

## CHAPTER XII

### MINOR CAROLINE PROSE

THE greatest, beyond all doubt, of the minor writers of the Caroline period in prose is Robert Burton. Less deliberately quaint than Fuller, he is never, as Fuller sometimes is, puerile, and the greater concentration of his thoughts and studies has produced what Fuller never quite produced, a masterpiece. At the same time it must be confessed that Burton's more leisurely life assisted to a great extent in the production of his work. The English collegiate system would have been almost sufficiently justified if it had produced nothing but *The Anatomy of Melancholy*; though there is something ironical, no doubt, in the fact that this ideal fruit of a studious and endowed leisure was the work of one who, being a beneficed clergyman, ought not in strictness to have been a resident member of a college. Yet, elsewhere than in Oxford or Cambridge the book could hardly have grown, and it is as unique as the institutions which produced it.

The author of the *Anatomy* was the son of Ralph Burton of Lindley in Leicestershire, where he was born on the 8th of February 1577. He was educated at Sutton Coldfield School, and thence went to Brasenose College, Oxford. He became a student of Christchurch—the equivalent of a fellow—in 1599, and seems to have passed the whole of the rest of his life there, though he took orders and enjoyed together or successively the living of St. Thomas in Oxford, the vicarage of Walsby in Lincolnshire, and

the rectory of Segrave in Leicestershire, at both of which latter places he seems to have kept the minimum of residence, though tradition gives him the character of a good churchman, and though there is certainly nothing inconsistent with that character in the *Anatomy*. The picture of him which Anthony à Wood gives at a short second hand is very favourable; and the attempts to harmonise his "horrid disorder of melancholy" with his "very merry, faceté, and juvenile company," arise evidently from almost ludicrous misunderstanding of what melancholy means and is. As absurd, though more serious, is the traditionary libel obviously founded on the words in his epitaph (*Cui vitam et mortem dedit melancholic*), that having cast his nativity, he, in order not to be out as to the time of his death, committed suicide. As he was sixty-three (one of the very commonest periods of death) at the time, the want of reason of the suggestion equals its want of charity.

The offspring in English of Burton's sixty-three years of humorous study of men and books is *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first printed in 1621, and enlarged afterwards by the author. A critical edition of the *Anatomy*, giving these enlargements exactly with other editorial matter, is very much wanted; but even in the rather inedited condition in which the book, old and new, is usually found, it is wholly acceptable. Its literary history is rather curious. Eight editions of it appeared in half a century from the date of the first, and then, with other books of its time, it dropped out of notice except by the learned. Early in the present century it was revived and reprinted with certain modernisations, and four or five editions succeeded each other at no long interval. The copies thus circulated seem to have satisfied the demand for many years, and have been followed without much alteration in some later issues.

The book itself has been very variously judged. Fuller, in one of his least worthy moments, called it "a book of philology." Anthony Wood, hitting on a notion which has often been borrowed since, held that it is a convenient commonplace book of classical quotations, which, with all respect to Anthony's memory (whom

I am more especially bound to honour as a Merton man), is a gross and Philistine error. Johnson, as was to be expected, appreciated it thoroughly. Ferriar in his *Illustrations of Sterne* pointed out the enormous indebtedness of Tristram Shandy to Democritus Junior. Charles Lamb, eloquently praising the "fantastic great old man," exhibited perhaps more perversity than sense in denouncing the modern reprints which, after all, are not like some modern reprints (notably one of Burton's contemporary, Felltham, to be noticed shortly), in any real sense garbled. Since that time Burton has to some extent fallen back to the base uses of a quarry for half-educated journalists; nevertheless, all fit readers of English literature have loved him.

The book is a sufficiently strange one at first sight; and it is perhaps no great wonder that uncritical readers should have been bewildered by the bristling quotations from utterly forgotten authorities which, with full and careful reference for the most part, stud its pages, by its elaborate but apparently futile marshalling in "partitions" and "members," in "sections" and "subsections," and by the measureless license of digression which the author allows himself. It opens with a long epistle, filling some hundred pages in the modern editions, from Democritus Junior, as the author calls himself, to the reader—an epistle which gives a true foretaste of the character and style of the text, though, unlike that text, it is not scholastically divided. The division begins with the text itself, and even the laziest reader will find the synopses of Burton's "partitions" a curious study. It is impossible to be, at least in appearance, more methodical, and all the typographical resources of brackets (sub-bracketed even to the seventh or eighth involution) and of reference letters are exhausted in order to draw up a conspectus of the causes, symptoms, nature, effects, and cure of melancholy. This method is not exactly the method of madness, though it is quite possible for a reader to attach more (as also less) importance to it than it deserves. It seems probable on the whole that the author, with the scholastic habits of his time, did actually draw out a

