HISTORY OF ENGLISH PROSE

FIFTEENTH CENTURY PROSE

The Fifteenth century is comparatively barren and non productive in the field of English literature. During this time little poetry of quality was written. The English and Scottish poets were very poor imitators of Chaucer both in the command of subject matter and versification. But the prose literature of this age recorded considerable progress. Unlike the poetry of this age prose suffered from no retrogression. There was a perceptible increase in skill due to increased practice. There was a growing perception of the beauties of rhythm and cadence and there was the development of various prose styles including the ornate and the plain. The English prose certainly moved forward during the 15th century to a richness that was unknown to the preceding age. During the 15th century prose made some remarkable progress because the English men shaped the rough material of their native tongue to form a literature for providing instruction and entertainment. But still English prose of the 15th century amounts for little originality and artistic value. The slow progress of prose on national lines was due to the influence that Latin exercised on the minds of the prose writers of this age. They were fascinated by Latin constructions. They were also contented to be the translators of French works of repute. Prose in the century was developed much on trial and error basis.

The promising prose writers of the century sought to impart directness, vigour and simplicity. It was due to their efforts that the prose of the age developed and various kinds of prose works were written. It is interesting to observe that English prose writers attempted different kinds of prose during this period. Fisher and Cranmer (1489-1556) popularized theological writings and historical prose was presented in The Chronicle of England by Capgrave (1393-1464) who wrote in a business like fashion.
Philosophical prose appeared in The Governance of England by Fortescue (c. 1394-1476). Elyot (c. 1490-1546) popularised educational prose and prepared the way for medical prose in the Castle of Health. William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible is highly praiseworthy.

The English Prose of the 15th century was cultivated and promoted by the following writers:

Reginald Peacock

Sir John Fortescue

William Caxton

John Fisher

Hugh Latimer

Sir Thomas More

Sir Thomas Malory
REGINALD PEACOCK (1392-1461) is one of the important prose writers of the 15th century. Peacock’s prose, often rugged and obscure, is marked by his preference for English words over Latin. His two works were The Repressor of over-much Blaming of the Clergy (c. 1445) and The Book of Faith. His books were among the earliest of English controversial works and they mark a victory over the once all important Latin.

Part of his book “The Repressor of over-much Blaming of the Clergy”

The Uses of Logic

By Reginald Pecock (c. 1395–1460)

From Repressour, Part I.

THAT I be the better and the clearer understood of the lay people in some words to be after spoken in this present book, I set now before to them this doctrine taken shortly out of the faculty of logic. An argument, if he be full and formal, which is cleped a syllogism, is made of two propositions, driving out of them, and by strength of them, the third proposition. Of the which three propositions the two first be cleped premisses, and the third following out of them is cleped the conclusion of them. And the first of those two premisses is cleped the first premiss, and the second of them is cleped the second premiss. And each such argument is of this kind, that if the both premisses be true the conclusion concluded out, and by them, is also true; and but if ever either of those premisses be true, the conclusion is not true. Ensample thereof is this: “Each man is at Rome, the Pope is a man, eke the Pope is at Rome.” So here be set forth two propositions, which be these: “Each man is at Rome,” and “The Pope is a man”; and these be the two premisses in this argument, and they drive out the third proposition, which is this: “The Pope is at Rome,” and it is the conclusion of the two premisses. Wherefore, certes, if any man can be sicker for any time that these two premisses be true, he may be sicker that the conclusion is true,
though all the angels in heaven would say, and hold that, thilk conclusion were not true. And this is a general rule in every good and formal and full argument, that if his premisses be known for true the conclusion ought be avowed for true, whatever creature will say the contrary. 1

What properties and conditions be required to an argument, that he be full and formal and good, is taught in logic by full, fair, and sure rules, and may not be taught of me here in this present book. But would God it were learned of all the common people in their mother’s language, for then they should thereby be put from much rudeness and boisterousness which they have now in reasoning; and then they should soon know and perceive when a skile 1 and an argument bindeth and when he not bindeth, that is to say, when he concludes and proves his conclusion, and when he not so doeth; and then they should keep themselves the better from falling into errors, and they might the sooner come out of errors by hearing of arguments made to them, if they into any errors were fallen; and then they should not be so blunt and so rude and informal and boisterous in reasoning, and that both in their arguing and in their answering, as they now be; and then should they not be so obstinate against clerks and against their prelates, as some of them now be, for default of perceiving when an argument proceedeth into his conclusion of needs, and when he not so doeth, but seemeth only so do. 2 And much good would come forth if a short compendious logic were devised for all the common people in their mother’s language; and, certes, to men of court, learning the king’s law of England in these days, thilk now said short compendious logic were full precious. Into whose making, if God will grant leave and leisure, I purpose sometime after mine other business for to essay. 2

Note 1. skile = reason.

Note 2. so do = so to do
SIR JOHN FORTECUE (1394-1476) was an important prose writer who made some contributions in the development of 15th century English prose. In contrast to Peacock, he stands for clarity of ideas. Fortescue avoids Peacock’s pattern of long complicated sentences. H. S. Bennet in his Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century writes “in common with other 15th century writers Fortescue is not capable of writing a highly complex prose but what straight forwardness, simplicity and clear thinking could accomplish may be seen in almost every pages of The Governance of England”.

WILLIAM CAXTON (1422-1490) the English printer was also a remarkable prose writer of the 15th century. It would be difficult to overestimate the debt of Caxton to English literature. He printed almost every English work of real quality known in his days including Chaucer and Malory. In addition Caxton made and printed twenty four translations from French, Dutch and Latin texts, of which the most remarkable were the two earliest, the Recuyell of the Histories of Troye (1471) and the Game and Playe of Chesse (1475). At first he wanted to employ the elegant and ornate style but soon he became conscious of his limitations and switched to a simpler style. He decided to write in “Englysshe not ouer rude, ne curious, but in suchetermes as shall be vnderstanden by goddys grace.” To make himself more certain of being understood he sometimes placed the French word beside the English word. This practise was especially cultivated by Caxton. He avoided rustic terms and became intelligible to all his readers. The best of his prose can be found in his explanatory prefaces.
JOHN FISHER (1459-1535), a religious divine and the Bishop of Rochester, opposed Henry VIII during Reformation, was imprisoned and finally beheaded. He wrote much in Latin and in English and he is represented by a small collection of tracts and sermons and a longer treatise on the Psalms. Though they are of no great quantity, his prose works are in the nature of much importance. They are the first of the rhetorical religious books that for several centuries were to be an outstanding feature of English prose. In addition they mark a distinctive step ahead in the evolution of English prose style. They are written in the style of an orator: the searching after the appropriate word, the frequent use of rhetorical figures of speech and a rapid and flowing rhythm. In the style of Fisher we can observe the beginning of an ornate style. Fisher proved to be the direct ancestor of the prose style of the great 17th century prose writer Jeremy Taylor.

Character of Henry VII.

By John Fisher (c. 1469–1535)

From the Funeral Sermon on Henry VII.

FORASMUCH as this honourable audience now is here assembled to prosecute the funeral observances and ceremonies about this most noble prince late our king and sovereign, king Henry the seventh. And all be it I know well mine unworthiness and inabilities to this so great a matter, yet for my most bounden duty, and for his gracious favour and singular benefits exhibit unto me in this life, I would now after his death right affectuously some thing say, whereby your charities the rather might have his soul recommended. And to that purpose I will entreat the first psalm of the dirige, which psalm was written of the holy king and prophet king David, comforting him after his great falls and trespasses against Almighty God and read in the church in the funeral obsequies of every Christian person when that he dieth. And specially it may be read in the person of this most
noble prince, for in it is comprised all that is to be said in this matter. And in
the same order that the secular orators have in their funeral orations most
diligently observed, which resteth in three points. First in the commendation
of him that dead is. Second in a stirring of the hearers to have compassion
upon him. And third in a comforting of them again. Which three be done by
order in this same psalm, as by the grace of our Lord it may here after
appear. First, as touching his laud and commendation, let no man think that
mine intent is for to praise him for any vain transitory things of this life,
which by the example of him all kings and princes may learn how sliding,
how slippery, how failing they be. All be it he had as much of them as was
possible in manner for any king to have, his politic wisdom in governance it
was singular, his wit alway quick and ready, his reason pithy and
substantial, his memory fresh and holding, his experience notable, his
counsels fortunate and taken by wise deliberation, his speech gracious in
divers languages, his person goodly and amiable, his natural complexion of
the purest mixture, his issue fair and in good number, leagues and
confederies he had with all Christian princes, his mighty power was dread
every where, not only within his realm but without also, his people were to
him in as humble subjection as ever they were to king, his land many a day
in peace and tranquillity, his prosperity in battle against his enemies was
marvellous, his dealing in time of perils and dangers was cold and sober
with great hardiness. If any treason were conspired against him it came out
wonderfully, his treasure and riches incomparable, his buildings most
goodly and after the newest cast all of pleasure. But what is all this now as
unto him, all be but fumus et umbra. A smoke that soon vanisheth, and a
shadow soon passing away. Shall I praise him then for them? Nay,
forsooth. The great wise man Solon, when that the king Crœsus had
shewed unto him all his glorious state and condition that he was in as
touching the things above rehearsed, he would not affirm that he was
blessed for all that, but said Expectandusest finis. The end is to be abiden
and looked upon, wherein he said full truth, all be it peradventure not as he
intended, but verily a truth it is, in the end is all together, a good end and a
gracious conclusion of the life maketh all, and therefore Seneca in his
epistles saith, Bonamvitæclausulamimpone. In any wise make a good
conclusion of thy life, which thing I may confirm by holy letters. In the
prophet Ezekiel it is written and spoken by the mouth of God in this manner, Justitia justi non liberabiteum in quacunque die peccaverit et impietas simpii non nocebitei in quacunque die conversus fuerit et impietates sua. That is to say, if the righteous man have lived never so virtuously, and in the end of his life commit one deadly sin and so depart, all his righteous dealing before shall not defend him from everlasting damnation, and in contrary wise, if the sinful man have lived never so wretchedly in times past, yet in the end of his life if he return from his wickedness unto God, all his wickedness before shall not let him to be saved. Let no sinner presume of this to do amiss or to continue the longer in his sin, for of such presumers scant one among a thousand cometh unto this grace, but the death taketh them or they beware. Let no man also murmur against this, for this is the great treasure of the mercy of Almighty God, and against such murmurs is sufficiently answered in the same place, for what should become of any of us were not this great mercy? Quispotest dicerem mundum est cor meum, innocens ego sum a peccato. Who may say (saith Ecclesiasticus) mine heart is clean, I am innocent and guiltless of sin. As who saith, no man may speak this word. When then all men have in their life trespassed against Almighty God, I may well say that he is gracious that maketh a blessed end. And to that purpose Saint John in the Apocalypse saith, Beati mortui qui in domino moriuntur. Blessed are those which have made virtuous end and conclusion of their life in our Lord, which verily I suppose this most noble prince hath done, the proof whereof shall stand in four points. The first is a true turning of his soul from this wretched world unto the love of Almighty God. Second is a fast hope and confidence that he had in prayer. Third a steadfast belief of God and of the sacraments of the church. Fourth in a diligent asking of mercy in the time of mercy, which four points by order be expressed in the first part of this psalm. As to the first, at the beginning of Lent last passed, he called unto him his confessor, a man of singular wisdom, learning, and virtue, by whose assured instruction I speak this that I shall say. This noble prince, after his confession made with all diligence and great repentance, he promised three things, that is to say, a true reformation of all them that were officers and ministers of his laws to the intent that justice, from henceforward, truly and indifferently might be executed in all causes.
Another, that the promotions of the church that were of his disposition should, from henceforth, be disposed to able men such as were virtuous and well learned. Third, that as touching the dangers and jeopardies of his laws for things done in times past, he would grant a pardon generally unto all his people, which three things he let not openly to speak to divers as did resort unto him. And many a time unto his secret servants he said that if it pleased God to send him life, they should see him a new changed man. Furthermore, with all humbleness he recognised the singular and many benefits that he had received of Almighty God, and with great repentance and marvellous sorrow accused himself of his unkindness towards Him, specially that he no more fervently had procured the honour of God, and that he had no more diligently performed the will and pleasure of Him, wherein he promised, by the grace of God, an assured amendment. Who may suppose but that this man had verily set his heart and love upon God, or who may think that in his person may not be said, Dilexi, that is to say, I have set my love on my lord God.

**HUGH LATIMER (1485-1555)** is another prose writer of the 15th century who was punished by Henry VIII because of his resistance against some of his reforms. Latimer’s prose work consists of two volumes of sermons published in 1549. These works are remarkable for their plain and dogmatic exposition, their graphical power and their homely appeal. He is first among the writers of plain style.

