

THE VIGOR AND EXPRESSIVENESS
OF
OLDER ENGLISH.

A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON,

DECEMBER 17, 1890.

BY

ROBERT FLETCHER, M. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

WASHINGTON,
JUDD & DETWEILER, PRINTERS.

1890.

[FROM THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST FOR JANUARY, 1891.]

**THE VIGOR AND EXPRESSIVENESS OF OLDER
ENGLISH.***

BY ROBERT FLETCHER, M. D.

A new observance has, to a limited extent, obtained a foot-hold in our society, the delivery, namely, of an address at the meeting nearest to the Christmas holidays, which shall not necessarily relate to anthropology, except in its broadest sense, but belong rather to the domain of art or letters, and be, it is hoped, of interest to invited guests as well as to members at this hospitable season. We can for one evening leave our Indian brother at peace—would that he may continue so! with his games and his folk-lore—and attempt an adventure into the regions of poetry or romance. From one point of view this partial apology for the subject of the evening's address is perhaps superfluous, inasmuch as all that relates to the evolution of our noble English language is a legitimate branch of philology, even though the method of treating it may be more literary than technical.

It is probable that most of us in the course of our reading have been led to enquire why it is that modern English, modern good English, is generally more diffuse, less terse, less able to clothe a thought in a few striking words, than its vigorous progenitor, the English of early writers. The subject is a copious one, indeed almost boundless in its capacity for comparison, and cannot admit of more than a sparing consideration within the limits of this evening's address; but it is also one of general interest, and in the discussion which

* Read before the Anthropological Society of Washington, December 16, 1890.

may follow, illustrations may be contributed either for or against the views suggested.

You will observe that the phrase employed is "older English," not "old English." It does not refer to the time of Chaucer or of his immediate successors, but, to be precise, my illustrations will be selected from the writers of the Elizabethan age and their followers for the next half century. It must not be supposed that archaic English does not possess the characters of terseness and vigor to a high degree, but the ruggedness of early composition, and, in poetry, the requirements of the rhythm, obliging accentuation of syllables no longer so treated, would make the comparison with modern writings inconvenient and perhaps unconvincing.

Writers are apt to speak of the glories of the Elizabethan period in its wonderful outburst of poetry as if it were peculiarly an English phenomenon. It is to be remembered that this was the era of the revival of letters and the sister arts of sculpture and painting throughout Europe. It was the most splendid period of the *Renaissance*, and Italy above all countries was the seat of the most munificent and successful pursuit of all branches of knowledge. The influence of Italian literature is strikingly evident in the works of the great English writers of the time in question.

The marvelous suddenness and extent of the change which took place in English poetry, and especially in dramatic writing, is a subject of constant interest to the student. The harsh crabbed lines of the Miracle plays, and the Moralities, were followed by attempts at something like dramatic construction, which attained its culminating point in the works of Sackville, Gascoigne, Peele, Lilly, and Nash. Suddenly, like a burst of sunshine, broke forth "Marlowe's mighty line," to be followed in wonderful rapidity by the plays of the masters of the romantic drama—Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Heywood, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Ford, Massinger, Middleton, and other and less distinguished writers. During fifty years and more, from the appearance of Marlowe's *Tamburlane*, in 1588, which may be regarded as the starting point of the romantic drama, a mass of plays was produced which for brilliancy, pathos, humor, exquisite poetry, and fertility of invention, is unequalled by the literature of any period or of any nation. It was the spring-time of the world of English letters, and the reason for its luxuriance is not difficult to discover. The renaissance and the reformation were contemporary phenomena. The former had its origin in Italy

and the latter in Germany. The Italian cared little, comparatively speaking, for the restoration of religious purity, but he fairly revelled in the revival of forgotten arts and learning. England at the period in question shared the benefits of both those great upheavals. Henry the Eighth had introduced the Reformation, and under the milder reign of his great daughter, Englishmen, rejoicing in their new-born freedom of thought and inspired by the masterpieces of classical literature which, in original and translation, came in profusion from Italy, wrote as men never wrote before or since, and filled—

“The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.”

