

CHAPTER I

FROM TOTTEL'S "MISCELLANY" TO SPENSER

IN a work like the present, forming part of a larger whole and preceded by another part, the writer has the advantage of being almost wholly free from a difficulty which often presses on historians of a limited and definite period, whether of literary or of any other history. That difficulty lies in the discussion and decision of the question of origins—in the allotment of sufficient, and not more than sufficient, space to a preliminary recapitulation of the causes and circumstances of the actual events to be related. Here there is no need for any but the very briefest references of the kind to connect the present volume with its forerunner, or rather to indicate the connection of the two.

There has been little difference of opinion as to the long dead-season of English poetry, broken chiefly, if not wholly, by poets Scottish rather than English, which lasted through almost the whole of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. There has also been little difference in regarding the remarkable work (known as Tottel's *Miscellany*, but more properly called *Songs and Sonnets, written by the Right Honourable Lord Henry Howard, late Earl of Surrey, and others*) which was published by Richard Tottel in 1557, and which went through two editions in the summer of that year, as marking the

dawn of the new period. The book is, indeed, remarkable in many ways. The first thing, probably, which strikes the modern reader about it is the fact that great part of its contents is anonymous and only conjecturally to be attributed, while as to the part which is more certainly known to be the work of several authors, most of those authors were either dead or had written long before. Mr. Arber's remarks in his introduction (which, though I have rather an objection to putting mere citations before the public, I am glad here to quote as a testimony in the forefront of this book to the excellent deserts of one who by himself has done as much as any living man to facilitate the study of Elizabethan literature) are entirely to the point—how entirely to the point only students of foreign as well as of English literature know. "The poets of that age," says Mr. Arber, "wrote for their own delectation and for that of their friends, and not for the general public. They generally had the greatest aversion to their works appearing in print." This aversion, which continued in France till the end of the seventeenth century, if not later, had been somewhat broken down in England by the middle of the sixteenth, though vestiges of it long survived, and in the form of a reluctance to be known to write for money, may be found even within the confines of the nineteenth. The humbler means and lesser public of the English booksellers have saved English literature from the bewildering multitude of pirated editions, printed from private and not always faithful manuscript copies, which were for so long the despair of the editors of many French classics. But the manuscript copies themselves survive to a certain extent, and in the more sumptuous and elaborate editions of our poets (such as, for instance, Dr. Grosart's *Donne*) what they have yielded may be studied with some interest. Moreover, they have occasionally preserved for us work nowhere else to be obtained, as, for instance, in the remarkable folio which has supplied Mr. Bullen with so much of his invaluable collection of Old Plays. At the early period of Tottel's *Miscellany* it would appear that the very idea of publication in print had hardly

occurred to many writers' minds. When the book appeared, both its main contributors, Surrey and Wyatt, had been long dead, as well as others (Sir Francis Bryan and Anne Boleyn's unlucky brother, George Lord Rochford) who are supposed to be represented. The short Printer's Address to the Reader gives absolutely no intelligence as to the circumstances of the publication, the person responsible for the editing, or the authority which the editor and printer may have had for their inclusion of different authors' work. It is only a theory, though a sufficiently plausible one, that the editor was Nicholas Grimald, chaplain to Bishop Thirlby of Ely, a Cambridge man who some ten years before had been incorporated at Oxford and had been elected to a Fellowship at Merton College. In Grimald's or Grimoald's connection with the book there was certainly something peculiar, for the first edition contains forty poems contributed by him and signed with his name, while in the second the full name is replaced by "N. G.," and a considerable number of his poems give way to others. More than one construction might, no doubt, be placed on this curious fact; but hardly any construction can be placed on it which does not in some way connect Grimald with the publication. It may be added that, while his, Surrey's, and Wyatt's contributions are substantive and known—the numbers of separate poems contributed being respectively forty for Surrey, the same for Grimald, and ninety-six for Wyatt—no less than one hundred and thirty-four poems, reckoning the contents of the first and second editions together, are attributed to "other" or "uncertain" authors. And of these, though it is pretty positively known that certain writers did contribute to the book, only four poems have been even conjecturally traced to particular authors. The most interesting of these by far is the poem attributed, with that which immediately precedes it, to Lord Vaux, and containing the verses "For age with stealing steps," known to every one from the gravedigger in *Hamlet*. Nor is this the only connection of Tottel's *Miscellany* with Shakespere, for there is no reasonable doubt that the "Book of Songs and Sonnets,"

to the absence of which Slender so pathetically refers in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is Tottel's, which, as the first to use the title, long retained it by right of precedence. Indeed, one of its authors, Churchyard, who, though not in his first youth at its appearance, survived into the reign of James, quotes it as such, and so does Drayton even later. No sonnets had been seen in England before, nor was the whole style of the verse which it contained less novel than this particular form.

As is the case with many if not most of the authors of our period, a rather unnecessary amount of ink has been spilt on questions very distantly connected with the question of the absolute and relative merit of Surrey and Wyatt in English poetry. In particular, the influence of the one poet on the other, and the consequent degree of originality to be assigned to each, have been much discussed. A very few dates and facts will supply most of the information necessary to enable the reader to decide this and other questions for himself. Sir Thomas Wyatt, son of Sir Henry Wyatt of Allington, Kent, was born in 1503, entered St. John's College, Cambridge in 1515, became a favourite of Henry VIII., received important diplomatic appointments, and died in 1542. Lord Henry Howard was born (as is supposed) in 1517, and became Earl of Surrey by courtesy (he was not, the account of his judicial murder says, a lord of Parliament) at eight years old. Very little is really known of his life, and his love for "Geraldine" was made the basis of a series of fictions by Nash half a century after his death. He cannot have been more than thirty when, in the Reign of Terror towards the close of Henry VIII.'s life, he was arrested on frivolous charges, the gravest being the assumption of the royal arms, found guilty of treason, and beheaded on Tower Hill on 19th January 1547. Thus it will be seen that Wyatt was at Cambridge before Surrey was born, and died five years before him; to which it need only be added that Surrey has an epitaph on Wyatt which clearly expresses the relation of disciple to master. Yet despite this relation and the community of influences which acted on both,

their characteristics are markedly different, and each is of the greatest importance in English poetical history.