**SIR THOMAS MORE (1478-1535)** is much known for his Latin works owing to their elegance and wit. This includes Utopia which presents the picture of an imaginative ideal state based on the socialistic pattern. His English prose works include The Life of John Picus, The History of Richard III and a number of tracts and letters. He writes ably and clearly but with no great distinction of manner. He is the first writer of the middle style.
WHEREUPON soon after, that is to wit, on the Friday the —— day of ——, many Lords assembled in the Tower, and there sat in council, devising the honorable solemnity of the king's coronation, of which the time appointed then so near approached, that the pageants and subtleties were in making day and night at Westminster, and much vitaille 1 killed therefore, that afterwards was cast away. These lords so sitting together communing of this matter, the protector came in among them, first about nine of the clock, saluting them courteously, and excusing himself that he had been from them so long, saying merely that he had been asleep that day. And after a little talking with them, he said unto the Bishop of Ely: My lord you have very good strawberries at your garden in Holborn, I require you let us have a mess of them. Gladly my lord, quoth he, would God I had some better thing as ready to your pleasure as that. And therewith in all the haste he sent his servant for a mess of strawberries. The protector set the lords fast in communing, and thereupon praying them to spare him for a little while departed thence. And soon, after one hour, between ten and eleven he returned into the chamber among them, all changed, with a wonderful sour angry countenance, knitting the brows, frowning and froting 2 and gnawing on his lips, and so, sat him down in his place; all the lords much dismayed and sore marvelling of this manner of sudden change, and what thing should him ail. Then when he had sitten still a while, thus he began: What were they worthy to have, that compass and imagine the destruction of me, being so near of blood unto the king and protector of his royal person and his realm? At this question, all the lords sat sore astonied, musing much by whom this question should be meant, of which every man wist himself clear. Then the lord chamberlain, as he that for the love between them thought he might be boldest with him, answered and said, that they were worthy to be punished as heinous traitors, whatsoever they were. And all
the other affirmed the same. That is (quoth he) yonder sorceress my
brother’s wife and other with her, meaning the queen. At these words many
of the other Lords were greatly abashed that favoured her. But the lord
Hastings was in his mind better content, that it was moved by her, than by
any other whom he loved better. Albeit his heart somewhat grudged, that
he was not afore made of counsel in this matter, as he was of the taking of
her kindred, and of their putting to death, which were by his assent before
devised to be beheaded at Pomfret this self same day, in which he was not
ware that it was by other devised, that himself should the same day be
beheaded at London. Then said the protector; ye shall all see in what wise
that sorceress and that other witch of her counsel, Shore’s wife, with their
affinity, have by their sorcery and witchcraft wasted my body. And therewith
he plucked up his doublet sleeve to his elbow upon his left arm, where he
showed a werish 3 withered arm and small, as it was never other. And
thereupon every man’s mind sore misgave them, well perceiving that this
matter was but a quarrel. For well they wist, that the queen was too wise to
going about any such folly. And also, if she would, yet would she of all folk
least make Shore’s wife of counsel, whom of all women she most hated, as
that concubine whom the king her husband had most loved. And also no
man was there present, but well knew that his harm was ever such since
his birth. Natheless the lord Chamberlain answered and said: certainly, my
lord, if they have so heinously done, they be worthy heinous punishment.
What, quoth the protector, thou servest me, I ween, with ifs and with ans, I
tell thee they have so done, and that I will make good on thy body, traitor.
And therewith, as in a great anger, he clapped his fist upon the board a
great rap. At which token given, one cried treason without the chamber.
Therewith a door clapped, and in come there rushing men in harness as
many as the chamber might hold. And anon the protector said to the Lord
Hastings: I arrest thee, traitor. What, me, my Lord? quoth he. Yea thee,
traitor, quoth the protector. And another let fly at the Lord Stanley which
shrunk at the stroke and fell under the table, or else his head had been cleft
to the teeth: for as shortly as he shrunk, yet ran the blood about his ears.
Then were they all quickly bestowed in diverse chambers, except the lord
Chamberlain, whom the protector bade speed and shrieve him apace, for by
saint Paul (quoth he) I will not to dinner till I see thy head off. It booted him
not to ask why, but heavily he took a priest at adventure, and made a short shrift, for a longer would not be suffered, the protector made so much haste to dinner; which he might not go to till this were done for saving of his oath. So was he brought forth into the green beside the chapel within the Tower, and his head laid down upon a long log of timber, and there stricken off, and afterwards his body with the head interred at Windsor beside the body of king Edward, whose both souls our Lord pardon.

A marvellous case is it to hear, either the warnings of that he should have voided, or the tokens of that he could not void. For the self night next before his death, the lord Stanley sent a trusty secret messenger unto him at midnight in all the haste, requiring him to rise and ride away with him, for he was disposed utterly no longer to bide; he had so fearful a dream, in which him thought that a boar with his tusks so raced them both by the heads, that the blood ran about both their shoulders. And forasmuch as the protector gave the boar for his cognizance, this dream made so fearful an impression in his heart, that he was thoroughly determined no longer to tarry, but had his horse ready, if the lord Hastings would go with him to ride so far yet the same night, that they should be out of danger ere day. Ay, good lord, quoth the lord Hastings to this messenger, leaneth my lord thy master so much to such trifles, and hath such faith in dreams, which either his own fear fantasieth or do rise in the night’s rest by reason of his day thoughts? Tell him it is plain witchcraft to believe in such dreams; which if they were tokens of things to come, why thinketh he not that we might be as likely to make them true by our going if we were caught and brought back (as friends fail fleers), for then had the boar a cause likely to race us with his tusks, as folk that fled for some falsehood, wherefore either is there no peril (nor none there is indeed), or if any be, it is rather in going than biding. And if we should, needs cost, fall in peril one way or other, yet had I liever that men should see it were by other men’s falsehood, than think it were either our own fault or faint heart. And therefore go to thy master, man, and commend me to him, and pray him be merry and have no fear: for I ensure him I am as sure of the man that he wotteth of, as I am of my own hand. God send grace, sir, quoth the messenger, and went his way.
Certain is it also, that in the riding toward the Tower, the same morning in which he was beheaded, his horse twice or thrice stumbled with him almost to the falling; which thing albeit each man wot well daily happeneth to them to whom no such mischance is toward, yet hath it been, of an old rite and custom, observed as a token often times notably foregoing some great misfortune. Now this that followeth was no warning, but an enemious scorn. The same morning ere he were up, came a knight unto him, as it were of courtesy to accompany him to the council, but of truth sent by the protector to haste him thitherward, with whom he was of secret confederacy in that purpose, a mean man at that time, and now of great authority. This knight when it happed the lord Chamberlain by the way to stay his horse, and commune a while with a priest whom he met in the Tower street, brake his tale and said merrily to him: What, my lord, I pray you come on, whereto talk you so long with that priest, you have no need of a priest yet; and therewith he laughed upon him, as though he would say, ye shall have soon. But so little wist that other what he meant, and so little mistrusted, that he was never merrier nor never so full of good hope in his life; which self thing is often seen a sign of change. But I shall rather let any thing pass me, than the vain surety of man’s mind so near his death. Upon the very Tower wharf, so near the place where his head was off so soon after, there met he with one Hastings, a pursuivant of his own name. And of their meeting in that place, he was put in remembrance of another time, in which it had happened them before to meet in like manner together in the same place. At which other time the lord Chamberlain had been accused unto king Edward, by the lord Rivers the queen’s brother, in such wise that he was for the while (but it lasted not long) far fallen into the king’s indignation, and stood in great fear of himself. And forasmuch as he now met this pursuivant in the same place, that jeopardy so well passed, it gave him great pleasure to talk with him thereof with whom he had before talked thereof in the same place while he was therein. And therefore he said: Ah Hastings, art thou remembered when I met thee here once with an heavy heart? Yea, my lord (quoth he), that remember I well: and thanked be God they gatno good, nor ye none harm thereby. Thou wouldest say so, quoth he, if thou knewest as much as I know, which few know else as yet and more shall shortly. That meant he by the lords of the queen’s kindred that
were taken before, and should that day be beheaded at Pomfret: which he well wist, but nothing ware that the axe hung over his own head. In faith, man, quoth he, I was never so sorry, nor never stood in so great dread in my life, as I did when thou and I met here. And lo, how the world is turned, now stand mine enemies in the danger (as thou mayst hap to hear more hereafter) and I never in my life so merry nor never in so great surety. O good God, the blindness of our mortal nature, when he most feared, he was in good surety, when he reckoned himself surest, he lost his life, and that within two hours after. Thus ended this honorable man, a good knight and a gentle, of great authority with his prince, of living somewhat dissolute, plain and open to his enemy, and secret to his friend, eath 6 to beguile, as he that of good heart and courage forestudied no perils. A loving man and passing well beloved. Very faithful, and trusty enough, trusting too much.

Note 1. vitaille = animals used for food.
Note 2. froting = chafing.
Note 3. werish = deformed.
Note 4. raced = tore, gashed.
Note 5. enemious = shown by the enemy.
Note 6. eath = easy.

SIR THOMAS MALORY, died 1471, was well known for his romance Morte'd Arthur. The famous Arthurian legends were joined to a great prose romance written with a uniform dignity and fervour. It is a skilful blend of dialogue and narrative, full of colour and life. The style has a transparent clarity and is poetic making Malory the first great prose stylist. Few writers of the century had been more successful than Malory in the use of dialogue and narrative. His dialogue is singularly terse and direct so that Malory's prose is as capable of irony as Chaucer's verse.
Extracts from the Morted’Arthur

By Sir Thomas Malory (d. c. 1470)

How Arthur by the mean of Merlin gat Excalibur his sword of the Lady of the Lake

RIGHT so the king and he departed, and went until an hermit that was a good man and a great leach. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; so the king was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go, and so departed. And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours and I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake: What damsel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen, and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her again. Damsel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur king, said the damsel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damsel, go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alight, and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him. And the arm and the hand went under the water; and so they came unto the land and rode forth. And then Sir Arthur saw a rich
pavilion: What signifieth yonder pavilion? It is the knight’s pavilion, said Merlin, that ye fought with last, Sir Pellinore, but he is out, he is not there; he hath ado with a knight of yours, that hight Egglame, and they have fought together, but at the last Egglame fled, and else he had been dead, and he hath chased him even to Carlion, and we shall meet with him anon in the high way. That is well said, said Arthur, now have I a sword, now will I wage battle with him and be avenged on him. Sir, ye shall not so, said Merlin, for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that ye shall have no worship 1 to have ado with him; also he will not lightly be matched of one knight living; and therefore it is my counsel, let him pass, for he shall do you good service in short time, and his sons after his days. Also ye shall see that day in short space, ye shall be right glad to give him your sister to wed. When I see him, I will do as ye advise me, said Arthur. Then Sir Arthur looked on the sword, and liked it passing well. Whether liketh you better, said Merlin, the sword or the scabbard? Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword for while ye have the scabbard upon you ye shall never loose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded, therefore keep well the scabbard always with you. So they rode unto Carlion, and by the way they met with Sir Pellinore; but Merlin had done such a craft that Pellinore saw not Arthur, and he passed by without any words. I marvel, said Arthur, that the knight would not speak. Sir, said Merlin, he saw you not, for and he had seen you ye had not lightly departed. So they came unto Carlion, whereof his knights were passing glad. And when they heard of his adventures they marvelled that he would jeopard his person so alone. But all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did. 1

How tidings came to Arthur that king Ryons had overcome eleven kings, and how he desired Arthur’s beard to trim his mantle
THIS meanwhile came a messager from king Ryons of North Wales, and king he was of all Ireland, and of many Isles. And this was his message, greeting well king Arthur in this manner wise, saying that king Ryons had discomfited and overcome eleven kings, and every each of them did him homage, and that was this—they gave him their beards clean flayed off, as much as there was; wherefore the messager came for king Arthur’s beard. For king Ryons had trimmed a mantle with kings’ beards, and there lacked one place of the mantle, wherefore he sent for his beard, or else he would enter into his lands, and burn and slay, and never leave till he have the head and the beard. Well, said Arthur, thou hast said thy message, the which is the most villainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent unto a king; also thou mayest see my beard is full young yet to make a trimming of it. But tell thou thy king this: I owe him none homage, nor none of mine elders; but or it be long 2 he shall do me homage on both his knees, or else he shall lose his head, by the faith of my body, for this is the most shamefulest message that ever I heard speak of. I see well thy king met never yet with worshipful man, but tell him I will have his head without he do me homage. Then the messenger departed. Now is there any here, said Arthur, that knoweth king Ryons? Then answered a knight that hight Naram, Sir, I know the king well; he is a passing good man of his body as few be living, and a passing proud man; and, Sir, doubt ye not he will make war on you with a mighty puissance. Well, said Arthur, I shall ordain for him in short time.

As we look back at the prose of the 15th century we see a variety of very developed and condensed prose.
The Elizabethan Age has well been called as a young age. It was full of boundless vigour, reawakened intellectual esteem and soaring imagination. The best of the age is found in drama and next in poetry. As prose, unlike verse, does not admit any substantial restriction hence Elizabethan prose developed substantially. For the first time prose had risen to a position of first rate importance. The dead weight of the Latin tradition was passing away and English prose was acquiring a tradition and a universal application. During the 15th century Latin dominated as the medium of expression while English came to its own in the 16th century. With the arrival of mass printing, English prose became the popular medium for works aiming both at amusement and instruction. The books which date from this period covered many departments of learning. The early Elizabethan use of prose was rich, gaudy and overflowing. It is far from commonly accepted principle of simplicity as it was colourful, blazing, rhythmic, indirect and polished.

The sixteenth century prose can be categorised into two periods: a) prose writings before 1579 and b) prose during the later half of the 16th century. During the early years Sixteenth Century Prose was cultivated by Elyot, Cavendish, Cheke, Willson and Ascham.

