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out in any way thwarting the purpose of the great organized system behind them. It could not stay the hand of those who wished to tamper with the loyalty of faithful citizens; but it did prompt disloyalty in men who in themselves would have been content with the Constitution as they found it, had it only allowed them the free use of their personal rights. It strengthened, rather than weakened, the Roman Communion, because it frightened away all superficial followers, and cemented the true remnant with a spirit of martyrdom for a common cause.

And so we may be glad that more enlightened counsels rule us to-day. England has gained good soldiers, statesmen, and lawyers, by admitting Roman Catholic nonconformists to their rights, and the cause of true religion has not suffered. It is no true cause which shelters its existence under the cowardly repression of an opponent instead of his confutation —*Magna est veritas et prevalebit.*

At the same time, we cannot ignore the characteristics of a system, and we must see to it that whilst the individual Roman Catholic is left free, the system is not allowed any hold by which it may infringe the rightful liberties, religious and civil, of other individuals. To this end we retain the law that makes the Sovereign a Protestant: its indirect is probably greater than its direct effect. We must see that the Queen's writ runs into all conventual buildings that we permit in England. We must prevent any astute attempt to get a footing in the Church of England. These are precautions against a system which is stronger than its members. But when we hear of their prayers for the conversion of England, we shall do well to be incited also to pray for unity—only it must be brought about, not by our acceptance of their tenets, but by their escape from the bondage of their system into the simpler faith of primitive days, from which they have wandered so far—to their loss and our own.

J. C. WRIGHT.

ART. IV.—POETRY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

"The poets have a hundred times more good-sense than the philosophers. In seeking for the beautiful, they meet with more truths than the philosophers find in their searching after the true."

JOUBERT: "Pensées."

"GOOD poetry," so Boccaccio is made to say in one of Landor's "Imaginary Conversations," "is like good music: it pleases most people, but the ignorant and inexpert lose half its pleasures, the invidious lose them all. What

a paradise lost is here!" Such a statement, coming from one who (like Landor) was eminent both as a writer of poetry and prose, and was withal a fully-equipped scholar, is not without its significance. It appears also to be a positively true criticism. Poetry, like every other form of art, requires patient study to unravel its secrets; more, perhaps, than any other, it appeals superficially to a considerable number of readers who thereby are deluded into an idea that they understand poetry. But the fact is far otherwise. "Understand" is a word peculiarly liable to misconstruction. It means, in its proper sense, not a superficial acquaintance with those qualities in a subject which, because they are superficial or (as the word implies) *on the surface*, therefore manifest themselves most conspicuously; but an entering into those less obvious but more vital significances which are really presupposed in the very existence of the art. To understand poetry involves laborious effort, continued application, as well as natural insight and ready sympathy; it demands, too, an earnest belief in the possibilities of poetry to become something other than a substitute for a game of dominoes to an idle man after dinner. Poetry cannot, in fact, be justly appreciated till we are prepared to study its *principles;* for principles it has and must have, otherwise it would lack coherence of form as it would assuredly lack spiritual meaning. The same is true of any art, be it music, or painting, or architecture, or sculpture. The outward appearance or form is the manifestation of the informing spirit within. Just as we may regard the visible world as the garment woven by the hand of the Creator, upon the loom of Time, whereby He hides while yet He reveals Himself; so the outward form of all noble poetry, which means exactly our word "creation," neither more nor less is the visible symbol of an invisible, but none the less real, spiritual impulse, effected through the medium of both written word and spoken word, and directly appealing to the noblest passions and highest instincts of human nature.

Hence we assume that poetry, just because it *is* something other and deeper than the momentary ebullition of a wayward fancy, just because it *is* a profound necessity of the finest natures, just because it possesses a spiritual significance instead of being an instrument for the gratification of chance impulses alone, is of no mean import in the evolution of the world's history. We embark upon no empty quest when we set ourselves to comprehend and mark the progression of the time-spirit as it reveals itself in the grandest form of human utterance; rather it concerns us too deeply *not* to care —if, that is, we realize (and how few do realize!) that poetry

is the finer spirit of human thought. And human thought, being universal, influences and controls the march of human conduct to-day, even as it has done from the beginning.