In order to appreciate exactly what this importance is we must remember in what state Wyatt and Surrey found the art which they practised and in which they made a new start. Speaking roughly but with sufficient accuracy for the purpose, that state is typically exhibited in two writers, Hawes and Skelton. The former represents the last phase of the Chaucerian school, weakened not merely by the absence of men of great talent during more than a century, but by the continual imitation during that period of weaker and ever weaker French models—the last faint echoes of the *Roman de la Rose* and the first extravagances of the *Rhétoriciens*. Skelton, on the other hand, with all his vigour, represents the English tendency to prosaic doggerel. Whether Wyatt and his younger companion deliberately had recourse to Italian example in order to avoid these two dangers it would be impossible to say. But the example was evidently before them, and the result is certainly such an avoidance. Nevertheless both, and especially Wyatt, had a great deal to learn. It is perfectly evident that neither had any theory of English prosody before him. Wyatt's first sonnet displays the completest indifference to quantity, not merely scanning "harber," "banner," and "suffer" as iambs (which might admit of some defence), but making a rhyme of "feareth" and "appeareth," not on the penultimates, but on the mere "eth." In the following poems even worse liberties are found, and the strange turns and twists which the poet gives to his decasyllables suggest either a total want of ear or such a study in foreign languages that the student had actually forgotten the intonation and cadences of his own tongue. So stumbling and knock-kneed is his verse that any one who remembers the admirable versification of Chaucer may now and then be inclined to think that Wyatt had much better have left his innovations alone. But this petulance is soon rebuked by the appearance of such a sonnet as this :—

(*The lover having dreamed enjoying of his love complaineth that the dream is not either longer or truer.*)

“Unstable dream, according to the place
 Be steadfast. once, or else at least be true.
 By tasted sweetness, make me not to rue
 The sudden loss of thy false feigned grace.
 By good respect in such a dangerous case
 Thou brought'st not her into these tossing seas
 But mad'st my sprite to live, my care to increase,¹
 My body in tempest her delight to embrace.
 The body dead, the sprite had his desire :
 Painless was th' one, the other in delight.
 Why then, alas ! did it not keep it right,
 But thus return to leap into the fire ?
 And where it was at wish, could not remain ?
 Such mocks of dreams do turn to deadly pain.”

Wyatt's awkwardness is not limited to the decasyllable, but some of his short poems in short lines recover rhythmical grace very remarkably, and set a great example.

Surrey is a far superior metrist. Neither in his sonnets, nor in his various stanzas composed of heroics, nor in what may be called his doggerel metres—the fatally fluent Alexandrines, fourteeners, and admixtures of both, which dominated English poetry from his time to Spenser's, and were never quite rejected during the Elizabethan period—do we find evidence of the want of ear, or the want of command of language, which makes Wyatt's versification frequently disgusting. Surrey has even no small mastery of what may be called the architecture of verse, the valuing of cadence in successive lines so as to produce a concerted piece and not a mere reduplication of the same notes. And in his translations of the *Æneid* (not published in Tottel's *Miscellany*) he has the great honour of being the originator of blank verse, and blank verse of by no means a bad pattern. The following

¹ In original “tencrease,” and below “timbrace.” This substitution of elision for slur or hiatus (found in Chaucerian MSS.) passed later into the t' and th' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

sonnet, combined Alexandrine and fourteener, and blank verse extract, may be useful :—

(Complaint that his lady after she knew of his love kept her face alway hidden from him.)

“ I never saw my lady lay apart
 Her cornet black, in cold nor yet in heat,
 Sith first she knew my grief was grown so great ;
 Which other fancies driveth from my heart,
 That to myself I do the thought reserve,
 The which unwares did wound my woeful breast.
 But on her face mine eyes mought never rest
 Yet, since she knew I did her love, and serve
 Her golden tresses clad alway with black,
 Her smiling looks that hid[es] thus evermore
 And that restrains which I desire so sore.
 So doth th[is] cornet govern me, alack !
 In summer sun, in winter's breath, a frost
 Whereby the lights of her fair looks I lost.”¹

(Complaint of the absence of her lover being upon the sea.)

“ Good ladies, ye that have your pleasures in exile,
 Step in your foot, come take a place, and mourn with me a while.
 And such as by their lords do set but little price,
 Let them sit still : it skills them not what chance come on the dice.
 But ye whom love hath bound by order of desire,
 To love your lords whose good deserts none other would require,
 Come ye yet once again and set your foot by mine,
 Whose woeful plight and sorrows great, no tongue can well define.”²

¹ As printed exactly in both first and second editions this sonnet is evidently corrupt, and the variations between the two are additional evidence of this. I have ventured to change “hid” to “hides” in line 10, and to alter the punctuation in line 13. If the reader takes “that” in line 5 as = “so that,” “that” in line 10 as = “which” (*i.e.* “black”), and “that” in line 11 with “which,” he will now, I think, find it intelligible. Line 13 is usually printed :

“ In summer, sun : in winter's breath, a frost.”