The great characteristic of the Elizabethan drama was its absolute freedom and spontaneity. No censor of the press existed to prune the too glowing expressions, or to expunge passages too daring in their reflections upon great persons. It is not surprising, then, that under conditions such as those which have been hastily sketched, the language should have had the vigor and expressiveness which belonged to its period of youth.

It is a difficult thing to show by quotations, necessarily short, the wonderful change which has been described as taking place in so brief a period in the character of English poetry, but I will attempt it by first reading two or three stanzas from Sackville's *Mirror for Magistrates*, perhaps altogether the finest poem of immediately pre-Elizabethan times.

The poet, like Dante's hero, is led by a superhuman personage, in this case a goddess, to the infernal regions. This is his personification of Death and War:

“And by and by a dumb, dead corpse we saw,
Heavy and cold, the shape of Death aright,
That daunts all earthly creatures to his law;
Against whose force in vain it is to fight,
No peers, no princes, nor no mortal wight,
No towns, no realms, cities, nor strongest tower,
But all perforce must yield unto his power.

His dart anon out of the corpse he took,
And in his hand (a dreadful sight to see)
With great triumph eftsoons the same he shook,
That most of all my fears effrayed me;
His body dight with nought but bones, perdye,
The naked shape of man there saw I plain,
All save the flesh, the sinew, and the vein.

Lastly stood War, in glittering arms yclad,
 With visage grim, stern looks, and blackly hued ;
 In his right hand a naked sword he had,
 That to the hilt was all with blood imbrued ;
 And in his left (that kings and kingdoms rued),
 Famine and fire he held, and therewithal
 He razed towns, and threw down towers and all.

Cities he sacked, and realms that whilom flowed
 In honor, glory, and rule above the best,
 He overwhelmed, and all their fame devoured,
 Consumed, destroyed, wasted, and never ceased
 'Till he their wealth, their name, and all oppressed,
 His face forehewed with wounds, and by his side,
 There hung his targe with gashes deep and wide."

Strongly imaginative this, and full of the love for personifying which, a few years later, Spenser, in his noble poem, carried to perfection. But it is the style, the expression, which is our subject. Only twenty-five years later Marlowe wrote thus :

" It lies not in our power to love or hate,
 For will in us is overruled by fate,
 When two are stripped, long e'er the course begin,
 We wish that one should lose, the other win ;
 And one especially do we affect
 Of two gold ingots, like in each respect ;
 The reason no man knows, let it suffice,
 What we behold is censured by our eyes.
 Where both deliberate, the love is slight ;
 Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ? "

You remember how Shakespeare, half tenderly, refers to this passage, where Rosalind says :

" Dead shepherd, now I find thy sawe of might ;
 ' Who ever loved that loved not at first sight ? "

It is, perhaps, hardly just to select this exquisite rhymed passage, full of sweetness, for the comparison. Let us take the blank verse where Tamburlane asks himself, " What is beauty ? "

" If all the pens that ever poets held
 Had fed the feeling of their master's thoughts,
 And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
 Their minds, and muses, on admired themes ;
 If all the heavenly quintessence they 'stil

CORRECTION.

In last line of page 5 and 5th line of page 6, for "mountain's height," read "mountain's top."

From their immortal flowers of poesy,
 Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
 The highest reaches of a human wit ;
 If these had made one poem's period,
 And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
 Yet should there hover in their restless heads
 One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
 Which into words no virtue can digest."

That charming writer, Adelaide Procter, has in our own day expressed a similar thought :

No great Thinker ever lived and taught you
 All the wonder that his soul received ;
 No true Painter ever set on canvas
 All the glorious vision he conceived.

Sackville is a fair example of the poets of his day ; his style is not more harsh or obscure than that of Surrey, Wyatt, and others of his contemporaries. Marlowe is not the best, although the earliest, of the dramatists of the succeeding period ; but what a change in twenty-five years !

In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* there is a passage which shows a grander conception of hell than is to be found in either Milton or Dante. The place of torment pictured by those two great poets was purely material. When Mephistophilis tells Faustus that he was one of the fallen angels cast down into the nether region, the latter says : "How comes it then that thou art out of hell?" Mephistophilis replies :

"Why this is Hell, nor am I out of it ;
 Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God
 And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,
 Am not tormented with ten thousand Hells
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss?"

