

# ENGLISH PROSE

(1137-1890)

SELECTED BY

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## PREFACE

This volume and its companion, *ENGLISH POETRY, 1170-1892*, were suggested some twelve years ago by the experience of Professors Bronson, Dodge, and myself with an introductory course in English Literature in Brown University. Our plan was to have the students read English classics in the same manner and spirit in which they would read interesting contemporary poems, novels, speeches, essays, etc., and then to discuss with them what they had read. No attention was given to linguistic puzzles, unessential allusions, or any other minutiae. Such things are of course a legitimate and indispensable part of the study of literature, but it seemed well not to confuse and defeat our principal aim by dealing with them in this course. Literary history, however, was not neglected, and care was taken to supply such information in regard to the setting of each piece in life or literature as seemed necessary for the interpretation of its subject, purpose, and method.

The greatest difficulty we had to contend with was the lack of cheap texts. No single volume on the market contained what we needed, and separate texts, even when accessible at very low prices, cost in the aggregate more than students could afford to pay. I therefore attempted to bring together in the volume of *English Poetry* such a collection of poems, important either historically or for their intrinsic merits, as would permit every teacher to make his own selection in accordance with his tastes and the needs of his class. The present volume is, in like manner, intended to be used by teachers as a storehouse or treasury of prose.

In the Preface of the volume of poetry, I tried to make it clear that I did not suppose that any teacher would require his pupils to read all the poems contained in it. This would indeed be absurd. That volume contains between fifty-five and sixty thousand lines, and, as there are in the ordinary school year only about thirty weeks of three recitations each, the pupil would have to read more than six hundred lines — between fifteen and twenty pages of an ordinary book — for each recitation. Yet some teachers have attempted this and have been surprised to find the attempt unsuccessful. It will be well to bear in mind that this prose book, also, contains much more than at first sight it may seem to contain. Each page, it may be noted, contains about as much as three ordinary octavo pages of medium size.

As to the manner in which the choice shall be made for the use of a class, the teacher may of course confine the work to as few authors as he chooses, or may require only the most interesting parts of the long selections, or may in both ways reduce to reasonable limits the amount of reading required. Some teachers will wish a large number of short passages illustrating the characteristics of as many authors as possible; others will prefer to study a smaller number of authors in selections long enough to show, not merely what heights of excellence each writer could occasionally attain, but also what qualities and what degree of sustained power each possessed. This volume, it is believed, provides materials for both kinds of study.

It need hardly be said that, after leaving the earlier periods of English Literature, in which unknown words and forms confront the reader in every sentence, the main difficulties that a student meets in reading the English classics arise not so much from internal as from external causes. And these can easily be removed. Simple and clear presentation by the teacher of the theme of the writer, of his attitude toward his theme, of the relations of writer and theme to contemporaneous life and art, and of other matters necessary to intelligent reading, should precede the student's reading of each piece, whether of prose or verse. Great literature is usually great no less because of its content than because of its form, and it will generally be found that students are prepared to appreciate fine thoughts before they are able to understand grace or beauty of form in literature. And certainly, if, as Spenser tells us,

Soul is form and doth the body make,

we must understand the soul, the content, and aim, of a piece of literature before we can judge whether or not it has created for itself an appropriate and beautiful body or form. To expect a student who has not the knowledge implied or assumed in a bit of prose or verse to read it sympathetically is as grave an error as that ancient one — now happily abandoned — of causing students of English composition to spin out of their entrails vast webs of speculation upon subjects lying far beyond their knowledge or experience. If the teacher will attempt to make every selection as real and vital to his students as if it were concerned with some subject of the life of to-day, the study of English Literature will become a new and interesting thing for himself as well as for his pupils. And although this is theoretically a counsel of perfection not easily fulfilled, it will be found in practice not difficult to secure a large measure of success.

In this volume, as in its predecessor, the remarks in the Introduction are not intended to take the place of a history of English Literature. Here and there they furnish information not usually found in elementary text-books; here and there they have not even that excuse for existence, being often merely hints or suggestions or explanations which the editor wished to make; in a few instances it may be thought that their proper place is the Preface rather than the Introduction.

In printing the earlier texts — that is, all before Sidney's *Arcadia* — the old spelling is preserved, except that *f*, *h*, *3*, *i*, *j*, *u*, *v*, have been reduced to modern forms and usage. Such inconsistencies as appear are due to variations in the texts themselves or to variant editorial methods in the standard editions. The punctuation of the earlier texts has been modernized, sometimes by me, sometimes by the editor whom I follow.

In the later texts, the spelling and punctuation of standard editions has usually been retained, even where they differ from modern usage; but in a few instances, where the older punctuation was not only faulty but seriously misleading, I have not scrupled to change it. In no such instance, however, was there any doubt as to the author's meaning.

The division of the book into periods is of course not altogether satisfactory. Not to mention general difficulties, Ben Jonson's relations with Shakspeare and Bacon induced me to put him in the same period with Bacon, though it would doubtless have been better to put both him and Dekker in the following period. Again, in the Nineteenth Century, it seems hardly justifiable to put Stevenson in the same period with Newman, Borrow, Thackeray, and Dickens; but I found that I had room for him and him only among the departed masters of his generation, and it seemed undesirable to put him alone in a separate division.

No attempt has been made to apportion the space given to a writer in close accordance with his importance. My plan originally was that every piece, whether essay, letter, speech, or chapter of a book, should be given as a whole composition, in its entirety. But lack of

space made it necessary to make many cuts, — though none, I hope, that affect the essential qualities of any selection or interfere with its intelligibility. The attempt to present whole selections rather than brilliant scraps of course made proportional representation impossible, and the cuts that were made did not better the adjustment, as they were made where they would cause the least loss of formal and material excellences.

In spite of careful calculations, far too large an amount of copy was sent to the printer. Nor did such cutting as is mentioned above suffice to reduce it to the necessary limits. It became necessary, while the book was going through the press, to omit several writers altogether, — some of them, no doubt, writers whom I shall be criticised for omitting. I can only say that my regret is perhaps greater than that which will be felt by any one else. I now feel that, as I was obliged to omit Henley and some other recent writers, it might have been well to omit Stevenson also and let the book end with Walter Pater.

The selection from the so-called Mabinogion in the Appendix was added at the suggestion of Professor Cunliffe of the University of Wisconsin. Many teachers will no doubt wish to use it in connection with the study of mediæval romances, and will join me in thanks to Professor Cunliffe.

For aid in collating the copy for the printer and in reading proofs I am indebted to my sister, Annie Manly.