programme for the treatment of his subject in some form not very different from these wonderful synopses, and did actually endeavour to keep to it, or at any rate to work on its lines within the general compass of the scheme. But on each several head (and reducing them to their lowest terms the heads are legion) he allowed himself the very widest freedom of digression, not merely in extracting and applying the fruits of his notebook, but in developing his own thoughts,—a mine hardly less rich if less extensive than the treasures of the Bodleian Library which are said to have been put at his disposal.

The consequence is, that the book is one quite impossible to describe in brief space. The melancholy of which the author treats, and of which, no doubt, he was in some sort the victim, is very far from being the mere Byronic or Wertherian disease which became so familiar some hundred years ago. On the other hand, Burton being a practical, and, on the whole, very healthy Englishman, it came something short of "The Melencolia that transcends all wit," the incurable pessimism and quiet despair which have been thought to be figured or prefigured in Durer's famous print. Yet it approaches, and that not distantly, to this latter. It is the Vanity of Vanities of a man who has gone, in thought at least, over the whole round of human pleasures and interests, and who, if he has not exactly found all to be vanity, has found each to be accompanied by some *amari aliquid*. It is at the same time the frankly expressed hypochondria of a man whose bodily health was not quite so robust as his mental constitution. It is the satiety of learning of a man who, nevertheless, knows that learning, or at least literature, is the only cure for his disease.

In mere style there is perhaps nothing very strongly characteristic in Burton, though there is much that is noteworthy in the way in which he adapts his style to the peculiar character of his book. Like Rabelais, he has but rarely occasion to break through his fantastic habit of stringing others' pearls on a mere string of his own, and to set seriously to the composition of a paragraph of wholly original prose. But when he does, the effect is

remarkable, and shows that it was owing to no poverty or awkwardness that he chose to be so much of a borrower. In his usual style, where a mere framework of original may enclose a score or more quotations, translated or not (the modern habit of translating Burton's quotations spoils, among other things, the zest of his own quaint habit of adding, as it were, in the same breath, a kind of summary or paraphrase in English of what he has said in Latin or Greek), he was not superior to his time in the loose construction of sentences; but the wonder is that his fashion of writing did not make him even inferior to it. One of his peculiar tricks—the only one, perhaps, which he uses to the extent of a mannerism—is the suppression of the conjunctions “or” and “and,” which gives a very quaint air to his strings of synonyms. But an example will do more here than much analysis:—

“And why then should baseness of birth be objected to any man? Who thinks worse of Tully for being *Arpinas*, an upstart? or Agathocles, that Sicilian King, for being a potter's son? Iphicrates and Marius were meanly born. What wise man thinks better of any person for his nobility? as he<sup>1</sup> said in Machiavel, *omnes eodem patre nati*, Adam's sons, conceived all and born in sin, etc. *We are by nature all as one, all alike, if you see us naked; let us wear theirs, and they our clothes, and what's the difference?* To speak truth, as Bale did of P. Schalichius, *I more estee thy worth, learning, honesty, than thy nobility; honour thee more that thou art a writer, a doctor of divinity, than earl of the Hunnes, baron of Skradine, or hast tittle to such and such provinces, etc. Thou art more fortunate and great* (so Jovius writes to Cosmus Medices, then Duke of Florence) *for thy virtues than for thy lovely wife and happy children, friends, fortunes, or great Duchy of Tuscany.* So I account thee, and who doth not so indeed? Abdalonymus was a gardener, and yet by Alexander for his virtues made King of Syria. How much better is it to be born of mean parentage and to excel in worth, to be morally noble, which is preferred before that natural nobility by divines, philosophers, and politicians, to be learned, honest, discreet, well qualified to be fit for any manner of employment in country and commonwealth, war and peace, than to be *degeneres Neoptolemi* as so many brave nobles are, only wise because rich, otherwise idiots, illiterate,

<sup>1</sup> Burton, with others of the time, constantly wrote “he” as the equivalent of the classical demonstratives. Modern, but not better, use prefers “the man,” or something similar.