With such preliminary insistence on the importance of poetry, when justly regarded, in the economy of life, we may pass on to consider that section of the history of poetry included within the limits of the present century. It will be sufficient for the present purpose to confine attention to its development in England during these years, and to pass in review only those poets who have made fruitful contributions to the poetic history of their time. I propose, during the course of this essay, briefly to advert to the conditions under which the spirit of poetry has worked during the century, and to delineate—briefly, but not, I hope, altogether inadequately—the tendencies which modern poetry has manifested throughout.

It will be convenient to classify those representative poets whom we shall select to illustrate this theme into two main divisions, according to their chronology. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley will naturally occupy the former of these two divisions, while the latter will contain the names of those who are closer to us in point of time, and who represent a later development of thought—Tennyson and Robert Browning.[1]

Just over one hundred years ago there emerged from an obscure publishing house in the West of England a volume of poetry by two (hitherto) unknown writers, which, in the hands of destiny, was to become a fresh incentive to hope for all those who saw, in the closing years of the eighteenth century, nothing but an arid waste so far as poetry was concerned. At the end of that century the impulse given to verse-writing by the early followers of the school of Pope was utterly played out; the art of poetry had degenerated into a merely mechanical trade, by the laws of which a given amount of rhymed couplets could be turned out in a given time upon any given theme. The mechanical school of poetry, with its precision and its brilliance of phrase, had, in the hands of Pope, been a useful teacher; Pope had taught us how, within the limits of exact language, to give to thought and feeling a fineness of expression, a sanity of

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[1] Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, and Swinburne cannot now be dealt with; but a knowledge of their work is in some sort essential to a proper and disciplined understanding of the literary spirit of the age. Specially true is this of Arnold, in whose sculpturesque and exquisite verse the peculiar "welt-schmerz" of the century is exactly portrayed, the flavour of its cultured pessimism and twilight regret embalmed and beautified.

phrase, as well as a cultured point and rhythm, which can hardly be rivalled, certainly not surpassed, anywhere. Nor was this all. There are traces, genuine traces, of emotion in Pope; and, among his successors, Johnson certainly achieved a notable success in his "Vanity of Human Wishes," in the expression of powerfully-felt conviction. The couplet was not, therefore, necessarily devoid of the heart's own note, even in the midst of the gay tinsel and flash apparel wherein its bodily presence was disguised. At the same time we must recollect that, except Gray's "Elegy," no great poem was written from the year 1742 till the publication of Cowper's "Task"—a period of over forty years. It was Cowper's "Task" that broke the ice of conventionalism in poetry, and—though not immediately—enabled far-seeing readers to discern the approach of a better day when poetry, untrammelled once more, would assert its right and vindicate its place as the organ of human emotion, and the expression of man's hopes, and joys, and tears.

But, though to Cowper we gladly allow the credit due to the first work in such pioneering, it is to Wordsworth and to Coleridge that belong the glory and the delight of having won back the springs of poetry, and of the art of the poet, from the wilderness where they had lain choked among the driving sands of falsehood in custom and mechanism in life, to those green pastures and happy ways that border the still waters of noble imagination and make glad the river of human life.

Such, then, was the destiny of "Lyrical Ballads": it came to break up the old crust that locked in the spirit of poetry, and release that spirit, henceforward to take to itself new and better forms, more elastic, more subtle, and therefore more likely to be in accord with the progressive ideals of the time. The French Revolution is, if not responsible for, certainly instrumental in, securing to us this wider outlook upon humanity, which we see so palpably reflected in the literature, and therefore in the poetry, of those eventful years which witnessed the coming of a new century. Poetry then, as always, was, so to speak, the most sensitive of barometers, responding with wonderful certainty to the variations in the climate of human thought.

