

HALLECK'S NEW ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

REUBEN POST HALLECK, M.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE"

"HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE"



AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

CHICAGO

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY
REUBEN POST HALLECK.
COPYRIGHT, 1913, IN GREAT BRITAIN.

HAL. NEW ENG. LIT.

W. P. 35

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION — LITERARY ENGLAND	I
 CHAPTER	
I. FROM 449 A.D. TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST, 1066	7
II. FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST, 1066, TO CHAUCER'S DEATH, 1400	53
III. FROM CHAUCER'S DEATH, 1400, TO THE ACCESSION OF ELIZABETH, 1558	99
IV. THE AGE OF ELIZABETH, 1558-1603	119
V. THE PURITAN AGE, 1603-1660	220
VI. FROM THE RESTORATION, 1660, TO THE PUBLICATION OF PAMELA, 1740	256
VII. THE SECOND FORTY YEARS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CEN- TURY, 1740-1780	304
VIII. THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM, 1780-1837	351
IX. THE VICTORIAN AGE, 1837-1900	449
X. TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE	587
SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF AUTHORS AND THEIR CHIEF WORKS	625
INDEX	633

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
1. Woden	12
2. Exeter Cathedral	18
3. Anglo-Saxon Gleeman. (From the tapestry designed by H. A. Bone)	21
4. Facsimile of Beginning of Cotton MS. of Beowulf. (British Museum)	25
5. Facsimile of Beginning of Junian MS. of Cædmon	32
6. Anglo-Saxon Musicians. (From illuminated MS., British Museum)	35
7. The Beginning of Alfred's Laws. (From illuminated MS., British Museum)	45
8. The Death of Harold at Hastings. (From the Bayeux tapestry)	53
9. What Mandeville Saw. (From Edition of 1725)	73
10. John Wycliffe. (From an old print)	74
11. Treuthe's Pilgryme atte Plow. (From a MS. in Trinity College, Cambridge)	77
12. Gower Hearing the Confession of a Lover. (From Egerton MS., British Museum)	79
13. Geoffrey Chaucer. (From an old drawing in the MS. of Occleve's Poems, British Museum)	80
14. Canterbury Cathedral	84
15. Pilgrims Leaving the Tabard Inn. (From Urry's Chaucer)	86
16. Facsimile of Lines Describing the Franklyn. (From the Cambridge University MS.)	87
17. Franklyn, Friar, Knight, Prioress, Squire, Clerk of Oxford. (From the Ellesmere MS.)	87-89
18. Morris Dancers. (From MS. of Chaucer's Time)	92
19. Henry VIII, giving Bibles to Clergy and Laity. (From frontispiece to Coverdale Bible)	101
20. Book Illustration, Early Fifteenth Century. (British Museum)	105
21. Facsimile of Caxton's Advertisement of his Books. (Bodleian Library, Oxford)	106
22. Malory's <i>Morie d'Arthur</i> . (From DeWorde's Edition, 1529)	107
23. Early Title Page of <i>Robin Hood</i> . (Copland Edition, 1550)	110
24. William Tyndale. (From an old print)	113
25. Sir Thomas Wyatt. (After Holbein)	114
26. Facsimile of Queen Elizabeth's Signature	119
27. Sir Philip Sidney. (After the miniature by Isaac Oliver, Windsor Castle)	125
28. Francis Bacon. (From the painting by Van Somer, National Portrait Gallery)	128
29. Title page of <i>Bacon's Essays</i> , 1597	131
30. John Donne. (From the painting by Jansen. South Kensington Museum)	137
31. Edmund Spenser. (From a painting in Duplin Castle)	139
32. Miracle Play at Coventry. (From an old print)	148
33. Hell Mouth in the Old Miracle Play. From a Columbia University Model	149
34. Fool's Head	152
35. Air-Bag Flapper and Lath Dagger	153
36. Fool of the Old Play	154
37. Thomas Sackville	157
38. Theater in Inn Yard. (From Columbia University model)	159
39. Reconstructed Globe Theater, Earl's Court, London, 1912	160
40. The Bankside and its Theaters. (From the Hollar engraving, about 1620)	162
41. Contemporary Drawing of Interior of an Elizabethan Theater	164
42. Marlowe's Memorial Statue at Canterbury	170
43. William Shakespeare. (From the Chandos portrait, National Portrait Gallery)	174
44. Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon	175
45. Classroom in Stratford Grammar School	176
46. Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Shottery	178
47. View of Stratford-on-Avon	182
48. Inscription over Shakespeare's Tomb	183

