

CHAPTER X

CAROLINE POETRY

THERE are few periods of poetical development in English literary history which display, in a comparatively narrow compass, such well-marked and pervading individuality as the period of Caroline poetry, beginning, it may be, a little before the accession of Charles I., but terminating as a producing period almost before the real accession of his son. The poets of this period, in which but not of which Milton is, are numerous and remarkable, and at the head of them all stands Robert Herrick.

Very little is really known about Herrick's history. That he was of a family which, distinguished above the common, but not exactly reaching nobility, had the credit of producing, besides himself, the indomitable Warden Heyrick of the Collegiate Church of Manchester in his own times, and the mother of Swift in the times immediately succeeding his, is certain. That he was born in London in 1591, that he went to Cambridge, that he had a rather stingy guardian, that he associated to some extent with the tribe of Ben in the literary London of the second decade of the century, is also certain. At last and rather late he was appointed to a living at Dean Prior in Devonshire, on the confines of the South Hams and Dartmoor. He did not like it, being of that class of persons who cannot be happy out of a great town. After the Civil War he was deprived, and his successor had not the decency (the late Dr. Grosart, constant to his own party, made

a very unsuccessful attempt to defend the delinquent) to pay him the shabby pittance which the intruders were supposed to furnish to the rightful owners of benefices. At the Restoration he too was restored, and survived it fifteen years, dying in 1674; but his whole literary fame rests on work published a quarter of a century before his death, and pretty certainly in great part written many years earlier.

The poems which then appeared were divided, in the published form, into two classes: they may be divided, for purposes of poetical criticism, into three. The *Hesperides* (they are dated 1648, and the *Noble Numbers* or sacred poems 1647; but both appeared together) consist in the first place of occasional poems, sometimes amatory, sometimes not; in the second, of personal epigrams. Of this second class no human being who has any faculty of criticism can say any good. They are supposed by tradition to have been composed on parishioners: they may be hoped by charity (which has in this case the support of literary criticism) to be merely literary exercises—bad imitations of Martial, through Ben Jonson. They are nastier than the nastiest work of Swift; they are stupider than the stupidest attempts of Davies of Hereford; they are farther from the author's best than the worst parts of Young's *Odes* are from the best part of the *Night Thoughts*. It is impossible without producing specimens (which God forbid that any one who has a respect for Herrick, for literature, and for decency, should do) to show how bad they are. Let it only be said that if the worst epigram of Martial were stripped of Martial's wit, sense, and literary form, it would be a kind of example of Herrick in this vein.

In his two other veins, but for certain tricks of speech, it is almost impossible to recognise him for the same man. The secular vigour of the *Hesperides*, the spiritual vigour of the *Noble Numbers*, has rarely been equalled and never surpassed by any other writer. I cannot agree with Mr. Gosse that Herrick is in any sense "a Peisan." They had in his day shaken off the merely

ascetic temper of the Middle Ages, and had not taken upon them the mere materialism of the *Aufklärung*, or the remorseful and satiated attitude of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. I believe that the warmest of the Julia poems and the immortal "Litany" were written with the same integrity of feeling. Here was a man who was grateful to the upper powers for the joys of life, or who was sorrowful and repentant towards the upper powers when he felt that he had exceeded in enjoying those joys, but who had no doubt of his gods, and no shame in approaching them. The last—the absolutely last if we take his death-date—of those poets who have relished this life heartily, while heartily believing in another, was Robert Herrick. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the *Hesperides* were wholly *péchés de jeunesse* and the *Noble Numbers* wholly pious palinodes. Both simply express, and express in a most vivid and distinct manner, the alternate or rather varying moods of a man of strong sensibilities, religious as well as sensual.

Of the religious poems the already-mentioned "Litany," while much the most familiar, is also far the best. There is nothing in English verse to equal it as an expression of religious fear; while there is also nothing in English verse to equal the "Thanksgiving," also well known, as an expression of religious trust. The crystalline simplicity of Herrick's style deprives his religious poems of that fatal cut-and-dried appearance, that vain repetition of certain phrases and thoughts, which mars the work of sacred poets generally, and which has led to an unjustly strong censure being laid on them by critics, so different from each other as Dr. Johnson and Mr. Matthew Arnold. As the alleged Paganism of some of Herrick's sacred poems exists only in the imagination of readers, so the alleged insincerity is equally hypothetical, and can only be supported by the argument (notoriously false to history and to human nature) that a man who could write the looser *Hesperides* could not sincerely write the *Noble Numbers*. Every student of the lives of other men—every student of his own heart—knows, or should know, that this is an utter mistake.

Undoubtedly, however, Herrick's most beautiful work is to be found in the profane division, despite the admixture of the above-mentioned epigrams, the dull foulness of which soils the most delightful pages to such an extent that, if it were ever allowable to take liberties with an author's disposition of his own work, it would be allowable and desirable to pick these ugly weeds out of the garden and stow them away in a rubbish heap of appendix all to themselves. Some of the best pieces of the *Hesperides* are even better known than the two well-known *Noble Numbers* above quoted. The "Night Piece to Julia," the "Daffodils," the splendid "To Anthea," ("Bid me to live"), "The Mad Maid's Song" (worthy of the greatest of the generation before Herrick), the verses to BEN JONSON, those to Electra ("I dare not ask a kiss"), the wonderful "Burial Piece to Perilla," the "Grace for a Child," the "Corinna Maying" (the chief of a large division of Herrick's poems which celebrate rustic festivals, superstitions, and folklore generally), the epitaph on Prudence Baldwin, and many others, are justly included in nearly all selections of English poetry, and many of them are known by heart to every one who knows any poetry at all. One or two of the least well known of them may perhaps be welcome again:—

" Good morrow to the day so fair,
Good morning, sir, to you ;
Good morrow to mine own torn hair
Bedabbled with the dew.

" Good morning to this primrose too,
Good morrow to each maid ;
That will with flowers the tomb bestrew
Wherein my love is laid.

" Ah, woe is me, woe, woe is me,
Alack and well-a-day !
For pity, sir, find out that bee
That bore my love away.

" I'll seek him in your bonnet brave ;
I'll seek him in your eyes ;

Nay, now I think, they've made his grave
I' th' bed of strawberries.

“ I'll seek him there : I know ere this
The cold, cold earth doth shake him ;
But I will go, or send a kiss
By you, sir, to awake him.

“ Pray hurt him not ; though he be dead
He knows well who do love him,
And who with green turfs rear his head,
And who do rudely move him.

“ He's soft and tender, pray take heed,
With bands of cowslips bind him,
And bring him home ; but 'tis decreed
That I shall never find him.”

“ I dare not ask a kiss ;
I dare not beg a smile ;
Lest having that or this,
I might grow proud the while.

“ No, no—the utmost share
Of my desire shall be
Only to kiss that air
That lately kissèd thee.”

“ Here, a little child, I stand
Heaving up my eithe: hand :
Cold as paddocks though they be
Here I lift them up to Thee,
For a benison to fall
On our meat and on us all.

Amen.”

But Herrick's charm is everywhere—except in the epigrams. It is very rare to find one of the hundreds of little poems which form his book destitute of the peculiar touch of phrasing, the eternising influence of style, which characterises the poetry of this particular period so remarkably. The subject may be the merest trifle, the thought a hackneyed or insignificant one. But the amber to enshrine the fly is always there in larger or smaller, in

clearer or more clouded, shape. There has often been a certain contempt (connected no doubt with certain general critical errors as they seem to me, with which I shall deal at the end of this chapter) flavouring critical notices of Herrick. I do not think that any one who judges poetry as poetry, who keeps its several kinds apart and does not demand epic graces in lyric, dramatic substance in an anthologia, could ever feel or hint such a contempt. Whatever Herrick may have been as a man (of which we know very little, and for which we need care less), he was a most exquisite and complete poet in his own way, neither was that way one to be lightly spoken of.

