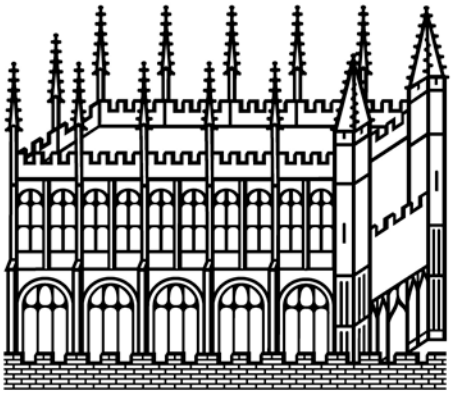

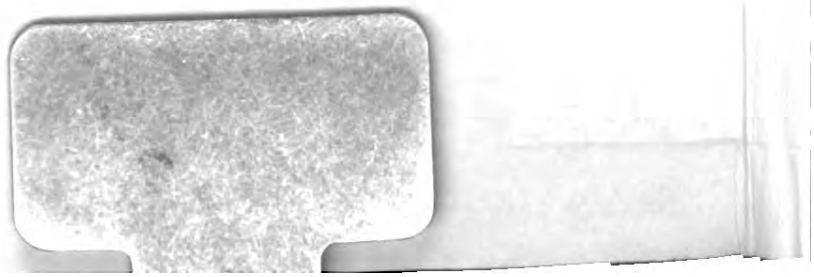

EMINENT CHARACTERS

OF THE

ENGLISH REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.

BY

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1853.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In presenting the following pages to the world, the writer deems some apology necessary for their introduction. Known only to a limited circle of readers as the author of a Prize Essay in connexion with an ancient religious society, he would have remained in the contented enjoyment of so unobtrusive a position, had not a desire to employ his pen upon politics and polemics, themes inadmissible in his former work, induced him to venture before the public upon this occasion as an uninvited guest. He has for some time observed with regret the existence of conflicting opinions with reference to eventful passages of our national history, whence has originated a wish to express his own views on these subjects, which must be regarded as his excuse for adding another to the numerous historical treatises already in existence.

With respect to the plan of the work, it should be

stated that several chapters were originally distinct essays, not intended to constitute part of a series—a fact that must explain any want of arrangement that may be detected upon a critical perusal, although it is to be hoped that this defect has been in some degree remedied by the order in which the topics are brought forward. A general review of British history forms the introductory chapter, for the purpose of comprehending the political antecedents of the English Revolution; after which, its several characteristics are discussed under five distinguished names, of whom one, the author of "Paradise Lost," is regarded in an almost exclusively literary aspect, the public transactions of his time being included in the notice of his contemporaries.

Of these characters, that of Oliver Cromwell is alone held up to reprobation; and the writer is not only aware that in this he has opposed the prevailing tendencies of the age, but is also conscious that many of his sentiments do not coincide with those of any particular political party or religious denomination. In these respects, he has to crave the indulgence of his readers, and to refer to the universally admitted right of every one to maintain and diffuse his con-

scientious opinions. Rejoicing in the fact that his opponents have equal liberty with himself, he ventures to hope that if erroneous, he has not been partial, and that he has neither flattered the vanity of a court, nor stimulated the passions of the crowd.

Denmark Hill,
5th January, 1853.

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EMINENT CHARACTERS

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

From the days of the "mighty hunter before the Lord" to those of the effeminate Sardanapalus, the metropolis of the world stood where now the Tigris washes the time-honoured mounds of Kalah and Nimroud. Removed from Nineveh to Babylon, and from Babylon to Persepolis, and thence to Alexandria, where the conquering Macedonian made his name, though not his dominion, immortal, we find the seat of universal empire transferred at last to European soil, and rising, in the genial clime of ancient Italy, on the summit of seven hills by the banks of the Tiber.

Nothing more appropriate can be applied to the empire of Rome, than the similitude suggested by

the spirit of inspiration to the dreams of the heathen monarch of old. It was partly iron and partly clay —an amalgamation of elements that it was impossible to combine; of a military despotism fitly likened to iron, with a constitution, which, whilst it possessed all the pliability of clay, retained absolutely nothing of its plastic power. Even after ages of dominion, so heterogeneous an empire afforded no insuperable barrier to the tide of hostile emigration setting in from the north. The suicidal policy of an emperor, who, in founding new institutions, desired to be free from old associations, at length transferred the seat of government from the shores of the Tiber to those of the Bosphorus, and in but a comparatively short period, the very forum that of old had responded to the eloquence of Cicero, bore witness to the barbaric dominion of Theodoric.

It is from the fall of imperial Rome that the history of modern Europe must be dated. The Roman empire is not to be confounded with its continuation in Thrace or its restoration in Germany. Whether at Constantinople or at Frankfort, the imperial purple came to be assumed by the descendants of the very barbarians who had destroyed the supremacy, if not the existence, of the people of Rome. The classic nations of Italy speedily disappeared before their Teutonic supplanters; and Europe, re-

duced anew to a condition of comparative barbarism, had again to begin the onward progress towards refinement and civilization.

Amongst the countries that had been subdued by the Romans in the days of their power, was that which we now call our own. It was, however, our own island, and not our own people, that experienced this subjugation. The Celtic aborigines of Britain are no more. It is doubtful whether even the Welsh represent them. Their tribes had been reduced by the Roman power; but the powerful Anglo-Saxon race, who supplanted them, and from whom we ourselves are descended, were amongst those northern nations by whom the empire was itself overthrown. The history of a country is the history, not of the soil, but of the people by whom it is possessed. That of England should date from the Saxon colonization, a period which also corresponds with the fall of the Roman empire, previously to which, Britain, as but a part of the great whole, had, in common with the other countries of Europe, no separate and independent history of its own.

The Saxons and Angles, those important tribes that embodied the germ of the great people who are now spread over the earth from the Shetlands to Tasmania, were originally settled amongst the other descendants of Japhet in the north of Europe. For centuries

had these numerous tribes been striving to extend their territory southward: in the early and almost fabulous ages of the Roman republic, the city of Romulus was burned by the Gauls; and in the latter days of the empire, when its aristocracy were enervated by luxury, and its democracy enfeebled by discontent, these powerful hordes of barbarians came down in large masses upon its various provinces. Britain, as the most remote, had been abandoned so soon as the empire of the west found it necessary to centralize, rather than diffuse, its remaining power; and the aborigines, left to themselves, became so easy a prey to internal dissension, that the destroyers of the empire seized this opportunity of acquiring the vacated province. The Anglo-Saxons, before whom the Celts were driven to the mountain fastnesses of Wales, or the foreign shores of Bretagne, founded independent kingdoms—or rather, chieftainships—in the country they had thus unjustly acquired, which, after years of mutual conflict, were gradually united into one under the rule of the most powerful, that of the West Saxons—eminent by its historical association with the names of Egbert, Alfred, and Athelstane.

The Saxon tribes, on their arrival in Britain, brought with them the barbarous, yet in some respects poetic, mythology of the Teutonic races; and the

names of their principal divinities live in those which we apply to the days of the week—a circumstance which has, even in our own time, rendered a highly respectable religious community scrupulous as to using them. Upon this mythology was engrafted, by the propagandist zeal of the spiritual despotism that had succeeded the temporal on the banks of the Tiber, a form of Christianity so corrupt, that its introduction can scarcely be regarded as more than negatively beneficial. Thus shut out from the influence of vital religion, the Anglo-Saxons, during a period of several centuries, made but little progress in morals or in civilization. The people were savagely ferocious in war; and in peace, of which they had but little, wallowed in all the filthiness of intoxication and sensuality.

At length they were considerably raised in the social scale, by a monarch who has always been regarded as the pattern and exemplar of a patriotic king. Alfred the Great proved to the south of Britain, what, in after ages, the third Alexander became to the north, or the autocrat who laboured in the dock-yard at Chatham, to the inhabitants of those inhospitable steppes which form the inheritance of the descendants of Rurik. To this very day the name of Alfred cannot be mentioned without exciting admiration; and in our own time we have seen the

thousandth anniversary of his birth celebrated with sentiments of patriotic enthusiasm. A learned man, in an age when the majority of potentates were unable either to read or to write, and a monarch, at a period when monarchy was really a power in the state, he employed the influence of his exalted position, to bestow upon his country a code of laws, to promote the regular and efficient administration of justice, to establish schools of learning, and to gather around him the accomplished and the virtuous, by whose assistance and advice the sovereign might be effectually prevented from becoming a despot. All this he succeeded in accomplishing, in the midst of circumstances the most disadvantageous. The kingdom was a prey to the ravages of alien enemies, and a large portion of his life was devoted to the active defence of its borders. These troubles survived his reign. In the days of his grandson, Athelstane, a formidable confederation of neighbouring powers was formed against the throne of the West Saxons; and the overthrow of this alliance on the memorable field of Brunanburgh is not less famous in the story of Britain, than the parallel conflict at Clontarf is celebrated in the annals of the Emerald isle.

We are now brought to what may be designated the second great period in English history, that of the Danish or Scandinavian conquest. The tide of

emigration from north to south, before which imperial Rome had been swept away, had not then begun to subside, if indeed it may be said to have yet subsided, for it is well known how the northernmost power in Europe has for ages been endeavouring to extend its frontier from the Tartaric Euxine to the Mussulman Bosphorus. We find, therefore, that after the Teutonic races, to whom the Saxons belonged, had spread over the several provinces of the Lower Empire, another torrent of intruders supervened upon them, and endeavoured to dispossess them of the regions they had occupied, or at least to despoil them of the results of occupation. These were the Scandinavians or Northmen, usually known to English historians as Danes, and to northern chroniclers as vikings or pirates, whose doings have been celebrated in the metrical traditions of the Scalds, and whose mythology has been enriched by the wild imaginations of the Edda.

Their system of warfare was predatory and devastating; invading a country in the first instance for the sake of plunder, they so harassed the inhabitants that they were glad to bargain for a discontinuance of such visits by permitting the intruders to settle amongst themselves. In this manner colonies of Danes arose throughout Western Europe: the shores of the Baltic they possessed altogether, where their

name and their race still live in the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway, and forcing their way to the more genial climate of France, the monarch of the Franks was glad to assign them a territory in what was afterwards the duchy, and is now the province, of Normandy. Even Alfred the Great was obliged to consent to their settlement in the north of England, which he permitted on the vain and fruitless condition of their professing Christianity: vain and fruitless, we say, because the assumption of religion without its reality could only promote at once the opposite extremes of superstition and infidelity. Neither was the king of Scots in any better position with regard to these barbarians than his southern rival, if we may venture to gather the import of those rugged sculptures which yet excite the curiosity of the antiquarian, on the pillar of Sueno at Forres. Nor were the settlements of the Northmen restricted to Europe. Remains of Scandinavian architecture in the New World prove that some of these adventurers, perhaps driven by a storm in a westerly direction from the shores of Ireland or of Iceland, must have settled on the verge of the primeval forests of America.*

* The lovers of transatlantic poetry will remember how beautifully this historical hypothesis has been worked up into a legend by Henry Longfellow:

"Three weeks we westward bore,
And, when the storm was o'er

So restless, and withal so ferocious, were the enemies with whom Alfred and his predecessors had had to contend, and with whom his successors on the throne of the West Saxons were continually embroiled, through coalitions between the Northmen already settled in England, and fresh arrivals of their countrymen, as invaders on the coast. Even the signal defeat, by King Athelstane, of the sea-king Anlaf and his confederates, did not prevent a renewal of their barbarous hostilities. At length Ethelred the Second repeatedly bribed them to depart, but finding that this line of policy only rendered their visits the more frequent, he resorted to the diabolical expedient of a general massacre of the Danish settlers. Under the son of the murderess Elfrida, the vigil of St. Brice proved to the Danes on the shores of the Humber, what the eve of St. Bartholomew subsequently became, under the son of an equally atrocious mother, to the Huguenot dwellers on the banks of the Seine.

Even in that comparatively barbarous age, so

Cloud-like we saw the shore
Stretching to lee-ward;
There, for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which, to this very hour,
Stands looking sea-ward."

The Skeleton in Armour.

gigantic a crime brought about its own punishment. The Northmen had now "a local habitation and a name" in the Cimbric Chersonesus, and the task of chastising the faithless descendant of Alfred was undertaken by no less a person than the King of Denmark himself. The unworthy policy of Ethelred had alienated in a great measure the affections of his own people, who had, moreover, been completely dispirited by repeated invasion; and neither the Anglo-Saxon monarch nor his subjects were able to withstand the concentrated efforts of Scandinavian vengeance. The contest survived the generation in which it had been commenced, but in the next the son of Ethelred was deposed by the son of Sweyn, who at length succeeded in reigning undisturbed over a territory that extended from the mountains of Norway to the straits of Dover.

The invasions of the Danes may be said to have ceased with the reign of Canute. The pirates had begun to exchange a roving for a territorial life. They were, moreover, his native subjects. Scandinavia was to him what Normandy was to the Conqueror, Scotland to James the First, Holland to William of Orange, or Hanover to the earlier sovereigns of the house of Brunswick. It was therefore in his power to control the Norsemen as no Anglo-Saxon king had been able to do. Under

his dominion the Danish conquest of England arrived at its consummation. He removed the disadvantages under which the Northmen had laboured as settlers, and at the same time conciliated the Anglo-Saxons by placing both nations on an equal footing in the country. This, however, was by no means favourable to religion, morals, or civilization. The Danes were far behind the Saxons in national advancement, as might be expected from a people whose home had been their ships, and who chose to live by plunder rather than by those arts of honest industry in which the English excelled. They had, moreover, but just emerged from paganism; and Canute, who appears to have been deeply imbued with the doctrines of Rome, found it necessary to restrain heathen observances by severe ecclesiastical enactments. The Danes, however, never obtained that complete mastery over the Saxons which was subsequently gained by their Norman compatriots. The two races blended together, upon equal terms, into one community, in which the Anglo-Saxon was the prevailing element. The latter race being numerically superior, Canute deemed it his interest to secure the services of their great men in extending the limits, and consolidating the influence, of his vast northern empire, which, had it continued under the rule of a master-mind like his own, might have proved a formidable rival in Europe

to that, which, under Charlemagne, had risen like a phœnix from the ashes of Rome. But Providence had otherwise decreed. As the tide at Southampton refused to obey the mandate of the Dane, so the awful messenger of Death was equally disobedient to his sovereign pleasure. Upon his decease, his dominions, divided, like those of Alexander, between his successors, proved an empire as evanescent as that of Napoleon.

England and Scandinavia, much to the advantage of the former, were now for ever disunited; and in a very short time the predominant race in Britain were able to restore to the throne of his ancestors that unworthy Saxon king, who, as the founder of Westminster Abbey, obtained for himself a place amongst the confessors of the church, but whose reign possesses little historical interest, except in so far as it serves to elucidate the nature of the Anglo-Saxon institutions. From the days of Alfred, to whom, amongst other merits, must be accorded the high distinction of having originated the first idea of the British constitution, the monarch had been guided in all his proceedings by the advice of his Witan—an assembly which appears to have partaken of the nature both of parliament and privy council, and to have consisted not only of territorial lords, but also of those who represented the interests of the people at large. Such a state of things, in a half-civilized

community, may appear unaccountable; but it should be borne in mind that the hardy tribes of the west have always been more liberal in their habits and feelings than the effeminate nations of the east. This is apparent in their very language, and an appropriate illustration may be selected from two words in common use amongst ourselves. The term "lady," signifies a giver of bread, or dispenser of the hospitalities of the house; the word "king," the instrument by which the nation carries out its designs: capacities in which the degraded tenant of the harem and the arbitrary despot of the divan are equally unknown to the luxurious oriental. Of course the general absence of education prevented the Saxon constitution from being more than what we should now call a liberal aristocracy, with the sovereign at its head; yet it appears to have possessed as much of the democratic element as was consonant with the existing state of affairs. Whilst Edward the Confessor governed a united nation of Northmen and Saxons, we find the elements of a liberal constitution, and that partly on account of the personal incapacity of the sovereign, more fully developed than before. The noblemen by whom the affairs of the kingdom were administered, speedily obtained popularity and power,—none more so than the talented but unprincipled earl of Kent, whose influence, often arrayed even in arms against

his sovereign, was so great, that after he had passed away, and the childless monarch had gone down to the tomb in which his remains are yet enshrined, the voice of the people unanimously placed the son of Earl Godwin upon the vacant throne.

The infamous and unfortunate Ethelred the Second had contracted affinity with the family of the reigning dukes of Normandy, that settlement which the natives of the inhospitable north had established in the sunny climate of genial Neustria. The result of this was, that on the decease of the Confessor, William the Norman, with the important exception of illegitimate birth, which was then but slightly regarded, possessed, by inheritance, a claim to the English crown, which he prepared to maintain against the popular election by force of arms; a step in itself sufficiently ominous of an intent to extinguish constitutional administration. At the head of a brilliant force he invaded the country, and after a hard-fought conflict on the spot where the Abbey of Battle subsequently contained the long roll of his followers, and where its picturesque ruins still arrest the attention of the traveller, he left King Harold lifeless on the ensanguined plain, and, marching in triumph to the capital, was there proclaimed his successor.