49. Shakesp ^{are} — The D'Avenant Bust. (Discovered in 1845)	190
50. Henry Irving as Hamlet	191
51. Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth. (From the painting by Sargent)	192
52. Falstaff and his Page. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	193
53. Ben Jonson. (From the portrait by Honthorst, National Portrait Gallery)	199
54. Ben Jonson's Tomb in Westminster Abbey	201
55. Francis Beaumont	206
56. John Fletcher	207
57. Cromwell Dictating Dispatches to Milton. (From the painting by Ford Madox Brown)	222
58. Thomas Fuller	225
59. Izaak Walton	227
60. Jeremy Taylor	227
61. John Bunyan. (From the painting by Sadler, National Portrait Gallery)	228
62. Bedford Bridge, Showing Gates and Jail. (From an old print)	230
63. Bunyan's Dream. (From Fourth Edition <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , 1680)	231
64. Woodcut from the First Edition of Mr. Badman	232
65. Robert Herrick	234
66. John Milton. (After a drawing by W. Faithorne, at Bayfordbury)	238
67. John Milton. <i>Æt.</i> 10	239
68. Milton's Visit to Galileo in 1638. (From the painting by T. Lessi)	240
69. Facsimile of Milton's Signature, 1663	241
70. Title Page to <i>Comus</i> , 1637	242
71. Milton's Motto from <i>Comus</i> , with Autograph, 1639	244
72. Milton Dictating <i>Paradise Lost</i> to his Daughter. (From the painting by Munkacsy)	250
73. Samuel Butler	257
74. John Dryden. (From the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller, National Portrait Gallery)	265
75. Birthplace of Dryden. (From a print)	266
76. Daniel Defoe. (From a print by Vandergucht)	272
77. Jonathan Swift. (From the painting by C. Jervas, National Portrait Gallery)	277
78. Moor Park. (From a drawing)	278
79. Swift and Stella. (From the painting by Dicksee)	279
80. Joseph Addison. (From the painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller, National Portrait Gallery)	285
81. Birthplace of Addison	287
82. Richard Steele	288
83. Sir Roger de Coverley in Church. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	290
84. Alexander Pope. (From the portrait by William Hoare)	293
85. Pope's Villa at Twickenham. (From an old print)	294
86. Rape of the Lock. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	296
87. Alexander Pope. (From a contemporary portrait)	297
88. Horace Walpole	311
89. Thomas Gray	314
90. Stoke Poges Churchyard	315
91. A Blind Beggar Robbed of his Drink. (From a British Museum MS.)	317
92. Samuel Richardson. (From an original drawing)	320
93. Henry Fielding. (From the drawing by Hogarth)	322
94. Laurence Sterne	324
95. Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	324
96. Tobias Smollett	325
97. Edward Gibbon. (From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds)	328
98. Edmund Burke. (From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, National Portrait Gallery)	330
99. Oliver Goldsmith. (From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, National Portrait Gallery)	332
100. Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	333
101. Goldsmith's Lodgings, Canonbury Tower, London	334

