

THE ENGLISH ODE FROM SPENSER TO DRYDEN.

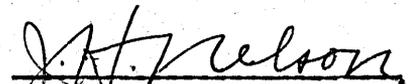
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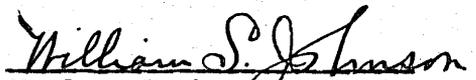
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TO THE REVERED MOTHER

WHOSE FAITH WAS ITS INSPIRATION

AND WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENTS

HASTENED ITS COMPLETION

THIS WORK

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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THE ENGLISH ODE.

FROM SPENSER TO DRYDEN.

P R E F A C E.

The object of this study is to trace the development of the ode in English throughout the seventeenth century. We hope to consider all the available lyrics of this century that were called odes by their authors, to seek other poems having an equal claim with them to this designation in a time of uncertain standards, and to follow the development of form and treatment until the ode-idea became crystallized into the gem of many facets which is now called the English ode. We shall not, however, treat of the funeral-ode or elegy, which is of sufficient importance in English to merit a separate study. Moreover, those poems, whether called odes or not, which form a part of a greater whole, as, for example, those enshrined in drama or in narrative or pastoral poems, will be considered only in exceptional cases.

Such a study as this would be impossible were it not for the labors of many eminent scholars, who have collected and edited

poetical works long buried in oblivion. We acknowledge our indebtedness to them in our bibliography. This is not by any means a complete list of all works dealing with this period in English literature; it is merely a list of all the works read or consulted for information or background in preparing this thesis.

For more direct and personal assistance, we thank the Faculty of the Department of English, of the University of Kansas, whose gracious encouragement has been a light and a stay, and especially Dr. John H. Nelson, Dr. Robert J. Allen, and Prof. R. D. O'Leary, whose helpful suggestions and courteous guidance merit a grateful acknowledgment.

CHAPTER I.

AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE ODE IN ENGLISH.

The ode was the product of Grecian taste and skill, the best composers being Pindar and Anacreon. The odes of Pindar have all been lost, excepting some of the triumphal odes. These were composed to be sung by a double chorus; consequently, each part, or triad, is composed of three stanzas or three distinct movements, the strophe sung by a chorus which turned to the right, the antistrophe or answer by a chorus which turned to the left, and the epode sung by the united choruses at the end of the movement. The Roman authors adopted the name, but not the measure. Horace varied the structure of his odes, though most commonly he used a four-lines stanza.

When, by the Renaissance, knowledge of Greek and Roman literature was diffused throughout western Europe, poets speedily produced translations and imitations of these works. Ronsard, in France, especially popularized the odes of Pindar. John Southern (also written Soothern or Soowthern), an English poetaster, first made use of the word "ode" in English letters, when in 1584 he published a clumsy plagiarism of Ronsard, entitled "The Musyque of the Beautie of his Mistresse Diana"; the volume "consists of sonnets by the author,of elegies, odes, odallets,"¹ and other verses. In 1588 Shakespeare used the word in "Love's Labour Lost,"

where Dumain says:

Once more Ile read the Ode that I have writ,²

and the following year the author of "The Arte of English Poesie" has this phrase: "Out of the primitive Greeke and Latine, as Comedie, Tragedie, Ode, Epitaphe, Elegie, Epigramme and other moe."³

So far as we know, Daniel is the first English author of merit who used the word "ode" in the title of a poem. His ode appeared in 1592, in his sonnet-sequence "Delia". It consists of four stanzas, each containing six octosyllabic lines, with rhyme-scheme a b a b a b. This poem in no sense follows the rules of Greek versification, which, in fact, were little understood at the revival of learning. Consequently, we find, as in this case, many poems called odes by their authors, which cannot be said to deserve this appellation.

The English authors were more familiar with Latin than with Greek, and seem to have inferred, from Horace, that any eulogistic, meditative, or philosophic verses might be considered an ode, whether addressed to an individual, as Jonson's "Ode to Himself," to an abstraction, as Drayton's ode "To Cupid", or to an event, as the same poet's "To the Virginian Voyage." Moreover, the ode did not always take the form of an address. Jonson's "Epode", one hundred and sixteen lines, not printed in stanzas, is a moralizing discourse on vice and virtue. A quotation will show its style and structure:

Next to knowing no vice, is to know vice well

And her black spite expel.⁴

Mr. Gosse calls Jonson the "importer of the ode", and praises his "strong and manly verse, sounding with a rude directness amid the lovely chorus of the euphuists."⁵ Jonson composed one ode on the Pindaric model, which we shall consider at length, and several odes in imitation of Horace: for example, "Praises of a Countrie Life", in a series of ten-syllable and eight-syllable lines rhyming alternately, which is based on Horace's well-known "Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis." Jonson, with all the other poets of the time, wrote marriage-odes, though all such compositions are inferior to Spenser's "Epithalamion" and "Prothalamion".

In the opinion of Mr. Brett, Drayton was the only English poet until the time of Cowper who "showed mastery of the short staccato measure of the Anacreontic."⁶ Mr. Elton pronounces these odes, "of their species, the earliest in our tongue," and "some of them, the best odes we have."⁷ There is variety in the versification of these odes, and some unevenness; still "they cannot be regarded," says Mr. Child, "otherwise than a remarkable achievement in the creation of a new music in English poetry."⁸

Until the time of Cowley, only the one ode of Jonson was modelled on Pindar. Spenser's marriage-odes, long in stanza and varied in length of line, were formed upon the model of the Italian canzone, with a longer line as refrain, Spenser's own invention. Cowley obtained a copy of Pindar's odes, printed without the choral divisions, and deemed them "fashioned in absolute irregularity."⁹ Thereupon, he translated two of them in what he thought a similar form, and on this model fashioned his original compositions. Cowley's odes are not Pindaric, for there is no system in the number

and position of the lines, no correspondence in the stanzas. Other poets, weary of the regular stanzas they had so long been writing, and doubtless attracted by the general irregularity, which gave such freedom for digressions in treatment, variations in rhyme, imitated Cowley almost to the exclusion of other lyrical forms, and formed a school that, in the words of Mr. Saintsbury, "produced poet-ically for a century and a half some of the very worst verse in the English language."¹⁰ Dryden developed Cowley's form admirably in his "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day" (1678) and "Alexander's Feast" (1697), while it became a "bewildering instrument" in the hands of lesser poets, like Shadwell. To quote Mr. Saintsbury again: these "majestick numbers" are "as able to provide a poet with wings to soar as they are to provide a poetaster with weights to sink".¹¹

In 1705 Congreve, then thirty-five years old, came across an edition of Pindar and discovered its secret. Thereupon, he composed odes quite faultless in form, the first written in English with the proper distinction of strophe, antistrophe, and epode since Jonson's in 1629. Probably because of his essay, published in 1706, entitled "A Discourse on the Pindaric Ode," Congreve has been credited with the discovery of the principles governing the structure of this ode. Modern research has shown that he merely gave the substance of the notes of two distinguished scholars, Nicolas Lesueur, (1545-1594) and Erasmus Schmid - or Schmidt - (1506-1673), a professor of Greek at Wittenberg. Their exhaustive commentaries upon Pindar were included in the Oxford folio edition of his works in 1697.¹²

In 1749 Gilbert West, son of the editor of Pindar, brought out

a translation of the odes of the great Theban, divided into strophes, much more irregular in form, however, than Pindar or even Congreve would have permitted. It was this version which fell into Gray's hands, and led to the production of the two most famous Pindaric odes in our language, the "Progress of Poesy" in 1754 and "The Bard" in 1756.

Before this, in 1747, Collins had published the slender collection of his delightful odes, formed upon the simpler Greek model. The disciples of Gray and Collins soon strayed from their models, so that the ode fell again into disrepute. Akenside (1721-1770) restored order out of chaos by producing "a series of odes that come nearer to the Greek model in form than any that had been or have since been composed," though his rhetoric is "chilly, constrained, and painful."¹³

The nineteenth century poets, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and others, remodelled the ode so that "the diapason of English odes is a music like that of which Thomson speaks.

A broad majestic stream, and rolling on
Through all the winding harmony of sound.¹⁴

We have seen, and we shall see yet more fully, that the term "ode", as used by the poets in the past, has not been restricted to any set form of versification. It is true that Coventry Patmore, in the prefatory note to his volume of poems entitled "The Unknown Eros and other Odes," attempts to formulate a law. He says:¹⁵

In its highest order, the lyric or ode is a tetrameter, the line having the time of eight iambics. When it descends to narrative, or the expression of a less-exalted strain of thought, it becomes a trimeter, or even a dimeter, with the time of four; and it is allowable to vary the tetrameter "ode" by the occasional introduction of passages in either

or both of these inferior measures, but not, I think, by the use of any other. The license to rhyme at indefinite intervals is counterbalanced, in the writing of all poets who have employed this measure successfully, by unusual frequency in the occurrence of the same rhyme.

Unfortunately, his own odes do not exemplify his rule, and, fortunately, our modern singers have not adopted it.

Our study will show how, little by little, the application of the term has been restricted as regards verse-form, so that now, in English, the word ode has a definite meaning. Our poets do not bind themselves by the laws of Pindar, but allow great variety in the lengths of the lines, and at times, though not necessarily, in the comparative lengths of the stanzas. Liberty within bounds characterizes the form and theme-treatment of the English ode. The finest example of this is Coleridge's "France, as Ode."¹⁶ Here the five stanzas, composed each of twenty-one lines, have all the same verse-structure and rhyme-scheme.

With regard to the theme, practice has been fairly constant; odes may be grouped as funeral-odes, or elegies; marriage-odes, or epithalamia - less popular now than they were three hundred years ago; and odes composed for other special occasions, or on abstract themes. Thus we have Cowley's "On the Death of Mr. William Hervey," so full of sincere feeling, and Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," with its varied measures, sonorous cadences, and patriotic enthusiasm; Spenser's "Epithalamion" and Kipling's "Recessional"; Milton's "On Time" and Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," - two odes that put in such striking contrast the optimistic mentality of the seventeenth century and the philosophic unrest of the nineteenth. Milton tells us, in twenty-

two lines, that the flight of time is little loss to us, for when it has fled

Attired with stars we shall forever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee, O Time;¹⁷

whilst Wordsworth finds "perpetual benediction" rather in looking backwards to "the thought of our past years."¹⁸

All the critics are agreed on one point, namely, that the theme of an ode must be exalted, or at least dignified, and that it should be treated in a lofty or dignified manner. The term cannot be applied to narrative in verse, for an ode presupposes passionate feeling, enthusiasm, which must be impersonal; that is to say, the poet is the spokesman for humanity and expresses in his sweet or moving strains what all men feel - or might feel - but few know how to utter. An ode is characterized by beauty or stateliness of expression, and consequently is, as a rule, only two or three hundred lines in length. Our deepest feelings need not many words. On the other hand, too brief a treatment leads to a lack of grandeur and dignity, and thus precludes a poem from consideration among the odes and relegates it to a place among the simple lyrics.

Our early poets sometimes used the term "ode" for what we should call a song. This seems to be especially the case when serious reflections or philosophic musings accompany the theme, as, for example, in Richard Barnfield's "Ode", found in a Miscellany of 1596,¹⁹ which, from a consideration of the nightingale and her song, develops into a study of the qualities of a true friend:

If thou sorrow, he will weep;
If thou wake, he cannot sleep;
Thus, of every grief, in heart
He with thee doth bear a part.²⁰

Odes may be classified as Pindaric odes and their imitations, Horatian odes, and free odes. The imitations of the Pindaric ode may be in regular stanzas, as Jonson's "Ode on the Death of Sir Henry Morison," or in irregular stanzas, as Cowley's and Dryden's odes. In the nineteenth century, these imitations were more exact and more scholarly, with a truer conception of the nature and spirit of Pindar's odes. The Greek poet's style is marked by boldness and brilliancy; he elaborates his theme by many comparisons, - allusions, mythical references, metaphors. Above all, there is concentration of thought, dignity, restraint; the eagle-flight is characteristic of Pindar.

The Horatian odes, modelled on Horace, are essentially different. They are written in short, regular stanzas; the theme may be quite commonplace. However, to be called an ode in English, the poem, whether or not it be in the form of an address, should be characterized by dignity and refinement. An imitation of Horace should be couched in language that is graceful and polished, not necessarily marked by deep emotion. In Horace's odes a "man of the world" speaks to us; in Pindar's, a seer.

The third class of odes is unrestrained in form; the lyric feeling, the inspiration of the moment predominate. It is the "romantic movement" in odes, as opposed to the classical, and is best exemplified by the odes of Collins, Wordsworth, and - to name an American - Lowell.

CHAPTER II.

"MARRIAGE-ODES."

The "marriage-ode", which the poets delighted in calling an epithalamium, was composed to honor the nuptials of a patron or a friend. This form of verse had an ephemeral popularity, easily accounted for. The wonder is that such fulsome adulation and such indelicacy were tolerated for half a century. The many beautiful lines and happy phrases are not a compensation for our disappointment at seeing the Muse's pinions trailing at times through the slime of utter sensuality. Spenser sounded the key-note of this style of ode, and outlined the treatment with nymphs and flowers and all the notes of jubilation, with true poetic restraint; this is especially noticeable in his second marriage-ode, written, as were all those of the other poets, in the calm of intellectual endeavor. But what a step in degradation we have from Spenser to Herrick!

"Epithalamion," the first great ode in the language, and, by a perfection hardly to be expected in a first production, its most beautiful marriage-ode, was composed by Spenser in 1594 on the occasion of his own marriage with Elizabeth Boyle. He himself tells us in the closing lines that it was his wedding-gift:

Song ! made in lieu of many ornaments
With which my love should duly have been dect !¹

The fact that he published it the following year lessens, alas!

the romance, and seems to indicate either that the time of disillusionment had come for both, or that the poet little understood a woman's desire to have and to hold in sole possession not only the heart of her husband but also the written expression of his love.