From the memorable battle of Hastings may be dated the commencement of the third great epoch in

English history—that of the Norman conquest. This is remarkable as the last colonization of the island by an alien race—the last wave in the inundation of Northern barbarism that passed over the provinces of the extinct empire of Rome. The Normans were a branch of the same erratic family as the Danes, but from long settlement in the Gallic territories they had acquired some of the national characteristics of the French, whilst, at the same time, they retained all the ferocity, daring, and determination of their ancestors. Their subjugation of this country is also remarkable for the entire change it brought about in its political and social institutions. The liberal constitution of the Anglo-Saxons was swept away, and an absolute despotism substituted in its place; the profession of Christianity was rendered more completely subservient to Rome; the advance of learning and the arts, in which the English had made some progress, was altogether retarded, and the relations of the kingdom were associated with the continent, in a manner highly detrimental to its internal interests. The Norman conquest was in fact a reaction, a backward step, a relapse in the direction of barbarism, which England took centuries to recover. Like other great calamities, however, it was over-ruled for good by a superintending Providence. The Conqueror, it is true, confiscated all the estates of Saxon proprietors,

whom he reduced to a condition little better than slavery, and made over the lordship of the soil, by force, to his own followers; but this deed of rapine and violence, enormous as was its criminality, laid the foundation of that aristocracy, to whom, as a class, although much has been truly said to its detriment, the people have, in subsequent ages, been greatly indebted for the high social position they now enjoy, to which, it is unquestionable, they could never have attained, except through the instrumentality of those who had thus been unjustly exalted above them.

William the Norman introduced into England the feudal system, that state of society which had arisen on the Continent, after the fall of the empire had extinguished the ancient civilization, and under which the tenants were also the subjects of the lords of the soil. From the king upon the throne to the meanest baron whose name was recorded on the rolls of Battle Abbey, each ruled those below him with unmitigated despotism. According to the usage of feudalism, the monarch was, as duke of Normandy, a vassal of the French crown; but being an independent sovereign in England, he constantly resisted the claims of his brother of France to homage in respect of his newly-acquired territory. This condition of things involved the people of England in incessant wars

with France, or with rivals to the king for the possession of his duchy, during the reigns of all those monarchs who were also dukes of Normandy, and as dukes they ruled England rather than as kings. In the time of Stephen, for example, the country, not yet recovered from the wide-spread ravages of William the First, was wasted by a protracted civil war, in the object of which the native inhabitants had not the least possible interest. Under Henry the Second, although he inherited from his mother the claims of the ancient Saxon dynasty, with a survivor of which his grandfather had deemed it politic to join affinity, the interests of England were more entangled than ever with those of the Continent, through the increased accession of French territory which that monarch derived from his father and his wife.

This evil, however, though unmitigated at first, did not in the end prove disadvantageous to the Anglo-Saxons. The Norman barons, although they deprived them of their possessions, were not able either to exterminate or to put them down. They continued to form the majority of the nation, and to this day, although the races have long since blended, the prevailing element in British nationality is German, rather than Scandinavian. On their vassals and serfs, the barons, under the feudal system, relied for

military service—whilst the king, in his turn, relied upon the barons for the due execution of that service on his behalf. It was, therefore, the interest of the feudal lord to conciliate his tenants, and the interest of the king to conciliate the feudal lords. Each class had separate interests, tending to identical ends; and this necessarily led to mutual concession. On the continent it was not so,—there the barbarians by whom the empire had been overthrown, expatriated or extinguished the original inhabitants, and established feudalism amongst their own people, instead of amidst a subjected yet naturally hostile race; and the system thus became a pure tyranny. In England, on the contrary, the same system, from the different circumstances attendant upon its introduction, only served to prepare the way for a free government. Without the aid of the barons, the king would have been helpless, and apart from the assistance of their vassals, the lords would have been powerless; hence the importance of conciliating the people so soon became obvious, that ambitious monarchs, upon their accession to a throne which most of them held by a disputed tenure, would grant a charter to their subjects in renewal of Saxon rights and privileges; and imperious barons, awed into humanity by the approach of death, and no longer able to derive benefit from their services, would, at the instance of confessors,

decree the emancipation of their down-trodden serfs.*

As time progressed, the increased influence of the king began to excite the jealousy of the nobles; and they who had had to combine their forces to subdue the native population, resorted to the same combination in order to withstand the impending encroachments of the throne. The common people, thus essential to the king and to the barons, in vindication of their respective interests, did not lose all that appeared to be lost, in the hostilities that were carried on by the successors of the Conqueror. Soon after the race of Plantagenet had succeeded to the crown, and the Normans, in addition to England, acquired a footing in the emerald isle, the faithlessness of one of the most wicked kings of that ambitious dynasty caused him to be deprived, by his feudal liege lord, of all his territorial possessions in France. This freed the English from the entanglements of a tortuous foreign policy, and restricted the royal atten-

* "Every vassal of his banner—
Every serf born to his manor—
All those wronged and wretched creatures,
By his hand were freed again.
And, as on the sacred missal
He recorded their dismissal:
Death relaxed his iron features,
And the monk replied—'Amen!'"

LONGFELLOW'S *Norman Baron.*

tion to England, where it was the wish of John to govern as a despot, which the power of the barons would not suffer him to do. They took up the cause of the very people whom their ancestors had enslaved, and that people, stimulated by the traditionary influence of Saxon freedom, followed them into the field as armed retainers, to coerce the king into granting those measures of reform which the nobles demanded. This was the origin of what are known in history as the barons' wars. With the feudal aristocracy of the realm and their vassal democracy arrayed against him, John was soon placed in a similar position to that of the second James. He had no supporter left to whom he could appeal, no warrior remaining on whose prowess he could confide. But, unlike the last of the Stewart kings, he felt himself compelled to grant the concessions required; and the Great Charter, signed at Runnymede, became the foundation of those rights and liberties upon which succeeding generations have been able to rely.

There is, however, an essential difference between liberty under a charter, and liberty by Act of Parliament. The former supposes all power to reside in the sovereign, and the liberties of the subject to be dependent upon his arbitrary pleasure—the latter is secured by the recorded will of the nation at large. John knew precisely all that was implied in the

former position. So soon as he was released from the restraint under which he had signed the Great Charter, he endeavoured to annul it—called in foreign aid to subdue the power of the barons—but died before the contest was decided. His decease turned the scale for a time in their favour. His infant son and successor was brought up under their guidance; but that infant, grown to man's estate, followed precisely the same policy as his father; and his whole life was one continued struggle to free himself from the limitations which the confirmation of the charter had imposed. The struggle at one period broke out into open civil war. The leader of the barons, on this occasion, was Simon de Montfort, who, during the absence of the king from the capital, convened in London an assembly, consisting not only of the barons, but of deputies chosen to represent the freeholders and freemen of England. A few months afterwards, the king, like Charles the First in after times, when this shadow of a parliament had grown into a powerful reality, was a prisoner in the hands of his own subjects, but unlike that monarch, the chances of war soon decided in his favour. In a very short period, De Montfort was a mutilated and mangled corpse; and the power of the barons was extinguished for a time.

This, however, was but a check just previous to a

final triumph. The next reign developed the English constitution. Edward the First, like his father, confirmed the great charter; but unlike his father, he was not perpetually seeking to be free from its requirements. So far from it, he thought it policy to concede to the barons and their retainers that form of administration which the provisional government of De Montfort had originated during the civil dissensions of the preceding reign. To the barons, he united in council the representatives of the people: and this more than restoration of the Saxon Witan, constituted the assembly, to which was referred by the crown the questions of taxation, legislation, and the general affairs of the State; an assembly which, in a very short time, divided into two chambers, the hereditary and the elective, to the latter of which the privilege of deciding upon questions of finance more especially appertained.

With this origin of the British Constitution in the form in which it at present exists, the Norman period may be said to conclude; and the fourth great epoch in our history, the English period, to commence.

The era that originated the parliamentary constitution of England, consolidated into one the races of which its people were composed: it developed also their language, and from that day to the present, in

speech as well as nationality, the Anglo-Saxon element has prevailed. It will be found, however, that upon the mediæval period of our history, many extraneous influences operated that were anything than favorable to the formation of the national character.

The principal of these was the growing power of the church of Rome, which now ruled with iron hand the ecclesiastical policy of western christendom; and which had been more than ever oppressive, since the day that William the Norman planted the banner of Hildebrand upon English soil. The celibacy of the clergy, rendered compulsory by that infamous pope, converted the priests into a community of profligates; and the increasing departure of ecclesiastical doctrine, as well as practice, from the simplicity of the gospel, rendered it expedient to prohibit the perusal of the scriptures, which, in the Anglo-Saxon times, had been possessed by the people in their vernacular tongue. The result of this prohibition was the universal prevalence of debauchery, ignorance, and irreligion. Another powerful influence upon the community was exerted by the institutions of chivalry, a system which arose, like that of feudalism, out of the national character of the Teutonic races, and the theory at the basis of which, was the protection of the weak against the strong, whilst its motive power

really consisted in that love of war which European society derived from its barbarian antecedents. For the spirit of knighthood, in professing to vindicate the oppressed, committed itself the most frightful oppression; and in espousing nominally the cause of virtue, revelled in all the excesses of vice. It was to the perverted religion, and the sanguinary chivalry of the dark ages, that the first preacher of the crusades appealed; and through the mighty power of those warlike influences, the sacred associations of that land in which the Redeemer had suffered were polluted by the life-blood of those, whom, under other circumstances, his Spirit might have guided into the paths of righteousness and peace.

Corrupt, however, as were the institutions of the middle ages, we are not to suppose that Divine Providence did not extract some benefit to society even from them. The depraved church of Rome was the means of preserving in monasteries and cells the very scriptures it sought to suppress, and which were destined, so soon as its power should be weakened, to shed forth their regenerating light upon the world; to say nothing of the classical literature preserved in the same repositories, and the oriental learning that the crusaders were the means of introducing into Europe. So true is it that "there is a soul of goodness in things evil," that the very

corruptions of Romanism, whilst they extinguished spiritual, gave a fresh stimulus to temporal knowledge, (which, however, must be considered immeasurably inferior in importance) by calling forth the energies of the musician, the painter, and the architect: and the ecclesiastical remains of our own country present to this day, in their ivy-covered ruins, a spectacle of grandeur that impresses the beholder with sentiments of thoughtfulness and awe. The spirit of chivalry, again, served to revive that respect for the female character which had prevailed amongst the German nations of old, and imparted a humanizing influence to poetry and romance, through the enchanting strains of minstrels and of troubadours. The exploits even of knight-errant crusaders rendered some service to refinement and to taste, in affording a theme for the elegant epic of Torquato Tasso.

Combined motives of chivalry and ambition caused the mediæval kings of English history to pursue a line of foreign policy which exerted an evil influence on the nation at large, by teaching them to consider their nearest neighbours as natural enemies. Scotland and France were respectively treated, the one as a weak contemporary, the other as an obnoxious rival, by the more ambitious of the Plantagenets, who put forth a claim to the crown of the former, through

feudal superiority; to that of the latter, by hereditary right. The result of these aspiring endeavours, though frequently successful for a time, was the merited disappointment of their cruel projectors. The first Edward, it is true, subdued the retreat of the ancient Britons; but his attempts against the hardy mountaineers of the north called up the spirit of freedom in the persons of Wallace and of Bruce, whilst the stone from Scone, which he carried off in so much triumph, was destined to fulfil its legendary associations. With Edward the Third commenced a series of wars on the continent, continued by the monarchs who followed him with more or less success, until the zeal of a peasant girl of Domremi gave a blow to the power of the English invader, which, although Joan of Arc was herself sacrificed, the oppressor never recovered.

These foreign hostilities not only rendered our monarchs no better than banditti abroad, but caused them to govern in accordance with that character at home. The line of policy pursued by Richard the Second, in his domestic administration, was so oppressive, as was sufficiently indicated by the rebellion of Wat Tyler, that the nation at large began to desire a change in the government; and his ambitious cousin, taking advantage of the general discontent, seized a favourable opportunity to procure his depo-

sition, and to seat himself upon the throne. Without the people, whom he gained over by fair promises, Henry of Lancaster could never have succeeded, and this epoch may be called the first popular revolution in the constitutional history of England; that accomplished by the baronial wars having originated with the aristocracy; and it fully established the principle which had lain dormant since the days of Harold the Second, that the choice of the people and of parliament formed a better title to the crown than that of hereditary descent.

This first revolution, however, like all, whether popular or otherwise, that have been accomplished by fraud and violence, was soon succeeded by a period of the most frightful reaction. In the third generation, the vigour of the new dynasty began to decline, and then a claim to the throne was preferred, on behalf of the exiled branch of the royal family, by that party in the state who, in modern phraseology, would be styled legitimists. The result of this contest was the most barbarous and cruel intestine war that perhaps any country in Europe ever witnessed. We have known a civil war defined to the comprehensions of children, as the most uncivil thing that can possibly be imagined; and no phraseology could better describe the strife carried on under the respective banners of the White and Red Rose—appropriate

symbols—had the one been supposed to blanch, and the other to blush, at the enormities committed beneath its shadow. The legitimists at length triumphed over the scarcely less savage defenders of popular election; and the ferocity with which Edward the Fourth, and Richard the Third, controlled their more aristocratic subjects, appals the student of history, even though they appear on contemporaneous pages with Louis the Eleventh, of France, and James the Third, in Scotland.

The effect of these wars was materially to weaken the power of the old Norman nobility, nearly all the heads of ancient families perishing on the battle-field or on the scaffold, and their estates being confiscated as those of traitors. In proportion as the nobility were depressed, the crown and the commonalty were exalted—each monarch, knowing that he held the throne by a most uncertain tenure, bidding for popularity by large concessions, and at the same time controlling the people more effectually than preceding monarchs, without a similar parade of liberality, had been able to do. Such were the respective positions occupied by the three great powers in the social system, when another revolution, and one restorative of constitutional principles, placed upon the throne the first sovereign of the house of Tudor.

Under this powerful dynasty, England underwent

the most complete changes in its religious, social, and political affairs. The princes of this house not only represented the Saxon and Norman kings, but, by another line than that through which they claimed relationship with the Plantagenets, they derived their descent from the ancient Britons; and the first of their number by affinity, and his descendants by consanguinity, added the claim of inheritance to that of the popular choice. Their title to the throne was therefore undisputed, and this served to strengthen that power of the crown, which, in the reigns immediately preceding, had been so much in the ascendant. The failure, through the civil wars, of the old nobility, rendered it easy for the crown to create a new and a more subservient aristocracy, which was principally accomplished by Henry the Eighth, through whose frequent matrimonial alliances the relatives of his wives were raised to the first ranks of the peerage, and by whose imperious nature not only these new-born patricians, but the more independent commoners, were awed into submission through such ministers as Wolsey and Cromwell, themselves raised from obscurity. Events, however, soon arose in connexion with changes that affected the whole of the western world, which so elevated and excited the popular mind, that the policy of Henry was prevented from doing that which, in the succeeding century,

Louis the Fourteenth so effectually accomplished on the other side of the channel.

The empire which had begun with Romulus on the Italian peninsula, and which, long after its extinction in that locality, was continued by the successors of Theodosius on the Bosphorus of Thrace, had at last been overthrown, and the Mussulman Turk reigned triumphant in the city of Constantine. The discovery of printing by Gutenburg and Faust in Germany, a discovery which, during the reign of Edward the Fourth, had been associated in England with the names of Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde, gave a stimulus to learning, and opened those paths of literature to the many, which had hitherto been traversed only by a few. These two important events occurring contemporaneously, brought about what is usually termed the revival of letters in Europe. One result of the substitution of the crescent for the cross on the dome of St. Sophia, was the migration westward of the sages of the Greek empire, bringing with them the literature of the classical and oriental authors, to enlighten the nations that had grown up on the site of the empire of the west. The newly-invented printing-press facilitated the dissemination of these writings, and thus the public mind was trained to a more correct taste and a sounder judgment, than the descendants of the northern bar-

barians had ever before possessed. The light thus spreading westward was, however, to extend yet further in the same direction. Columbus became convinced of the existence of a continent hitherto unknown to the civilized world, and after contending against obstacles, the almost insuperable nature of which none but those who have striven against the accumulated ignorance of ages can fully apprehend, realized its discovery in the western hemisphere. The New World thus laid open, was found peopled by savage aborigines, and at the same time possessed of many natural advantages that rendered it a promising field for colonization. The attention of Europe was speedily directed to this new discovery; and supposing the original inhabitants of America to have been Shemitic races, of which there is every probability, the prophecy of Noah, regarding the enlargement of Japheth, began to be in process of literal fulfilment.