	PAGE
102. Dr. Primrose and his Family. (From a drawing by G. Patrick Nelson)	336
103. Samuel Johnson. (From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds)	339
104. Samuel Johnson's Birthplace. (From an old print)	341
105. James Boswell	343
106. Cheshire Cheese Inn To-day	344
107. Robert Southey	358
108. Charles Lamb. (From a drawing by Maclise)	359
109. Bo-Bo and Roast Pig. (From a drawing by B. Westmacott)	360
110. William Cowper. (From the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence)	364
111. Cowper's Cottage at Weston	365
112. John Gilpin's Ride. (From a drawing by R. Caldecott)	365
113. Robert Burns. (From the painting by Nasmyth, National Portrait Gallery)	368
114. Birthplace of Burns	369
115. Burns and Highland Mary. (From the painting by James Archer)	371
116. Sir Walter Scott. (From the painting by William Nicholson)	375
117. Abbotsford, Home of Sir Walter Scott	376
118. Scott's Grave in Dryburgh Abbey	377
119. Loch Katrine and Ellen's Isle	378
120. Walter Scott. (From a life sketch by Maclise)	379
121. Scott's Desk and "Elbow Chair" at Abbotsford	381
122. Jane Austen. (From an original family portrait)	383
123. Jane Austen's Desk	385
124. William Wordsworth. (From the portrait by B. R. Haydon)	387
125. Boy of Winander. (From the painting by H. O. Walker, Congressional Library)	388
126. Wordsworth's Home at Grasmere — Dove Cottage	391
127. Grasmere Lake	393
128. William Wordsworth. (From a life sketch in <i>Fraser's Magazine</i>)	396
129. Rydal Mount near Ambleside	397
130. Samuel Taylor Coleridge. (From a pencil sketch by C. R. Leslie)	399
131. Coleridge's Cottage at Nether-Stowey	401
132. Coleridge as a Young Man. (From a sketch made in Germany)	405
133. Lord Byron. (From a portrait by Kramer)	407
134. Byron at Seventeen. (From a painting)	408
135. Newstead Abbey, Byron's Home	409
136. Castle of Chillon	410
137. Byron's Home at Pisa	414
138. Percy Bysshe Shelley. (From the portrait by Amelia Curran, National Portrait Gallery)	417
139. Shelley's Birthplace, Field Place	418
140. Grave of Shelley, Protestant Cemetery, Rome	420
141. Facsimile of Stanza from <i>To a Skylark</i>	421
142. John Keats. (From the painting by Hilton, National Portrait Gallery)	426
143. Keats's Home, Wentworth Place	428
144. Grave of Keats, Rome	42
145. Facsimile of Original MS. of <i>Endymion</i>	430
146. Endymion. (From the painting by H. O. Walker, Congressional Library)	431
147. Thomas de Quincey. (From the painting by Sir J. W. Gordon, National Portrait Gallery)	436
148. Room in Dove Cottage	437
149. Charles Darwin	452
150. John Tyndall	453
151. Thomas Huxley. (From the painting by John Collier, National Portrait Gallery)	454
152. Dante Gabriel Rossetti. (From the drawing by himself, National Portrait Gallery)	463
153. Thomas Babington Macaulay. (From the painting by Sir F. Grant, National Portrait Gallery)	466
154. Cardinal Newman. (From the painting by Emmeline Deane)	473
155. Thomas Carlyle. (From the painting by James McNeill Whistler)	477
156. Craigenputtock	478

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xi

PAGE

157.	Mrs. Carlyle. (From a miniature portrait)	479
158.	John Ruskin. (From a photograph)	488
159.	Charles Dickens. (From a photograph taken in America, 1868)	496
160.	Dickens's Home, Gads Hill	498
161.	Facsimile of MS. of <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	501
162.	William Makepeace Thackeray. (From the painting by Samuel Laurence, National Portrait Gallery)	504
163.	Caricature of Thackeray by Himself	505
164.	Thackeray's Home where <i>Vanity Fair</i> was Written	506
165.	George Eliot. (From a drawing by Sir F. W. Burton, National Portrait Gallery)	511
166.	George Eliot's Birthplace	512
167.	Robert Louis Stevenson. (From a photograph)	517
168.	Stevenson as a Boy	518
169.	Edinburgh Memorial of Robert Louis Stevenson. (By St. Gaudens)	522
170.	George Meredith. (From the painting by G. F. Watts, National Portrait Gallery)	524
171.	Thomas Hardy. (From the painting by Winifred Thompson)	530
172.	Max Gate. (The Home of Hardy)	532
173.	Matthew Arnold. (From the painting by G. F. Watts, National Portrait Gallery)	534
174.	Robert Browning. (From the painting by G. F. Watts, National Portrait Gallery)	541
175.	Elizabeth Barrett Browning. (From the painting by Field Talfourd, National Portrait Gallery)	542
176.	Facsimile of MS. from <i>Pippa Passes</i>	550
177.	Alfred Tennyson. (From a photograph by Mayall)	554
178.	Farringford	555
179.	Facsimile of MS. of <i>Crossing the Bar</i>	561
180.	Algernon Charles Swinburne. (From the painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti)	564
181.	Rudyard Kipling. (From the painting by John Collier)	569
182.	Mowgli and his Brothers. (From <i>The Jungle Book</i>)	572
183.	The Cat That Walked. (From Kipling's drawing for <i>Just-So Stories</i>)	573
184.	Joseph Conrad	589
185.	Arnold Bennett	590
186.	John Galsworthy	592
187.	Herbert George Wells	593
188.	William Butler Yeats	598
189.	John Masefield	601
190.	Alfred Noyes	604
191.	Henry Arthur Jones	607
192.	Arthur Wing Pinero	607
193.	George Bernard Shaw. (From the bust by Rodin)	609
194.	James Matthew Barrie	610
195.	Stephen Phillips	612
196.	Lady Gregory	615
197.	John Synge	618