Of the poems which comprised "Lyrical Ballads," two stand out with singular vividness, and claim our attention. Each is characteristic of its author at his highest; in each are clearly manifested those fundamental principles which actually determined the life-history of the writers themselves. Of each poem it may confidently be affirmed that it is "a criticism of life," so far as the poet's own life is concerned. I refer to the "Ancient Mariner" of Coleridge, and to the long

blank-verse monologue by Wordsworth entitled "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey." Coleridge, in that marvellous contribution to his friend's book, has completely and finally subordinated the entire setting of his subject to the over-mastering idealism which—perhaps unconsciously—inspired him throughout its composition. The actors in that strange tragedy do not move in the common light, or breathe a common air; they rise, ghost-like, from their several stations, and pass into an unearthly mist of supernatural wonder, which so powerfully affects the imagination, that, while we seem to have journeyed with them on their eerie voyage, we nevertheless appear to have been one with them externally to ourselves, as it were, in trance or dream. And, for all that, it is too painfully vivid, too terribly accurate in the hideous details of it, to be other than reality. Reality and vision in one! the phantom image and the corporeal fact so intimately linked that separation is impossible! Truly, if anywhere, the triumph of verbal magic.

In Wordsworth a higher, purer note is struck—a note which never fell to any lower range, but, so far as its main characteristic is concerned, remained one and identical to the day of the poet's death. True, no one could be *less* inspired than he, when the inspiration deserted him; but no one can ever accuse him of striking other than a high and pure note. There is a large admixture of severity and austere self-repression in Wordsworth's muse, which do not help to commend him to those who only love the colour of romanticism and warmth of passion, not the simplicity of form, the all but statuesque purity of intention, which are vital and saving elements—though not the only elements—in every lofty work of art. The very spring breath of the romantic movement, its freshness, its cleanness, its invigoration, breathe through the early lyrics which Wordsworth wrote between 1798 and 1807—that marvellous decade during which his finest work was accomplished, and his mission of helpful enterprise inaugurated. The lines on "Tintern Abbey" are a speaking witness of his complete mastery over language—language which is often so inevitable in its simplicity as to appear easy to everyone save to him who knows it to be hardly less than a miracle. Perhaps the secret of Wordsworth's arresting power was his unquestioning search for truth, wherever it could be found; and thus, almost without conscious effort, his language clothed itself in appropriate form. Because his genius was never employed save in truth's own service, his words came home to the heart with immense weight of conviction. That is it—the note of a steady conviction! Nobody can hope to convince another who is not himself convinced of the truth of what he

teaches; and this holds good of a poet quite as much as of a religious teacher. So far did Wordsworth push his theory of truth, as to forget too often that *truth* is not necessarily *fact*, but is something infinitely worthier and loftier. Hence his language frequently was harsh, frequently trivial; and his lack of humour made him singularly obtuse as to the right choice of a subject best suited to convey his lesson, or support an idealistic treatment. But, take him at his best, where subject, treatment, intensity of feeling, power of language, were fused into one harmonious unity, and where, outside of Shakespeare and Milton, can Wordsworth be surpassed? Study, for example, his "Highland Reaper," loveliest of lyrics; his noble setting of a great picture in the lines entitled "Nature and the Poet"; his wonderful "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" (perhaps the greatest single poetic effort of this century); or the "Tintern" lines, which read the heart of Nature as the heart of a child—and few will doubt that on the title-deeds of England's fame stand, first, Shakespeare and Milton, then Wordsworth. Abundantly, indeed, has his own hope been realized as to the final destiny of his poetry—"to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous: this is their office, which, I trust, they will faithfully perform long after we have mouldered in our graves."

We may now conveniently pass on to consider, briefly, a second pair of poets in the first group—poets with much similarity of aim, yet infinite diversity of practice. Shelley and Keats are alike in this—they are both intensely imaginative, both steeped in the spirit of romanticism, both keenly alive to the delights and beauties of the world, both sensitive to the finger-tips; diverse in this, that whereas the elder poet, Shelley, looked beyond the merely phenomenal beauty of the universe, finding in the intellectual spirit which was both its presupposition and the key to its mystery the sole source of his aspiration and inspiration, Keats, on the other hand, found in the tangible joys of being, in the passions of his fellows, in the light and colour of the sensuous side of nature, a sufficient guarantee of the fulness and adequacy of existence. Each, therefore, was bound to regard Nature from, I will not say an antagonistic, but at least a different, aspect. To Shelley, Nature was the visible symbol of an unbodied intellectual (or spiritual) presence; and that presence he worshipped with an ardour totally uncomprehended by, and incomprehensible to, the everyday intelligence; but to Keats that presence was but a mere abstract and colourless quantity,