Apart from the bold originality of thought which marked this period, what subtle causes can be detected to account for this expressiveness of words and style? It is a trite dictum that it is to the Anglo-Saxon that our language owes its beauty and strength. Its strength? yes; but not its tenderness or beauty. It is to the Latin generally that we must look for these qualities. Take an example from Shakespeare ; that beautiful description of morning :

"Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
 Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain's height."

In this perfect picture there are many Saxon words; but who does not see that the one master epithet which gives the feeling to it is the now almost obsolete Latin word *jocund*? The *jocund* day, the joyous, laughing day, which in its eagerness to brighten the world "stands tiptoe on the misty mountain's height."

The joyousness of morning is well brought in by Chaucer in these lines, slightly modernized to avoid the antique rhythm:

"The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright
That all the orient laugheth of the sight."

Observe the force of the preposition "of"—"that all the orient laugheth *of* the sight"—partakes and shares in its joyousness.

Compare with this a well-known description of morning by a modern poet:

"Morn on the mountain, like a summer bird
Lifts up her purple wing, and in the vales
The gentle wind, a sweet and passionate wooer,
Kisses the blushing leaf, and stirs up life
Within the solemn woods of ash deep-crimsoned,
And silver beech, and maple yellow-leaved."

A pretty picture, but diffusely elegant.

It is a lover who sees the approach of the "*jocund* day," but the philosophic Horatio sees the dawning of the morn after his encounter with the elder Hamlet's ghost with more sober feelings:

"But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill,"

I do not propose to make comparison between the poetry of the Elizabethan days and modern poetry for the sake of disparaging the latter. The debt we all owe to the poets of our own and closely preceding times is measureless in extent, and to be acknowledged gratefully and with tenderness. But in the older English there is an almost epigrammatic terseness, a bold use of epithets, a liberal coinage of new combinations of parts of speech, a daring use of metaphor, which gradually gave place to tamer though perhaps more mellifluous composition.

Here is another instance where one word, and that a Latin one, gives expression to the line, but the whole passage is so remarkably fine that it must be quoted entire. It is from "*Christ's Victorie*," by Giles Fletcher, 1610, and consists of a personification of Justice.

Mercy has been pleading eloquently for Man before the Eternal Father, when Justice stands forth :

“ She was a virgin of austere regard ;
 Not as the world esteems her, deaf and blind ;
 But as the eagle, that hath oft compared
 Her eye with Heaven's ; so, and more brightly shined
 Her lamping sight ; for she the same could wind
 Into the solid heart, and with her ears
 The silence of the thought loud speaking hears,
 And in one hand a pair of even scales she wears.”

The effect of her eloquence is grandly told :

“ She ended, and the heavenly hierarchies
 Burning in zeal thickly imbranded were ;
 Like to an army that alarum cries,
 And every one shapes his ydreaded spear,
 And the Almighty's self, as he would tear
 The earth and her firm basis quite asunder,
 Flamed all in just revenge and mighty thunder.
 Heaven stole itself from earth by clouds that moistened under.”

In the first line you will agree with me that the Latin word *austere* is the key-note of expression :

“ She was a virgin of austere regard.”

The word “ lamping ”

“ So, and more brightly shined
 Her lamping sight,”

is almost entirely obsolete. Spenser uses it, and the verb *to lamp*—that is, to shine, to glitter—may be found in archaic dictionaries.

The only modern instance of its use which I have met with is in “ Unimore,” a poem by Professor Wilson, the “ Christopher North ” of the palmy days of Blackwood's Magazine. He describes the chief as :

Moody and wild, and with large restless eyes
 Coal-black and *lamping*.

There is also in the second stanza a good example of the art with which words were compounded or intensified in the epithet “ imbranded.” It brings vividly before the imagination the serried ranks of angelic warriors, “ hierarchies,” as the poet terms them, with brands or flaming swords in their hands, pressing eagerly forward :

“ Burning with zeal, thickly imbranded were.”

