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SOCIAL ENGLAND

# SOCIAL ENGLAND

**A Record of the Progress of the People**

*IN RELIGION LAWS LEARNING ARTS INDUSTRY COMMERCE SCIENCE  
LITERATURE AND MANNERS FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES  
TO THE PRESENT DAY*

*By VARIOUS WRITERS*

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VOLUME I

*FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE ACCESSION OF  
EDWARD THE FIRST*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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A CIVILISED nation has many aspects, and the story of its life might be told in as many ways. But, broadly speaking, the forms under which it presents itself to observation may be reduced to three. We may consider it either as a Society, as a Polity, or as a State among States. The first and simplest conception of it is, of course, as a Society—a body of individuals associated, primarily, for purposes of mutual support in the struggle with the hostile forces of Nature, and of common advantage in the acquisition and distribution of her products. Association, however, necessarily creates rights and duties; from rights and duties spring law and government; with law and government the Polity is born; and from the intercourse of one polity with another arises the still wider conception of the State among States.

Under which of these three aspects we propose to review the life of the English nation in the following pages is sufficiently indicated by the title of the work. It is with our career as a Society, and not as a Polity, nor as a State among States, that this history is concerned. At the outset, however, it may be as well to guard against the risk of any misconception as to the sense in which our title is employed and the limits within which it applies. Every civilised Society is in the nature of an organism, the shape and direction of whose evolution depend in part upon the action of internal forces and in part upon the influence of its surroundings. Among those surroundings the laws and institutions of every such Society form a most important element and play a very potent part. True as it may be that they often owe both their origin and complexion, wholly or in large measure, to the character of the people who devise or who accept them, it is no less true that they react powerfully upon that character and materially affect its development. Still more obvious is it that, whatever may have been a nation's

natural tendencies of growth, they are liable to be profoundly influenced by the nature of its relations with other States—with States from whom it may learn arts and industries or derive wealth—with States whom it may conquer or be conquered by—with States who may strengthen it by alliances or exhaust it in wars. In strictness of language, therefore; the social history of any country is not, and cannot be, absolutely separable from the history of its political events, its legal and administrative institutions, and its international fortunes. The undue prominence formerly given by historians to these matters has produced a reaction, which is, perhaps, in some danger of running to excess; and the influence of politics upon social progress is again, perhaps, beginning to assert itself as a force of greater activity and potency than a certain modern school of historical writers are disposed to acknowledge. “Drum-and-trumpet histories,” no doubt, deserve much of the contempt which the late Mr. Green, by implication, cast upon them in the preface to his famous work; but nevertheless there are passages in the epic of a nation’s life which seem imperatively to require recitation to the strains of these martial instruments. Without such an accompaniment, indeed, the historical narratives would sometimes be not only inadequate, but positively unintelligible.

Yet, although we cannot entirely detach the history of the Society from that of the Polity and State, although we cannot escape the necessity of combining with our narrative of the material, moral, and intellectual progress of the people some parallel record of their politics at home and abroad, we can approximate sufficiently for our present purpose to a separation of the two subjects. It is open to us, and it has been the object aimed at in these pages, to *abstract* from the political, and to *isolate* the social facts of our history wherever this can be done; to deal as concisely as the demands of clearness will permit with matters of war and conquest, of treaty and alliance, of constitutional conflict and dynastic struggle; but to treat at length and in detail of the various stages of our English civilisation, whether as marked by recognisable epochs in moral and intellectual advance, or as indirectly traceable through those accretions of wealth which, by increasing comfort and enlarging leisure, do so much to promote the intellectual development, and, within certain limits, the

moral improvement of peoples. It is possible, and it is here intended, to dwell mainly on such matters as the growth and economic movements of the population, the progressive expansion of industry and commerce, the gradual spread of education and enlightenment, the advance of arts and sciences, the steady diffusion, in short, of all the refining influences of every description which make for the "humane life."

Such a treatment of the history of a people must obviously follow one or other of two methods. Either their forward movement, from the first rude and simple beginnings of Society to the complexity of modern life, may be viewed throughout as a whole; or the progress made by them in all the various departments of human activity may be examined period by period, in detail. In other words, we may take up a position from which we can survey the entire array of our civilising forces in their wide-winged advance; or we may collect reports from those who have separately followed the onward march of each of the great divisions of which the army is composed. Either method has its advantages, and either its drawbacks. The former undoubtedly presents us with a picture more impressive to the eye, but the latter yields results less bewildering to the mind. What is lost to the imagination through the employment of this method is the gain of the understanding, and perhaps no other justification is needed for its adoption in a work of this kind. For it may at least be claimed for a Social History of England compiled on this principle, that if it will not of itself enable the reader to comprehend the entire subject in all its vast proportions, it is the best preparation which he could have for an attempt to grapple with that formidable task. A powerful imagination, aided by exceptional clearness of head and tenacity of memory, might possibly attack so many-sided a subject *en bloc*, with some prospect of success; but for the great majority of mankind a patient study of it, detail by detail, must precede any attempt to survey it as a whole.

There is also, I venture to think, another convenience, and an additional aid to fulness of comprehension, in the method which has been here adopted. By the plan of tracing our social progress through the various departments of activity which sum up the life of a people, that continuous movement from the general to the special, from the simple to the

complex, from unity to multiplicity, which the advance of civilisation involves, and indeed implies, is brought before the reader in, perhaps, the most conspicuous of all possible ways. It "leaps to the eye," so to say, from the very table of contents. As the centuries roll on, the six or seven great categories under which the various forms and forces of social life may at first be divided become unequal to the needs of classification. The accumulating facts under each of them grow too various in character to be massed together without risk of confusion. New activities arise which refuse to class themselves under the old headings. Divisions of the subject throw off subdivisions which themselves require later on to be further subdivided. In every department of our national life there is the same story of evolutionary growth—continuous in some of them, intermittent in others, but unmistakable in all. Industries multiply and ramify; Commerce begets child after child; Art, however slowly in this country as compared with others, diversifies its forms; Learning breaks from its mediæval tutelage and enters upon its world-wide patrimony; Literature, after achieving a poetic utterance the most noble to which man has ever attained, perfects a prose more powerful than that of any living competitor, and more flexible than all save one; and finally, Science, latest of birth, but most marvellous of growth, rises suddenly to towering stature, stretches forth its hundred hands of power, extending immeasurably the reach of human energies, and, through the reaction of a transformed external life upon man's inner nature, profoundly and irreversibly, if still to some extent obscurely, modifies the earthly destinies of the race.

It is surely no reproach to the intellectual faculties of the average modern Englishman that he should require the aids of classification and arrangement to assist him to realise this mighty and manifold advance. To attempt to review the whole line of a moving army through stage after stage of its march might well confuse the perceptions of all save the trained military expert, and dazzle any but the most practised eye. And some such effect could hardly fail to be produced by a Social History of England which, in chapter after chapter, and sometimes even in paragraph after paragraph, should interweave the story of our progress in arts or letters with the record of the growth of our industries and the

expansion of our commerce. It is with the view, as has been said, of avoiding such confusion that the plan of these volumes has been determined on. To those responsible for its selection it has seemed best to treat of each great department of our social life in severalty, and as far as possible (though this, of course, is not always entirely possible) in strict segregation from the rest; and so to arrange the work as that each chapter should carry on the history of our progress in every such department from the point at which the preceding chapter left it.

It may be objected to this arrangement that it inevitably entails a certain amount of repetition. The objection is just, but not, as it has seemed to the projectors of this work, of any considerable weight. Certain events and influences do undoubtedly touch our social history on more than one of its sides, and certain historic personages belong to it in more than one capacity. Economic movements, for instance, are sometimes inseparably associated with changes in manners, arts and industries occasionally overlap each other, the religious leader in early periods is often the promoter of learning, not infrequently also the eminent man-of-letters. All such things and persons require, of course, to be dealt with under more than one section, and have been so dealt with in fact. But it will be found, I venture to think, that these unavoidable duplications are neither numerous nor important enough to weigh against the general convenience of the adopted arrangement.