if, indeed, it existed at all; certainly the object of his love and adoration was to be discovered in those visible symbols *themselves*, that, to his brother-poet, were only interesting in so far as they were the outward manifestation of a hidden mystery. For Keats the *outward* was everything; for Shelley the *inward* was alone an object of interest. It is needful to be clear upon this, or the exact position of these two most extraordinarily gifted men becomes more or less an enigma. No better clue can be given for the following out of the interpretation just suggested than is afforded by Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and Keats' stanzas on "Autumn." Each is typical of its author; to each clings the peculiar flavour that we are accustomed to associate with the choicest products of consummate genius. A single quotation from Shelley's "Adonais," though well known, will illustrate what is meant:

> The One remains, the Many change and pass;
> Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.

In these lines there seems to pulsate the very life of mystery itself, and in every word is incorporated the idea of timelessness hidden in the womb of Time. And now listen to that other music of Keats, who "loved the principle of beauty in all things," but cared nothing to philosophize about Nature as did Wordsworth, and never attained to the depth of Wordworth's spiritual insight, but who, like an "Elizabethan born too late," has never been surpassed for rounded beauty of utterance and rich felicity of haunting phrase. He is, indeed, the truest of artists in words, and not unworthy to rank in this regard with Shakespeare himself. The passage quoted is the final verse of the "Autumn" stanzas already alluded to:

> Where are the Songs of Spring? Ah, where are they?
>   Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
> While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
>   And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;
> Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
>   Among the river-sallows, borne aloft
>   Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies:
> And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
>   Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
>   The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
>   And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Surely here, if anywhere, is the accent of immortality; and if we read the poem in connection with Tennyson's early poem "Mariana," we shall readily admit the intellectual and spiritual kinship that linked together the finished work of

Keats, who died at the age of twenty-five, and the work of Alfred Tennyson, who owed so much to the inspiring influences of his predecessor.

Between the death of Byron, in 1824, and the year 1842, which witnessed the publication, not of Tennyson's *first* work —that had appeared as far back as 1827—but of his two-volumed collection of "Poems," there was not much of an eventful character published to the world. True, Browning's "Paracelsus" came out in 1835; but it made no stir, as is too often the case with a really noteworthy book. When Tennyson, however, collected out of his volumes of 1830 and 1833 what was, in his matured judgment, worth retaining after scrupulous and wholesale revision, adding thereto such poems as had lain by him in manuscript from 1835 to 1841, the whole literary world was captivated. The volumes of 1842 mark a definite era in the literary history of England. By them he was at once raised to the highest pinnacle of literary celebrity; next to Wordsworth he was the leading poet; and when in 1850 Wordsworth died, the choice of Tennyson to fill the vacant post of Laureate was inevitable. Tennyson died in the autumn of 1892; so that for exactly half a century he continued to fill that position. And during that period of time, though volume after volume appeared, he never once lost his unique hold on the affection, we will not say of Englishmen alone, but of English-speaking people the wide world over. He preserved his pre-eminence to the last; other poets arose, and for a time, perhaps, lured the public, but ever, in the end, that public fell beneath the spell which Tennyson so deftly knew how to weave; and they fell willingly. "Tennyson," says an admirable critic of our generation, "was able, by the vigour and uniformity of his gifts, to hold English poetry stationary for sixty years—a feat absolutely unparalleled elsewhere."

If one be asked what it was that constituted so extraordinary a popularity—a popularity of a really worthy order, not that misplaced popularity which so often terminates in a half-fretful contempt—perhaps it will be enough to say that in Tennyson, as in no other writer of his age, were reflected the temper of the time, the ideals that governed it, the passions that stirred it, the enthusiasms which stimulated it. The poetry of Tennyson, too, is a magic mirror, which softens hard outlines, heightens vivid contrasts, and flings over all the wonderful glow of a romantic fancy. Furthermore, the tender melancholy of Tennyson's nature, his religious fervour, and, not least, his abundant patriotism, powerfully appeal to the peculiar sensibilities of our modern world. And when we add to all this that the colours of the dawn flowed from the

poet's pencil with perpetual charm and rich variety, that, moreover, he was a great artist, and could invest an ancient tale with all the tints of romance, it is not, after all, so wonderful that he reigned so long the undisputed master in the world of letters. Then his literary tact (he did not disgust people by publishing too often or too much), his immense knowledge, his fine scholarship, and his robust English common-sense (a virtue he deeply prized), combined with that air of secrecy which he cultivated in his relations with the outside world, all served to heighten the effect.