These secular revolutions, however, only prepared the way for another of a religious character, which was calculated to exert a yet stronger and more lasting influence upon society. For ages, the domineering power of the Church of Rome had been upon the increase, and its departure from the simplicity of the gospel was now wider and more manifest than ever. During several centuries, it had only

subsisted by the ignorance in which it kept the common people; and so soon as that ignorance was partially removed through the circumstances above mentioned, an extensive defection from its pale was the natural result. The names of Luther, Melancthon, Zwingle, and Calvin, will for ever be remembered in connexion with that Reformation which divided western Christendom into Catholic and Protestant, and which it has long been the habit of the latter persuasion to designate glorious. Glorious it undoubtedly was, so far as it went, yet it went comparatively but a little way towards the restoration of primitive Christianity. Protestantism has become the name for a system of errors, if not of crimes, scarcely less serious than those of the Latin church; and, although a step in the right direction, it is painful to witness its name adored, and its principles idolatrously worshipped, as though nothing could be orthodox but the Augsburg Confession. Christianity does not exclusively belong to the names either of Protestant or of Catholic. There is an enlightened Catholicity—we do not say Catholicism—the recognition of the fact, that whatever their outward diversities, all who really believe on the Son of God, and trust in Him alone for salvation, are one in Christ their head. There is an enlightened Protestantism—the belief of the truth that no human power has a

right to interfere between the Creator and the creature, in the exercise of faith by the latter. There is truth at the base of each system, but much error in the superstructure of both, though the preponderance of error undoubtedly belongs to the Church of Rome. It is not, however, for man to glory in man. To say, I am of Calvin, or I am of Luther, is as reprehensible as the corresponding spirit which has been condemned for ever in the pages of inspiration, where it is transferred by a figure to the yet greater names of Paul and Apollos. There should be no standard but the truth as it is in Jesus—no glorying in aught save the cross of Christ—no other authority than that of inspiration;—and then, and not till then, will the only name to distinguish believers be that which was applied to the disciples first at Antioch.

The Reformation, by no means immaculate abroad, had the misfortune to be introduced into England under circumstances the most unfavourable, being made to subserve the vices of a profligate and tyrannical sovereign. From the reign of Henry VIII., many of the most eventful changes in the history of Britain may be dated. One of these was the rise of the Anglican church, to be more fully developed under his son and successor: to be suppressed by one of his daughters, and revived by another—a church that may be concisely characterized, as in many respects,

an unfortunate compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism, exhibiting several of the failings of each, without the distinctive excellencies of either. Another was the commencement of that struggle between the crown and the parliament, which, after a contest of more than a century, ended in the triumph of constitutional freedom. The changes that were now coming thick upon the social system of Christendom—the Reformation, the revival of letters, the invention of printing, the discovery of America, created that which had been before unknown in England,—a public mind; not, indeed, comprehending all that in modern language is understood by that term, but a power of sufficient weight to prevent the Tudor monarchs and their new nobility from completely suppressing the third estate, which, during the continuance of the dynasty, had to maintain an unceasing parliamentary warfare, in order to preserve its existence.

The anti-popular policy commenced by Henry VIII. was carried out to perfection by his daughter Elizabeth. That princess was surrounded by circumstances which lent a false lustre to her character in the eyes of her subjects. The majority of the nation were by her time professedly Protestant; and to gratify them, she commenced a system of persecution against Catholics, and dissenters from the

established religion, worthy of the most palmy days of the papacy itself. To maintain her position as a Protestant sovereign, she espoused the cause of the Flemish revolution, against the oppressions of Parma and the persecutions of Alva; and thus incurred the displeasure of the tyrant Philip, evinced in his preparation of the Spanish armada, the overthrow of which, at a time when it had threatened the very existence of the nation, only served to render her administration the more brilliant. In the maintenance of the same position, and also in gratification of her own jealous resentment, she sacrificed her hated rival, the ex-queen of Scotland, one of the most beautiful and accomplished women of her time, though there is great reason to fear not one of the most excellent. These concessions, apparently made to the spirit of bellicose Protestantism, but really to her own ambition, enabled Elizabeth, like Cromwell in the next generation, to gain an ascendancy over the people, which she artfully employed to the suppression of their influence. At the close of a long reign, she left England a first-class power in Europe; not, indeed, through a system of constant hostilities with France, which had ceased with the reign of her father, or by perpetual warfare with Scotland, to which affinity with the Stewarts had put an end, but by the establishment of a system of armed and diplo-

matic intervention in the affairs of foreign states, which, with occasional interruptions under the succeeding dynasty, has subsisted to our own times, to the apparent rather than the real advantage of this country, and almost invariably to the disadvantage of every other.

With the reign of the last of the Tudors, closed the history of England as a separate and distinct kingdom. By a just individual retribution, the celibacy of Elizabeth left her crown to the son of the beautiful cousin she had so treacherously murdered, and by an equally just national retribution, the throne of England, as though the stone from Scone had not lost its virtue, devolved, in default of nearer heirs, upon the kings of that country, whose liberties her monarchs had for ages been endeavouring to subvert. From this period, the Scottish element is introduced into English history, and it was one which had vast influence in the impending revolution. The Scots possessed, to a very large extent, the love of freedom, but of freedom from foreign restraint, rather than from internal despotism. The earlier part of their history had been one continued struggle with the encroachments of England; and to make head against these, a ruling mind was absolutely necessary, such as was auspiciously furnished in the instance of the indomitable Robert Bruce. His descendants

and successors of the house of Stewart, engaged as they were in frequent contests with their powerful southern neighbours, endeavoured to exalt the royal power as much as possible, and to identify the cause of Scotland with that of her king. With the mass of the people they undoubtedly succeeded, although in the Highlands they occasionally created dissatisfaction, by injudicious attempts to put down that system of clanship which, as a branch of the institutions of feudalism, had existed amongst the Gaelic population from the earliest ages. Such was the condition of things in Scotland, from the days of the poetic but arbitrary James I., to those of the Reformation, the principles of which, introduced into that country in a purer form than in England, made greater progress with the mass of the people than with the royal house—a circumstance that will account for the unpopularity of the unfortunate Mary, who was regarded by her subjects in the same light as that in which her great grandson, the seventh James, was subsequently viewed by the people of England.

Her son, James VI., educated by those who had effected her deposition, became the first protestant sovereign north of the Tweed, and in this character was enabled to regain that influence over his subjects which, though lost by his mother, had been possessed

by his forefathers. His own estimate of the importance of the kingly office was prodigious, and, though himself essentially sensual and grovelling, he contrived, by the exercise of a certain degree of low cunning, to make his authority felt. After some time, he was suddenly, though not unexpectedly, placed, by the death of Queen Elizabeth, at the head of three kingdoms instead of one. His own notions of regal right were carried into England, where the policy of the Tudors had prepared the way for their dissemination; and although he did not find the English Parliament so subservient as the Scottish Estates, he was able, throughout the whole of his career in the south, as James I., to maintain with unabated vigour the crusade against constitutional liberty that his predecessors had begun. The discovery of the Gunpowder Plot invested his name with an interest similar to that which the Spanish Armada had obtained for Elizabeth; and, like Henry VIII., he sought to subdue the rising power of the Commons, and overcome the prestige of the ancient aristocracy, by the creation of new nobility,—in this case mostly imported from the north of Tweed—circumstances which postponed the struggle, already imminent, to the reign of his unfortunate son and successor.

A new element of social and political discord had

been gradually infused into the empire from the position of Ireland, which, originally occupied by the Normans under Henry the Second, had been colonized by the English down to the period when Henry VIII., his predecessors having claimed no more than the lordship of the emerald isle, assumed the title of king, and ennobled some of the descendants of the aboriginal chiefs. The Norman conquerors of Ireland, whom its native inhabitants have with singular perversity been accustomed to designate Saxon, never intermingled, as in England, with the conquered race; and hence the Celtic and Teutonic tribes constantly regarded each other with the distrustful feelings of those who occupy the respective positions of oppressor and oppressed. The acceptance by the English of the protestant faith, only served to increase this animosity. Their unchristian-like behaviour towards the conquered races caused the native Irish to look with abhorrence upon the religion they professed, and to cleave with the greater tenacity to an unreformed creed, the repudiation of which might have proved the surest means of their elevation. The Romish priesthood, by encouraging those patriotic resentments which the presence of an oppressive invader perpetually called forth, only contrived to fasten more strongly their deadly hold upon the minds of a superstitious people, retaining them

in the greatest possible ignorance, and inciting them to deeds of treasonable violence against the government under which they lived; violence that the rulers never failed to repay with a fearful amount of interest. This has been the social condition of the sister isle, so fruitful in political disturbances, from the days of the Plantagenets, to those of the house of Hanover. The native population, ever degraded, always impoverished, often reduced to the lowest depths of misery and starvation, the servile tools of a jesuitical priesthood, in the only country in Europe where the Church of Rome has ever been associated with the cause of liberty;—the conquering race, overbearing, insolent, willing to persecute, unwilling to forgive,—a shame to Protestantism, and a disgrace to Christianity.

Such were the respective and relative positions of the three kingdoms, when the reign of Charles I. ushered in the great revolutionary period of English history. That sovereign had undoubtedly private virtues, but he was utterly destitute of firmness or ability, and in public life his treachery became as notorious, as in the domestic circle his fidelity was proverbial. He had also the misfortune to have been trained in the most exalted ideas of royal prerogative, a circumstance that quite unfitted him to administer the English constitution. That constitution, which

had been the growth of years, from the days of the first Edward, contained, like all institutions that are developed through a long period of time, many anomalies, which the first Charles attempted, for the sake of exalting the regal power, to prove contradictions. It was an established principle of government that parliament had the right to levy and appropriate the public money, but it was also law that the king might demand maritime service from his subjects, and by commuting that service into money, Charles and his advisers thought to raise a revenue from the people without referring to their representatives, who, from the manner in which the ordinary resources of the realm were expended in foreign wars, or lavished upon court favourites, were unwilling to vote the regular supplies. In this measure the king was opposed in an action at law, which has made memorable a name which will ever live in English history, that of the patriot Hampden. It is true that judgment was given, though not unanimously, for the crown; but as the judges had been limited to a tenure of office, dependent solely upon the pleasure of the king, the only result of the trial was to lower the sovereign and the bench in the estimation of the people.

A new source of irritation soon arose, from the facilities which the constitution of the Anglican

Church afforded for the persecution of those who dissented from its sentiments. Invested at the Reformation with the temporalities of Rome, it had also assumed, though in a lesser degree, the pernicious doctrines, and intolerant spirit, of the great apostasy. Under Elizabeth and James I., the persecuting edicts that had been enacted in Catholic times for the suppression of heresy were enforced against papists and protestant dissenters with equal impartiality, and both classes of offenders were indiscriminately consigned to the fearful fire which for ages had been wont to glow in Smithfield, in order to consume the witnesses for God. At the accession of Charles, the Romanizing tendencies of the Established Church were opposed by so large a body within its own communion, known in history by the name of Puritans, that such extreme measures could no longer be adopted; but the primate, Laud, who was the royal instrument of ecclesiastical, as Strafford was of civil despotism, contrived to institute proceedings against Puritanism, no less cruel and more degrading—inflicting such punishments as flogging, the pillory, pecuniary fines, and corporeal mutilations. This system of persecution was not confined to England. It extended also to the sister kingdoms. Episcopacy and forms of prayer were imposed upon the Scottish Presbyterians, and the Catholics of Ireland were per-

mitted, if not encouraged, to achieve a bloody massacre of their Protestant fellow-subjects.

The policy pursued by the king and his advisers, in matters both civil and religious, terminated in the inevitable result to which it was tending. North of the Tweed, his native subjects, in the exercise of more zeal than forbearance, took up arms to resist the invasion of their religious privileges. Larger resources than could be obtained merely by the exercise of the royal prerogative were required by the crown for maintaining this civil war; and hence, after dispensing for several years with a parliament in England, the king was obliged to return to the form of popular administration. After the shortest parliament of the reign, the celebrated Long Parliament at length assembled. The Commons chose to consider grievances before they would vote supplies. They impeached Strafford, the favourite minister, and a renegade from the popular cause, (who had actually drawn up a plan for erecting the monarchy into a despotism,) of high treason; and, after his trial and condemnation, they extorted from the king, who was as faithless to his friends as to his enemies, the royal assent to his execution. They abolished the ecclesiastical tribunals that had been the means of so much persecution for conscience sake; and more than this, they carried through both houses, and obtained

from the king his own assent to a bill, which abolished his constitutional privilege of dissolving parliament.

Up to this point, the upper house acted in concert with the lower. The wars of the Roses had long since exterminated, with few exceptions, the ancient Norman nobility; and those who remained were disposed to regard with jealousy the growing power of the sovereign. Lords of more recent creation were too independent to carry out the servile ends for which their predecessors had just before been ennobled. Suddenly, however, a detestable expedient on the part of the king, changed the temper of the rebellious aristocracy. Charles, whose aim had been to set aside the constitution, could not bear the deprivation of powers which even that allowed him. He resorted to the sanguinary proceeding of levying war against the estates of the realm. This indefensible act was, perhaps, the most consummate stroke of policy he ever achieved. It secured him what he never had before, except in the person of a few minions and parasites—a party of his own. True it is, that no one was willing to place the king above the laws; but when matters had been pushed to the verge of civil war, many were found willing to support the cause of the crown, the supremacy of which had already been tried, rather than that of parlia-

ment, whose exclusive domination had never been experienced. Thus arose the party known in history by the name of the Cavaliers. Their support of the royal cause must be regarded as rather negative than positive; and so well was the king aware of this, that both himself and his unworthy sons rewarded the really efficient aid they received from this party with little else than ingratitude, indifference, and neglect. The same circumstance will also account for the general want of vigour and discipline displayed by the royalists throughout the whole of this contest, associated though they were with aristocratic grandeur and historical recollections.

It is a well known maxim, that like begets like. The appeal to force on the part of the king, produced an equally violent appeal to force on the side of the parliament. England, as well as Scotland, was involved in all the horrors of that most brutal of contentions, a civil war. In this strife between the elements of the constitution—the second estate against itself, and the first against the third—the latter was at last successful. The king was virtually, though not nominally, dethroned. A prisoner in the hands of his subjects, he became, though unwillingly, as subservient to parliament as that assembly could possibly desire. The revolution was thus accomplished. Then followed, however, another re-

volution. Parliament had only triumphed by means of a stern, unflinching, and thoroughly disciplined army. That army, conscious of the obligations it had imposed on the popular cause, determined to set aside the authority under which it had acted, and to exalt itself into a dictatorship. The legislature had already effected the deposition of the king, and materially altered the relations subsisting between church and state; but it had no idea, at the outset of the contest, of abolishing regal authority and all existing institutions. This, however, was the aim and intent of a victorious army. The House of Lords was overawed, and the House of Commons packed or intimidated, by the mere brute force of a resistless soldiery. The king was judicially murdered, after the mockery of a trial. A republic was proclaimed, and under the semblance of a democracy, the country was placed beneath the iron heel of a military despotism. A stronger evidence exists not in history, that a powerful standing army is the greatest enemy to the civil and religious liberties of a people.

This second revolution was not accomplished without a struggle. Not only were the royalists and more moderate parliamentarians opposed to the movement, but it called forth the armed opposition of the people of Scotland. Their contest with Charles Stewart was based upon religious rather than political

grounds. The polemics of the Scots were democratic, through the associations derived from the vigorous defence of Protestantism they had had to make against two successive monarchs of the house of Stewart. Yet, opposed as they were to priestcraft, to kingcraft they had no objection. The idea of a sovereign was associated in their minds with that of a chieftain, who vindicated the independence of the country against the encroachments of their more powerful southern neighbours. It was only natural, therefore, that they should be opposed to the republican dictatorship, which the English army attempted to impose upon them. So long as the contest lay between the king and the parliament, they had readily co-operated with the latter; but so soon as the parliament had been superseded by Cromwell and his Ironsides, they took up arms in the cause of monarchy, upon the condition, in which they were basely deceived, of the Stewarts abandoning that of episcopacy. The victories, however, achieved at Dunbar and Worcester, by the same power that had already dragooned the emerald isle into submission, taught them that principles, however worthy, when maintained by brute force, must ever fall before a superiority of discipline and of numbers.