However that may be, it is clear that when the poem was written Spenser's love was sincere and idealistic. He calls upon the Muses to help him his "owne loves prayses to resound."² They must ere dawn awaken his beloved and sing to her of coming joys and consolations, while she is being attired for the bridal by the Nymphs of wood and river. Garlands must be scattered, all the birds must sing, maidens must form the wedding-train, minstrels must "shrill aloud their merry musick,"³

The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce...
Hymen! io Hymen! ⁴

We seem called upon to witness a Roman triumph as the bride,
Adorned with beautyes grace and vertues store,⁵
advances to "the temple-gates." Here the poet's apostrophe,

Open the temple-gates unto my love!
Open them wide that she may enter in!⁶

recalls to mind the royal Prophet's cry: "Attollite portas, principes, vestras; elevamini, portae aeternales; et introibit Rex gloriae!"⁷ Does Spenser mean to imply that for him an earthly Paradise is opening? After the ceremony, during which the angels

Forget their service and about her fly,⁸

the wedding-feast, to which all are invited, is celebrated with bells and wine and song. The lover, however, becomes impatient

and finds

...it ill-ordained was
To choose the longest day in all the yeare,⁹

and calls upon the sun to hasten to his "home within the westernne
fome."¹⁰ At last he sees the evening star,

Fayre childe of Beauty! glorious lampe of Love!
That all the host of Heaven in rankes doost lead!¹¹

As all nature has shared his joy during the day, so the star seems

...to laugh atweene [its] twinkling light,
As loying in the sight.¹²

Now all creatures must keep quiet - there must be none of the
"lamenting cries" which probably were heard frequently at night in
those days of feuds and outlaws; no evil spirits or hobgoblins
must be about, no housefires or lightning do their "helpless harms,"
so serious at that period.

This passage of the poem brings forcibly before us the manner
of life in the late sixteenth century, the lack of many things
which in our civilization seem indispensable. Here too we find
two lines with a delightfully human touch; who that has lived near
a frog-pond can fail to sympathize with:

Ne let th' unpleasant quyre of Frogs still croking
Make us to wish theyr choking¹³?

His wish is granted. "Still silence trew night-watches keeps"; only

Cynthia, she that never sleepes
But walkes about high heaven al the night,¹⁴

peeps in at his window. The poem closes with an invocation call-
ing upon the "high heavens" to pour down their blessings, that
his descendants may be destined

Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.¹⁵

Of the twenty-four stanzas of this beautiful poem, nine consist of eighteen lines, fifteen of these being iambic pentameter, the three others trimeter, except in the first stanza where the sixteenth line has four feet. In general, the short lines are the sixth, eleventh, and sixteenth; however, in the tenth, sixteenth, and twenty-first stanzas, the tenth rather than the eleventh is the short line. The fifteenth stanza contains but seventeen lines, the sixth and fifteenth of which are six-syllable. Thirteen stanzas of nineteen lines each have regularly the sixth, eleventh, and seventeenth as the short lines. The closing stanza consists of but seven lines, all but the fifth - an octosyllable - being in iambic pentameter. Throughout the poem, except in this short stanza, the last line of each stanza, in which the echoes of the woods ring a refrain to the preceding verse, is a hexameter, rhyming in every case with "sing" in the preceding line.

There is the same curious mixture of pagan and Christian ideas which is found in almost all the poets of this century. Some passages are also very plain-spoken, but not more so than passages in the works of Spenser's contemporaries, as well as in those of Coventry Patmore, Swinburne, and other moderns. The glimpses we get of English life are interesting, as are the lines which show some of the poet's ideas of beauty. Certainly, no maiden of the present day would be flattered were attention called to her "sunshiny face", or were her hair described as "yellow locks lyke golden wyre."¹⁶

This ode, by its music, its cadences, its gradual rise to the climax of joy and the calm peace of possession, produces an

effect of exhilaration, of elevation. We are convinced of the sincerity of the author's feeling, and join ourselves to

These glad many, which for joy do sing,
That all the woods them answer, and their echo ring.¹⁷

Spenser's second great marriage-ode, "Prothalamion", was written in 1596, in honor of the double marriage of "the two honourable and vertuous Ladies," Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, to "two worthy gentlemen, M. Henry Gilford and M. William Peter, Esquyers" of the household of the Earl of Essex. Its ten eighteen-line stanzas are exactly similar, the verses being iambic pentameter, except the fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth, which are six-syllable lines.

The poem throughout exhibits less of nature and of feeling than his own marriage-ode, more of art and of artificiality. While "Epithalamion" is of all time, "Prothalamion", by its conceits and devices, is most decidedly of its own time of changing ideals. It is in good part a daring plagiarism of the work of an unknown author, in one of the "Miscellanies" so popular in Elizabeth's day.¹⁸

The poet walked forth along the Thames one calm, warm day, and espied by the river-side a "flocke of nymphes" busy gathering flowers. Two fair swans appeared, "swimming downe the Lee." The nymphs, amazed at their beauty, strewed the waves about them with flowers and crowned them with garlands, meanwhile singing them a lay of greeting and good wishes. The Lee murmured its affection to them, while

All the foule which in his flood did dwell¹⁹

flocked about them and formed their train. Thus they came "to merry London", where a noble lord, "with a great traine ensuing," came forth from his "high towers" and

Two gentle Knights of lovely face and feature...
Receiv'd those two faire brides.²⁰

The chief interest of the poem lies in the autobiographical touches. We learn the poet's birthplace in the lines:

...London, my most kyndly nurse,
That to me gave this Lifes first native source,
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of auncient fame.²¹

Something of his disappointment in life is evident in the passage:

Through discontent of my long, fruitlesse stay
In Princes court, and expectation vayne
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away.²²

Local coloring is given by his mention of the Temple,

...those bricky towres...
Where now the studious Lawyers have their bowers,²³

and of the stately pile near it,

Where oft I gaynèd giftes and goodly grace -²⁴

Leicester's house, then the residence of the Earl of Essex, of whose victory over the Spaniards at Cadiz in 1596 the poet makes flattering mention.

These marriage-odes are, in general outline, the model of the later poets who attempted the form. Still, each one tried to put some originality in the setting. James Shirley wrote his "epithalamium" in the form of a dialogue. It has the unusual merit of being short - twenty-six lines - long enough for its adulatory spirit:

Oh, look anon, if in the seeded sky,

You miss no stars; here I did spy
Two gliding by.²⁵

Campion and Francis Beaumont wrote masques for these happy occasions. Jonson enshrined his epithalamia in masques, one of no noteworthy distinction in the "Masque of Hymen"²⁶; another, for the marriage of Lord Haddington, 1608, in the masque entitled "The Hue and Cry after Cupid."²⁷ This lyric consists of seven stanzas, each containing eleven lines of different lengths, rhyming in couplets, the eleventh line forming a refrain:

Shine, Hesperus, shine forth, thou wished star!

The measure is lively, and alliteration makes the verses musical, as may be seen by these opening lines:

Up, youths and virgins, up and praise
The god whose nights outshine his days;
Hymen, whose hallowed rites
Could never boast of brighter lights.

But there is little of the rapturous strain in "honest Ben". Witness the fifth stanza of his "Epithalamion for the Nuptials of Mr. Hierome Weston to Lady Frances Stuart,"²⁸ which begins so musically and ends in a pitiful anti-climax:

Harke; how the bells upon the waters play
Their sister-tunes from Thames his either side,
As they had learned new changes for the day,
And all did sing th' approaches of the bride.
The lady Frances drest
Above the rest
Of all the maidens faire,
In gracefull ornament of garland, gemmes, and haire.

In England's Helicon²⁹ there is a typical marriage-ode, contributed by Christopher Brooke for the edition of 1614. Personification and mythology play their large part, as witness these, the first of ninety-eight verses:

Aurora's blush, the ensign of the day,
 Hath waked the god of light from Tithon's bower,
 Who on our bride and bridegroom doth display
 His golden beam, auspicious to this hour.

The refrain of this ode is arranged as a chorus:

To to Hymen! Paeans sing
 To Hymen and my Muse's king!

Two little phrases seem worthy to be cited: "Time goes on
 crutches"³⁰ and "Birds fledged must needs be flying."³¹

In Randolph's "Epithalamium to Mr.F.H."³² we get a more
 personal note, though the conventionalized beginning is still
 with us:

Frankie, when this Morn' the harbinger of day
 Blushed from her Easterne pillow where she lay...

His approach to his subject has some originality, for he goes on
 to say that he met Venus and Cupid in a field, and, on inquiring
 what they were doing, he was told that they were going to Weston,

To tye pure hearts in purest bond together,³³

and would take messages from him.

With Phineas Fletcher, in "An Hymen at the Marriage of my
 most dear cousins, Mr.W. and M.R."³⁴, we seem to step back to Spenser,
 and with the shepherds roam the flowery fields; even the
 rhyme chosen for the refrain evokes a reminiscent mood:

Chamus, that with thy yellow-sanded stream
 Slid'st softly down where thousand Muses dwell,
 Gracing their bowers, but thou more grac'd by them;
 Heark, Chamus, from thy low-built greeny cell:
 Heark how our Kentish woods with Hymen ring
 While all the Nymphs, and all the shepherds sing,
 Hymen, oh Hymen, here thy saffron garment bring.

Do we not almost see Chamus in his "greeny cell", "his bonnet
 sedge inwrought with figures dim"? and does not Fancy show the

gentle Cowley walking 'neath the trees, and the "uncouth swain" "warbling his Doric lay", and many more whose notes have made old Cambridge famous?

Two dainty odes are from the irreproachable pen of Sir John Beaumont. One, to the Marquis of Buckingham and his "faire and vertuous lady"³⁵, comprises six stanzas of five lines each, with this peculiarity, - that each line in the stanza is longer by two syllables than the preceding line. The poem presents a unique appearance on the printed page, as may be seen from the following quotation:

Now when they loyne their hands
Behold, how fair that knot appears !
O may the firmesse of these nuptiall bands
Resemble that bright line, the measure of the yeares,
Which makes a league between the poles, and loynes the hemispheres.³⁶

The other is in honor of the marriage of King Charles and Queen Mary.³⁷ His delicate allusions must have seemed graceful to the French princess:

The ocean long contended (but in vaine)
To part our shore from France.
Let Neptune shake his mace, and swelling waues aduance;
The former vnion now returnes againe,
This isle shall once more kisse the maine
Joyn'd with a flow'ry bridge of love, on which the Graces dance.³⁸

When Frederick, Count Palatine, wedded Elizabeth, daughter of James I. in 1613, the poets outdid themselves in masques and songs and odes. All celebrated the marriage of the Thames and the Rhine, and, as the ceremony took place on the fourteenth day of February, none neglected to invoke St. Valentine. George Wither's long composition of more than five hundred lines in ingenious and creditable to his manliness. He begins by an apostrophe to the Princess:

Bright northern star, and fair Minerva's peer,
Sweet lady of this day, Great Britain's dear.³⁹

He then recalls and describes the late winter, which had been exceedingly tempestuous, and relates how the Muse offered him an explanation of it, saying that a match had been concluded by the divine powers between the Thames and the Rhine, - both cherished by Jove and by Neptune; that Jove had issued a summons to the gods to grace the nuptials by their presence, and mortals had mistaken this for thunder. In like vein, he accounts for the winds and the floods. "Hell's hateful hags" opposed the match and strove to

Wreak their wrath on air, earth, sea, and man,⁴⁰

but Jove had stopped their mischief and made all beautiful for the wedding. The poet then refers to the three masques to be given on this occasion, and the fire-works, Jove's "comets and meteors." He praises the Prince, and adds:

We hope that this will the uniting prove
Of countries and of nations by your love.⁴¹

With great naïveté, he then gives spiritual advice to the Princess, - she must think on God, remember that she is mortal; as for the glories of the Court, they are:

Honours which you yourself did never win,
And might, had God been pleased, another's bin;
And think, if shadows have such majesty,
What are the glories of eternity!⁴²

He then asks the Princess to listen to the wedding-song which he has composed for her:

Valentine, good morrow to thee,
Love and service both I owe thee.⁴³

We notice the pathetic, personal touch, when the author of

"Abuses Stript and Whipt" says that he will venture to come with the other shepherds to the feasting, though he is "in Court now almost hated."⁴⁴ He brings his poem to a close with the pretty lines:

Yea, I desire that all your sorrows may
Never be more than they have been to-day.

How different is Donne's Epithalamion⁴⁵ on the same occasion! Mr. Gosse finds a "delicious vivacity"⁴⁶ in his hundred and twelve lines, beginning:

Haile, Bishop Valentine, whose day this is,
All the Aire is thy Diocis,
And all the chirping Choristers,
And other birds are thy Parishioners.

This dainty conceit is pleasing, but all too soon we are forced to agree with Mr. Grierson that Donne is "quite himself in his treatment of the theme of this kind of poem,"⁴⁷ which is another way of saying that he lacks tact and taste.

For the marriage of the Earl of Somerset and Lady Frances Howard, Donne composed an Eclogue.⁴⁸ Here Allophanes reprehends Idios for his absence from court. Idios avows that he had fled because he was unable to express his feelings on this great occasion, but in his solitude he has composed a "nuptiall song," which he proceeds to sing. Mr. Grierson thinks that "in glow and colour, nothing Donne has written surpasses the Somerset Epithalamium."⁴⁹ This may be so, but the glow is too hot and the color too vivid. What have we here but words, empty words and vain exaggerations!

First her eyes kindle other Ladies eyes,
Then from their beames their jewels lusters rise,
And from their jewels torches do take fire,
And all is warmth and light and good desire.⁵⁰

Of his third epithalamium, written "On a Citizen"⁵¹ when he was a student, his youth and the times must be the excuse. Its satiric lines contain a pun: the "Daughters of London" are angels, and bring "thousands of Angels on their marriage-daies."⁵²

Henry Vaughan also has left us a marriage-song "To the best and most accomplished Couple,"⁵³ whose memory, vague though it be, lives only because of the poet's kindly wishes. These he has expressed in six stanzas, each consisting of one pentameter line followed by five tetrameter lines. These stanzas are followed by two pentameter lines, the key-stone, as it were, of his arch:

So you to both worlds shall rich presents bring,
And gather'd up to heav'n, leave here a Spring.⁵⁴

The inference is that the gentleman was a Mr. Spring.