We may claim, then, for Tennyson a pre-eminent position as the interpreter of his age; we may feel assured that in his poetry are displayed "the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure." But while, for these very reasons, Tennyson's poetry has been the delight and wonder of his generation, which has found there the reflex of its own dim hopes, unspoken yearnings, and vague unrest, on precisely similar grounds it is less universal in its significance. It is rather the creation of the period than its spiritual teacher; it has caught and fixed in exquisite shape the floating ideas of the time; it has not given birth to some master motive or controlling impulse. Hence such poetry, while infinitely suggestive and sensitive, has not the world-wide import of those half-dozen supreme poets who undoubtedly *govern* the thoughts of after ages. In other words, Tennyson is less the seer than the artist; and, so far, cannot be ranked in the first order of poets. His work is intensely national; it is hardly cosmopolitan. Hence, while we are led to the conclusion that, as a painter and musician in word and phrase, he stands upon an unassailable pedestal, we may not set him beside Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare; for these speak, not to this or that age, to this or that people, but to the whole world.

Bearing in mind this caution, we proceed to consider, as shortly as possible, the drift and tendency of Tennyson's poems from the year 1842, when he first leapt into the full glare of fame, right on to that ever-memorable night, nearly seven years ago, when, after breathing into the ear of his wife that tender and beautiful little requiem "The Silent Voices," he passed away amid the mourning of the entire English-speaking race. It is not necessary to mention even the title of all the various volumes which, during those fifty years, he gave to the world; it is, however, necessary to allude to three in particular, as they severally illustrate the growth of the poet's own art and the drift of his sentiment. These three volumes are "In Memoriam," the "Idylls of the King," and "Queen Mary."

"In Memoriam" is so intensely admired—though not always as perfectly comprehended—by every lover of poetry

that a detailed examination of its contents would be a superfluity. In it the artistic qualities which are so characteristic of the poet reached their highest level of excellence; and the fact becomes all the more intelligible when we realize that upon that unique work were lavished the unceasing toil, the noblest inspiration, of fully seventeen years. Begun in 1833, at a time of grief and depression of heart consequent upon the death of his beloved friend Arthur Hallam, it was not finished till 1849. In its cantos we trace the mood of the poet from the first shock of sorrow and passion of dejection to the solemn triumph of its close; from the hour of darkness and doubt to the clear dayspring of faith and hope. Here, more fully than elsewhere, the religious tendency[1] of the poet was revealed. "In Memoriam" has been called the poem of the earnest doubters; and that is true, but only partially so. It is more: it is the poem of faith triumphant over all the hard facts of existence which tend to submerge faith in the waters of despair. How nobly does the soul of the poet extricate itself from these depths, and pass on to the better knowledge and loftier conviction which are the main motive of its close! Life is stern, and death is stern; the apparent failure of love in the midst of this world's stress is touched with a bitter realism; but, above all, the star of Divine love shines unquenched, spite of all the clouds that hide from view the meaning of man's brief existence,—that love of God which, albeit not antagonistic to the law that governs the course of things, is yet higher than law, and alone can reveal the mystery of creation. No poem in our time has realized this truth of truths quite so successfully as "In Memoriam."

We pass on to regard for an instant that cycle of twelve poems which was begun in 1836 and completed in 1885, and has been appropriately named "The Idylls of the King." There are readers of the Idylls who study them for the sake of the story they contain; others, again, for the sake of the mellifluous verse in which that story is enshrined; but they are wiser who, without disregarding the story running through this ancient cycle of folk-lore dressed up so faultlessly for

[1] The late R. H. Hutton, in an essay upon Tennyson (reprinted in "Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought"), seems to me to have gauged the attitude of the poet towards religion with singular felicity when he writes: "The lines of Tennyson's theology were in harmony with the great central lines of Christian thought; but, in coming down to details, it soon passed into a region where all was wistful, and dogma disappeared in a haze of radiant twilight." *Cf.* "The Ancient Sage" and "Akbar's Dream" for a presentation of the poet's final attitude towards the problem of belief.