The various heads, then, under which our Social History may be considered are as follow:—

- I. Civil Organisation.
- II. Religion.
- III. Learning and Science.
- IV. Literature.
- V. Art.
- VI. Trade and Industry.
- VII. Manners.

The general character of the contents of Section I. may be gathered from the foregoing remarks. It will contain a concisely-summarised account of the more important political events of each period, especially of such as have an immediate

bearing on the social life of the people ; but it will be mainly devoted to tracing the development of our administrative institutions (the history of English law and of our judicial system being dealt with in a separate section), and will, in fact, render a continuous account of the various modes in which the Society has expressed and expresses itself as the Polity. Our progress in the arts of military and naval defence, which would properly fall, perhaps, to be treated of under this section, is the subject of a special contribution.

In Section II. we shall deal with the subject of Religion under each of the three distinct forms in which it has influenced our social life—the forms, namely, of faith, worship, and discipline. We shall treat of it, that is to say, not only in its inner aspect as a force, in promoting, directing, or modifying, both by ritual and doctrine, the spiritual energies of the individual citizen, but also in its outward aspect as a system of injunctions and observances affecting civil life as a whole. The twofold or threefold character of this treatment will not at first necessitate any subdivisions of the subject. Throughout those centuries during which the faith of the nation was formulated, its worship directed, and its discipline prescribed by a single authority, the history of the Church of England covers the history of national religion. It is not till after the Reformation and until the centrifugal influences of Protestantism come into full play in the multiplication of nonconforming sects, that it will be necessary to expand this section for the inclusion of all the religious influences bearing upon our Social History.

The combined treatment of Learning and Science in Section III. will, of course, be only possible in the earlier volumes of the work. But during the period covered by those volumes the two titles were, in fact, names of the same thing. Where Science indeed, has from the first depended to some extent on experiment, as in the case of medicine, we begin at once to give it separate treatment ; but it is not till it becomes exclusively and universally experimental that it ceases to belong to the household of Learning and claims an "establishment" of its own. Before that time, both alike begin and end in the study of written records. In this section, however, we shall deal, not only with the subject of the acquisition but with that of the diffusion of secular

knowledge. It will be a combined history of research and of education.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to observe that Section IV. cannot always, from the nature of the case, be completely separated from the preceding section. The dividing-line between Literature and Science is frequently effaced, even in these days—sometimes, agreeably enough, through the literary gifts of scientific men; at other times, less desirably, through the scientific affectations of contemporary men-of-letters. But in earlier times, when poetry was still in its infancy, and romance and drama and criticism were as yet unbegotten, much of the existing national literature was the literature of Learning, and the appearance of the names of many early writers and their works, both in this and in the foregoing division, was, therefore, inevitable. Nevertheless, the capacities in which they will thus appear being distinguishable from each other, they have a right to the double mention. Primitive epic, for instance, and ancient chronicle may be one; but the influence of the bard on the future of letters and of the language is something quite distinct from his contribution to contemporary learning and to our own knowledge of his time. His achievements in each capacity must be separately studied if his place in the history of English Social Life is to be accurately adjudged. Still, it is only in the earliest volume of this work that cases of this kind will be likely to occur. Later on the distinction between Literature and Learning will become and remain sufficiently well marked.

The subject of Section V. is from the outset more clearly defined. It is, indeed, in its earliest stages that Art is most distinctly independent and self-sufficing—most clearly the product of the natural human striving after the beautiful. In the story of almost every nation the progress of this struggle has an interest of its own, irrespectively of the measure of its success, and it is far from being wanting in such interest in our own country. For a long time, however, the record of success, or at least of distinguished success, is with us, in a certain sense, a limited one. The history of English art is, for many ages, the history of a great architecture—mainly, indeed, of a great religious architecture alone. With the two other leading art-forms—with painting and sculpture—it is long before English Social History has to concern itself; and

we approach almost within sight of our own time before the subject of this section so expands as to compel its subdivision.

It is in the section which follows that the need of specialisation is soonest felt. Under the joint heading of Trade and Industry we have been able at the outset to deal in one and the same article with the entire history of national industry and of national and international exchange, whether of natural or manufactured products. But at an early stage of the work the urban industries claim separation from agriculture; production and exchange soon after part company; and it may be that at last the ever-growing volume of our foreign commerce will require to be treated apart from the history of inland trade.

To the comprehensive title of Section VII. it may be objected that it is of somewhat indefinite import and extent; but it is on that account all the more fitted to describe the miscellaneous character of the matter which it covers, and to enable us to sum up under it all that remains to be recorded in the history of social progress. Needless to say, perhaps, it makes no pretence to be scientific, and indeed it so far departs from strictly logical principles of classification as to introduce a new order of phenomena to the group. For it will, of course, be observed that whereas Religion, Industry, Learning, and the other titles which have been already under consideration, represent forces as well as their realised effects, the title now to be considered has not that duality of meaning. It is, in fact, only a name for the resultant of all the forces in question. The manners of a people are simply such as its industries, its religion, its art and learning and literature combine to make them; for upon the first of these factors depends that wealth which determines the material aspect of manners, while the other factors represent the humanising, refining, and sanctifying influences to which their moral aspect at any given stage of a people's social history is due.

Hence, no doubt, it may be said with truth that every phenomenon recorded in our sections on manners is, strictly speaking, referable to one or more of the sections into which the work is divided. For where it is not the expression of some physical fact or material force, it is the product of some moral



or spiritual agent in the formation of a national character, which has, or should have been, already dealt with elsewhere. Nevertheless, the phenomena in question are so multitudinous that in the vast majority of cases it is only possible to note them in the mass, and without endeavouring to correlate them with each other, or to trace them to their creative causes. To the senses of most of us the social state of any country at any given stage of its civilisation is expressed by—is, indeed, almost identical with—the condition of its manners; and however thoroughly a social history may investigate the inner forces which have made for the civilisation and advancement of the community, it could not complete the picture to the eye, and still less to the imagination of a reader, without devoting an ample, perhaps even a relatively greater space to the presentment of the outward aspect of their lives.

#### I. CIVIL ORGANISATION.

It is difficult for those who are confronted as we are at every turn by that endless intertexture of institutions of which contemporary society is made up, to realise the beginnings of our English life. Civil organisation among the earliest inhabitants of these islands—what was it? What meaning would the words have had? Or, if the words themselves are too abstract, what things and thoughts which we should nowadays contemplate under that subject-name were before the eyes and in the minds of the men among whom Cæsar's legionaries sprang, sword in hand, from their galleys on a certain day in the fifty-fifth year before the birth of Christ? Can "Civil Organisation" of any sort be predicated of them; or are not the words, it may be asked, altogether too big to describe appropriately the rude and primitive arrangements of their common life?

Modern research is not of that opinion. It is not so very long, it is true, since the youthful student of this era of our history was not taught to see anything in the men who resisted the Roman invasion but a mere horde of naked barbarians, as little entitled to the name, and as destitute of any of the characteristics, of a civil society as a band of Blackfeet or of Sioux. This yelling, woad-bedaubed savage, however,

has been, by this time expelled, it may be hoped for good, from the popular imagination. Much, no doubt, is yet to learn about the race on whose shores the Roman conqueror planted his eagles before the dawn of the Christian era; but enough is known to satisfy us that the words in question are far from being unapt of application to their mode of ordering their lives. Cæsar, in fact, descended upon a country which had been the scene of repeated invasions and of successive conquests before his arrival; and so far were its people from being without civil organisation that they possessed a polity and society, in some measure compounded of and often visibly traceable to preceding ones, which it had in part assimilated and in part displaced.