One of the last marriage-odes that have come down to us from the seventeenth century is Robert Herrick's "Nuptial Ode on Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady,"⁵⁵ which Mr. Gosse pronounces "admirably fanciful and put together with consummate skill."⁵⁶ Sir Clipseby is evidently one of Herrick's cronies, for we have a short ode addressed to him, an invitation to a drinking-bout. This may in part account for the poet's freedom of speech. The hundred and sixty lines are vivacious and musical, as may be seen in the following stanza:

What's that we see from far? the spring of Day
Bloom'd from the East, or faire injewel'd May
Blowne out of April; or some New
Star fill'd with glory to our view,
Reaching at heaven,
To adde a nobler Planet to the seven?
Say, or doe we not descrie
Some Goddess, in a cloud of Tiffanie
To move or rather the
Emergent Venus from the sea?⁵⁷

Here is imagination, indeed, - but earth-bound. However, in this ode are the beautiful lines:

A savour like unto a blessed field
 When the bedabled Morne
 Washes the golden corne.⁵⁸

The poet, whose versification is always varied and interesting, has taken some curious liberties in this poem, such as separating the adjective "new" from its noun "star" in the above quotation; in one case, he has even separated the syllables of a word, writing "slow" at the end of one verse and "ly" at the beginning of the next. As often happens in his lines, we get little side-lights on the superstitions of those days, superstitions which are still with us - "the lucky four-leaved grass," the sprinkling with wheat (why have we moderns changed this to rice?) and the yet current belief that

Blest is the Bride, on whom the Sun doth shine.⁵⁹

We have another epithalamium by Herrick, that written "To Sir Thomas Southwell and his Ladie"; this merits no special mention. By the middle of the century, the theme had been worn threadbare. The unsightly weeds in this field of poetry had completely choked the flowers. May the field lie fallow until a second Spenser comes to write noble and ennobling strains on a theme which is sacred to sane humanity !

The two poems which Andrew Marvell composed for the marriage, November 18, 1657, of Lord Fauconberg and Lady Mary Cromwell, third daughter of the Lord Protector, were by him called "Songs"⁶⁰, and rightly. In the first, Endymion and Luna converse, whilst a Chorus encourages the former to persevere until his wooing is successful, - a delicate tribute to the bride. Then, in a second song, Holbinol,

Phillis, and Tomlin sing the praises of both bride and groom. These songs have none of the characteristics of an ode.

We are now able to form an opinion about these epithalamia and decide whether or not they should be classed with odes. With regard to their form, some, we have seen, consist of a succession of decasyllabic rhyming couplets, not grouped in stanzas, as, for example, Randolph's and a great part of Wither's. Some, like Fletcher's, are composed of stanzas having five pentameter lines followed by an Alexandrine. Others, as Jonson's, have lines of divers lengths in their stanzaic structure. Hence we conclude that these marriage-odes cannot be grouped together because of similarity in form. The theme of all is practically the same, and the treatment varies only according to the pure-mindedness of the author. The true gentleman has an instinct as to what is fitting, which cannot be learned in the schools. Hence, in some of these poems, the sentiment is nobler, more elevated, than in others. It is to be noted that Spenser, who originated this kind of poem, did not call his compositions odes. They are not like any classic ode, either in structure or content. Hence, it seems reasonable to decide that these marriage-hymns or songs are in no sense odes, and should not be so classed, notwithstanding long-standing custom to the contrary. Though they are addresses, though some have an irregular stanzaic structure, though there is unity, and, in many cases, variety and elevation in the treatment, the interest is a very personal one. The poets called them epithalamia, or nuptial-songs. Let us do the same.

CHAPTER III.

POEMS CALLED ODES BY THEIR AUTHORS,- TO 1625.

As before mentioned, Daniel appears to have been the first English poet to designate one of his poems an "Ode", though, according to modern standards, the term seems pretentious in this case. His little poem, published in 1592, consists of but four stanzas, with two rhymes to each, and has all the characteristics of a little love-song, in which he dies for his "fierce Faire." The most charming lines in it refer to Echo:

Eccho, Daughter of the Aire,
babbling guest of Rocks and hills.¹

As the citation shows, the measure is trochaic, and each line has eight syllables, the eighth being occasionally represented by a pause. The effect is more melodious than stately. This little lyric appeared originally in the sonnet-sequence "Delia."

Thirty-one years later, in 1623, there was published a poem of seventy-seven lines by the same author, which in its Anglo-Saxon seriousness is worthy to be called an ode, according to the standards of that day. Daniel calls it, "A Description of Beauty, translated out of Marino." In the true odic style, it opens with an apostrophe:

O Beauty (beames, nay flame
Of that great lampe of light)

That shines a while, with fame,
But presently makes night:

In a succession of six-syllable lines, the poet reminds us that "Beauty is made of clay," that "day-closing Hesperus" will behold it languishing, and asks, "What then will it avail?"

Michael Drayton published in 1606 a volume of "collected poems" containing his Odes. In the preface he says that some are lofty as Pindar's, others amorous as Anacreon's, others mixed as Horace's, but implies that he is following his models from afar. In the edition of 1619 he carefully revised these, and added others. We have in all nineteen, of varying interest. The poet seems to have taken pride in using different metres and rhyme-schemes; no two are alike in both. Two, "An Amoret Anacreontick" and "A Skeltoniad", are not separated into stanzas. Most of the others have six-line stanzas, though "The Cryer" has one eleven and one twelve-line stanza, and "The Heart" has three lines with one rhyme to each stanza. The long ode "To Himselfe and the Harpe" must have required much skill in composition, for each stanza is composed of but five lines, with two rhymes. The rhyme-schemes are even more interesting, there being twelve absolutely different ones in the nineteen poems. The most unusual is found in "Love's Conquest", where the sixth line of a stanza rhymes with the first and third lines of the following stanza. The effect is peculiar and not pleasing.

Among his nineteen odes, Drayton included his "To the Cambro-Britans and their Harpe, the Ballad of Agincourt," which begins:

Faire stood the Wind for France,
When we our Sayles aduance,
Nor now to proue our chance,
Longer will tarry;

But putting to the Mayne,
 At Kaux, the Mouth of Sene,
 With all his Martiall Trayne,
 Landed King Harry.²

This poem is melodious and exhibits a skilful use of proper nouns; it probably is, as Mr. Elton says, "the finest flower of old patriot lyric,"³ but its sing-song measure, as lacking in stateliness as the appellation "King Harry" is lacking in dignity, should exclude it from the noble company of odes. In fact, Drayton's odes are to Wordsworth's or Shelley's as a wax candle is to a mercury-arc lamp, or as is the small and odorless yellow cinquefoil beside the peerless long-stemmed rose. His subjects, however, are of "worthy import." Two selections will show the treatment. "To the New Yeare" opens with the following lines:

Rich Statue double-faced,
 With Marble Temples graced,
 To raise thy God-head hyer,
 In flames where Altars shining
 Before the Priests diuining,
 Doe od'rous Fumes expire.⁴

In the ode "To the Virginian Voyage", we read:

And cheerefully at Sea,
 Successe you still intice,
 To get the Pearle and Gold,
 And ours to hold
 Virginia
 Earth's onely Paradise,⁵

In such lines, says Mr. Elton, "Drayton's cadence often has the true music, as of the harp speeding a vessel that is launched with colours flying, to win some new continent of odorous tropic fruits and illimitable gold."⁶ Mr. Elton speaks, it may be, with the indulgence due to the work of a pioneer. Others probably merit the reproof which the poet thus expresses in "To Himselfe and the Harpe":

To those that with despight
 Shall terme these numbers slight,
 Tell them their Judgement's blind.⁷

More musical and more stately than Drayton's measures are two poems composed by William Drummond of Hawthornden, and found in the collection called The Flowers of Sion. "An Hymne of the Resurrection" consists of one hundred and forty-five decasyllabic verses, glowing with faith and love. Joy breathes in the opening lines:

Rise from those fragrant Climes thee now embrace,
 Unto this world of ours, O haste thy Race
 Faire Sunne.⁸

All nature rejoices, earth with its trees and hills, its brooks and flowers, the air, the skies, for

An eternall Sunne hastes to arise.⁹

Alliteration and antithesis add to the beauty of the thought in such lines as

Life out of Death, Light out of Darkness springs,¹⁰

and, sharing the poet's enthusiasm, we repeat the refrain:

Haile, holy Victor, greatest Victor, haile!¹¹

Even more thrilling and uplifting, with its rapid six-syllable lines, with every eighth line a sonorous decasyllabic verse, is the "Hymne of the Ascension." From the gleaming exordium

Bright portalles of the Skie,
 Emboss'd with sparkling starres,
 Doores of Eternitie
 With diamantine barres,
 Your Arras rich up-hold,
 Loose all your bolts and Springs,
 Ope wide your Leaves of gold;
 That in your Roofes may come the King of kings,¹²

we follow the Saviour above the moon and sun, beyond the milky way and the spheres, until He comes "in the most holie Place."¹³ The hundred and fourteen lines of this poem are all in the same noble and uplifting strain.

When Drummond was but ten years old (1595), another poet with spiritual insight, Blessed Robert Southwell, S.J.¹⁴ laid down his life for his faith at Tyburn, at the age of thirty-four. His "Burning Babe", a poem of sixteen lines, loved and known by heart by Ben Jonson, seems, in spite of Horace's example, almost too short to be called an ode, although its theme is lofty, its treatment sublimely imaginative, and its lines full of mystic meaning. More easily understood and of more nearly universal appeal is his "Times Go by Turns", of which the following lines with their striking antitheses will give an idea:

O chance may win, that by mischance was lost;
 The net that holds no great, takes little fish;
 In some things, all; in all things, none are crossed;
 Few, all they need; but none have all they wish:
 Unmeddled joys here to no man befall;
 Who least, hath some; who most, hath never all.¹⁵

We should like to linger over his poems, so many of which, like the Roman poet's, breathe a calm optimism, but must be content with three characteristic quotations: "My mind to me an empire is" from "Content and Rich"¹⁶ and these two verses from "Loss in Delays":

Single sands have little weight,
 Many make a drowning freight.¹⁷

The third citation, from "Scorn not the Least", is typical of the Elizabethan love of nature:

We trample grass and prize the flowers of May;
 Yet grass is green, when flowers do fade away.¹⁸

The poet did not use the term ode in connection with these poems,

though their good sense and urbanity have a flavor of Horace. They are mentioned here simply by way of comparison with other poems, entitled odes, - such, for example, as Drayton's - in order to make more evident the vagueness and indecision that seem to have existed in the first quarter of the seventeenth century with regard to the application of the term ode.

Some time before 1618, Joshua Sylvester composed his "Ode to Astraea."¹⁹ This is not an ode at all, but a rather long love-poem of sixteen eight-line stanzas in tetrameter couplets, in which the poet details, with many classical allusions, those things which are not the reasons for his love, as eyes, hair, skin. He says at last that he loves her for her soul, and adds:

Thy mild pleasing courtesie
Makes the triumph over me.²⁰

Two poems, for a long time attributed to John Donne, were entitled odes by their authors. The first is found in Francis Davison's Poetical Rhapsody, published in 1602. Mr. Grierson argues from a Hawthornden manuscript and from the style and sentiment that John Hoskins is the author.²¹ The poem, of four stanzas, each comprising six verses, is a love-poem in a rather elevated style. The first line, "Absence, hear thou my protestation," deceives us if it makes us think that the whole poem is an address to a personified Absence, for, before the end of the first stanza, the poet is communing with himself. The fourth stanza, here quoted, will show by its content that the poem is not a true ode.

By absence this good means I gain,
That I can catch her
Where none can watch her,
In some close corner of my brain;

There I embrace and kiss her,
And so I both enjoy and miss her.²²

The other "Ode", attributed often to Donne, is by the best manuscripts assigned to Lord Herbert of Cherbury.²³ It is entitled "Ode: Of our Sense of Sinne." In four stanzas of five lines each the poet tells us that we do not notice our faults, and feel them only in their punishment. The only apparent reason for calling this composition an ode is the variety in the lengths of the lines. Its labored and obscure diction is best exemplified by a quotation:

But we know ourselves least; mere outward shews
Our mindes so store
That our soules, no more than our eyes disclose
But forme and colour. Onely he who knowes
Himselfe, knowes more.²⁴

Apparently no other so-called odes were written during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. We have seen that, early in the century, the term ode was loosely applied to songs and light lyrics. Moreover, the poets were not consistent in their use of the word, since, of two poems by Daniel, only the one less worthy of the name is by him called an ode. We have seen also that poems more worthy of this title by their lofty theme and treatment are by their authors called hymns or songs, as, for example, Drummond's "Hymne of the Ascension." Drayton, in his Preface, showed that the idea of the ode was in his mind connected with the idea of a special stanzaic form or treatment, as taught by Pindar and Horace. This is the sole advance in the restriction of the term ode of which evidence has been found in the first twenty-five years of the seventeenth century. Drayton, however, did not imitate Pindar. His odes are more

Horatian in style and form, without, however, exhibiting Horace's polished grace of diction.

It is true that seven of Pindar's odes are written in simple stanzas. These Ronsard had imitated in France, and, in 1550, he had published these imitations, together with fourteen odes on what is now called the Pindaric model, that is, with strophe, anti-strophe, and epode. The English either imitated Horace or adopted "le système strophique simple, qui permet de chanter tous les strophes sur le même air."²⁵ In this class belong Drayton's odes. It remained for Ben Jonson to take the next step in the development of the true ideal of an ode, as we shall see in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV .

FROM JONSON TO COWLEY.

The prolific and all-capable Ben Jonson is credited with producing the first true Pindaric ode written in the English language. This is entitled "To the immortal memory and friendship of that noble pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison,"¹ and was occasioned by the death of the latter about 1629. This ode merits serious study, as an exemplification not only of Pindar's ode-structure, but also of his style and spirit. The different movements received from Jonson English names, which strikingly recall the movements made by the Greek choruses to the right and to the left, and then the union of the two groups of singers and dancers. Jonson calls the strophe the "turn"; the antistrophe is the "counterturn"; the epode is the "stand". These three parts form a "triad". There are four triads in Jonson's ode. As in Pindar, the triads are exactly similar in construction; moreover, the counterturn is constructed like the turn; all the epodes are the same, and differ from the other movements. Consequently the "turn" which begins the third triad will clearly show the verse-form and the rhyme-scheme of all the turns and counterturns in the poem. This "turn" is well-known, for it is sometimes given in anthologies as a separate poem:

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk, doth make man better be;
 Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,

To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere;
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May,
 Although it fall and die that night,
 It was the plant and flower of light.
 In small proportions we just beauties see;
 And in short measures, life may perfect be.²

We see that the ten lines are rhymed in couplets; there are two tetrameter verses followed by two pentameter verses; then, in order, two trimeter, two tetrameter, two pentameter.

The epode or stand contains twelve lines, with the rhyme-scheme: a b a b c c d e e d f f. The variation in line-length, from dimeter to pentameter, is best shown by a citation. This is the "stand" of the first triad:

For what is life, if measured by the space,
 Not by the act?
 Or maskèd man, if valued by his face
 Above his fact?
 Here's one outlived his peers,
 And told forth fourscore years;
 He vexèd time, and busied the whole state,
 Troubled both foes and friends,
 But ever to no ends:
 What did this stirrer but die late?
 How well at twenty had he fallen or stood!³
 For three of his fourscore he did no good.