J. M. M.

## INTRODUCTION

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE (p. 1) belongs for the most part, of course, to the history of English literature before the Norman Conquest; but the later records, especially those of the Peterborough version, from which our selection is taken, are of great importance for the study of modern English prose. The Chronicle seems to have been begun in the reign of Alfred the Great, perhaps in consequence of his efforts for the education of his people. It exists in six versions, differing more or less from one another both as to the events recorded and the period of time covered, but together forming, in a manner, a single work. The early entries, beginning with 60 B.C., were compiled from various sources and are, for the most part, very meager and uninteresting. Here are the complete records for two years: "An. DCCLXXII. Here (that is, in this year) Bishop Milred died;" "An. DCCLXXIII. Here a red cross appeared in the sky after sunset; and in this year the Mercians and the men of Kent fought at Otford; and wondrous serpents were seen in the land of the South-Saxons." For long, weary stretches of years, there are, with the notable exception of the vivid account of the death of Cynewulf, few more exciting entries than these. Even when great events are recorded, no effort is made to tell how or why they occurred, no attempt to produce an interesting narrative. In the time of King Alfred, however, a change appears, and, though the records still have the character of annals rather than of history, the narrative is often very detailed and interesting, especially in regard to the long and fierce contest with the Danes. After the Norman Conquest, one version of the Chronicle, that kept by the monks of Peterborough, contains entries of the greatest importance both for the history of the times and for the state of the English language then. The latest of these entries is for the year 1154, when the turbulent reign of the weak Stephen was followed by the strong and peaceful administration of Henry II. The selection we have chosen is from the entry for 1137, and gives a startling picture of the terrors of the time. It is almost astounding to recall that it was just at this time that Geoffrey of Monmouth started the story of King Arthur on its long and brilliant career in literature. The most notable things about the passage, considered as English prose, are its simplicity and straightforwardness and its strong resemblance to modern English in sentence structure and word order. These features are probably to be accounted for by the fact that, though the writer doubtless understood Latin, he did not feel that he was producing literature, but only making a plain record of facts, and consequently did not attempt the clumsy artificialities so often produced by those who tried to imitate Latin prose in English.

The OLD ENGLISH HOMILY (p. 1) may serve to illustrate the kind of sermons preached in the twelfth century. The homilies that have come down to us show scarcely any originality of conception or expression. All are reproductions of older English homilies or are based upon similar compositions in Latin by such writers as St. Anselm of Canterbury, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugo of St. Victor, and Radulphus Ardens. In both matter and manner they follow closely their chosen models. The short extract here given has been selected principally because of the curious and amusing anecdote of the young crab and the old, which is its sole touch of freshness or originality. Very noticeable in all of these homilies is the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which was in vogue for so many centuries; and, in some of them, the mysticism which was rapidly developing

under the influence of the ideals and sentiments of chivalry. The style is determined largely by the fact that they were intended to be read aloud to a congregation. The symbol *u* here and in other early texts is to be pronounced like French *u*, German *ü*, or, less accurately, like Latin *i*.

THE ANCREN RIWLE (p. 2), as its name indicates, is a treatise for the guidance and instruction of some nuns. We learn from the book itself that it was written, at their special request, for three young ladies of gentle birth,—"daughters of one father and one mother," who had forsaken the world for the life of religious contemplation and meditation. There has been some discussion as to the author, but he is generally believed to have been Richard Poore, or Le Poor, bishop successively of Chichester, Salisbury, and Durham, who was born at Tarrent, where these nuns probably had their retreat, and whose heart was buried there after his death in 1237. At any rate, the author was evidently a man in whom learning and no little knowledge of the world were combined with a singularly sweet simplicity, which has often been taken for naïveté. His learning appears abundantly from his familiarity with the writings of the great Church Fathers and the classical Latin authors who were known in his day; his knowledge of the world appears partly in his sagacious counsels as to the more serious temptations of a nun's life, and partly in his adaptation of courtly romantic motives to spiritual themes; while the sweet simplicity of his character is constantly and lovably revealed in the tone of all that he says—even in its sly and charming humor—and in his solicitude about infinite petty details, which are individually insignificant, to be sure, but mean much for the delicacy and peace of life. Of the eight parts or books into which the work is divided only two are devoted to external, material matters, the other six to the inner life; and this proportion is a true indication of the comparative values which the good counselor sets upon these things. The style, for all the learning displayed, is simple and direct, with few traces of Latin sentence structure or word order—a fact due perhaps to the nature and destination of the book no less than to the character of the author.

The ENGLISH PROCLAMATION OF HENRY III (p. 4) has, of course, no place in the history of literature, though it has in the history of prose style. As the first royal proclamation in the English language after the Conquest its importance is great, but may be easily misunderstood or exaggerated. It does not mark the real beginning of the use of the English language for such purposes; that did not come until many years later. It was issued in English as a political measure, to secure for the king support against his enemies from the large portion of the commonwealth who understood no Latin or French, and as such it is an important evidence of the power of the English-speaking people and the value of their support. In view of its peculiar nature its spelling has been retained without modification. The only features worthy of special notice are the sign þ, which means *th*, the sign ȝ, which represents a spirant *g* that has become in modern English either *g*, *gh*, *y*, or *w*, and the use of *v* for *u* and *u* for *v*.

RICHARD ROLLE (p. 5), the greatest of the English mystics, was both a poet and a writer of Latin and English prose. His favorite theme of meditation was the love of Christ, a subject which so exalted him that he heard in his meditations music of unearthly sweetness and felt that he had tasted food of heavenly savor. It is in the descriptions of these mystical experiences that he is most interesting and most poetical, but unfortunately for us they are written in Latin. His English prose is, however, more remarkable than his verse. The note of mysticism is unmistakable in the extract here given from one of his epistles. His importance in the history of English religious thought is very great, especially in emphasizing the significance of the inner life in contrast to the mere externals of religious observance—a tendency which we have already noted in English literature in connection with *The Ancren Riwele*.