I do not know of another instance of the use of this striking word. It is not to be found in Milton, who borrowed much imagery from this powerful but little-read poem.

The final triumph of Mercy over Justice is finely conceived :

“ With that, the mighty thunder dropt away
From God's unwarie arme, now milder growne,
And melted into tears ; as if to pray
For pardon, and for pittie, it had knowne,
That should have been for sacred vengeance throwne ;
 Thereto the armies angelic devow'd
 Their former rage, and all to Mercie bow'd ;
Their broken weapons at her feet they gladly strow'd.”

I cannot refrain from giving you one more quotation from this poem, the less so because a very able critic has declared it to be “the peerless stanza of English sacred poetry.” It is from the close of the poem, in which is portrayed the final triumph of the redeemed multitude. You will observe the forcible compounds which prevail :

“ No sorrow nowe hangs clowding on their browe,
No bloodless maladie empales their face,
No age drops on their hayrs his silver snowe,
No nakedness their bodies doth embase,
No povertie themselves and theirs disgrace,
 No fear of death the joy of life devours,
 No unchast sleep their precious time deflowers,
No losse, no grief, no change, wait on their winged hours.”

I have spoken of the bold use of new combinations of parts of speech. You will have noticed one of them in the preceding quotation :

“ Thereto the armies angelic devowed
 Their former rage.”

In that very touching play, “A woman killed by kindness,” the author of which was Thomas Heywood, a contemporary of Shakespeare, Frankford, who has just discovered the unfaithfulness of his wife, exclaims :

“ O God ! O God ! that it were possible
To undo things done ; to call back yesterday !
That Time could turn up his swift sandy glass,
To untell the days, and to redeem the hours !”

The expression “to tell the hours or days” is common enough, but I do not know of any other instance of the use of the word “to

untell," and it adds great force to this outcry of a broken heart. In Shakespeare's *Richard II*, that luckless king when parting from Queen Isabella, who is about to leave her fallen husband, says :

"Let me unkiss the oath 'twixt thee and me."

One more example of this coinage of verbs must suffice. You doubtless remember that exquisite lyric by Robert Herrick, in which the Robin Redbreast finds Amaryllis sleeping by a fountain, and, believing her to be dead, after his charitable wont, "brought leaves and moss to cover her." She opens her eyes :

"At which poor Robin flew away,
And seeing her not dead, but all *disleaved*,
He chirpt for joy to see himself deceived."

Epithets form a cognate part of this division of striking phrases. It would seem impossible to refer to Diogenes and his tub by any more condensed expression. There is an epigram, the author of which I do not know, but it is in a collection printed in 1640, which, while it has no great merit, is curious in this particular :

UPON DIOGENES AND CRÆSUS.

When the tubb'd cynic went to hell, and there
Found the pale ghost of golden Cræsus bare,
He stops, and jeering 'till he shrugs again,
Says, "O, thou richest king of kings, what gain
Have all thy large heaps brought thee, since I spy
Thee here alone, and poorer now than I?
For all I had I with me bring, but thou
Of all thy wealth hast not one farthing now."

Note the compactness of expression of the last line of another epigram from the same collection :

ON A PROUD MAID.

She that will eat her breakfast in her bed,
And spend the morn in dressing of her head,
And sit at dinner like a maiden-bride,
And talk of nothing all day but of pride,
God in his mercy may do much to save her,
But what a case is he in that must have her !

I think another source of vigor was the boldness with which unusual inflections were made ; nouns, for example, being converted into verbs, as in this extract from a sermon by Hugh Latimer, where

prelate and *lord* are so treated. It is from his "Sermon on the ploughers," delivered in 1549. He sternly rebukes the prelates and nobles for "neglecting the plough," or, metaphorically, for not performing their duties.

"Amend, therefore, and ye that be prelates look well to your office, for right prelating is busy laboring, and not lording. Therefore, preach and teach, and let your ploughs be doing."

Further on he breaks forth in this wise :

"And now I would ask a strange question. Who is the most diligent bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know him, who it is. I know him well. But now I think I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him. There is one that passeth all the other, and is the most diligent prelate and preacher in all England. And will ye know who it is? I will tell you. It is the Devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his cure; ye shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; he keepeth residence at all times; ye shall never find him out of the way; call for him when you will, he is ever at home—the diligentest preacher in all the realm; he is ever at his plough; no lording nor loitering can hinder him."