Jonson has imitated Pindar by mingling much moralizing, the force of which is brought home by examples, as that of the useless life recorded above. In fact, he goes to the heart of the matter at once by the opening anecdote, from which he draws the lesson that the wise would never wish to enter this world "Could they but life's miseries foresee."⁴ In the midst of the second triad, he makes his application, "Morison fell young!" but "all offices were done", and he draws the beautiful conclusion we have lately quoted: "In short measures life may perfect be."⁵

Then the poet calls upon Lucius to rejoice, for his friend is enjoying the "bright eternal day,"

Whilst that in heav'n, this light on earth must shine.⁶

He pays a beautiful tribute to their friendship, based on "simple love of greatness and of good," and having such force of example that

.....they that saw
The good, and durst not practise it, were glad
That such a law
Was left yet to mankind,
Where they might read and find
Friendship in deed was written, not in words.⁷

Here is a serious and dignified treatment of a noble theme; there is much of Pindar's spirit, though the flight is less lofty. This is the only ode Jonson composed in this manner, and there is nothing similar in English literature until the appearance of Congreve's Odes in the eighteenth century.

Some thirty years before this true Pindaric, Jonson wrote a poem which he named "Ode to James, Earle of Desmond."⁸ It consists of five stanzas, each containing thirteen lines. The opening strains arouse great expectations, which, as sometimes happens with this poet's minor compositions, are doomed to be disappointed by a very tame ending. Listen to this exordium:

Where art thou, Genius? I should use
Thy present aide: arise, Invention,
Wake, and put on the wings of Pindar's muse,
To towre with my intention
High as his mind, that doth advance
Her upright head above the reach of chance,
Or the times' envie:
Cynthius, I applie
My bolder numbers to thy golden lyre:
O then inspire
Thy priest in this strange rapture; heate my braine
With Delphick fire,

That I may sing my thoughts in some unvulgar straine.⁹

The poet then advises the earl not to think himself unfortunate when afflicted, for it is

.....glad innocence
Where only a man's birth is his offence,¹⁰

and concludes his advice by urging his "best-best lov'd" to stand

As farre from all revolt as you are now from fortune,¹¹
since "Gold that is perfect will outlive the fire."¹²

Another of our author's early pieces, in six stanzas of ten lines each, was addressed "To Sir William Sidney [nephew of Sir Philip Sidney] on his Birth-day."¹³ The third stanza, here quoted, illustrates the form and crystallizes the advice which Jonson deemed fitting on this occasion:

This day says, then, the number of glad years
Are justly summ'd that make you man:
Your vow
Must now
Strive all right ways it can
T' outstrip your peers:
Since he doth lack
Of going back
Little, whose will
Doth urge him to run wrong or to stand still.¹⁴

We notice in this ode, much more than in the former, the curious interweaving of rhymes which is so characteristic of Herrick. It is a good example of the irregular stanza which, developed by Cowley, became the hall-mark of an English ode.

Yet another friend, a "High-spirited"¹⁵ one, received from Jonson in the form of an ode "some wholesome physick for the mind." Later, when on the nineteenth of January, 1629, his comedy The New Inn was "most negligently played by some of the King's servants, and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others, the King's

subjects,"¹⁶ the poet soothed his feelings and assuaged his disappointment by addressing two odes "To Himself."¹⁷ In one he calls upon himself to leave the stage

Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,
Usurp the place of wit!¹⁸

He must not waste himself "on such as have no taste";¹⁹ for them "sweepings do as well."²⁰ He advises himself to

Take the Alcaic lute,
Or thine own Horace, or Anacreon's lyre;
Warm thee by Pindar's fire,²¹

and sing "the glories of thy king."²² Evidently, there was satisfaction in the thought that people would say that, in measures equal to his,

In sound of peace or wars
No harp e'er hit the stars.²³

The sentiments expressed in the second ode are similar; he must "sing high and aloof."²⁴

Not alone in these irregular lines did the Muse of Jonson sing. The odes of Horace served as models for several of his short poems, such as "Praises of a Countrie Life",²⁵ "To Venus",²⁶ "To Lydia",²⁷ both as to form and substance. Jonson has regulated the length of his lines according to his Latin model and used rhymes as links, but, because of their lack of dignity or grandeur, it is doubtful if these English verses can rightly be called odes. His "Epode",²⁸ a discourse of a hundred and sixteen lines in successive pentameters and trimeters, on what constitutes true virtue guided by reason, contains figures such as this description of true love:

It is a golden chaine let down from Heaven
Whose linkes are bright and even.²⁹

This is, however, in no sense an apostrophe, and, as a philosophic discourse, should be counted an epistle rather than an ode.

That Jonson was widely-read in English, as well as in French and Latin literature, is shown in a short poem of thirty-six lines in rhymed octosyllabic couplets, which he entitled simply "An Ode."³⁰ He seems to be addressing himself and, after naming the women made famous by some poet's pen, from Homer's Helen to Constable's Diana, he asks: "Shall not I my Celia bring?"³¹ Though the substance of this poem reminds us of Horace, it lacks emotional content.

When in 1630 the Queen, Henrietta Maria, was twenty-two years old, Jonson wrote "An Ode or Song, by all the Muses, in celebration of her Majesty's Birthday."³² It is composed of nine stanzas, each Muse being supposed to sing one. Its lilting measure is here illustrated by the lines put into Clio's mouth:

Up, public joy, remember
This sixteenth of November
 Some brave uncommon way;
And though the parish steeple
Be silent to the people,
 Ring thou it holy-day.

One other poem was entitled an ode by Jonson. This is "To the Right Honourable Hierome, Lord Weston, an Ode Gratulatorie, for his Returne from his Embassie, 1632." The five stanzas, of six lines each, form a simple lyric, somewhat in Horace's line of thought, without emotion.

Jonson shows in his odes that the idea of what constitutes such a poem was crystallizing. His odes are all apostrophes, generally to an individual; they are not love-songs, but contain

reflections or advice of a more universal application. They do not show much feeling, for Jonson was of a practical, dominating disposition, the head governing the heart. Only one of his odes is written according to the rules which governed Pindar; the others are written in regular stanzas such as Horace used, or in regular stanzas of irregular lines. Thus Jonson carried farther the ideas of Drayton, restricted in a greater measure the theme and its treatment, associated the name ode with irregular verses, and emphasized the idea of the apostrophe. He thus had a great influence on the odes produced by his followers.

Religion held a great place in the thoughts of these early writers and, sooner or later, all gave proofs that theirs was a "living faith." Jonson is no exception. Among his short lyrics one, entitled "To Heaven"³³, is touching in its simplicity, and in the delicacy of sentiment in the man, who does not complain of his griefs

.....lest it be thought the breath
Of discontent; or that these prayers be
For weariness of life, not love of Thee.³⁴

This poem is an apostrophe, with noble theme and true feeling; but its form, thirteen pentameter couplets, is little like that of an ode. It is not long enough to exhibit sustained dignity, and lacks variety in its unity.

In the same line of thought is Wither's beautiful little poem "The Marygold,"³⁵ - thirty lines in iambic pentameter -, a meditation or, as he says, "a serious musing." He notes how the plant depends on the sun,

Still bending tow'rds him her small slender stalk...

And how she veils her flowers when he is gone
 As if she scornèd to be lookèd on
 By an inferior eye; or did contemm
 To wait upon a meaner light than him.³⁶

Quickly, in the true contemplative spirit, he turns heavenward:

But O my God! though grovelling I appear
 Upon the ground, and have a rooting here
 Which pulls me downward, yet in my desire
 To that which is above me I aspire;
 And all my best affections I profess
 To Him that is the Sun of Righteousness.³⁷

Wither did not call his poem an ode, in which he was perhaps right, for the remarks made on Jonson's "To Heaven" apply equally well to this little gem.

A contemporary, Sir John Beaumont, attempted even a loftier flight in his "Ode of the Blessèd Trinitie."³⁸ In the form of his stanza he seems to express how, by meditation, the grandeur of his theme increases, for, beginning each of his twelve stanzas by four six-syllable lines, he concludes with one of ten syllables followed by one of twelve syllables. After a short theological explanation of the Trinity, the poet says that to treat such heavenly things the Muse must "praise with humble silence,"

And what is more than this, to still deuotion leaue.³⁹

Sir John Beaumont, as well as Jonson, knew his Horace. The following quotation from his rendering of Horace, III.29,⁴⁰ will serve to illustrate his smooth and polished versification:

He, master of himselfe, in mirth may live
 Who saith, "I rest well pleas'd with former dayes,
 Let God from Heav'n to-morrow give
 Black clouds, or sunny rayes."⁴¹

The mention of Sir John reminds us of his brother Francis, the dramatist, and of the poem entitled "Lines on the Tombs in

Westminster Abbey,"⁴² which, shortened by more than half, was long attributed to him. The forty-eight lines are in octosyllabic couplets. A certain irregularity in the position of the accents and the occasional shortening of a line by dropping one syllable adds to the weirdness of the effect. Who does not know "Mortality, behold and fear"! Who has not shivered at the thought of the "royal bones" and weighed the lesson conveyed in the tremendous lines:

Here are sands, ignoble things,
Dropt from the ruin'd sides of kings!⁴³

Theme and treatment render this poem worthy to be classed among the early English odes, on the Horatian model. Its author is unknown.⁴⁴

Written in irregular line-lengths like Jonson's "Ode to James, Earle of Desmond", is that of his "son", Thomas Randolph,⁴⁵ "To Master Anthony Stafford", in seven twelve-line stanzas. In substance it is a rhymed epistle inviting his friend to the country. The point of view, the urbanity, remind us of Horace, but in other respects this poem can hardly be called an ode. More interesting is Randolph's "Answer"⁴⁶ to Ben's ode "To Himself," in six stanzas, constructed on the same model as Ben's. He says that Ben's withdrawal from the stage will make people think they "frighted" him; he should disdain them. The "New Inn" is for "guests of a nobler strain."⁴⁷ Do not, says this loyal friend to Ben, let them

Shake the Muse which way they please.⁴⁸

The sixteen-line poem which Randolph called "A Pastoral Ode,"⁴⁹ is really a little love-song,

The form of stanza which Tennyson so well exemplified in "In Memoriam" is found already well developed in Lord Herbert of

Cherbury's "Ode upon a question moved, Whether Love should continue for ever."⁵⁰ The poem is mainly a question developed by Celenda, and answered at considerable length by Meleander, in the affirmative, of course. Two stanzas will give an idea of its melody and of its platitudes:

The well accorded Birds did sing
 Their hymns unto the pleasant time,
 And in a sweet consorted chime
 Did welcom in the chearful Spring.

To which soft whistles of the Wind,
 And warbling murmurs of a brook,
 And varied notes of leaves that shook,
 An harmony of parts did bind.⁵¹

Mr.G.C.Moore-Smith is "inclined to claim that in poetic feeling and art Edward Herbert soars above his brother George."⁵² That may be; but certainly that versifier is not polished who must overwork the auxiliary "did" in order to fill up his measure.

Thirteen years younger than Lord Herbert was Sir Henry Wotton, two of whose poems, "To His Mistress, the Queen of Bohemia,"⁵³ and "The Character of a Happy Life,"⁵⁴ are too well-known to need comment. The former is in a most delicate, complimentary style; the latter is Horatian in its simplicity and Christian in its sentiments. They are not, however, odes, though they have more odic quality in theme and treatment than the poem last discussed. They are mentioned here as evidence of the fact that poets, on the whole, at this time gave no clear and definite meaning to the term ode. Less well known than these short lyrics is Sir Henry's "Ode to the King at his Returning from Scotland,"⁵⁵ interesting because it was attributed for a long time to Ben Jonson and inserted by Mr.Gifford among Ben's "Works". It consists

of twenty-two lines arranged in four stanzas, with two supplementary lines. A quotation will show the style and the rhyme-scheme:

To this let all good hearts resound,
 While diadems invest his head;
 Long may he live, whose life doth bound
 More than his laws, and better lead
 By high example than by dread! ⁵⁶

"Upon the Occasion of His Majesty's Proclamation in the Year 1630, Commanding the Gentry to reside upon their estates in the Country,"⁵⁷ Sir Richard Fanshawe, whom Mr. Massingham calls "the fine gentleman of the muse," who "can command at times not only poetic courtesy but also poetic taste,"⁵⁸ composed a pleasing and patriotic ode of forty-eight lines, glorifying England and praising the country-side. The Lake Poets have a kindred spirit in the author of these picturesque lines:

The lily queen, the royal rose,
 The gilliflower, prince of the wood;
 The courtier tulip (gay in clothes)
 The regal bud;

The violet, purple senator,
 How they do mock the pomp of state
 And all that at the surly door
 Of great ones wait! ⁵⁹

Dr. Johnson would have applauded this sentiment! The poet addresses the "Ladies", but shows no emotion, nor concentrated thought.

Robert Herrick, the greatest of the "sons of Ben," designated five of his poems "odes". The short one to Sir Clipseby Crew has already been mentioned. Even shorter is the one to Ben Jonson, entitled simply "An Ode for Him."⁶⁰ That "To Master Endymion Porter upon his Brother's Death"⁶¹ contains but twenty-eight lines, of varying length, grouped in four stanzas, with three rhymes each. There is in it little of the ordinary elegiac strain. Its

seems, for though the treatment is vivacious, and the lines steeped in imagination, the theme lacks in loftiness and the emotion in this beautiful lyric is too personal. Herrick's muse flits from flower to flower in the lyric meadow, but never with the eagles seeks the heights.