At some early stage or other in that westward movement of peoples which has continued from prehistoric periods down to our own times, a wave of non-Aryan immigrants, short of stature and swarthy of complexion, had swept over the island, to be followed in course of time by first one and then another incursion of Aryans—of Gaelic, that is to say, and Brythonic Celts; and when Cæsar came, the mixed community deposited by these succeeding floods of invaders showed a distinctly legible history of social growth. The earliest settler, the dark Iberian, had long since been subdued and enslaved by the tall and fair-hued Celt who had followed him, and from whom in language, in character, in mode of life, and form of institutions, the conquered Iberian conspicuously differed. But the Aryan tribesman, with his pride of race and his more advanced conception of property as of a subject not of common but of family ownership, had declined to the condition of a despised villager, so far as social and political importance were concerned, before the Roman conquest. The tribal chief had by that time grown into the tribal king; the free land of the tribe, alike with the common land of the villagers, had become tributary to him; and the two communities, family and communistic, were alike his subjects. It was through the strife of tribal kings, with its consequences of the flight, the exile, and the appeal for Roman assistance of those who had been worsted in the struggle, that the way was opened for the conquest of Britain to the conquerors of Gaul.

A people who had already passed through such a history are surely well entitled to a record of their civil organisation.

But the claim of the inhabitant of pre-Roman Britain is stronger and more enduring than this; for the social system which grew up in these islands between the date of their earliest settlement by westward-journeying explorers and their subjugation by the Mistress of the World has left ineffaceable marks behind it to this day. Dim with the dust of centuries, yet still distinctly visible in dialect and tradition, in boundary lines of shire and diocese, and in the strange survivals of pre-historic feud, the tribal divisions of Celtic England can still be traced, while "the rule of the Roman has been forgotten, even where his villa and his storied gravestone remain."

Long, indeed, as was the period of Roman domination, its four centuries must be regarded from the point of view of our civil progress as a mere interval of arrested growth. Here, indeed, as everywhere, the conquerors set their mark deeply enough upon the outward features of the land which they had made their own. Roman road and Roman villa preserve for us the traces of their labours and their luxuries, and history testifies, in scattered but sufficient records, to the material prosperity, with its opportunities of education and enlightenment for those within the area of diffusion, which grew up under the Roman Peace. But they never succeeded in—they never, indeed, systematically attempted—that work of civil reconstruction which followed so many of their Continental conquests. The great mass of the British remained untouched alike in political institutions and laws as in language, religion, and manners, by the civilisation of their masters. Britain, after four hundred years of government as a conquered province, had done nothing but unlearn the rude military virtues which she originally possessed. She had neither assimilated the administrative system of her rulers nor developed such germs of self-governing capacity as were to be found in her pre-existing social order. Hence in the history of our civil organisation the Roman dominion can only be regarded as, politically speaking, an irrelevant episode—a digression from the main narrative, which does not resume its course again until the Imperial legions have been withdrawn.

And then the thread is taken up by another hand, and from the new masters to which Britain has now to submit herself her civil life receives an impress and her social forces

a direction which are the most marked and most potent that she is destined in all her history to undergo. For the English conquest of Britain laid the foundations of the English social order that we know to-day. The Norman conqueror who came after did for England what the Roman conqueror had not endeavoured, or had failed, to do. He built upon the main lines of that civil organisation which he found in existence at his coming, and widely as the "elevation" of the completed structure may have departed from the prospective ideal of the Saxon architect the ground plan remains his. Henceforth, at any rate—from the "English conquest" of Britain in the seventh century down to the close of the nineteenth—the history of our social order is a history of uniform growth. There are no violent breaks in the narrative, nor, indeed, is there any material departure from what one may call the logical evolution of the "plot." Norman and Angevin, Tudor and Stuart, often working unconsciously enough, added each his chapter to the story; but its lines were laid from the beginning, its development has been continuous, and its course, through all political fluctuations and vicissitudes, orderly. At whatever period in our annals we turn away from the often troubled current of politics to survey the stream of social progress we find the same regularity in its steady onward flow.

## II. RELIGION.

Of the other great agent in civilisation—Religion—a somewhat different story has to be told. Christianity dawned in Western Britain at a period when the civil virtues of the conquered Celts were declining under the paralysing effects of Roman rule; but its early light was naturally feeble, and ere it had time to broaden eastward and southward, Rome withdrew her legions, and a fresh flood of paganism poured over the land. The precise duration of the era thus brought to so disastrous a close is hard to determine. Secular legend contends with religious myth in the pious but futile effort to indicate the apostle of Britain; but history, which cannot even fix with precision the date of the conversion, is naturally silent as to its author. All we know for certain is that there were

Christians in Britain at the commencement of the third century, and that in the early years of the fourth there is evidence of the existence in this country of a fully-organised Church. But the faith spread slowly, and had not permeated the mass of the people even of Southern Britain when the Roman occupation came to an end, and the one bond of connection between these islands and the western centre of Christianity was thus violently severed. The conquest of Britain by the pagan English "thrust a wedge of heathendom," as Mr. Green has picturesquely put it, "into the heart of that great Christian communion which comprised every country, save Germany, in Western Europe, as far as Ireland itself"; and it was from this furthest point of illumination that the rays of Christianity were destined to be reflected back upon the intervening darkness. It was due to the ardour and devotion of Irish missionaries, and to the spirit which they infused into the Saxon princes who had embraced Christianity, that the light kindled by Augustine in South-eastern Britain was not extinguished in blood.

Nevertheless, if it was the Celtic Church which conquered England for Christianity, it was to the Roman obedience that the country was won. The struggle of over two centuries between the old faith and the new was followed within a few years of its close by a controversy among the victors as to the ecclesiastical rule which it was their duty to follow. At the Council convened for the settlement of this momentous question the claims of the Irish Church were rejected and the authority of Rome prevailed. Following up her victory with her wonted promptitude, she despatched the Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus, to fill the archiepiscopal See of Canterbury, and the CHURCH OF ENGLAND as we know it to-day was born.

Its history for the twelve hundred years which have since elapsed has been, in large measure, the history of the nation, for which, indeed, during some nine or ten of these centuries, it was only another and a spiritual name. That its periods of development and of arrested growth, of prosperity and adversity, of splendour and obscurity, have always had their counterparts in contemporary secular eras, it would be too much to say. The temporal history of the Church in England, as in most European countries, has always been a

subject of controversy. It touches the burning fringe of party politics at many points, and men of opposite opinions as to the proper policy of the State in civil matters cannot be expected to take the same view of the influence of the Church on social progress at certain given periods of her history. True, their differences turn mainly on political questions; true, the direct action of the Church upon society has, except during certain rare and brief intervals of corruption or stagnation, been too manifestly beneficent to admit of dispute; yet nevertheless—and there is here an illustration of the truth on which it seemed desirable to insist at the outset of these remarks—it is impossible so to separate the social from the political organism as to justify us in regarding the political conduct of the Church of England throughout the various ages of our history as without bearing on our social destinies.

It would be the merest pedantry, for instance, to treat the great conflict of the twelfth century between the Church and the Crown—between the civil and the ecclesiastical jurisdictions—as a mere episode in our political history, as an incident which the social historian as such can afford to regard with indifference, or at any rate to study as a subject lying outside the sphere of his special work. The importance of that struggle was no less momentous from the social than from the political point of view. It would, indeed, be absolutely irrational to suppose that a question so profoundly affecting civil life in so many of its relations as was then in issue could have nothing or but little to say to social history. Should the Church possess judicial authority co-ordinate with and independent of, if not encroaching on, that of the State? Or were the State courts to be supreme? Primarily; no doubt, the issue here is an issue of politics, yet it is surely evident that its decision in a great measure determined the line of development of our English social body. Clearly it cannot be a matter of indifference to any society whether civil or ecclesiastical influences prevail in directing its advance.