unfit for any nanner of service? Udalricus, Earl of Cilia, upbraided John Huniades with the baseness of his birth; but he replied, *In te Ciliensis comitatus turpiter exstinguitur, in me gloriose Bistricensis exoritur*; thine earldom is consumed with riot; mine begins with honour and renown. Thou hast had so many noble ancestors; what is that to thee? *Vix ea nostra voco*; when thou art a disard<sup>1</sup> tnyself, *quid prodest Pontice longo stemmate censeri?* etc. I conclude, hast thou a sound body and a good soul, good bringing up? Art thou virtuous, honest, learned, well qualified, religious? Are thy conditions good? Thou art a true nobleman, perfectly noble though born of Thersites, *dummodo tu sis Aeacida similis non natus sed factus*, noble κατ' ἐξοχήν, for neither sword, nor fire, nor water, nor sickness, nor outward violence, nor the devil himself can take thy good parts from thee. Be not ashamed of thy birth then; thou art a gentleman all the world over, and shalt be honoured, whenas he, strip hir of his fine clothes, dispossess him of his wealth, is a funge<sup>2</sup> (which Polynices in his banishment found true by experience, gentry was not esteemed), like a piece of coin in another country, that no man will take, and shall be contemned. Once more, though thou be a barbarian born at Tontontec, a villain, a slave, a Saldanian negro, or a rude Virginian in Dasamonquepeuc,<sup>3</sup> he a French monsieur, a Spanish don, a seignior of Italy, I care not how descended, of what family, of what order—baron, count, prince—if thou be well qualified and he not but a degenerate Neoptolemus, I tell thee in a word thou art a man and he is a beast."

Such, in his outward aspects, is Burton; but of him, even more than of most writers, it may be said that a brick of the house is no sample. Only by reading him in the proper sense, and that with diligence, can his great learning, his singular wit and fancy, and the general view of life and of things belonging to life, which informs and converts to a whole his learning, his wit, and his fancy alike, be properly conceived. For reading either continuous or desultory, either grave or gay, at all times of life and in all moods of temper, there are few authors who stand the test of practice so well as the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Probably, however, among those who can taste old authors, there will always be a friendly but irreconcilable difference as to

<sup>1</sup> A "dizzard" = a blockhead. Said to be connected with "dizzy."

<sup>2</sup> Fungus, mushroom.

<sup>3</sup> Saldania is Saldanha Bay. As for Tontontec and Dasamonquepeuc, I shall imitate the manly frankness of the boy in *Henry V.*, and say, "I do not know what is the French for fer, and ferret, and firik."

the merits of Fuller and Burton, when compared together. There never can be any among such as to the merits of Fuller, considered in himself. Like Burton, he was a clerk in orders; but his literary practice, though more copious than that of the author of *The Anatomy*, divorced him less from the discharge of his professional duties. He was born, like Dryden, but twenty-two years earlier, in 1608, at Aidwinkle in Northamptonshire, and in a parsonage there, but of the other parish (for there are two close together). He was educated at Cambridge, and, being made prebendary of Salisbury, and vicar of Broadwindsor, almost as soon as he could take orders, seemed to be in a fair way of preferment. He worked as a parish priest up to 1640, the year of the beginning of troubles, and the year of his first important book, *The Holy War*. But he was a staunch Royalist, though by no means a bigot, and he did not, like other men of his time, see his way to play Mr. Facing-both-ways. For a time he was a preacher in London, then he followed the camp as chaplain to the victorious army of Hopton, in the west, then for a time again he was stationary at Exeter, and after the ruin of the Royal cause he returned to London, where, though he did not recover his benefices, he was leniently treated, and even, in 1655, obtained license to preach. Nevertheless, the Restoration would probably have brought him promotion, but he lived not long enough to receive it, dying on the 15th of August 1661. He was an extremely industrious writer, publishing, besides the work already mentioned, and not a few minor pieces (*The Holy and Profane State, Thoughts and Contemplations in Good, Worse, and Better Times, A Pisgah-sight of Palestine*), an extensive *Church History of Britain*, and, after his death, what is perhaps his masterpiece, *The Worthies of England*, an extraordinary miscellany, quartering the ground by counties, filling, in the compactest edition, two mighty quartos, and containing perhaps the greatest account of miscellaneous fact to be found anywhere out of an encyclopedia, conveyed in a style the quaintest and most lively to be found anywhere out of the choicest essayists of the language.