Indissolubly connected with Herrick in age, in character, and in the singularly unjust criticism which has at various times been bestowed on him, is Thomas Carew. His birth-date has been very differently given as 1587 and (that now preferred) 1598; but he died nearly forty years before the author of the *Hesperides*, and nearly ten before the *Hesperides* themselves were published, while his own poems were never collected till after his own death. He was of a Gloucestershire branch of the famous Devonshire family of Carew, Cary, or Cruwys, was of Merton College, Oxford, and the Temple, travelled, followed the Court, was a disciple of Ben Jonson, and a member of the learned and accomplished society of Clarendon's earlier days, obtained a place in the household of Charles I., is said by his friend Hyde to have turned to devotion after a somewhat libertine life, and died in 1639, before the evil days of triumphant Puritanism, *felix opportunitate mortis*. He wrote little, and the scantiness of his production, together with the supposed pains it cost him, is ridiculed in Suckling's doggerel "Sessions of the Poets." But this reproach (which Carew shares with Gray, and with not a few others of the most admirable names in literature), unjust as it is, is less unjust than the general tone of criticism on Carew since. The *locus classicus* of depreciation both in regard to him and to Herrick is to be found, as might be expected, in one of the greatest, and one of the most wilfully capricious and

untrustworthy of English critics, in Hazlitt. I am sorry to say that there can be little hesitation in setting down the extraordinary misjudgment of the passage in question (it occurs in the sixth Lecture on Elizabethan Literature), in part, at least, to the fact that Herrick, Carew, and Crashaw, who are summarily damned in it, were Royalists. If there were any doubt about the matter, it would be settled by the encomium bestowed in the very same passage on Marvell, who is, no doubt, as Hazlitt says, a true poet, but who as a poet is but seldom at the highest height of the authors of "The Litany," "The Rapture," and "The Flaming Heart." Hazlitt, then, while on his way to tell us that Herrick's two best pieces are some trivial anacreontics about Cupid and the Bees—things hackneyed through a dozen literatures, and with no recommendation but a borrowed prettiness—while about, I say, to deny Herrick the spirit of love or wine, and in the same breath with the dismissal of Crashaw as a "hectic enthusiast," informs us that Carew was "an elegant Court trifler," and describes his style as a "frequent mixture of the superficial and commonplace, with far-fetched and improbable conceits."

What Carew really is, and what he may be peremptorily declared to be in opposition even to such a critic as Hazlitt, is something quite different. He is one of the most perfect masters of lyrical form in English poetry. He possesses a command of the overlapped heroic couplet, which for sweep and rush of rhythm cannot be surpassed anywhere. He has, perhaps in a greater degree than any poet of that time of conceits, the knack of modulating the extravagances of fancy by the control of reason, so that he never falls into the unbelievableness of Donne, or Crashaw, or Cleveland. He had a delicacy, when he chose to be delicate, which is quintessential, and a vigour which is thoroughly manly. Best of all, perhaps, he had the intelligence and the self-restraint to make all his poems wholes, and not mere congeries of verses. There is always, both in the scheme of his meaning and the scheme of his metre, a definite plan of rise and fall, a concerted effect. That these great merits were

accompanied by not inconsiderable defects is true. Carew lacks the dewy freshness, the unstudied grace of Herrick. He is even more frankly and uncontrolledly sensual, and has paid the usual and inevitable penalty that his best poem, *The Rapture*, is, for the most part, unquotable, while another, if he carried out its principles in this present year of grace, would run him the risk of imprisonment with hard labour. His largest attempt—the masque called *Cælum Britannicum*—is heavy. His smaller poems, beautiful as they are, suffer somewhat from want of variety of subject. There is just so much truth in Suckling's impertinence that the reader of Carew sometimes catches himself repeating the lines of Carew's master, "Still to be neat, still to be drest," not indeed in full agreement with them, but not in exact disagreement. One misses the "wild civility" of Herrick. This acknowledgment, I trust, will save me from any charge of overvaluing Carew.

A man might, however, be easily tempted to overvalue him, who observes his beauties, and who sees how, preserving the force, the poetic spell, of the time, he was yet able, without in the least descending to the correctness of Waller and his followers, to introduce into his work something also preserving it from the weaknesses and inequalities which deface that of almost all his contemporaries, and which, as we shall see, make much of the dramatic and poetical work of 1630-1660 a chaos of slipshod deformity to any one who has the sense of poetical form. It is an unwearying delight to read and re-read the second of his poems, the "Persuasions to Love," addressed to a certain A. L. That the sentiment is common enough matters little; the commonest things in poetry are always the best. But the delicate interchange of the catalectic and acatalectic dimeter, the wonderful plays and changes of cadence, the opening, as it were, of fresh stops at the beginning of each new paragraph of the verse, so that the music acquires a new colour, the felicity of the several phrases, the cunning heightening of the passion as the poet comes to "Oh! love me then, and now begin it," and the dying fall of the close, make up to me, at least, most charming pastime. It is not the same kind of pleasure, no

doubt, as that given by such an outburst as Crashaw's, to be mentioned presently, or by such pieces as the great soliloquies of Shakespere. Any one may say, if he likes to use words which are question-begging, when not strictly meaningless, that it is not such a "high" kind. But it is a kind, and in that kind perfect.

Carew's best pieces, besides *The Rapture*, are the beautiful "Ask me no more," the first stanza of which is the weakest; the fine couplet poem, "The Cruel Mistress," whose closing distich—

"Of such a goddess no times leave record,
That burned the temple where she was adored"—

Dryden conveyed with the wise and unblushing boldness which great poets use; the "Deposition from love" written in one of those combinations of eights and sixes, the melodious charm of which seems to have died with the seventeenth century; the song, "He that loves a rosy cheek," which, by the unusual morality of its sentiments, has perhaps secured a fame not quite due to its poetical merits; the epitaph on Lady Mary Villers; the song "Would you know what's soft?" the song to his inconstant mistress:

"When thou, poor excommunicate
From all the joys of love, shalt see
The full reward, and glorious fate
Which my strong faith shall purchase me,
Then curse thine own inconstancy.

"A fairer hand than thine shall cure
That heart which thy false oaths did wound;
And to my soul, a soul more pure
Than thine, shall by love's hand be bound,
And both with equal glory crown'd.

"Then shalt thou weep, entreat, complain
To Love, as I did once to thee;
When all thy tears shall be as vain
As mine were then, for thou shalt be
Damn'd for thy false apostacy."—

the pleasant pictures of the country houses of Wrest and Saxham; the charming conceit of "Red and white roses":

" Read in these roses the sad story
 Of my hard fate and your own glory :
 In the white you may discover
 The paleness of a fainting lover ;
 In the red, the flames still feeding
 On my heart with fresh wounds bleeding.
 The white will tell you how I languish,
 And the red express my anguish :
 The white my innocence displaying
 The red my martyrdom betraying.
 The frowns that on your brow resided
 Have those roses thus divided ;
 Oh ! let your smiles but clear the weather
 And then they both shall grow together."—

and lastly, though it would be easy to extend this already long list of selections from a by no means extensive collection of poems, the grand elegy on Donne. By this last the reproach of vain and amatorious trifling which has been so often levelled at Carew is at once thrown back and blunted. No poem shows so great an influence on the masculine panegyrics with which Dryden was to enrich the English of the next generation, and few are fuller of noteworthy phrases. The splendid epitaph which closes it—

" Here lies a king that ruled as he thought fit
 The universal monarchy of wit "—

is only the best passage, not the only good one, and it may be matched with a fine and just description of English, ushered by a touch of acute criticism.

" Thou shalt yield no precedencæ, but of time,
 And the blind fate of language, whose tuned chime
 More charms the outward sense : yet thou mayst claim
 From so great disadvantage greater fame.
 Since to the awe of thine imperious wit
 Our troublesome language bends, made only fit
 With her tough thick-ribbed hoops to gird about
 Thy giant fancy, which had proved too stout
 For their soft melting phrases."

And it is the man who could write like this that Hazlitt calls an "elegant Court trifle!"