Sometimes, it is true, in those shifting scenes which show us the Church of England now active in the assertion of its spiritual privileges or temporal pretensions, now allied with the champions of popular rights against the Crown, the

political side of its history overshadows every other aspect of it. Throughout the reign of John and into that of his son and successor it may, with substantial truth, be said that the political and the social importance of the Church varied inversely with each other. Its prominence as a participator in the strife of politics had never been so marked; but it was a stationary, and became at last a declining, influence on private life and manners. Great as had been its gains in popularity through its attitude in the struggle for the Charter, they were not so great or nearly so important as its losses in popular reverence. Everywhere its prelates and clergy displayed signs of a growing secularisation of temper and of habits. Preaching had fallen into disuse, the monastic orders had degenerated into mere wealthy landowners, the ignorance of the priest left parishes without the reality of spiritual direction, even when his non-residence did not deprive them of its very form. Services were neglected and pluralism abounded, abuses of all kinds were rife, and the temporary failure of the Church to keep pace with the moral needs of the nation was attested by the eager interest with which the coming of the friars was welcomed by the people.

For the revival of religion that followed, these devoted missionaries are no doubt entitled to the chief credit. Yet the Church which their enthusiasm did something to awaken was soon to find them sharing with her in that process of degeneration which went on through the next period of relapse. It is curious to contrast their condition in the first quarter of the thirteenth century with what it had become in the second half of the fourteenth, to reflect on the change which had taken place between the time when thousands of followers flocked, full of religious zeal, to the outstretched hand of the mendicant preacher, and the time, not much more than a century later, when Wyclif could, with general applause, denounce them as "sturdy beggars," and declare that "the man who gives alms to a begging friar is *ipso facto* excommunicate."

These words were uttered by a man who was not content with mere denunciation, and in the struggle of Lollardism, from the initiation of the movement by Wyclif to its final suppression some thirty years after his death, we have an illustration of that recuperative principle within the Church

itself by which it was revived and preserved from age to age, until, purged more thoroughly and renovated more completely than ever before by the great convulsion of the Reformation, it finally assumed that place in the guidance of the moral and spiritual progress of the people which, except for one comparatively brief period in a later century, it has never lost.

And it is, of course, on that momentous crisis in the fortunes of Europe that the profound interest which the Church and religion of the nation possess for the student of its social history mainly concentrates itself. For the future of civil society in England, as in every European country, may almost be said to have turned on its choice between the old faith and the new. The far-reaching consequences of that choice stand inscribed for us indeed on wider tablets than those of the history of a single continent: they are written across the face of the world. There is a form of civilisation suited to the genius of Catholicism and to the racial characteristics—on which, however, it also importantly reacts—of the nations which took the Romeward road at that great parting of the ways; and it is not the concern or within the purpose of this work to compare this form of civilisation, either favourably or unfavourably, with that which has flourished and advanced in countries holding the Protestant form of the Christian faith. It is enough that the two forms are essentially distinct, that they lend themselves respectively to the development of wholly different moral and intellectual qualities, and that the people which definitely accepts one of them must be content to travel to its goal at a different rate, if not by a different route, of progress from that of the other. Hence it is that the decision between the claims of the two faiths which contended at the Reformation was of such vast social as well as political and religious importance. Issues inconceivably remote from the question of the number of the Sacraments, or the Petrine Commission of the Pope, and—if temporal may be compared with spiritual things—of vastly greater moment, it might be said, to humanity, were tried out in that tremendous struggle; and the results of the trial for most European countries, and for England pre-eminently, are visible to those who look around the world to-day, with an impressive clearness which even the most



vivid and powerful imagination of the great men of either Church who took part in that conflict could not possibly have realised.

By that fateful decision of the sixteenth century the whole future course of our social history, so far as religious influences have guided it, was determined. For the Reformation was the unquestionable though not the immediate progenitor of that great spiritual movement of the ensuing century which left an impress on the life and manners of the nation so deep and so abiding as to be still plainly discernible, after an interval of two hundred and fifty years, in some of the most conspicuous and characteristic qualities of our people. Without Protestantism, no Puritanism; and without Puritanism the Englishman of to-day would have been a different man. Not only in thought and feeling, not only in moral and intellectual temperament must he have deviated from the existing type, but his whole scheme and theory of life, his rules of individual conduct, his code of social usages, his tastes and amusements, his preferences in literature, his attitude towards Art—in a word his entire estimate of the relative proportions of human interests and human objects, would have been other than they are. The history of Puritanism is properly speaking, of course, a part of the general history of religion; and after the birth of the Puritan movement the religious factor in our social growth can no longer be identified as heretofore with the now waxing, now waning influence of the English Church. Yet the Church, though it resisted and for a time suppressed the Puritan movement, was itself and still is affected by it, and indeed may fairly be said, from the date of the Wesleyan revival to that of the Tractarian reaction, a period of a hundred years, to have been indebted for the chief sources of its vital energy to the Puritan spirit. And since it was in the largest, the soberest, and on the whole the most conservative class of Englishmen that this spirit arose in the sixteenth and renewed itself in the seventeenth century, so it is in this great middle class—the class that typifies the whole people for the foreigner, and even, so far as we may judge from popular conceptions, and from the caricatures that reflect them, for themselves—that its survival is the most marked at the present day. Culture and scepticism, and the growth of luxury and

refinement are no doubt affecting it, but to an extent which only seems considerable because the cultivated and sceptical, the refined and luxurious minority exaggerate it. The exaggeration is apt to deceive, because the classes who have outgrown the influence of Puritanism are as disproportionately vocal as they are relatively small, while the classes among whom that influence is still dominant are a virtually voiceless multitude. But the impartial student of the national character is constantly being confronted with evidence to the fact that the process of so-called "emancipation" has reached but the merest fringe of the community, and that the great bulk of middle-class Englishmen are still, to all intents and purposes, the true spiritual descendants of a Puritan stock.

### III. LEARNING AND SCIENCE.

The spiritual and intellectual factors in our social development may here, perhaps, with advantage be still pursued, though another order of arrangement is for the most part followed in the body of the work; and here, perhaps, it may be in place to say that the sequence of subjects will often vary in successive chapters, according to the prominence or importance of those subjects at the particular period dealt with. The history of Learning and Science runs parallel with that of religion, and sometimes, though not always, in the same channel. In the earlier ages of our social history, however, the identity of the two is, of course, almost unbroken. At a time when Learning was the monopoly of the ecclesiastical order it was inevitable that its progress should mainly follow religious lines. The careers and characters of those who promote it will often fall to be dealt with under the head of Religion, and sometimes under that of Literature also; for the earliest literary efforts of men so situated will, for the most part, be devoted to religious subjects, while at the same time they naturally form the beginnings of Learning for the otherwise rude and unlettered society in which they appear. Thus Cædmon, among the earliest of Saxon poets, throws Scripture into metrical paraphrase; and Alfred,

as a translator of Beda, lays the foundations not only of a Saxon prose but of English history.

It is not, indeed, till after the rise of the English Universities, nor even then immediately, that the fortunes of Learning can be said to have detached themselves from those of the Church. The academic system was, it is true, ecclesiastical in form and origin, and even to a certain extent, in affiliation. The wide extension which mediæval usage gave to the word "orders" still gathered the whole educated world within the pale of the clergy. "Whatever might be their proficiency, scholar and teacher were alike clerks, free from lay responsibilities or the control of civil tribunals, and amenable only to the rule of the bishop and the sentence of his spiritual courts." Nevertheless, as the collegiate foundations testify in their very origin to a decline of the impulse towards exclusively religious endowments and reveal a new desire to dedicate wealth to educational instead of to more literally "pious uses," so in their development and in that of their mother Universities does the secularising spirit which gave birth to them become more and more conspicuous in its operation and potent in its effects. The influence of the Church, so seriously threatened by that great expansion of the field of education which coincides with the rise of the Universities, was to some extent indeed to be re-established by the aid of the Friars and the renewed supremacy which their teaching procured for scholastic theology in the academic course. Yet from this very school sprang Roger Bacon, whose hand was to unlock the doors of the temple of Science, and to reveal at least a glimpse of those treasures within it which future generations were to explore.