modern hearers, and fully realizing the witchery of its purple patches, its tender pathos, and its inexhaustible charm, are nevertheless not blind to the *purpose* which, from inception to finish, guided the hand of the poet. In the Idylls he shadows "sense" at war with "soul," as is plain enough from the epilogue of 1872. The whole cycle is allegoric, as much so as "Don Quixote" is allegoric, and clearly, therefore, the vehicle of a moral purpose. Not for nothing is the complete poem divided into twelve books, each with a "story-telling name," answering the year's revolving months. By "King Arthur" was meant man's soul; by the "Round Table" the passions and capacities of a man.[1] And the inner kernel of the entire cycle is to be found in the "Holy Grail," which Tennyson completed in 1868, and of which he thus wrote: "The 'Holy Grail' is one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the Reality of the Unseen. The end, when the King speaks of his work and of his visions, is intended to be the summing up of all in the highest note by the highest of human men. These three lines in Arthur's speech are the (spiritually) central lines of the Idylls:

> In moments when he feels he cannot die,
> And knows himself no vision to himself
> Nor the high God a vision."

And perhaps Tennyson's son and biographer was true when he said, "Of all the Idylls, the 'Holy Grail' seems to me to express most my father's highest self."

In 1875 Tennyson broke new ground by the publication of "Queen Mary," in some ways the finest dramatic work since Shakespeare. But it was not welcomed by the public on its appearance; and, somehow or other, neither "Queen Mary" nor his subsequent plays were ever accorded more than a courteous but frigid reception. Possibly the reason may lie in the fact that readers had so schooled themselves into the habit of regarding Tennyson as a writer of idyll and lyric that they were nonplussed when he assumed a novel rôle and posed as a dramatist. But that, ultimately, Tennyson's plays will be appreciated as their merits demand, there can be little doubt.

For a man of nearly seventy years of age to move thus into a fresh sphere of literary activity, and (so to say) complete the line of Shakespeare's English chronicle plays by the addition of an historical trilogy such as he intended "Harold," "Becket," and "Queen Mary" to be, was indeed hazardous.

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[1] See "Tennyson: A Memoir," by his Son, vol. ii., p. 90.

But if hazardous, the attempt was, in the best sense, successful; true it did not win him "full-handed plaudits" from pit or gallery, but it secured him the whole-hearted approval of men like Froude, Gladstone, Browning, and Professor Jebb. And, indeed, the plays are astonishingly virile, and full of movement and colour. And that is what one notices in so much of Tennyson's later work—the increase of masculinity. Perhaps he lost a little of the old voluptuous ease and mellow smoothness of phrase which are noticeable features in the products of his early magic; but what he may have lost he made up for by increment of forceful diction, and power of dramatic intensity. Be that as it may, my object in drawing attention to "Queen Mary" and the subsequent plays is by way of emphasizing the dramatic tendency in much of Tennyson's later work—work dramatic in principle if not always dramatic in form. Undoubtedly he was influenced by the massive genius of Robert Browning; and his volume of "Ballads" published in 1880 is a clear case in point. Influenced, not quite consciously; but then this unconscious assimilation of pregnant ideas was habitual with Tennyson (as has been already stated); but how fruitful in their final issue!

E. H. BLAKENEY.

(*To be continued.*)

ART. V.—RELIGION IN THE TIME OF CHAUCER.

THE great poet and acute observer Geoffrey Chaucer, with whose religious opinions we are concerned in this paper, lived at one of the most momentous periods of English history. It is thought that he was born about the year 1340, in the reign of Edward III., and he died in 1400, in the first year of the reign of Henry IV., the son of his old patron and brother-in-law, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Thus, his life covers rather more than the interval between the most glorious epoch of Edward III.'s reign—the Battle of Creçy being fought when Chaucer was a boy of six—and the downfall, in 1399, of his unfortunate grandson and successor, Richard II. It was, in fact, the first half of the Hundred Years' War between England and France, which had such momentous consequences, both European and national. To England, says the historian Green,[1] it brought a social, a religious, and in the

[1] The following pages are a résumé from Green's "History of the English People."