In 1638 Sir William D'Avenant published Madagascar with Other Poems; three of these he entitled odes. All three are friendly addresses, all three have varied measures in each stanza; in no other way do they resemble odes. "To the King on New Yeares Day, 1630," has four stanzas. "To Endimion Porter, passing to Court to him by water" has three stanzas of twelve lines each. "In Remembrance of Master William Shakespeare. Ode"⁶⁸ has three six-line stanzas. The last has a certain interest, since it is said to have been written in the year of Shakespeare's death, when D'Avenant was but ten years old. If it were not revised before being published, it shows great skill in versification and considerable imagination in so youthful a composer. He imagines the trees and flowers along the Avon as lamenting the great poet, and even the river itself as dwindling away through grief. Here is the last stanza:

The pitious river wept itself away
 Long since (alas!) to such a swift decay,
 That reach the map, and look
 If you a river there can spie;
 And for a river your mock'd eye
 Will finde a shallow brooke.⁶⁹

Five years after the publication of D'Avenant's poems, Alexander Broms wrote "An Ode,"⁷⁰ reproaching in veiled language the disturbers of the peace of the kingdom. The irregular lines of the stanza and the dignified treatment form its sole claim to the

name "ode", as may be seen from the following stanza, the fourth of six:

The world's undone,
When stars oppose the Sun,
And make him change his constant course to rest;
His foaming steeds,
Flying those daring deeds,
I' th' stables of the north or west
When we may fear he'll never more return,
To light and warm us with his rays, but all to burn! ⁷¹

John Hall lived but twenty-nine years, from 1627 to 1656, too short a time for the complete development of a youth full of promise. Before he was twenty-one years old, he had published two volumes of poems, four of which he entitled odes. The following remark on his work by Mr. Saintsbury is suggestive: "Gold dust only, in small handfuls, or even pinches? Perhaps; but gold dust." ⁷² Three of his odes are misnamed, according to present-day standards. "An Epicurean Ode" ⁷³ is an address to Romira, implying that she is of more than mortal birth. Two others, each simply called "An Ode", are prayers; one of fifty-four lines asks a part in God's kingdom:

Thy kingdom is
More than ten thousand worlds, each heart
A province is;
Keep residence in mine, 'tis part
Of those huge realms; I'll be
Thy slave, and by this means gain liberty. ⁷⁴

This is musical and deeply religious in tone, but not remarkable in versification. The other prayer, in five stanzas of eight lines each, calls for God's assistance:

Thou who alone
Canst give assistance, send me aid
Else shall I in those depths be laid
And quickly thrown
Whereof I am afraid;
Thou who canst stop the sea
In her mad rage, stop me,
Lest from my self my own self ruin be. ⁷⁵

Hall's fourth ode shows the influence of Ben Jonson, as it is written in exactly the same stanzaic form which Randolph used in his "Ode to Master Anthony Stafford," - twelve verses varying in length from two to six accents. It is entitled, "To his Tutor, Master Pawson. An Ode"⁷⁶ and, treating as it does of the study of geography, history, and astronomy, and the mind's search for truth, it is quite a remarkable production for an undergraduate. The tutor to whom these lines were addressed must have been deeply gratified:

Come, come away,
 And snatch me from these shades to purer day.
 Though Nature lie
 Reserv'd, she cannot 'scape thy piercing eye.
 I'll in her bosom stand,
 Led by thy cunning hand,
 And plainly see
 Her treasury;
 Though all my light be but a glimpse of thine,
 Yet with that light I will o'erlook
 Her hardly open'd book,
 Which to aread is easy, to understand divine.⁷⁷

Another and better-known Caroline lyricist, Richard Lovelace, in 1645 published "Poems", five of which he called odes, and two epodes. Of these seven poems five, which may be described as dignified love-poems, concern Lucasta; one is addressed "To my Lady H."⁷⁸ The structure of these six poems is very simple. Two of them, "To my Lady H." and "Calling Lucasta from her Retirement,"⁷⁹ are a series of stanzas each comprising three rhyming lines. Three others are in couplets, while one rhymes partly in couplets, with alternate rhymes in the middle of the stanza. The seventh of the poems is entitled "The Grasshopper. To my noble friend, Mr. Charles Cotton. Ode."⁸⁰ It contains a little moralizing in Horace's style,

and has merely that claim to be entitled an ode. Its structure is simple, alternating pentameter and tetrameter lines with alternate rhymes. The poet begins:

Oh thou, that swing'st upon the waving eare
 Of some well-fillèd oaten beard,
 Drunk ev'ry night with a delicious teare
 Dropt thee from Heav'n, where now th' art rear'd!⁸¹

The consideration of the grasshopper's fate at the coming of winter bids him and his friend to create

A gemine summer in each other's breast.⁸²

During winter they will read Greek together.

Thus richer than untempted kings are we,
 That asking nothing, nothing need;
 Though lord of all what seas imbrace, yet he
 That wants himselfe, is poore indeed.⁸³

Fourteen years later two more so-called odes are found in a new edition of Lovelace's poems. The stanzaic form in them is somewhat more elaborate than in the poems first published. "Love Inthron'd. Ode"⁸⁴ has an eight-line stanza, the lines varying from three to five accents, while the four stanzas of "Ode"⁸⁵ comprise each ten lines, rhyming in couplets, with two to five accents in the verses. This seems to indicate that Lovelace's idea of an ode, which term he uses so loosely, was at last becoming restricted to a poem having variety in the verse-form, but that the question of theme or treatment did not occur to him.

And yet models had not been wanting! Two of the most remarkable odes in the language had already been published, one on the Horatian model, the other exemplifying the grandeur of treatment which characterized Pindar; but Lovelace's work is proof of the little influence exercised at that time by the poetry of Milton

and of Marvell, whose works we shall now consider.

On Christmas morning, 1629, John Milton, then in his twenty-first year, began one of the most exquisite odes in the English language. The associations of the day enkindled his soul and inspired him with strains of undying beauty. He called his work "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity,"⁸⁶ and that he considered it an ode is evident from his own words in the Introduction:

See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O, run, prevent them with thy humble ode.⁸⁷

The introduction comprises four stanzas, each composed of six pentameter lines, followed by an Alexandrine. In Pindaric style, the poet at once states his theme:

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
and invites his Muse to greet the Lord, to welcome Him with a hymn. This hymn contains twenty-seven eight-line stanzas in a stately and melodious measure. In each stanza, two rhymed trimeter lines are followed by a pentameter line; the movement is repeated, the second pentameter line rhyming with the first; then a tetrameter line is followed by a hexameter, rhyming with it. The variation in the length of the lines prevents monotony, as well as all tendency to sing-song.

Milton has treated his theme with Pindaric splendor and elaboration. The Bible and the Classics supply illustrations. The "Sons of Morning", the "sable-stolèd sorcerers", the "yellow-skirted fays", all, in one way or another, acknowledge the presence of their Lord. In His honor, Heaven sends

The helmèd Cherubim
And sworded Seraphim...⁸⁸ while

Heaven's youngest-teemèd star
 Hath fixed her polish'd car,
 Her sleeping Lord with hand-maid lamp attending. 89

Mr. Browne tells us that Landor considered stanzas 4-7 of the Hymn "incomparably the noblest piece of lyric poetry in any modern language" that he knew, but that he thought the rest "marred here and there by the bubbles and fetid mud of the Italian," to the influence of which literature he "attributed many of the redundancies and exaggerations of Milton's verse."⁹⁰ The stanzas indicated by Landor are, indeed, strikingly beautiful. How musical are the lines:

But peaceful was the night
 Wherein the Prince of Light
 His reign of peace upon the earth began:
 The winds with wonder whist,
 Smoothly the waters kist
 Whispering new joys to the mild océan -
 Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
 While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave. 91

It is true, too, that a critical eye may find a blemish or two, as in the conceit,

...when the sun in bed
 Curtain'd with cloudy red
 Pillows his chin upon an orient wave, 92

but we doubt that the blame should be laid upon the Italians; Donne was still living! And we could not spare a single detail that adds to the solemnity, neither "the Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets,"⁹³ nor even the old Dragon who "swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail."⁹⁴

It is hard to believe that, in the tempestuous years of his later life, Milton lost faith in the divinity of the "Son of Heaven's Eternal King," to whose feet his youthful Muse had brought so transcendant an offering.

At least two editors⁹⁵ have grouped seven shorter poems of Milton with "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity", and called them all odes. The fact that all of these, except "On the Death of a Fair Infant",⁹⁶ were first published together, in 1645, may have something to do with this. Two of these, the exception mentioned and "On the Death of the Marchioness of Winchester"⁹⁷, are elegies, and the ten-line "Song on May Morning"⁹⁸ is by its title placed among simple lyrics. It is doubtful, moreover, if Milton himself, with his lofty ideals, would have considered the four others sufficiently long and elaborate to be called odes.

The eight stanzas of "The Passion"⁹⁹ are formed on the model of the Introduction in the Nativity ode, of which they vividly remind us. Milton probably intended this poem, which he left unfinished, as a companion-piece to that ode, since in the very first stanza he recalls his former poem thus:

Erewhile of music.....
 And joyous news of Heavenly Infant's birth
 My Muse with Angels did divide to sing.¹⁰⁰

The poet transports himself to Calvary, and calls upon night to hide his grief. He strives for comparisons, with such conceits as:

The leaves should all be black whereon I write,
 And letters, where my tears have wash'd, a wannish white. 101

The general effect is so artificial that we are glad he did not complete the poem according to his first intention. Many years later, in "Paradise Lost", he treated the theme in a worthy manner.

"The Circumcision"¹⁰² is short - two irregular stanzas of fourteen lines each, with a very pretty rhyme-scheme: a b c b a d c e e d f g g f . The subject is treated with truly classical restraint; the address is to

Ye flaming Powers, and wingèd Warriors bright,
 who are invited to mourn, - and to rejoice, - because of
 Just law, indeed, but more exceeding love.¹⁰³

The twenty-two irregular lines "On Time"¹⁰⁴ have somewhat the appearance of a short ode, but as Milton, to judge from the early editions, composed it for a clock-face, it need not detain us! That same year, 1630, at Cambridge, the poet wrote "At a Solemn Music."¹⁰⁵ The poem is addressed to the

Sphere-born harmonious Sisters, Verse and Voice.¹⁰⁶

Most of the twenty-eight lines are pentameter verses, though in some there is an irritating roughness, as:

Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ,
 Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce.¹⁰⁷

One line, the eighth, contains six syllables; the fifteenth and sixteenth lines have each seven syllables, with four accents; while the last line has twelve syllables. This poem has been highly praised, though it seems a labored composition which adds nothing to the poet's glory. In truth, the consideration of these minor poems of Milton leads to the conclusion that he wrote but one true ode. Though in each of these poems of Milton other than the Nativity ode, there is diversity in the line-lengths, though the theme is lofty and the treatment elevated, there is a lack of that amplitude and variety which is expected in even an irregular ode.

Milton's assistant in his duties as Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth was another poet, Andrew Marvell. He is especially remembered for one ode, "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return

from Ireland."¹⁰⁸ Its one hundred and twenty lines rhyme in couplets, two tetrameter lines being followed by two trimeter lines. Its style resembles that of Horace when praising Augustus - it is spirited, clear-cut, concise. It was probably written in 1650, when Cromwell left Ireland to take part in a campaign against Scotland. We note the author's sympathy with King Charles, who "nothing common did nor mean,"¹⁰⁹ and his realization that Cromwell must continue to wield the sword, for

The same arts that did gain
A pow'r must it maintain.¹¹⁰

This, Marvell's unique ode, is the greatest of its kind in the seventeenth century. In fact, so far is it from his usual style that his authorship has been questioned, for, as already noted, no other poem written by him has the qualities of an ode.

As we cast a backward glance before bringing this chapter to a close, we perceive the greater definiteness attained in the odic idea since the beginning of the century. Jonson has written a model Pindaric ode, perfect as to form. Milton has exemplified the style of Pindar and impressed us with the loftiness of his theme. Marvell has produced an ode with something of Horace's form, style, and diction. Doubtless the difference between the Greek and Roman models has been one of the causes of confusion in the differentiation of the English ode from other kinds of lyric verse, for Horace's themes are often slight and commonplace; he treats of wine-casks and fountains as well as of heroes, while his manner is often slightly cynical, almost flippant, notwithstanding the music of his verse. No poems on slight themes and slight in treatment now being produced are called odes in English, even

though they may bear a close resemblance to Horace's work. Jonson's example of dignified theme, noble treatment, and varied stanzaic structure, at last prevailed, not precisely because of Jonson's influence, but because his idea was developed and popularized, as well as modified, by an author whom we have yet to consider, - Abraham Cowley.

CHAPTER V.

THE RELIGIOUS POETS .

Before beginning the study of Cowley's influence, it is well to give a brief consideration to the work of a group of poets who made a special contribution to English literature, the so-called "religious poets," and to inquire what place they should have in the study of the seventeenth century ode. A careful examination of their writings reveals only one poem so designated by its author, Crashaw's "Ode which was Praefixed to a little Prayer-book given to a young Gentle-woman." Let us, however, examine their work by the same standards used with the other poets of the seventeenth century. Let us see if any of their poems might be classed among odes. We shall probably find that some of their hymns fulfil all the conditions that make them worthy of mention here.

Two of these poets led almost contemporaneous lives, George Herbert and Francis Quarles. Both were born in 1592; and they died within four years of each other, the former in 1633, the latter four years earlier. Herbert's devotion is very calm; in it there are no raptures. His poems are musings or pieces of self-examination. Two of them are in the form of an apostrophe. "Peace"¹ begins so charmingly that, on first coming upon it, one is inclined to rejoice as at the finding of a treasure:

Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell, I humbly crave,
 Let me once know.
 I sought thee in a secret cave,
 And ask'd if Peace were there.
 A hollow wind did seem to answer, No:
 Go seek elsewhere.

But the poem soon degenerates into far-fetched conceits. The other, entitled "Discipline"², consists of eight four-line stanzas, showing neither great feeling nor imagination. The first and the last will illustrate the style.

Throw away Thy rod,
 Throw away Thy wrath;
 O my God,
 Take the gentle path!

Throw away Thy rod;
 Though man frailties hath,
 Thou art God;
 Throw away Thy wrath.

Very different is Quarles. Mr. E. W. Gosse pronounces him "without distinction and without charm,"³ and says that his poetry is "prose run mad in couplets."⁴ These strictures can hardly, in fairness, apply to all of the so-called Emblemes. What is daintier than "On the Nativity"?⁵

Come, come, my blessed Infant, and immure thee
 Within the Temple of my sacred arms...⁶
 Pardon, sweet Babe, what I have done amisse,
 And seal that granted pardon with a kisse.⁷

And is there not imagination in the lines:

The purple violet and the pale-fag'd lilly,
 The pancy and the organ colombine?⁸

Just one more Embleme must be mentioned, the well-known "False World, thou ly'st!"⁹ That it is a bold apostrophe cannot be denied, but is it elevated enough to be called an ode? The first stanza will suffice to show the lack of imagination, the rhythmic prose of much of Quarles's work:

Fair world, thou ly'st: Thou canst not lend
 The least delight.
 Thy favours cannot gain a Friend,
 They are so slight:
 Thy morning pleasures make an end
 To please at night:
 Poore are the wants that thou supply'st,
 And yet thou vaunt'st, and yet thou vy'st
 With heav'n: Fond earth, thou boast'st, false world, thou ly'st.