The great Friar, however, was born before his time; the age in which he lived was not yet ripe for those studies which in after ages were to be pursued to such mighty issues. Scholasticism was destined to remain for yet two centuries supreme. But it is no unmeaning chapter in the history of our intellectual progress that contains the record of its sway. Its system was an unrivalled course of discipline in clear thinking, in vigorous analysis, in searching criticism, in the comprehension and use of every weapon in the armoury of human reason. If knowledge made no advance under the reign of scholasticism, the instruments of knowledge were

being steadily, if undesignedly, brought by it to perfection. It was the schoolmaster to lead men to science. Such fruits as it produced in the meantime were exclusively, it is true, of the theological or ecclesiastical order; they are to be traced in the daring Erastianism, as a later age would have called it, of Ockham, and in the reforming energies of Wyclif. But its methods were all the while preparing the faculties of man to appropriate and profit by the great possessions into which they were one day to enter.

With the discovery of the New World a new era dawned upon the human mind. The great period of the Renaissance opened; and first in Italy, then over all the Continent, and then finally in England, the Revival of Letters stirred the human mind into more vigorous activity. The rise and progress of the New Learning belongs in part, but in part only, to the history of Religion. It has had much to say to the advance of knowledge on the secular side, and pre-eminently so through its influence on education. Dean Colet's foundation of St. Paul's was the first step in an educational movement which was destined, in the course of a generation or two, to transform the face of the country. The aim of the founder was the union of rational religion with sound learning, the exclusion of the scholastic logic, and the steady diffusion of the two classical literatures. Greek, the newcomer, did not obtain admission without a struggle, but it established itself in time. Not only did its study creep gradually into existing schools, but the influence of Colet's example was so powerful that new foundations came in numbers into existence in which Greek was from the first included in the curriculum. More grammar schools, it has been said, were founded in the latter years of Henry, than during the whole of the three preceding centuries. The grammar schools of Edward VI. and of Elizabeth carried forward the movement, which by the end of the century had completed its transforming work.

Nor was the influence of the New Learning confined to the earlier, the primary and secondary, stages of education; it invaded, and, after a sharp conflict at each of the two Universities, it mastered the higher education also. For a time it divided Oxford between its partisans and its opponents—the "Greeks" and "Trojans"; and the spirit of

contention rose high enough in one instance, at any rate, to provoke interference and call forth rebuke from the king. But in the Universities, as in the schools, the triumph of the New Learning was not long delayed. A newly-founded college in Oxford signalised itself by the establishment of the first Greek lecturership; the Crown at a later time created a professorship of the same study; and the work was consummated by Wolsey's munificent foundation of Christ Church.

At the full tide of the educational movement, in the first years of the reign of Elizabeth, Bacon was born—Bacon, who may with substantial accuracy be described as a born philosopher who mistook himself for a man of science, and whose contribution to the intellectual advancement of mankind, though large in amount, was widely different in character from his own conception of it. His design was to lay the foundations of a true method of scientific inquiry; his achievement was to devise and expound a system which, while as a whole it is not that of science, yet anticipates modern scientific methods in many striking ways. He insisted, and rightly, on the Experimental Principle, though he attained to no true comprehension of experimental methods; and to have succeeded in the former, even while failing in the latter point, was an achievement which can only be properly appreciated by those who have due regard to the educational dogmas and intellectual superstitions against which Bacon had to contend. But apart from the services—great, if misunderstood, both by himself and others—which he indirectly rendered to the cause of natural science, a large debt is due to him from the whole body of human studies then awaiting the application of that great principle which Bacon insisted upon in physics as a condition of advance. If the two words which entitle this section be distinguished—if Learning, that is to say, be treated as a generic and Science as a specific appellation—we shall have to admit that the work of Bacon in behalf of the wider was even greater than that which he accomplished for the narrower cause.

As the seventeenth century advances, the horizon of knowledge—including thereunder the contributions made by deductive reasoning, by inductive inquiry and by criticism of ancient records—immeasurably widens. Old methods of inquiry are more fruitfully pursued; scholarship, wielding

fresh weapons, enlarges the borders of erudition; new experimental sciences are born, and the oldest of all the deductive sciences achieves its greatest triumph in the hands of the most illustrious of its students. It is the age of Harvey and Sydenham, of Boyle and Gilbert, of Locke and Hobbes; above all, it is the age of Isaac Newton. The Royal Society is founded, and enrolls the greatest astronomer of all time in the list of its presidents. By the close of the seventeenth century the whole face of the intellectual world had been transformed. The Science upon which Swift looked forth in scorn at the beginning of the next age, and on which he cut his irreverent jests in "Gulliver"; the philosophy which he ridicules in the "Voyage to Laputa"; nay, the very Learning against which he so audaciously measured himself in the "Battle of the Books," wear an aspect wholly different from that which they would have presented to the eye of any observer at the beginning of the reign of James I. Philosophy and Science bore indelible traces of the labour of Locke and Newton, and Learning would have been at another stage than it had by this time reached in England if Bentley had never lived.

Through the first half of the ensuing century the rate of progress in the sciences a little slackens, but it recovers towards its close. There are foreshadowings of the age which was to follow and in its course to add more by a thousandfold to the volume and import of scientific discovery than had been slowly and doubtfully accumulating during the countless cycles that had elapsed since the dawn of human intelligence. In its earlier years, as has been said, the eighteenth century was more remarkable as an era in the history of our national literature than for any contributions to the advancement of Science. Its second half was rendered memorable by the application of physical research and mechanical invention to industrial purposes; and in this respect its achievements belong rather to the economic division of our survey. Yet pure science was not neglected in any of its main departments. Herschel in astronomy, Hunter in anatomy and physiology, Black, Cavendish, and Priestley in chemistry, are names memorable and reverend in the annals of British Science, and every one of them recalls some important conquest won for humanity in the region of the unknown.

But, if for no other cause, the period would deserve to be lastingly remembered as having, in the great work of Adam Smith, given birth to a new science, which, if the successors of its founder have failed to advance it to conclusions as universally true and as irrefragable as was once expected, has probably done more for human happiness and prosperity during the hundred and twenty years which have elapsed since its principles were first enunciated in the "Wealth of Nations," than any other product of the pure intellectual energy of man.

The birth and early years of the nineteenth century found our country still locked in the death-grapple with Napoleon ; and though even so, there is, of course, discernible, as with every nation, which still retains its vitality, a steady, if not very rapid or extensive, widening of the field of knowledge throughout this period, it was not till the century had well-nigh half run its course that that extraordinary scientific movement which has given it its place among the ages first took its rise. The application of steam to terrestrial locomotion dates from late in its fourth decade, and it was only in its fifth that our railway system first flung wide that net whose meshes we have ever since been weaving closer and closer over the land. Electric telegraphy dates its beginning from much about the same time, though the growth of its employment in the arts of life was for a long time sensibly slower than that of its coëval power. It was, perhaps, not until the Fifties that Science began to advance in earnest, but from thenceforward its rate of progress has been increasing almost continuously, until it has reached its present bewildering speed. No doubt it is in the domain of applied physics, and notably in that part of their domain to which belongs the wonder-working science of electricity, that this rush of discovery and of the utilisation of discovery is the most conspicuous. The employment of this force for the three purposes of sound-transmission, of illumination, and of locomotion, represent three distinctly novel applications of it, dating all of them from within the last quarter, if not the last twenty years, of the expiring century. And not only, so far as we can judge, is the number of these applications still a long way from being completed, but the extent of progress possible in those departments of activity to which this Protean force has

already been applied seems quite beyond the reach of precise estimation.