The third of this great trio of poets, and with them the most remarkable of our whole group, was Richard Crashaw. He completes Carew and Herrick both in his qualities and (if a kind of bull may be permitted) in his defects, after a fashion almost unexampled elsewhere and supremely interesting. Hardly any one of the three could have appeared at any other time, and not one but is distinguished from the others in the most marked way. Herrick, despite his sometimes rather obtrusive learning, is emphatically the natural man. He does not show much sign of the influence of good society, his merits as well as his faults have a singular unpersonal and, if I may so say, *terræfilian* connotation. Carew is a gentleman before all; but a rather profane gentleman. Crashaw is religious everywhere. Again, Herrick and Carew, despite their strong savour of the fashion of the time, are eminently critics as well as poets. Carew has not let one piece critically unworthy of him pass his censorship: Herrick (if we exclude the filthy and foolish epigrams into which he was led by corrupt following of Ben) has been equally careful. These two bards may have trouble with the *ensor morum*,—the *ensor literarum* they can brave with perfect confidence. It is otherwise with Crashaw. That he never, as far as can be seen, edited the bulk of his work for press at all matters little or nothing. But there is not in his work the slightest sign of the exercise of any critical faculty before, during, or after production. His masterpiece, one of the most astonishing things in English or any other literature, comes without warning at the end of *The Flaming Heart*. For page after page the poet has been poorly playing on some trifling conceits suggested by the picture of Saint Theresa and a seraph. First he thinks the painter ought to have changed the attributes; then he doubts whether a lesser change will not do; and always he treats his subject in a vein of grovelling and grotesque conceit which the boy Dryden in the stage of his elegy on Lord Hastings would have disdained. And then in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye, without warning of any sort, the metre changes, the poet's inspiration catches fire, and there rushes up into the heaven of poetry this marvellous rocket of song:—

“ Live in these conquering leaves : live all the same ;
 And walk through all tongues one triumphant flame ;
 Live here, great heart ; and love, and die, and kill ;
 And bleed, and wound, and yield, and conquer still.
 Let this immortal life where'er it comes
 Walk in a crowd of loves and martyrdoms.
 Let mystic deaths wait on't ; and wise souls be
 The love-slain witnesses of this life of thee.
 O sweet incendiary ! show here thy art,
 Upon this carcase of a hard cold heart ;
 Let all thy scatter'd shafts of light, that play
 Among the leaves of thy large books of day,
 Combin'd against this breast at once break in,
 And take away from me myself and sin ;
 This gracious robbery shall thy bounty be
 And my best fortunes such fair spoils of me.
 O thou undaunted daughter of desires !
 By all thy pow'r of lights and fires ;
 By all the eagle in thee, all the dove ;
 By all thy lives and deaths of love ;
 By thy large draughts of intellectual day ;
 And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;
 By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire ;
 By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire ;
 By the full kingdom of that final kiss
 That seized thy parting soul, and seal'd thee his ;
 By all the heavens thou hast in him,
 (Fair sister of the seraphim)
 By all of him we have in thee ;
 Leave nothing of myself in me.
 Let me so read thy life, that I
 Unto all life of mine may die.”

The contrast is perhaps unique as regards the dead colourlessness of the beginning, and the splendid colour of the end. But contrasts like it occur all over Crashaw's work.

He was a much younger man than either of the poets with whom we have leashed him, and his birth year used to be put at 1616, though Dr. Grosart has made it probable that it was three years earlier. His father was a stern Anglican clergyman of extremely Protestant leanings, his mother died when Crashaw was young, but his stepmother appears to have been most unovercal. Crashaw was educated at Charterhouse, and then went to Cambridge, where in 1637 he became a fellow of Peterhouse, and came in for the full tide of high church feeling, to which (under the mixed influence of Laud's policy, of the ascetic practices of the Ferrars of Gidding, and of a great architectural development afterwards defaced if not destroyed by Puritan brutality) Cambridge was even more exposed than Oxford. The outbreak of the civil war may or may not have found Crashaw at Cambridge; he was at any rate deprived of his fellowship for not taking the covenant in 1643, and driven into exile. Already inclined doctrinally and in matters of practice to the older communion, and despairing of the resurrection of the Church of England after her sufferings at the hands of the Parliament, Crashaw joined the Church of Rome, and journeyed to its metropolis. He was attached to the suit of Cardinal Pallotta, but is said to have been shocked by Italian manners. The cardinal procured him a canonry at Loretto, and this he hastened to take up, but died in 1649 with suspicions of poison, which are not impossibly, but at the same time by no means necessarily true. His poems had already appeared under the double title of *Steps to the Temple* (sacred), and *Delights of the Muses* (profane), but not under his own editorship, or it would seem with his own choice of title. Several other editions followed,—one later than his death, with curious illustrations said to be, in part at least, of his own design. Manuscript sources, as in the case of some other poets of the time, have considerably enlarged the collection since. But a great part of it consists of epigrams (in the wide sense, and almost wholly sacred) in the classical tongues, which were sometimes translated by Crashaw himself. These are not always correct in

style or prosody, but are often interesting. The famous line in reference to the miracle of Cana,

“Vidit et erubuit nympa pudica Deum,”

is assigned to Crashaw as a boy at Cambridge; of his later faculty in the same way the elaborate and, in its way, beautiful poem entitled *Bulla* (the Bubble) is the most remarkable.

Our chief subject, however, is the English poems proper, sacred and profane. In almost all of these, there is noticeable an extraordinary inequality, the same in kind, if not in degree, as that on which we have commented in the case of *The Flaming Heart*. Crashaw is never quite so great as there; but he is often quite as small. His exasperating lack of self-criticism has sometimes led selectors to make a cento out of his poems—notably in the case of the exceedingly pretty “Wishes to His Unknown Mistress,” beginning, “Whoe’er she be, That not impossible she, That shall command my heart and me”—a poem, let it be added, which excuses this dubious process much less than most, inasmuch as nothing in it is positively bad, though it is rather too long. Here is the opening, preceded by a piece from another poem, “A Hymn to Saint Theresa” :—

“Those rare works, where thou shalt leave writ
 Love’s noble history, with wit
 Taught thee by none but him, while here
 They feed our souls, shall clothe thine there.
 Each heavenly word by whose hid flame
 Our hard hearts shall strike fire, the same
 Shall flourish on thy brows and be
 Both fire to us and flame to thee :
 Whose light shall live bright, in thy face
 By glory, in our hearts by grace.

“Thou shalt look round about, and see
 Thousands of crown’d souls throng to be
 Themselves thy crown, sons of thy vows :
 The virgin births with which thy spouse
 Made fruitful thy fair soul ; go now
 And with them all about thee, bow

To Him, 'Put on' (He'll say) 'put on,
 My rosy love, that thy rich zone,
 Sparkling with the sacred flames,
 Of thousand souls whose happy names
 Heaven heaps upon thy score, thy bright
 Life brought them first to kiss the light:
 That kindled them to stars.' And so
 Thou with the Lamb thy Lord shall go,
 And whereso'er He sets His white
 Steps, walk with Him those ways of light.
 Which who in death would live to see
 Must learn in life to die like thee."

" Whoe'er she be,
 That not impossible she,
 That shall command my heart and me ;

" Where'er she lie,
 Lock'd up from mortal eye,
 In shady leaves of destiny ;

" Till that ripe birth
 Of studied Fate stand forth,
 And teach her fair steps to our earth :

" Till that divine
 Idea take a shrine
 Of crystal flesh, through which to shine :

" Meet you her, my wishes
 Bespeak her to my blisses,
 And be ye call'd, my absent kisses."

The first hymn to Saint Theresa, to which *The Flaming Heart* is a kind of appendix, was written when Crashaw was still an Anglican (for which he did not fail, later, to make a characteristic and very pretty, though quite unnecessary, apology). It has no passage quite up to the Invocation—Epiphonema, to give it the technical term—of the later poem. But it is, on the contrary, good almost throughout, and is, for uniform exaltation, far the best of Crashaw's poems. Yet such uniform exaltation must be seldom sought in him. It is in his little bursts, such as that in the stanza beginning, "O mother turtle dove," that his charm consists.