Now no one would compare a black silk hood to the sun, and a reference to line 2 will show the real meaning. The hood is a frost which lasts through summer and winter alike.

² In reading these combinations it must be remembered that there always a strong cæsura in the midst of the first and Alexandrine line. It is the Alexandrine which Mr. Browning has imitated in *Fifine*, not that of Drayton, or of the various practitioners of the Spenserian stanza from Spenser himself downwards.

"It was the (n)¹ night ; the sound and quiet sleep
 Had through the earth the weary bodies caught,
 The woods, the raging seas, were fallen to rest,
 When that the stars had half their course declined.
 The fields whist : beasts and fowls of divers hue,
 And what so that in the broad lakes remained,
 Or yet among the bushy thicks² of briar,
 Laid down to sleep by silence of the night,
 'Gan swage their cares, mindless of travails past.
 Not so the spirit of this Phenician.
 Unhappy she that on no sleep could chance,
 Nor yet night's rest enter in eye or breast.
 Her cares redouble : love doth rise and rage again,³
 And overflows with swelling storms of wrath."

The "other" or "uncertain" authors, though interesting enough for purposes of literary comparison, are very inferior to Wyatt and Surrey. Grimald, the supposed editor, though his verse must not, of course, be judged with reference to a more advanced state of things than his own, is but a journeyman verssmith.

"Sith, Blackwood, you have mind to take a wife,
 I pray you tell wherefore you like that life."

is a kind of foretaste of Crabbe in its bland ignoring of the formal graces of poetry. He acquits himself tolerably in the combinations of Alexandrines and fourteeners noticed above (the "poulter's measure," as Gascoigne was to call it later), nor does he ever fall into the worst kind of jog-trot. His epitaphs and elegies are his best work, and the best of them is that on his mother. Very much the same may be said of the strictly miscellaneous part of the *Miscellany*. The greater part of the Uncertain Authors are less ambitious, but also less irregular than Wyatt, while they fall far short of Surrey in every respect. Sometimes, as in the famous "I loath that I did love," both syntax

¹ In these extracts () signifies that something found in text seems better away ; [] that something wanting in text has been conjecturally supplied.

² Thickets.

³ This Alexandrine is not common, and is probably a mere oversight.

and prosody hardly show the reform at all; they recall the ruder snatches of an earlier time. But, on the whole, the characteristics of these poets, both in matter and form, are sufficiently uniform and sufficiently interesting. Metrically, they show, on the one side, a desire to use a rejuvenated heroic, either in couplets or in various combined forms, the simplest of which is the elegiac quatrain of alternately rhyming lines, and the most complicated the sonnet; while between them various stanzas more or less suggested by Italian are to be ranked. Of this thing there has been and will be no end as long as English poetry lasts. The attempt to arrange the old and apparently almost indigenous "eights and sixes" into fourteeners and into alternate fourteeners and Alexandrines, seems to have commended itself even more to contemporary taste, and, as we have seen and shall see, it was eagerly followed for more than half a century. But it was not destined to succeed. These long lines, unless very sparingly used, or with the ground-foot changed from the iambus to the anapæst or the trochee, are not in keeping with the genius of English poetry, as even the great examples of Chapman's *Homer* and the *Polyolbion* may be said to have shown once for all. In the hands, moreover, of the poets of this particular time, whether they were printed at length or cut up into eights and sixes, they had an almost irresistible tendency to degenerate into a kind of lolling amble which is inexpressibly monotonous. Even when the spur of a really poetical inspiration excites this amble into something more fiery (the best example existing is probably Southwell's wonderful "Burning Babe"), the sensitive ear feels that there is constant danger of a relapse, and at the worst the thing becomes mere doggerel. Yet for about a quarter of a century these overgrown lines held the field in verse and drama alike, and the encouragement of them must be counted as a certain drawback to the benefits which Surrey, Wyatt, and the other contributors of the *Miscellany* conferred on English literature by their exercises, here and elsewhere, in the blank verse decasyllable, the couplet, the stanza, and, above all, the sonnet.

It remains to say something of the matter as distinguished from the form of this poetry, and for once the form is of hardly superior importance to the matter. It is a question of some interest, though unfortunately one wholly incapable of solution, whether the change in the character of poetical thought and theme which Wyatt and Surrey wrought was accidental, and consequent merely on their choice of models, and especially of Petrarch, or essential and deliberate. If it was accidental, there is no greater accident in the history of literature. The absence of the personal note in mediæval poetry is a commonplace, and nowhere had that absence been more marked than in England. With Wyatt and Surrey English poetry became at a bound the most personal (and in a rather bad but unavoidable word) the most "introspective" in Europe. There had of course been love poetry before, but its convention had been a convention of impersonality. It now became exactly the reverse. The lover sang less his joys than his sorrows, and he tried to express those sorrows and their effect on him in the most personal way he could. Although allegory still retained a strong hold on the national taste, and was yet to receive its greatest poetical expression in *The Faerie Queene*, it was allegory of quite a different kind from that which in the *Roman de la Rose* had taken Europe captive, and had since dominated European poetry in all departments, and especially in the department of love-making. "Dangier" and his fellow-phantoms fled before the dawn of the new poetry in England, and the depressing influences of a common form—a conventional stock of images, personages, and almost language—disappeared. No doubt there was conventionality enough in the following of the Petrarchian model, but it was a less stiff and uniform conventionality; it allowed and indeed invited the individual to wear his rue with a difference, and to avail himself at least of the almost infinite diversity of circumstance and feeling which the life of the actual man affords, instead of reducing everything to the moods and forms of an already generalised and allegorised experience. With the new

theme to handle and the new forms ready as tools for the handler, with the general ferment of European spirits, it might readily have been supposed that a remarkable out-turn of work would be the certain and immediate result.