Herbert's poems are much better known than Quarles's, doubtless through the popularity given him by Izaak Walton's Life of George Herbert. They are, however, much colder. Mr. Gosse, who cannot be accused of partiality for Quarles, admits that "his fervour, though it takes such a wearisome form, is genuine."¹⁰ Herbert could not have written such verses as the following:

E'en like two little bank-dividing brooks
 That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
 And having rang'd and search'd a thousand nooks,
 Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
 Where in a greater current they conjoyn,
 So I my best-belovèd's am; so he is mine.¹¹

What heat in these lines, when, speaking of monarchs, he says:

Their wealth is but a counter to my coin;
 The world's but theirs; but my belovèd's mine.¹²

William Habington and Dr. Joseph Beaumont will not delay us long. Mr. Chalmers says of the former that "his poems are distinguished from those of most of his contemporaries by delicacy of sentiment, tenderness, and a natural strain of pathetic reflection."¹³ His beautiful "Nox nocti indicat scientiam"¹⁴ is well-known, and may be considered an ode if we assume that the poet is addressing himself. The thought of death and of eternity pervades all his religious poems with a striking sameness, as in the psalm-paraphrase entitled, "Paucitatem dierum meorum nuncia mihi."

Tell me, O great All-knowing God!
 What period

Hast Thou unto my days assign'd.
 Like some old leaflesse tree, shall I
 Wither away, or violently
 Fall by the axe, by lightning, or the wind?¹⁵

- a pre-occupation easily explained in a man whose father had spent six years in the Tower, under suspicion of complicity in Babington's plot to release Mary Queen of Scots, and who, with his family had remained true to the old religion of the realm. According to modern standards, his poems are more fittingly called hymns or lyrics than odes.

This is true also of Dr. Joseph Beaumont's minor poems. The lines and stanzas are often irregular. In only one case does he use an apostrophe, - in a poem composed of nine eight-line stanzas, called "Content".¹⁶

Divine Content!
 O could the world resent
 How much of Bliss doth lye
 Wrap'd up in thy
 Delicious name; and at
 How low a Rate
 Thou mightst be bought; no Trade would driven be
 To purchase any Wealth, but only Thee!

This is little more than cut-up prose; "vers libres" minus all imagination.

Thomas Traherne, "re-discovered in the twentieth century,"¹⁷ is highly praised by the editor of his Works, Mr. Dobell, who, speaking of the religious poets, says: "None of them has the vitality, the sustained enthusiasm, the power imparted by intense conviction, which we find in our author."¹⁸ The writer of this essay has sought in vain for these qualities. The poet is cheerful and optimistic, but he plays upon but one string. Much of what he has written is little more than versified prose. Judged solely by

the irregularity of the lines, - from two to five accents - by the greatness of the theme, and by its philosophical treatment, "My Spirit" might be classed among the odes. The poet is talking to himself, and says that his spirit

...simple like the Deity
In its own centre is a sphere 19
Not shut up here, but everywhere.

Other philosophical and didactic passages are interesting, merely as fore-shadowings of later poets; they have no poetic or aesthetic appeal. A quotation from "Thoughts I.", which is composed of seven stanzas, each containing twelve lines varying in length from two to five accents, will exemplify the poet's style and justify the opinions expressed.

Ye brisk, divine, and living things,
Ye great examplars, and ye heavenly Springs,
Which I within me see;
Ye machines great
Which in my spirit God did seat, 20
Ye engines of felicity....etc.

Machines and engines are without poetic connotation, in spite of Milton's example and the depth of meaning - or ambiguity - of his "two-handed engine."

The other two religious poets, Henry Vaughan and Richard Crashaw, are to each other as light is to flame; one appeals more to the intellect, the other awakens the emotions. Vaughan, "with a fine sense of natural beauty,"²¹ is a "lineal progenitor of Wordsworth."²² This is seen in "The Bird", the first twenty-two lines of which constitute a dainty odelet:

For each enclosed spirit is a star
Inlighting his own little sphere,
Whose light, though fetched and borrowed from afar,
Both mornings makes and evenings there.²³

Unfortunately, Vaughan has committed the fault, common with him, of a weak ending, by adding ten inferior lines. A very lofty and imaginative poem, where again the first lines are the best, is entitled "The World".²⁴ It begins by the well-known line "I saw Eternity the other night." "The Rainbow"²⁵, "Night"²⁶, "The Retreat"²⁷, all these have some claim to the appellation "ode", as does the thirty-line poem called "Christ's Nativity"²⁸, of which the first two stanzas are:

Awake, glad heart! get up, and sing,
 It is the Birth-day of thy King;
 Awake! awake!
 The sun doth shake
 Light from his locks, and all the way
 Breathing Perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake, awake! heark, how the wood rings,
 Winds whisper, and the busie springs
 A Concert make;
 Awake, awake!
 Man is their high-priest, and should rise
 To offer up the sacrifice.

Richard Crashaw has been declared by Mr. Courthope "one of the most remarkable poets of the reign of Charles I."²⁹, while another eminent scholar and critic, Mr. Gosse, says: "He rises, at his best, to a mounting fervour which is quite electrical, and hardly rivalled in its kind before or since."³⁰ His "Ode to Saint Teresa" and "The Flaming Heart" are too well known to readers of anthologies to need more than mention here. They have all the qualities of odes, as has also the poem which the author called "A Hymn to the Name above Every Name."³¹ This long poem of two hundred and thirty-nine lines, mostly decasyllabic, but with a generous interweaving of four and of six-syllable lines, is not divided into stanzas. The poet calls upon his Soul to "awake and sing", but finds her

.....poor of noble powers
And full of nothing else but empty me.³²

So the Soul calls upon all Nature and all Art to help her; the Heavens too, and all the "warbling Seraphim," Then follows the fervent appeal:

Come, lovely Name! Appear from forth the bright
Regions of peaceful light;
Look from Thine Own illustrious home,
Fair King of Names, and come.³³

There are many lines filled with enthusiasm and imagination, as

O, see the weary lids of wakeful Hope,
(Love's eastern windows) all wide ope
With curtains drawn
To catch the daybreak of Thy dawn, ³⁴ ... and these:

How many thousand mercies there
In Pity's soft lap lie a-sleeping! ³⁵

The poet speaks of the joy of those who suffer persecution for that Name's sake, and ends with the Day of Judgment,

When stubborn rocks shall bow,
And hills hang low their heaven-slanting heads
To seek for humble beds
Of dust, where in the bashful shades of Night,
Next to their own low Nothing, they may lie,
And couch before the dazzling light of Thy dread majesty.
They that by Love's mild dictate now
Will not adore Thee,
Shall then, with great confusion, bow
And break before Thee! ³⁶

Many, if not all, of Crashaw's poems are characterized by imagination and passion. Still, as has already been said, of his religious poems, only one was called by him an ode. It is written in his customary style, without stanzaic division, and consists of a hundred and twenty-four verses of varying lengths; the rhyme-scheme also is irregular. Like Pindar, he boldly indicates his theme at the outset:

Lo here a little volume, but great Book³⁷
 It is an armory of light,
 Let constant use but keep it bright.³⁸

The middle of the poem is taken up with reflections, and contains much spiritual counsel:

If when he come
 He find the Heart from home,
 Doubtless he will unload
 Himself some other where,
 And pour abroad
 His pretious sweets
 On the fair soul whom first he meets.³⁹

Crashaw concludes with the rewards of fidelity:

Happy proof! she shal discover
 What joy, what blisse
 How many Heav'ns at once it is
 To have her God become her Lover.⁴⁰

Crashaw wrote on patriotic as well as on religious themes.

"On the King's Coronation"⁴¹ and "On the Birth of the Princess Elizabeth"⁴² are in the same rich and musical style. A few lines from "To the Queen, - a Panegyrick"⁴³ will suffice to support this statement.

Britain! the mighty Ocean's lovely Bride!
 Now stretch thyself, fair Isle, and grow; spread wide
 Thy bosome, and make roome. Thou art opprest
 With thine own glories, and art strangely blest
 Beyond thy self!

Thou by thy self maist sit, blest Isle, and see
 How thy great mother Nature dotes on thee.
 Thee therefore from the rest apart she hurl'd
 And seem'd to make an Isle, but made a World.⁴⁴

We are now able to form a judgment, and to answer the question as to whether or not these religious writers have enriched our literature with odes. We need not hesitate over the poems of Dr. Beaumont, which are almost simple prose. The other poets show variety in the stanzaic forms of their poems, and diversity in the

line-lengths. Crawshaw did not separate most of his poems into stanzas, but this can easily be done. We have seen that many of these religious poems are not apostrophes. Their theme is always noble, but the treatment varies greatly. The poems of Quarles and Habington are lacking in grandeur; those of Vaughan in emotional appeal, although some of these, as, for example, "The World," possess other characteristics of the ode. Herbert's work and Traherne's have a personal rather than a universal appeal; they do not evoke a mood in the reader, and, consequently, charm him only when his mood is that of the poet.

Crawshaw alone seems to have dealt with his themes in a grand, elaborate, highly emotional strain, with much variety in his unity, and a richness of poetical imagery which arouses thought and feeling, while the music of his phrases satisfies the desire for beauty. Hence his poems, both patriotic and religious, might justly be called irregular odes. However, he himself has not so named his patriotic poems, probably because they are written in pentameter couplets, while he has preferred to call his religious poems hymns. The unique poem which he has called an ode shows us that his idea of an ode was lofty: the ode should be long, varied, ornate in style, an address. But he seems to have considered the ode as of lower lyric rank than the hymn, since he reserved the appellation "ode" for a stately poem prefixed to a prayer-book, and invariably gave the title "hymn" to what he certainly considered greater and nobler themes, - his addresses to the inhabitants of Heaven. We shall not make this distinction. "The Hymn to Saint Teresa", "The Flaming Heart", and many of the poems in his Carmen Deo Nostro may rightly be classed among the irregular odes.

CHAPTER VI

COWLEY AND THE PINDARIC ODES.

Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) was so precocious a boy that his first volume of poems, published when he was fifteen years old, contained a narrative poem, "Pyramus and Thisbe," written when he was ten. A second edition, three years later, included six poems therein called "odes", and a seventh entitled "A Vote"¹, which Cowley, in his essay "On Myself" refers to as an ode.² These first odes of Cowley are not the Pindarics which have made his name an important one in literary history. They are rather imitations of Horace, with regular stanzas and simple rhyme-schemes, and are marked by a great simplicity. For example, "A Vote" consists of eleven stanzas, each comprising eight lines of from three to five accents, with rhyme-scheme a a b c c b d d. The poet votes that he will not be a Puritan preacher, a school-master, a justice of the peace, or courtier, or lawyer, or usurer. He begs to be freed from "singing-men, and "court-madam's beauty". He does not want too much poetry or astronomy.

This only grant me, that my means may lie
 Too low for envy, for contempt too high
 Some honour I would have,
 Not from great deeds, but good alone.³

In 1656 Cowley published a folio volume of his poems. In the

first section are the two beautiful tributes of his affection to his deceased friends: "On the Death of Mr. William Hervey"⁴, and "On the Death of Mr. Grashaw"⁵, together with three poems which he has entitled odes. These are: "Ode. Of Wit"⁶, "Ode"⁷, and "Ode. In Imitation of Horace's Ode. Lib. I. od. 5."⁸ This last-mentioned ode is composed of five stanzas of six lines each, and begins, "To whom now Pyrrha art thou kind?" Neither this poem nor the one entitled simply "Ode" deserves that appellation, for neither theme nor treatment is lofty. The "Ode" is surprising from the pen of the noble-minded and gentle Cowley. He advises his friend Dick to console his disappointment in a rather unmanly way, and shows little esteem for womankind. These are the opening lines:

Here's to thee, Dick; this whining Love despise;
Pledge me, my Friend, and drink till thou be'st wise.
It sparkles brighter far than she;
'Tis pure and right without deceit;
And such no woman ere will be:
No; they are all sophisticate.

The poet compensates for these inanities in the "Ode. Of Wit", which Dr. Johnson declares "is almost without a rival."⁹ In the days of Elizabeth the word wit denoted the intellectual faculty; later, this was identified with the imagination, especially in its fanciful development, as exhibited by the so-called metaphysical poets. In nine stanzas of eight lines each the poet tries to answer the following demand:

Tell me, O tell, what kind of thing is wit.

The second stanza will illustrate his treatment of this theme:

London that vents of false ware so much store,
In no ware deceives us more.
For men led by the colour and the shape,
Like Zeuxis' birds fly to the painted grape;

Some things do through our judgement pass
 As through a multiplying-glass;
 And sometimes, if the object be too far,
 We take a falling meteor for a star.

The poem contains many quotable lines. The following show how Cowley merits the eulogium of Mr. Gosse, who says: "The moral purity of Cowley's muse in so licentious a time must not pass without praise.....Cowley seldom forgot to write as a gentlemen."¹⁰

Much less can that have any place
 At which a virgin hides her face;
 Such dross the fire must purge away; 'tis just
 The author blush, there where the reader must.¹¹

These early odes, to quote Mr. Gosse again, "breathe a great pride in the art of poesy, great desire for and confidence of fame, and a scholastic turn of mind."¹²

In the third section of the folio Cowley presented his "Pindarick Odes", preceded by a "Preface", which is of considerable interest and importance. He says:

If a man should undertake to translate Pindar word for word, it would be thought that one Mad man had translated another... our Ears are strangers to the Musick of his Numbers. ...I have in these two Odes of Pindar [Second Olympic Ode and Nemaeon Ode] taken, left out, and added what I please; nor make it so much my aim to let the Reader know precisely what he spoke, as what was his way and manner of speaking; which has not been yet (that I know of) introduced into English, though it be the noblest and highest kind of writing in Verse.¹³

In the "Preface" to the folio, Cowley had already prepared his readers for this experiment: "As for the Pindarick Odes, I am in great doubt whether they will be understood by most Readers.... The digressions are many and sudden, and sometimes long, according to the fashion of all Lyriques, of Pindar above all men living.... The Numbers are various and irregular."¹⁴

It has generally been supposed that Cowley did not understand

the structure of Pindar's odes. Mr. Gosse says that "he produced, by an error in criticism, a whole class of poetry which flourished more or less vigorously almost until our own times."¹⁵ We cannot be sure of this. Cowley was a Greek and Latin scholar. He wrote a Latin poem on plants in six books which, with other pieces, was published in 1678, more than ten years after his death, under the title Poemata Latina; and, from his long residence in the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, we may infer that he had seen the edition of Pindar published by Erasmus Schmid and Nicolas Lesueur in 1616, with extensive commentaries and Latin translations of the Odes. It seems reasonable, therefore, to interpret Cowley's words literally and to assume that, as he says, he aimed only at showing Pindar's manner. To form an idea as to his success in accomplishing this purpose, let us now consider these odes, which are fifteen in number.