Often, as in verse after verse of *The Weeper*, it has an unearthly delicacy and witchery which only Blake, in a few snatches, has ever equalled; while at other times the poet seems to invent, in the most casual and unthinking fashion, new metrical effects and new jewelries of diction which the greatest lyric poets since—Coleridge, Shelley, Lord Tennyson, Mr. Swinburne—have rather deliberately imitated than spontaneously recovered. Yet to all this charm there is no small drawback. The very maddest and most methodless of the “Metaphysicals” cannot touch Crashaw in his tasteless use of conceits. When he, in *The Weeper* just above referred to, calls the tears of Magdalene “Wat’ry brothers,” and “Simpering sons of those fair eyes,” and when, in the most intolerable of all the poet’s excesses, the same eyes are called “Two waking baths, two weeping motions, Portable and compendious oceans,” which follow our Lord about the hills of Galilee, it is almost difficult to know whether to feel most contempt or indignation for a man who could so write. It is fair to say that there are various readings and omissions in the different editions which affect both these passages. Yet the offence is that Crashaw should ever have written them at all. Amends, however, are sure to be made before the reader has read much farther. Crashaw’s longest poems—a version of Marini’s *Sospetto d’Herode*, and one of the rather overpraised “Lover and Nightingale” story of Strada—are not his best; the metre in which both are written, though the poet manages it well, lacks the extraordinary charm of his lyric measures. It does not appear that the “Not impossible she” ever made her appearance, and probably for a full half of his short life Crashaw burnt only with religious fire. But no Englishman has expressed that fire as he has, and none in his expression of any sentiment, sacred and profane, has dropped such notes of ethereal music. At his best he is far above singing, at his worst he is below a very childish prattle. But even then he is never coarse, never offensive, not very often actually dull; and everywhere he makes amends by flowers of the divinest poetry. Mr. Pope, who borrowed not a little from him, thought,

indeed, that you could find nothing of "The real part of poetry" (correct construction and so forth) in Crashaw; and Mr. Hayley gently rebukes Cowley (after observing that if Pope borrowed from Crashaw, it was "as the sun borrows from the earth") for his "glowing panegyrick." Now, if the real part of poetry is anywhere in Hayley, or quintessentially in Pope, it certainly is not in Crashaw.

The group or school (for it is not easy to decide on either word, and objections might be taken to each) at the head of which Herrick, Carew, and Crashaw must be placed, and which included Herbert and his band of sacred singers, included also not a few minor groups, sufficiently different from each other, but all marked off sharply from the innovating and classical school of Waller and his followers, which it is not proposed to treat in this volume. All, without exception, show the influence in different ways of Ben Jonson and of Donne. But each has its own peculiarity. We find these peculiarities, together with anticipations of post-Reformation characteristics, mixed very curiously in the miscellanies of the time. These are interesting enough, and may be studied with advantage, if not also with pleasure, in the principal of them, *Wit's Recreations* (1640). This, with certain kindred works (*Wit Restored*, and the very unsavoury *Musarum Delicie* of Sir John Mennis and Dr. Smith), has been more than once republished. In these curious collections, to mention only one instance, numerous pieces of Herrick's appeared with considerable variants from the text of the *Hesperides*; and in their pages things old and new, charming pastoral poems, *vers de société* of very unequal merit, ballads, satires, epigrams, and a large quantity of mere scatology and doggerel, are heaped together pell-mell. Songs from the dramatists, especially Fletcher, make their appearance, sometimes with slight variants, and there are forms of the drinking song in *Gammer Gurton's Needle* long after, and of Sir John Suckling's "Ballad on a Wedding," apparently somewhat before, their respective publication in their proper places. Here is the joke about the wife and the almanack which reckless tradition has told of Dryden; printed when Lady Elizabeth

Howard was in the nursery, and Dryden was not yet at Westminster. Here we learn how, probably about the second or third decade of the century, the favourite authors of learned ladies were "Wither, Draiton, and Balzack" (Guez de Balzac, of the *Letters*), a very singular trio; and how some at least loved the "easy ambling" of Heywood's prose, but thought that he "grovelled on the stage," which it must be confessed he not uncommonly did. *Wit Restored* contains the charming "Phillida flouts Me," with other real "delights." Even Milton makes his appearance in these collections, which continued to be popular for more than a century, and acquired at intervals fresh vogue from the great names of Dryden and Pope.

Neglecting or returning from these, we may class the minor Caroline poets under the following heads. There are belated Elizabethans like Habington, sacred poets of the school of Herbert, translators like Stanley, Sherburne, and Quarles, philosophico-theological poets like Joseph Beaumont and More, and poets of society, such as Lovelace and Suckling, whose class degenerated into a class of boon companion song-writers, such as Alexander Broune, and, at the extremity of our present period, Charles Cotton, in whose verse (as for the matter of that in the famous muses of Lovelace and Suckling themselves) the rapidly degenerating prosody of the time is sometimes painfully evident. This is also apparent (though it is compensated by much exquisite poetry, and on the strictly lyric side rarely offends) in the work of Randolph, Corbet, Cartwright, Chamberlayne of the *Pharonnida*, Sidney Godolphin, Shakerley Marmion, Cleveland, Benlowes, Kynaston, John Hall, the enigmatic Chalkhill, Patrick Carey, Bishop King. These about exhaust the list of poets who must be characterised here, though it could be extended. Cowley, Marvell, and Waller fall outside our limits.

George Herbert, the one popular name, if we except Lovelace and Suckling, of the last paragraph, was born at Montgomery Castle in 1593, of the great house now represented in the English peerage by the holders of the titles of Pembroke, Carnarvon, and Powis.

George was the younger brother of the equally well-known Lord Herbert of Cherbury; and after being for some years public orator at Cambridge, turned, it is said, on some despoite or disappointment, from secular to sacred business, accepted the living of Bemerton, and after holding it for a short time, died in 1633. Walton's *Life* was hardly needed to fix Herbert in the popular mind, for his famous volume of sacred poems, *The Temple*, would have done so, and has done so far more firmly. It was not his only book by any means; he had displayed much wit as quite a boy in counter-lamphooning Andrew Melville's ponderous and impudent *Anti-Tami-Cami-Categoria*, an attack on the English universities; and afterwards he wrote freely in Greek, Latin, and English, both in prose and verse. Nothing, however, but *The Temple* has held popular estimation, and that has held it firmly, being as much helped by the Tractarian as by the Romantic movement. It may be confessed without shame and without innuendo that Herbert has been on the whole a greater favourite with readers than with critics, and the reason is obvious. He is not prodigal of the finest strokes of poetry. To take only his own contemporaries, and undoubtedly pupils, his gentle moralising and devotion are tame and cold beside the burning glow of Crashaw, commonplace and popular beside the intellectual subtlety and, now and then, the inspired touch of Vaughan. But he never drops into the flatness and the extravagance of both these writers, and his beauties, assuredly not mean in themselves, and very constantly present, are both in kind and in arrangement admirably suited to the average comprehension. He is quaint and conceited; but his quaintnesses and conceits are never beyond the reach of any tolerably intelligent understanding. He is devout, but his devotion does not transgress into the more fantastic regions of piety. He is a mystic, but of the more exoteric school of mysticism. He expresses common needs, common thoughts, the everyday emotions of the Christian, just sublimated sufficiently to make them attractive. The fashion and his own taste gave him a pleasing quaintness, which his good sense kept from being ever

obscure or offensive or extravagant. The famous "Sweet day so cool, so calm, so bright," and many short passages which are known to every one, express Herbert perfectly. The thought is obvious, usual, in no sense far fetched. The morality is plain and simple. The expression, with a sufficient touch of the daintiness of the time, has nothing that is extraordinarily or ravishingly felicitous whether in phrasing or versing. He is, in short, a poet whom all must respect; whom those that are in sympathy with his vein of thought cannot but revere; who did England an inestimable service, by giving to the highest and purest thoughts that familiar and abiding poetic garb which contributes so much to fix any thoughts in the mind, and of which, to tell the truth, poetry has been much more prodigal to other departments of thought by no means so well deserving. But it is impossible to call him a great poet even in his own difficult class. The early Latin hymn writers are there to show what a great religious poet must be like. Crashaw, if his genius had been less irregular and jaculative, might have been such. Herbert is not, and could not have been. With him it is an almost invariable custom to class Vaughan the "Silurist," and a common one to unite George Sandys, the traveller, translator of Ovid, and paraphrast of the Psalms and other parts of the Bible. Sandys, an older man than Herbert by fifteen, and than Vaughan by more than forty years, published rather late, so that he came as a sacred poet after Herbert, and not long before Vaughan. He was son of the Archbishop of York, and brother of that Edwin Sandys who was a pupil of Hooker, and who is said to have been present on the melancholy occasion when the judicious one was "called to rock the cradle." He is interesting for a singular and early mastery of the couplet, which the following extract will show:—

"O Thou, who all things hast of nothing made,
Whose hand the radiant firmament displayed,
With such an undiscerned swiftness hurled
About the steadfast centre of the world;
Against whose rapid course the restless sun,
And wandering flames in varied motions run.