The result in fact may have been certain but it was not immediate, being delayed for nearly a quarter of a century; and the next remarkable piece of work done in English poetry after Tottel's *Miscellany*—a piece of work of greater actual poetical merit than anything in that *Miscellany* itself—was in the old forms, and showed little if any influence of the new poetical learning. This was the famous *Mirror for Magistrates*, or rather that part of it contributed by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. *The Mirror* as a whole has bibliographical and prosodic rather than literary interest. It was certainly planned as early as 1555 by way of a supplement to Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*. It was at first edited by a certain William Baldwin, and for nearly half a century it received additions and alterations from various respectable hacks of letters; but the "Induction" and the "Complaint of Buckingham" which Sackville furnished to it in 1559, though they were not published till four years later, completely outweigh all the rest in value. To my own fancy the fact that Sackville was (in what proportion is disputed) also author of *Gorboduc* (see Chapter III.) adds but little to its interest. His contributions to *The Mirror for Magistrates* contain the best poetry written in the English language between Chaucer and Spenser, and are most certainly the originals or at least the models of some of Spenser's finest work. He has had but faint promise of late years. According to the late Professor Minto, he "affords abundant traces of the influence of Wyatt and Surrey." I do not know what the traces are, and I should say myself that few contemporary or nearly contemporary efforts are more distinct. Dean Church says that we see in him a faint anticipation of Spenser. My estimate of Spenser, as I hope to show, is not below that of any living critic; but considerations of bulk being allowed, and it being fully granted that Sackville had nothing like

Spenser's magnificent range, I cannot see any "faintness" in the case. If the "Induction" had not been written it is at least possible that the "Cave of Despair" would never have enriched English poetry.

Thomas Sackville was born at Buckhurst in Sussex, in the year 1536, of a family which was of the most ancient extraction and the most honourable standing. He was educated at Oxford, at the now extinct Hart Hall, whence, according to a practice as common then as it is uncommon now (except in the cases of royal princes and a few persons of difficult and inconstant taste), he moved to Cambridge. Then he entered the Inner Temple, married early, travelled, became noted in literature, was made Lord Buckhurst at the age of thirty-one, was for many years one of Elizabeth's chief councillors and officers, was promoted to the Earldom of Dorset at the accession of James I, and died, it is said, at the Council table on the 19th of April 1608.

We shall deal with *Gorboduc* hereafter: the two contributions to *The Mirror for Magistrates* concern us here. And I have little hesitation in saying that no more astonishing contribution to English poetry, when the due reservations of that historical criticism which is the life of all criticism are made, is to be found anywhere. The bulk is not great: twelve or fifteen hundred lines must cover the whole of it. The form is not new, being merely the seven-line stanza already familiar in Chaucer. The arrangement is in no way novel, combining as it does the allegorical presentment of embodied virtues, vices, and qualities with the melancholy narrative common in poets for many years before. But the poetical value of the whole is extraordinary. The two constituents of that value, the formal and the material, are represented with a singular equality of development. There is nothing here of Wyatt's floundering prosody, nothing of the well-intentioned doggerel in which Surrey himself indulges and in which his pupils simply revel. The cadences of the verse are perfect, the imagery fresh and sharp, the presentation of nature singularly original, when it is compared with the battered copies

of the poets with whom Sackville must have been most familiar, the followers of Chaucer from Occleve to Hawes. Even the general plan of the poem—the weakest part of nearly all poems of this time—is extraordinarily effective and makes one sincerely sorry that Sackville's taste, or his other occupations, did not permit him to carry out the whole scheme on his own account. The "Induction," in which the author is brought face to face with Sorrow, and the central passages of the "Complaint of Buckingham," have a depth and fulness of poetical sound and sense for which we must look backwards a hundred and fifty years, or forwards nearly five and twenty. Take, for instance, these stanzas:—

"Thence come we to the horror and the hell,
 The large great kingdoms, and the dreadful reign
 Of Pluto in his throne where he did dwell,
 The wide waste places, and the huge plain,
 The wailings, shrieks, and sundry sorts of pain,
 The sighs, the sobs, the deep and deadly groan;
 Earth, air, and all, resounding plaint and moan.

"Here puled the babes, and here the maids unwept
 With folded hands their sorry chance bewailed,
 Here wept the guiltless slain, and lovers dead,
 That slew themselves when nothing else availed;
 A thousand sorts of sorrows here, that wailed
 With sighs and tears, sobs, shrieks, and all yfere
 That oh, alas! it was a hell to hear.

"Lo here, quoth Sorrow, princes of renown,
 That whilom sat on top of fortune's wheel,
 Now laid full low; like wretches whirled down,
 Even with one frown, that stayed but with a smile:
 And now behold the thing that thou, erewhile,
 Saw only in thought: and what thou now shalt hear,
 Recount the same to kesar, king, and peer."¹

¹ The precedent descriptions of Sorrow herself, of Misery, and of Old Age, are even finer than the above, which, however, I have preferred for three reasons. First, it has been less often quoted; secondly, its subject is a kind of commonplace, and, therefore, shows the poet's strength of handling; thirdly, because of the singular and characteristic majesty of the opening lines.