What Cæsar had been to the senate of Rome, and what Napoleon became to the republic of France,

that did Cromwell become to the commonwealth of England. A democracy in name, and a dictatorship in reality, yielded to a despotism in appearance as well as in fact. It is true, that under his rule there was a semblance of the ancient Constitution—a House of Commons—in his latter days a House of Lords—and a council of officers in lieu of the privy council. It is equally true, however, that the Commons were incessantly browbeat by this uncrowned monarch, and were dissolved after short sittings, for no other offence than that of not being sufficiently subservient to the chair of the protector, who, after the manner of the Stewarts, his predecessors, and, indeed, his kinsmen, undertook to impose the taxes, without the concurrence of the legislature. The lords, or "other house," altogether composed of his own creatures, had none of the prestige that belonged to the representatives of the English aristocracy. The army was a new power in the State; for up to this period, standing armies had been unknown; and it was vigorously employed, as brute force invariably is in the hands of a tyrant, to subdue the free expression of popular opinion. True it is, that there was no regularly established Church; but though the country had been delivered from a persecuting hierarchy, it was by no means free from the severities of religious intolerance. Papists and prelatists were persecuted

in their turn by a despot, who, though claimed by modern independents as one of themselves, was really in the position of the unjust judge, who neither feared God nor regarded man. Those descriptive words of Holy Writ present in brief an appropriate summary of Cromwell's character. His correspondence has in later times been exhumed, in order to prove his piety and devotion: but actions speak louder than words; religious technicalities were the ordinary language of his day; and for various causes, a profession of piety was so much in the ascendant, that it became an ordinary practice for those to assume it as a virtue who had it not. A godly puritan would have blushed, and a veritable nonconformist turned pale with horror, at those deeds of Cromwell, which it has been the fashion of half-neological, half-chartist authors and essayists, to eulogize and to applaud. When the last great assize shall have come, and many of those who, in human estimation, are great historical characters, shall awake to everlasting shame and contempt at the irrevocable fiat of an infallible Judge, an awful doom will be found to await, not only those tyrants who have boldly administered an unmitigated despotism, but those who, in the name of liberty, and often on behalf of a republic, have, for purposes of self-exaltation, enslaved and oppressed their down-trodden fellow-men.

There is a distinction, however, between the despotism of Cromwell and that of his predecessors. Where the Stewarts would have mutilated a nose or cropped an ear, Oliver cut off the entire head. This gave an air of greater firmness and decision to a policy equally odious, but more sanguinary than that of Charles the First. Other merit, if merit this can be called, the protectorate had none. It made the power of England to be felt abroad, but more by inspiring fear than by inducing respect. Its foreign policy, however splendid, is therefore no commendation; and its Irish administration, despite Mr. Carlyle's deprecation of "a rose-water policy," ought to be abhorred wherever civilization exists. Those governments that are most powerful abroad, are usually most nefarious at home. It was so with the Roman republic, with the empire of Napoleon, and so it was with the autocracy of Oliver Cromwell.

That autocracy fell with its author. Upon his decease, the nation, disgusted with a military despotism, reverted, at the instance of a soldier of fortune, to a despotism of the old regime. The Restoration became another phase in the English revolution of the seventeenth century. All the institutions of the monarchy, with the exception of the Courts of High Commission and Star-chamber, were revived under the rule of an infamous profligate. The Anglican Church

was re-established on its former episcopal foundation. The whole contest between the crown and the parliament was renewed, to the advantage, not of the people, but of the throne. For a quarter of a century, the liberties of three great kingdoms were laid at the feet of a voluptuous tyrant, before whom sycophants descanted on the divine right of kings. Compared with such a state of things, the reign of Cromwell and his Ironsides had been beneficent. The Protector had only nominated parliament—the second Charles, following the example of the French autocrat, to whom he basely sold himself and his country, set it aside altogether, and for the last nine years of his life, the estates of the realm were never convoked.

At length the death of Charles placed his brother on the throne. James the Second (the Seventh of Scotland) was, if possible, even more than his predecessors, determined to put down the authority of parliament. He had, however, more resolution to propose, and less ability to carry out, than any prince of his family—two circumstances which, in combination, largely militated against the accomplishment of his ends. He was, moreover, a Roman Catholic, and this deprived him of the support of the old cavaliers, amongst whom subserviency to the throne was almost identical with attachment to the church of England. His devotion to the Romish faith appears to have

been as sincere as it was injudicious. In violation of his assurance to parliament that he would govern according to the laws, he proceeded, for the purpose of introducing Catholics to place and power, to assert his right to dispense with the operation of certain enactments. The judges were overawed into a decision in favour of the legality of this exercise of the royal prerogative; but upon the real merits of the question there cannot now exist a doubt. True it is, that the laws he endeavoured to set aside, were, in themselves, persecuting enactments, which, happily for society, have been in later times erased from the statute-book. They were, however, in those days, acts of parliament legally binding, and, as such, could only be nullified, as they have since been, by constitutional repeal; for the crown, therefore, to dispense with their operation, was for its wearer to place himself above the laws, in defiance of the implied condition upon which, from the accession of Henry the Fourth, the sovereigns of England had exercised their authority.

A more flagrant case of violation by a monarch of the constitution under which he had acceded to power, was never proved than in the instance of the second James. His administration, conducted as it was by designing Jesuits and inhuman bullies in the interest of the court, offended and disgusted all parties. The cavaliers and high-churchmen who had fought for

Charles the First, trembled for existing institutions, whose safety was not now threatened by the people, but by the sovereign. Protestant dissenters, exposed as they had been, in common with papists, to every variety of persecution, nobly refused to accept the toleration offered by the monarch to both parties alike, when procured at the expense of a violation of the authority of parliament. Extreme monarchists and devoted republicans stood equally aghast at the prospect of more than eastern despotism, which was afforded by the policy of the sovereign. The result was an almost unanimous coalition of all parties in order to supersede him. His son-in-law, a liberal and a wise, though, it is to be feared, an unscrupulous foreign prince, was called from beyond seas to supplant him on the throne; and this was done, so far as England was concerned, without appealing to the odious decision of the sword. The last of the Stewart kings, left, like John in similar circumstances, without an adherent, did not, like that monarch, concede the demands of his subjects, but fled in ignominious exile from their shores. A convention then offered the throne thus vacated to the illustrious prince who had headed the popular confederation; and it was accepted upon the conditions under which it had been proposed.

From that day to the present, no British sovereign

has ever been embroiled with his subjects in a contest for the supremacy. After the crown had been transferred to William of Orange by the estates of the realm, the future succession was left to be settled by act of parliament, the tenure under which the throne is at present held. The British empire is so far a republic. The first magistrate, monarch though he be, is virtually elected by those over whom he presides. Retention of office by the responsible ministers of the crown is dependent upon their possession of public confidence. The only legitimate sovereign, and the only constitutional minister, are those who rejoice in the esteem and regard of the majority. The democratic, however, is not the sole element of English politics: there is enough of the aristocratic and monarchical principles to preserve the constitution from that weakness and instability which the experience of history proves to be inseparable from the working of purely republican institutions. And although it may still contain many anomalies, and require, as everything human always must, the most searching and vigorous reforms; yet in its fundamental principles, the British constitution is one from which the world at large may derive many great and important lessons in the science of political and social amelioration.

That constitution, the result of so many centuries

of progressive advancement, was finally developed in its present form by the revolution successfully accomplished in the centenary year of the Spanish armada. The revolutionary period of English history terminated in the memorable era of 1688. A neighbouring country has in later times gone through political convulsions very nearly similar, without arriving at an equally satisfactory consummation. In Louis the Sixteenth, in Napoleon, and in Charles the Tenth, it is easy to trace analogies to Charles the First, Cromwell, and the second James; but for a parallel to William of Orange we may search in vain the annals of France. This proves that the English must have possessed what their more impulsive neighbours had not—men of profound and lasting abilities. To achieve a revolution, the results of which will endure for centuries, is not the work of ordinary minds; and when we examine the biography of the seventeenth century in Britain, we find it to have been the Augustan age of English history.

This would be sufficiently proved, were we to select the department of philosophy alone. From Francis Bacon, at the commencement, to John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, at the close of this eventful period, the sciences, whether mental, mathematical, or physical, made enormous progress, and were ably developed in the interval by Hobbes, Browne, Harvey,

Maskelyne, and Ray, names scarcely inferior. But to turn from philosophy to those lighter, but not less indispensable pursuits, which contribute so much to the elegancies of human existence, we discover amongst those who excelled in the fine arts the names of Walker, Lely, Gibbons, and Kneller, stimulated, as their genius doubtless was, by the foreign influences of Vandyke and Le Seur. In architecture, the fame of Wren will be as enduring as the glorious structure, which, in despite of innumerable obstacles to its progress, he was at length enabled to rear on the time-honoured site of old St. Paul's. The English school of music was revived, if not established, by Lawes and Purcell. Poetry produced a Waller and a Dryden,—and in a loftier sphere than they, and compared with whom they sink into the respective positions of Bavius and Mævius, the only genius that has ever been permitted to enter into competition with that of Shakspere. Theology was graced with the learning and piety of Howe, Owen, Baxter, Flavel, Usher, Tillotson, and Kenn; and enriched by the genius and devotion combined, of the immortal author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." George Fox appeared as the founder of one of the most peaceable and Christian-like of religious denominations; and William Penn as a brilliant example of the success with which, even in the midst of barbarians, its lofty principles may be

consistently carried out. Temple shone as a diplomatist. Selden earned an immortal reputation in the department of antiquities; Clarendon, Whitelock, and Burnet, in the yet loftier walk of historical composition. The science of jurisprudence was adorned with such men as Coke, Glanvil, Hale, Bradshaw, and Somers. In the arena of politics, whether in camp or in council, Oliver Cromwell may be considered to have obtained for himself a deathless renown; although, as we have endeavoured to show already, and intend to discuss yet more in detail, at the expense of his character, moral and religious. In general literature, Defoe, who flourished in the latter days of this period, is unquestionably without a rival. Even gossip was furnished with an apostle in the diarist Pepys, whose journals were to the age in which he lived, what the letters of Horace Walpole have become to that which succeeded. Nor in this list of illustrious names are its ornaments confined to the sterner sex: Mrs. Hutchinson and Lady Rachel Russell are characters worthy of comparison with their renowned predecessors in the annals of female heroism, Lady Jane Grey and Margaret Roper.

It is the design of the following pages to enlarge upon some of the distinguished characters already named—the motives by which they were influenced —the principles by which they were guided. A

prominent place will be given to the respective writers of the greatest poem, the greatest allegory, and the greatest fiction, that England, or perhaps any other country, ever produced, and whose several reputations are as wide as the world. In addition to these, there have been selected for consideration, from the more exclusively political characters of the revolution, the opposite extremes of an impartial judge and a military tyrant.

The last name in our series, that of Daniel Defoe, connects the seventeenth century with the eighteenth —the era of the revolution with the age of Anne— an age which has been highly extolled, but which will not bear comparison with that which went before. In the reign of the last Stewart queen, the Revolution was over—the liberties of the people were no longer exposed to aggression from the throne—the reaction consequent upon all sudden political changes began to steal upon the country; and society, settling down upon its lees, reverted to something like the polite profligacy of the Restoration, a condition from which it was destined to be roused rather by the religious revivals of Wesley and Whitfield, than by any subsequent political revolution.

Violent convulsions in civil administration are at all times prodigious evils, and those of England in the seventeenth century, much as they have been

commended, undoubtedly embodied principles injurious to religion, morality, and the well-being of society at large. But the "soul of goodness in things evil," that superintending Providence which controls the affairs of every world in an apparently infinite universe, did, from this seeming chaos of depravity, deduce an immeasurable amount of good. To the student of mankind who seeks to discern in the records of his race the marks of Divine interposition, the characters and characteristics of the English Revolution must ever form an interesting and instructive subject of inquiry; and it is in some humble manner to aid the researches of such, that the following pages are frequently devoted to the consideration of that, which, in our own day, two enlightened and eloquent presbyterian divines have expressively denominated "God in History."

CHAPTER II.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

THE time was a January morning, two centuries ago. The place was the open street, in front of that most sublime of Inigo's creations, the banqueting-house of Whitehall. The workmen were completing the erection of a scaffold just level with the first-floor windows of that noble building. Darker and darker grew its sombre appearance, as the extension of breadth after breadth of sable covering gradually concealed its massive timbers from the view, and seemed to add a more chilling melancholy to the mournful twilight of the cold winter's morning. Nearer and nearer to this dreary centre of attraction pressed an eager crowd, apparently anxious to behold some unprecedented spectacle. Amidst the different countenances in that numerous throng, might be recognised the grave earnest demeanour of those who approved the judgment passed on the victim about to be sacrificed; men who felt that they had justice on their side, and,

that, however repugnant it might be to the feelings of nature, the execution was required by exalted principle. Then, again, might be seen a few of the adherents of royal prerogative, come to satiate despair by beholding the death-blow given to their falling cause, but with a demeanour that seemed less to indicate disinterested sympathy than disappointed ambition. As the hour advances, the block is fixed, and enveloped, like the scaffold, in a sable pall. The executioners appear, disguised in black masks, but with the frightful weapon bare, its bright keen edge shining, as it lay on the sable floor, with all the little light it was able to reflect from a January sky.

At length the sound of drum and fife is heard in the direction of St. James's Park. The colours of the Commonwealth are advancing. The infantry form in double lines across the street, and between them, a guard of halberdiers escort into the banqueting-house one who seems to attract the especial notice of the assembled multitudes, as they divide to make way for the military. The attention of the throng is now more than ever directed to the scaffold and its completed arrangements. Some time continues to elapse. Remarks of impatience and curiosity pass from one to another, all subdued, however, by a feeling of solemnity and suppressed emotion. At last, the centre window of the banqueting-house is thrown

open: two or three military officers appear, together with a prelate of the church in full costume, and enter upon the scaffold. These are followed by a tall and majestic figure, leaning upon the arm of an attendant, and dressed in a suit of black, wearing a subdued but calm expression upon a countenance that had once been remarkably handsome, whilst, from beneath his hat, some locks of grey, mingled with the otherwise raven tresses that flowed upon his shoulders, seemed to indicate that the heavy hand of care had pressed severely upon him. He addresses himself to those near him in a few detached sentences, inaudible except to the spectators who immediately surround the scaffold; and as he uncovers to prepare for the fatal stroke, he displays a brow which has been rendered immortal by the pencil of Vandyke. He looks once more on his palatial home; once more he addresses a few parting words to his friends around him; and in a moment all is over;—the last blow has been struck—the scaffold swims with royal blood; and even his bitterest foes among the vast assemblage melt noiselessly away, touched with emotion at the severe fate of "that tyrant, traitor, and public enemy" —Charles Stewart, king of England.

Before we stop to inquire who was the great author of this tragic scene, let us imagine exactly thirteen years to have passed away, and picture to

ourselves the great western thoroughfare out of London, known to later times as Oxford-street, on another cold day in the month of January.

The verdant hedges that in summer season lined the road, gay with the sweetbriar and the eglantine, are nothing now but bare and barren brushwood, save where the evergreen holly puts forth its variegated leaves, and with its ripening bunch of berries seems to say that merry Christmas time is barely gone. And yet no Christmas pageant comes this way, but one that demons might have readily devised. As the day advances, the barren hedge-rows are hid from view by crowds of the lower orders of society, who line the road in dingy rank and file. Here and there, however, distinguished from the throng of pedestrians, may be discerned some aristocratic cavalier, in his flowing wig and ponderous boots, mounted on a milk-white charger, riding slowly up and down, yet ever and anon looking intently, with the rest of the assemblage, in the direction of the ancient City of Westminster. At length three sledges, commonly used for conveying criminals to the gallows, are discerned slowly aprroaching from the great metropolis. The rabble seem possessed with a sudden emotion of fiendish joy. The cavalier appears to participate in their exultation, whilst yet, to show his own superiority to malignants of the baser sort, he unceremoniously

backs his fiery steed upon the ranks of the people, and thus makes room for the passage of the gloomy cavalcade. Nearer and nearer it comes, and more frequent are the expressions of drunken loyalty that emanate from the degraded spectators, in sympathy with an outrageous insult offered to departed greatness. Stretched upon each sledge is a lifeless human body in an advanced stage of decomposition. The livid appearance of one, yet dark with the plague spot, proves that the spirit had been banished thence by the withering blast of the malignant pestilence. The other two present a ghastly sight; and it is evident that some time must have passed over each in the dark abode of the tomb, ere thus were wantonly revealed the shrouded secrets of the sepulchre. The dreadful procession moves on. Tyburn turnpike is at length reached; and there the mouldering remains of the dreaded general whom the pestilence mowed down in his career of victory over the Emerald Isle—of that stern man of law who pronounced the awful sentence upon Charles the First—and last, but not least, of the powerful dictator who, above all others, was the main instrument of procuring that unhappy monarch's doom, are hung upon the worse than Upas-tree that has sealed the fate of so many, and finally ignominiously interred beneath its baleful shadow, with none but the wild winds to sing their

requiem. No lofty monument now rears its head to mark the last resting-place of England's great Protector. Hyde Park was once his favourite pleasaunce; and little thought he, when, the dreaded autocrat of Britain's isle, he paced its princely pastures, of the foul scorn to which, beyond its northern gate, his mortal coil was destined. And he as little thought the time would come when any should presume to doubt his right to have a statue. So passes human glory!

Perhaps few of the renowned characters who compose the British Walhalla have been more variously viewed than that grim hero of the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell. It has been the fashion of royalists—a party whose spirit is appropriately designated by the contemporary appellation of malignant—to hold up the great Protector to public detestation, as a solemn sinner against that shabby sham of rampant royalty—the divine right of kings. In the present days of revolutionary radicalism, it has, however, become the practice to pour out before Cromwell's shrine the libations of an exalted hero-worship. It is far more than probable, that the truth lies somewhere between these contradictory extremes. Regarding his career as that of an imperious but able autocrat, we are quite unable to concur in the unqualified praise awarded to his memory, by the majority of modern writers; whilst

at the same time, we utterly dissent from the censures of cringing conservatism. We discern, however, in our hero's life, so many characteristics of intellectual greatness, that a sketch of his career may be desirable, before we proceed to point out its manifold inconsistencies.