The impressiveness was often attained by the judicious use of antithesis. There is a fine example of this in the Revenger's Tragedy. Vindici, seeing the King's favorite mistress pass by in state, bursts forth :

"To have her train borne up, and her soul trail i' the dirt!"

Here, too, is a charming little narrative from Fuller, in which antithesis is delicately employed :

"It happened in the reign of this King (Henry II) there was a fierce battle fought in Flintshire, at Coleshall, between the English and Welch, wherein this Henry de Essex, betwixt traitor and coward, cast away both his courage and banner together, occasioning a great overthrow of the English. But he that had the baseness to do had the boldness to deny the doing of so foul a fact until he was challenged in combat by Robert de Momford, a knight, eye-witness thereof, and by him overcome in a duel. Whereupon his large inheritance was confiscated to the King, and he himself partly thrust, partly going, into a convent, hid his head in a cowl, under which, betwixt shame and sanctity, he blushed out the remainder of his life."

There is, perhaps, no passage in the whole range of tragedy in which horrors are so accumulated as in the scene in Webster's play of the Duchess of Malfi, where the Duchess is strangled by order of her brothers in revenge for her having married her steward. Wax figures are shown to her, which she is made to believe are the dead bodies of her husband and children ; a masque of madmen is brought in to affright her ; the tombman comes to her to prepare her grave, and the bellman who is to toll her knell, and the tragic scene closes with this dirge, with its strong antitheses :

“ Hark, now everything is still,
 The screech owl and the whistler shrill
 Call upon our dame aloud,
 And bid her quickly don her shroud !
 Much you had of land and rent ;
 Your length in clay 's now competent ;
 A long war disturbed your mind ;
 Here your perfect peace is signed.
 Of what is 't fools make such vain keeping ?
 Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
 Their life a general mist of error,
 Their death a hideous storm of terror.
 Strew your hair with powders sweet,
 Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
 And (the foul fiend more to check)
 A crucifix let bless your neck.
 'Tis now full tide 'tween night and day :
 End your groan, and come away.”

Sometimes the vigorous expression is attained by a daring use of the impossible, as in the stirring address of a Roman general to his soldiers, in a play of Beaumont and Fletcher :

“ The Gods of Rome fight for ye ; loud Fame calls ye,
 Pitched on the topless Appenine.”

Or as in this reference to the nightingale with her breast pressed against a thorn, as myths describe her :

“ Nor ever lets sweet rest invade her eyes,
 But leaning on a thorn her dainty chest,
 For fear soft sleep should steal into her breast,
 Expresses in her song grief not to be expressed.”

Fletcher, Christ's Victorie.

In the Revenger's Tragedy, Vindici, in place of the court beauty expected by his master the Duke, brings in the skull of his dead mistress, and moralizes over it with gravest irony :

" Here's an eye
 Able to tempt a great man to serve God ;
 A pretty hanging lip that has forgot to dissemble ;
 Methinks this mouth should make a swearer tremble ;
 A drunkard clasp his teeth and not undo 'em
 To suffer wet damnation to run through 'em.
 Here's a cheek keeps her color, let the wind go whistle ;
 Spout, rain, we fear thee not ; be hot or cold,
 All's one with us."

Note, too, from the same writer the strong imagery in this masterly, if somewhat fantastic, description of the casting-up by the " full-stomached sea " of the body of a shipwrecked knight :

" He lay in his armour as if that had been
 His coffin ; and the weeping sea, like one
 Whose milder temper doth lament the death
 Of him whom in his rage he slew, runs up
 The shore, embraces him, kisses his cheek,
 Goes back again, and forces up the sand
 To bury him, and every time it parts
 Sheds tears upon him, till at last (as if
 It could no longer endure to see the man
 Whom it had slain, yet loth to leave him) with
 A kind of unresolved unwilling pace,
 Winding her waves one in another, like
 A man that folds his arms or wrings his hands
 For grief, ebb'd from the body, and descends
 As if it would sink down into the earth,
 And hide itself for shame of such a deed."