A man of genius who adored Fuller, and who owes to him more than to any one else except Sir Thomas Browne, has done, in small compass, a service to his memory which is not easily to be paralleled. Lamb's specimens from Fuller, most of which are only two or three lines long, and none a pageful, for once contradict the axiom quoted above as to a brick and a house. So perfectly has the genius of selector and author coincided, that not having myself gone through the verification of them, I should hardly be surprised to find that Lamb had used his faculty of invention. Yet this would not matter, for they are perfectly Fullerian. Although Fuller has justly been praised for his method, and although he never seems to have suffered his fancy to run away with him to the extent of forgetting or wilfully misrepresenting a fact, the conceits, which are the chief characteristic of his style, are comparatively independent of the subject. Coleridge has asserted that "Wit was the stuff and substance of his intellect," an assertion which (with all the respect due to Coleridge) would have been better phrased in some such way as this,—that nearly the whole force of his intellect concentrated itself upon the witty presentation of things. He is illimitably figurative, and though his figures seldom or never fail to carry illumination of the subject with them, their peculiar character is sufficiently indicated by the fact that they can almost always be separated from the subject and from the context in which they occur without any damage to their own felicity. To a thoroughly serious person, to a person like Lord Chesterfield (who was indeed very serious in his own way, and abhorred proverbial philosophy), or to one who cannot away with the introduction of a quip in connection with a solemn subject, and who thinks that indulgence in a gibe is a clear proof that the writer has no solid argument to produce, Fuller must be nothing but a puzzle or a disgust. That a pious and earnest divine should, even in that day of quaintness, compare the gradual familiarisation of Christians with the sacraments of the Church to the habit of children first taking care of, and then neglecting a pair of new boots, or should describe a brother clerk



as "pronouncing the word *damn* with such an emphasis as left a dismal echo in his auditors' ears a good while longer," seems, no doubt, to some excellent people, unpardonable, and almost incomprehensible. Yet no one has ever impeached the sincerity of Fuller's convictions, and the blamelessness of his life. That a grave historian should intersperse the innumerable trivialities of the *Worthies* may be only less shocking. But he was an eminent proof of his own axiom, "That an ounce of mirth, with the same degree of grace, will serve God farther than a pound of sadness." Fuller is perhaps the only writer who, voluminous as he is, will not disappoint the most superficial inquirer for proofs of the accuracy of the character usually given to him. Nobody perhaps but himself, in trying to make the best of the Egyptian bondage of the Commonwealth, would have discovered that the Church, being unrepresented by any of the four hundred and odd members of Cromwell's Parliament, was better off than when she had Archbishops, Bishops, and a convocation all to herself, urging, "what civil Christian would not plead for a dumb *ἄναξ*," and so enlisting all the four hundred and odd enemies as friends and representatives. But it is impossible to enter fully on the subject of Fuller's quips. What may fairly be said of them is, that while constantly fantastic, and sometimes almost childish, they are never really silly; that they are never, or hardly ever in bad taste; and that, quaint and far fetched as they are, there is almost always some application or suggestion which saves them from being mere intellectual somersaults. The famous one of the "Images of God cut in ebony," is sufficient of itself to serve as a text. There is in it all the good side of the emancipation propaganda with an entire freedom from the extravagance, the vulgarity, the injustice, the bad taste which marked that propaganda a century and more afterwards, when taken up by persons very different from Fuller. Perhaps it may be well to give an extract of some length from him:—

"A lady big with child was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and in the dungeon was delivered of a son, who continued with her till a boy of some

bigness. It happened at one time he heard his mother (for see neither of them could, as to discern in so dark a place) bemoan her condition.

"Why, mother (said the child) do you complain, seeing you want nothing you can wish, having clothes, meat, and drink sufficient? Alas! child (returned the mother), I lack liberty, converse with Christians, the light of the sun, and many things more, which thou, being prison-born, neither art nor can be sensible of in thy condition.

"The *post-nati*, understand thereby such striplings born in England since the death of monarchy therein, conceive this land, their mother, to be in a good estate. For one fruitful harvest followeth another, commodities are sold at reasonable rates, abundance of brave clothes are worn in the city, though not by such persons whose birth doth best become, but whose purses can best bestow them.