It has been truly said:—

> "There is a tide in the affairs of man,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

There is such a tide; and Providence is the luminary that shines serenely on its swelling surges, and controls its ebb and flow. This was never more fully verified than in the case of Oliver Cromwell. He was born at Huntingdon, in the forty-first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. His father belonged to an ancient family, one of whose members had had the misfortune to become the minister of Henry the Eighth, and—as the natural consequence, to end his days upon the scaffold. The maiden name of his mother was Stewart; and it is remarkable, that she was a distant relative of the family who, four years after her son's birth, succeeded to that throne which he was destined to humble in the dust. Oliver was originally designed for the law, and entered at Lincoln's Inn, but he did not pursue this profession; for we find him early in life returning to his native county, marrying the daughter of Sir James Bourchier, and

engaging in a farm, or, according to others, in a brewery. Being a person of great public spirit, manifested in his attempts to drain the Bedford Level, he was returned to parliament in the second year of Charles the First, for the borough of Huntingdon; and, in the later parliaments of the same reign, for the town of Cambridge.

The period at which he entered public life was indeed eventful in English history. The reign of a besotted pedant had given way to that of an accomplished and amiable, but weak young man, who drank deeply into his father's high notions of royal prerogative. Thus evilly influenced, the First Charles recked not of the means by which he attained his ends. If parliament, as the constitutional keeper of the public purse, refused the supplies he might desire for any purpose, however mischievous, it was immediately dissolved, the leading members of the opposition sent to the Tower, and the money collected from the people by main force. If any one dared to complain of these proceedings, there was a Court of Star Chamber ready to slit the nose or cut off the ears of the offender; and a semi-popish clergy, who hated evangelical religion with fiendish avidity, continually on the watch for victims to drag before this horrible tribunal. No one, unless he were in the pay of the court, could fill a seat in the legislature under such a

condition of things, and refrain from taking the popular side. Upon that side we find Cromwell ranged, although he does not appear to have occupied a prominent place in the proceedings of parliament until about the middle of this reign; and then he first became known as a plain, almost uncouth, individual, remarkable rather for the force of sound sense than for the splendour of eloquence. At one period, indeed, such was the unsettled condition of those misgoverned times, we find him, with his family, on board an emigrant ship bound for America, when a suicidal act of despotism on the part of the doomed tyrant, prevented not only his departure, but that of several others who were destined to be instrumental in procuring the downfal of monarchy.

The course of events proceeded, as is well known, until the king declared war against the parliament, and the country was plunged into all the horrors of a prolonged civil war. After the commencement of hostilities, Cromwell, following an example numerously set, raised a troop of horse, and took the field as a volunteer. His services to the cause of the parliament were so valuable, particularly at the battle of Marston Moor, that on the new model of the parliamentary army in 1645, when the services of the Earl of Essex and its more aristocratic leaders were dispensed with, and their places supplied with the

heroes of the extreme party, he was appointed lieutenant-general, under the commander-in-chief, Sir Thomas Fairfax. The civil war, the result of which had been hitherto uncertain, was at once decided to the advantage of the parliament. Naseby Field, where Cromwell remarkably distinguished himself, witnessed the utter ruin of the king and his cause. After the defeated tyrant had been a prisoner in the hands of his injured subjects, it was the genius of Cromwell that brought the second civil war to a successful termination.

The question that now arose in the legislature related to the disposal of the royal captive. The leaders of the army, who are generally, though without sufficient reason, identified in history with the independents in religion, were for the execution of summary vengeance upon the sovereign. The more moderate party, with whom, though with equal inaccuracy, the name of presbyterians is usually associated, and who certainly represented those who first took up arms to oppose the faithless monarch, were for no measure ulterior to the continued imprisonment or deposition of the king. This party had the majority in the house, if not out of doors, and their views were to some extent shared by the Lord General Fairfax. The military party, however, had physical force at their command, and they had Cromwell for a leader.

The event soon proved that nothing could withstand such a combination. The members obnoxious to the army were removed from parliament by the literally forcible argument of three regiments of the line; and after this proceeding, known by the name of Colonel Pride's purge, a majority in favour of the military party was very easily obtained. The result is well known. A High Court of Justice was formed; the king was brought before it, and found guilty of being a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy; the tragedy in front of the palace of Whitehall, which we have already attempted to describe at the opening of this paper, closed the scene.

In all these proceedings our hero occupied a very prominent position. It is no royalist fabrication to say, that Cromwell was the means of procuring the death of the king, although we have no reason to suppose that in this particular proceeding he was actuated by any motives of personal ambition. It was a measure brought about by himself and his coadjutors, in the hope of serving the cause of liberty, although by its severity the contrary effect was produced. "It cannot be doubted," said Charles James Fox, a name ever dear to English patriotism, "but the opportunity thus given to Charles to display his firmness and piety, has created more respect for his memory than it could otherwise have obtained.

Respect and pity for the sufferer on the one hand, and hatred to his enemies on the other, soon produce favour and aversion to their respective causes."*

The death of the king was followed by the constitution of the Commonwealth; and among the forty names composing the council of state for conducting the new republic, we find that of Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell. He was soon, however, called to another field than that of council. The refusal of the emerald isle to acknowledge the authority of the commonwealth required his services to the westward of St. George's channel. At Drogheda, he displayed the red flag, and announced that no quarter would be given to any that were found under arms. The royalist governor refused to surrender, and after a heavy battery, two breaches were made in the walls of the town. Cromwell headed a storming party in

* Mr. Fox's *Fragment of History*, &c. p. 16, cited in Wallace's continuation of Sir James Mackintosh's *History of England*, Vol. vi., ch. 4, where the writer makes the following observations:—"The execution of Charles I. by the republicans, was a dangerous error. Charles, by rendering his government incompatible with freedom, forfeited his throne, but not his life. If life were to be taken away upon abstract principles and by extraordinary procedure, not by known law and established jurisprudence, its tenure would be frail indeed: if the first magistrate were made an exception, it would involve the political obliquity of placing his personal safety in a worse situation than that of the meanest of the people."

person, and, after a desperate engagement, won the day. He put the officers of the garrison to death, slew the soldiers, or had them shipped for Barbadoes, and massacred the citizens indiscriminately, whether man, woman, or child. His own vindication to parliament was, that the display of such severity at the outset would save much effusion of blood in the end. The event seems to have justified his anticipations, although it cannot be said to palliate his guilt. After Wexford had been taken under as heavy a fire and as desperate a slaughter as Drogheda, most of the towns he approached quietly surrendered, appalled at the mere mention of the cruelties he had perpetrated.

After his campaign in Ireland, Cromwell was called to another as successful, if not as terrible, in the north of Britain. The Scots, though faithful to their covenant, had not, like the English, abjured either hereditary monarchy, or the family of the Stewarts. They had among them the Prince of Wales, in the character, to which he afterwards proved so faithless, of a sworn covenanter, and they were prepared to assert his rights by force of arms. On the 3rd of September, 1650, a misty autumn morning, exactly a year from the day on which he had formed the siege of Drogheda, Cromwell was ready to meet them on the field of Dunbar. As the sun broke through the haze, and tipped with its red

autumnal beam the edge of halbert, pike, and spear, he pointed his troops to the appearing luminary, with the encouraging quotation—"Now let God arise, and his enemies shall be scattered!" The result of their charge was such, that in a few hours the successful general had to dispatch to the parliament at Westminster a courier, bearing the news of a decisive victory, with the colours of the vanquished as trophies.

Another year, and the Prince of Wales, with the crown of Scotland on his brow, was in the midst of republican England. Another 3rd of September, and his utterly routed retainers were once more flying before the victorious Cromwell. The battle upon this occasion was fought under the walls of the ancient city of Worcester. The prince escaped only with his life, and in his subsequent wanderings became a hero of romance at Boscobel.

The honours lavished upon Cromwell after this "crowning glory," as he himself termed it, only find a parallel in those bestowed in later times upon the so-called heroes of Blenheim and Waterloo. A deputation bearing the congratulations of parliament was appointed to meet him, on his proud progress towards the ancient capital of indomitable England. The palace of Hampton Court was placed at his disposal, with a grant of 2500*l.* a year, and a landed

estate worth 4000*l.* per annum. His son-in-law Ireton, who died three months after this victory, and who had had sufficient honesty to refuse a similar grant for his own services, received a sumptuous funeral in Westminster Abbey, beside the ashes of the ancient kings. Such policy on the part of a young republic can be only suicidal. From this very time, Cromwell appears to have been in the habit of convening a council of influential officers and members of parliament, to deliberate as to the best form of government to be permanently adopted by the nation. Upon these occasions, he was accustomed to throw his influence in favour of something like a return to monarchical power. One day in April, 1653, at a meeting of this kind in his own apartments at Whitehall, he received intelligence that parliament was employed upon a bill for its own dissolution, the passing of which would of necessity bring about some change in the administration of public affairs. His coadjutor, Colonel Harrison, was in his place in the house during this debate, and there did not hesitate to tell the members assembled, that the course they were pursuing would offend Cromwell and the council of officers. It was evident from the employment of such language in parliament, that the republic had virtually given way to a dictatorship.

Cromwell was quite conscious of his own power. He followed the other commoners who had been present at his council to the benches of St. Stephen's. Stationing a file of halberdiers in the lobby of the house, he desired the members to withdraw; and on their opposition to this demand, called the soldiers in. A violent altercation ensued, but the powerful argument of physical force, or as it has sometimes been called, the right of might, was not so easily resisted. The house was soon cleared by the military of all that remained of the once dreaded Long Parliament. The council of state, which conducted the executive government, was similarly disposed of. Like Cæsar, in ages long before him, or Napoleon, in more recent times, Cromwell returned triumphant from the political slaughter of a republic, that was mainly indebted to himself for its greatness. There was no meretricious splendour connected with this daring exploit. The scene was the old chapel of St. Stephen, with its dingy tapestry and its dusty benches. The vanquished were the sturdy commoners of the old republican school, with plain puritanical faces, and still plainer habiliments. The victor himself wore merely a suit of black, with grey worsted stockings. But beneath all this plainness was the force of political and military power, a power sufficient to enable

Oliver forthwith to assume the title of Captain-General of the Commonwealth.

During all these proceedings, Cromwell declared to his friends that he only did that which he had rather be torn in pieces than do, but that a necessity was laid upon him for the glory of God and the good of the nation. He issued addresses to the public, announcing the formation of a provisional government, and justifying the dissolution of the long parliament, on the ground of the violation by that assembly of the principle of popular representation. With singular inconsistency, he proceeded at once to put an end to the same principle himself. He issued summonses to a hundred and fifty-six persons of his own nomination, to take upon themselves the authority of the legislature. Upon the meeting of this convention, known in history, from the name of one of its members, as Barebone's Parliament, the appointment of the new government was confirmed, with Cromwell and his officers at its head. Several excellent reforms, worthy of a really popular assembly, were being proceeded with, when the dictator, finding it not so subservient as he had anticipated, procured through the speaker, who was in his interest, a packed sitting, at which the majority agreed to resign their functions to Cromwell, and the dissentients were put

down by force of arms. Oliver now assumed, with the concurrence of his officers, the title of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and was so proclaimed throughout the three kingdoms, of which he remained to his death the virtual sovereign.

On his accession to the Protectorate, Cromwell found all political parties so resolutely opposed to his government, that his utmost care was exercised to manage them with that adroitness of which he was so perfect a master. With all his vigilance, however, conspiracies were occasionally formed against him, but they were suppressed as soon as detected. In 1654, he called a parliament, previously to the meeting of which, he had done that which cost Charles the First his crown and his life—imposed the taxes by his own authority. As the legislature began freely to discuss the propriety of continuing the government in a single person, Cromwell forcibly imposed upon the members a test of adhesion to the form of government already settled. Those who refused to accept this test were committed to prison. The house, being rendered so far subservient, made the Protectorship sure to Cromwell for life, but reserved to itself the privilege of naming his successor, and of levying the taxes. The Protector, displeased with these exceptions to his

demands, took the earliest opportunity of dissolving the assembly.

To consolidate his power, he proceeded to organize a regular system of military despotism, towards the expenses of which he compelled the royalists to contribute one-tenth of their estates. Under this arrangement, England and Wales were divided into twelve districts, and a major-general was placed at the head of each. At the meeting of the next parliament, although all members were excluded who were not furnished with tickets of admission from the government, the power of these officers was so severely canvassed, that Cromwell was obliged to consent to the abolition of their authority. From the same parliament, however, he obtained an address, requesting him to assume the title of king. Although it was manifest that his own intrigues had brought about this proceeding, the army, his chief instrument of government, raised so vigorous a protest against it, that the Protector was obliged to decline the acceptance of the proffered diadem. He obtained, however, the consent both of the parliament and the army, to reserve to himself the nomination of his successor, and the power to create a second chamber in the legislature. Upon the promulgation of this new constitution, which amounted, in fact, to an hereditary monarchy, Cromwell was again inaugurated

Lord Protector. At the next session of parliament, "the other house," as Oliver's new chamber of peers was designated, and which was chiefly composed of his own relatives and his most distinguished officers, took the place of the old house of Lords. The system of admitting the members by tickets into the house of Commons not being again resorted to, Cromwell found the benches of St. Stephen's occupied by a powerful and vigorous opposition, who threatened to undo the new constitution of the preceding session. To avert such a catastrophe, he hastily dissolved the parliament, at a period when it is unquestionable that all parties in the nation were combining together to overthrow his authority. He continued to maintain the government, however, until his death a few months afterwards. A failing constitution, worn by the anxieties of public life, and by grief for the death of a favourite daughter, at length broke down under a complication of disorders, and in 1658, the great Protector, on the anniversary of those memorable days in which he had sent so many to their last account, went himself to appear before the same awful tribunal.

The events which followed Cromwell's decease, proved that nothing but his own consummate ability had been the means of consolidating his power. The same authority, vested in his incapable son and

successor, was immediately overthrown; and the result was the restoration of the Stewart tyranny, with its mad career of oppression, cruelty, and licentiousness.

The foreign relations of the protectorate have been frequently referred to as a proof of its power; and it is unquestionable, that during the government of Cromwell, England was far more dreaded by surrounding nations than at any other period of history. Oliver adopted proceedings with reference to his foreign allies, of which the bare idea would, in recent times, have scared Lord Aberdeen from his propriety, and alarmed even the more courageous genius of Palmerston. He hanged the brother of the Portuguese ambassador for murder, on the same day that a treaty with Portugal was signed by the envoy. He despatched Blake to the Italian powers on the Mediterranean, who had aided the king in the great civil war, to demand satisfaction; and obtained it to the amount of sixteen ship-loads of treasure. His friendship was eagerly sought by the heroic Christina of Sweden. The rival powers of France and Spain courted his alliance with the most abject servility. He granted it to Mazarine, the wily minister of the magnificent Louis XIV., but would only acknowledge that monarch as king of the French, the title of king of France having long appertained to the

fallen throne of England. The politic cardinal, who, on occasion of the Protector's demand to be addressed by the French king in the fraternal style adopted by one sovereign toward another, had advised Louis to call him even his father, if it were necessary to gain his ends, readily submitted to all this dictation, and though a dignitary of the Church of Rome, was obliged, at the instance of Cromwell, to intercede with the persecuting duke of Savoy on behalf of the Vaudois, and to protect the Huguenots from the consequences of a tumult at Nismes. So warm an attachment did Mazarine think it desirable to maintain towards England, that he offered to expel the exiled Stewarts from France, and they were banished accordingly. The Prince of Wales himself, sought, and was refused, the hand of one of Cromwell's daughters in marriage, and, with a similar result, offered the Protector his own terms if he would but restore to him the throne of his ancestors. The last year of the Protectorate witnessed the capture of Dunkirk, on behalf of the English, by a French army, superintended in person by Louis XIV. and his minister; which had for its commander Marshal Turenne, and for its adversaries, the Spaniards under the great Condé. Cromwell, upon this victory, despatched an embassy of congratulation to the monarch and the cardinal, and received another in

return, bearing the keys of Dunkirk, and assurances of the most profound amity and veneration. With Spain and Holland the Protector went to war. Jamaica was taken from the first, and an immense booty secured in a naval engagement at Cadiz. Van Tromp, the admiral of the second, who placed a broom at his mast-head, to show how effectually he would sweep the English from the seas, was defeated and slain.

The religious policy of Cromwell's administration was in accordance with the spirit of the age. Toleration was denied to black prelacy and malignant popery; in modern phraseology, to Anglicanism and Romanism; but other views, as in the instance of James Naylor, did not always escape the strong arm of the law. The presbyterians and independents were the most flourishing of the religious denominations that obtained public favour during the days of the protectorate. Cromwell has sometimes been represented as himself an independent: it is certain, however, that he never made a profession of attachment to any ecclesiastical system.