THE VOIAGE AND TRAVAILLE OF SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE, KT. (p. 6), is one of the



greatest and most successful literary impostures ever perpetrated. It seems first to have been issued about 1371 in French, from which it was very soon translated into Latin, English, and many other languages. Its popularity was enormous, as is attested by the immense number of Mss. which have come down to us, and by the frequency with which it has been reprinted ever since 1475, the date of the first printed edition. Incredible as are many of the stories it contains, the apparent simplicity and candor of the author, his careful distinction between what he himself had seen and what he reported only on hearsay, his effort to avoid all exaggeration even in his most absurd statements, gained ready belief for his preposterous fabrications, and this was confirmed by the fact that some of the statements which at first seemed most incredible — such as the roundness of the earth — were actually true and were proved to be so by the discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The book was really compiled from many sources, principally the travels of William of Boldensele, a German traveler of the previous century, and Friar Odoric of Pordenone, an Italian who visited Asia in 1316-1320, the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais, a great mediæval compilation of history and legend, and Pliny's *Natural History*, that great storehouse of the marvelous. As to the identity of the author, he is now believed to have been one Jean de Bourgogne, an Englishman who fled from England after the execution of his lord, John baron de Mowbray, in 1322, but it is not certainly known whether Mandeville or Bourgogne was his real name. Two witnesses of the sixteenth century record having seen at Liège a tomb to the memory of Dominus Johannes de Mandeville, on which was an epitaph giving the date of his death as Nov. 17, 1371, and some verses declaring him to have been the English Ulysses. In any event, the book is one of the most fascinating books of marvels ever written, and the English version, although a translation, is of the highest importance for the history of English prose.

Of JOHN WICLIF (p. 9) no account is necessary here. Whatever may have been his own part in the translations of the Bible which go under his name, these translations are of great importance for the history of English prose style. The same selection (the fifth chapter of St. Matthew) has therefore been given from both the earlier and the later version. The differences between them are very striking and instructive. In order to afford opportunity for further study of the gradual development of the matchless style of the Authorized Version of the English Bible, the same chapter is given from Tyndale's version (p. 34, below). Both the Authorized and the Revised versions are so easily accessible that it seems unnecessary to print the same chapter from them, but they should not be neglected in the comparison.

JOHN DE TREVISA (p. 11) translated into English in 1387 the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden, a sort of universal history and geography written about half a century earlier. Higden's work is largely a compilation from other authors, whose names he often gives, — sometimes wrongly, to be sure, — but he added a good deal from his own personal knowledge. Trevisa, in his turn, made some additions in his translation. The chapter here given is interesting as a specimen of fourteenth-century English prose, but still more so for the glimpses it affords as to the state of the language in the time of Higden and the changes that took place between then and the time when Trevisa wrote.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (p. 12) is also too well known to require an additional note. It may, however, be remarked that the simplicity of the *Prologue to the Astrolabe* and the skill shown in the translation of *Boethius* indicate that, had prose been regarded as a proper medium for literary art in his day, Chaucer could have told his tales in a prose as simple, as musical, and as flexible as his verse, for he obviously could have wrought out such a prose had there been the incentive to do so.

THE REPRESSOR OF OVER MUCH BLAMING OF THE CLERGY (p. 16) is the most important monument of English prose in the first two thirds of the fifteenth century. It is

clear and vigorous in style, and well organized and arranged as a discussion. It was intended as a defense of the practices of the Church of England against the criticisms of the Lollards, and is distinguished by great ingenuity and subtlety. Its author, Reginald Pecock, bishop successively of St. Asaph and Chichester, was very proud of his skill as a logician and delighted to undertake a difficult discussion. In this book he alienated some of the officials of the Church by the arguments used to defend it, and completed this alienation by the publication of heretical doctrines, such as his denial of the authenticity of the Apostles' Creed. He was seized and compelled to recant his opinions and to see his books burnt as heretical. He died a disappointed and broken man.

The *Morte Darthur* of SIR THOMAS MALORY (p. 18) has long been famous, not only as the source of most of the modern poems about King Arthur and his Knights, but also as one of the most interesting books in any language. It has recently been shown by Professor Kittredge that Sir Thomas was not, as some have supposed, a priest, but, as the colophon of his book tells us, a soldier, with just such a career as one would wish for the compiler of such a volume. He was attached to the train of the famous Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and perhaps was brought up in his service. As Professor Kittredge says, "No better school for the future author of the *Morte Darthur* can be imagined than a personal acquaintance with that Englishman whom all Europe recognized as embodying the knightly ideal of the age." The Emperor Sigismund, we are informed on excellent authority, said to Henry V, "that no prince Cristen for wisdom, norture, and manhode, hadde such another knyght as he had of therle Warrewyk; addyng therto that if al curtesye were lost, yet myght hit be founde ageyn in hym; and so ever after by the emperours auctorite he was called the 'Fadre of Curteisy.'" Sir Thomas derived his materials from old romances, principally in French, which he attempted to condense and reduce to order. His style, though it may have been affected to some extent by his originals, is essentially his own. Its most striking excellence is its diction, which is invariably picturesque and fresh, and this undoubtedly must be ascribed to him. The syntax, though sometimes faulty, has almost always a certain naïve charm. On the whole, regarding both matter and manner, one can hardly refuse assent to Caxton when he says, "But thystorye (*i.e.* the history) of the sayd Arthur is so gloryous and shynyng, that he is stalled in the fyrst place of the moost noble, beste, and worthiest of the Cristen men."

WILLIAM CAXTON (p. 21) of course rendered his greatest services to English literature as a printer and publisher, but the charming garrulity of his prefaces, as well as their intrinsic interest, richly entitles him to be represented here. The passage chosen is, in its way, a classic in the history of the English language. I have tried to make it easier to read by breaking up into shorter lengths his rambling statements, — they can hardly be called sentences, — but I somewhat fear that, in so doing, a part, at least, of their quaint charm may have been sacrificed.

THE CRONYCLE OF SYR JOHN FROISSART (p. 22), written in French in the fourteenth century, is as charming in manner and almost as romantic in material as *Le Morte Darthur* itself. Sir John was intimately acquainted with men who were actors or eyewitnesses of nearly all the chivalric deeds performed in his day in England and France, and indeed in the whole of western Europe, and his chronicle has all the interest of a personal narrative combined with the charm of his shrewd simplicity and his fine enthusiasm for noble deeds. The age in which he lived was one of the most picturesque in history. Chivalry had reached the height of its splendid development, and, though doomed by the new forces that had come into the world, — gunpowder, cannon, and the growing importance of commerce, — its ideals were cherished with perhaps a greater intensity of devotion than ever before. It was the age of Chaucer and the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight* in literature, and of Edward III and the Black Prince with their brilliant train of followers in tourney and battle. Froissart wrote professedly "to the intent that the honourable



and noble adventures of feats of arms, done and achieved by the wars of France and England, should notably be enregistered and put in perpetual memory, whereby the prewe (noble) and hardy may have ensample to encourage them in their well-doing." His accounts of events are sometimes colored by this pious intention, as well as by the prejudices of his informants; and that is the case with the selection here given. It appears from other sources that the young king did not act as nobly and bravely at Mile-end Green as Froissart represents him, but no doubt his friends persuaded themselves and Froissart that he did, and it seemed a fine example to record for the encouragement of high-spirited young men. The interest and importance of the passage may excuse its length; it has been quoted or paraphrased by every historian who has written about the famous Revolt of 1381. The style of the translator, Lord Berners, is admirable in its simple dignity and its wonderful freshness and vividness of diction.