"But their mother, England, doth justly bemoan the sad difference betwixt her present and former condition; when she enjoyed full and free trade without payment of taxes, save so small they seemed rather an acknowledgment of their allegiance than a burden to their estate; when she had the court of a king, the House of Lords, yea, and the Lord's house, decently kept, constantly frequented, without falsehood in doctrine, or faction in discipline. God of His goodness restore unto us so much of these things as may consist with His glory and our good."

"I saw a servant maid, at the command of her mistress, make, kindle, and blow a fire. Which done, she was posted away about other business, whilst her mistress enjoyed the benefit of the fire. Yet I observed that this servant, whilst industriously employed in the kindling thereof, got a more general, kindly, and continuing heat than her mistress herself. Her heat was only by her, and not in her, staying with her no longer than she stayed by the chimney; whilst the warmth of the maid was inlaid, and equally diffused through the whole body.

"An estate suddenly gotten is not so lasting to the owner thereof as what is duly got by industry. The substance of the diligent, saith Solomon, Prov. xii. 27, is precious. He cannot be counted poor that hath so many pearls, precious brown bread, precious small beer, precious plain clothes, etc. A comfortable consideration in this our age, wherein many hands have learned their lesson of labour, who were neither born nor bred with it."

The best judges have admitted that, in contradistinction to this perpetual quipping, which is, as far as it goes, of his time the general style of Fuller is on the whole rather more modern than the styles of his contemporaries. It does not seem that this is due to deliberate intention of shortening and proportioning his

prose; for he is as careless as any one of the whole century about exact grammatical sequence, and seems to have had no objection on any critical grounds to the long disjointed sentence which was the curse of the time. But his own ruling passion insensibly disposed him to a certain brevity. He liked to express his figurative conceits pointedly and antithetically; and point and antithesis are the two things most incompatible with clauses jointed *ad infinitum* in Clarendon's manner, with labyrinths of "whos" and "whiches" such as too frequently content Milton and Taylor. Poles asunder from Hobbes, not merely in his ultimate conclusions but in the general quality of his mind, he perhaps comes nearest to the author of the treatise on *Human Nature* in clear, sensible, unambiguous presentation of the thing that he means to say; and this, joined to his fecundity in illustration of every kind, greatly helps the readableness of his books. No work of his as a working out of an original conception can compete with *The Anatomy of Melancholy*; but he is as superior in minor method to Burton as he is inferior in general grasp.

The remainder of the minor Carolines must be dismissed rapidly. A not unimportant position among the prose writers of this time is occupied by Edward Herbert, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the elder brother of George Herbert the poet. He was born in 1583, and finished his life ingloriously, and indeed discreditably, during the troubles of the civil war, on the 20th of August 1648. His earlier career is elaborately if not exactly truthfully recorded in his *Autobiography*, and its details have been carefully supplemented by his latest editor, Mr. Lee. His literary activity was various and considerable. His greatest work—a treatise which has been rashly called the foundation of English deism, but which rather expresses the vague and not wholly unorthodox doubt expressed earlier by Montaigne, and by contemporaries of Herbert's own, such as La Mothe le Vayer—was written in Latin, and has never been translated into English. He was an English verse writer of some merit, though inferior

to his brother. His ambitious and academic *History of Henry VIII.* is a regular and not unsuccessful effort in English prose, prompted no doubt by the thorough-going courtiership which ranks with his vanity and want of stability on the most unfavourable aspect of Herbert's character. But posterity has agreed to take him as an English writer chiefly on the strength of the Autobiography, which remained in manuscript for a century and more, and was published by Horace Walpole, rather against the will of Lord Powis, its possessor and its author's representative. It is difficult to say that Lord Powis was wrong, especially considering that Herbert never published these memoirs, and seems to have written them as much as anything else for his own private satisfaction. It may be doubted whether there is any more astounding monument of coxcomby in literature. Herbert is sometimes cited as a model of a modern knight-errant, of an Amadis born too late. Certainly, according to his own account, all women loved and all men feared him; but for the former fact we have nothing but his own authority, and in regard to the latter we have counter evidence which renders it exceedingly doubtful. He was, according to his own account, a desperate duellist. But even by this account his duels had a curious habit of being interrupted, in the immortal phrase of Mr. Winkle, by "several police constables;" while in regard to actual war the exploits of his youth seem not to have been great, and those of his age were wholly discreditable, inasmuch as being by profession an ardent Royalist, he took the first opportunity to make, without striking a blow, a profitable composition with the Parliament. Nevertheless, despite the drawbacks of subject-matter, the autobiography is a very interesting piece of English prose. The narrative style, for all its coxcomby and its insistence on petty details, has a singular vivacity; the constructions, though sometimes incorrect ("the edict was so severe as they who transgressed were to lose their heads"), are never merely slovenly; and the writer displays an art, very uncommon in his time, in the alternation of short and long sentences and the general adjustment