NEW ENGLISH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

LITERARY ENGLAND

Some knowledge of the homes and haunts of English authors is necessary for an understanding of their work. We feel in much closer touch with Shakespeare after merely reading about Stratford-on-Avon; but we seem to share his experiences when we actually walk from Stratford-on-Avon to Shottery and Warwick. The scenery and life of the Lake Country are reflected in Wordsworth's poetry. Ayr and the surrounding country throw a flood of light on the work of Burns. The streets of London are a commentary on the novels of Dickens. A journey to Canterbury aids us in recreating the life of Chaucer's Pilgrims.

Much may be learned from a study of literary England. Whether one does or does not travel, such study is necessary. Those who hope at some time to visit England should acquire in advance as much knowledge as possible about the literary associations of the places to be visited; for when the opportunity for the trip finally comes, there is usually insufficient time for such preparation as will enable the traveler to derive the greatest enjoyment from a visit to the literary centers in which Great Britain abounds.

Whenever an author is studied, his birthplace should be located on the literary map, page xii. Baedeker's *Great Britain* will be indispensable in making an itinerary. The *Reference List for Literary England* (p. 4) is sufficiently comprehensive to enable any one to plan an enjoyable literary pilgrimage through Great Britain and to learn the most important facts about the places connected with English authors.

The following suggestions from the author's experience are intended to serve merely as an illustration of how to begin an itinerary. The majority of east-bound steamships call at Plymouth, a good place to disembark for a literary trip. From Plymouth, the traveler may go to Exeter (a quaint old town with a fine cathedral, the home of *Exeter Book*, p. 19), thence by rail to Camelford in Cornwall and by coach four miles to the fascinating Tintagel (King Arthur), where, as Tennyson says in his *Idylls of the King*:—

“All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur.”

Next, the traveler may go by coach to Bude (of which Tennyson remarked, “I hear that there are larger waves at Bude than at any other place. I must go thither and be alone with God”) and to unique Clovelly and Bidford (Kingsley), by rail to Ilfracombe, by coach to Lynton (Lorna Doone), and the adjacent Lynmouth (where Shelley passed some of his happiest days and alarmed the authorities by setting afloat bottles containing his *Declaration of Rights*), by coach to Minehead, by rail to Watchet, driving past Alfoxden (Wordsworth) to Nether-Stowey (Coleridge)

and the Quantock Hills (p. 401), by motor and rail to Glastonbury (Isle of Avalon, burial place of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere), by rail to Wells (cathedral), to Bath (many literary associations), to Bristol (Chatterton Southey), to Gloucester (fine cathedral, tomb of Edward II), and to Ross, the starting point for a remarkable all day's row down the river Wye to Tintern Abbey (Wordsworth), stopping for dinner at Monmouth (Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 66).

After a start similar to the foregoing, the traveler should begin to make an itinerary of his own. He will enjoy a trip more if he has a share in planning it. From Tintern Abbey he might proceed, for instance, to Stratford-on-Avon (Shakespeare); then to Warwick, Kenilworth, and the George Eliot Country in North Warwickshire and Staffordshire.

For natural beauty, there is nothing in England that is more delightful than a coaching trip through Wordsworth's Lake Country (Cumberland and Westmoreland). From there it is not far to the Carlyle Country (Ecclefechan, Craigenputtock), to the Burns Country (Dumfries, Ayr), and to the Scott Country (Loch Katrine, The Trossachs, Edinburgh, and Abbotsford). In Edinburgh, William Sharp's statement about Stevenson should be remembered, "One can, in a word, outline Stevenson's own country as all the region that on a clear day one may in the heart of Edinburgh descry from the Castle walls."

If the traveler lands at Southampton, he is on the eastern edge of Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Dorchester in Dorsetshire being the center. The Jane Austen Country (Steventon, Chawton) is in Hampshire. To the east, in Surrey, is Burford Bridge near Dorking, where Keats wrote part of his *Endymion*, where George Meredith had his summer home, and where "the country of his poetry" is located.