It is perhaps well, in an early passage of a book which will have much to do with the criticism of poetry, to dwell a little on what seems to the critic to be the root of that matter. In the first place, I must entirely differ with those persons who have sought to create an independent prosody for English verse under the head of "beats" or "accents" or something of that sort. *Every English metre since Chaucer at least can be scanned, within the proper limits, according to the strictest rules of classical prosody: and while all good English metre comes out scatheless from the application of those rules, nothing exhibits the badness of bad English metre so well as that application.* It is, alongside of their great merits, the distinguishing fault of Wyatt eminently, of Surrey to a less degree, and of all the new school up to Spenser more or less, that they neglect the quantity test too freely; it is the merit of Sackville that, holding on in this respect to the good school of Chaucer, he observes it. You will find no "jawbreakers" in Sackville, no attempts to adjust English words on a Procrustean bed of independent quantification. He has not indeed the manifold music of Spenser—it would be unreasonable to expect that he should have it. But his stanzas, as the foregoing examples will show, are of remarkable melody, and they have about them a command, a completeness of accomplishment within the writer's intentions, which is very noteworthy in so young a man. The extraordinary richness and stateliness of the measure has escaped no critic. There is indeed a certain one-sidedness about it, and a devil's advocate might urge that a long poem couched in verse (let alone the subject) of such unbroken gloom would be intolerable. But Sackville did not write a long poem, and his complete command within his limits of the effect at which he evidently aimed is most remarkable.

The second thing to note about the poem is the extraordinary freshness and truth of its imagery. From a young poet we always expect second-hand presentations of nature, and in Sackville's day second-hand presentation of nature had been elevated to the rank of a science. Here the new school—Surrey, Wyatt, and

their followers—even if he had studied them, could have given him little or no help, for great as are the merits of Tottel's *Miscellany*, no one would go to it for representations of nature. Among his predecessors in his own style he had to go back to Chaucer (putting the Scotch school out of the question) before he could find anything original. Yet it may be questioned whether the sketches of external scenery in these brief essays of his, or the embodiments of internal thought in the pictures of Sorrow and the other allegorical wights, are most striking. It is perfectly clear that Thomas Sackville had, in the first place, a poetical eye to see, within as well as without, the objects of poetical presentment; in the second place, a poetical vocabulary in which to clothe the results of his seeing; and in the third place, a poetical ear by aid of which to arrange his language in the musical co-ordination necessary to poetry. Wyatt had been too much to seek in the last; Surrey had not been very obviously furnished with the first; and all three were not to be possessed by any one else till Edmund Spenser arose to put Sackville's lessons in practice on a wider scale, and with a less monotonous lyre. It is possible that Sackville's claims in drama may have been exaggerated—they have of late years rather been undervalued: but his claims in poetry proper can only be overlooked by those who decline to consider the most important part of poetry. In the subject of even his part of *The Mirror* there is nothing new: there is only a following of Chaucer, and Gower, and Occleve, and Lydgate, and Hawes, and many others. But in the handling there is one novelty which makes all others of no effect or interest. It is the novelty of a new poetry.

It has already been remarked that these two important books were not immediately followed by any others in poetry corresponding to their importance. The poetry of the first half of Elizabeth's reign is as mediocre as the poetry of the last half of her reign is magnificent. Although it had taken some hints from Wyatt and Surrey it had not taken the best; and the inexplicable devotion of most of the versifiers of the time to the doggerel

metres already referred to seems to have prevented them from cultivating anything better. Yet the pains which were spent upon translation during this time were considerable, and undoubtedly had much to do with strengthening and improving the language. The formal part of poetry became for the first time a subject of study resulting in the *Instructions* of Gascoigne, and in the noteworthy critical works which will be mentioned in the next chapter; while the popularity of poetical miscellanies showed the audience that existed for verse. The translators and the miscellanists will each call for some brief notice; but first it is necessary to mention some individual, and in their way, original writers who, though not possessing merit at all equal to that of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sackville, yet deserve to be singled from the crowd. These are Gascoigne, Churchyard, Turberville, Googe, and Tusser.

The poetaster and literary hack, Whetstone, who wrote a poetical memoir of George Gascoigne after his death, entitles it a remembrance of "the well employed life and godly end" of his hero. It is not necessary to dispute that Gascoigne's end was godly; but except for the fact that he was for some years a diligent and not unmeritorious writer, it is not so certain that his life was well employed. At any rate he does not seem to have thought so himself. The date of his birth has been put as early as 1525 and as late as 1536: he certainly died in 1577. His father, a knight of good family and estate in Essex, disinherited him; but he was educated at Cambridge, if not at both universities, was twice elected to Parliament, travelled and fought abroad, and took part in the famous festival at Kenilworth. His work is, as has been said, considerable, and is remarkable for the number of first attempts in English which it contains. It has at least been claimed for him (though careful students of literary history know that these attributions are always rather hazardous) that he wrote the first English prose comedy (*The Supposes*, a version of Ariosto), the first regular verse satire (*The Steel Glass*), the first prose tale (a version from Bandello), the first translation from Greek tragedy (*Jocasta*), and the first critical essay (the

above-mentioned *Notes of Instruction*). Most of these things, it will be seen, were merely adaptations of foreign originals; but they certainly make up a remarkable budget for one man. In addition to them, and to a good number of shorter and miscellaneous poems, must be mentioned the *Glass of Government* (a kind of morality or serious comedy, moulded, it would seem, on German originals), and the rather prettily, if fantastically termed *Flowers, Herbs, and Weeds*. Gascoigne has a very fair command of metre; he is not a great sinner in the childish alliteration which, surviving from the older English poetry, helps to convert so much of his contemporaries' work into doggerel. The pretty "Lullaby of a Lover," and "Gascoigne's Good Morrow" may be mentioned, and part of one of them may be quoted, as a fair specimen of his work, which is always tolerable if never first-rate.