SIR THOMAS MORE (p. 29) is one of the most striking and charming figures in the brilliant court of Henry VIII, and is known to all students of literature as the author of *Utopia*. Unfortunately for our purposes that interesting book was written in Latin and, though soon translated into English, cannot represent to us the author's English style. I have chosen a selection from his *Dialogues* rather than from the *History of Richard III*, partly because the style seems to me more touched with the author's emotion, and partly because the passage presents the attitude of the writer on a question which may interest many modern readers. It is characteristic in its mixture of dignity, good sense, prejudice, enlightenment, spiritual earnestness, and playfulness of temper.

The *Sermon* by HUGH LATIMER, an extract from which is here given (p. 36), represents English pulpit oratory of the middle of the sixteenth century at its very best. Latimer was famous for his sound learning, his sturdy common sense, his pithy colloquial style, and his intellectual and spiritual fearlessness. A very fair conception of the man may be obtained from this sermon and Foxe's account of his death (p. 41, below).

ROGER ASCHAM, tutor to Queen Elizabeth and one of the most learned men of his time, declared that he could more easily have written his *Scholemaster* (p. 38) in Latin than in English, and no doubt he could; but, fortunately, other considerations than ease induced him to write in English. The book is intensely interesting, because of the thoroughly wholesome attitude towards learning, not as of value for its own sake, but as a means for the cultivation of mind and spirit and an aid toward the development of the perfect man, perfect in body, in mind, and in soul, in agility and strength, in intellectual power and knowledge, in courtesy and honor and religion, which was the finest ideal of the leaders of that great intellectual and spiritual awakening which we call the Renaissance. The same attitude is displayed in his other interesting book, the *Toxophilus*, which is also well worth reading, especially by all who care both for learning and for outdoor sports. The methods of training children and of teaching Latin outlined in the *Scholemaster* are so humane and sane and effective, that it is hard to believe that, having once been practiced or even suggested, they could have been forgotten and neglected, and needed to be rediscovered within our own time, — indeed have not yet been discovered in their entirety by all teachers. In spite of Ascham's facility in Latin, his English is simple, clear, and idiomatic, and is permeated by the attractiveness of his nature.

FOXES'S *Acts and Monuments of these latter and perillous Dayes* (p. 41), better known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, was for many years one of the most popular books in the English language and was reprinted many times. It is, of course, in many respects a barbarous book, the product of an age when scarcely any one, Catholic or Protestant, doubted that cruel torture was a proper means of inculcating the true faith, and death a proper penalty for refusing to accept it. The book long kept alive the bitter and distorted memories of that time. The style is usually plain and a trifle stiff, but occasionally rises to eloquence.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY's famous book, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (p. 45), is too leisurely in movement and too complicated in structure to be well illustrated by a continuous selection, except as to its style, but the passage here presented seems better suited than any other of similar length to convey an idea of the nature of the story and the sources of its charm for Sidney's contemporaries.

The selection from JOHN LYLY's *Euphues and his England* (p. 57) may seem to some teachers shorter than is warranted by Lyly's reputation and his indubitable services to English prose. But the characteristics of his style are such as can be exhibited in comparatively small compass; and its excessive ornamentation soon becomes monotonous and unendurable. Moreover, it is not by its ornamental but by its structural features that it rendered its services to English prose, and the most significant of these, as Professor Morsbach has recently shown, is exact balance of accents in correlative phrases and clauses. This very important feature can easily and quickly be worked out by teacher or pupils; and the process, if applied to several authors, cannot fail to be profitable.

ROBERT GREENE (p. 64) is fully discussed in all histories of English Literature. I wish here only to explain that I have given three selections from works attributed to him, not because I regard him as more important for the history of English prose than some others less generously represented, but for other reasons. In the first place, if all three are really by Greene, they deserve attention as presenting three different styles and kinds of writing; in the second place, at least two of them are of special interest to historians of literature and are often quoted for the illustration of Elizabethan life. I confess that, in my opinion, the most famous of the three, the *Groat's Worth of Wit*, is, as some of Greene's friends declared when it was published (after his death), not the product of Greene's pen, but the work of Henry Chettle. Professor Vetter's arguments against Greene's authorship<sup>1</sup> seem to me conclusive, and it would not be difficult to add to them.

The length of the extract from DEKKER's *Gull's Hornbook* (p. 89) will no doubt be excused, even by the student, for the sake of its vivid picture of the way in which the "young bloods" of Shakspere's day and those who wished to be thought such conducted themselves. The advice is of course ironical throughout, but, like many another humorist who has poked fun at men with a grave face, Dekker has been supposed by some readers to have written a serious guide for frivolous men.

ROBERT BURTON (p. 97) will doubtless be little to the taste of the ordinary modern reader, not only because of his love for Latin phrases and quotations with uncouth references, but also because of the quaint style and fantastic humor which have endeared him to so many of the greatest lovers of literature. His book is, as might be expected, the product of an uneventful life of studious leisure, passed in the quiet shades of the University of Oxford. The best way to learn to love it is to read it in the same circumstances in which it was produced; the leisure of a long and lazy summer day or a quiet winter night is almost indispensable for a full appreciation of its shrewd sense and whimsical humor. The passage here given contains not only the brief anecdote from which Keats developed his beautiful poem *Lamia*, but also, if not the sources, at least analogues, of Balzac's remarkable story, *A Passion in the Desert*, and F. Anstey's *A Tinted Venus*. The notes not in brackets are those of the author himself. They have been retained in their original form because, not only in their range, but even in their occasional vagueness, they are characteristic of the author.