of the paragraph. Here and there, too, there are passages of more elevated style which give reason for regretting that the *De Veritate* was not written in English. It is very much to be feared that the chief reason for its being written in Latin was a desire on the author's part to escape awkward consequences by an appearance of catering for philosophers and the learned only. It must be admitted that neither of the two great free-thinking Royalists, Hobbes and Herbert, is a wholly pleasant character; but it may be at least said for the commoner (it cannot be said for the peer) that he was constant to his principles, and that if somewhat careful of his skin, he never seems to have been tempted to barter his conscience for it as Herbert did.

Hardly any other writer among the minor Caroline prosaists is important enough to justify a substantive notice in a work which has already reached and almost exceeded the limits accorded to it. The excellent style of Cowley's *Essays*, which is almost more modern than the work of Dryden and Tillotson, falls in great part actually beyond the limits of our time; and by character, if not by date, Cowley is left for special treatment in the following volume. He sometimes relapses into what may be called the general qualities with their accompanying defects of Elizabethan prose—a contempt of proportion, clearness, and order; a reckless readiness to say everything that is in the writer's mind, without considering whether it is appropriate or not; a confusion of English and classical grammar, and occasionally a very scant attention even to rules which the classical grammars indicate yet more sternly than the vernacular. But as a rule he is distinguished for exactly the opposite of all these things. Much less modern than Cowley, but still of a chaster and less fanciful style than most of his contemporaries, is the famous Protestant apologist, Chillingworth—a man whose orderly mind and freedom from anything like enthusiasm reflected themselves in the easy balance of his style. Sanderson, Pearson, Baxter, the two former luminaries of the Church, the latter one of the chief literary lights of Nonconformity, belong more or less to the period, as does

Bishop Hall. Baxter is the most colloquial, the most fanciful, and the latest, of the three grouped together; the other two are nearer to the plainness of Chillingworth than to the ornateness of Jeremy Taylor. Few English prose writers again are better known than Izaak Walton, though it might be difficult to prove that in matter of pure literature he stands very high. The engaging character of his subjects, and the still more engaging display of his own temper and mode of thought which he makes in almost every sentence, both of his *Complete Angler* and of his hardly less known *Lives*, account for the survival and constant popularity of books which are neither above nor below the better work of their time in literary form. Walton was born in 1593 and died ninety years later. His early manhood was spent in London as a "linen-draper," but in friendly conversation with the best clerical and literary society. In 1643 he retired from London to avoid the bustle of the Civil War, and the *Complete Angler* appeared in 1653. Another writer contemporary with Walton, though less long-lived, James Howell, has been the subject of very varying judgments; his appeal being very much of the same kind as Walton's, but addressed to a different and narrower class of persons. He was born in 1594(?) of a fair Welsh family, was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, was employed more than once on confidential business errands on the Continent, entered Parliament, was made Clerk of the Council, was imprisoned for years in the Fleet during the Civil War, received at the Restoration the post of Historiographer, and died in 1666. He wrote all manner of things, but has chiefly survived as the author of a large collection of Familiar Letters, which have been great favourites with some excellent judges. They have something of the agreeable garrulousness of Walton. But Howell was not only much more of a gossip than Izaak; he was also a good deal of a coxcomb, while Walton was destitute of even a trace of coxcombry. In one, however, as in the other, the attraction of matter completely outdoes the purely literary attraction. The reader is glad to hear at first hand what men thought