**SIR THOMAS ELYOT** is the author of The Governance of England (1531). The book is a fine specimen of a perfect combination between matter and manner. Elyot’s style is classical and he is rather too much given to long sentences. He lacks the deliberate classical plainness of his younger contemporary Ascham.
THE MOST renowned prince, King Henry the Fifth, late King of England, during the life of his father was noted to be fierce and of wanton courage. It happened that one of his servants whom he well favoured, for felony by him committed, was arraigned at the King’s Bench: whereof he being advertised, and incensed by light persons about him, in furious rage came hastily to the bar, where his servant stood as a prisoner, and commanded him to be ungavaed, and set at liberty, whereat all men were abashed, reserved the chief justice, who humbly exhorted the prince to be contented that his servant mought be ordered according to the ancient laws of this realm, or if he would have him saved from the rigour of the laws, that he should obtain, if he mought, of the King, his father, his gracious pardon: whereby no law or justice should be derogate. With which answer the prince nothing appeased, but rather more inflamed, endeavoured himself to take away his servant. The judge considering the perilous example and inconvenience that mought thereby ensue, with a valiant spirit and courage commanded the prince upon his allegiance to leave the prisoner and depart his way. With which commandment the prince, being set all in a fury, all chafed, and in a terrible manner, came up to the place of judgement—men thinking that he would have slain the judge, or have done to him some damage; but the judge sitting still, without moving, declaring the majesty of the King’s place of judgement, and with an assured and bold countenance, had to the prince these words following: Sir, remember yourself: I keep here the place of the King, your sovereign lord and father, to whom ye owe double obedience, wherefore, eftsoons in his name, I charge you desist of your wilfulness, and unlawful enterprise, and from henceforth give good example to those which hereafter shall be your proper subjects. And now for your contempt and disobedience, go you to the prison of the King’s
Bench, whereunto I commit you; and remain ye there prisoner until the pleasure of the King, your father, be further known. With which words being abashed, and also wondering at the marvellous gravity of that worshipful justice, the noble prince, laying his weapon apart, doing reverence, departed and went to the King’s Bench as he was commanded. Whereat his servants disdaining, came and shewed to the King all the whole affair. Whereat he a whiles studying, after as a man all ravished with gladness, holding his eyes and hands up toward heaven, abraided, saying with a loud voice: O merciful God, how much am I, above all other men, bound to Your infinite goodness; specially for that Ye have given me a judge, who feareth not to minister justice, and also a son who can suffer semblably and obey justice? 1

Now here a man may behold three persons worthy excellent memory. First, a judge, who being a subject, feared not to execute justice on the eldest son of his sovereign lord, and by the order of nature his successor. Also a prince and son and heir of the King, in the midst of his fury, more considered his evil example, and the judge’s constance in justice, than his own estate or wilful appetite. Thirdly, a noble King and wise father, who contrary to the custom of parents, rejoiced to see his son and the heir of his crown, to be for his disobedience by his subject corrected. 2

Wherefore I conclude that nothing is more honourable, or to be desired in a prince or noble man, than placability. As contrary wise, nothing is so detestable, or to be feared in such one, as wrath and cruel malignity. 3

GEORGE CAVENDISH wrote the biography of Cardinal Wolsey. Cavendish wrote in a rhetorical style and with no simplicity.

SIR JOHN CHEKE’s actual composition was in Latin. He wrote the Heart of Sedition. In this work Cheke shows himself vigorous in arguments and eloquent in impression.
O NOBLE peace, what wealth bringest thou in, how do all things flourish in field and in town, what forwardness of religion, what increase of learning, what gravity in counsel, what devise of wit, what order of manners, what obedience of laws, what reverence of states, what safeguard of houses, what quietness of life, what honour of countries, what friendship of minds, what honesty of pleasure hast thou always maintained, whose happiness we knew not, while now we feel thy lack, and shall learn by misery to understand plenty, and so to avoid mischief by the hurt that it bringeth, and learn to serve better, where rebellion is once known; and so to live truly, and keep the king’s peace. What good state were ye in afore ye began, not pricked with poverty, but stirred with mischief, to seek your destruction, having ways to redress all that was amiss? Magistrates most ready to tender all justice, and pitiful in hearing the poor men’s causes, which sought to amend matters more than you can devise, and were ready to redress them better than ye could imagine; and yet for a headiness ye could not be contented; but in despite of God, who commandeth obedience, and in contempt of the king, whose laws do seek your wealth, and to overthrow the country, which naturally we should love, ye would proudly rise, and do ye wot not what, and amend things by rebellion to your utter undoing. What states leave ye us in now, besieged with enemies, divided at home, made poor with spoil and loss of our harvest, murdered and cast down with slaughter and hatred, hindered from amendments by our own devilish haste, endangered with sickness by reason of disorder, laid open to men’s pleasures for breaking of the laws, and feebled to such faintness that scarcely it will be covered. 1
Wherefore, for God’s sake, have pity on yourselves, consider how miserably ye have spoiled, destroyed, and wasted us all; and if for desperateness ye care not for yourselves, yet remember your wives, your children, your country, and forsake this rebellion. With humble submission acknowledge your faults, and tarry not the extremity of the king’s sword; leave off with repentance, and turn to your duties, ask God forgiveness, submit ye to your king, be contented for a commonwealth one or two to die.

SIR THOMAS WILLSON’s main work is Art of Rhetoric (1553). In this book he recommends purity and simplicity of the language. He lays emphasis on the necessity of writing English for Englishmen.

The Virtue of Simplicity

By Thomas Wilson (c. 1526–1581)

From the Arte of Rhetorike

Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that we never affect any strange ink-horn terms, but to speak as is commonly received: neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living over-careless, using our speech as most men do, and ordering our wits as the fewest have done. Some seek so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mother’s language. And I dare swear this, if some of their mothers were alive, they were not able to tell what they say. And yet these fine English clerks will say, they speak in their mother tongue, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the King’s English. Some far journeyed gentlemen at their return home, like as they love to go in foreign apparel, so they will powder their talk with over-sea language. He that cometh lately out of France, will talk French English and never blush at the matter. Another chops in with English Italinated, and applieth the Italian phrase to our English speaking, the which is, as if an orator that professeth to utter his mind in plain Latin, would needs speak poetry, and far fetchedcolours of strange antiquity. The
lawyer will store his stomach with the prating of pedlars. The auditor in making his account and reckoning, cometh in with sisesould, and cater denere, for vi. s. iii. d. The fine courtier will talk nothing but Chaucer. The mystical wisemen and poetical clerks will speak nothing but quaint proverbs, and blind allegories, delighting much in their own darkness, especially, when none can tell what they do say. The unlearned or foolish fantastical, that smells but of learning (such fellows as have seen learned men in their days) will so Latin their tongues, that the simple cannot but wonder at their talk, and think surely they speak by some revelation. I know them that think rhetoric to stand wholly upon dark words, and he that can catch an ink-horn term by the tail, him they count to be a fine Englishman, and a good rhetorician.  

ROGER ASCHAM is the representative of the earliest school of Elizabethan prose. Born at Yorkshire and educated at St. John College, Cambridge, Ascham became a teacher of Greek in 1540. He participated in the literary and religious controversies of his time but managed a firm position on the shifting ground of politics. He was appointed tutor to Young Elizabeth (1548) and secretary to Queen Mary. He is among the pioneers of English prose and the most popular educationist of his times. His two chief works are Toxophilus (1545) and The School Master. The first is a treatise, in dialogue form, on archery and the next is an educational work containing some ideas that were fairly fresh and entertaining. He was a man of moderate literary talent, of great industry, and of boundless enthusiasm for learning. Though he was strongly influenced by classical models, he has all the strong Elizabethan sense of nationality. In Toxophilus he declares his intention of writing the English matter in English speech for the Englishmen.

English prose up to 1579 does not show any marked progress and after this date it registered a rapid growth and improvement. The later 16th century prose took its various forms such as Prose romances, Pamphlets, Translations, Critical prose, Sermons, Dramatic prose, Character writing, Essays etc.
During the later half of the 16th century a number of prose romances were produced. They were all written in Euphuistic style, a prose style cultivated by John Lyly. John Lyly’s first prose work Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit (1579) made him a foremost figure of his day. He repeated the success in Euphues and his England (1580). Euphuism is the first consciously fabricated prose style in English.

All through the period there was a flood of short tracts on religion, politics, and literature. In its buoyancy and vigour, its quaint mixture of truculence and petulance, Elizabethan pamphleteering is refreshingly boyish and alive. It is usually keenly satirical, and in style it is unformed and uncouth. The most notable among the pamphleteers were THOMAS NASHE (1567-1601), ROBERT GREENE (1560-92) and THOMAS LODGE (1558-1625). These pamphleteers cultivated a journalistic style characterised by vigour, force and raciness.

Sermon writings rose to a level of literary importance in this period. Donne was the most notable and his sermons contain his finest prose work. Numbered 160 Donne’s sermons show his unflinching faith in God and Christianity and his oratorial skill. Donne’s sermons, of which the finest is probably Death’s Duell (1630), contain many of the features of his poetry. The other prominent sermon writers are James Ussher and Joseph Hall. JAMES USSHER (1581-1656), born and educated at Dublin, was descended from a protestant family. He rose to be the bishop of Meath and the Arch bishop of Armagh. In 1640 he came to England and remained there through out his life due to disturbances in Ireland. His sermons, discourses and tracts show learning, adroit argument and a plain and easy style. JOSEPH HALL (1574-1656) was educated at Cambridge, took orders, and became a prominent of the puritans, among whom was Milton. He was appointed bishop of Exeter and Norwich. Hall’s opinions brought him to disgrace during the Puritan rule. Hall’s devotional and theological works were numerous and include tracts, sermons and treatises. Though he is often shallow and voluble, he writes with literary grace. He is the most literary of the theologians of the time.
The zeal for learning and spirit of adventure, which were prominent features of the early Elizabethan age, were strongly apparent in the frequent translations. The translators cared little for verbal accuracy, and sometimes were content to translate from a translation, say from a French version of a Latin text. They worked in many varied fields. Of the classics, Virgil was translated by PHAER (1558) and STANYHURST (1562); Plutarch’s Lives by NORTH (1579); Ovid by GOLDING (1565 & 1567), TURBERVILLE (1567), and CHAPMAN (1595); Homer by CHAPMAN (1598). All Seneca was translated into English by 1581, and Suetonius, Pliny and Plutarch’s Morals were translated by HOLLAND. Among the translations of Italian works were Machiavelli’s Arte of Warre (1560) and Castiglione’s The Courtier translated by HOBY (1561); the Palace of Pleasure by PAINTER (1566); Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso by HARRINGTON (1591). From France were drawn FLORIO’s translation of the Essays of Montaigne (1603) and DANNETT’s Commines (1596), while Spain provided NORTH with The Diall of Princes (1557).

The birth of literary criticism during this period indicates the growing stature of the national literature and the realisation of the need to establish the principles of writing. The critics turned to the classics for their guides and models. They were chiefly concerned with three topics: the status and value of poetry, the importance of classical models, the merits and demerits of rhyme. Stephen Gosson attacked poetry as immoral in his Puritanical treatise The School of Abuse (1579) and Sidney replied in his epoch making The Apologie for Poetrie (1582). William Webbe, in A Discourse of English Poetrie (1586), attempted the first historical survey of poets and poetry, and Puttenham’s The Arte of English Poesy (1589) is the first systematic consideration of poetry as an art. Intermittent discussion on the merits and demerits of rhyme culminated in the debate between Campion and Daniel. In reply to Campion’s condemnation of rhyme in his Observations in the Art of English Poesie (1602), Daniel’s famous A Defence of Rhyme (1602) asserted the right of every literature to its own customs and traditions.
Beginning in the pamphlets, character sketches, and other miscellaneous writings English essay developed in the works of Bacon. The English essay has its roots in the Elizabethan period, in the miscellaneous work of Lodge, Lyly and Greene and other literary free lancers. Sidney’s Apologie for Poetrie attains a rudimentary essay form. But the first real English essayist was Bacon who published a short series of essays in 1597. In him we have the miscellany of theme and the brevity and the musings of the philosopher.

**SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PROSE**

The development of English prose in the 17th century can be divided into two periods: 1) prose in the age of Milton 2) prose during Restoration.

During the mid 17th century or rather the Age of Milton the development of prose carried on from the previous age. In spite of the hampering effects of the civil strife, the prose output was copious and excellent in kind. There was a notable advance in the sermon writing; pamphlets were abundant; and history, politics, philosophy and miscellaneous kinds were well represented. There was a remarkable advance in prose style.

The prose of this age was cultivated in a style very different from the Elizabethan and Sixteenth century prose. The prose writers used a grand style which Bacon and Hooker never anticipated. It was loose in structure, over coloured, elaborate and way ward. The writers indulged too freely in the use of Latinised words of classical construction. Despite some drawbacks, the prose of this period has many qualities. It has the freshness of form. The Seventeenth century is the first great period of modern English prose when it was forming under the classical influence but independent of the French impact. In subject matter it represents the self conscious and personal interest of the time. It was also a period of biography,
autobiography, history and personal essays. The prose of this age possesses a strongly religious or theological and philosophical character.

The important prose writers of this period are, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Fuller, Jack Walton and John Milton.

**SIR THOMAS BROWNE (1605-82)**, born at London and educated at Winchester and Oxford, studied medicine, practised at Oxfordshire, travelled abroad, and received his degree of M.D at Leyden. Almost alone among his contemporary writers, Browne seems to have been unaffected by the commotions of the time. His prose works, produced during some of the hottest years of civil strife, are oblivious of the unrest. *Religio Medici* (1635/1642), his confession of faith, is a curious mixture of religious faith and scientific scepticism. *Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Vulgar Errors* (1646), sharing the same mental inconsistency, resembles the works of Burton in its out of way learning. *Hydriotaphia: Urne Buriall* (1658), commonly considered to be his master piece, contains reflections on human mortality induced by the discovery of some ancient funeral urns. The Garden of Cyrus (1658) is a treatise on the quincunx. His last work *Christian Morals* was published after his death.