" Sing lullaby, as women do,
 Wherewith they bring their babes to rest,
 And lullaby can I sing too,
 As womanly as can the best.
 With lullaby they still the child;
 And if I be not much beguiled,
 Full many wanton babes have I
 Which must be stilled with lullaby.

" First lullaby, my youthful years,
 It is now time to go to bed,
 For crooked age and hoary hairs
 I have won the hav'n within my head:
 With lullaby then, youth, be still,
 With lullaby content thy will,
 Since courage quails and comes behind,
 Go sleep and so beguile thy mind.

" Next lullaby, my gazing eyes,
 Which wanton were to glance apace,
 For every glass may now suffice
 To show the furrows in my face.
 With lullaby then wink awhile,
 With lullaby your looks beguile;
 Let no fair face, nor beauty bright,
 Entice you oft with vain delight.

“ And lullaby, my wanton will
Let reason(s) rule now rein thy thought,
Since all too late I find by skill
How dear I have thy fancies bought :
With lullaby now take thine ease,
With lullaby thy doubts appease,
For trust to this, if thou be still
My body shall obey thy will.”

Thomas Churchyard was an inferior sort of Gascoigne, who led a much longer if less eventful life. He was about the Court for the greater part of the century, and had a habit of calling his little books, which were numerous, and written both in verse and prose, by alliterative titles playing on his own name, such as *Churchyard's Chips*, *Churchyard's Choice*, and so forth. He was a person of no great literary power, and chiefly noteworthy because of his long life after contributing to Tottel's *Miscellany*, which makes him a link between the old literature and the new.

The literary interests and tentative character of the time, together with its absence of original genius, and the constant symptoms of not having “found its way,” are also very noteworthy in George Turberville and Barnabe Googe, who were friends and verse writers of not dissimilar character. Turberville, of whom not much is known, was a Dorsetshire man of good family, and was educated at Winchester and Oxford. His birth and death dates are both extremely uncertain. Besides a book on Falconry and numerous translations (to which, like all the men of his school and day, he was much addicted), he wrote a good many occasional poems, trying even blank verse. Barnabe Googe, a Lincolnshire man, and a member of both universities, appears to have been born in 1540, was employed in Ireland, and died in 1594. He was kin to the Cecils, and Mr. Arber has recovered some rather interesting details about his love affairs, in which he was assisted by Lord Burghley. He, too, was an indefatigable translator, and wrote some original poems. Both poets affected the combination of Alexandrine and fourteener

(split up or not, as the printer chose, into six, six, eight, six), the popularity of which has been noted, and both succumbed too often to its capacities of doggerel. Turberville's best work is the following song in a pretty metre well kept up :—

“ The green that you did wish me wear
 Aye for your love,
 And on my helm a branch to bear
 Not to remove,
 Was ever you to have in mind
 Whom Cupid hath my feire assigned.

“ As I in this have done your will
 And mind to do,
 So I request you to fulfil
 My fancy too ;
 A green and loving heart to have,
 And this is all that I do crave.

“ For if your flowering heart should change
 His colour green,
 Or you at length a lady strange
 Of me be seen,
 Then will my branch against his use
 His colour change for your refuse.¹

“ As winter's force cannot deface
 This branch his hue,
 So let no change of love disgrace
 Your friendship true ;
 You were mine own, and so be still,
 So shall we live and love our fill.

“ Then I may think myself to be
 Well recompensed,
 For wearing of the tree that is
 So well defended
 Against all weather that doth fall
 When wayward winter spits his gall.

“ And when we meet, to try me true,
 Look on my head,

¹ Refusal.

And I will crave an oath of you
 Whe'r¹ Faith be fled ;
 So shall we both answered be,
 Both I of you, and you of me."

The most considerable and the most interesting part of Googe's work is a set of eight eclogues which may not have been without influence on *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and a poem of some length entitled *Cupido Conquered*, which Spenser may also have seen. Googe has more sustained power than Turberville, but is much inferior to him in command of metre and in lyrical swing. In him, or at least in his printer, the mania for cutting up long verses reaches its height, and his very decasyllables are found arranged in the strange fashion of four and six as thus :—

" Good aged Bale :
 That with thy hoary hairs
 Dost still persist
 To turn the painful book,
 O happy man,
 That hast obtained such years,
 And leav'st not yet
 On papers pale to look.
 Give over now
 To beat thy wearied brain,
 And rest thy pen,
 That long hath laboured sore."

Thomas Tusser (1524?-1580) has often been regarded as merely a writer of doggerel, which is assuredly not lacking in his *Hundred* (later *Five Hundred*) *Points of Husbandry* (:557-1573). But he has some piquancy of phrase, and is particularly noticeable for the variety, and to a certain extent the accomplishment, of his prosodic experiments—a point of much importance for the time.

To these five, of whom some substantive notice has been given, many shadowy names might be added if the catalogue were of any use: such as those of Kinwelmersh, Whetstone, Phaer,

¹ Short for "whether."