Which heat, light, life infuse ; time, night, and day
 Distinguish ; in our human bodies sway :
 That hung'st the solid earth in fleeting air
 Veined with clear springs which ambient seas repair.
 In clouds the mountains wrap their hoary heads ;
 Luxurious valleys clothed with flowery meads ;
 Her trees yield fruit and shade ; with liberal breasts
 All creatures she, 'heir common mother, feasts."

Henry Vaughan was born in 1622, published *Poems* in 1646 (for some of which he afterwards expressed a not wholly necessary repentance), *Olor Iscanus* (from Isca Silurum) in 1651, and *Silex Scintillans*, his best-known book, in 1650 and 1655. He also published verses much later, and did not die till 1695, being the latest lived of any man who has a claim to appear in this book, but his aftergrowths were not happy. To say that Vaughan is a poet of one poem would not be true. But the universally known

"They are all gone into the world of light"

is so very much better than anything else that he has done that it would be hardly fair to quote anything else, unless we could quote a great deal. Like Herber, and in pretty obvious imitation of him, he set himself to bend the prevailing fancy for quips and quaintnesses into sacred uses, to see that the Devil should not have all the best conceits. But he is not so uniformly successful, though he has greater depth and greater originality of thought.

Lovelace and Suckling are inextricably connected together, not merely by their style of poetry, but by their advocacy of the same cause, their date, and their melancholy end. Both (Suckling in 1609, Lovelace nine years later) were born to large fortunes, both spent them, at least partially, in the King's cause, and both died miserably,—Suckling, in 1642, by his own hand, his mind, according to a legend, unhinged by the tortures of the Inquisition ; Lovelace, two years before the Restoration, a needy though not an exiled cavalier, in London purlieus. Both have written songs of quite marvellous and unparalleled exquisiteness, and both have left doggerel which

would disgrace a schoolboy. Both, it may be suspected, held the doctrine which Suckling openly champions, that a gentleman should not take too much trouble about his verses. The result, however, was in Lovelace's case more disastrous than in Suckling's. It is not quite true that Lovelace left nothing worth reading but the two immortal songs, "To Lucasta on going to the Wars" and "To Althea from Prison;" and it is only fair to say that the corrupt condition of his text is evidently due, at least in part, to incompetent printing and the absence of revision. "The Grasshopper" is almost worthy of the two better-known pieces, and there are others not far below it. But on the whole any one who knows those two (and who does not?) may neglect Lovelace with safety. Suckling, even putting his dramatic work aside, is not to be thus treated. True, he is often careless in the bad sense as well as in the good, though the doggerel of the "Sessions" and some other pieces is probably intentional. But in his own vein, that of coxcombry that is not quite cynical, and is quite intelligent, he is marvellously happy. The famous song in *Aglaura*, the Allegro to Lovelace's Pensive, "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" is scarcely better than "'Tis now since I sat down before That foolish for a heart," or "Out upon it! I have loved Three whole days together." Nor in more serious veins is the author to be slighted, as in "The Dance;" while as for the "Ballad on a Wedding," the best parts of this are by common consent incomparable. Side by side by these are to be found, as in Lovelace, pieces that will not even scan, and, as *not* in Lovelace (who is not seldom loose but never nasty), pieces of a dull and disgusting obscenity. But we do not go to Suckling for these; we go to him for his easy grace, his agreeable impudence, his scandalous mock-disloyalty (for it is only mock-disloyalty after all) to the "Lord of Terrible Aspect," whom all his elder contemporaries worshipped so piously. Suckling's inconstancy and Lovelace's constancy may or may not be equally poetical,—there is some reason for thinking that the lover of Althea was actually driven to something like despair by the loss of his mistress. But

that matters to us very little. The songs remain, and remain yet unsurpassed, as the most perfect celebrations, in one case of chivalrous devotion, in the other of the coxcomb side of gallantry, that literature contains or is likely ever to contain. The song-writing faculty of the English, which had broken out some half century before, and had produced so many masterpieces, was near its death, or at least near the trance from which Burns and Blake revived it more than a century later, which even Dryden's super-human faculty of verse could only galvanise. But at the last it threw off by the mouths of men, who otherwise seem to have had very ordinary poetical powers, this little group of triumphs in song, to which have to be added the raptures—equally strange and sweet, equally unmatched of their kind, but nobler and more masculine—of the "Great Marquis," the few and wonderful lines of Montrose. To quote "My dear and only love, I pray," or "Great, good, and just, could I but rate," would be almost as much an insult to the reader as to quote the above-mentioned little masterpieces of the two less heroic English cavaliers.

Quarles, More, and Joseph Beaumont form, as it were, a kind of appendix to the poetry of Herbert and Vaughan—an appendix very much less distinguished by poetical power, but very interesting as displaying the character of the time and the fashion (strange enough to us moderns) in which almost every interest of that time found its natural way into verse. The enormous popularity of Francis Quarles's *Emblems* and *Enchiridion* accounts to some extent for the very unjust ridicule which has been lavished on him by men of letters of his own and later times. But the silly antithesis of Pope, a writer who, great as he was, was almost as ignorant of literary history as his model, Boileau, ought to prejudice no one, and it is strictly true that Quarles's enormous volume hides, to some extent, his merits. Born in 1592 at Romford, of a gentle though not very distinguished family, which enters into that curious literary genealogy of Swift, Dryden, and Herrick, he was educated at Cambridge, became cup-bearer to the ill-fated and romantically renowned "Goody Palsgrave," held

the post which Middleton and Jonson had held, of chronologer to the city of London, followed the King to Oxford to his loss, having previously had losses in Ireland, and died early in 1644, leaving his memory to be defended in a rather affecting document by his widow, Ursula. Quarles was a kind of journalist to whom the vehicle of verse came more easily than the vehicle of prose, and the dangers of that state of things are well known. A mere list of his work (the *Enchiridion* is in prose, and a good thing too) would far exceed any space that can be given to him here. All Quarles's work is journey-work, but it is only fair to note the frequent wealth of fancy, the occasional felicity of expression, which illustrate this wilderness.

More and Beaumont were not, like Quarles, poetical miscellanists and periodical writers; but they seem to have shared with him the delusion that poetry is an instrument of all work. Henry More, a man well connected and who might have risen, but who preferred to pass the greater part of a long and studious life as a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, is best known as a member of the theological school, indifferently called the Cambridge Platonists and the Cambridge Latitudinarians. His chief work in verse is a great philosophical poem, entitled the *Song of the Soul*, with such engaging sub-titles as *Psychozoia*, *Psychathanasia*, *Antipsychopannychia*, and *Antimonopsychia*. I shall not, I hope, be suspected of being ignorant of Greek, or disinclined to metaphysics, if I say that the *Song of the Soul* appears to me a venerable mistake. A philosophical controversy carried on in this fashion—

“But contradiction, can that have place
In any soul? Plato affirms ideas;
But Aristotle, with his pugnacious race,
As idle figments stiffly them denies,”

seems to me to be a signal instance of the wrong thing in the wrong place. It is quite true that More has, as Southey says, “lines and passages of sublime beauty.” A man of his time, actuated by its noble thought, trained as we know More to have

been in the severest school of Spenser, and thus habituated to the heavenly harmonies of that perfect poet, could hardly fail to produce such. But his muse is a chaotic not a cosmic one.

Something the same may be said of Joseph Beaumont, a friend of Crashaw, and like him ejected from Peterhouse, son-in-law of Bishop Wren, and, later, head of Jesus College. Beaumont, a strong cavalier and an orthodox churchman, was a kind of adversary of More's, whose length and quaintness he has exceeded, while he has almost rivalled his learning in *Psyche* or *Love's Mystery*, a religious poem of huge dimensions, first published in 1648 and later in 1702. Beaumont, as both fragments of this vast thing and his minor poems show, had fancy taste, and almost genius on opportunity; but the prevailing mistake of his school, the idea that poetry is a fit vehicle for merely prosaic expression, is painfully apparent in him.