Browne was a great literary stylist. He shows the ornate style in its richest bloom. His diction is strongly latinised and he has the scholastic habit of introducing Latin tags and references. His sentences are carefully wrought and artistically combined into paragraphs. The diction has a richness of effect unknown among other English prose writers. The prose is sometimes obscure, rarely vivacious, and hardly ever diverting: but the solemnity and beauty of it have given it an enduring fascination.
Temperance in Pleasure
By Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682)

From Christian Morals

PUNISH not thyself with pleasure; glut not thy sense with palative delights; nor revenge the contempt of temperance by the penalty of satiety. Were there an age of delight or any pleasure durable, who would not honour Volupia? but the race of delight is short, and pleasures have mutable faces. The pleasures of one age are not pleasures in another, and their lives fall short of our own. Even in our sensual days, the strength of delight is in its seldomness or rarity, and sting in its satiety: mediocrity is its life, and immoderacy its confusion. The luxurious emperors of old inconsiderately satiated themselves with the dainties of sea and land, till, wearied through all varieties, their refections became a study unto them, and they were fain to feed by invention: novices in true epicurism! which, by mediocrity, paucity, quick and healthful appetite, makes delights smartly acceptable; whereby Epicurus himself found Jupiter’s brain in a piece of Cytheridian cheese, and the tongues of nightingales in a dish of onions. Hereby healthful and temperate poverty hath the start of nauseating luxury; unto whose clear and naked appetite every meal is a feast, and in one single dish the first course of Metellus; who are cheaply hungry and never lose their hunger, or advantage of a craving appetite, because obvious food contents it; while Nero, half famished, could not feed upon a piece of bread, and, lingering after his snowed water, hardly got down an ordinary cup of Calda. By such circumscriptions of pleasure the contemned philosophers reserved unto themselves the secret of delight, which the helluos of those days lost in their exorbitances. In vain we study delight; it is at the command of every sober mind, and in every sense born with us; but nature who teacheth us the rule of pleasure, instructeth also in the bounds thereof, and where its line expireth. And, therefore, temperate minds, not pressing their pleasures until the sting appeareth, enjoy their
contentationscontentedly, and without regret, and so escape the folly of excess, to be pleased unto displacency.  

**JEREMY TAYLOR (1613-67)** is the most important literary divine of the age. A learned, voluble, and impressive preacher, who carried the same quality into his prose works which consisted of tracts, sermons, and theological books. His popular works were The Liberty of Prophesying (1647), Holy Living (1650), and Holy Dying (1651). In his writings he is fond of quotations and allusions and of florid, rhetorical figures, such as simile, exclamation, and apostrophe; and his language is abundant, melodious and pleasing.

**Of the Practice of Patience**
**By Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667)**

*From Holy Dying*

NOW we suppose the man entering upon his scene of sorrows and passive graces. It may be he went yesterday to a wedding, merry and brisk, and there he felt his sentence, that he must return home and die (for men very commonly enter into the snare singing, and consider not whither their fate leads them); nor feared that then the angel was to strike his stroke, till his knees kissed the earth, and his head trembled with the weight of the rod which God put into the hand of an exterminating angel. But, whatsoever the ingress was, when the man feels his blood boil or his bones weary, or his flesh diseased with a load of a dispersed and disordered humour, or his head to ache, or his faculties discomposed; then he must consider that all those discourses he hath heard concerning patience and resignation, and conformity to Christ’s sufferings, and the melancholic lectures of the Cross, must all of them now be reduced to practice, and pass from an ineffective contemplation to such an exercise as will really try whether we were true disciples of the Cross, or only believed the doctrines of religion when we were at ease, and that they never passed through the ear to the heart, and dwelt not in our spirits. But every man should consider God does nothing in
vain; that He would not to no purpose send us preachers, and give us rules, and furnish us with discourse, and lend us books, and provide sermons, and make examples, and promise His Spirit, and describe the blessedness of holy sufferings, and prepare us with daily alarms, if He did not really purpose to order our affairs so that we should need all this, and use it all. There were no such thing as the grace of Patience, if we were not to feel a sickness, or enter into a state of sufferings.

**THOMAS FULLER (1608-61)** had an original and penetrating mind. His literary works are of great interest and value. His serious historical books include *The History of the Holy War* (1639), dealing with the crusades, and *The Church History of Britain* (1655). Among his pamphlets are *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* (1645) and *An Alarum to the Counties of England and Wales* (1660). The work that has given him his reputation is *The Worthies of England* published after his death by his son in 1662.

**JOHN MILTON (1608-74)** was not only a great poet but also a finest writer of prose whose work is among the finest controversial writing in the language. Most of his prose was written during the middle period of his life (1640-60). The prose works have an unusual interest because they have a direct bearing on either his personal business or public interest. In all he has written twenty-five pamphlets (21 in English, 4 in Latin). He wrote his pamphlets on themes like divorce, episcopacy, politics, education, liberty of the press etc. His greatest prose work is *Areopagitica* (1644) which is a noble and impassioned plea for the liberty of the press.
The Search after Truth
By John Milton (1608–1674)

From the Areopagitica

TRUTH indeed came once into the world with her divine master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master’s second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint. 1

We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust, and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the sun, until the opposite motion of their orbs bring them to such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning? The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, and the removing him from off the presbyterian shoulders, that will make us a happy nation: no; if other things as great in the church, and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin have beaconed up to us, that we are stark blind. 2
There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance which causes the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their Syntagma. 1 They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dissevered pieces, which are yet wanting to the body of truth. To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal, and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold, and neutral, and inwardly divided minds. 3

Note 1. Syntagma = scheme of doctrine.

While considering the prose style of Milton we must keep in mind how it was occasioned. His pamphlets were cast off at the centre of any controversy and precipitated into print while some topic was in urgent debate either in Milton’s or in public mind. Hence they are tempestuous and disordered in method and voluble, violent and lax in style. They reveal intense zeal and pugnacity, a mind at once spacious in ideals and intolerant in application, a rich fancy, and a capacious scholarship. They lack humour, proportion, and restraint; but in spite of these defects they are among the greatest prose compositions in the English language.

The other prose writers in the age of Milton were Izaac Walton, Earl of Clarendon and Thomas Hobbes. The period is almost devoid of narrative prose of the lighter sort, it is quite rich in sermons, pamphlets and other miscellaneous prose. The period has been called as “the Golden Age of English pulpit.” The violent religious strife of the time has a great flow of sermon writing which is marked with eloquence, learning and strong argument. In addition to Jeremy Taylor and Fuller we may notice Robert South, Issac Barrow and Richard Baxter. A number of philosophical works were also written. On the moral side there are the works of Browne; on the
political those of Hobbes; and on the religious side the books of John Hales. In historical prose the works of Clarendon and Fuller stood preeminent.

**RESTORATION PROSE**

With the exception of the works of Dryden and Bunyan, the prose work of the Restoration times is of little moment. Dryden’s prose is almost entirely devoted to literary criticism and Bunyan’s contribution shows a remarkable development of the prose allegory. The remainder of the prose writers deal with political, historical, theological and other miscellaneous subjects.

**JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700)** is the representative writer of the Restoration age. For forty years he continued to produce an abundance of literary works of every kind ----- poems, plays and prose works. Dryden’s versatility is apparent when we observe that in prose, as well as in poetry and drama, he attains to primacy in his generation. In prose Dryden has one rival, John Bunyan. No single item of Dryden’s prose work is of very great length; but in his Essay of Dramatic Poesie (1668), in his numerous dedicatory epistles and prefaces, and in scanty stock of his surviving letters we have a prose corpus of some magnitude. The general subject of his prose work is literary criticism, and that of a sane and vigorous quality. The style is free but not too much. There are slips of grammar, but not too many. Dryden has been given the credit of inaugurating the new era of English prose. He has also been considered as the father of English prose.
THIS, I think, my lord, is a sufficient reproach to you; and should I carry it as far as mankind would authorise me, would be little less than satire. And indeed, a provocation is almost necessary, in behalf of the world, that you might be induced sometimes to write; and in relation to a multitude of scribblers, who daily pester the world with their insufferable stuff, that they might be discouraged from writing any more. I complain not of their lampoons and libels, though I have been the public mark for many years. I am vindictive enough to have repelled force by force, if I could imagine that any of them had ever reached me; but they either shot at rovers, and therefore missed, or their powder was so weak, that I might safely stand them at the nearest distance. I answered not the Rehearsal, because I knew the author sat to himself when he drew the picture, and was the very Bayes of his own farce; because also I knew that my betters were more concerned than I was in that satire; and, lastly, because Mr. Smith and Mr. Johnson, the main pillars of it, were two such languishing gentlemen in their conversation, that I could liken them to nothing but to their own relations, those noble characters of men of wit and pleasure about the town. The like considerations have hindered me from dealing with the lamentable companions of their prose and doggrel. I am so far from defending my poetry against them, that I will not so much as expose theirs. And for my morals, if they are not proof against their attacks, let me be thought by posterity, what those authors would be thought, if any memory of them, or of their writings, could endure so long as to another age. But these dull makers of lampoons, as harmless as they have been to me, are yet of dangerous example to the public. Some witty men may perhaps succeed to their designs, and mixing sense with malice, blast the reputation of the most innocent amongst men, and the most virtuous amongst women.
Heaven be praised, our common libellers are as free from the imputation of wit as of morality; and therefore whatever mischief they have designed, they have performed but little of it. Yet these ill writers, in all justice, ought themselves to be exposed; as Persius has given us a fair example in his first satire, which is levelled particularly at them; and none is so fit to correct their faults, as he who is not only clear from any in his own writings, but is also so just, that he will never defame the good; and is armed with the power of verse, to punish and make examples of the bad.

JOHN BUNYAN (1628-88) alone contests the supremacy of Dryden in the domain of Restoration prose. His first book Grace Abounding (1666) is a spiritual autobiography dealing with the spiritual history of his birth, childhood and youth. There is sincerity in expression and a remarkable simplicity. The Pilgrim’s Progress (1678) is his masterpiece. It is an allegory which takes the form of a dream fragment. The whole book is remarkable for a powerful narrative style enriched by beauty, simplicity and vividness of language. Bunyan was the first writer who used a very simple and appealing prose. His other famous works are The Life and Death of Mr. Badman (1680) and The Holy War (1682).
Letters to and from Diabolus

By John Bunyan (1628–1688)

From The Holy War

LETTER I

TO our great Lord, the Prince Diabolus, dwelling below in the Infernal Cave. 1

Oh great father, and mighty Prince Diabolus, we, the true Diabolonians yet remaining in the rebellious town of Mansoul, having received our beings from thee, and our nourishment at thy hands, cannot with content and quiet endure to behold, as we do this day, how thou art dispraised, disgraced, and reproached among the inhabitants of this town; nor is thy long absence at all delightful to us, because greatly to our detriment. 2

The reason of this our writing unto our lord, is for that we are not altogether without hope that this town may become thy habitation again; for it is greatly declined from its Prince Emmanuel; and he is uprisen, and is departed from them: yea, and though they send, and send, and send after him to return to them, yet can they not prevail, nor get good words from him. 3

There has been also of late, and is yet remaining, a very great sickness and fainting among them; and that not only upon the poorer sort of the town, but upon the lords, captains, and chief gentry of the place (we only who are of the Diabolonians by nature remain well, lively, and strong), so that through their great transgression on the one hand, and their dangerous sickness on the other, we judge they lie open to thy hand and power. If therefore, it shall stand with thy horrible cunning, and with the cunning of the rest of the princes with thee, to come and make an attempt to take Mansoul again, send us word, and we shall to our utmost power be ready to deliver it unto thy hand. Or, if what we have said shall not by thy Fatherhood be thought best and most meet to be done, send us thy mind in
a few words, and we are all ready to follow thy counsel to the hazarding of our lives, and what else we have. 4

Given under our hands the day and date above written, after a close consultation at the house of Mr. Mischief, who yet is alive, and hath his place in our desirable town of Mansoul. 5

Except for Grace Abounding, all Bunyan’s major works are allegorical and in each case the allegory is worked out with ease, force, and clearness. His allegorical personages are fresh and apt, and are full of an intense interest and a raw dramatic energy. Bunyan’s style is unique in prose. Though it is undoubtedly based on Biblical models, it is quite individual. It is homely, but not vulgar; strong, but not coarse; equable, but not monotonous; it is sometimes humorous but it is never ribald; rarely pathetic, but never sentimental.

**LORD HELIFAX (1633-95)** ranks high as orator; as an author his fame rests on a small volume called Miscellanies containing a number of political tracts. In his writings Helifax adopts the manner and attitude of the typical man of the world: a moderation of statement, a cool and agreeably acid humour, and a style devoid of flourishes.

**SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE (1628-99)** was an example of the moneyed, leisured semi amateur in literature who wrote little but elegantly. His chief works were his LETTERS (1700), MEMOIRS (1691) and MISCELLANEA, a series of essays (1680, 1690 & 1701). His style resembles that of Halifax in its mundane, cultured reticence; but sometimes he has higher flights, in which he shows some skill in the handling of melodious and rhythmic prose.
Temple on his Way to Munster

By Sir William Temple (1628–1699)

From Letters

I NEVER travelled a more savage country, over cruel hills, through many great and thick woods, stony and rapid streams, never hardly in any highway, and very few villages, till I came near Dortmund, a city of the Empire, and within a day’s journey, or something more, of Munster. The night I came to Dortmund was so advanced when I arrived, that the gates were shut, and with all our eloquence, which was as moving as we could, we were not able to prevail to have them opened; they advised us to go to a village about a league distant, where they said we might have lodging. When we came there, we found it all taken up with a troop of Brandenburg horse, so as the poor Spanish Envoy was fain to eat what he could get in a barn, and to sleep upon a heap of straw, and lay my head upon my page instead of a pillow. The best of it was, that he, understanding Dutch, heard one of the Brandenburg soldiers coming into the barn, to examine some of my guards about me and my journey, which, when he was satisfied of, he asked if he had heard nothing upon the way of an English Envoy that was expected; the fellow said, he was upon the way, and might be at Dortmund within a day or two, with which he was satisfied, and I slept as well as I could.