Neville, Blundeston, Edwards, Golding, and many others. They seem to have been for the most part personally acquainted with one another; the literary energies of England being almost confined to the universities and the Inns of Court, so that most of those who devoted themselves to literature came into contact and formed what is sometimes called a clique. They were all studiously and rather indiscriminately given to translation (the body of foreign work, ancient and modern, which was turned into English during this quarter of a century being very large indeed), and all or many of them were contributors of commendatory verses to each other's work and of pieces of different descriptions to the poetical miscellanies of the time. Of these miscellanies and of the chief translations from the classics some little notice may be taken because of the great part which both played in the poetical education of England. It has been said that almost all the original poets were also translators. Thus Googe Englished, among other things, the *Zodiacus Vitæ* of Marcellus Palingenius, the *Regnum Papisticum* of Kirchmayer, the *Four Books of Husbandry* of Conrad Heresbach, and the *Proverbs* of the Marquis of Santillana; but some of the translators were not distinguished by any original work. Thus Jasper Heywood, followed by Neville above mentioned, by Studley, and others, translated between 1560 and 1580 those tragedies of Seneca which had such a vast influence on foreign literature and, fortunately, so small an influence on English. Arthur Golding gave in 1567 a version, by no means destitute of merit, of the *Metamorphoses* which had a great influence on English poetry. We have already mentioned Surrey's blank-verse translation of Virgil. This was followed up, in 1555-60, by Thomas Phaer, who, like most of the persons mentioned in this paragraph, used the fourteener, broken up or not, as accident or the necessities of the printer brought it about.

It was beyond doubt this abundant translation, and perhaps also the manifest deficiencies of the fourteener thus used, which brought about at the close of the present period and the beginning

of the next the extraordinary attempt to reproduce classical metres in English verse, which for a time seduced even Spenser, which was not a little countenanced by most of the critical writers of the period, which led Gabriel Harvey and others into such absurdities, and which was scarcely slain even by Daniel's famous and capital *Defence of Rhyme*. The discussion of this absurd attempt (for which rules, not now extant, came from Drant of Cambridge) in the correspondence of Spenser and Harvey, and the sensible fashion in which Nash laughed at it, are among the best known things in the gossiping history of English Letters. But the coxcombrity of Harvey and the felicitous impertinence of Nash have sometimes diverted attention from the actual state of the case. William Webbe (a very sober-minded person with taste enough to admire the "new poet," as he calls Spenser) makes elaborate attempts not merely at hexameters, which, though only a curiosity, are a possible curiosity in English, but at Sapphics which could never (except as burlesque) be tolerable. Sidney, Spenser, and others gave serious heed to the scheme of substituting classical metres without rhyme for indigenous metres with rhyme. And unless the two causes which brought this about are constantly kept in mind, the reason of it will not be understood. It was undoubtedly the weakness of contemporary English verse which reinforced the general Renaissance admiration for the classics; nor must it be forgotten that Wyatt takes, in vernacular metres and with rhyme, nearly as great liberties with the intonation and prosody of the language as any of the classicists in their unlucky hexameters and elegiacs. The majesty and grace of the learned tongues, contrasting with the poverty of their own language, impressed, and to a great extent rightly impressed, the early Elizabethans, so that they naturally enough cast about for any means to improve the one, and hesitated at any peculiarity which was not found in the other. It was unpardonable in Milton to sneer at rhyme after the fifty years of magnificent production which had put English on a level with Greek and above Latin as a literary instrument. But for Harvey and Spenser, Sidney

and Webbe, with those fifty years still to come, the state of the case was very different.

The translation mania and the classicising mania together led to the production of perhaps the most absurd book in all literature—a book which deserves extended notice here, partly because it has only recently become accessible to the general reader in its original form, and partly because it is, though a caricature, yet a very instructive caricature of the tendencies and literary ideas of the time. This is Richard Stanyhurst's translation of the first four books of the *Æneid*, first printed at Leyden in the summer of 1582, and reprinted in London a year later. This wonderful book (in which the spelling is only less marvellous than the phrasology and verse) shows more than anything else the active throes which English literature was undergoing, and though the result was but a false birth it is none the less interesting.

Stanyhurst was not, as might be hastily imagined, a person of insufficient culture or insufficient brains. He was an Irish Roman Catholic gentleman, brother-in-law to Lord Dunsany, and uncle to Archbishop Usher, and though he was author of the Irish part of Holinshed's *History*, he has always been regarded by the madder sort of Hibernians as a traitor to the nation. His father was Recorder of Dublin, and he himself, having been born about 1547, was educated at University College, Oxford, and went thence, if not to the Inns of Court, at any rate to those of Chancery, and became a student of Furnival's Inn. He died at Brussels in 1618. Here is an example of his prose, the latter part of which is profitable for matter as well as for form:—

“How beyt¹ I haue heere haulf a guesh, that two sorts of carpers wyl seeme too spurne at this myne enterprise. Thee one vterlie ignorant, the oother meanlye letterd. Thee ignorant wyl imagin, that thee passage was nothing craggye, in as much as M. Phaere hath broken thee ice before me: Thee meaner clarcks wyl suppose my trauail in these heroical verses too carrye no

¹ This and the next extract are given *literatim* to show Stanyhurst's marvellous spelling.

great difficultie, in that yt lay in my choic too make what word I would short or long, hauing no English writer beefore mee in this kind of poëtrye with whose squire I should leauel my syllables.

Haue not these men made a fayre speake? If they had put in *Mightye Joue*, and *gods* in thee plural number, and *Venus* with *Cupide thee bynd Boy*, al had beene in thee nick, thee rythme had been of a right stamp. For a few such stiches boch vp oure newe fashion makers. Prouyded not wythstanding alwayes that *Artaxerxes*, al be yt hee bee spurgalde, beeing so much gallop, bee placed in thee dedicatory epistle receauing a cuppe of water of a swayne, or elles al is not wurth a beane. Good God what a frye of *wooden rythmours* dooth swarme in stacioners shops, who neuere enstructed in any grammar schoole, not atayning too thee pairinges of thee Latin or Greeke tongue, yeet like blind bayards rush on forward, fostring theyre vayne conceits wyth such ouerweening silly follyes, as they reck not too bee condemned of thee learned for ignorant, so they bee commended of thee ignorant for learned. Thee reddiest way, therefore, too flap these droanes from the sweete senting huius of Poëtrye, is for thee learned too applye theym selues wholye (yf they be delighted wyth that veyne) too thee true making of verses in such wise as thee *Greekes* and *Latins*, thee fathurs of knowledge, haue doone; and too leaue too these doltish coystrels theyre rude rythming and balducktoom ballads."