Sometimes the expressiveness depends upon the curtness due to elision of the auxiliary verb or of intensives, as in this passage from an old translation of St. Chrysostom :

" Where is he that was clad in raiment of gold ? He that rode in the chariot ? He that had armies ; that had the girdle ; that had the heralds ? He that was slaying these, and casting those into prison ? He that put to death whom he would, and let free whom he was minded ? I see nothing but bones, and a worm, and a spider's web ; all these things are earth, all these a fable, all a dream, and a shadow, and a bare relation, and a picture, or rather, not so much

as a picture. For the picture we see, at least, is a likeness, but here not so much as a likeness."

There is a vein of thought resembling a part of this passage in a speech of Coriolanus. Cominius addressing him, says :

" Flower of warriors,
How is 't with Titus Lartius?"

The other replies :

" As with a man busied about decrees ;
Condemning some to death, and some to exile ;
Ransoming him, or pitying, threatening the other."

Occasionally an opportunity is offered for comparison of expressiveness where an old and a more recent author have treated the same subject.

Take, for example, the first verse of Addison's hymn, beginning with :

" The spacious firmament on high."

The first epithet is faulty ; we speak of a spacious house or of spacious streets, but the word applied to the vastness of the heavens seems paltry and unfit. But it is the store of pleonasms in this famous verse which makes it a positive curiosity. " The firmament " is a comprehensive expression ; it means the entire celestial sphere ; but, not content with this sufficient phrase, see what weak repetitions the poet brings in :

" The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim."

There are here four descriptive epithets which are mere pleonasms, namely, the spacious firmament, the blue ethereal sky, the spangled heavens, and lastly, the feeble expression, " a shining frame." The last line contains the objectionable word " original," used in the sense of creator.

It would be unfair to compare Addison with the master poets ; but there is a poem upon the same subject as this hymn, written by William Habington, like himself, one of the minor English poets, and published in 1635, which, while not especially strong, exhibits the terseness and clearness in which the other is deficient.

It has no title except a quotation from the psalter: "Nox nocti indicat scientiam:" Night unto night showeth knowledge.

"When I survey the bright
 Celestial sphere,
 So rich with jewels hung, that night
 Doth like an Æthiop bride appear ;

 My soul her wings doth spread
 And heavenward flies,
 Th' Almighty's mysteries to read
 In the large volume of the skies.

 For the bright firmament
 Shoots forth no flame
 So silent, but is eloquent
 In speaking the Creator's name."

There are other verses, but these suffice for the comparison.

In a poem of Sir John Davies, *The Orchestra* (1596), there is a passage which contains a wonderful personification of the sea in its tidal relation to the moon :

"Soe the sea that fleets about the land,
 And like a girdle clips her solid waist,
 Musicke and measure both doth understand ;
 For his great chrystall eye is always cast
 Up to the moone, and on her fixed fast ;
 And as she daunceth in her pallid sphere,
 So daunceth he about her center here."

Coleridge has made use of this fine figure in his *Ancient Mariner* :

"Still as a slave before his lord,
 The ocean has no blast ;
 His great bright eye most silently
 Up to the moon is cast—
 If he may know which way to go ;
 For she guides him smooth or grim.
 See, brother, see ! how graciously
 She looketh down on him."

There is no diffuseness or weakness in this fine passage from the modern poet ; but, apart from the curious coincidence, I think the figure is more forcibly expressed by the older writer.

From classic days to our own the leveling power of death has been a favorite subject for poetic illustration. The exuberant fancy

of the older writers found expression in the production of image after image, repeated like strokes on an anvil.

In 1598 the plague was so widespread and fatal in London that the courts of law were removed to St. Albans. In a play of that date, by Thomas Nash, there is a lugubrious song, or rather a *Kyrie eleeson*, a verse or two of which will illustrate this apothegmatic style :

“ Rich men, trust not in wealth ;
 Gold cannot buy you health ;
 Physic himself must fade ;
 All things to end are made ;
 The plague full swift goes by ;
 I am sick, I must die.
 Lord have mercy on us !

