Review

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REVIEWS.

The Cambridge History of English Literature. Edited by A. W. WARD and A. R. WALLER. Vol. VII. Cavalier and Puritan. Cambridge: University Press. 1911. 8vo. x + 553 pp.

No volume yet published of the *Cambridge History* surpasses the one before us in variety of interest and of matter. The editors, when they first embarked upon their great enterprise, announced their intention of making 'provision for treating certain subjects more or less allied to literature pure or proper,' as, for example, 'the literature of science and philosophy, of politics and economics,' 'the work of schools, universities and libraries,' newspapers, magazines, domestic letters, and so forth—in fact, 'the whole range of letters in its widest acceptation, from "The Cambridge Platonists" to "the fraternity of vagabonds."' In no section of the work is this promise more generously fulfilled than in the present volume, and some of the best and most instructive contributions to it are those which deal with subjects not usually treated in histories of 'literature pure or proper.' There are no better chapters, for example, in the book than that by Mr J. B. Williams on 'The Beginnings of English Journalism,' or Professor Foster Watson's on 'Scholars and Scholarship,' or Dr Ward's on 'Historical and Political Writings'; nor would it be easy to find in any history of philosophy a more lucid and able summary of the work of 'Hobbes and Contemporary Philosophy' than that given here by Professor Sorley. It will thus be seen that the volume contains much that cannot properly be labelled either 'Cavalier' or 'Puritan,' although no better sub-title, perhaps, could have been given to it as a whole.

All the poetry of the period with the exception of Marvell's is dealt with in the first five chapters. Marvell finds a somewhat uneasy place in a chapter mainly devoted to Bunyan. Its author, Dr John Brown, who gives us a sound if not a particularly stimulating appreciation of Bunyan, is indeed 'conscious of making a great transition' in passing from him to Marvell. Marvell deserves, on the whole, a fuller and more sympathetic treatment as a poet than he gets from Dr Brown. One misses, for example, a direct reference to two of his longer poems—*Upon the Hill and Grove at Billborow* and *Upon Appleton House*—which are quite as well worth quoting from, in illustration of his love of nature, as the more familiar lyrics cited here. Marvell's place as a poet is, as

Dr Brown feels, with Herrick and the earlier seventeenth century lyricists, and Herrick is appropriately the poet who leads the way in this volume. No one has a better claim to write of him than Dr Moorman, and this he does clearly and with excellent judgment. As Dr Moorman points out, Herrick is something more, and other, than the mere 'cavalier lyricist' he is so often taken to be; some of his most characteristic songs are such as 'would have found attentive ears among the contemporaries of Marlowe, Breton and Shakespeare,' while others recall 'that which was still more remote from the sophisticated tastes of the cavalier lyricists—the folk-song of the cornfield or the chimney corner.' Herrick's *Noble Numbers* written, as he tells us, by way of reparation for his

unbaptised rhymes
Writ in my wild unhallow'd times,

do not save him from being, in Dr Moorman's words, 'the most pagan of English poets.' Other singers, much less prodigal of 'wanton' wit than Herrick, felt themselves constrained to tender the same sort of penitential offering to the Heavenly Muse—Habington was one, who 'leaves the theme of earthly love to "the soft silken youths at Court," and is full of self-accusation that he should ever have handled the theme, however purely' (p. 45). These are the men who cause most of the difficulty in attempting to divide the poets of this time into two rigorously defined classes of 'Cavalier' and 'Puritan.' Carew, Suckling and Lovelace are, doubtless, all entitled to parade as out-and-out 'cavalier lyricists,' but how are we to classify poets like Habington or Vaughan? They have affinities with both the sacred and the profane 'wits,' and the title 'The Sacred Poets' which Mr Hutchinson gives to the second chapter in this volume, is applicable in an exclusive sense only to two among the group with which he deals—viz. Herbert and Traherne. Henry Vaughan has left behind him sufficient 'secular' verse to show that he could have held his own, at least, with the best of the courtly wits. But he became, in his own words, 'one of the many converts gained by the holy life and verse' of George Herbert, and it was Herbert's avowed ambition to challenge the profane poets on their own ground. 'Cannot thy Dove,' he asks, 'outstrip their Cupid easily in flight?' Mr Hutchinson writes well and judiciously of Herbert, but he might, in our opinion, have been more generous in his appreciation of the rare poetical qualities of Vaughan. The Silurist, despite what Mr Hutchinson calls his 'defective workmanship,' saw visions and dreamt dreams, in his lonely communings with nature on the Breconshire hills, of a kind that visited no other poet of his time—boasting as he does that he had 'pierc'd through all the store' of Nature, and that he

broke up some seals which none had touch'd before.