From the whole of Cromwell's public career, we infer that his chief merit is that of having been an able and efficient autocrat. Despotism is undoubtedly the most simple form of government,—and, were human nature trustworthy, it would be also the most

desirable. Cromwell was a governor of far greater abilities than any king that ever reigned in England; and as the natural consequence, his administration was proportionably superior. But a tyrant he was, in the fullest sense of the word; and tyranny in his case is only aggravated by the fact, that his early public life was one continued struggle against despotism in its worst of forms. Like the Whigs of more modern politics, he made the cause of the people the vehicle of his ascent to power: and upon its attainment, cast down the ladder by which he had arisen. To march into the parliament house with a regiment of soldiers, and dissolve the assembly,—to call another of his own nomination; to organize a military despotism for the collection of taxes imposed without the nation's consent,—to nullify popular representation, by requiring from the Commons tickets of admission at the door of their house;—these were tyrannies that his unfortunate and less able predecessor dreamed not of; exercised in addition to others that afford a mere echo of Stewart policy.

The Commonwealth fell with the Long Parliament. A similar conclusion is the fate of most republics. Where the wholesome principle of a limited hereditary monarchy is set aside, the presidency of a state will fall either to the greatest influence or the highest capacity; and if the latter be the case, as in the

instance of Cromwell, superior intellect will not merely rule, but despotize. The Protector is frequently justified—and it was his own justification, on the ground that the exigencies of the times required the arbitrary course he pursued. It is extraordinary, to say the least, that the good of the Commonwealth should demand the exercise of the very policy that would gratify the highest personal ambition of the individual. History shews that the amount of power which Cromwell exerted was such as could not lawfully be exercised by any human being, however gifted, except over a nation of savages just emerging from barbarism; for under no other circumstances can despotic government be anything else than an enormous crime. Irresponsible power, it has been said, would ruin an angel; yet such was the extent of authority after which Cromwell aspired, and to which, with certain exceptions, he actually attained. From what we know of the characters of those who founded the English commonwealth, it is clear that they did not require the rigid discipline they received at his hands. They could appreciate the rule of the Protector just at what it was worth. The mawkish commendations of his tyranny that have proceeded from the pens of Thomas Carlyle and Merle D'Aubigné, are merely the creations of modern

fancy, and are sufficiently refuted by the severe condemnations of his rule to be found in the contemporary pages of Lucy Hutchinson and of Edmund Ludlow.

It is extraordinary, again, if Cromwell were the politician of integrity he is represented to have been, that the principles of his government should have expired with himself. His foreign policy may have been splendid—so was that of Elizabeth, one of the most imperious tyrants that ever sat upon a throne. He may have done much for his country; so have many to whom their country owes nothing in return. He may have obtained, under the rule of a tyrant, the concession of popular liberties; so have many, who, when in power themselves, have ruthlessly swept all those liberties away. Yet whatever he may have accomplished in his lifetime, he accomplished nothing for succeeding generations. There can be but one way of accounting for such a failure, and it is that of considering his acts as selfish—of supposing that his motive was ambition, and his instrument of government arbitrary power. We value freedom far too dearly to associate with its cause the name, although deathless, of Oliver Cromwell. Nought else on earth than liberty can be more dear to man. The poet has nobly sung—

"'Tis liberty alone, that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it."*

It is not the glory of nominal republics that we call by the sacred name of freedom. We mean by liberty that which comes home to our altars and our hearths, that which we breathe in the free atmosphere of heaven, that which glows by our own fireside, that which enables every man to sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none making him afraid.

"Ah, Freedom is a noble thing;
Freedom makes men to have liking.
To man all solace Freedom gives,
He lives at ease who freely lives;
And he that aye has lived free,
May not well know the misery,
The wrath, the hate, the spite, and all
That's compass'd in the name of thrall."†

Not only, however, does Cromwell's public career appear unworthy of true patriotism, but equally unworthy of that religion of which he is so often held up as a consistent disciple. Far from us be all uncharitableness, but there is a point beyond which even Christian charity ought not to be extended. We have no right to go further than the rule laid

* Cowper's Task.

† Lines modernised in Sir Walter Scott's History of Scotland, from the venerable biographer of Robert Bruce.

down for us in Scripture—"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The military despotism of Cromwell was not more opposed to liberty, than the massacre of helpless multitudes on an Irish campaign to the spirit and genius of Christianity. Actions speak louder than words. The religious phraseology of Cromwell's letters—and be it observed that they savour more of the law than of the gospel—can avail nothing when viewed in connexion with the deeds of his life. Let it not be said that we take of this question too evangelical a view. The Gospel is a standard to which human actions may be fairly brought, as it is that by which all must eventually be tried. It is a revelation of peace, which, setting aside the puny dictates of human policy, regards war as a sin not only against God, but against society. "Blessed are the peacemakers," were the inspired words of the heavenly founder of Christianity. Can we, then, without blaspheming that Divine system, admit the man to be a true believer who devotes his lifetime to deeds of blood and slaughter? If the Gospel, where it is believed, has no power to deter from such monstrous violations of moral and social obligation, it is a natural inference that it cannot be a system of heavenly original. We are aware that it is said, that the state of affairs at the time required the

severity which Cromwell displayed; that the adoption of such a course at the outset prevented a greater effusion of blood in the end; and that the principles of peace were not in his day associated with those of Christianity. We do not admit, however, that the requirements of the Gospel can be lawfully violated in order to meet any supposed exigency. Unless Christianity be itself equal to every emergency, it is no longer a system of universal application, but what the world considers it to be—a beautiful theory, which it is impossible to reduce in all cases to practice. The defence offered on behalf of Cromwell's Irish massacres amounts to the dogma, that we may do evil that good may come; a doctrine summarily disposed of in the words of inspiration, which tell us that its condemnation is just. And if the principles of universal peace were not understood in the days of the Protectorate as they are at present, on whom does the guilt of ignorance fall, but upon the men of those times? The Bible then was as complete and intelligible as it is now; and the Bible, and the Bible only, is not more the religion of Protestants than it is of peacemakers.

Let us not be dazzled by the splendid career of the great Protector. Make him the object of our hero worship, and we are compelled to sacrifice to his memory every principle of liberty, whether civil

or religious. Yet worship him as the transcendent of talented tyranny, the demigod of distinguished despotism, the acme of able autocracy, and he is adored at his proper shrine. Let his oblations be the slaughtered innocents of bleeding Erin; his priestess the wailing Banshee; the wreath to crown his statue's marble brow, the deadly upas. Let not the sacred cause of freedom, and the still more sacred interests of Christianity, be polluted by their association, in the nineteenth century, with the name of one who notoriously violated both. If we exalt any as a hero of patriotism, let it be "some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood," and not the grim memory of England's imperious dictator. In an arena far more peaceful than that of political discord or military strife; from our fruitful fields, our teeming factories, our scattered villages, our crowded towns, our happy homes, our cheerful firesides—thence let us select the heroes of our mental homage, those whom,

"The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad; nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne
Or shut the gates of mercy on mankind."

CHAPTER III.

SIR MATTHEW HALE.

PERHAPS of all the localities in the British metropolis that are rich in associations of the days gone by, none are more remarkable than Westminster Hall. Originally erected as a banqueting room for the old palace, on the site of another raised by the Red King, and now adopted by a modern structure as a magnificent vestibule to the Halls of the Legislature, it has witnessed scenes of more thrilling interest than banquets, and contests far weightier than the wager of battle proclaimed within its walls on the eve of a coronation.

There Richard the Second, the prince under whom the building had arisen, was despoiled of the royalty he so fearfully disgraced. Few kings that have reigned in the west ever exercised a despotism so completely oriental. To the gorgeousness and the tyranny he united also the mental incapacity which is the usual characteristic of a sheikh or of a sultan.

He displayed all the splendour and all the despotism, with none of the commanding abilities, which in a later age and another country were successfully exercised by the cruel but magnificent Louis Quatorze. And it was the want of such abilities, in the case of Richard Plantagenet, that prevented the nation from being deceived into supporting misgovernment, even though the king and his courtiers might be decorated with ermine, and arrayed in vestments rich with cloth of gold. A more able prince soon appeared in the person of his exiled cousin, and the power of public opinion, which has since been so often irresistibly put forth, was sufficient, after a few weeks of bloodless revolution, to place Henry of Lancaster on the throne which the king had been compelled to vacate, in the presence of the assembled estates in Westminster Hall.

Many points of resemblance are to be traced between this earliest of our revolutions, and that of 1688, which we trust may prove the last, as it has been the latest. In both, the people, provoked by tyranny, were so completely of one mind, that the desired object was attained apart altogether from the aid of the sword. In each, the prince displaced was at once incapable and despotic, and the monarch who succeeded both powerful and wise. In the very faults of the leading characters we discern a parallel

The fair fame of the Fourth Henry is tarnished by the mysterious disappearance of his predecessor: the memory of the Third William, so frequently celebrated as "glorious, pious, and immortal," is sullied with the treacherous massacre of Glencoe. And in many other respects, more resemblance exists than may at first be imagined, between Henry of Lancaster and William of Orange.

But the great hall at Westminster has witnessed other scenes quite as spirit-stirring as the deposition of its founder. There, in the reign of the Eighth Henry, stood the illustrious More, one of the wisest of statesmen, one of the most virtuous of mankind, one of the most brilliant ornaments of the degenerate church to which he belonged, once the head of the legal profession, once the most illustrious minister of the crown, but now like

> "Darius great and good,
> Fall'n, fall'n, fall'n,
> Fall'n from his high estate;"

browbeat by insolent judges, denied when a prisoner at the bar that impartial justice he had ever dispensed from the bench; and all because he was not willing to sell his conscience and his faith, mistaken though they were, to the pleasure of an unjust and wicked king. And there, in after years, stood another victim of equal ability, but of far less virtue; not how-

ever, a sacrifice to the caprice, though he may have been to the faithlessness of a sovereign, but to the judicial vengeance of an outraged people, whose righteous cause he had once espoused, aud then basely deserted for the service of a king, whom he meant to erect into a despot by his cherished project of Thorough. A significant term was that word Thorough; significant enough to bring to the block its accomplished employer, in the person of the famous or rather infamous Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford.

In less than eight years from the period of the last-named trial, occurred in the same place another yet more memorable, even that of the tyrant whom Strafford had so efficiently served: too efficiently, indeed, for himself. Of all the characters in English history, none have been so variously represented as Charles the First. Perhaps he may be most appropriately described as uniting all the opposite defects exhibited by those of his ancestors who had ruled for more than two centuries to the north of the Tweed. James the First, the royal poet of Scotland, succeeded to the administration of affairs after a long imprisonment in England, when, for crimes real or imaginary committed in his absence, he adjudged to death or confiscation the flower of his nobility: and as the natural consequenee of such severity, fell himself in

the end by the poniard of an assassin. James the Second united to the cruelty of his father that treachery which induced him to violate the rites of hospitality, by murdering with his own hand the great earl of Douglas at the royal table. James the Third, less able than his predecessors, and a slave to his favourites, became the victim of an aristocracy inflamed by the severities of former reigns, and no longer controlled by any symptoms of talent in the person of the sovereign. His son, James the Fourth, headstrong and incautious, involved himself and his country in a contention with England, which at length terminated in death and disgrace on that fatal field of Flodden, out of which the most elegant of modern poets has successfully woven so exquisite a tale. James the Fifth lent his countenance to the suppression of the great religious reformation; and by a series of impolitic acts so forfeited the affections of his subjects, that in the end his own army refused to draw the sword on his behalf. His daughter Mary, on account of her attachment to the papacy, and her marriage with the murderer of her husband, found herself a prisoner in the hands of her subjects, and supplanted by her own infant son upon the throne. That son, James the Sixth, and the first of his name and his race that

"Ruled all Britain to the sea,"

though devoted by profession to the protestant religion, was really opposed to everything that savoured of liberty either in Church or State. An invader of the rights of the Church in Scotland, of the privilege of parliament in England, his memory is branded on the page of history as that of a prince who maintained

"The right divine of kings to govern wrong;"

and on the page of literature, as one by whom learning was degraded into imbecile pedantry. The child of such a parent was the unfortunate Charles the First, in whom were unhappily combined the severity of the first James, the faithlessness of the second, the favouritism of the third, the rashness of the fourth, and the impolicy of the fifth, with the attachment to arbitrary power that characterized his father, and that brought him to an end precisely similar to that of his grandmother.

In the last year of his life, we find him the prisoner of the people he had misgoverned. Unhappily for him, those who had the greatest influence in political affairs were precisely the men least disposed to forgive a public injury. The consequence was, that the royal criminal was not allowed that birthright of all Englishmen, a fair trial. In the first instance, the parliament itself had been packed by

the forcible exclusion of a number of members, so that it is impossible to consider those who remained as being that which, by a solemn resolution, they declared themselves to be, "the commons of England in parliament assembled, who, *being chosen by representing the people*, have the supreme power in the nation;" or, indeed, as anything else than the slavish instruments of an implacable and furious military despotism. In the next place, the court chosen for the trial of the king by this wretched remnant of what was once a free parliament, was not composed of impartial judges, but of well-known political partisans, who had for years been opposed to his government, and before whom it was impossible he should ever obtain a fair hearing. It may be said, that the trial of a king by his subjects was an event so unprecedented, that it could not have been conducted according to any of the ordinary forms of procedure: of this we are not so certain; it is a question, however, whether, if the king deserved no more than deposition, a trial were necessary at all. In after years his son was deposed by a vote of the convention, without formal arraignment before any tribunal, the only difference in his case being the overt act of leaving the throne vacant, which it certainly needed no trial to prove. From all these considerations, we think it must appear that the trial of Charles the

First was both unfair and unconstitutional, and only instituted for the purpose of procuring his death by those who were already determined upon it. He refused, himself, to acknowledge the legal authority of the Court, to answer its indictment, or even to uncover his head in the presence of the judges. And, however much his protest may have contained of falsehood or absurdity, and however enormous the political crimes for which he really had to answer, it must surely be conceded that a criminal is warranted in refusing to plead before a Court composed of enemies bent upon his destruction. How much soever Charles may, in the arrangements of Providence, have deserved the ignominious fate which he met, one thing is certain—that no human hand could be justified in inflicting it upon him. In a word, his trial was a mockery, and his execution a murder.

In objecting to the validity of the High Court of Justice, the unhappy despot followed the legal advice of one, who, whilst he generally adhered to the side of monarchy, maintained principles and displayed virtues worthy of a nobler cause than that of his unfortunate sovereign. This was the great and judicious Sir Matthew Hale.

The political character of Hale, so far as it can be considered royalist, must be viewed (to use a modern phrase) as essentially conservative; but it should

be remembered, however paradoxical it may appear, that Conservatism is, in many respects, an element of progress. For the genius of good government consists not only in destroying evil, but also in preserving good. It follows, that the maintenance to a certain extent of the conservative element, is essential to every efficient administration. Seldom, however, has the mind of any one man been sufficiently comprehensive to preserve a due balance between the progressive and retrogressive principles of government. Hence we find that in politics good order has been ensured by a balance of errors. Our own national prosperity, for example, has been greatest either when a Tory ministry has been met by a powerful opposition of Whigs, or a Whig administration confronted with a vigorous opposition of Tories. So prone is human nature to extremes, that the extremes serve to keep each other in check. If all were conservatism, liberty were at an end; if all were radicalism, good order would be unknown. Neither principle by itself can be just. The difficulty lies in knowing how far to combine the two. But from the experience of history we find, that a superintending Providence has interposed, and where minds have failed to combine the opposing principles, has brought into combination the opposing minds. To borrow a simile from material operations, the same benefit to society

has been derived from a mechanical union, as would have resulted from a chemical combination.

Let it not be supposed that we mean to offer an apology for the now almost exploded system of Toryism. We are not defending any one political system, but endeavouring to show that there is some truth in all; and if we might venture an opinion, should add, that, in a political constitution like our own, the liberal principle may with safety greatly preponderate over the conservative. But as the latter should still be maintained, though in a subordinate degree, we are not to deem those altogether erroneous, who, in other times, and under other circumstances, insisted upon its adoption to a greater extent than we should now be disposed to justify. There are few so totally in error as to be altogether and invariably wrong. Even a clock that has ceased to go at all is sure to be right, as has been ingeniously observed, twice in twenty-four hours. The mistake of the old cavaliers, the fathers of Toryism, was not that of espousing a cause altogether erroneous, but of maintaining it to an extent inconsistent with truth. And, to do them justice, they did not take up arms for the refinement of cruelty that slit the noses of Burton and Bastwick, and cut off the ears of Prynne. They did not fight for the imposition of ship-money, or for Strafford's detestable

project of Thorough. They did not contend for the civil enormities of Star Chamber, or the ecclesiastical intolerance of the High Commission. But they knew that the day had come when the contest between the parliament and the crown had to be decided by the entire sacrifice of the one or of the other; and their interests, their prejudices, and, perhaps, in many instances, their sincere convictions, induced them to prefer the ancient ascendancy of the throne to the then untried and unknown domination of the people. It would be the height of injustice to charge upon the Royalists, however appropriate to the spirit of their party, and indeed of all parties, may have been the contemporary term Malignant, the guilt of the political enormities of the unprincipled and unfortunate monarch for whom they contended.