The next morning I went into Dortmund, and, hearing there that, for five or six leagues round, all was full of Brandenburg troops, I dispatched away a German gentleman I had in my train, with a letter to the bishop of Munster, to let him know the place and condition I was in, and desire he would send me guards immediately, and strong enough to convey me. The night following my messenger returned, and brought me word, that, by eight o’clock the morning after, a Commander of the Bishop’s would come in sight of the town, at the head of twelve hundred horse, and desired I would come and join them so soon as they appeared. I did so, and, after an easy march till four o’clock, I came to a castle of the Bishop’s, where I was
received by Lieutenant-General Gorgas, a Scotsman in that service, who omitted nothing of honour or entertainment that could be given me. There was nothing here remarkable, but the most Episcopal way of drinking that could be invented. As soon as we came in the great hall, there stood many flagons ready charged, the General called for wine to drink the King’s health; they brought him a formal bell of silver gilt, that might hold about two quarts or more; he took it empty, pulled out the clapper, and gave it me, who he intended to drink to, then had the bell filled, drank it off to his Majesty’s health, then asked me for the clapper, put it in, turned down the bell, and rung it out, to show he had played fair, and left nothing in it; took out the clapper, desired me to give it to whom I pleased, then gave his bell to be filled again, and brought it to me. I that never used to drink, and seldom would try, had commonly some gentlemen with me that served for that purpose when it was necessary; and so I had the entertainment of seeing his health go current through about a dozen hands, with no more share in it than just what I pleased. 2

It was a strange coincidence that two diary writers SAMUEL PEPYS (1633-1703) & JOHN EVELYN (1620-1706) were working at the same time during this period.

Though the prose writings of Restoration are not great in bulk, it shows a profound change in style. Previous writers, such as Browne, Clarendon, and Hobbes, had done remarkable and beautiful work in prose, but their style had not yet found itself. It was wayward and erratic, often cumbersome and often obscure, and weighted with a Latinised construction and vocabulary. In Dryden’s time prose begins definitely to find its feet. It acquires a general utility and permanence; it is smoothened and straightened, simplified and harmonised. This is the age of average prose and it prepares the way for the works of Swift and Addison.
Not that Dryden’s style is flawless. It is sometimes involved and obscure; there are little slips of grammar and many slips of expression; but on the average it is of high quality. In the case of Bunyan the style becomes plainer still. But it is powerful and effective. Pepys and Evelyn have no pretensions to style as such, but their work is admirably expressed.

In some writers of the period we find this desire for unornamented style degenerating into coarseness and ugliness. Such a one is JEREMY COLLIER (1650-1726), who’s Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698) caused a great commotion. THOMAS SPRAT (1635-1713) wrote on the newly formed Royal Society in a close, naked, natural way of speaking. JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704), in his famous An Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690) wrote with a style bare to bald but clear.
The 18th Century was doubtlessly an age of great prose. Matthew Arnold calls it a century of prose and suggests that even the poetry of the period was prosaic or versified prose. The period has only one great poet Alexander Pope while it produced prose writers of very high quality like Addison, Steele, Swift, Defoe and Johnson.

Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) was a journalist and pamphleteer who wrote with extraordinary felicity and effect on an infinite variety of subjects. His prose work is in amazing bulk and variety. Like most of the prose writers of the period Defoe turned out a mass of political tracts and pamphlets. He issued his own journal The Review in 1704 which was in several ways the forerunner of The Tatler and The Spectator. His best known work was The True Born Englishman (1701). His The Shortest Way with the Dissenters (1702) invited official wrath. His novels like Robinson Crusoe were landmarks in the growth of prose. His prose is noted for extraordinary minute realism and colloquial style.
IT happened one day about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man’s naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand: I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition; I listened, I looked round me, I could hear nothing, nor see any thing; I went up to a rising ground to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one, I could see no other impression but that one, I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the very print of a foot, toes, heel, and every part of a foot; how it came thither, I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of my self, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man; nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes affrighted imagination represented things to me in; how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way.

When I came to my castle, for so I think I called it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued; whether I went over by the ladder as first contrived, or went in at the hole in the rock, which I called a door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next morning; for never frighted hare fled to cover, or fox to earth, with more terror of mind than I to this retreat.

I slept none that night; the farther I was from the occasion of my fright, the greater my apprehensions were; which is something contrary to the nature of such things, and especially to the usual practice of all creatures in fear. But I was so embarrassed with my own frightful ideas of the thing, that I formed nothing but dismal imaginations to my self, even though I was now
a great way off it. Sometimes I fancied it must be the devil; and reason joined in with me upon this supposition, for how should any other thing in human shape come into the place? Where was the vessel that brought them? What marks were there of any other footsteps? And how was it possible a man should come there? But then to think that Satan should take human shape upon him in such a place where there could be no manner of occasion for it, but to leave the print of his foot behind him, and that even for no purpose too, for he could not be sure I should see it; this was an amusement the other way; I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to have terrified me than this of the single print of a foot. That as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea upon a high wind would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all the notions we usually entertain of the subtilty of the devil.

Abundance of such things as these assisted to argue me out of all apprehensions of its being the devil. And I presently concluded then, that it must be some more dangerous creature, viz. That it must be some of the savages of the mainland over against me, who had wandered out to sea in their canoes, and either driven by the currents, or by contrary winds, had made the island; and had been on shore, but were gone away again to sea, being as loth, perhaps, to have stayed in this desolate island, as I would have been to have had them.

While these reflections were rolling upon my mind, I was very thankful in my thoughts, that I was so happy as not to be thereabouts at that time, or that they did not see my boat, by which they would have concluded that some inhabitants had been in the place, and perhaps have searched farther for me. Then terrible thoughts racked my imagination about their having found my boat, and that there were people here; and that if so, I should certainly have them come again in greater numbers and devour me; that if it should happen so that they should not find me, yet they would find my enclosure, destroy all my corn, carry away all my flock of tame goats, and I should perish at last for mere want.
Thus my fear banished all my religious hope; all that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of His goodness, now vanished, as if He that had fed me by miracle hitherto, could not preserve by His power the provision which He had made for me by His goodness: I reproached myself with my easiness, that would not sow any more corn one year than would just serve me till the next season, as if no accident could intervene to prevent my enjoying the crop that was upon the ground; and this I thought so just a reproof, that I resolved for the future to have two or three years’ corn beforehand, so that whatever might come, I might not perish for want of bread. 6

How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man! and by what secret differing springs are the affections hurried about, as differing circumstances present! To-day we love what to-morrow we hate; to-day we seek what to-morrow we shun; to-day we desire what to-morrow we fear; nay, even tremble at the apprehensions of. This was exemplified in me at this time in the most lively manner imaginable; for I whose only affliction was, that I seemed banished from human society, that I was alone, circumscribed by the boundless ocean, cut off from mankind, and condemned to what I called silent life; that I was as one whom heaven thought not worthy to be numbered among the living, or to appear among the rest of his creatures; that to have seen one of my own species would have seemed to me a raising me from death to life, and the greatest blessing that heaven itself, next to the supreme blessing of salvation, could bestow; I say, that I should now tremble at the very apprehensions of seeing a man, and was ready to sink into the ground at but the shadow or silent appearance of a man’s having set his foot in the island.

The most important contribution in 18th century prose has been made by Richard Steele (1672-1729) and Joseph Addison (1672-1719) through their well known periodicals The Tatler and The Spectator. Temperamentally Richard Steele was a moralist but he had none of the cynicism which had characterised the century. He wrote dramas but it was due to his essays that he finds his place in literature. He had variation and sentimental aspiration and a form of sincere piety as proved by his first book The
Christian Hero. His lesson is that conduct should be regulated not by the desire for glory but by conscience. He started his journal The Tatler in 1709, The Spectator in 1711 and several other short lived periodicals The Guardian (1713), The Englishman (1713), The Reader (1714), and The Plebeian (1719). Steele is remarkable for his witty prose and humorous style. His characters are also humorous.

Steele’s alliance with Addison was so close and so constant that a comparison between them is almost inevitable. Some critics maintain that of the two Steele is worthier. He is equal to Addison in versatility and originality. His humour is broader and less restrained than Addison’s, with a naïve pathetic touch that is reminiscent of Goldsmith. His pathos is more attractive and more humane. But Steele’s very virtues are only his weaknesses sublimed; they are emotional, not intellectual; of the heart, and not of the head. He is incapable of irony; he lacks penetration and power. He lacks Addison’s care and suave ironic insight. He is reckless in style and inconsequent in method.

The aim of Steele’s essays was didactic; he desired to bring about a reformation of contemporary society manners, and is notable for his consistent advocacy of womanly virtues and the ideal of the gentleman of courtesy, chivalry, and good taste. His essays on children are charming, and are full of human sympathy.

Joseph Addison was famous for drama, poetry and essays. But it is in fact almost entirely as an essayist that he is justly famed. Together with Steele he protected the periodical essay in The Tatler and The Spectator. The first object of Addison and Steele was to present a true and faithful picture of the 18th century. The next object was to bring about a moral and social reform in the conditions of the time. The best of his essays are centred round the imaginary character of Sir Roger de Coverley and hence known as Coverley Papers.
Addison wrote four hundred essays in all, which are of almost uniform length, of nearly unvarying excellence of style and of a wide variety of subject. Most of his compositions deal with topical subjects ----- fashions, head dresses, practical jokes, polite conversation. Deeper themes were handled in a popular fashion---- immorality, jealousy, prayer, death and drunkenness. He touched politics only gingerly. He advocated moderation and tolerance and was the enemy of enthusiasm. Sometimes he adopted allegory as a means of throwing his ideas vividly to the readers and hence we have The Vision of Mirza and the political allegory Public Credit.

Addison’s humour is of a rare order. It is delicately ironical, gentlemanly, tolerant and urbane. His style has often been deservedly praised. It is the pattern of the middle style, never slipshod, or obscure, or unmelodious. He has an infallible instinct for proper word and subdued rhythm. In this fashion his prose moves with a demure and pleasing grace, in harmony with his subject, with his object, and with himself.

**Will. Wimble**

*By Joseph Addison (1672–1719)*

*(Spectator, NO. 108.)*

AS I was yesterday morning walking with Sir Roger before his house, a country-fellow brought him a huge fish, which he told him, Mr. William Wimble had caught that very morning; and that he presented it, with his service to him, and intended to come and dine with him. At the same time he delivered a letter, which my friend read to me as soon as the messenger left him.  

SIR ROGER—I desire you to accept of a jack, which is the best I have caught this season. I intend to come and stay with you a week, and see how the perch bite in the Black River. I observed with some concern, the last time I saw you upon the bowling green, that your whip wanted a lash to it; I will bring half-a-dozen with me that I twisted last week, which I hope will serve you all the time you are in the country. I have not
been out of the saddle for six days last past, having been at Eaton with Sir John’s eldest son. He takes to his learning hugely.—I am, sir, your humble servant,

WILL. WIMBLE.

This extraordinary letter, and message that accompanied it, made me very curious to know the character and quality of the gentleman who sent them; which I found to be as follows. Will. Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of the Wimbles. He is now between forty and fifty; but being bred to no business and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare. He is extremely well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man: he makes a May-fly to a miracle; and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods. As he is a good-natur’d officious fellow, and very much esteem’d upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him. He carries a tulip-root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in the opposite sides of the county. Will. is a particular favourite of all the young heirs, whom he frequently obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting-dog that he has made himself: he now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers or sisters; and raises a great deal of mirth among them, by enquiring as often as he meets them how they wear? These gentleman-like manufactures and obliging little humours, make Will. the darling of the country.

Sir Roger was proceeding in the character of him, when we saw him make up to us with two or three hazel-twigs in his hand that he had cut in Sir Roger’s woods, as he came through them, in his way to the house. I was very much pleased to observe on one side the hearty and sincere welcome with which Sir Roger received him, and on the other, the secret joy which his guest discover’d at sight of the good old knight. After the first salutes
were over, Will. desired Sir Roger to lend him one of his servants to carry a
set of shuttlecocks he had with him in a little box to a lady that lived about a
mile off, to whom it seems he had promis’d such a present for above this
half year. Sir Roger’s back was no sooner turned but honest Will. began to
tell me of a large cock-pheasant that he had sprung in one of the
neighbouring woods, with two or three other adventures of the same
nature. Odd and uncommon characters are the game that I look for, and
most delight in; for which reason I was as much pleased with the novelty of
the person that talked to me, as he could be for his life with the springing of
a pheasant, and therefore listened to him with more than ordinary attention.

In the midst of his discourse the bell rung to dinner, where the gentleman I
have been speaking of had the pleasure of seeing the huge jack, he had
cought, served up for the first dish in a most sumptuous manner. Upon our
sitting down to it he gave us a long account how he had hooked it, played
with it, foiled it, and at length drew it out upon the bank, with several other
particulars that lasted all the first course. A dish of wild-fowl that came
afterwards furnished conversation for the rest of the dinner, which
concluded with a late invention of Will.’s for improving the quail-pipe.

Upon withdrawing into my room after dinner, I was secretly touched with
compassion towards the honest gentleman that had dined with us; and
could not but consider with a great deal of concern, how so good an heart
and such busy hands were wholly employed in trifles; that so much
humanity should be so little beneficial to others, and so much industry so
little advantageous to himself. The same temper of mind and application to
affairs might have recommended him to the publick esteem, and have
raised his fortune in another station of life. What good to his country or
himself might not a trader or merchant have done with such useful tho’
ordinary qualifications?  