*Leviathan* (p. 102) is the strange title given by THOMAS HOBBS to his book on government, or, as he calls it, "the matter, form, and power of a commonwealth." The most distinguishing features of Hobbes are his entire freedom from mysticism, his conviction that all error and all ignorance are the results of a failure to reason clearly and sensibly,

<sup>1</sup> Abhandl. d. 44ten Sammlung d. deut. Schulmänner (Teubner, 1897).

and his thoroughgoing application of his principle that "there is no conception in a man's mind which hath not, totally or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense." His own thought is always clear and simple; all that he could see in the world he could understand, and all that he could understand he could express in its entirety. He conceived of all men (and of God) as made in his own image, differing from himself only in that some are very foolish and none so clear and consistent in reasoning as he. His style is very characteristic, clear, vigorous, rapid, and full of phrases that stick in the memory.

THOMAS FULLER (p. 117) is famous as antiquary, biographer, historian, pulpit orator, and wit. His wit — the quality which has most effectively kept his work alive for modern lovers of literature — is displayed at its best, not in the limning of a picture or the development of a theme, but by flashes, in quaint and impressive phrases or in glances at unnoted aspects of a subject. It therefore does not appear so strikingly in a continuous extract as in such a collection of brief paragraphs as Charles Lamb made for the delectation of himself and spirits akin to his. The short biographical sketch of Sir Francis Drake here given does not, indeed, illustrate the versatility of his genius, but it presents a good specimen of his sustained power as a writer of English prose.

JEREMY TAYLOR (p. 136) was a master of elaborate and involved prose rhythms and as such will always retain his place in the history of English literature. Whether his fondness for themes of decay and death was due to a morbid liking for the subjects themselves, or to the value which religious teachers in general at that time attached to the contemplation of physical corruption, or whether such themes offered a specially favorable opportunity for lyrical movements in prose ending in minor cadences, may admit of discussion. Certainly one hears even in the most soaring strains of his eloquence the ground tone of the futility and vanity of life.

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE (p. 143) was not a great writer, but his prose is so good in technique that it may serve to call attention to the fact that the secrets of prose style had been mastered and a flexible and effective instrument of expression had been created by the long line of writers who had wrought at the problem. Henceforth, while great writing was, as always, possible only to that special temperamental organization which we call genius, clear and graceful prose was within the scope of any intelligent man of good taste and good training, as is distinctly shown by the high level maintained in the eighteenth century even by writers of mediocre ability.

*The Diary* of SAMUEL PEPYS (p. 168) is probably the most honest and unsophisticated self-revelation ever given to the world. This is due partly to the fact that Pepys did not suppose that it would ever be read by any one but himself, and partly to an intellectual clearness and candor which enabled him to describe his actions and feelings without self-deception. Other autobiographies — even the most famous — have, without exception, been written with half an eye on the public; either the author has, consciously or half-consciously, posed to excite admiration for his cleverness or to shock by his unconventionalities, or he has become secretive at the very moment when he was beginning to be most interesting. But the reader would judge unjustly who estimated Pepys's character solely on the basis of the diary. He was in his own day regarded as a model of propriety and respectability and a man of unusual business capacity. He may be said, indeed, with little exaggeration, to have created the English navy; when he became Secretary to the Generals of the Fleet, the Admiralty Office was practically without organization, before the close of his career he had organized it and, as a recent Lord of the Admiralty says, provided it with "the principal rules and establishments in present use." That he was not altogether averse to what we now call "graft," is true; but in an age of universal bribery he was a notably honest and honorable official, and he never allowed his private interests to cause injury or loss to the service. No document of any sort gives us so full and varied and vivid an account of the social life and pursuits of the Restoration period;

Pepys is often ungrammatical, but he is never dull in manner or unprovided with interesting material. The carelessness of his style is due in no small measure to the nature of his book. He wrote for his own eye alone, using a system of shorthand which was not deciphered until 1825. That he was a man of cultivation is proved by the society in which he moved, by his interest in music and the drama, by the valuable library of books and prints which he accumulated and bequeathed to Magdalene College, Cambridge, by his interest in the Royal Society, and by the academic honors conferred upon him by the universities.

SHAFTESBURY'S *Characteristics* (p. 197) is another notable example of the high development which English prose style had obtained at the beginning of the eighteenth century. His philosophy, like most of the philosophy of the time, seems to us of the present day to be singularly lacking in breadth, depth, and solidity of content, but there can be no question of the clearness and grace of his presentation of it. Occasionally, to be sure, Shaftesbury's style becomes florid and acquires a movement inappropriate to prose, but such occasions are rare and in the main his prose will bear comparison with the best of its time.

In such a volume as this it is, of course, impossible to illustrate the work of the novelists as novelists; and considerations of space have made necessary the omission of all but a few of the most notable. In some cases it has been necessary to choose an extract from a novel in order to present the writer at his best; but wherever it is possible a selection has been chosen with a view to presenting the writer only as a writer of prose, leaving the more important aspect of his work to be presented in some other way. Thus from Fielding chapters have been chosen which give his theory of narrative art.

Whatever may have been the real basis for MACPHERSON'S so-called translation of the *Poems of Ossian* (p. 275), the work exercised a great, and, indeed, almost immeasurable, influence upon English and other literatures. Some persons may be disposed to criticise the inclusion of an extract from this translation in this volume rather than in the volume of poetry, but the translation itself is rhythmical prose, and it would not be difficult to show that it has exercised an equal or even greater influence upon prose than upon poetry. The question as to Macpherson's responsibility for the poems will probably never be entirely resolved. Celtic poems bearing considerable resemblance to his translations undoubtedly existed in considerable number, but it seems certain that his work was in no case merely that of a translator.

The long chapter from BOSWELL'S *Life of Johnson* is full of the prejudice and injustice of the author toward Oliver Goldsmith, whose ideas were often too advanced for such stanch worshippers of the established order as both Boswell and his master, Johnson, were, and whose personal sensitiveness made him, despite his intellectual independence, constantly the victim of the great dictator's methods of argument. That this chapter has had no little influence in the formation of false opinion about Goldsmith and even in promoting misunderstanding of his work, there can be little doubt; but it illustrates Boswell's method so well and presents Johnson so interestingly that I have not hesitated to print it.

THE LETTERS OF JUNIUS (p. 292) produced in their day a very great sensation, and their fame has been heightened by the mystery surrounding their authorship. Many of the prominent men of the time were accused of writing them and not a few either shyly admitted or boldly claimed the credit and the infamy. The reason why the real author did not appear and establish his claims was, as De Quincey long ago pointed out, that he could not assert his right to the literary fame without at the same time convicting himself of having made improper use of his official position under the government to obtain the information which made his attacks so effective. Historians of English literature have long accustomed us to believe that these letters depended for their success solely upon their literary style, their bitterness of invective, and their sardonic irony; but, although they



are remarkable as literature, the special feature which aroused the fears of the government was the fact that no state secret seemed safe from the author and that he might at any moment reveal matters which it was important to keep unknown. Recent researches have made it practically certain that Junius was Sir Philip Francis, who was a clerk in the war office during the period of the publication of the letters.