In London, it is a pleasure to trace some of the greatest literary associations in the world. We may stand at the corner of Monkwell and Silver streets, on the site of a building in which Shakespeare wrote some of his greatest plays. Milton lived in the vicinity and is buried not far distant in St. Giles Church. In Westminster Abbey we find the graves of many of the greatest authors, from Chaucer to Tennyson. London is not only Dickens Land and Thackeray Land, but also the "Land" of many other writers. We may still eat in the Old Cheshire Cheese (p. 344), where Johnson and Goldsmith dined.

Those interested in literary England ought to include the cathedral towns in their itinerary, so that they may visit the wonderful "poems in stone," some of which, *e.g.*, Canterbury (Chaucer), Winchester (Izaak Walton, Jane Austen), Lichfield (Johnson), have literary associations. For this reason, all of the cathedral towns in England have been included in the literary map.

REFERENCE LIST FOR LITERARY ENGLAND

- Baedeker's *Great Britain* (includes England and Scotland).
 Baedeker's *London and its Environs*.
 Adcock's *Famous Houses and Literary Shrines of London*.
 Lang's *Literary London*.
 Hutton's *Literary Landmarks in London*.
 Lucas's *A Wanderer in London*.
 Shelley's *Literary By-Paths in Old England*.
 Baildon's *Homes and Haunts of Famous Authors*.
 Bates's *From Gretna Green to Land's End*.
 Masson's *In the Footsteps of the Poets*.
 Wolfe's *A Literary Pilgrimage among the Haunts of Famous British Authors*.
 Salmon's *Literary Rambles in the West of England*.
 Hutton's *A Book of the Wye*.
 Headlam's *Oxford (Medieval Towns Series)*.
 Winter's *Shakespeare's England*.

Murray's *Handbook of Warwickshire*.

Lee's *Stratford-on-Avon, from the Earliest Times to the Death of Shakespeare*.

Tompkins's *Stratford-on-Avon* (Dent's *Temple Topographies*).

Brassington's *Shakespeare's Homeland*.

Winter's *Grey Days and Gold* (Shakespeare).

Collingwood's *The Lake Counties* (Dent's County Guides).

Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (Books I.-V.).

Rawnsley's *Literary Associations of the English Lakes*.

Knight's *Through the Wordsworth Country*.

Bradley's *Highways and Byways in the English Lakes*.

Jerrold's *Surrey* (Dent's County Guides).

Dewar's *Hampshire with Isle of Wight* (Dent's County Guides).

Ward's *The Canterbury Pilgrimage*.

Harper's *The Hardy Country*.

Snell's *The Blackmore Country*.

Melville's *The Thackeray Country*.

Kitton's *The Dickens Country*.

Sloan's *The Carlyle Country*.

Dougall's *The Burns Country*.

Crockett's *The Scott Country*.

Hill's *Jane Austen: Her Homes and Her Friends*.

Cook's *Homes and Haunts of John Ruskin*.

William Sharp's *Literary Geography and Travel Sketches* (Vol. IV. of *Works*) contains chapters on *The Country of Stevenson*, *The Country of George Meredith*, *The Country of Carlyle*, *The Country of George Eliot*, *The Brontë Country*, *Thackeray Land*, *The Thames from Oxford to the Nore*.

Hutton's *Literary Landmarks of Edinburgh*.

Stevenson's *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*.

Loftie's *Brief Account of Westminster Abbey*.

Parker's *Introduction to the Study of Gothic Architecture*.

Stanley's *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*.

Kimball's *An English Cathedral Journey*.

Singleton's *How to Visit the English Cathedrals*.

Bond's *The English Cathedrals* (200 illustrations).

Cram's *The Ruined Abbeys of Great Britain* (65 illustrations).

Home's *What to See in England*.

Boynton's *London in English Literature*.

GENERAL REFERENCE LIST FOR THE STUDY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE¹

Cambridge History of English Literature, 14 vols.

Garnett and Gosse's *English Literature*, 4 vols.

Morley's *English Writers*, 11 vols.

Jusserand's *Literary History of the English People*.

Taine's *English Literature*.

Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, 6 vols.

Stephens and Lee's *Dictionary of National Biography* (dead authors).

New International Cyclopaedia (living and dead authors).