Will. Wimble’s is the case of many a younger brother of a great family,
who had rather see their children starve like gentlemen, than thrive in a
trade or profession that is beneath their quality. This humour fills several
parts of Europe with pride and beggary. It is the happiness of a trading
nation, like ours, that the younger sons, tho’ incapable of any liberal art or profession, may be placed in such a way of life, as may perhaps enable them to vie with the best of their family: accordingly we find several citizens that were launched into the world with narrow fortunes, rising by an honest industry to greater estates than those of their elder brothers. It is not improbable but Will. was formerly tried at divinity, law, or physick; and that finding his genius did not lie that way, his parents gave him up at length to his own inventions. But certainly, however improper he might have been for studies of a higher nature, he was perfectly well turned for the occupations of trade and commerce. As I think this is a point which cannot be too much inculcated, I shall desire my reader to compare what I have here written with what I have said in my twenty-first speculation. 6

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was another writer who made new experiments in prose writings. His Gulliver’s Travels, The Tale of a Tub and The Battle of Books are powerful satires written in prose. His Journal to Stella is a long narrative in which political situation is reported when he was in London. He is the greatest satirist and unlike Pope he restricts himself to general rather than personal attacks. His work has a cosmic, elemental force, which is irresistible and almost frightening. His dissection of humanity shows a powerful mind relentlessly and fearlessly probing into follies and hypocrisy, but he is never merely destructive. His work has the desire for the greater use of commonsense and reason in the ordering of human affairs.
THE EMPEROR was already descended from the tower, and advancing on horseback towards me, which had like to have cost him dear; for the beast, though very well trained, yet wholly unused to such a sight, which appeared as if a mountain moved before him, reared up on his hinder feet: but that prince, who is an excellent horseman, kept his seat, till his attendants ran in, and held the bridle, while his majesty had time to dismount. When he alighted, he surveyed me round with great admiration; but kept without the length of my chain. He ordered his cooks and butlers, who were already prepared, to give me victuals and drink, which they pushed forward in a sort of vehicles upon wheels, till I could reach them. I took those vehicles, and soon emptied them all; twenty of them were filled with meat, and ten with liquor; each of the former afforded me two or three good mouthfuls; and I emptied the liquor of ten vessels, which was contained in earthen vials, into one vehicle, drinking it off at a draught; and so I did with the rest. The empress and young princes of the blood of both sexes, attended by many ladies, sate at some distance in their chairs; but upon the accident that happened to the emperor’s horse, they alighted, and came near his person, which I am now going to describe. He is taller, by almost the breadth of my nail, than any of his court; which alone is enough to strike an awe into the beholders. His features are strong and masculine, with an Austrian lip and arched nose, his complexion olive, his countenance erect, his body and limbs well proportioned, all his motions graceful, and his deportment majestic. He was then past his prime, being twenty-eight years and three quarters old, of which he had reigned about seven in great felicity, and generally victorious. For the better convenience of beholding him, I lay on my side, so that my face was parallel to his, and he stood but three yards off: however, I have had him since many times in my hand, and therefore cannot be deceived in the description. His dress was very plain and simple, and the fashion of it between the Asiatic and the European; but
he had on his head a light helmet of gold, adorned with jewels, and a plume on the crest. He held his sword drawn in his hand to defend himself, if I should happen to break loose; it was almost three inches long; the hilt and scabbard were gold enriched with diamonds. His voice was shrill, but very clear and articulate; and I could distinctly hear it when I stood up. The ladies and courtiers were all most magnificently clad; so that the spot they stood upon seemed to resemble a petticoat spread on the ground, embroidered with figures of gold and silver. His imperial majesty spoke often to me, and I returned answers; but neither of us could understand a syllable. There were several of his priests and lawyers present (as I conjectured by their habits), who were commanded to address themselves to me; and I spoke to them in as many languages as I had the least smattering of, which were High and Low Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca, but all to no purpose. After about two hours the court retired, and I was left with a strong guard, to prevent the impertinence, and probably the malice, of the rabble, who were very impatient to crowd about me as near as they durst; and some of them had the impudence to shoot their arrows at me, as I sate on the ground by the door of toy house, whereof one very narrowly missed my left eye. But the colonel ordered six of the ringleaders to be seized, and thought no punishment so proper, as to deliver them bound into my hands; which some of his soldiers accordingly did, pushing them forward with the but-ends of their pikes into my reach. I took them all in my right hand, put five of them into my coat-pocket, and as to the sixth, I made a countenance as if I would eat him alive. The poor man squallled terribly, and the colonel and his officers were in much pain, especially when they saw me take out my pen-knife: but I soon put them out of fear; for, looking mildly, and immediately cutting the strings he was bound with, I set him gently on the ground, and away he ran. I treated the rest in the same manner, taking them one by one out of my pocket; and I observed both the soldiers and people were highly obliged at this mark of my clemency, which was represented very much to my advantage at court. (From Gulliver’s Travels.)
In addition to these, other prose writers of the period were John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), Lord Bolingbroke (1678-1751), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and Earl of Shaftsbury (1671-1713). The writings of Arbuthnot were chiefly political and includes the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, The History of John Bull and The Art of Political Lying. Bolingbroke prided himself on being both a patron of letters and a man of letters. His Letter to Sir William Wyndham, A Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism and The Idea of a Patriot King reflect the Tory sentiments and are written with lucidity, vigour and rhetoric. Berkeley was a man of great and enterprising mind and wrote with much charm on a diversity of scientific, philosophical and metaphysical subjects. Among his books are The Principles of Human Knowledge, Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous and Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher. He is among the first of the English Philosophers who have dressed their ideas in a language of literary distinction. The books of Shaftesbury are written with great care and exactitude and are pleasant and lucid. His book Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times suited the taste of the time.

The prose of first half of the 18th century made a distinct advance. Periodical literature occupied a prominent place. Defoe’s Review (1704), Steele’s The Tatler (1709) and The Spectator (1711) and The Plebeian (1719) are some prominent periodicals of this time. With the advancement of periodical press the short essay takes a great stride forward. The works of Addison and Steele has already been mentioned. Other essayists of the time were Swift and Pope who contributed to the periodicals. Allegorical prose narratives were another feature of the time for example Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels and Addison’s The Vision of Mirza. There is also a large body of religious, political, and philosophical work. Much of it is satirical. In political prose Swift is the most outstanding.

The most outstanding feature of the prose of this era is the development of middle style of which one of the chief exponents was Addison. We now find an established prose style that may fit into any miscellaneous purposes----newspaper, political works, essay, historical writings and biographies. The
plainer style was practised by Swift and Defoe. With these two in vogue the ornate style disappeared and re-emerged with Johnson and Gibbon in the second half of the century.

**THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY**

During this period we find the development of prose in the hands of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Gibbon and Burke.

**Samuel Johnson (1709-84)** is a first rate writer of prose. His early works appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine during 1738 and 1744. For the said periodical he wrote imaginary parliamentary debates embellished in his own vigorous style. In 1747 he began working on his Dictionary which was his great contribution to scholarship. While working on the Dictionary he also wrote periodical essays for The Rambler. In these essays we find the mannerisms which are evident of his trenchant force and vigour. He wrote RASSELAS (1759) which was meant to be a philosophical novel but it was actually a number of Rambler essays strung together. During 1758-60 he contributed papers for The Idler, The Universal Chronicle and Weekly Gazette. These essays were lighter and shorter than those of Rambler. In 1765 he published his truly great work---- his edition of Shakespeare for which he wrote a fine preface, a landmark in Shakespeare criticism and scholarship. His travel book titled A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1775) shows the faculty of narrative. His last work and a substantial work was The Lives of the Poets (1777-81), planned as a series of introduction to the works and lives of fifty two poets. The book is regarded as a fine piece of literary criticism. Johnson’s prose style has often been criticised as pompous, artificial and verbose. However it only reflects one aspect of his writing. In his early works, notably in The Rambler, and in Rasselas, the prose is heavy, rhetorical, and full of affectation and highly Latinised. These early mannerisms disappear in his later writings. In The Lives of Poets his prose has ease, lucidity, force and vigorous directness of conversation.
The Loss of a Friend

By Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

From Rasselas

“SINCE Pekuah was taken from me” said the princess, “I have no pleasure to reject or to retain. She that has no one to love or trust has little to hope. She wants the radical principle of happiness. We may, perhaps, allow that what satisfaction this world can afford, must arise from the conjunction of wealth, knowledge, and goodness: wealth is nothing but as it is bestowed, and knowledge nothing but as it is communicated; they must therefore be imparted to others, and to whom could I now delight to impart them? Goodness affords the only comfort which can be enjoyed without a partner, and goodness may be practised in retirement.” 1

“How far solitude may admit goodness or advance it, I shall not,” replied Imlac, “dispute at present. Remember the confession of the pious hermit. You will wish to return into the world when the image of your companion has left your thoughts.” “That time,” said Nekayah, “will never come. The generous frankness, the modest obsequiousness, and the faithful secrecy of my dear Pekuah, will always be more missed, as I shall live longer to see vice and folly.” 2

“The state of a mind oppressed with a sudden calamity,” said Imlac, “is like that of the fabulous inhabitants of the new created earth, who when the first night came upon them, supposed that day would never return. When the clouds of sorrow gather over us, we see nothing beyond them, nor can imagine how they will be dispelled: yet a new day succeeded to the night, and sorrow is never long without a dawn of ease. But they who restrain themselves from receiving comfort, do as the savages would have done, had they put out their eyes when it was dark. Our minds, like our bodies, are in continual flux; something is hourly lost, and something acquired. To lose much at once is inconvenient to either, but while the vital powers remain uninjured, nature will find the means of reparation. Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye, and while we glide along the stream
of time, whatever we leave behind us is always lessening, and that which we approach increasing in magnitude. Do not suffer life to stagnate; it will grow muddy for want of motion: commit yourself again to the current of the world; Pekuah will vanish by degrees; you will meet in your way some other favourite or learn to diffuse yourself in general conversation.”

“At least,” said the prince, “do not despair before all remedies have been tried: the inquiry after the unfortunate lady is still continued, and shall be carried on with greater diligence, on condition that you will promise to wait a year for the event, without any unalterable resolution.”

Nekayah thought this a reasonable demand, and made the promise to her brother, who had been advised by Imlac to require it. Imlac had, indeed, no great hope of regaining Pekuah, but he supposed, that if he could secure the interval of a year, the princess would be then in no danger of a cloister.

Nekayah, seeing that nothing was omitted for the recovery of her favourite, and having, by her promise, set her intention of retirement at a distance, began imperceptibly to return to common cares and common pleasures. She rejoiced without her own consent at the suspension of her sorrows, and sometimes caught herself with indignation in the act of turning away her mind from the remembrance of her whom yet she resolved never to forget.

She then appointed a certain hour of the day for meditation on the merits and fondness of Pekuah, and for some weeks retired constantly at the time fixed, and returned with her eyes swollen and her countenance clouded. By degrees she grew less scrupulous, and suffered any important and pressing avocation to delay the tribute of daily tears. She then yielded to less occasions; sometimes forget what she was indeed afraid to remember, and at last wholly released herself from the duty of periodical affliction.

Her real love of Pekuah was yet not diminished. A thousand occurrences brought her back to memory, and a thousand wants, which nothing but the confidence of friendship can supply, made her frequently regretted. She,
therefore, solicited Imlac never to desist from inquiry, and to leave no art of intelligence untried, that, at least, she might have the comfort of knowing that she did not suffer by negligence or sluggishness. “Yet, what,” said she, “is to be expected from our pursuit of happiness, when we find the state of life to be such, that happiness itself is the cause of misery? Why should we endeavour to attain that, of which possession cannot be secured? I shall henceforward fear to yield my heart to excellence, however bright, or to fondness, however tender, lest I should lose again what I have lost in Pekuah.”

The prose of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74) is of astonishing range and volume. His The Citizen of the World (1759) is a series of imaginary letters from a china man whose comments on the English society are both simple and shrewd. He wrote many essays in the manner of Addison and also produced a great mass of hack work most of which is worthless as historical and scientific fact but is enlightened with the grace of his style. Some of these works are An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe (1759), The History of England (1771) and A History of Earth and Animated Nature.
I AM fond of amusement, in whatever company it is to be found; and wit, though dressed in rags, is ever pleasing to me. I went some days ago to take a walk in St. James’s Park, about the hour in which company leave it to go to dinner. There were but few in the walks, and those who stayed seemed, by their looks, rather more willing to forget that they had an appetite, than gain one. I sat down on one of the benches, at the other end of which was seated a man in very shabby clothes, but such as appeared to have been once fashionable; in short, I could perceive in his figure somewhat of the gentleman, but gentility (to speak like Milton) shorn of its beams. 1

We continued to groan, to hem, and to cough, as usual upon such occasions; and at last ventured upon conversation. “I beg pardon, sir,” cried I, “but I think I have seen you before; your face is familiar to me.”—“Yes, sir,” replied he, “I have a good familiar face, as my friends tell me. I am as well known in every town in England, as the dromedary or live crocodile. You must understand, sir, that I have been these sixteen years Merry Andrew to a puppet-show: last Bartholomew Fair my master and I quarrelled, beat each other, and parted; he to sell his puppets to the pincushion-makers 1 in Rosemary Lane, and I to starve in St. James’s Park.” 2

“I am sorry, sir, that a person of your appearance should labour under any difficulties.”—“O sir,” returned he, “my appearance is very much at your service; but, though I cannot boast of eating much, yet there are few that are merrier: if I had twenty thousand a year I should be very merry; and thank the fates! though not worth a groat, I am very merry still. If I have threepence in my pocket, I never refuse to be 2 my three-halfpence; and if I have no money, I never scorn to be treated by any that are kind enough to pay my reckoning. What think you, sir, of a steak and tankard? You shall
treat me now; and I will treat you again, when I find you in the Park in love with eating, and without money to pay for a dinner.”