First, for various reasons, among the nondescripts of the Caroline school, deserves to be mentioned William Habington, a Roman Catholic gentleman of good upper middle-class station, whose father was himself a man of letters, and had some trouble in the Gunpowder Plot. He was born at Hirdlip Hall, near Worcester, in the year of the plot itself, courted and married Lucy Herbert, daughter of his neighbour, Lord Powis, and published her charms and virtues in the collection called *Castara*, first issued in 1634. Habington also wrote a tragic comedy, *The Queen of Aragon*, and some other work, but died in middle life. It is upon *Castara* that his fame rests. To tell the truth it is, though, as had been said, an estimable, yet a rather irritating work. That Habington was a true lover every line of it shows; that he had a strong infusion of the abundant poetical inspiration then abroad is shown by line after line, though hardly by poem after poem, among its pieces. His series of poems on the death of his friend Talbot is full of beauty. His religion is sincere, fervent, and often finely expressed; though he never rose to Herbert's pure devotion, or to Crashaw's flaming poetry. One of the later *Castara* poems may be given:—

- “ We saw and woo'd each other's eyes,
My soul contracted then with thine,
And both burnt in one sacrifice,
By which our marriage grew divine.
- “ Let wilder youths, whose soul is sense,
Profane the temple of delight,
And purchase endless penitence,
With the stolen pleasure of one night.
- “ Time's ever ours, while we despise
The sensual idol of our clay,
For though the sun do set and rise,
We joy one everlasting day.
- “ Whose light no jealous clouds obscure,
While each of us shine innocent,
The troubled stream is still impure ;
With virtue flies away content.
- “ And though opinions often err,
We'll court the modest smile of fame,
For sin's black danger circles her,
Who hath infection in her name.
- “ Thus when to one dark silent room
Death shall our loving coffins thrust :
Fame will build columns on our tomb,
And add a perfume to our dust.”

But *Castara* is a real instance of what some foreign critics very unjustly charge on English literature as a whole—a foolish and almost canting prudery. The poet dins the chastity of his mistress into his readers' heads until the readers in self-defence are driven to say, “Sir, did any one doubt it?” He protests the freedom of his own passion from any admixture of fleshly influence, till half a suspicion of hypocrisy and more than half a feeling of contempt force themselves on the hearer. A relentless critic might connect these unpleasant features with the uncharitable and more than orthodox bigotry of his religious poems. Yet Habington, besides contributing much agreeable verse to the literature of the period, is invaluable as showing the counterside to Milton, the Catholic Puritanism which is no doubt inherent in

the English nature, and which, had it not been for the Reformation, would probably have transformed Catholicism in a very strange fashion.

There is no Puritanism of any kind in a group—it would hardly be fair to call them a school!—of “Heroic” poets to whom very little attention has been paid in histories of literature hitherto, but who lead up not merely to Davenant’s *Gondibert* and Cowley’s *Davideis*, but to *Paradise Lost* itself. The “Heroic” poem was a kind generated partly by the precepts of the Italian criticism, including Tasso, partly by the practice of Tasso himself, and endeavouring to combine something of the unity of Epic with something and more of the variety of Romance. It may be represented here by the work of Chalkhill, Chamberlayne, Marmion, and Kynaston. John Chalkhill, the author of *Thealma and Clearchus*, was, with his work, introduced to the public in 1683 by Izaak Walton, who styles him “an acquaintant and friend of Edmund Spenser.” If so, he must have been one of the first of English poets to adopt the very loose enjambed decasyllabic couplet in which his work, like that of Marmion and still more Chamberlayne, is written. His poem is unfinished, and the construction and working-up of the story are looser even than the metre; but it contains a great deal of charming description and some very poetical phrase.

Much the same may be said of the *Cupid and Psyche* (1637) of the dramatist Shakerley Marmion (*v. inf.*), which follows the original of Apuleius with alternate closeness and liberty, but is always best when it is most original. The *Leoline and Sydanis* (1642) of Sir Francis Kynaston is not in couplets but in rhyme-royal—a metre of which the author was so fond that he even translated the *Troilus and Cressida* of Chaucer into Latin, retaining the seven-line stanza and its rhymes. Kynaston, who was a member of both universities and at one time proctor at Cambridge, was a man interested in various kinds of learning, and even started an Academy or *Museum Minervæ* of his own. In *Leoline and Sydanis* he sometimes comes near to the mock heroic, but in his

lyrics called *Cynthiades* he comes nearer still to the best Caroline cry. One or two of his pieces have found their way into anthologies, but until the present writer reprinted his works¹ he was almost unknown.

The most important by far, however, of this group is William Chamberlayne, a physician of Shaftesbury, who, before or during the Civil War, began and afterwards finished (publishing it in 1659) the very long heroic romance of *Pharonnida*, a story of the most involved and confused character but with episodes of great vividness and even sustained power: a piece of versification straining the liberties of *enjambement* in line and want of connection in syntax to the utmost; but a very mine of poetical expression and imagery. Jewels are to be picked up on every page by those who will take the trouble to do so, and who are not offended by the extraordinary nonchalance of the composition.

The *Theophila* of Edward Benlowes (1603?-1676) was printed in 1652 with elaborate and numerous engravings by Hollar, which have made it rare, and usually imperfect when met with. Benlowes was a Cambridge man (of St. John's College) by education, but lived latterly and died at Oxford, having been reduced from wealth to poverty by the liberality which made his friends anagrammatise his name into "Benevolus." His work was abused as an awful example of the extravagant style by Butler (*Character of a Small Poet*), and by Warburton in the next century; but it was never reprinted till the date of the collection just noted. It is a really curious book, displaying the extraordinary *diffusion* of poetical spirit still existing, but in a hectic and decadent condition. Benlowes—a Cleveland with more poetry and less cleverness, or a very much weaker Crashaw—uses a monorhymed triplet made up of a heroic, an octosyllable, and an Alexandrine which is as wilfully odd as the rest of him.

Randolph, the youngest and not the least gifted of the tribe

¹ In *Minor Caroline Poets*, vols. i. and ii. (Oxford, 1905-6). An important addition to the religious verse of the time was made by Mr. Dobell with the *Poems* (London, 1903) of Thomas Traherne, a follower of Herbert, with some strange anticipations of Blake.

of Ben, died before he was thirty, after writing some noteworthy plays, and a certain number of minor poems, which, as it has been well observed, rather show that he might have done anything, than that he did actually do something. Corbet was Bishop first of Oxford and then of Norwich, and died in 1635. Corbet's work is of that peculiar class which is usually, though not always, due to "University Wits," and which only appeals to people with a considerable appreciation of humour, and a large stock of general information. It is always occasional in character, and rarely succeeds so well as when the treatment is one of distinct *persiflage*. Thus the elegy on Donne is infinitely inferior to Crew's, and the mortuary epitaph on Arabella Stuart is, for such a subject and from the pen of a man of great talent, extraordinarily feeble. The burlesque epistle to Lord Mordaunt on his journey to the North is great fun, and the "Journey into France," though, to borrow one of its own jokes, rather "strong," is as good. The "Exhortation to Mr. John Hammond," a ferocious satire on the Puritans, distinguishes itself from almost all precedent work of the kind by the force and directness of its attack, which almost anticipates Dryden. And Corbet had both pathetic and imaginative touches on occasion, as here :—

"What I shall leave thee none can tell,
But all shall say I wish thee well,
I wish thee, Vin, before all wealth,
Both bodily and ghostly health ;
Nor too much wealth, nor wit, come to thee,
So much of either may undo thee.
I wish thee learning not for show,
Enough for to instruct and know ;
Not such as gentlemen require
To prate at table, or at fire.
I wish thee all thy mother's graces,
Thy father's fortunes, and his places.
I wish thee friends, and one at court,
Not to build on, but support
To keep thee, not in doing many
Oppressions, but from suffering any.

I wish thee peace in all thy ways,
Nor lazy nor contentious days ;
And when thy soul and body part
As innocent as now those art."

Cartwright, a short-lived man but a hard student, shows best in his dramas. In his occasional poems, strongly influenced by Donne, he is best at panegyric, worst at burlesque and epigram. In "On a Gentlewoman's Silk Hood" and some other pieces he may challenge comparison with the most futile of the metaphysicals ; but no one who has read his noble elegy on Sir Bevil Grenvil, unequal as it is, will think lightly of Cartwright. Sir Edward Sherburne was chiefly a translator in the fashionable style. His original poems were those of a very inferior Carew (he even copies the name Celia), but they are often pretty. Alexander Brome, of whom very little is known, and who must not be confounded with the dramatist, was a lawyer and a cavalier song-writer, who too frequently wrote mere doggerel ; but on the other hand, he sometimes did not, and when he escaped the evil influence, as in the stanzas "Come, come, let us drink," "The Trooper," and not a few others, he has the right anacreontic vein.