The first, a very free translation of the second Olympian Ode, comprises eleven stanzas, varying in number of lines from thirteen to twenty-two. Two have seventeen lines, two have eighteen, two have nineteen. In the stanzas there is no correspondence in line-lengths; for example, in the first stanza, eleven of the lines have four accents, five of them have five accents, one line has six and another has seven. This is true of no other stanza. Throughout the poem the lines rhyme mostly in couplets. It is plain that there is here no imitation of Pindar's ode-structure. As for his manner, since the substance of the poem is translated from the Greek poet, we may, on account of its paraphrases, call it diluted Pindar. This judgment applies also to the Nemeaan Ode.

The third ode, "The Praises of Pindar" ,is an imitation of the second ode in Horace's fourth book. It comprises four stanzas, two of twelve lines each, one of eleven lines, another of fifteen. Here we may perceive the "grand style" which Cowley wished to imitate, in such expressions as "Pindar's unnavigable song".¹⁶ He says that whether the Theban praises gods or heroes,

Each embroidered line
Which their triumphant brows around
By his sacred hand is bound,
Does all their starry diadems outshine;¹⁷

and when he praises one who is dead,

Among the stars he sticks his name,
The grave can but the dross of him devour,
So small is death's, so great the poet's power.¹⁸

This is great praise, but the style is labored. Would not "writes his name" be more elegant than "sticks his name"?

To be brief, all of these fifteen odes except one are written in a loose, irregular stanza, from the two shortest, "Life"¹⁹ and "Life and Fame"²⁰, having each three stanzas, to the longest, "The Plagues of Egypt"²¹ with its nineteen stanzas, varying in length from thirteen to thirty-one lines, and in line-length from two to seven accents. The exception to the general irregularity is "The Extasie"²², which has eleven eight-line stanzas with uniform structure, and rhyme-scheme a b b a c c d d .The first two lines have five accents, the next two have three, then come two lines with four accents, followed by one line with three and one line with six.

In perusing these odes, the justness of Dr. Johnson's remark that "the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections as to exercise the understanding"²³ is evident. There are many allusions and learned references, many proofs that Cowley deserved his

reputation for scholarship; but they are uninteresting reading, versified prose too often. Here, to illustrate this statement, is an extract taken almost at random - for there are many similar passages - from one of the "Odes" which has been the most praised, "To Mr.Hobbes".²⁴

The fields which answer'd well the ancients' plough,
Spent and outworn return no harvest now,
In barren age, wild and inglorious lie,
 And boast of past fertility.
The poor relief of present poverty
 Food and fruit we now must want
 Unless new lands we plant.
We break up tombs with sacrilegious hands;
 Old rubbish we remove;
To walk in ruins, like vain ghosts, we love,
 And with fond divining wands
 We search among the dead
 For treasures buried,
 Whilst still the liberal earth dost hold
So many virgin mines of undiscovered gold.²⁵

Here and there a thought is finely expressed, as, for example, the concluding lines of the poem:

To things immortal time can do no wrong;
And that which never is to die, for ever must be young.

Or these lines from "Brutus"²⁶

 ...alas, our sight's so ill
That things which swiftest move seem to stand still.²⁷

Occasionally a beautiful or imaginative thought rewards our search, as these lines in "Brutus":

 And 'tis no wonder so
 If with dejected eye
 In standing pools we seek the sky,
That stars so high above should seem to us below.²⁸

The following imaginative verses are from "The Muse".²⁹

 Where never fish did fly
And with short silver wings out the low liquid sky;
 Where bird with painted oar did ne'er
Row through the trackless ocean of the air;

Where never yet did pry

The busy Morning's curious eye;
The wheels of thy bold coach pass quick and free,
And all's an open road to thee.³⁰

Sometimes Cowley degenerates, and his verses are absolutely commonplace, as in "To Dr. Scarborough" ³¹, when he discusses dropsy, ague, and other ills. Some of the lines of this poem are unquotable. In "The Resurrection"³² he very aptly, though not very poetically, describes his Pindaric Pegasus:

'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse,
Fierce and unbroken yet,
Impatient of the spur or bit;
Now prances stately and anon flies o'er the place;
Disdains the servile law of any settled pace,
Conscious and proud of his own natural force;
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too, that sits not sure!³³

These lines exemplify one of Cowley's faults, common to most of the metaphysical poets, that is, the elaboration and development of a comparison to the limits of endurance.

Cowley at times is grandiose and brilliant, but there are deep valleys between his heights. He did, however, show that Pindar's manner was elaborate, illuminated by allusion and comparison. Through him the idea of the ode was restricted to a worthy theme treated in no trivial manner; since his time, no mere love-song has been called an ode. Stanzas of varying line-lengths had long been used by poets, such as Jonson, Herrick, and Crashaw. Cowley extended this idea to variety in the stanzas of the same poem, each stanza developing one thought or one illustration, at greater or less length according to circumstances. This seems, on the whole, an unfortunate innovation, for this liberty of digression, this freedom from constraining bonds, led,

as Mr. Gosse says, to "a whole current of loud-mouthed lyric invocation not yet silent after more than two centuries."³⁴ However, to Cowley is probably due the freedom of structure and admitted irregularity in the modern English ode. Mr. Courthope says: "No English poet ever possessed in a higher degree the power of bringing a grand abstract idea before the mind in a concrete form, by means of rich and splendid imagery."³⁵ If the words "No ...poet" were changed to "Few poets", this statement could not be gainsaid, Cowley's Pindaric odes are important, not as poetry but as signposts or turning-points in literary history, through their influence on other writers of odes and their popularizing of what we now call "pseudo-pindarics", and especially through the restriction of the idea of the ode, and its differentiation as to structure, theme, and treatment from other lyrical forms.

In the fourth section of his folio edition, Cowley included ten poems "written on several occasions," which he called odes, and "The Complaint" ³⁶, which Dr. Johnson puts in this class.³⁷ All are in irregular stanzas, except "On the Queen's Repairing Somerset House", which is in pentameter couplets. "Ode. Sitting and Drinking in the Chair, made out of the Reliques of Sir. Francis Drake's Ship"³⁸, in four stanzas, is interesting for its imaginative content. The poet, seated in the chair, sails the oceans with Drake. He says:

The straits of time too narrow are for thee,
Lanch forth into an undiscovered sea,
And steer the endless course of vast Eternitie;
Take for thy Sail this Verse, and for thy Pilot Mee.³⁹

Another interesting poem of this group is entitled, "Ode. Mr. Cowley's Book presenting it self to the University Library of Oxford"⁴⁰,

Where thousand Lights into one brightness spread:
Hail living University of the Dead! ⁴¹

His ode "To the Royal Society"⁴², which he helped to found, praises their efforts to free Philosophy from the trammels of Authority, with rather fulsome adulation. This spirit is carried beyond all bounds in his ode "On the Death of Mrs. Katherine Philips."⁴³ He had already praised her in "On Orinda's Poems. Ode."⁴⁴ One stanza of this poem will show both the extraordinary impression produced on her contemporaries by this woman of letters and Cowley's hyperbolic treatment of his theme.

Thou dost my wonder, wouldst my envy raise
If to be prais'd I lov'd more than to praise
Where e're I see an excellence,
I must admire to see thy well knit sense,
Thy numbers gentle, and thy Fancies high,
Those as thy forehead smooth, these sparkling as thine eye.
'Tis solid, and 'tis manly all,
Or rather, 'tis angelical,
For as in Angels, we
Do in thy Verses see
Both improv'd Sexes eminently meet,
They are than Man more strong, and more than Woman sweet.⁴⁵

Cowley was a lovable personality, a loyal and devoted friend. By his contemporaries he was esteemed the greatest living English poet. This opinion is surprising, for Herrick and Milton, though older than he, both survived him for seven years. Mr. Saintsbury explains this phenomenon, saying: "Cowley represented all the tastes of a time of transition and overlapping; and he could please all while none was particularly dominant."⁴⁶ His odes are not true Pindarics, but they developed interest in this style of poem and led to further study and more correct exemplification of it. Through his influence the idea of an ode was restricted to a poem dealing with a worthy theme in a learned and lofty manner, with

much elaboration; and to a form admitting full liberty as to length of line and stanza, and the occurrence of rhyme. This liberty proved, as Mr. Gosse puts it, "a great snare to all persons of a pompous and bombastic habit,"⁴⁷ and produced much "prose of a rhetorical kind, carefully cut into patterns and tipped at the edges with rhyme."⁴⁸ However, as before mentioned, English letters owe a debt of gratitude to Cowley for the impetus he gave to the lofty treatment of lofty themes, - that is, to the embellishment of verse by metaphor and other forms of elaboration.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM COWLEY TO DRYDEN.

During Cowley's lifetime he was admired, not imitated; but before the close of the century almost every rhymster tried his hand at a Pindaric ode. "Freed from the restraints of stanza and couplet - and not paying much attention to sense - the poet could ramble on as long as he chose, and come to an end of his ramble when he chose likewise."¹ When Shadwell became poet-laureate in 1688, he adopted this form for the eulogistic and complimentary verses imposed on him by his official position, and thus established a custom, and unwritten law, which was abrogated by Southey in 1816. In the meantime, about a hundred and twenty royal odes were produced, which only a spirit of research could induce anyone to read nowadays.

Among the earliest imitators of Cowley was Bishop Sprat, who was the poet's first biographer.² He it is who wrote, in speaking of Cowley's Pindaric odes: "But that for which I think this inequality of number is chiefly to be preferr'd is its near affinity with Prose."³ That the Bishop attained his ideal, and that his admiration of Cowley was excessive, may be seen from the following quotations, chosen from his poem entitled: "Upon the poems of the English Ovid, Anacreon, Pindar, and Virgil, Abraham Cowley, in

imitation of his own Pindaric Odes."4 Needless to say, the stanzas are very long and irregular, the whole poem comprising two hundred and seventy-one verses.

Let all the meaner rout of books stand by,
 The common people of our library;
 Let them make way for Cowley's leaves to come,
 And be hung up within this sacred room:
 Let no prophane hands break the chain,
 Or give them unwish'd liberty again.⁵

Were books still chained in libraries at the close of the seventeenth century? Or is this an exaggerated way of saying that Cowley's works were priceless? Here is more hyperbole:

Thy high Pindarics soar
 So high, where never any wing till now could get:
 And yet thy wit
 Doth seem so great, as those that do fly lower.
 Thou stand'st on Pindar's back
 And therefore thou a higher flight dost take.
 Only thou art the eagle, he the wren,
 Thou hast brought him from the dust,
 And made him live again.⁶

More than once our poet becomes ridiculous: note this conceit:

You are the first bird of Paradise with feet⁷,

and this comparison between Cowley and Prometheus:

Along he brought the sparkling coal
 From some celestial chimney stole.⁸

Another friend of Cowley's, Mrs. Katherine Philips, better known as the "Matchless Orinda", in her verses "Upon Mr. Abraham Cowley's Retirement. Ode."⁹, praised him for withdrawing from court and seeking a quiet, studious life. She speaks of him as conquering the world, and concludes with these eulogistic lines:

For lo, the man whom all mankind admir'd
 (By ev'ry Grace adorn'd, and ev'ry Muse inspir'd)
 Is now triumphantly retir'd.
 The mighty Cowley this hath done,
 And over thee a Parthian conquest won,

Which future ages shall adore,
And which in this subdues thee more
Than either Greek or Roman ever could before.¹⁰

Another voluminous writer of odes is Charles Cotton: regular odes - simple songs on love or wine in the style of Horace - ,odes of irregular stanzaic structure, and odes which he labels pindaric. These are lawless at times, but contain many eight-syllable lines so printed as to have an irregular appearance. Dr.Johnson says: "His Pindarics will probably not be thought unworthy of a comparison with Cowley. His verses are often equally harmonious, while his thoughts are less encumbered with amplification."¹¹ The following quotation is from "Death, a Pindaric Ode."¹² All the lines have four accents, yet the poem is printed so as to produce an impression of irregularity.

At a melancholy season,
As alone I musing sat,
I fell, I know not how, to reason
With myself of man's estate,
How subject unto death and fate:
Names that mortals so affright,
As turns the brightest day to night,
And spoils of living the delight,
With which so soon as life is tasted,
Lest we should too happy be,
Even in our infancy,
Our joys are quash'd, our hopes are blasted;
For the first thing that we hear
(Us'd to still us when we cry)
The nurse to keep the child in fear,
Discreetly tells it, it must die, etc.¹³

There is little of interest in Cotton's odes, except, perhaps this opinion, expressed in "Pindaric Ode. Melancholy", of his contemporary, Oliver Cromwell:

Nor any place but Hell can hold so great a devil,¹⁴

The well-known author of "Hudibras", Samuel Butler, wrote three poems which he called "Pindaric Odes", one "Upon an Hypo-

critical Nonconformist" 15, one "Upon Modern Critics" 16, and the third "To the happy Memory of the Most Renowned Du-Val." 17 This personage seems to have been a highwayman who was eventually hanged. Butler says that he

Taught the wild Arabs....
 ... how to hang in a more graceful fashion
 Than e'er was known before to the dull English nation. 18

These verses show that Butler carried his satiric vein into his odes. He seems, indeed, to have called them odes under a misapprehension, or perhaps mockingly, for they are mostly octosyllabic couplets and could easily pass for sections of his burlesque epic, as shown by the following quotations from "Upon An Hypocritical Nonconformist:"

For talking idly is admir'd
 And speaking nonsense held inspir'd. 19

He does not pray, but prosecute,
 As if he went to law his suit;
 Summons his Maker to appear,
 And answer what he shall prefer. 20

To preach the gospel with a drum
 And for convincing overcome. 21

Certainly these poems are not even pseudo-pindarics, either in structure, theme, or treatment! They have but one resemblance to Cowley's work,— the stanzas vary in length.