Nevertheless, it is not in applied physics alone that the progress of human knowledge, and the part played in it by our country, have during the last and present generations been remarkable. Nay, it is not in that domain that our conquests, though the most striking to the eye, have been the highest as achievements of the human mind, or even, perhaps, the most potent in their ultimate effects upon the future of the race. While the discoveries of the physicist, appropriated and applied by the engineer, have transformed the outward aspect of English life, the great work of Darwin has been effecting a silent revolution in the mind of man. The publication of the "Origin of Species" marked an epoch, not merely in the record of scientific inquiry, but in the whole history of human thought. It has profoundly affected all studies, of whatsoever description, into which the nature of man—whether in its moral, its physical, its intellectual, or its spiritual aspect—enters as a factor to be considered. History, psychology, ethics, economics, have all taken a new departure from the starting-point indicated to them by the doctrine of Evolution. It may be said to have founded that science of Comparative Theology—if we may so call it—which for the first time has brought the methods of scientific inquiry to bear on the history of religion and of the religious instincts in man. There is, it must be repeated, not a single study having any affinities with biological science or depending in any of its processes on the conclusions of the biologists, which has not received both a new impetus and a new direction from the Darwinian theory.

But in every branch of Science the progress made during the last half-century has been immense. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that in almost every department of scientific inquiry—not only among those to which the name of "physics" should in strictness perhaps be confined, but among those also which are more directly concerned with the human economy than the constitution and laws of external Nature, and among those, lastly, such as chemistry, which may be regarded as intermediate between the two—discoveries of a far-reaching, sometimes of a revolutionising character, have during the period in question been made. Chemistry has



developed its always subtle processes to a pitch of almost inconceivable delicacy; physiology has widely extended its domain and revised its conclusions by the increasingly helpful aid of microscopic research; surgery, through the invention of the antiseptic treatment, and in many other ways, has made vast advances; therapeutics and sanitation have achieved successes which would have been unattainable, and have entered upon an almost boundless field of conquest which would never have been opened to them but for the construction and application of the germ theory of disease. In branches of inquiry unconnected—except as all instruments of human enlightenment are related to human interests—with the physical nature of man, the progress accomplished has been more remarkable still. The laws of the great cosmic forces—of heat and light, of magnetism and electricity—have been investigated, with the result that our knowledge of the behaviour of these forces, in regions or at stages of their operation which lie outside the cognisance of the senses, has now been placed on a basis of more assured hypothesis than they ever rested on before. And, highest triumph of all, the discovery of the world-embracing and time-spanning principle of the Conservation of Energy has knit the entire body of the physical sciences together, and practically made one science of the whole.

#### IV. LITERATURE.

To tell the story of English literature adequately within the limits of this preliminary sketch would be an even more hopeless task than that which has just been imperfectly attempted in the case of Learning and Science; for the beginnings—even the noticeable beginnings—of literature are earlier, the contributories to its growth are much more numerous, the causes which have directed the course of its development in this direction or in that are at once more obscure in their origin and more subtle in their operation; while, finally, the fact that the history of a literature is at once a history of thought and a history of language, instead of being, as is the case with religion or science or philosophy, a history of thought alone, must indefinitely enlarge the field of inquiry. A subject so

vast, however, may be said, in a certain sense, to simplify itself. A survey of it within the limits of a few of these preliminary pages must of necessity conform to one of two types. It must either take the shape of one of those severely compressed summaries which always threaten to resolve themselves into a mere catalogue of names and dates, and frequently fulfil the threat; or it must content itself with merely noting the great "periods" in the history of English letters and its great epochs of change.

In such a sketch, for instance, as the present it would be impossible to traverse otherwise than cursorily that long and interesting era of literary growth which stretches, roughly speaking, from the seventh to the fourteenth century. The history of Old English poetry, whether in its lyric form from Cædmon downwards, or in that rude barbaric shape of which the epic of "Beowulf" is the earliest example; the development of Old English prose, from its cradle, so to speak, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, to that arrest of its growth which befell it in the eleventh century, will be found traced in adequate detail in the second chapter of this volume. So, too, with that critical period in the fortunes of the language and its literature which began with the Norman Conquest and may be said to have lasted until after the accession of the dynasty of Anjou—that period during which our speech and literature, banished from the Court by French and Latin, still maintained themselves among the people, giving proof of that indestructible vitality in the strength of which they were ultimately to prevail. Over this era and the most memorable work which it produced—the "Brut" of Layamon, that monumental testimony to the self-sustaining vigour of our English tongue which, written nearly a century and a half after the Conquest, contains in thirty thousand lines but some fifty words of the Conqueror's language—it is impossible to linger here. One must hasten onward through another century and a half, when the struggle between the two languages had at last ended in the final triumph of the native speech, and Chaucer entered in, not merely to reap the fruits of victory, but to reunite the victor and the vanquished, and to work the surviving remnants of the Norman-French into that matrix of pure English from which the pure gold of his poetry emerged.

## INTRODUCTION.

For the philologist himself, as distinct from the student, poems of Chaucer must ever possess supreme interest, if they constitute an imperishable record of the state of the written language at a momentous epoch of transition. That the poet himself did not merely register but contributed to the transitional process is probable enough. Inspired innovation has been the prerogative of the highest literary genius in all ages, and it may well be that Chaucer's courtly, official, and diplomatic training revealed to him points of vigour or of grace in words and idioms of the Norman-French with which he was tempted to strengthen and enrich the English of his verse. But it is certain that these additions cannot have been important in amount. The old notion of the seventeenth-century writers—that Chaucer, writing in English upon most familiar English subjects, and producing works which at once made him the most popular writer of his time and country, yet “corrupted and deformed the English idiom by an immoderate mixture of French words”—is repugnant to common sense. There can be no reasonable doubt that the bulk of the words in question—and their proportion to the whole is small—had already won their way into the speech of the nation, and that all that the poet did was to fix them in its literary language.

And it is literature—the world's literature—not English philology, which has the first claim upon Chaucer. Whatever had been the linguistic peculiarities in the external structure of his poetry—if, that is to say, it had taught us as little of the history of our tongue as, in fact, it teaches us much—the place of that poetry in the story of our civilisation would nevertheless have remained unaffected. The unrivalled array of poetic qualities, both of feeling and expression, which it presents to us, the grace and gaiety of the poet, his humour and pathos, his dramatic force of portraiture, the catholicity of his sympathies, never to be again approached in literature till the coming of Shakespeare, his fine broad artistic treatment of the human figure, the dewy freshness of his landscape studies, and the clear sunny atmosphere through which he looks out alike upon Nature and upon man—it is these things which have raised the Father of English Poetry to the rank of one of the great poets of the world. It is in virtue of such things that that train of pilgrims which left Southwark for the

shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, on a certain day of April in or about the year 1383, remains so real to us, that the student still labours to fix the precise date of its departure and the times and places of its halts. It is for such reasons that these shadows of the poet's fancy are shadows more enduring than their substance, and that knight and squire, clerk and franklin, reeve and miller, pardoner and sompnoir, prioress and nun, and wife much widowed, move still, and will ever move, before us across the great imaginative panorama of the past, joyous and immortal as a Bacchic procession on a frieze of Phidias.

But Chaucer's light in literature was of as brief a radiance as Wiclif's in religion, and was followed by the re-invasion of as dense a gloom. Again we have to carry the eye forward for another century over the sombre period covered by the long war with France and the civil strife which followed it in England; nor do we find anything to arrest the gaze until we reach that great time of awakening which dawned for England, as for all Western Europe, with the Revival of Letters, the invention of printing, and the discovery of the New World.