If FRANCIS JEFFREY (p. 320) was unjust in his reviews of Wordsworth, lovers of Wordsworth — and who is not? — have been at least equally unjust in their treatment of Jeffrey. Sentences have been quoted, often in garbled form and always without the context, to illustrate the unfairness and stupidity and poetic insensibility of Jeffrey. Most sane critics of the present day differ from Jeffrey mainly in emphasis, they recognize that Wordsworth really had the defects which Jeffrey pointed out, and that they are grave. But in literature only the successes count, the failures fall away and should be forgotten. The selection here printed presents Jeffrey in his most truculent mood; another selection, the review of the *Excursion*, was planned for this volume, but the limitation of our space necessitated its omission.

LEIGH HUNT (p. 354) hardly deserves to be retained in a book from which it has been necessary, on account of lack of space, to exclude so many of his betters, but the interest of comparing his version of the *Daughter of Hippocrates* with Sir John Mandeville's prose (p. 6) and William Morris's poem (*English Poetry*, p. 551) was too great for my powers of resistance. Mandeville's version is a masterpiece of simple vivid narration, Morris's a wonder of visualized color and form and action, while Hunt's is a bit of clever but feeble prettiness, the work of a man totally deficient in distinction and power. These versions may help the student to understand when borrowing is not plagiarism — a task apparently too difficult for many who are sincerely interested in the problem.

The long selection from MACAULAY's famous chapter on the state of England at the time of the Revolution of 1688 (p. 382) is of course out of proportion to his importance among writers of English prose; but teachers who are tired of reading over and over again his biographical sketches will doubtless welcome it as a change, and both teachers and pupils will surely find it valuable for the vivid picture it gives of the physical and social background against which so large a part of English literature must be seen if it is to be seen truly. Moreover, in style it presents Macaulay at his best.

The title *Mabinogion* (p. 521) was given by LADY CHARLOTTE GUEST to the Welsh tales which she translated from the Red Book of Hergest, a collection of bardic materials. The Red Book was apparently written in the fourteenth century, but all of the stories probably took their present form earlier, and some of them are, in some form, of great antiquity. The term *Mabinogion*, though it has been generally accepted, does not properly include the tale here given. A young man who aspired to become a bard was called a *Mabinog* and was expected to learn from his master certain traditional lore called *Mabinogi*. Four of the tales included in the Red Book are called "branches of the Mabinogi." Lady Charlotte Guest treated *Mabinogi* as a singular, meaning a traditional Welsh tale, and from it formed the plural *Mabinogion*, which has since been widely used as she used it. Her translation was published in 1838-1849, and has been greatly admired for its preservation of the simplicity and charm of the originals. The story here printed is not purely Welsh, but has been affected in greater or less degree by the form and ideas of Arthurian romance as developed in France and England under the influence of chivalry.



# CONTENTS

## EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION .....	xi
THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE (extract from An. 1137) (by a Monk of Peterborough).....	i
AN OLD ENGLISH HOMILY (extract) (by an unknown author).....	i
RICHARD POORE (?), Bishop of Chichester, Salisbury, and Durham The Ancren Riwele (Speech; Nuns May Keep No Beast but a Cat) .....	2
ENGLISH PROCLAMATION OF HENRY III.....	4
RICHARD ROLLE (of Hampole) Epistle III: The Commandment of Love to God.....	5
SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile, Kt., Capp. IV, XVII, XXVII.....	6
JOHN WICLIF The Gospel of Mathew (Both versions)...	9
JOHN DE TREVISA Higden's Polychronicon, Bk. I, Cap. LIX	11
GEOFFREY CHAUCER A Treatise on the Astrolabe; Prologus....	12
Translation of Boethius, Bk. III, Prose IX, and Metre IX.....	13
REGINALD PECOCK, Bishop of St. Asaph, and Chichester The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy, Pt. I, Cap. XIII.....	16

## THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

SIR THOMAS MALORY Le Morte Darthur, Bk. XXI, Capp. IV- VI.....	18
WILLIAM CAXTON Preface to the Booke of Eneydos.....	21
SIR JOHN BOURCHIER, LORD BERNERS The Cronycle of Syr John Froissart, Capp. CCCLXXXIII, CCCLXXXIII.....	22

## THE TRANSITION TO MODERN TIMES

SIR THOMAS MORE A Dialogue of Syr Thomas More, Kt., Bk. III, Cap. XVI.....	29
WILLIAM TYNDALE The Gospell of S. Mathew, Cap. V.....	34
HUGH LATIMER The First Sermon before King Edward VI.....	36

## ROGER ASCHAM

The Scholemaster: The First Booke for the Youth.....	38
---	----

## JOHN FOXE

Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Dayes: The Behaviour of Dr. Ridley and Master Latimer at the Time of their Death.....	41
---	----

## THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

### SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

Arcadia (from Bk. I).....	45
---------------------------	----

### RICHARD HOOKER

Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (ex- tract from Bk. I).....	54
---	----

### JOHN LYL

Euphues and his England (extract) .....	57
---	----

### THOMAS LODGE

Rosalynde: Euphues' Golden Legacy (ex- tract).....	60
---	----

### ROBERT GREENE

A Groat's Worth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance (extract).....	64
The Art of Cony-Catching (extract).....	67
Greene's Never Too Late; The Palmer's Tale (extract).....	69

### FRANCIS BACON, Viscount St. Albans

Essays (I, Of Truth, p. 74; II, Of Death, p. 75; IV, Of Revenge, 75; V, Of Adversity, p. 76; VIII, Of Marriage and Single Life, p. 76; X, Of Love, p. 77; XI, Of Great Place, p. 78; XVI, Of Atheism, p. 79; XXIII, Of Wisdom for a Man's Self, p. 80; XXV, Of Dispatch, p. 81; XXVII, Of Friendship, p. 82; XLII, Of Youth and Age, p. 85; XLIII, Of Beauty, p. 85) .....	74
--	----

### THOMAS NASHE

The Unfortunate Traveller (or Jack Wil- ton) (extract).....	86
--	----

### THOMAS DEKKER

The Gull's Hornbook, Capp. VI-VIII....	89
--	----

### BEN JONSON

Timber: or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter (LXIV, De Shakespeare Nostrati, p. 94; LXXI, Dominus Verulamius, p. 94; C, De Bonis et Malis; De Innocentia, p. 95; CXV, De Stilo, et Optimo Scribendi Genere, p. 95).....	94
--	----

## THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

ROBERT BURTON	
The Anatomy of Melancholy, Pt. III, Sec. II, Mem. I, Subs. I.....	97
THOMAS HOBBES	
Leviathan, Pt. I, Cap. XIII (Of the Natural Condition of Mankind).....	102
IZAACK WALTON	
The Complete Angler (extract).....	104
SIR THOMAS BROWNE	
Religio Medici: Charity .....	111
Hydriotaphia: Urn-Burial, Chap. V.....	115
THOMAS FULLER	
The Holy State, Bk. II, Chap. XXII: The Life of Sir Francis Drake.....	117
JOHN MILTON	
Of Education.....	120
Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing (extract).....	126
JEREMY TAYLOR	
The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying, Chap. I, Sec. II.....	136
JOHN BUNYAN	
The Pilgrim's Progress: The Fight with Apollyon (p. 139); Vanity Fair (p. 141).....	139
SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE	
Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands, Chap. VIII.....	143
JOHN DRYDEN	
An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (extract)....	146
JOHN LOCKE	
Of the Conduct of the Understanding (extract).....	163
SAMUEL PEPYS	
His Diary (extract).....	168
ROBERT SOUTH	
A Sermon: Of the Fatal Imposture and Force of Words (extract).....	173

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

DANIEL DEFOE	
The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton (extract) .	176
JONATHAN SWIFT	
The Tale of a Tub: The Preface and Sections II and IX.....	184
A Modest Proposal.....	193
ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER, Earl of Shaftesbury	
Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc., Pt. III, Sec. III.....	197
JOSEPH ADDISON	
The Spectator (No. 10, Aims of the Spectator, p. 198; 26, Thoughts in Westminster Abbey, p. 200; 98, The Head-Dress, 201; 159, The Vision of Mirza, p. 203; 1584, Hilpa and Shalum, p. 205; 585, The Same, continued, p. 206).....	198
SIR RICHARD STEELE	
The Tatler (Nos. 82, 95, 167, 264).....	207

SIR RICHARD STEELE ( <i>Continued</i> )	
The Spectator (No. 11).....	214
GEORGE BERKELEY, Bishop of Cloyne	
A Proposal for a College to be erected in the Summer Islands.....	216
SAMUEL RICHARDSON	
The History of Clarissa Harlowe, Letter XVI.....	221
HENRY FIELDING	
Tom Jones, Bk. I, Chap. I; Bk. II, Chap. I; Bk. V, Chap. I; Bk. VIII, Chap. I; Bk. X, Chap. I.....	226
SAMUEL JOHNSON	
Congreve.....	234
The Rambler (Nos. 68, 69).....	239
DAVID HUME	
An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, Sec. V, Pt. II.....	243
LAURENCE STERNE	
Tristram Shandy, Vol. VIII, Chaps. XXIII-XXX.....	247
TOBIAS SMOLLETT	
Humphry Clinker (Letter to Sir Watkin Phillips).....	251
OLIVER GOLDSMITH	
Letters from a Citizen of the World to his Friends in the East, XXI, XXVI-XXX.....	255
EDMUND BURKE	
Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts (extract).....	267
Reflections on the Revolution in France (extract).....	270
JAMES MACPHERSON (?)	
The Poems of Ossian: Cath-Loda, Duan III.....	275
JAMES BOSWELL	
The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., Chap. XIII.....	277
JUNIUS [? Sir Philip Francis]	
Letters XII and XV, to the Duke of Grafton.....	292

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, I

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	
Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads".....	298
SIR WALTER SCOTT	
Wandering Willie's Tale (from Redgauntlet).....	308
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE	
Biographia Literaria, Chap. XIV.....	317
FRANCIS JEFFREY, LORD JEFFREY	
The White Doe of Rylstone.....	320
ROBERT SOUTHEY	
The Life of Nelson, Chap. V (extract), the Battle of the Nile.....	321
JANE AUSTEN	
Pride and Prejudice, Chaps. I-VI.....	328
CHARLES LAMB	
The Two Races of Men.....	337
Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist.....	340
A Chapter on Ears.....	343

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR	
Imaginary Conversations: Æsop and Rhodopè.....	345
WILLIAM HAZLITT	
Mr. Coleridge.....	349
LEIGH HUNT	
The Daughter of Hippocrates.....	354
THOMAS DE QUINCEY	
The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (extract).....	357
THOMAS CARLYLE	
Sartor Resartus, Chaps. VI-IX.....	366
THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, Baron Macaulay	
The History of England, Vol. I, Chap. III (extract).....	382
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, II	
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, CARDINAL	
The Idea of a University, Discourse VI (extract).....	409
GEORGE BORROW	
Lavengro, Chaps. LXX, LXXI.....	417
WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY	
The English Humourists: Sterne.....	425
Vanity Fair, Chaps. XII, XIII.....	430
CHARLES DICKENS	
A Child's Dream of a Star.....	440

CHARLES DICKENS ( <i>Continued</i> )	
Our Mutual Friend: Chap. V, Boffin's Bower.....	441
JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE	
Cæsar, Chap. XIII.....	450
"GEORGE ELIOT," Mary Ann Evans (Cross)	
The Mill on the Floss, Bk. VII, Chap. V, The Last Conflict.....	458
JOHN RUSKIN	
The Stones of Venice, Vol. II, Chaps. I, IV, V (extracts).....	463
The Crown of Wild Olive, Preface.....	473
MATTHEW ARNOLD	
Culture and Anarchy: Sweetness and Light.....	478
SIR LESLIE STEPHEN	
Newman's Theory of Belief (extract)....	489
WALTER PATER	
Style.....	492
The Child in the House.....	502
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON	
François Villon, Student, Poet, and Housebreaker.....	509

APPENDIX

The Mabinogion: Peredur the Son of Ewrawc (translated by Lady Charlotte Guest).....	521
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# ENGLISH PROSE

## EARLY MIDDLE ENGLISH

### THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE (C. 1154)

#### A MONK OF PETERBOROUGH

(FROM THE RECORD FOR 1137)