It is true that they appealed to the sword, and that the sword of civil contention; but in this they have no advantage over their opponents, who referred a nobler cause to the same detestable arbitration. We throw out this remark merely in passing; for the character of a criminal is not made positively fairer by the fact that his neighbour's may be painted yet darker than his own. And if a deeper guilt attach to aggressive than to defensive warfare, it is that which belonged to the king and his adherents.

Yet we are fain to deem the one as guilty as the other. Even the world has been able to discern greatness in suffering; and an authority much higher than the world has declared that the man who beareth rule in his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. If we are menaced by war, it is noble, it is manly, it is Christian, to forbear from resorting to war in return. If we are injured and oppressed, it is the part of moral fortitude to sustain in calm and dignified repose the injury and the oppression. If we are wronged and despised, it is the highest exercise of heroism to overlook the insult and forgive the wrong. For in returning good for evil, we overcome ourselves by moral suasion; in opposing force to force, we can but vanquish others by physical coercion. And if the course of Christian forbearance and forgiveness be incumbent upon the individual, it is also incumbent upon the nation as an aggregate of individuals. Let it not be said that whenever we are assailed, it is absolutely necessary to stand upon the defensive. It is a well-known maxim, that where one will not, two cannot contend; and this principle, universally admitted with regard to individuals, is, for the reason just stated, equally applicable to the nation at large. Had the people of England and of Scotland adopted this course with Charles I.; had the cavaliers, when his banner was

set up, omitted to flock to his standard; had the parliamentarians, when it was displayed in the open field, permitted it to flutter idly there without a rival; had both parties coalesced to demand from the king, by peaceful and by moral means, those reforms that the nation so absolutely needed, the revolution upon which the constitution of this great empire rests to the present day might have been anticipated by more than forty years. As it was, the great civil war threw three kingdoms into disorder, destroyed the whole framework of society, made fearful havoc of the bodies and blood and souls of men, and fomented the spirit of civil dissension for a period of eighteen years, with no apparent result other than that of converting the whips with which the First Charles had chastised his subjects, into scorpions in the hands of the Second. And had the issue been far different, had anything like the liberty desired been obtained, we question whether even such an invaluable blessing would not have been far too dearly bought at the expense of a lengthened period, during which tranquillity was a thing unknown. For though it may be true that peace is of no value apart from liberty, it is equally true that liberty is valueless apart from peace.

After the lapse of a quarter of a century, England witnessed another revolution, but it was one of a

peaceful and constitutional character. It is true that two armies were brought into the field; but it was another field than that of engagement. The nation was then of one mind. The troops of the king deserted to the cause of the people, and the tyrant was left without an army to which he might appeal. The consequence was, that the change accomplished proved (in England, at least) a bloodless revolution. The throne was vacated, and it was only left to the nation to appoint a successor. That successor was nominated by parliament; and to this day, the terms of the compact between the crown and the legislature remain in force, and compose the foundation upon which depend our rights and our liberties. This fact is one of many that prove the superiority of moral to physical force. The revolution of 1642, which was founded on the latter, only led to a fearful reaction: that of 1688, which was brought about by the former, produced results that endure to this hour.

Yet, with all its attendant horrors, the period of the great civil war was, like most troublous times, an age of great men and of great principles. Such men and such principles, as before observed, were not wanting, even on the side of the king. And we now purpose returning to the consideration of a character who may well be denominated the most illustrious of

that party in the state—if indeed he may be considered as belonging to a party at all.

Matthew Hale was the son of a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, who retired from his profession on account of some scruples as to the integrity of expedients used in pleading at the bar. Though we cannot but admire tenderness of conscience, we take this to have been founded on a misapprehension. In defending a criminal, the advocate has no occasion to affirm his innocence. He has only to guard against any unfair legal advantage being taken of his client. Life and liberty are so valuable, that no one ought to be deprived of either without much stronger proof of criminality than it is possible to derive from what is ordinarily called moral evidence. Before any human being is condemned to execution or imprisonment, the proof of guilt should approximate to the certainty of mathematical demonstration. Hence it is, that the rules of legal evidence are far more precise than those of evidence in general,—that a prisoner at the bar is always allowed the benefit of a doubt, and considered innocent by the law until proved to be guilty. It follows, that in attempting to throw discredit upon evidence adduced against a person accused, the innocence of the party is by no means asserted. It is only incontrovertible evidence that is good in law, and therefore in defending a prisoner, the advocate, so far

from justifying wickedness, asserts the enormous value of liberty and of life. In our own day, a counsellor who deliberately uttered a falsehood in defence of his client, justly incurred the universal censure of society. Whether the standard of forensic morality were lower in the days of Mr. Robert Hale, we are of course unable positively to determine; but the fact of his premature retirement from a lucrative profession for the reason above stated, only enhances our opinion of his integrity and conscientiousness—qualities which we shall find were transmitted unimpaired to his more celebrated son.

Matthew was the only child of his parents; and they both died whilst he was at a very early age. His history is, therefore, one of the many instances of orphanage to be found in the lives of distinguished men, and which seem given us to show that high attainments are yet within the reach of those who are deprived of their nearest and most natural protectors. The guardian to whom was intrusted the task of bringing up young Hale, committed his education to those who were inclined to puritan opinions in theology, and who represented what would now be called the evangelical portion of the Church of England,—an establishment which at this early period of its career, had widely departed from the simplicity of the Gospel. This judicious selection

of instructors probably laid the foundation of Hale's religious character, so superior to that of the majority of adherents to the same faith and order. At the age of seventeen, he entered as a student at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and the temptations of a college life, which have ruined so many, were not experienced without exerting a baneful influence upon him. His generally studious habits were dissipated for a time by a taste which he speedily acquired for dramatic performances. He had the good sense, however, to discover the injurious effects which such unprofitable amusements were exerting upon his mind, and at length formed the resolution, which was strictly preserved, of never witnessing a play again. Some may be disposed to condemn such an example, as exhibiting a needless austerity. It were well, however, were it universally followed at the present day. No one has presumed to insist upon the stage as one of the necessaries of life; and every one admits, that though it may not be evil in itself, many of its associations are, to say the least, questionable. And where a pursuit that contributes to nothing more than entertainment, is invested with anything like a questionable character, the only path that can be safely pursued is the path of avoidance.

An anecdote related of Hale at this period of his life, strikingly illustrates that love of integrity which

early distinguished his character. A professor of gymnastics, from whom he had been taking lessons, told him one day that he could teach him no more, for he understood fencing better than his master. The pupil, deeming this a mere compliment, hit upon an expedient for putting its truth to the test. Happening to be the landlord of the house tenanted by the fencing-master, he offered to give it him if he would so far prove his superiority in the art as to strike him on the head. The professor, willing to admit his own abilities in the prospect of such a prize, struck the blow to which he had been challenged, and Hale presented him with the house accordingly.

These, and similar recreations, imparting to his amusements a military character, Hale was on the point of departing for a foreign country to serve in the army of the Prince of Orange, when one of those remarkable leadings of Providence that are too often regarded as mere accidents, introduced him to a nobler field than that of slaughter. Having been involved in a lawsuit, he had to engage the services as counsel of serjeant Glanvil,* an eminent lawyer

* Of this distinguished serjeant, Bishop Burnet, in his biography of Hale, pauses to narrate an incident much to his honour. He was a second son, in whose favour the eldest, a profligate, had been disinherited by their father; but finding

of his day, who, in conferring with Hale, discovered in him such an aptitude for his own profession, that he advised him to adopt it, and he accordingly entered at Lincoln's Inn. Matthew applied himself with all diligence to the study of the law; and, soon after he was called to the bar, his integrity and his abilities procured for him the friendship and esteem of eminent men of all parties, amongst others, of Sir William Noy, the Attorney-General, and John Selden, the antiquary.

Early in life an important change appears to have taken place in Hale's religious views, to which the following incident seems, as means to an end, to have been greatly blessed. He had been accustomed to seek relaxation from study in the society of vain and frivolous companions, and upon one of these occasions, a guest at table had very nearly died from the effects of excessive intoxication. This made so deep an impression on the mind of Hale, that he not only resolved to abstain from all vain company, and from all drinking habits for the future (a resolution which he punctually fulfilled), but he was led to devote his attention to the serious consideration of religious

that the loss of the patrimony preyed heavily upon the mind of his brother, whilst it appeared to have exerted a favourable influence on his character, he generously made him a present of the whole.

things, and under the Divine blessing attained to such experience in the truths of the Gospel, that his character as a Christian stands no less high than his reputation as a lawyer; and his contributions to the theological literature of this country will undoubtedly be read when his merely professional productions are forgotten.

Although he lived at a period when it was no easy matter for a Christian to maintain his consistency, we never find that he made shipwreck of his religious character. It is impossible to say as much of his contemporaries. The times were troublous, and beset with peculiar temptations to those who were zealous for the faith. The persecutions and the semi-popery encouraged by Laud and other prototypes of the Puseyite school, drove most of those who adhered to evangelical views of religion into a violent spirit of opposition to the government, and hence we find some of the most exemplary Christians of that day tinctured with all the rancour of party. This could never be said of Hale. When the civil wars commenced, although his views, notwithstanding his puritan education, were of a royalist and conservative character, he determined to take no part in the contest. He had before him the classic example of Atticus, whose life by Cornelius Nepos he translated, and purposed, in like manner, to live, at a period of

intestine strife, on terms of amity and concord with men of all parties. The high standing to which he had attained at the bar, his upright character, and his political tendencies, caused him to be employed as counsel for several eminent state criminals of the king's party, amongst whom were the Earl of Strafford, Archbishop Laud, and the Duke of Hamilton. His services were also retained by the parliament upon one occasion, as counsel to the commissioners appointed to treat with the king for the reduction of the city of Oxford. But in none other than these professional engagements did he take any part in public affairs during the entire period of the great civil war. Previously to the trial of Charles the First, that unworthy and unfortunate monarch retained him as an advocate; but he never appeared in court, as, in conformity with the course he pointed out to the king, and which was actually adopted, he refused to acknowledge the validity of a tribunal at once illegal and irregular.

As it frequently happens that lawyers are raised to the bench by the same government against which they have often pleaded at the bar, so it was in the instance of Sir Matthew Hale. In the year 1653, soon after the commonwealth of England had given place to the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell, he was made Chief Justice of the Common Pleas by that able

usurper. This appointment proves that Cromwell, though he possessed many of the vices that belong to a tyrant, could appreciate the worth of an impartial and upright judge, one of the most valuable of characters in distracted and troublous times. It also proves that Sir Matthew Hale, though influenced by many royalist prejudices, was a true patriot notwithstanding. A blind adherent to the cause of the king would never have administered the laws of a nominal republic. But Hale was sufficiently enlightened to perceive that justice and property it was absolutely necessary always to preserve, and hence he accepted the commission which the protector offered him.

To administer justice under the rule of Oliver Cromwell, was by no means an easy task. The iron dominion of that military despot, similar in many respects to the tyrannical administration of the Stewarts, is perhaps no longer an enigma when we remember that by the mother's side he was a Stewart himself. He thought nothing, when it served his own political purposes, of packing juries, imprisoning counsel, and commanding judges to disobey the law. Such arbitrary interference with the course of justice was made by Oliver in the case of George Cony, who refused the payment of certain custom-house dues on the same grounds taken by Hampden in resisting ship-money,—namely, that the impost had been levied

by the executive without consent of the legislature. In this celebrated case, the protector's interference with the bench led to the resignation of several judges. Hale, however, as has been remarked by a modern historian,* could keep his place and do his duty in the face of the tyrant. Being on circuit at Lincoln, a soldier of the garrison was indicted for the murder of a cavalier. No attempt was made to disprove the fact, obedience to orders being the only plea offered by the government in defence of its myrmidon. The jury found the prisoner guilty, and Hale, to prevent the interference of the protector on his behalf, pronounced sentence, and directed an immediate execution. On another occasion, he dismissed a jury as having been returned by order from Cromwell, and not, as the statute required, by the sheriff. For this he was severely rebuked by the protector, who, however, did not dare to deprive him of his commission. Cromwell was probably constrained to admire the bold integrity of the judge, and, like the ideal Satan of his own secretary, felt on such an occasion "how awful goodness was."

Hale's acceptance of a commission from the protector is justified by Bishop Burnet, on the ground of his never having made any declaration in acknow-

* William Wallace, Esq., in his continuation of Sir James Mackintosh's "History of England," vol. vi. page 208.

ledgment of the usurped authority. We cannot suppose that a man of Sir Matthew's integrity justified himself upon the jesuitical grounds taken by his biographer. Although his predilections may have been royalist, he had far too much good sense to become a besotted believer in the preposterous claims of prerogative. He knew the Scripture precept to "fear God and honour the king;" the latter clause, itself written under an empire that was nominally a republic, enjoining respect and obedience to the existing government, whatever form it may assume. Upon this principle of enlightened submission to "the powers that be," and of maintaining their authority when exerted on the behalf of order, he took office as a judge both under Cromwell and under Charles the Second. This principle is so little understood, that he has been frequently blamed for having, in an age of public calamity, stood aloof from the contest, and assumed a position of neutrality. Such a charge, however, is really the highest eulogium that can be pronounced upon his character. Although the position of opinions does not prove their correctness, yet, as a general rule, truth will be found to occupy a medium position between two extremes. The religion we believe to be true holds a middle place between those who reject the New Testament on the one hand, and those who receive the Koran

on the other. An administration which nearest represents political truth, must be one that avoids the opposite extremes of despotism and democracy. So, in a time of civil dissension, the right will usually be found to lie somewhere between the contending parties. The community, taken as a whole, is, as previously shown, preserved by the balance, within itself, of opposite errors maintained by individuals. But if an individual be able to balance the contest within his own spirit, and uphold whatever may be right in both parties, without implicitly adhering to the sentiments of either, to him belongs the praise of true impartiality, and not the censure that appertains to careless indifference. Where neutrality is synonymous with an unbiassed judgment, it is deserving not of blame but of commendation, and it will usually be found that he is most of a patriot who is least of a partisan.

Under the protectorate, every variety of obstacle was, as we have said, thrown in the way of an impartial magistrate. Hale felt this so much, that, after an interference on the part of government in behalf of some baptists who had been charged with disturbing the worship of another denomination, he declined to preside any longer in criminal proceedings, and limited his judicature to civil causes, until the death of Oliver Cromwell; when, upon the accession

of the new protector, he resigned altogether his commission as a judge.

It is well known how soon the restoration of monarchy followed the decease of the great Oliver. To account for this rapid change is not so difficult as it may at first appear. The protector formed the key-stone of the complicated arch of England's revolutionary politics. As soon as he was removed, the fabric of his government fell to pieces, and all the old animosities revived. The republicans in the first instance set aside the protectorate. Then they restored the Long Parliament, which Cromwell had put down rather than dissolved, in that mutilated condition, which, since the exploit of Colonel Pride, had obtained for it the opprobrious designation of "the Rump." With this apparently undying assembly, were resuscitated the feuds that had distinguished the history of its bygone days. Those republicans who had united in reviving it, soon divided into the old factions of civil and military. At length the latter prevailed. The Long Parliament was put down by Lambert, as it had previously been by Cromwell. For a short time the supreme power was again in the hands of a military despotism. Dissensions, however, arose in the council of officers, and then the Long Parliament, like a spectre that never

would be laid, began again to haunt the chapel of St. Stephen.

Political revolutions, like disturbances in standing water, generally bring upon the surface all the feculence of the lowest depths. So did the state of parties at this period suddenly introduce a new dictator, and one so utterly unprincipled, that the character even of Cromwell himself appears by comparison almost celestial. This was the famous, or rather infamous, General Monk. He has been described by some as a soldier of fortune, by others as a scoundrel of fortune,*—a coincidence which may serve to confirm the opinion, that when military men aspire to civil power, those terms are not far from synonymous. In the great civil war, he had fought on both sides, and had been trusted by neither. Under the protectorate, his abilities, which were really great, had recommended him to the notice of Oliver Cromwell, and he was now in command of the army in Scotland. On the re assembling of parliament, he marched south of the Tweed at the head of that army. His professed object was to confirm the authority of the legislature, and to establish the constitution on a strictly republican basis, without a sovereign, and without a peerage. This he constantly asserted, with oaths,

* See the historian last referred to, Vol. vi. page 287.

asseverations, protestations, and tears. His real intention was to replace in parliament those excluded members of the moderate or presbyterian party, who had been averse to the execution of Charles the First, and through their influence to destroy the commonwealth, to bring back monarchy, and to restore the Stewarts. The design may have been a grand one; it was at least constitutional; but to advance it by such means was the course only of consummate hypocrisy and diabolical deceit.