As for Charles Cotton, his "Virgil Travesty" is deader than Scarron's, and deserves to be so. The famous lines which Lamb has made known to every one in the essay on "New Year's Day" are the best thing he did. But there are many excellent things scattered about his work, despite a strong taint of the mere coarseness and nastiness which have been spoken of. And though he was also much tainted with the hopeless indifference to prosody which distinguished all these belated cavaliers, it is noteworthy that he was one of the few Englishmen for centuries to adopt the strict French forms and write rondeaux and the like. On the whole his poetical power has been a little undervalued, while he was also dexterous in prose.

Thomas Stanley has been classed above as a translator because he would probably have liked to have his scholarship thus brought into prominence. It was, both in ancient and modern tongues,

very considerable. His *History of Philosophy* was a classic for a very long time; and his edition of Æschylus had the honour of revision within the nineteenth century by Porson and by Butler. It is not certain that Bentley did not borrow from him; and his versions of Anacreon, of various other Greek lyrists, of the later Latins, and of modern writers in Spanish and Italian are most remarkable. But he was also an original poet in the best Caroline style of lyric; and his combination of family (for he was of the great Stanley stock), learning, and genius gave him a high position with men of letters of his day. Sidney Godolphin, who died very young fighting for the King in Hopton's army, had no time to do much; but he has been magnificently celebrated by no less authorities than Clarendon and Hobbes, and fragments of his work, which has only recently been collected, have long been known. None of it, except a commendatory poem or two, was printed in his own time, and very little later; while the MSS. are not in very accomplished form, and show few or no signs of revision by the author. Some, however, of Godolphin's lyrics are of great beauty, and a couplet translation of the *Fourth Æneid* has as much firmness as Sandys or Waller. Another precocious poet whose life also was cut short, though less heroically, and on the other side of politics, was John Hall, a Cambridge man, who at barely twenty (1645-6) issued a volume of poems and another, *Horæ Vacivæ*, of prose essays, translated Longinus, did hack-work on the Cromwellian side, and died, it is said, of loose and lazy living. Hall's poems are of mixed kinds—sacred and profane, serious and comic—and the best of them, such as "The Call" and "The Lure," have a slender but most attractive vein of fantastic charm. Patrick Carey, again, a Royalist and brother of the famous Lord Falkland, brought up as a Roman Catholic but afterwards a convert to the Church of England, left manuscript pieces, human and divine, which were printed by Sir Walter Scott in 1819, and are extremely pleasant; while Bishop King, though not often at the height of his well-known "Tell me no more how fair she is," never falls below a level much above the average.

The satirist John Cleveland, whose poems were extremely popular and exist in numerous editions (much blended with other men's work and hard to disentangle), was made a sort of "metaphysical helot" by a reference in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and quotations in Johnson's *Life of Cowley*. He partly deserves this, though he has real originality of thought and phrase; but much of his work is political or occasional, and he does not often rise to the quintessential exquisiteness of some of those who have been mentioned. A few examples of this class may be given:—

"Through a low
Dark vale, where shade-affecting walks did grow
Eternal strangers to the sun, did lie
The narrow path frequented only by
The forest tyrants when they bore their prey
From open dangers of discovering day.
Passed through this desert valley, they were now
Climbing an easy hill, whose every bough
Maintained a feathered chorister to sing
Soft panegyrics, and the rude winds bring
Into a murmuring slumber; whilst the calm
Morn on each leaf did hang the liquid balm
With an intent, before the next sun's birth
To drop it in those wounds which the cleft earth
Received from's last day's beams. The hill's ascent
Wound up by action, in a large extent
Of leafy plains, shows them the canopy
Beneath whose shadow their large way did lie."

CHAMBERLAYNE, *Pharonnida*, iv. l. 199-216.

It will be observed that of these eighteen lines all but *four* are overrun; and the resemblance to the couplet of Keats's *Endymion* should not be missed.

"April is past, then do not shed,
And do not waste in vain,
Upon thy mother's earthy bed
Thy tears of silver rain.

"Thou canst not hope that the cold earth
By watering will bring forth
A flower like thee, or will give birth
To one of the like worth.

“’Tis true the rain fall’n from the sky
Or from the clouded air,
Doth make the earth to fructify,
And makes the heaven more fair.

“With thy dear face it is not so,
Which, if once overcast,
If thou rain down thy showers of woe,
They, like the sirens, blast.

“Therefore, when sorrow shall becloud
Thy fair serenest day,
Weep not : thy sighs shall be allow’d
To chase the storm away.

“Consider that the teeming vine,
If cut by chance [it] weep,
Doth bear no grapes to make the wine,
But feels eternal sleep.”

KYNASTON.

“Be conquer’d by such charms ; there shall
Not always such enticements fall.
What know we whether that rich spring of light
Will staunch his streams
Of golden beams
Ere the approach of night ?

“How know we whether’t shall not be
The last to either thee or me ?
He can at will his ancient brightness gain,
But thou and I
When we shall die
Shall still in dust remain.”

JOHN HALL.

This group of poets seems to demand a little general criticism. They stand more by themselves than almost any other group in English literary history, marked off in most cases with equal sharpness from predecessors, followers, and contemporaries. The best of them, Herrick and Carew, with Crashaw as a great thirdsman, called themselves “sons” of Ben Jonson, and so in a way they were ; but they were even more sons of Donne.

That great writer's burning passion, his strange and labyrinthine conceits, the union in him of spiritual and sensual fire, influenced the idiosyncrasies of each as hardly any other writer's influence has done in other times; while his technical shortcomings had unquestionably a fatal effect on the weaker members of the school. But there is also noticeable in them a separate and hardly definable influence which circumscribes their class even more distinctly. They were, as I take it, the last set of poets anywhere in Europe to exhibit, in that most fertile department of poetry which seeks its inspiration in the love of man for woman, the frank expression of physical affection united with the spirit of chivalry, tempered by the consciousness of the fading of all natural delights, and foreshadowed by that intellectual introspection which has since developed itself in such great measure—some think out of all measure—in poetry. In the best of them there is no cynicism at all. Herrick and Carew are only sorry that the amatory fashion of this world passeth; they do not in the least undervalue it while it lasts, or sneer at it when it is gone. There is, at least to my thinking, little coarseness in them (I must perpetually except Herrick's epigrams), though there is, according to modern standards, a great deal of very plain speaking. They have as much frank enjoyment of physical pleasures as any classic or any mediævalist; but they have what no classic except Catullus and perhaps Sappho had,—the fine rapture, the passing but transforming madness which brings merely physical passion *sub specie æternitatis*; and they have in addition a faint preliminary touch of that analytic and self-questioning spirit which refines even further upon the chivalric rapture and the classical-renaissance mysticism of the shadow of death, but which since their time has eaten up the simpler and franker moods of passion itself. With them, as a necessary consequence, the physical is (to anticipate a famous word of which more presently) always blended with the metaphysical. It is curious that, as one result of the change of manner, this should have even been made a reproach to them—that the ecstasy of their

ecstasies should apparently have become not an excuse but an additional crime. Yet if any grave and precise person will read Carew's *Rapture*, the most audacious, and of course wilfully audacious expression of the style, and then turn to the archangel's colloquy with Adam in *Paradise Lost*, I should like to ask him on which side, according to his honour and conscience, the coarseness lies. I have myself no hesitation in saying that it lies with the husband of Mary Powell and the author of *Tetrachordon*, not with the lover of Celia and the author of the lines to "A. L."