As I never refuse a small expense for the sake of a merry companion, we instantly adjourned to a neighbouring ale-house and in a few moments had a frothing tankard and a smoking steak spread on the table before us. It is impossible to express how much the sight of such good cheer improved my companion’s vivacity. “I like this dinner, sir,” says he, “for three reasons: first, because I am naturally fond of beef; secondly, because I am hungry; and, thirdly and lastly, because I get it for nothing: no meat eats so sweet as that for which we do not pay.” He therefore now fell-to, and his appetite seemed to correspond with his inclination. After dinner was over, he observed that the steak was tough: “and yet, sir,” returns he, “bad as it was, it seemed a rumpsteak to me. O the delights of poverty and a good appetite! We beggars are the very foundlings of Nature; the rich she treats like an arrant step-mother; they are pleased with nothing: cut a steak from what part you will, and it is insupportably tough; dress it up with pickles,—even pickles cannot procure them an appetite. But the whole creation is filled with good things for the beggar. Calvert’s butt out-tastes champagne and Sedgeley’s home-brewed excels Tokay. Joy, joy, my blood! though our estates lie nowhere, we have fortunes wherever we go. If an inundation sweeps away half the grounds of Cornwall, I am content, I have no lands there; if the stocks sink, that gives me no uneasiness—I am no Jew.” The fellow’s vivacity, joined to his poverty, I own, raised my curiosity to know something of his life and circumstances, and I entreated that he would indulge my desire. “That I will, sir,” said he, “and welcome; only let us drink to prevent our sleeping: let us have another tankard while we are awake—let us have another tankard; for ah, how charming a tankard looks when full!”

Note 1. To the pincushion-makers. For sawdust. Rosemary Lane, or Rag Fair, in Whitechapel, was a centre of this industry.

Note 2. to be = to contribute or subscribe.
Edward Gibbon (1737-94) was an eager reader of history from his early years. His private historical studies led him to become a Roman Catholic when he was sixteen which resulted in his expulsion from Oxford. His father sent him to Lausanne, Switzerland in the hope that the Protestant atmosphere there would divert him from his new faith. There, at Lausanne, Gibbon got acquainted with the French language and learning. His first book A History of Switzerland (1770) was never finished. In 1776 he published the first volume of The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Five other volumes of the same book were published at two years interval. This book has been regarded as one of the greatest historical works. His prose style is peculiar to himself. It is lordly and commanding with a majestic rhythm. Admirably appropriate to its gigantic subject, the style has some weaknesses. Though it never flags and rarely stumbles but the very perfection of it tends to monotony as it lacks ease and variety.

Edmund Burke (1729-97) shares with Gibbon the place of the great prose stylist of the age. The works of Burke can be divided into two groups: his purely philosophical writings and his political pamphlets and speeches. His philosophical writings were composed in the earlier part of his career. A Vindication of Natural Society (1756) is a parody of the style and ideas of Bolingbroke. A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1756) is his most philosophical book. His political works are his most substantial claim to fame. In variety, breadth of view and illuminating power of vision they are unsurpassed in the language. They fall into two categories: speeches and pamphlets. It is in his speeches that Burke’s artistry and power is at its best. The greatest of them are his speeches on American Taxation, on Conciliation with the Colonies and on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings. Of his best known pamphlets, the first to be produced was Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770), which shows all his peculiar qualities and methods. Between 1790 and 1797 he published a number of pamphlets, of which Reflection on the Revolution in France, A Letter to a Noble Lord and Letters on a Regicide Peace are the most noteworthy. Though the occasion of Burke’s political writings has vanished, the books can still be read with profit and pleasure.
Burke was the practical politician who applied a light and clear and forcible intelligence to the problems of his days. He could distil from the muddy liquid of contemporary party strife the clear wine of wisdom and so deduce ideas of unshakeable permanence. In addition, we have the attraction of Burke’s style. Dignified and graceful, it is the most powerful prose of the times. It is marked by all oratorical devices---- repetition, careful arrangement and balance of parts, copious use of rhetorical figures, and variation of sentence structure, homely illustrations and a swift vigorous rhythm. It is full of colour and splendour and is fired by impassioned imagination.

**Liberty**

*By Edmund Burke (1729–1797)*

*From Reflections on the Revolution in France*

I FLATTER myself that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty as I well as any gentleman of that society, be who he will; and perhaps I have given as good proofs of my attachment to that cause, in the whole course of my public conduct. I think I envy liberty as little as they do, to any other nation. But I cannot stand forward, and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions and human concerns, on a simple view of the object as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour, and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind. Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet could I, in common sense, ten years ago, have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without inquiry what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered? Can I
now congratulate the same nation upon its freedom? Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed amongst the blessings of mankind, that I am seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate an highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, on the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. 1

When I see the spirit of liberty in action, I see a strong principle at work; and this, for a while, is all I can possibly know of it. The wild gas, the fixed air, is plainly broke loose; but we ought to suspend our judgment until the first effervescence is a little subsided, till the liquor is cleared, and until we see something deeper than the agitation of a troubled and frothy surface. I must be tolerably sure, before I venture publicly to congratulate men upon a blessing, that they have really received one. Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver; and adulation is not of more service to the people than to kings. I should therefore suspend my congratulations on the new liberty of France, until I was informed how it had been combined with government; with public force; with the discipline and obedience of armies; with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue; with morality and religion; with the solidity of property; with peace and order; with civil and social manners. All these (in their way) are good things too; and, without them, liberty is not a benefit whilst it lasts, and is not likely to continue long. The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please; we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risk congratulations, which may be soon turned into complaints. Prudence would dictate this in the case of separate insulated private men; but liberty, when men act in bodies, is power. Considerate people, before they declare themselves, will observe the use which is made of power; and particularly of so trying a thing as new power in new persons, of whose principles, tempers, and dispositions, they have little or no experience, and in situations where those who appear the most stirring in the scene may possibly not be the real movers.
The prose of this period has many men and many manners. The simplest prose of this period is found mainly in the works of the novelists. The excellent middle style of Addison survived in the works of Goldsmith and in the later works of Johnson. The ornate class of prose was represented by the Rambler essays of Johnson and the writings of Gibbon and Burke. A fresh and highly interesting style was the poetic prose of Macpherson’s Ossian. This style was not ornate as it was drawn from the simplest elements. It possessed a solemnity of expression, and so decided a rhythm and cadence, that the effect is almost lyrical.
NINETEENTH CENTURY PROSE
ROMANTIC PROSE

Poetry dominated the literary scene of the first half of 19th century more popularly known as the Romantic period. Due to the presence of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Keats the literary limelight was focussed on poetry. Jane Austen and Walter Scott were the prominent names in Novel. Hence prose was at the third rank in the stature of literary popularity. However the prose of this period was no mean genre and we have essayists like Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt enlarging the horizon of English literature through their contributions. Apart from these two we have Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Shelley and Keats also writing some substantial prose works.

It is a fact that the age did not produce a pamphleteer of the first rank but the productivity of the age is marked in the immense productivity of the political writers. Apart from a steep rise in periodicals the age witnessed the beginning of daily journals which are still very strong elements in literature and politics. Some of the dailies that started are The Morning Chronicle (1769), The Morning Post (1772), The Times (1785) etc. A race of strong literary magazines sprang to life: The Edinburgh Review (1802), The Quarterly Review (1809), Blackwood’s Magazine (1817), The London Magazine (1820), and The Westminster Review (1824).

Though Wordsworth and Coleridge are great poets but they also contributed in the development Romantic prose by their critical works and treatises. Wordsworth’s Preface to Lyrical Ballads is a fine specimen of prose and critical theory which blasted the ailing dogmatic classical dictates of literature in general and poetry in particular. Coleridge’s prose, like his poetry, was scrappy, chaotic and tentative. In bulk it is massive; in manner it is diffuse and involved; but it possesses a breadth, a depth and a searching wisdom that is rare and admirable. The prose of Coleridge is
philosophical and literary in theme. In 1796 he started a periodical The Watchman in which he contributed typical essays showing considerable weight and acuteness of thought. He contributed some miscellaneous prose in The Morning Post. In 1808 he started a series of lectures on poetry and allied subjects. In 1817 he published Biographia Literaria and Sibylline Leaves. Biographia Literaria is his most valuable prose work. After long philosophising the book discusses Wordsworthian theory of poetry in a masterly fashion. The book places Coleridge in the first rank of critics. Second only in importance in establishing Coleridge as the greatest of English critics are his lectures on Shakespeare and other poets.

Shelley and Keats also wrote some prose of good consideration. Shelley’s Defence of Poetry (1821) is soundly written and is a strong exposition of the Romantic point of view. His letters show him as a man of common sense and not merely the crazy theorist of popular imagination. His prose style is somewhat heavy but clear. As a prose writer, unlike Wordsworth, Keats made no attempt at a systematic formulation of his views on his art. His Letters give a clear insight into his mind and artistic development. Written with a spontaneous freshness and an easy intimacy, they are the most interesting letters of their times. Apart from poems and exquisite novels Sir Walter Scott also compiled a mass of some beautiful miscellaneous prose. Among them are his prefaces to the editions of Dryden (1808), Swift (1814), Lives of the Novelists (1821-24), Life of Napoleon (1827) and the admirable Tales of a Grandfather (1828-30). His articles, pamphlets, journals and letters are a legion in themselves.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) began his literary career as a poet, attempted a tragic play and compiled Tales from Shakespeare with his sister Mary Lamb. His substantial critical work is found in his specimens of English Dramatic Poets, who lived about the time of Shakespeare (1808) which is remarkable for its delicate insight and good literary taste. But all these writings are of little importance compared with his essays. The first of his essays appeared in The London Magazine in 1820 when Lamb was forty
five. The original series was published as The Essays of Elia (1823) and a second under the title of The Last Essays of Elia (1833).

The essays of Lamb are unequalled in English. They are on a variety of subjects ranging from chimney sweeps to old china. They are touched with personal opinions and recollections so oddly obtruded that interest in the subject is nearly swamped by reader’s delight in the author. It is said that no essayist is more egotistical than Lamb; but no egotist can be so artless and yet so artful, so tearful yet so mirthful, so pedantic and yet so humane. It is this delicate clashing of humours, like the chiming of sweet bells, which affords the chief delight to his readers.

His style bears the echoes and odours of older writers like Browne and Fuller. It is full of long and curious words and it is dashed with frequent exclamations and parentheses. The humour that runs through the essays is not so strong but it is airy and elfish in note; it vibrates faintly but never lacks precision. His pathos is of the same character; and sometimes, as in Dream Children, it deepens into a quivering sigh of regret. He is so sensitive and so strong, so cheerful and yet so unalterably doomed to sorrow.
BRIDGET ELIA has been my housekeeper for many a long year. I have obligations to Bridget, extending beyond the period of memory. We house together, old bachelor and maid, in a sort of double singleness; with such tolerable comfort, upon the whole, that I, for one, find in myself no sort of disposition to go out upon the mountains, with the rash king’s offspring, to bewail my celibacy. We agree pretty well in our tastes and habits—yet so, as “with a difference.” We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickerings—as it should be among near relations. Our sympathies are rather understood than expressed; and once, upon my dissembling a tone in my voice more kind than ordinary, my cousin burst into tears, and complained that I was altered. We are both great readers in different directions. While I am hanging over (for the thousandth time) some passage in old Burton, or one of his strange contemporaries, she is abstracted in some modern tale or adventure, whereof our common reading-table is daily fed with assiduously fresh supplies. Narrative teases me. I have little concern in the progress of events. She must have a story—well, ill, or indifferently told—so there be life stirring in it, and plenty of good or evil accidents. The fluctuations of fortune in fiction—and almost in real life—have ceased to interest, or operate but dully upon me. Out-of-the-way humours and opinions, heads with some diverting twist in them, the oddities of authorship, please me most. My cousin has a native disrelish of anything that sounds odd or bizarre. Nothing goes down with her that is quaint, irregular, or out of the road of common sympathy. She “holds Nature more clever.” I can pardon her blindness to the beautiful obliquities of the Religio Medici; but she must apologise to me for certain disrespectful insinuations which she has been pleased to throw out latterly, touching the intellectuals of a dear favourite of mine, of the last century but one—the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous, but again somewhat fantastical and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle.
It has been the lot of my cousin, oftener, perhaps, than I could have wished, to have had for her associates and mine, free-thinkers—leaders and disciples of novel philosophies and systems; but she neither wrangles with nor accepts their opinions. That which was good and venerable to her when a child retains its authority over her mind still. She never juggles or plays tricks with her understanding.

We are both of us inclined to be a little too positive; and I have observed the result of our disputes to be almost uniformly this—that in matters of facts, dates, and circumstances, it turns out that I was in the right, and my cousin in the wrong. But where we have differed upon moral points; upon something proper to be done, or let alone; whatever heat of opposition or steadiness of conviction I set out with, I am sure always, in the long-run, to be brought over to her way of thinking.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) held unusual political and literary views and headstrong temperament that made him centre of controversies and battles throughout his life. A lecturer of literature by profession Hazlitt was a representative literary critic of the period. From 1814 till his death he contributed to The Edinburgh Review, while others of his articles were published in The Examiner, The Times and The London Magazine. His early writings were consisted of miscellaneous philosophical and political works but his reputation rests upon the lectures and essays on literary and general subjects published between 1817 and 1825. His lectures on Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays (1817), The English Poets (1818), The English Comic Writers (1819) and The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820) are good examples of literary criticism and scholarship. The best of his essays are collected in The Round Table (1817), Table Talk, or Original Essays on Men and Manners (1821-22) and The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits (1825).
Hazlitt’s writing is remarkable for its fearless expression of an honest and individual opinion, his ability to communicate his own enjoyment and his gift for evoking unnoticed beauty. His judgements are based on his emotional reactions rather than on objectively applied principles. Hence they are sometimes marred by personal bias but, for the most part, they show his enthusiasm guided by a strong common sense. In style he stands in contrast to De Quincey’s elaborate orchestration of the complex sentence and the magic of the delicate word tracery. His brief, abrupt sentences have the vigour and directness which his views demand. His lectures have manly simplicity and something of the looseness of organisation which is typical of good conversation. His lectures and essays show a fondness for the apt and skillfully blended quotation and for the balanced sentences. His diction is always pure and his expression is concise.

**Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)** is one of the authors whose work has to be rigorously sifted. He wrote a large amount of prose; most of which is hackwork, a fair proportion is of good quality, and a small amount is of highest merit. His Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821), appeared in The London Magazine, is a series of visions that melt away in the manner of dreams. The best of his work is contained in The English Mail Coach (1849), Suspiria de Profundis (1845) and On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts (1827). A great part of his work is dreary and diffuse. He displays a wide range of knowledge. His style is apt to stumble into vulgarity but when inspired he gives to the English tongue a wonderful strength and sweetness. In these rare moments he plunges into an elaborate style and imagery but never looses grip, sweeping along with sureness and ease. In rhythm and melody he is supreme.
VICTORIAN PROSE

With all its immense production, the Victorian age produced poets like Tennyson, Browning and Arnold; novelists like Dickens, Thackeray and Eliot. It revealed no supreme writer like Shakespeare but the general literary level was very high and it was an age of spacious intellectual horizon, noble endeavour and bright aspirations.

With regard to prose, the greater proportion is written in middle style, the established medium in journalism, in all miscellaneous work and in majority of the novels. Outside this mass of middle style, the style of Ruskin stands highest in the scale of ornate ness; of the same kind is the scholarly elegance of Walter Pater. The style of Macaulay and Carlyle are peculiar brands of the middle style.

During the Victorian age novel had thrust itself into the first rank with Dickens, Thackeray and Eliot. Short story developed as a new species. Essays had expanded as a giant literary type with Macaulay, Carlyle, Pater, Ruskin and many others. Of the minor essayists Dickens in his The Uncommercial Traveller and Thackeray in his The Roundabout Papers practised the shorter Addisonian style that was enlarged by Ruskin, Pater and Stevenson. The lecture became a prominent literary species with Carlyle, Thackeray and Dickens publishing their lectures in book form. But it was Ruskin who, like Coleridge, gave a distinct style and manner to it.

John Ruskin (1819-1900), with no need to earn a living, settled down to a literary career. He developed his own advanced notions on art, politics, economics and other subjects. In art he was particularly devoted to the landscape painting of Turner. In social and economic issues he was an advocate of an advance form of socialism. His ideas appear innocuous today but the Victorian public received them with shock and dismay. First he received only jeers from his adversaries but gradually he freely
expounded his opinions in lectures, pamphlets and books. He began with a book Modern Painters which turned out to be his longest book with its first volume published in 1843 and the fifth and last in 1860. The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) is a shorter and more popular work. The Stones of Venice (1851-53), in three volumes, is considered as his masterpiece in thought and style. His other writings are of miscellaneous nature. It comprises of The Two Paths (1859), a course of lectures; Unto This Last (1860), a series of articles on political economy; MuneraPulveris (1862-63), an unfinished series of articles on political economy; Sesame and Lilies (1865), his most popular shorter works; The Crown of Wild Olive (1866), a series of addresses etc.

**Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)** is considered as the most representative and honourable name in Victorian prose that not only enriched the genre but also exerted a tremendous impact on the age. His earliest works were translations, essays and biographies. The best work of this period are his translation of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (1824), his The Life of Schiller (1825) and his essays on Burns and Scott. Then came Sartor Resartus (1833-34) in a series in Fraser’s Magazine. It is an extraordinary book which pretended to contain the opinions of a German professor but under the thin veil of fiction Carlyle disclosed his own spiritual struggles during his early troubled years. Though the style is violent and the meaning is obscure but it has energy and a rapturous ecstasy of revolt. Carlyle then switched over to historical writings which he did in his own unconventional style. His major historical works are The French Revolution (1837), a series of vivid pictures rather than history, but full of audacity and colour; Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches (1845), a huge effort relieved by his volcanic methods; Life of John Sterling (1851), a slight work but more genial and humane; and The History of Frederich 11 of Prussia (1858-65), an enormous work in scale and detail both. He wrote numerous works dealing with contemporary events that include Chartism (1840), Past and Present (1843), and Letter-day Pamphlets (1850). The series of lectures which he delivered in 1837 was published as On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (1841).
Now it is difficult to understand why Carlyle was valued so highly in moral and political affairs. His works have froth and thunder but little of anything is solid and capable of analysis. However he was a man of sterling honesty, of sagacious and powerful mind which he applied to the troubles of his time. His opinions were widely discussed and accepted. His books had the force of ex cathedra pronouncements. Carlyle’s style was entirely his own. At the first glance a passage seems rude and uncouth: with many capital letters in the German fashion, with broken phrases, he proceeds amid a torrent of whirling words. Yet he is flexible to a wonderful degree; he can command a beauty of expression; a sweet and piercing melody. His style has the lyrical note that requires only the lyrical metre to become great poetry.

**Dr. Francia**

**By Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881)**

**From Essays**

BUT undoubtedly by far the notablest of all these South American phenomena is Dr. Francia and his Dictatorship in Paraguay; concerning whom, and which, we have now more particularly to speak. Francia and his reign of terror have excited some interest, much vague wonder in this country; and especially given a great shock to constitutional feeling. One would rather wish to know Dr. Francia;—but unhappily one cannot! Out of such a murk of distracted shadows and rumours, in the other hemisphere of the world, who would pretend at present to decipher the real portraiture of Dr. Francia and his Life? None of us can. A few credible features, wonderful enough, original enough in our constitutional time, will perhaps to the impartial eye disclose themselves; these, with some endeavour to interpret these, may lead certain readers into various reflections, constitutional and other, not entirely without benefit.
Certainly, as we say, nothing could well shock the constitutional feeling of mankind, as Dr. Francia has done. Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse, and indeed the whole breed of tyrants, one hoped, had gone away many hundred years ago, with their reward: and here, under our own nose, rises a new tyrant, claiming also his reward from us! Precisely when constitutional liberty was beginning to be understood a little, and we flattered ourselves that by due ballot-boxes, by due registration courts, and bursts of parliamentary eloquence, something like a real National Palaver would be got up in those countries,—arises this tawny-visaged, lean, inexorable Dr. Francia; claps you an embargo on all that; says to constitutional liberty, in the most tyrannous manner, Hitherto, and no farther! It is an undeniable, though an almost incredible fact, that Francia, a lean private individual, Practitioner of Law, and Doctor of Divinity, did, for twenty or near thirty years, stretch out his rod over the foreign commerce of Paraguay, saying to it Cease! The ships lay high and dry, their pitchless seams all yawning on the clay banks of the Parana; and no man could trade but by Francia’s license. If any person entered Paraguay, and the Doctor did not like his papers, his talk, conduct, or even the cut of his face,—it might be the worse for such person! Nobody could leave Paraguay on any pretext whatever. It mattered not that you were man of science, astronomer, geologer, astrologer, wizard of the north; Francia heeded none of these things. The whole world knows of M. Aimé Bonpland; how Francia seized him, descending on his tea-establishment in Entre Rios, like an obscene vulture, and carried him into the interior, contrary even to the law of nations; how the great Humboldt and other high persons expressly applied to Dr. Francia, calling on him in the name of human science, and as it were under penalty of reprobation, to liberate M. Bonpland; and how Dr. Francia made no answer, and M. Bonpland did not return to Europe, and indeed has never yet returned. It is also admitted that Dr. Francia had a gallows, had jailors, law-fiscals, officials; and executed, in his time, upwards of forty persons, some of them in a very summary manner. Liberty of private judgment, unless it kept its mouth shut, was at an end in Paraguay. Paraguay lay under interdict, cut off for above twenty years from the rest of the world, by a new Dionysius of Paraguay. All foreign commerce had ceased; how much more all domestic constitution
building! These are strange facts. Dr. Francia, we may conclude at least, was not a common man but an uncommon.

**Macaulay (1800-59)**, at Cambridge, won the Chancellor’s medal for poetry twice and was made a fellow at Trinity College in 1824. The collapse of father’s business led him to study law and he entered into the bar in 1826. He began his literary career with Knight’s Quarterly Magazine but later began writing his famous essays for The Edinburgh Review. He entered the Parliament in 1830 as a Whig, came to India for four years on a legal post, re-entered political life and rose to the level of Secretary of War and Paymaster General of the Forces. Before leaving for India Macaulay had written 22 essays for The Edinburgh Review; he added three during his stay in India and finished eleven more after his return. He contributed five biographies for Encyclopaedia Britannica. His essays dealt with either literary subjects like Milton, Byron, Bunyan etc or historical studies including his famous compositions on Warren Hastings and Lord Clive. His opinions were often one sided, and his knowledge was often flawed with actual error or distorted by his craving for antithesis but his essays are clearly and ably written and disclose an eye for picturesque effect. His History of England remained unfinished with four volumes of the book completed during his life time. His treatment of history is marked by picturesque details, desire for brilliant effect which resulted in a hard, self-confident manner and in a lack of broader outlines and deeper views.

**Walter Pater (1839-94)** is known both as a stylist and a literary critic. He devoted himself to art and literature producing some remarkable volumes on these subjects. The collection of his first essays appeared as Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873). The essays were chiefly concerned with art. Imaginary Portraits (1887) deals with artists and Appreciations (1889) is on literary themes with an introductory essay on style. Pater was a representative of the school of aesthetic criticism. He was a strong believer of the theory of art for art’s sake. He focused his attention always
on form rather than subject matter. His own style is among the most notable of the Victorian prose writers. It is the creation of immense application and forethought; every word is conned, every sentence proved and every rhythm appraised. It is never cheap, but firm and equable.

The earlier published works of the renowned Victorian novelist R L Stevenson (1850-94) were consisted of collection of essays titled An Inland Voyage (1878), Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes (1879) and VirginibusPuerisque (1881). In the essays he appears to be a master of easy, graceful style which is the result of much care and a close attention to artistic finish. Any list of Victorian prose stylists will be incomplete without mentioning the name of Matthew Arnold. Arnold (1822-88) was a man of many activities but now he holds his rank as a poet and a literary critic. His prose works are large in bulk and wide in range. His critical essays are ranked of highest value. Essays in Criticism (1865 & 1889) contain the best of his critical works, which is marked by wide reading and careful thought. His judgements are usually sane and measured. He ranks as one of the great English literary critics. In his prose, as in his poetry, he appears to be an apostle of sanity and culture. He advocates a broad cosmopolitan view of European literature as a basis for comparative judgement and attacks provincialism and lack of real knowledge. He wrote freely upon theological and political themes also. Two of his best books of this class are Culture and Anarchy (1869) and Literature and Dogma (1873). His style is perfectly lucid, easy, elegant, distinct and rhythmical.
AN ACUTE philosophical writer, the late Dean Mansel (a writer whose works illustrate the literary beauty there may be in closeness, and with obvious repression or economy of a fine rhetorical gift), wrote a book of fascinating precision in a very obscure subject, to show that all the technical laws of logic are but means of securing, in each and all of its apprehensions, the unity, the strict identity with itself of the apprehending mind. All the laws of good writing aim at a similar unity or identity of the mind in all the processes by which the word is associated to its import. The term is right, and has its essential beauty, when it becomes in a manner, what it signifies, as with the names of simple sensations. To give the phrase, the sentence, the structural member, the entire composition, song, or essay, a similar unity with its subject and with itself:—style is in the right way when it tends toward that. All depends upon the original unity, the vital wholesomeness and identity of the initiatory apprehension or view. So much is true of all art, which therefore requires always its logic, its comprehensive reason—insight, foresight, retrospect, in simultaneous action—true, most of all, of the literary art, as being of all the arts most closely cognate to the abstract intelligence. Such logical coherency may be evidenced not merely in the lines of composition as a whole, but in the choice of a single word, while it by no means interferes with, but may even prescribe, much variety, in the building of the sentence for instance, or in the manner—argumentative, descriptive, discursive—of this or that part or member of the entire design. The blithe crisp sentence, decisive as a child’s expression of its needs, may alternate with the long-contending, victoriously intricate sentence; the sentence, born with the integrity of a single word, relieving the sort of sentence in which, if you look closely, you can see much contrivance, much adjustment, to bring a highly qualified matter into compass at one view. For the literary architecture, if it is to be
rich and expressive, involves not only foresight of the end in the beginning, but also development or growth of design, in the process of execution, with many irregularities, surprises, and afterthoughts; the contingent as well as the necessary being subsumed under the unity of the whole. As truly, to the lack of such architectural design of a single, almost visual, image, vigorously informing an entire, perhaps very intricate, composition, which shall be austere, ornate, argumentative, fanciful, yet true from first to last to that vision within, may be attributed those weaknesses of conscious or unconscious repetition of word, phrase, motive, or member of the whole matter, indicating as Flaubert was aware, an original structure in thought not organically complete. With such foresight, the actual conclusion will most often get itself written out of hand, before, in the more obvious sense, the work is finished. With some strong and leading sense of the world, the tight hold of which secures true composition and not mere loose accretion, the literary artist, I suppose, goes on considerately, setting joint to joint, sustained by, yet restraining, the productive ardour, retracing the negligences of his first sketch, repeating his steps only that he may give the reader a sense of secure and restful progress, readjusting mere assonances even, that they may soothe the reader, or at least not interrupt him on his way; and then, somewhere before the end comes, is burdened, inspired, with his conclusion, and betimes delivered of it, leaving off not in weariness and because he finds himself at an end, but in all the freshness of volition. His work now structurally complete, with all the accumulating effect of secondary shades of meaning, he finishes the whole up to the just proportion of that antepenultimate conclusion, and all becomes expressive. The house he has built is rather a body he has informed. And so it happens to its greater credit, that the better interest even of a narrative to be recounted, a story to be told, will often be in its second reading. And though there are instances of great writers who have been no artists, an unconscious tact sometimes directing work in which we may detect, very pleasurably, many of the effects of conscious art, yet one of the greatest pleasures of really good prose literature is in the critical tracing out of that conscious artistic structure, and the pervading sense of it as we read. Yet of poetic literature too; for, in truth, the kind of constructive intelligence here supposed is one of the forms of the imagination. 1