The story of the century that followed is itself the history of a literature. England was slower than some countries to feel the quickening of the Renaissance, but that magical influence made itself felt at last. First the poets of mediæval Italy, then the Greek and Latin classics, began to win their way to the heart of English culture. Translations of Tasso and Ariosto showed the new interest of Englishmen in the chosen land of this intellectual dayspring; versions of the more famous works of classical antiquity followed, and before the close of the sixteenth century the greater poets and historians of Greece and Rome had been given to the English people in their own tongue. But meanwhile to the native Muse herself the awakening had come. In the poems of Wyatt and Surrey and their contemporaries there were signs not only of the stirring of that new life of thought and fancy, but of the beginnings of that new feeling for metrical form which were to find their culmination in the "Faerie Queene." An English prose began to feel its way in the writings of Ascham and of Hooker to its present structural form, and to dare with Sidney—if experimentally, and not always in a

spirit of wisdom—to borrow colour from imagery and warmth from rhetoric. And, last and greatest birth of all, the “Morality” and Mystery play of the Early Tudor period brought forth that glory of the world’s literature, the Elizabethan drama—that ever-broadening light upon the face of man and Nature which had its flush of dawn in Marlowe and its meridian splendour in Shakespeare.

The sixteenth century passes into the seventeenth; the burst of song sinks gradually into silence; the fire of dramatic genius burns lower and lower and at last expires, never again to be rekindled, except at times into a faint and transient flicker, throughout the ages which have since passed. But still the stately march of English literature, in mighty verse or memorable prose, through Milton and Dryden, through Bacon and Jeremy Taylor, through Browne and Hobbes and Clarendon, moves on. Even the Restoration comedy, morally corrupt and dramatically imitative though it be, has yet its part in the movement; for the literary quality of Congreve, and in a lesser degree of Vanbrugh, is of high excellence, and the former was the first to teach the English writer how to impart somewhat of that point and balance to the prose epigram in which he may approach, though the genius of our language forbids him to rival, the French. The services of Dryden to English letters in every department were inestimable. He not only gave order and regularity to the heroic couplet, but he left behind him a more mobile and elastic prose than he found; and both by the style and matter of his literary dissertations he may claim to have been the father of the modern science of criticism. He resumes the literature of the later seventeenth century both in prose and verse, and he wielded over the former the sovereignty which passed at his death into the hands of as many partitioners as did the empire of Alexander. Within little more than a dozen years from his decease the sceptre of poetry was as firm in the grasp of Pope as it had ever been in his own; but many writers of high merit, among whom the names of Swift and Addison are the most distinguished, were the successors to his fame in prose.

The fortunes of this latter portion of his bequeathed work were more evenly prosperous, and ultimately not less brilliant, than those of the former. English prose, strengthened by

Swift, refined and purified by Addison, has had to pass through no interval of decline or retrogression between that day and our own, and has proved itself an instrument of equally marvellous reach and power in the hands alike of every great master of fiction, from Fielding and Richardson to even the too negligent Scott, and from Scott to Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot; of every historian, from Hume and Gibbon to Macaulay and Froude; of every critic and essayist, from Johnson and Goldsmith to Southey and Landor, Lamb and Hazlitt, and from them to Ruskin and Carlyle. English poetry, on the other hand, after being carried through, at no little cost in sincerity of feeling, to the highest possible technical perfection, by Pope, was destined to decline in the hands of his innumerable imitators into a lifeless art, a condition from which Gray and Cowper—true poets as they were—were only forerunners of its redemption. It is not till we reach the very threshold of the nineteenth century that a new poetic movement sets in, less potent of immediate influence, but in literary distinction second only to that of the Elizabethan period, and of so much more lasting vitality that it has hardly even yet exhausted its force. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 was the birth-cry of that new poetic spirit—a spirit part romantic, part mystical, part naturalist—which has transmitted its triple influence from Coleridge and Shelley, from Keats and Wordsworth, to Swinburne and William Morris on the one hand, to Matthew Arnold and his school on the other, and may be regarded as having reached its highest pitch of inspiring power in the poetry of Tennyson, wherein all three of its constituent elements unite.

#### V. ART.

The student of the history of art in England has no such many-threaded narrative to follow out as the explorer of this subject in Italy or even in other less artistically famous Continental countries would find it necessary to trace. England has produced many great works of art, but at no period of her annals has she produced great art-works of many kinds. With substantial accuracy indeed it may be said that until a comparatively recent period of her annals she

produced them only in one kind. Painting and sculpture had elsewhere had a long and glorious history before we meet with the name of any Englishman born which has acquired a right of enrolment beside those of foreign masters in these branches of art. Even the very breath of the Renaissance, which passed over certain other countries like that wind of resurrection which swept the valley of the dead at the summons of Ezekiel, awoke no new artistic life in England. Centuries had yet to pass, and the one great form of art in which Englishmen excelled, even then declining, was to die out altogether, before an English school of painting arose. Fortunate is it for us that the form in question is prominent over all others for the durability of its creations, and that many a majestic monument remains to attest the power and nobility to which English architecture attained.

If, however, the history of our art in its greater and more famous departments has, so to speak, but little lateral extension, yet if we take major and minor art-forms together, the record of its total activities stretches wide, and is of deeply significant bearing on the general narrative of our advance in civilisation. In the pages which we here devote to it we shall endeavour to trace its lineage, as near as may be, in continuous descent from the remotest past. In so doing we shall show how the arts of design began before the beginnings of history, and how the earliest conceptions of architectural grandeur date from the prehistoric builders. We shall show how the Roman invader found means to beautify his place of exile with the work of British craftsmen; and how his rude English successor in conquest developed here into the most laborious of illuminators, the most skilful of embroiderers. We shall note the suggestive importance of the English loom five centuries before the Frenchman or the Fleming came to teach us a more perfect method, and a thousand years before the first spindle turned in Manchester. Later on we shall see how, with the coming of the Norman, the English burgh gave place to the impregnable castle, and how the perishable wooden churches of the Saxon were replaced by Norman stonework, built as for eternity. Or, later still, how a profusion of carving and decoration covered the churches of the day of Anselm and Lanfranc. We shall watch the rise, and follow the decline and fall, of Gothic architecture; its coming, under

the first of the Angevins; the grace of its springtime under Richard and John and Henry; its sumptuous decoration under the Edwards; its grave, autumnal beauty under their successors; its Indian summer and final eclipse under the Tudors.

Our survey of the development of lay architecture will show its moving along similar, but not parallel, lines. The massive Norman castle—the great seal which William set everywhere on his conquests—outwardly gave little promise of progress. Yet even these stones, cemented with the tears and sweat of the conquered, soon bear witness to the outward movement of material civilisation. New fashions rapidly invade the keep and donjon. The stronghold grows larger; it becomes commodious; later it is seen to aim at actual comfort; finally it approaches something like luxury. The manor-house now begins to compete with it, and in the end successfully, save in those few cases where under the pressure of military discipline the castle has to serve the purpose of an elaborate government fortification. Later on we shall see how, while retaining the old menace of external aspect, it becomes internally a residence not unfitted for civilised man. At length the castellated form entirely disappears, and the country houses built by English magnates show their military descent only in a certain soldierly stateliness. The Renaissance, too, comes in to derange further the old designs, though it must be confessed that in comparison with religious architecture our lay buildings suffered little injury from the new influence.

The art of painting seems to have begun everywhere (except possibly in Egypt) as ancillary to some other art. In England it appeared as the handmaid—and the humble handmaid—of architecture. But England was not singular in this respect; nor shall we find any proof that in the infancy of art the fresco painters of York or Canterbury were behind those of Tuscany and the Romagna. Though, of course, behind the Italians, they were not more so than were the artists of France and Flanders; but while those countries suffered nothing worse than an arrest of growth, in England there was actual death. The seed of artistic genius, which in more fortunate lands was alive if dormant, seems to have perished altogether. The long and exhausting



war with France, and the internecine strife of York and Lancaster, were not merely unfavourable to the harvest of art-production; apparently they sterilised the soil. Painting, like Christianity, had a second time to be imported into England.

Sculpture, though nowadays regarded somewhat as the Cinderella of our national art, had rather better fortune, probably because it was more an integral part—indeed, almost a branch—of architecture. It happened, moreover, to be the one form of artistic effort in which Englishmen early displayed what in our modern phrase we call “a feeling for decoration.” The reader will see in the course of these pages how largely it was developed by the Gothic masons in finial and ornament, and how sepulchral sculpture (including portraiture in stone and bronze) assumed an importance which even in our darkest architectural age it never afterwards lost.