Why Mr Hutchinson should say that 'his chosen name, Silurist, expresses his intimate love of Welsh mountains, etc.' is not quite clear; what the name is, almost certainly, meant to express is the poet's connection with an ancient family of Vaughans who dwelt in south-east

Wales, once occupied by the tribe known as Silures. It is a pity that his brother, Thomas Vaughan, a poet of some potentiality if not of much actual performance, and 'a noted son of the fire and an experimental philosopher' (to quote Anthony à Wood), should receive so perfunctory a notice in this volume. Mr Hutchinson dismisses him in a sentence, and Mr Routh gives him no more than two in his account of the Rosicrucians; but he was, even after his death, of sufficient consequence as a cabalistic writer to come under the lash of Swift in the *Tale of a Tub*. As against this, and other possible slight omissions of the kind, it is pleasant to see Thomas Traherne at last given his due station, both as poet and prose-writer, in a standard history of English literature. In his chapter on 'Writers of the Couplet' Mr Hamilton Thompson surveys a fairly familiar field with a clear critical eye, and, among others, those great names of their time, Waller and Cowley, get from him their just dues.

Professor Saintsbury is in one of his own particular preserves in writing of 'The Lesser Caroline Poets,' and, as one might expect, he finds plenty of good sport there, and succeeds in communicating much of his sporting ardour to the reader. It is somewhat of a puzzle, however, to discover the critical purpose of the final paragraph on 'what might have been' in the case of some of these poets; and one wonders the more why it should have been written at all when on the very opposite page—in the opening passages of his chapter on Milton—Professor Saintsbury commends David Masson for having written a biography 'without that undue expatiation into "may-have-beens" and "probablys" and "perhapses" which, despite the temptation to it which exists in some cases, is irritating to the critically minded and dangerously misleading to the uncritical.' Professor Saintsbury himself, in dealing with Milton, makes little, if any, effort to resist this temptation, plentifully studded as his chapter is with conjectures and reservations. Here is one signal example. 'An Aspasia-Hypatia-Lucretia-Griselda, with any naughtiness in the first left out and certain points in Solomon's pattern woman added might have met Milton's views; but this blend has not been commonly quoted in the marriage market.' This expression of opinion, and its form, go to show that the chapter on Milton, whatever else may be said about it, is the liveliest in the book. It bears the marks of all the writer's well-known idiosyncrasies of style and critical judgment. Many things in it are admirably said; other things—well, not so admirably. As a whole, the study of Milton which Professor Saintsbury here gives us is disproportionate. About a third of it is given to biography, and much of that is trivial and unnecessary. Although Professor Saintsbury pronounces 'the Milton legend and controversy' 'tedious and idle like all controversial legends and to be kept down as much as possible,' he himself in this chapter is at some pains to keep it up. Antipathy to Milton's political opinions is even allowed to raise its head here and there, as when we read of 'the peculiar arrogance—the morose determination to be different, the singular want of adaptability in politics and social matters generally which has been

admitted even by sympathisers with his political and religious views.' Poor Mark Pattison 'catches it' once or twice, apparently because of 'his liberalism and his Milton-worship.' Professor Saintsbury is, less irritating when he gives us purely literary criticism, and one can only wish that he had given us more of it in this chapter in preference to discussion of so much 'gossip' (to use his own word) and insignificant personal matters. *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* deserved a more liberal treatment—although much of what is here said of them is finely said. The prose works, again, are somewhat perfunctorily dealt with. Perhaps the best feature of the chapter is the discussion of Milton's versification and style.