English Men of Letters Series (abbreviated reference, E. M. L.)

Great Writers' Series (abbreviated reference, G. W.).

Poole's *Index* (and continuation volumes for reference to critical articles in periodicals).

The United States Catalogue and Cumulative Book Index.

SELECTIONS FROM ENGLISH LITERATURE²

* Pancoast and Spaeth's *Early English Poems*. (P. & S.)³

* Warren's *Treasury of English Literature, Part I*. (Origins to Eleventh Century: London, One Shilling.) (Warren.)

* Ward's *English Poets*, 4 vols. (Ward.)

* Bronson's *English Poems*, 4 vols. (Bronson.)

Oxford Treasury of English Literature, Vol. I., *Beowulf to Jacobean*;

* Vol. II., *Growth of the Drama*; Vol. III., *Jacobean to Victorian*. (*Oxford Treasury*.)

* *Oxford Book of English Verse*. (Oxford.)

* Craik's *English Prose*, 5 vols. (Craik.)

* Page's *British Poets of the Nineteenth Century*. (Page.)

Chambers's *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*. (Chambers.)

Manly's *English Poetry* (from 1170). (Manly I.)

Manly's *English Prose* (from 1137). (Manly II.)

Century Readings for a Course in English Literature. (Century.)

¹ For special references to authors, movements, and the history of the period, see the lists under the heading, *Suggestions for Further Study*, at the end of each chapter.

² School libraries should own books marked *.

³ The abbreviation in parentheses after titles will be used in the *Suggested Readings* in place of the full title.

CHAPTER I

FROM 449 A.D. TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST, 1066

Subject Matter and Aim. — The history of English literature traces the development of the best poetry and prose written in English by the inhabitants of the British Isles. For more than twelve hundred years the Anglo-Saxon race has been producing this great literature, which includes among its achievements the incomparable work of Shakespeare.

This literature is so great in amount that the student who approaches the study without a guide is usually bewildered. He needs a history of English literature for the same reason that a traveler in England requires a guidebook. Such a history should do more than indicate where the choicest treasures of literature may be found; it should also show the interesting stages of development; it should emphasize some of the ideals that have made the Anglo-Saxons one of the most famous races in the world; and it should inspire a love for the reading of good literature.

No satisfactory definition of "literature" has ever been framed. Milton's conception of it was "something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die." Shakespeare's working definition of literature was something addressed not to after times but to an eternal present, and invested with such a touch of nature as to make the whole world kin. When he says of Duncan:—

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well,"

he touches the feelings of mortals of all times and opens the door for imaginative activity, causing us to wonder why life should be a fitful fever, followed by an incommunicable sleep. Much of what we call literature would not survive the test of Shakespeare's definition; but true literature must appeal to imagination and feeling as well as to intellect. No mere definition can take the place of what may be called a feeling for literature. Such a feeling will develop as the best English poetry and prose are sympathetically read. Wordsworth had this feeling when he defined the poets as those:—

“Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares.”

The Mission of English Literature.—It is a pertinent question to ask, What has English literature to offer?

In the first place, to quote Ben Jonson:—

“The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine.”

English literature is of preëminent worth in helping to supply that thirst. It brings us face to face with great ideals, which increase our sense of responsibility for the stewardship of life and tend to raise the level of our individual achievement. We have a heightened sense of the demands which life makes and a better comprehension of the “far-off divine event” toward which we move, after we have heard Swinburne's ringing call:—

“ . . . this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength
of thy spirit, and live out thy life
as the light.”

We feel prompted to act on the suggestion of —

“ . . . him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.”¹

In the second place, the various spiritual activities demanded for the interpretation of the best things in literature add to enjoyment. This pleasure, unlike that which arises from physical gratification, increases with age, and often becomes the principal source of entertainment as life advances. Shakespeare has Prospero say : —

“ . . . my library
Was dukedom large enough.”

The suggestions from great minds disclose vistas that we might never otherwise see. Browning truly says : —

“ . . . we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.”

Sometimes it is only after reading Shakespeare that we can see —

“ . . . winking Mary buds begin
To ope their golden eyes,
With everything that pretty is,”

and only after spending some time in Wordsworth's company that the common objects of our daily life become invested with —

“The glory and the freshness of a dream.”

In the third place, we should emphasize the fact that one great function of English literature is to bring deliverance to souls weary with routine, despondent, or suffering

¹ Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.