The art of painting as we find it in the England of the Tudors came from abroad, and had all the tenderness of an exotic. It struck no roots into our chilly soil. The illustrious artists who were tempted from Italy and Switzerland and the Low Countries by the hope of enriching themselves at the Tudor and Stuart Courts had pupils indeed, and imitators, but neither they themselves nor their disciples succeeded in founding any school, in establishing any tradition. Yet, small and infantile as their influence has been, we shall have briefly to record the English doings of these artistic settlers on our shores, as well as of the comparatively obscure Englishmen who were tempted to emulate their achievements. These were not few, but hardly any of them attained commanding success. Some good miniaturists in the sixteenth century, one great English and one great Scottish portrait-painter in the seventeenth, form a promising beginning, but the promise is not fulfilled. The want of public appreciation, the troubles of the Civil War, the subjection to France, and, above all, the blighting influence of Protestantism in the former century, and of Puritanism its quintessence in the latter, go far to account for the failure, reinforced as they, moreover, were by simple bad luck in the early deaths of artists of ability. The story which we have to tell is full of interest, but not of that

interest which attaches to a phase of national development. That comes later.

Any consecutive history of English-bred art must naturally begin with Hogarth. During his life nearly all our greatest artists were born, and the last of the survivors of the band lived on into the second quarter of the present century. It will be our privilege to summarise, however briefly, the fascinating record of their splendid achievements, and to indicate their hardly less splendid failure. We shall mark, too, that strange phenomenon which seems the abiding note of English effort, that our victories in art, as in war, have mostly been "soldiers' victories," where every man did that which was right in his own eyes. This is true not only of the painters of our age, but also of the men who succeeded them, and of the men of to-day. There have, of course, been movements distinguished by more orderly aims and the effort after a more uniform artistic ideal. The most important of these is still great, if no longer a directly vitalising one; but here, since we are trespassing on the threshold of the present, our survey of English art must be closed.

## VI. TRADE AND INDUSTRY.

And now that the moral, the intellectual, the spiritual factors, in the sum of our modern civilisation have thus been passed in review, it remains only to glance at the physical agencies which have contributed to its growth. We shall have in these volumes to trace the progress of our material prosperity, step by step, and through stage after stage of its advance. We shall have to note the successive utilisation of the various sources of wealth; the development of the corresponding methods of production; the chequered fortunes of our agriculture; the rise and growth, in its later stages so enormous, of our manufacturing industry; the progressive expansion to its present astonishing volume of our external trade. Incidentally thereto, of course, we shall have to render, period by period, an account—for it will be hardly less than that—of the physical well-being of the great body of the English people; to show how it has been affected by causes natural and artificial, by "act of God" or ordinance of man; by laws, in the legislator's literal sense of the word,

and in the economist's figurative use of it; by war, pestilence, or famine, with their depletions of population, arrests of production, and displacements of industries; and last, and most important of all influencing causes, by those applications of man's inventive faculty to his productive work, which by directing the stream of industry into new channels and leaving others bare and dry, may within a few score years reverse the work of ages, and not only transform the external aspect of a society, but almost create a new type of national character.

It is on this side of the subject that the history of a nation's industry is so intimately bound up with the history of its manners; and though for convenience of treatment the two subjects have of course been severally dealt with in the body of the work, I need make no attempt to separate them here. The external aspects of the life of any people—their manners and customs, their social institutions and usages, their habits in short (from the broadest down to the narrowest sense of that word, from the most important observances of social intercourse down to the very cut and colour and material of costume), are, if not in exclusive, in obviously closer dependence upon the character of their industries than on any other cause. No sooner has colonisation or conquest laid the bases of civil society; no sooner does the war with Nature, or with human rivals, for territorial possession come to an end, and the colonist or the conqueror settle down to live of his labour, than a process of mutual interaction between industries and habits sets in, the resultant of which defines the particular line of development along which such a society must advance in the arts of life. Soil and climate, opportunity and instinct, combine to direct a people to one kind of industry or another; but the industry once chosen, and any others subsequently added to it, leave an ever deepening mark upon their character. Our own early history supplies one of the most notable of all the illustrations of this truth in the tale of Saxon and Dane. The sea rovers who descended upon Britain in the fifth century had before the close of the eighth been transformed into the race of home-keeping landmen in whom another breed of maritime marauders found at first an almost defenceless prey.

In the order of man's advance towards civilisation, agricultural or pastoral industry was everywhere no doubt his earliest form of settled labour. The plough-handle or the crook was the first implement to his hand after the hunting-spear. Undoubtedly he must have tilled the earth before he mined it; yet, inasmuch as the most primitive form of agriculture originates in the immediate personal needs of the cultivator, and for a long time seeks no other object than the satisfaction of those needs through more or less rude processes of local barter, its beginnings may leave no deep trace upon the history of a people. It is not until a race is far enough advanced to become producers for the purposes of exchange against the products of other and more advanced communities that their industries find their way into written record. In the case of countries more favoured by climate than Britain their earliest trade with the foreigner which history has to record is usually in the surface products of the earth—in corn or wine, in the yields of the olive-grove or the orchard. But it is as a producer of minerals that our group of islands is first met with in the pages of the historian and the geographer; and a variety of evidence goes to show that its inhabitants must have possessed the art of working in metals before the Roman occupation. The country, however, which had been marked out by destiny to become the greatest manufacturer in the world was slow in taking its place among the manufacturing nations of Europe. Other peoples whom the English race have since far outstripped were ahead of us for many centuries, and throughout that period England existed mainly as a producer of raw material, and as, what she still pre-eminently remains, an emporium of exchange. In Roman and Saxon, as in later times, our great capital was a notable centre of international commerce, and to the Danish invasion and the rule of the Danes we owe the rise and growth of the trading ports on our eastern coasts. It is before the fall of the Danish rule that the merchant, asked in the Old English Dialogue "What do you bring to us?" replies, "I bring skins, silks, costly gems, and gold, besides various garments, pigments, wine, oil, and ivory, with brass and copper and tin, silver and gold, and the like."

It was as a trader that England first began her career of prominence in the history of the world; but long after she

had become a producer far beyond her own needs she still remained, so to speak, at the first stage of production. The great wool-producing country of the Western world, she was for long dependent mainly on the demand of the Flemish looms for the exchange of this product, and it was not till the reign of Edward III. that an attempt was made to promote the manufacture in this country. But here, of course, we approach a subject of such magnitude that in a few prefatory observations of this kind it is impossible to do more than touch upon it. It is one upon which the two sections of agriculture and commerce come in contact with each other, and it forms a main element in that great question which will fall to be dealt with in the economic department of these volumes—namely, the reciprocal action and reaction of trade upon industry, and of industry upon trade.

Other, however, than economical factors will, of course, have to be taken into account. Influences wielded by legislation and royal policy, such as are particularly noticeable in the thirteenth century; the shock of great physical calamities, such as made memorable the succeeding age; civic movements and developments, active throughout both these periods and thereafter—these and many other forces have to be reckoned with in tracing the vicissitudes of our industrial and commercial history, even as far down as the accession of Elizabeth, while with the sudden outburst of the exploring and colonising spirit which marked that glorious era a new chapter opens in the history of our commerce. Then comes the long pause of the seventeenth century, when the eye of England, no longer sweeping the horizon of the outer world, as under the Tudor princes, turned inwards, and the adventurer-race of the preceding age seemed absorbed in the work, to use an expressive French phrase, of “making their souls,” and,—what has been known to accompany that process in private families,—fighting among themselves. Upon this follows the Revolution and the exhausting European war which succeeded it; then that revival and growth of British trade under the peaceful policy of Walpole which carries us well-nigh to the middle of the seventeenth century; then the new Empire won for us, and the world-wide market thrown open to us, by the elder Pitt;

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