The chapters on the prose writers, and on things that scarcely belong to 'literature pure and proper,' are, on the whole, of greater interest and novelty than those on the poets, and form much the more valuable part of the volume, regarded as an embodiment of the results of recent research. It would be presumptuous to attempt a 'review' of them here—nothing more than a brief allusion to each can well be given. Professor Saintsbury writes on four 'Antiquaries'—to wit, Sir Thomas Browne, Fuller, Walton and Urquhart—with all the knowledge, zest and intrepidity begotten of his multitudinous reading, and he is here at his best. Nothing, perhaps, that Dr Ward has contributed to this History is more admirable in presentment—clear, concise and, 'without o'erflowing, full' of rich information—than his double chapter on 'Historical and Political Writings.' Clarendon is inevitably the most imposing figure in his gallery, but the lover of 'mere literature' will, perhaps, derive quite as much pleasure from what he has to say about such typically seventeenth-century people as James Howell and Lucy Hutchinson. One of the best-written and most scholarly chapters in the volume is that on 'Hobbes and Contemporary Philosophy' by Professor Sorley. It may be that the philosophy which he passes under review has but a remote interest for the modern reader, but the literary quality of the writings of Hobbes, at least, still compels our admiration, and Professor Sorley, in a fine paragraph, claims for Hobbes, in common with the other greatest lights of English philosophy, a place 'amongst the masters of language, wherever language is looked upon as conveying a meaning.' Hobbes differs from Bacon, Berkeley and Hume, 'and in his own way is supreme.' 'There is no excess of imagery or allusion, though both are at hand when wanted. There is epigram; but epigram is not multiplied for its own sake. There is satire; but it is always kept in restraint. His work is never embellished with ornament; every ornament is structural and belongs to the building. There is never a word too many, and the right word is always chosen. His materials are of the simplest; and they have been formed into a living whole, guided by a great thought and fired by the passion of a great cause.' Even thus, one is tempted to say, as one thinks of much that this volume contains, should literary criticism be written, if 'language is looked upon as conveying a meaning.' The literary criticism of this

period, by the way, is the theme of an excellent chapter by Professor Spingarn, and it will possibly be news to those who know Rymer only by notorious examples of his 'exaggerated animus against Elizabethan tragedy' to hear that in his *View of Tragedy* 'real learning was placed at the service of criticism, and the first connected account of the rise of modern literatures attempted.' Professor Foster Watson's chapter on 'Scholars and Scholarship' has already been mentioned as one of the most interesting in the book, and it finds a fitting pendant in Mr Bass Mullinger's account of 'The English Grammar Schools.' Mr J. B. Williams deals well with a subject which he has made his own in his crowded little chapter on 'The Beginnings of Journalism,' and the volume is rounded off with a chapter—not perhaps very happily entitled—on 'The Advent of Popular Thought in Modern Literature,' by Professor H. V. Routh. Mr Routh has worked his way through a wilderness of pamphlets on all sorts of odd subjects, and gives us among other things a very full account of the witchcraft controversy, which he regards, 'together with the civil war pamphlets and the puritan tirades, as an inevitable phase in the evolution of English modern thought.' The bibliography and the index are both on the generous scale to which we have been accustomed in previous volumes.

W. LEWIS JONES.

BANGOR.

Poets and Poetry. By JOHN BAILEY. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1911. 8vo. 217 pp.

To write a critical review of essays which are chiefly criticisms of critical editions of poets or critics would suggest an intolerable remoteness from *Poets and Poetry*. It is Mr Bailey's first distinction that he never fails to lead his reader back to the fountain-head. His criticism becomes not the shadow of a shadow, but a new light by which to see once more the inner meaning of the best things in our literature.

His first essay on the Function of Poetry with its lively insistence on the two sides of the Horatian maxim strikes the keynote of the volume. He notes the modern tendency to give the *prodesse* more than its due, or at least to forget the equal claims of the *delectare*. 'Poets ought surely not to forget that it is their business to win and charm the world: and they need not be quite so scornful as Browning was of the power of tearing an idle man away from his cigar or game of dominoes.' He ends by a fine statement of the organic and spiritual conception of poetry, which Bergson has sown anew in modern thought. He describes the illuminating and enlarging effect of poetry and ends with a sentence worth quoting. 'What comes to us through poetry comes with a higher power of life about it than when it reaches us in any other way. We love more, we hate, we pity, we wonder, we even understand and know more. For the simple truth is that we live more; wherever the breath of poetry passes, it leaves behind it the breath of life.'