of Raleigh's execution; how Ben Jonson behaved in his cups; how foreign parts looked to a genuine English traveller early in the seventeenth century, and so forth. Moreover, the book was long a very popular one, and an unusual number of anecdotes and scraps passed from it into the general literary stock of English writers. But Howell's manner of telling his stories is not extraordinarily attractive, and has something self-conscious and artificial about it which detracts from its interest. The *Characters* of Overbury were followed and, no doubt, imitated by John Earle, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, and a man of some importance. Earle, who was a fellow of Merton, called his sketches *Microcosmography*. Nothing in them approaches the celebrated if perhaps not quite genuine milkmaid of Overbury; but they give evidence of a good deal of direct observation often expressed in a style that is pointed, such as the description of a bowling green as a place fitted for "the expense of time, money, and oaths." The church historian and miscellanist Heylyn belongs also to the now fast multiplying class of professional writers who dealt with almost any subject as it might seem likely to hit the taste of the public. The bold and fantastic speculations of Bishop Wilkins and Sir Kenelm Digby, and the *Oceana* or Ideal Republic (last of a long line) of James Harrington (not to be confounded with the earlier Sir John Harrington, translator of Ariosto), deserve some notice. The famous *Eikon Basilike* (the authorship of which has perhaps of late years been too confidently ascribed to Dr. Gauden independently, rather than to the king, edited by Gauden) has considerable literary merit. Last of all has to be mentioned a curious book, which made some noise at its appearance, and which, though not much read now, has had two seasons of genuine popularity, and is still highly thought of by a few good judges. This is the *Resolves* of Owen Feltham or Felltham. Not much is known of the author except that he was of a respectable family in East Anglia, a family which seems to have been especially seated in the neighbourhood of Lowestoft. Besides the *Resolves* he wrote some verse, of which the most notable piece is a reply to Ben

Jonson's famous ode to himself ("Come Leave the Loathed Stage")—a reply which even such a sworn partisan as Gifford admits to be at least just if not very kind. Felltham seems also to have engaged in controversy with another Johnson, a Jesuit, on theological subjects. But save for the *Resolves* he would be totally forgotten. The estimate of their value will differ very much, as the liking for not very original discussion of ethical subjects and sound if not very subtle judgment on them overpowers or not in the reader a distaste for style that has no particular distinction, and ideas which, though often wholesome, are seldom other than obvious. Wordsworth's well-known description of one of his own poems, as being "a chain of extremely valuable thoughts," applies no doubt to the *Resolves*, which, except in elegance, rather resemble the better-known of Cicero's philosophical works. Moreover, though possessing no great elegance, they are not inelegant; though it is difficult to forget how differently Bacon and Browne treated not dissimilar subjects at much the same time. So popular were they that besides the first edition (which is undated, but must have appeared in or before 1628, the date of the second), eleven others were called for up to 1709. But it was not for a hundred years that they were again printed, and then the well-meaning but misguided zeal of their resuscitator led him not merely to modernise their spelling, etc. (a venial sin, if, which I am not inclined very positively to lay down, it is a sin at all), but to "improve" their style, sense, and sentiment by omission, alteration, and other tamperings with the text, so as to give the reader not what Mr. Felltham wrote early in the seventeenth century, but what Mr. Cummings thought he ought to have written early in the nineteenth.

This chapter might easily be enlarged, and indeed, as Dryden says, shame must invade the breast of every writer of literary history on a small scale who is fairly acquainted with his subject, when he thinks how many worthy men—men much worthier than he can himself ever pretend to be—he has perforce omitted. Any critic inclined to find fault may ask me where is the ever-memor-



able John Hales? Where is Tom Coryat, that most egregious Odcombian? and Barnabee of the unforgotten, though scandalous, Itinerary? Where is Sir Thomas Urquhart, quaintest of cavaliers, and not least admirable of translators, who not only rendered Rabelais in a style worthy of him, who not only wrote in sober seriousness pamphlets with titles, which Master Francis could hardly have bettered in jest, but who composed a pedigree of the Urquhart family *nominatim* up to Noah and Adam, and then improvised chimney pieces in Cromarty Castle, commemorating the prehistoric ancestors whom he had excogitated? Where are the great Bishops from Andrewes and Cosin onwards, and the lesser Theologians who wrangled, and the Latitudinarians who meditated, and the historians with Whitelocke at their head, and the countless writers of countless classes of books who multiplied steadily as time went on? It can only be answered that they are not, and that almost in the nature of things they cannot be here. It is not that they are not intrinsically interesting; it is not merely that, being less intrinsically interesting than some of their forerunners or contemporaries, they must give way when room is limited. It is that even if their individual performance were better than that of earlier men, even if there were room and verge enough for them, they would less concern the literary historian. For to him in all cases the later examples of a style are less important than the earlier, merely because they are late, because they have had forerunners whom, consciously or unconsciously, they have (except in the case of a great genius here and there) imitated, and because as a necessary consequence they fall into the *numerus*—into the gross as they would themselves have said—who must be represented only by choice examples and not enumerated or criticised in detail.