Given a person capable of this lingo, given the prevalent mania for English hexameters, and even what follows may not seem too impossible.

"This sayd, with dareksoom night shade quite clowlye she vannisht.
 Grislye faces frouncing, eke against Troy leaged in hatred
 Of Saincts soure deities dyd I see.
 Then dyd I marek playnely thee castle of Ilion vplayd,
 And Troian buyldings quit topsy turvyce remooued.
 Much lyk on a mountayn thee tree dry wythered oaken
 Sliest by the clowne Coridon rusticks with twibbil or hatcher.
 Then the tre deepe minced, far chopt dooth terrifye swinckers
 With menacing becking thee branches palsye before tyme,
 Vntil with sowghing yt grunts, as wounded in hacking.
 At length with rounsefal, from stock vntruncked yt harssheth.
 Hee rested wyful lyk a wayward obstinat oldgrey.

These words owt showing with her howling the house she replennisht."

There is perhaps no greater evidence of the reverence in

which the ancients were held than that such frantic balderdash as this did not extinguish it. Yet this was what a man of undoubted talent, of considerable learning, and of no small acuteness (for Stanyhurst's Preface to this very translation shows something more than glimmerings on the subject of classical and English prosody), could produce. It must never be forgotten that the men of this time were at a hopelessly wrong point of view. It never occurred to them that English left to itself could equal Greek or Latin. They simply endeavoured, with the utmost pains and skill, to drag English up to the same level as these unapproachable languages by forcing it into the same moulds which Greek and Latin had endured. Properly speaking we ought not to laugh at them. They were carrying out in literature what the older books of arithmetic call "The Rule of False,"—that is to say, they were trying what the English tongue could *not* bear. No one was so successful as Stanyhurst in applying this test of the rack: yet it is fair to say that Harvey and Webbe, nay, Spenser and Sidney, had practically, though, except in Spenser's case, it would appear unconsciously, arrived at the same conclusion before. How much we owe to such adventurers of the impossible few men know except those who have tried to study literature as a whole.

A few words have to be said in passing as to the miscellanies which played such an important part in the poetical literature of the day. Tottel and *The Mirror for Magistrates* (which was, considering its constant accretions, a sort of miscellany) have been already noticed. They were followed by not a few others. The first in date was *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576), edited by R. Edwards, a dramatist of industry if not of genius, and containing a certain amount of interesting work. It was very popular, going through nine or ten editions in thirty years, but with a few scattered exceptions it does not yield much to the historian of English poetry. Its popularity shows what was expected; its contents show what, at any rate at the date of its first appearance, was given. It is possible that the doleful contents of *The Mirror*

for *Magistrates* (which was reprinted six times during our present period, and which busied itself wholly with what magistrates should avoid, and with the sorrowful departing out of this life of the subjects) may have had a strong effect on Edwards, though one at least of his contributors, W. Hunnis, was a man of mould. It was followed in 1578 by *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, supposed to have been edited by Roydon and Proctor, which is a still drier stick. The next miscellany, six years later, *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, edited by Clement Robinson, is somewhat better though not much. It is followed by the *Phenix Nest*, an interesting collection, by no less than three miscellanies in 1600, edited by "A. B." and R. Allot, and named *England's Helicon*, *England's Parnassus*, and *Belvedere* (the two latter being rather anthologies of extracts than miscellanies proper), and by Francis Davison's famous *Poetical Rhapsody*, 1602, all which last belong to a much later date than our present subjects.

To call the general poetical merit of these earlier miscellanies high would be absurd. But what at once strikes the reader, not merely of them but of the collections of individual work which accompany them, as so astonishing, is the level which is occasionally reached. The work is often the work of persons quite unknown or unimportant in literature as persons. But we constantly see in it a flash, a symptom of the presence of the true poetical spirit which it is often impossible to find for years together in other periods of poetry. For instance, if ever there was a "dull dog" in verse it was Richard Edwards. Yet in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* Edwards's poem with the refrain "The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love," is one of the most charming things anywhere to be found. So is, after many years, the poem attributed to John Wootton in *England's Helicon* (the best of the whole set), beginning "Her eyes like shining lamps," so is the exquisite "Come, little babe" from *The Arbour of Amorous Devices*, so are dozens and scores more which may be found in their proper places, and many of them in Mr. Arber's admirable *English Garner*. The spirit of

poetry, rising slowly, was rising surely in the England of these years: no man knew exactly where it would appear, and the greatest poets were—for their praises of themselves and their fellows are quite unconscious and simple—as ignorant as others. The first thirty years of the reign were occupied with simple education—study of models, efforts in this or that kind, translation, and the rest. But the right models had been provided by Wyatt and Surrey's study of the Italians, and by the study of the classics which all men then pursued; and the original inspiration, without which the best models are useless, though itself can do little when the best models are not used, was abundantly present. Few things are more curious than to compare, let us say, Googe and Spenser. Yet few things are more certain than that without the study and experiments which Googe represents Spenser could not have existed. Those who decry the historical method in criticism ignore this; and ignorance like wisdom is justified of all her children.