Beauty is but a flower,
 Which wrinkles will devour ;
 Brightness falls from the air ;
 Queens have died young and fair ;
 Dust hath closed Helen's eye ;
 I am sick, I must die.
 Lord have mercy on us !

Strength stoops unto the grave ;
 Worms feed on Hector brave ;
 Swords may not fight with fate ;
 Earth still holds ope her gate.
 Come, come, the hells do cry ;
 I am sick, I must die.
 Lord have mercy on us ! ”

A more poetical treatment of the subject, but with the same method, is to be found in a lyric of Shirley, published in 1659 :

“ The glories of our blood and state
 Are shadows, not substantial things ;
 There is no armour against fate,
 Death lays his icy hand on kings ;
 Sceptre and crown
 Must tumble down,
 And in the dust be equal made
 With the poor crooked scythe and spade.”

Alliteration must not be overlooked as lending its artful aid, though it is a question whether quaintness rather than vigor or impressive-

ness was not the result of its employment. Here is a good example in two pathetic verses of Spenser from his *Shepherd's Calendar*, under the heading December. They were probably written in remembrance of the destruction of his wife and child at the siege of an Irish fort.

“So now my year draws to his latter term,
 My spring is spent, my summer burnt up quite ;
 My harvest hastes to stir up winter stern,
 And bids him claim with rigorous rage his right.
 So now he storms with many a sturdy stoure,
 So now his blustering blast each coast doth scour

The careful cold hath nipped my rugged rind,
 And in my face deep furrows eld hath pight ;
 My head besprent with hoary frost I find,
 And by mine eye the crow his claw doth write.
 Delight is laid abed, and pleasure past,
 No sun now shines, clouds have all overcast.”

It would lead me far beyond the canonical hours, or rather minutes, to pursue these illustrations further. The mine is so rich that the nuggets I have extracted for your critical opinion seem almost insignificant, in view of what might have been exhibited.

I am conscious, too, that while I have endeavored to point out certain subtle arts and methods by which the impressiveness I spoke of has been attained, it is beyond the power of the critic to analyze genius and to account for the great utterances of the poet. I shall trespass upon your patience while I read one more extract, which is in a somewhat different vein from those which have gone before.

John Marston, though his style is somewhat labored and his versification occasionally rugged and sometimes even turgid, has a wonderfully condensed power of expression, lightened up occasionally by a subtle humor.

There is an excellent illustration of the origin of the word “dunces” in the passage I am about to read. Etymologists long since conjectured that the word was originally applied by the Thomists, the followers of Thomas Aquinas, to Duns Scotus, the learned Scotchman, otherwise John Scott of Duns, and his school. *Dunses*, used at first as a distinguishing epithet in acrimonious polemics, came at last to indicate stupidity or ignorance. Marston uses it in its original sense of disciples of Duns Scotus, while describing the research into *An sit anima?* whether there be a soul, and what were its ele-

ments and qualities. The passage seems to have escaped the lexicographers, although it is conclusive of the question :

“ I was a scholar : seven useful springs
 Did I deflower in quotations
 Of crossed opinions 'bout the soul of man.
 * * * * *

Delight, my spaniel slept, whilst I baised leaves,
 Tossed o'er the dunces, pored on the old print
 Of titled words ; and still my spaniel slept ;
 Whilst I wasted lamp oil, 'bated my flesh,
 Shrunk up my veins ; and still my spaniel slept.
 And still I held converse with Zabarell,
 Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw
 Of antique Donate ; still my spaniel slept.
 Still on went I : first, *an sit anima ?*
 Then an it were mortal. O, hold, hold !
 At that they 're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears
 A main pell-mell together ; still my spaniel slept.
 Then whether 'twere corporeal, local, fixt,
Ex traduce, but whether 't had free will
 Or no, ho, philosiphers
 Stood banding factions, all so strongly propt,
 I staggered, knew not which was firmer part,
 But thought, quoted, read, observed, and pried,
 Stuff noting-books ; and still my spaniel slept.
 At length he waked, and yawned, and, by yon sky,
 For aught I know, he knew as much as I ! ”