This gære<sup>1</sup> for<sup>2</sup> the king Stephne ofer sæ<sup>3</sup> to Normandi, and ther wes<sup>4</sup> underfangen,<sup>5</sup> forthithat<sup>6</sup> hi<sup>7</sup> uuenden<sup>8</sup> that he sculde<sup>9</sup> ben<sup>10</sup> alsuic<sup>11</sup> also<sup>12</sup> the eom<sup>13</sup> wes, and for<sup>6</sup> he hadde get his tresor;<sup>14</sup> ac<sup>15</sup> he to-deld<sup>16</sup> it and scatered sotlice.<sup>17</sup> Micel<sup>18</sup> hadde Henri king gadered gold and sylver, and na<sup>19</sup> god<sup>20</sup> ne dide me<sup>21</sup> for his saule<sup>22</sup> tharof.<sup>23</sup>

Tha<sup>24</sup> the king Stephne to Engalande com,<sup>25</sup> tha<sup>26</sup> macod<sup>27</sup> he his gadering<sup>28</sup> at Oxeneford; and thar he nam<sup>29</sup> the biscop Roger of Sereberi<sup>30</sup> and Alexander biscop of Lincol and te<sup>31</sup> Canceler Roger his neves,<sup>32</sup> and dide<sup>33</sup> ælle in prisun til hi<sup>7</sup> iafen<sup>34</sup> up here<sup>35</sup> castles. Tha<sup>24</sup> the suikes<sup>36</sup> undergæton<sup>37</sup> that he milde man was and softe and god<sup>20</sup> and na<sup>19</sup> justise<sup>38</sup> ne dide, tha<sup>26</sup> diden hi<sup>7</sup> alle wunder.<sup>39</sup> Hi<sup>7</sup> hadden him<sup>40</sup> manred<sup>41</sup> maked<sup>27</sup> and athes<sup>42</sup> suoren,<sup>43</sup> ac<sup>15</sup> hi nan<sup>19</sup> treuthe ne heolden.<sup>44</sup> Alle he<sup>7</sup> wæron<sup>45</sup> forsworn and here<sup>35</sup> treoths forloren;<sup>46</sup> for ævric<sup>47</sup> rice<sup>48</sup> man his castles makede,<sup>49</sup> and agænes<sup>50</sup> him heolden,<sup>51</sup> and fylden<sup>52</sup> the land ful of castles. Hi suencten<sup>53</sup> suythe<sup>54</sup> the uurecce<sup>55</sup> men of the land mid<sup>56</sup> castel weorces.<sup>57</sup> Tha<sup>24</sup> the castles uuaren<sup>45</sup>

1 year 2 went 3 sea 4 was 5 received 6 because 7 they 8 weened, thought 9 should 10 be 11 just such 12 as 13 uncle 14 treasure 15 but 16 dispersed 17 foolishly 18 much 19 no 20 good 21 anyone 22 soul 23 on account of it 24 when 25 came 26 then 27 made 28 assembly 29 seized 30 Salisbury 31 the 32 nephews (i.e. the son and nephew of Roger of Salisbury) 33 put 34 gave 35 their 36 traitors 37 perceived 38 justice, punishment 39 strange things, evils 40 to him 41 homage 42 oaths 43 sworn 44 kept 45 were 46 entirely abandoned 47 every 48 powerful 49 fortified 50 against 51 held 52 filled 53 oppressed 54 greatly 55 wretched 56 with 57 works

maked, tha<sup>1</sup> fylden hi mid deovles and yvele<sup>2</sup> men. Tha<sup>1</sup> namen<sup>3</sup> hi tha<sup>4</sup> men the<sup>5</sup> hi wenden<sup>6</sup> that ani god<sup>7</sup> hefden,<sup>8</sup> bathe<sup>9</sup> be<sup>10</sup> nihtes and be dæies, carlmen<sup>11</sup> and wimmen, and diden<sup>12</sup> heom<sup>13</sup> in prisun efter<sup>14</sup> gold and sylver, and pined<sup>15</sup> heom untellendlice<sup>16</sup> pining,<sup>17</sup> for ne uuæren<sup>18</sup> nævre<sup>19</sup> nan martyrs swa<sup>20</sup> pined also<sup>21</sup> hi wæron. Me<sup>22</sup> henged<sup>23</sup> up bi the fet<sup>24</sup> and smoked heom mid ful<sup>25</sup> smoke. Me henged bi the thumbs, other<sup>26</sup> bi the hefed,<sup>27</sup> and hengen<sup>28</sup> bryniges<sup>29</sup> on her<sup>30</sup> fet. Me dide<sup>12</sup> cnotted strenges<sup>31</sup> abuton<sup>32</sup> here<sup>30</sup> hæved<sup>27</sup> and uurythen<sup>33</sup> to<sup>34</sup> that it gæde<sup>35</sup> to the hærnas.<sup>36</sup> Hi dyden heom in quarterne<sup>37</sup> thar<sup>38</sup> nadres<sup>39</sup> and snakes and pades<sup>40</sup> wæron inne, and drapen<sup>41</sup> heom swa.<sup>20</sup> . . .

I ne can ne I ne mai<sup>42</sup> tellen alle the wonder<sup>43</sup> ne alle the pines<sup>44</sup> that hi diden wrecce<sup>45</sup> men on<sup>46</sup> this land; and that lastede tha .xix. wintre<sup>47</sup> wile<sup>48</sup> Stephne was king, and ævre<sup>49</sup> it was uuerse<sup>50</sup> and uuerse.

### FROM AN OLD ENGLISH HOMILY (BEFORE 1200)

(Unknown Author)

*Missus est Jeremias in puteum et stetit ibi usque ad os, etc.*

(See Jeremiah 38 : 6-13)

Leofemen,<sup>51</sup> we vindeth<sup>52</sup> in Halie Boc<sup>53</sup> that Jeremie the prophete stod in ane<sup>54</sup> pütte<sup>55</sup> and thet<sup>56</sup> in the venne<sup>57</sup> up to his muthe;<sup>58</sup> and

1 then 2 evil 3 seized 4 those 5 who 6 weened, thought 7 property 8 had 9 both 10 by 11 men 12 put 13 them 14 after (i.e. to obtain) 15 tortured 16 unspeakable 17 torture 18 were 19 never 20 so 21 as 22 one (i.e., they indefinite) 23 hanged 24 feet 25 foul 26 or 27 head 28 hung 29 corselets (as weights) 30 their 31 cords 32 about 33 twisted 34 till 35 went, penetrated 36 brains 37 prison 38 where 39 adders 40 toads 41 killed 42 may 43 evils 44 tortures 45 wretched 46 in 47 years 48 while 49 ever 50 worse 51 beloved 52 find 53 holy book = the Bible 54 a 55 pit 56 that (emphatic) 57 fen, mire 58 mouth