Mr. Saintsbury tells us that "the advantage of the regular ode is chiefly that it is more troublesome, and so less likely to be written by those who had better not write at all." 22 In this class may be safely put John Pomfret and Thomas Flatman. A glance at their works will show how easy it is to write bad Pindarics. John Pomfret has left us four very long and irregular poems, three of which he called "Pindaric Essays" and the other

a "Pindaric Ode". The following quotation, to illustrate the remarks just made, is taken from the ode entitled, "Dies Novissima, or the Last Epiphany".²³

I feel the heavy-rolling God,
Incumbent, revel in his frail abode.
How my breast heaves and pulses beat!
I sink, I sink, beneath the furious heat;
The weighty bliss o'erwhelms my breast,
And overflowing joys profusely waste.
Some nobler bard, O sacred Power, inspire, etc.²⁴

He continues in this strain for uncounted verses.

The Earl of Rochester characterizes Flatman's poetry in these words:

.....that slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,
Flatman, who Cowley imitates, with pains,
And rides a jaded Muse, whipt, with loose reins.²⁵

This poet has left us a dozen Pindaric Odes, addressed, for the most part to public men, which can be well described as to value by a line from his ode "The Review - Pindaric Ode to Reverend William Sancroft" ²⁶:

A numerous heap of ciphers would be found the total sum.²⁷
He has a humble opinion of his own work, for, in complimenting his "Reverend Friend, Dr. Samuel Woodford, on his Excellent Version of the Psalms",²⁸ he says:

Thus on your chariot wheel shall I
Ride safe, and look as big as Aesop's fly.²⁹

Flatman is chiefly remembered for two expressions, - his "illustrious Ghost",³⁰ in the "Pindaric Ode. On the Death of the Illustrious Prince Rupert"³¹, and his declaration that only those of plebeian birth die, - princes "disappear", - an idea used also by Waller and laughed at by Browning.³²

The mention of Flatman's "Ode to Reverend William Sancroft",

who, by the way, was Archbishop of Canterbury, brings to mind the ode written in this Churchman's honor, after his death in 1689, by Jonathan Swift. This ode will never be praised as poetry, though it is marked by the clarity which is a distinguishing trait of Swift's style. It is interesting as proving that, even in his early manhood, Swift was discontented and sarcastic. Thus, he says;

Why should the Sun, alas! be proud
To lodge behind a golden cloud?
Though fringed with evening gold the cloud appears so gay,
'Tis but a low-born vapour, enkindled by a ray. 33

Even more characteristic are the following lines from the same poem:

Ah, Britain, land of angels! which of all thy sins....
Has given thee up, a dwelling-place to fiends? 34

Three other poems were called odes by Swift. These are "Ode to the Hon. Sir William Temple"³⁵, "Ode to King William, on his successes in Ireland"³⁶, and "Ode to the Athenian Society."³⁷ The "Ode to King William" is an eulogium written in four-lined stanzas, with alternate rhymes; the others are in Cowley's manner. In the "Ode to Sir William Temple", Swift tells of his own poetical bent, saying:

Whate'er I plant (like corn on barren earth)
By an equivocal birth
Seeds, and runs up to poetry. 38

Should we be thankful to Dryden who, by his well-known remark, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet," stopped the flow of this Pindaric stream, and turned the current of Swift's thoughts to prose?

It would be a futile and uninteresting task to mention all the minor poets who wrote Pindarics during the last years of the seven-

teenth century, - Otway and Rowe, Hughes and Sheffield, Roscommon and Mulgrave, and numerous others whose names one never hears. Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, is remembered for one "quite respectable piece of rhymed and rhythmmed prose of a rhetorical kind", ³⁹ "On the Marriage of Princess Anne", ⁴⁰ in 1683. The joy given by this event in those days of stress and trouble is compared to the joy given by a rainbow in a storm, when

Again in pleasant warbling notes,
The cheerful poets of the wood extend their tuneful throats. ⁴¹

Dr. Johnson rightly estimates his poetry when he says: "It would now be esteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundle of verses, to be told that, in strains either familiar or solemm, he sings like Montague." ⁴²

Two poems by Edmund Waller may be mentioned in this connection, "A panegyric to My Lord Protector" ⁴³, written in 1654, and "To the King, Upon his Majesty's Happy Return." ⁴⁴ These are frequently spoken of as odes, though Waller did not so name them. They are written in rhymed pentameter couplets, the fore-runners of the heroic couplet which Pope brought to perfection. Addressing Cromwell, he says:

Your drooping country, torn with civil hate,
Restored by you is made a glorious state. ⁴⁵

Born to command, your princely virtues slept,
Like humble David's, while the flocks he kept. ⁴⁶

We may accept the judgment of King Charles, who complained to Waller that the address of welcome was inferior to the panegyric on Cromwell, and learn from the poet's answer that he was as smooth a politician as a versifier: "Sire, we poets never succeed so well in writing truth as in fiction."

Practically all the poets of this half-century wrote versified translations or imitations of Horace, compositions which naturally they described as odes, but which are as far from the Horatian model as their Pindaric odes are from the work of Pindar. But before the close of the century the ode was lifted, as it were, from its degradation by Congreve and Dryden.

Congreve's ode "On Mrs. Arabella Hunt Singing"⁴⁷ was not printed, it is true, until 1710, and there is question as to the date of its composition, Mr. Gosse assigning it to 1701.⁴⁸ But Mr. Summers, the editor of Congreve's Complete Works, thinks it was written in 1692. He says: "It is deservedly one of Congreve's most celebrated poems. It is Pindaric only in name, and more than one line will nowadays be held to be tawdry...but yet the descriptions of emotions awakened by the performance of an exquisite vocalist has something very lovely and appropriate in its cadences; the poet is truly inspired in his theme."⁴⁹ The poem consists of five stanzas, varying in length from sixteen to twenty lines. The lines also are irregular, varying from two to five accents, generally rhyming in couplets. The lady sings so beautifully that

.....th'Heavenly Choir
Come flocking to admire,⁵⁰

The poet tells them:

Your loss of heav'n nor shall you need to fear;
While she sings 'tis heaven here,⁵¹

And the listeners on earth are so "wrapt in sweet forgetfulness"⁵²
that they wish

Forever to be dying so, yet never die,⁵³

Dryden wrote two beautiful odes which also treat of music.

Every year on St. Cecilia's Day, the twenty-second of November, a musical society in London presented in her honor some song or ode, composed on request for the occasion by some distinguished poet of the day, and set to music by an eminent musical composer. Dryden accepted the invitation in 1687, writing his "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day"⁵⁴, and again ten years later, with "Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Music."⁵⁵ The former was set to music by a composer named Douglas, the latter by the poet-musician, John Hughes. This accounts for the frequent repetitions. Both poems are written in irregular stanzas, adapted to the mood to be conveyed, and are remarkable for the choice of words and meters fitted to the instrument. Thus, in the "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day", the "trumpet's loud clangor" speaks of anger; "the double, double, double beat of the thundering drum" proclaims the alarm; the flute complains and the violins voice passion.

But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher:
 When to the organ breath was given,
 An angel heard, and straight appeared,
 Mistaking earth for heaven.⁵⁶

In "Alexander's Feast" the poet carries the idea of the power of music yet farther: a single instrument, the lyre, in the hands of the accomplished musician Timotheus, arouses in turn at the master's will all the emotions. He

Could sweet the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.⁵⁷

But Cecilia surpassed him, for

He raised a mortal to the skies,
 She drew an angel down,⁵⁸

These two lines were criticised by Dr. Johnson, who says: "The conclusion is vicious; the music of Timotheus...had only a meta-

phorical power; that of Cecilia...had a real effect; the crown therefore could not be divided."⁵⁹ Dryden, who was far from being a braggart, said of this poem, "Nobody has written a nobler ode, and nobody ever will." Sir Walter Scott says in his Life of Dryden:

In lyrical poetry Dryden must be allowed to have no equals. Alexander's Feast is sufficient to show his supremacy in that brilliant department. In this exquisite production he flung from him all the trappings with which his contemporaries had embarrassed the ode....The change of tone in the harp of Timotheus regulates the measure and the melody and the language of every stanza...nor is the splendid poem disgraced by one word or line unworthy of it.⁶⁰

Mr.G.H.Noyes says that Dryden in this poem gives a "rapid series of flashlight pictures, each expressed in verse that by its music suggests the scene described. No poem has a more youthful vigor than this ode by the weary dramatist and satirist of sixty-six!"⁶¹ The aesthetic appeal, the charm of an ode, differs with the theme as well as with the temperament and culture of the reader. An abstract theme is, above all others, difficult to handle. Dryden probably made a safe prophecy: on so abstract a theme as the power of music, no nobler ode ever will be written.

In this connection it is interesting to note that in 1699 Addison wrote "An Ode for St.Cecilia's Day."⁶² Eight of its sixty lines were composed by Nahum Tate, and the whole was set to music by Daniel Purcell. Originality could now hardly be expected on this theme; there is simply a variation in adjectives,- the violins have become sprightly while the trumpet's tones are piercing. They sound,

Till, wafted by a gentle breeze,
They faint and languish by degrees,
And at a distance die.⁶³

Yet one more ode was written by Dryden, "An Ode to the pious

memory of the accomplished young lady, Mrs. Anne Killigrew."⁶⁴

This accomplished and virtuous lady, a maid of honour to the Duchess of York, died of small-pox in 1685, in her twenty-fifth year. Dryden's ode was prefixed to a volume of her poems, published the following year. It is more eulogistic than elegiac in tone.

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,
 Made in the last promotion of the blest;
 Whose palms, new plucked from Paradise,
 In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
 Rich with immortal green above the rest.⁶⁵

The poet praises her talent and her virtue. Here we find lines that express Dryden's disgust with the licentious stage of that time;

Oh! wretched we! why were we hurried down....
 To increase the steaming ordures of the stage!⁶⁶

He says that at Judgment the poets will rise first,

For they are covered with the lightest ground,⁶⁷

and concludes:

There thou, sweet saint, before the quire shalt go,
 As harbinger of Heaven, the way to show,⁶⁸
 The way which thou so well hast learned below.

The hundred and ninety-five lines of this ode are grouped in ten stanzas, varying in length from thirteen to thirty-nine lines. As the above quotations show, there are many pentameter lines, with occasional eighty-syllable and six-syllable lines. The rhymes follow no set scheme. The theme is treated in an elevated and sympathetic style, with great beauty and energy of expression.

Thus, by three outstanding poems, Dryden saved the irregular ode from falling into utter disrepute. As Mr. Saintsbury pithily puts it: "Dryden hardly ever fails in real symphonic effect; the

others too often simply empty sackfuls of wooden bricks of different sizes."⁶⁹ It is true that, after Dryden's time, inferior odes continued to be written, though the popularity of the heroic couplet in the eighteenth century doubtless diminished their number. Nevertheless, Dr. Johnson's dictum that Dryden found English poetry brick and left it marble is as true for the ode as for the other forms of verse. Those who find Dryden's odes devoid of feeling must at least admit that they are the work of an artist in word-craft, and that a marble statue can please by its beauty, though it arouses no other than purely aesthetic emotions.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

On the threshold of the eighteenth century, let us pause to cast a backward glance over the course we have traversed, and to note the work accomplished during the seventeenth century in the development of the English ode. In the year 1600 this term had no special meaning in England. Poets used it to designate simple lyrics, love-songs, pastorals of any form. Drayton associated the name with the Greek and Latin poems so designated, and taught by his example that, to be called an ode, a poem should treat nobly of a worthy theme. Jonson produced one true Pindaric ode, the only one in the century. He also used the term for other poems that were addresses, and restricted it to those of irregular stanzaic structure, - except for odes which were supposed to be imitations of Horace. Jonson's "school", - Randolph, Herrick, Hall, - continued the tradition, that is, followed Jonson's example as to treatment. About the middle of the century Marvell produced our best Horatian ode, while, shortly before, Milton had grandly exemplified the Pindaric style and the simple strophic form in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity."

Cowley rendered a great service to the ode by firmly implanting the idea that the treatment of the theme in such a poem can

never be light or trivial. In the lyric court, the ode is the princess, royally attired in cloth-of-gold and priceless gems. Cowley made an innovation by the use of stanzas of varying lengths in the same poem, so that there was unbridled liberty - or rather license - in verses, stanzas, and rhymes; and by calling his odes "Pindaric" he made general the notion that Pindar, in writing his lyrics, followed no law but his own will or fantasy. This led to the production of many worthless "Pindaric Odes". Congreve and more especially Dryden, towards the end of the century, produced odes which were true poetry, and tended to fix in our minds the concept of an ode.

In "A Discourse on the Pindarique Ode" which William Congreve in 1706 prefixed to his "Pindarique Ode Humbly Offered to the Queen", he aptly described the odes of the period in these words:

The character of these late Pindariques is, a Bundle of rambling incoherent Thoughts, express'd in a like Parcel of irregular Stanzas, which also consist of such another Complication of disproportion'd, uncertain and perplexed Verses and Rhimes.... Those irregular Odes of Mr. Cowley may have been the principal, though innocent Occasion, of so many deformed Poems since, which instead of being true Pictures of Pindar have... been only Caricatures of him, Resemblances that for the most part have been either Horrid or Ridiculous.¹

Congreve explained the structure of Pindar's odes and exemplified it. Later in the century, Gray wrote the two finest examples in English of the true Pindaric ode, "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard". His friends advised him to subjoin some explanatory notes, but he had, so he said, "too much respect for the understanding of his readers to take that liberty."² However, he was later persuaded to follow the advice, thus adding much to our comprehension and appreciation of his work.

English poets have not, on the whole, taken kindly to the restrictions of this form of lyric, as exemplified by Gray. They imitate more readily Pindar's simple strophic odes, so that, with the exception of a few poems written, most of them, in Cowley's irregular style, the modern English ode takes the form of an address with variety in the verse-formation, uniformity in stanza and rhyme-schemes, an impersonal elevation in tone, elaboration and beauty in treatment, passion or enthusiasm in spirit. In Congreve's words, it is

As Spenser sweet, as Milton strong.³

Gray, in his lines on Dryden in "The Progress of Poesy" describing the movement of the ode, speaks of the

Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder cloth'd, and long-resounding pace,⁴
who "wide o'er the fields of glory bear"⁵ the car of odic verse,
while the Muse

Scatters from her pictur'd urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.⁶

Let us retain this beautiful and striking figure as a poet's illustration of the heights of inspiration and the depths of feeling attained in the English ode at the close of the seventeenth century.

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