There are other matters to be considered in the determination of the critical fortunes of the Caroline school. Those fortunes have been rather odd. Confounded at first in the general oblivion which the Restoration threw on all works of "the last age," and which deepened as the school of Dryden passed into the school of Pope, the writers of the Donne-Cowley tradition were first exhumed for the purposes of *post-mortem* examination by and in the remarkable "Life" of Johnson, devoted to the last member of the class. It is at this time of day alike useless to defend the Metaphysical Poets against much that Johnson said, and to defend Johnson against the charge of confusion, inadequacy, and haste in his generalisations. The term metaphysical, originating with Dryden, and used by Johnson with a slight difference, may be easily miscomprehended by any one who chooses to forget its legitimate application both etymologically and by usage to that which comes, as it were, behind or after nature. Still Johnson undoubtedly confounded in one common condemnation writers who have very little in common, and (which was worse) criticised a peculiarity of expression as if it had been a deliberate substitution of alloy for gold. The best phrases of the metaphysical poets more than justify themselves to any one who looks at poetry with a more catholic appreciation than Johnson's training and associations enabled him to apply; and even the worst are but mistaken attempts to follow out a very sound principle, that of "making the common as though it were not common." Towards the end of the eighteenth century some of these poets, especially

Herrick, were revived with taste and success by Headly and other men of letters. But it so happened that the three great critics of the later Romantic revival, Hazlitt, Lamb, and Coleridge, were all strongly attracted to the bolder and more irregular graces of the great dramatic poets, to the not less quaint but less "mignardised" quaintnesses of prose writers like Burton, Browne, and Taylor, or to the massive splendours of the Elizabethan poets proper. The poetry of the Caroline age was, therefore, a little slurred, and this mishap of falling between two schools has constantly recurred to it. Some critics even who have done its separate authors justice, have subsequently indulged in palinodes, have talked about decadence and Alexandrianism and what not. The majority have simply let the Cavalier Poets (as they are sometimes termed by a mere historical coincidence) be something more than the victims of the schools that preceded and followed them. The lovers of the school of good sense which Waller founded regard the poets of this chapter as extravagant conceitists; the lovers of the Elizabethan school proper regard them as effeminate triflers. One of Milton's gorgeous but constantly illogical phrases about the poets of his day may perhaps have created a prejudice against these poets. But Milton was a politician as well as a poet, a fanatic as well as a man of letters of seldom equalled, and never, save in two or three cases, surpassed powers. He was also a man of a more morose and unamiable private character than any other great poet the world has known except Racine. The easy *bonhomie* of the Caroline muse repelled his austerity; its careless good-breeding shocked his middle-class and Puritan Philistinism; its laxity revolted his principles of morality. Not improbably the vein of sympathy which discovers itself in the exquisite verse of the *Comus*, of the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, of *Lycidas* itself, infuriated him (as such veins of sympathy when they are rudely checked and turned from their course will often do) with those who indulged instead of checking it. But because *Lycidas* is magnificent, and *Il Penseroso* charming poetry, we are not to think meanly of "Fair Daffodils,"

or "Ask me no more," of "Going to the Wars," or "Tell me no more how fair she is."

Let us clear our minds of this cant, and once more admit, as the student of literature always has to remind himself, that a sapphire and diamond ring is not less beautiful because it is not a marble palace, or a bank of wild flowers in a wood because it is not a garden after the fashion of Lenôtre. In the division of English poetry which we have been reviewing, there are to be found some of the most exquisite examples of the gem and flower order of beauty that can be found in all literature. When Herrick bids Perilla

"Wind me in that very sheet
Which wrapt thy smooth limbs when thou didst implore
The gods' protection but the night before :
Follow me weeping to my turf, and there
Let fall a primrose and with it a tear ;
Then lastly, let some weekly strewings be
Devoted to the memory of me.
*Then shall my ghost not walk about ; but keep
Still in the cool and silent shades of sleep ;*"

or when he writes that astonishing verse, so unlike his usual style—

"In this world, *the Isle of Dreams,*
While we sit by sorrow's streams,
Tears and terrors are our themes ;"

when Carew, in one of those miraculous closing bursts, carefully led up to, of which he has almost the secret, cries

"Oh, love me then, and now begin it,
*Let us not lose this present minute ;
For time and age will work that wrack
Which time nor age shall ne'er call back ;*"

when even the sober blood in Habington's decent veins spurts in this splendid sally—

"So, 'mid the ice of the far northern sea,
A star about the Arctic circle may
Than ours yield clearer light ; *yet that bu. shall
Serve at the frozen pilot's funeral ;*"

when Crashaw writes as if caught by the very fire of which he speaks,—the fire of the flaming heart of Saint Theresa ; when Lovelace, most careless and unliterary of all men, breaks out as if by simple instinct into those perfect verses which hardly even Burns and Shelley have equalled since,—it is impossible for any one who feels for poetry at all not to feel more than appreciation, not to feel sheer enthusiasm. Putting aside the very greatest poets of all, I hardly know any group of poetical workers who so often cause this enthusiasm as our present group, with their wonderful felicity of language ; with their command of those lyrical measures which seem so easy and are so difficult ; with their almost unparalleled blend of a sensuousness that does not make the intellect sluggish and of the loftiest spirituality.

When we examine what is said against them, a great deal of it is found to be based on that most treacherous of all foundations, a hard-driven metaphor. Because they come at the end of a long and fertile period of literature, because a colder and harder kind of poetry followed them, they are said to be “decadence,” “autumn,” “over-ripe fruit,” “sunset,” and so forth. These pretty analogies have done much harm in literary history. Of the Muse it is most strictly and soberly true that “*Bocca bacciata non perdè ventura, anzi rinnova come fa la luna.*” If there is any meaning about the phrases of decadence, autumn, and the like, it is derived from the idea of approaching death and cessation. There is no death, no cessation, in literature ; and the sadness and decay of certain periods is mere fiction. An autumn day would not be sad if the average human being did not (very properly) take from it a warning of the shortness of his own life. But literature is not shortlived. There was no sign of poetry dying when Shelley lived two thousand five hundred years after Sappho, when Shakespere lived as long after Homer. Periods like the periods of the Greek Anthology or of our Caroline poetry are not periods of decay, but simply periods of difference. There are no periods of decay in literature so long as anything good is produced ; and when nothing good is produced,

it is only a sign that the field is taking a healthy turn of fallow. In this time much that was good, with a quite wonderful and charming goodness, was produced. What is more, it was a goodness which had its own distinct characteristics, some of which I have endeavoured to point out, and which the true lover of poetry would be as unwilling to lose as to lose the other goodnesses of all the great periods, and of all but the greatest names in those periods. For the unapproachables, for the first Three, for Homer, for Shakespere, for Dante, I would myself (though I should be very sorry) give up all the poets we have been reviewing. I should not like to have to choose between Herrick and Milton's earlier poems; between the Caroline poets, major and minor, as just reviewed on the one hand, and *The Faërie Queene* on the other. But I certainly would give *Paradise Regained* for some score of poems of the writers just named; and for them altogether I would give all but a few passages (I would not give those) of *Paradise Lost*. And, as I have endeavoured (perhaps to my readers' satiety) to point out, this comparative estimate is after all a radically unsound one. We are not called upon to weigh this kind of poetry against that kind; we are only incidentally, and in an uninvincible manner, called upon to weigh this poet against that even of the same kind. The whole question is, whether each is good in his own kind, and whether the kind is a worthy and delightful one. And in regard of most of the poets just surveyed, both these questions can be answered with an unhesitating affirmative. If we had not these poets, one particular savour, one particular form, of the poetical rapture would be lacking to the poetical expert; just as if what Herrick himself calls "the brave Burgundian wine" were not, no amount of claret and champagne could replace it. For passionate sense of the good things of earth, and at the same time for mystical feeling of their insecurity, for exquisite style without the frigidity and the over-correctness which the more deliberate stylists frequently display, for a blending of Nature and art that seems as if it must have been as simply instinctive in all as it certainly was in some,

the poets of the Tribe of Ben, of the Tribe of Donne, who illustrated the period before Puritanism and Republicanism combined had changed England from merriment to sadness, stand alone in letters. We have had as good since, but never the same—never any such blending of classical frankness, of mediæval simplicity and chivalry, of modern reflection and thought.¹

¹ Since this book first appeared, some persons whose judgment I respect have expressed to me surprise and regret that I have not given a higher and larger place to Henry Vaughan. A higher I cannot give, because I think him, despite the extreme beauty of his thought and (more rarely) of his expression, a most imperfect poet; nor a larger, because that would involve a critical arguing out of the matter, which would be unsuitable to the plan and scale of this book. Had he oftener written as he wrote in the famous poem referred to in the text, or as in the magnificent opening of "The World"—

" I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
 All calm as it was bright,"

there would be much more to say of him. But he is not master of the expression suitable to his noble and precious thought except in the briefest bursts—bursts compared to which even Crashaw's are sustained and methodical. His admirers claim for "The Retreat" the germ of Wordsworth's great ode, but if any one will compare the two he will hardly complain that Vaughan has too little space here.

