

After one moment when I bowed my head
 And the whole world turned over and came upright,
 And I came out where the old road shone white,
 I walked the ways and heard what all men said
 Forests of tongues, like autumn leaves unshed,
 Being not unlovable but strange and light;
 Old riddles and new creeds, not in despite
 But softly, as men smile about the dead.

The sages have a hundred maps to give
 That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,
 They rattle reason out through many a sieve
 That stores the sand and lets the gold go free:
 And all these things are less than dust to me
 Because my name is Lazarus and I live. (i)

The mystery of the Incarnation had a strong enduring appeal to Chesterton. He understood the message of the angel, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy", (ii) and recognized in the Babe of Bethlehem the source of our happiness, knowing that

(i) The Collected Poems of G.K. Chesterton. (ii) St. Luke; Chapter II -10

without the Incarnation our hearts would be forever
burdened with the hopeless longing for what might
have been. But here in the cave of Bethlehem joy
is born to the world.

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,

His hair was like a light,

(O weary, weary were the world,

But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,

His hair was like a star.

(O stern and cunning are the kings,

But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,

His hair was like a fire,

(O weary, weary is the world,

But here the world's desire.) (i)

Though Chesterton's voice is now silenced,
other Catholic poets continue to spread this message
that only in God can the world's desire be satisfied.
The thirst of the human heart for perfect happiness

(i) The Collected Poems
of G. K. Chesterton

cannot be slaked until man has come into possession of the Supreme Good. The fact that true happiness cannot be attained in this life shows us that the object of man's quest is not among the things of this world. To satisfy this hunger for happiness, man must not rest on the shadows of this world, but he must seek in another world, in the eternal possession of God, the crown of all his hopes. It is this pursuit of God which gives meaning and value to life. Our hearts are made for Him and can find no rest without Him.

There is a quest that calls me
 In nights when I am lone;
 The need to ride where the ways divide
 The unknown from the known.
 I mount what thought is near me
 And soon I reach the place,
 The tenuous rim where the seen grows dim
 And the Sightless hides its face.

I have ridden the wind,
 I have ridden the sea,

I have ridden the moon and stars.
I have set my feet in the stirrup seat
Of a comet coursing Mars.
And everywhere
Thro earth and air
My thought speeds lightning shod,
It comes to a place where checking pace
It cries, 'Beyond lies God.' (1)

(1) Cale Young Rice;
Quoted by Rt. Rev. Fulton J. Sheen in
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