In the end, though, as we would fain hope for the honour of the national character, not in the means, he was certainly the representative of the public mind. The popular will, whether right or wrong, ought never to be put down by a faction. The purgation of parliament by Colonel Pride had therefore been an unjust and wicked invasion of the liberties of the people. Since that event, the Long Parliament had never represented the subjects whom it governed by military rule. The majority of the people were probably never at any time extreme republicans. They were never, in all probability, decidedly attached to the religious views of the Puritans. Neither, on the other hand, were they warm adherents of the house of Stewart or the Church of England. They had been taught by twelve years of bitter experience not to confide in political men of

any party. They had found the successive administrations of the Commonwealth and of the Protectorate, no less oppressive than the cruel tyranny of Charles the First. They had seen the place of the ancient God-fearing Puritans taken by aspiring men, who, under the same name, knew nothing of the same principles, and who, like the Pharisees of old, endeavouring to make up in appearance for what they wanted in reality, tried to impose upon society the mere forms of religion to such an extent, as to make them heavy burdens and grievous to be borne. They had seen a new and a dangerous power arise in the state — a power unprecedented in English history—that of a victorious and imperious standing army. They found that to maintain this despotism, they had incurred—what was also a novelty—a national debt of more than two millions. Without duly reflecting (for the public mind is always inconsiderate) on the state of things that preceded the revolution, they began to conclude, and not without some reason, that their sufferings in the civil war had been endured to no purpose.

The general wish for a renewal of the old state of things, it was the intention of Monk to employ for his own purposes. The cavaliers, who had always adhered to the cause of monarchy, were more

anxious than ever for its restoration. The Presbyterians, who had deprecated extreme measures with regard to the late king, were not unwilling to renew the ancient constitution with certain modifications. The city of London, and the public out of doors, were loud in their demands for a new and a free parliament. At this juncture, the mendacious Monk, by unbounded professions of republicanism, had obtained such influence with the existing legislature, that he succeeded in persuading them to re-admit the presbyterian members excluded by Colonel Pride. These restored, the Long Parliament at last died a natural death. Once again in their seats, this party formed a majority in the house. They annulled all the proceedings of the Rump. They appointed Monk commander-in-chief of the forces. They passed a bill for their own dissolution, and issued writs for the assembling of a new parliament.

In the general election that ensued, Sir Matthew Hale was returned a knight of the shire for his native county of Gloucester. Of this honour he had not been desirous himself, but he became, almost against his own will, the nominee of Lord Berkeley. There was much in his character that rendered him extremely suitable for a parliament, in which the future form of government was about

to be arranged. A return to monarchy appeared inevitable. The royalists and the presbyterians seemed likely to coalesce for its restoration. Hale had the virtues of both and the vices of neither. He had all the loyalty of a cavalier, and all the piety of a puritan, whilst he equally avoided the debaucheries of the royalist, and the intolerance of the covenanter. Royalists, however, were, as yet, ineligible to sit in parliament, and consequently but comparatively few were at first returned; the majority of members elected being either presbyterian, or of those moderate and impartial views of which Hale may be regarded as the type. Republicans were now at a discount; the faithless Monk had already opened negotiations with the exiled king; when the parliament assembled, it met in two chambers, and letters from Charles the Second were openly read both to lords and commons.

To Monk, one of the most unprincipled of English politicians, belongs the unenviable notoriety of having introduced to the throne one of the most wicked of English kings. The second Charles, in his declaration from Breda, promised a free pardon to the majority of those who had taken arms against his father, and liberty of religious opinion to all tender consciences. The

history of his reign forms the most bitter of all satires upon such a profession. But that reign was as yet future, and in the state of public opinion to which we have referred, the parliament and the people, deluded by their commander-in-chief, were ready to believe almost anything. It was resolved by the legislature to acknowledge Charles Stewart as the legitimate sovereign, without imposing any conditions upon which his restoration should be founded. The cause of liberty, in which so much blood had been shed, and so much property expended—for which the price of human bodies and souls had been paid on the battle-field, or on the scaffold, for a period of eighteen years, was thus hastily abandoned in a moment: a striking proof, if one were wanted, of the inability of physical force to produce beneficial results of a moral and political nature.

Within the walls of the house of commons only two voices were dissentient: one was the author of the "Histriomastix," the other the translator of the memoirs of Atticus. Perhaps nothing in the life of Hale is more to his credit than the fact, that, with all his royalist predilections, he was almost the only member of the convention parliament who dared to oppose the unconditional restoration of Charles. It proves that his political views were enlightened

and not slavish; and it also proves that he had a deep insight into human nature in general, and into the faithless character of the Stewart dynasty in particular. In this he was before his age. He proposed that some security for the liberties and laws of the nation should be obtained from the king. Monk replied that the people could have nothing to fear from a sovereign who possessed neither money nor troops; purposely overlooking the fact that he was himself in command of an army which would be placed at the royal disposal, and that parliament had already voted the king the sum of £50,000 in a fit of mental and moral intoxication. The protest was over-ruled, and Charles the Second was proclaimed.

A more infamous sovereign never disgraced the English or any other throne. In his private character he was notoriously profligate. In his public capacity he was sordidly debased. He sold himself and his country to the King of France. He married his consort for her dowry, and compelled her to submit to the attendance of his own mistresses, whose society he affected in her very presence, and to whose charms he was a perfect slave. Yet with all the licentiousness of a man of pleasure, he had none of the accidental humanity, which, often from mere indecision of purpose, will be found attendant upon such a character. He witnessed from a distance the

hanging and quartering of those who had subscribed the death-warrant of his father. He permitted, when he might have prevented, the judicial murders that arose in consequence of the fiction called the popish plot. Scepticism and superstition, those vices that belong to opposite extremes, in him were unhappily combined. Though he scoffed at religion, he succumbed to the priest. He lived an infidel, and he died a papist.

It is, however, a redeeming point in the midst of such depravity, that Charles the Second, like Cromwell, had sufficient virtue to promote a man of so much worth as Sir Matthew Hale. Yet the first public position in which he was placed, was calculated severely to try the integrity of any man, (and perhaps for this very reason it was selected for him by the king, who doubtlessly did not overlook his protest against the restoration), being no less than a seat in the commission court, before which the regicides were tried; or more properly speaking, by the decision of which they were judicially murdered. We do not, however, find the name of our hero appearing prominently in these infamous proceedings, which must have been especially distasteful to one who had all along recommended an act of indemnity without the inhuman exceptions that had been raised by parliament. He was speedily elevated to a far

more honourable and useful post—that of Chief Baron of the Exchequer, in which he remained for eleven years, when he was translated to the higher dignity of Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

A judge in those days had no sinecure. Crimes were everywhere abundant. The fearful example of the sovereign, joined to the reaction that followed the asceticism of the commonwealth, soon brought society to the lowest depths of debauchery and demoralization. At court, the brother of the king seduced the daughter of the chancellor. That functionary, when the prince proposed to make amends by marriage, professed the most slavish horror at the idea of royalty stooping to such an alliance, and added, that he would rather see his daughter the duke's mistress than the duke's wife. Low indeed must have been the standard of public morality, when such sentiments could be uttered by the highest legal authority, and one known to posterity as the grave and eminent historian Clarendon. In such a state of things criminal offences must have been rife.

But there were other circumstances that rendered the position of an impartial judge still more difficult and embarrassing. Evangelical religion was now hated and despised. After a severe struggle on the question of church government, the presbyterians were vanquished, and the establishment was reduced

by the rising power of the court and of the high-church party, to its original episcopal form, as that least conducive to vital godliness. Two thousand ministers were expelled from their livings by the operation of the new Uniformity Act, and others resigned them before the period at which that act came into force; a period fixed, with singular appropriateness, on the feast of St. Bartholomew, with all its sanguinary associations of the massacre accomplished by an unrelenting De Medicis on the banks of the Seine. But even this persecution was not enough to slake the vengeance of implacable bigotry. The nonconformists must not only be compelled to quit the church, but must be persecuted for having quitted it. Accordingly, the exercise of their worship was made a legal offence. The Conventicle Act was passed in 1644, by which attendance at other worship than that of the established church was made punishable with imprisonment, and for the third offence, with transportation. But even this did not satiate the malignant appetite of the legislature. Removed from the banks of the Thames to the shores of the Isis, to avoid one of the most fearful pestilences ever recorded in the annals of this country, parliament, in the next session, passed the Five Mile Act, by which the presence of a nonconformist minister was not to be tolerated within

five miles of any city, borough, or corporate town, or any place in which he had been accustomed to teach prior to the imposition of the recent disabilities, and which amounted to a sentence of banishment upon all such persons. It is true that a saving clause was added—unless they consented to take the oath of non-resistance: but although the abjuration of the sword is at all times a Christian duty, it was not at this period generally regarded as such; and the nonconformists had been so cruelly persecuted by the State, that it was scarcely to be expected that even their religious principle should be sufficiently high to submit with readiness to what was evidently intended as a mark of degradation.

Such were some of the laws which Sir Matthew Hale, as a judge, had to carry into force; and well is it for the honour of his memory, that no magistrate can be held morally responsible for the character of the laws he administers. So far was he from approving these barbarous enactments, that he not only did all that he could in his judicial capacity to mitigate their severity, but privately extended charitable assistance to the persecuted nonconformists, and also drew up a bill to be submitted to parliament for the mitigation of the penalties under which they were suffering.

An interesting conversation is recorded between

himself and the wife of John Bunyan, who appeared before the justices, whilst her husband was in prison, with a petition for the release of the illustrious author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." The conduct of Hale upon this occasion was worthy of his character. When it was urged against her request, that Bunyan's conviction had been according to law, he called for the statute book, to see if it were so. When the poor woman referred to the penniless condition of herself and four small children, one of whom was blind, he appeared greatly moved at the touching recital. When entreated by another of the bench to send her away, he calmly recommended a writ of error as the cheapest legal process likely to affect the position of the prisoner, and dismissed her with an expression of regret at being unable to do more.

His literal adherence to the integrity of justice has been deemed too severe; but is to be justified from the fact that most of his contemporaries notoriously departed from it. He declined to receive from a great duke in person any private information respecting a suit in which his grace was concerned. He refused to proceed with a trial, the plaintiff in which had just furnished him with venison. He paid the value of the sugar loaves presented to him as usual on circuit by the dean and chapter of Salisbury,

before he would hear a cause in which they were interested.

The condemnation by Sir Matthew Hale of two miserable women for witchcraft, which subjected them to the awful punishment of burning alive, is frequently spoken of as a blot upon his character, in terms somewhat similar to the acceptance of bribes on the part of Bacon. There is a great difference, however, between the two cases. Bacon did a wrong which he knew to be wrong. Hale did a wrong which he deemed to be right. These are just the two phases of crime; but the guilt of the first is far more aggravated than that of the second. The transgression of the one consists in his sinning against an enlightened conscience: of the other in possessing a conscience unenlightened. But we do not mean for a moment to palliate the guilt of the case last supposed. To be ignorant where we ought to be informed, is a sin against God, against society, and against ourselves. It is not, however, the presumptuous sin of him who knowingly and wilfully commits a crime. In the instance of these poor women, the judge vindicated the sentence to his own conscience, by a belief in the reality of witchcraft, in the sufficiency of the evidence, and in the accordance of the existing statute with the law of Moses. In all these respects, it is easy to prove him mistaken. To

imagine that the Almighty would suffer any mere creature to have intercourse with the world of spirits, is little short of blasphemy. To make the Levitical law the basis of our own penal enactments, is nothing less than persecution. Under the old economy, God was the king of a particular nation, and being essentially infallible, enacted laws in that capacity which it would be presumptuous in any earthly sovereign to imitate. Were we living under a Theocracy at this time, irreligion would be also high treason, and might be punished as such by the Almighty himself; but where the government is merely human, and religion and loyalty are distinct, to inflict any penalty for the lack of the former, is at once a violation of the rights of conscience, and an invasion of the prerogative of God. In the particular instance of witchcraft, that was prohibited under the Mosaic law, not because there was any reality in its assumptions, but because it was a pretence carried on in connexion with idolatry,—a crime amounting to treason under a Theocratic administration, but one which is not within the province of an ordinary magistrate to suppress. All this should have been present to the mind of Sir Matthew Hale. It may be said that he merely administered the law as it stood, and that for the state of the law the executive is not responsible. This we are willing to grant; but Hale did more

than merely administer: he avowed his belief in the reality of the crime. His error, therefore, consisted in justifying a bad law, and this is an error that we do not attempt either to vindicate or to conceal. We would try his memory with that impartiality with which, as a general rule, he himself tried the prisoners brought before him; and whilst we allow it to be a sin not of presumption but of ignorance, we are yet unable to efface this one stain from his character, this one blot from his history.

At length, after fifteen years' service at the head of the courts of Exchequer and King's Bench successively, the health of Sir Matthew Hale began to give way, and in consequence of increasing infirmities, he resigned his commission into the hands of the king. His retirement from the bench occasioned the offer of the highest testimonials to his character as a judge. But in so corrupt and demoralizing an age, we are not surprised that after he had breathed his last on the succeeding Christmas-day, the text chosen for his funeral oration should have been—"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."* Great and good men there were in that age of whom the world was not worthy, and Matthew

* Isaiah, lvii. 1.

Hale was one. He died on the 25th of December, 1676, at the age of sixty-seven, of a complication of disorders, of which the principal were asthma and dropsy; and his remains were interred in the churchyard of his native parish of Alderly, in Gloucestershire.

If it be true that the life of a great writer is most advantageously read in his works, the biography of Hale must be unusually voluminous. His writings may be divided into three classes—legal, philosophical, and religious. It is needless to say which of these have proved of the most lasting benefit to mankind. The lawyer of his own, and indeed of the present day, may have rejoiced in the possession of his "Pleas of the Crown," as a most valuable contribution to the literature of jurisprudence; but law is a progressive science, and the time may soon come when collections of this kind are no longer of utility. The student of nature might once have perused his treatises on Gravitation and the Principles of Motion with intense interest;—for there was scarcely a science or an art in which Sir Matthew was not a proficient;—but, in comparatively few years after his death, the discoveries of Newton threw into the shade all the investigations of preceding philosophers. Although nature has always been the same, the discoveries that may be made concerning it are apparently inexhaustible. Not so with religion. Theology is not a

progressive science; Christianity is not a system of development. The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ are never to give place to "another gospel, which is not another." As we have no reason to expect in this world any further revelation, so we should study with the greater earnestness that which we already possess. It is for this reason that the theological writings of Hale are unquestionably those of the greatest value. His "Contemplations Moral and Divine," may be perused in the nineteenth century with as much profit as in the seventeenth. It is true that there are some sentiments expressed in those works that would now be deemed superstitious;* but these arise, not from the Christian, but from the man. Such is but human weakness, which we must expect to discover in every disciple, although it is not on that account justifiable. But as, on a sunny day, a cloud between the eye and the sun only enables us with closer exactness to discern the form of that luminary; so the glory of Christianity is, perhaps, but more clearly defined, when seen through the mists that intervene between itself and the human soul.

* As for example, an exhortation, in a letter to his children concerning the observance of the Lord's day, to read the Scriptures, even in private, with the head uncovered. "After your private prayer read another chapter, and let your reading be with attention, observation, and *uncovered on your head.*"—*Contemplations*, Vol. i. p. 266. Edition of 1699.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," as we are told by an inspired apostle, "that the glory may be of God, and not of us." The "Contemplations" of Sir Matthew Hale are, indeed, full of treasure; the unsearchable riches of Christ, even durable riches and righteousness. It is a sublime lesson to the lawyers, to the statesmen, to the exalted of this world, that one who occupied so high a place amongst them should devote a large portion of two octavo volumes to a "Dissertation on the Knowledge of Christ Crucified," and should fill another with a "Discourse on the Knowledge of God and of ourselves." This presents us with a striking comment on the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles, who himself also was a man of vast human attainments—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

Sir Matthew Hale, with all his errors—and one of them, in particular, we have not endeavoured to conceal—presents the world with a brilliant example of an upright judge, an impartial politician, a skilful lawyer, a learned philosopher, a profound theologian;

* Philippians, iii. 8, 9.

his career forming on the whole a biography which calls to mind those spirit-stirring lines of a trans-atlantic poet, with which we may aptly conclude this historical sketch.

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footsteps on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing shall take heart again.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."*

* Longfellow's "Voices of the Night." "A Psalm of Life."

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN MILTON.

THE people are the fountain of power. The forty centuries that, in the language of the Corsican, look down from the pyramids, have only confirmed, by their varied experience, the truth of this immortal proposition. Yet such is not merely the lesson of the past. The present as forcibly illustrates the fact that society contains within itself the principles of its own government. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that society should be led by minds rightly directed. Amongst those who powerfully influence any community, the poet must rank at least as high as the statesman. It was once said, "Let me make the ballads, and you may make the laws." It might have been said with equal truth, Let me write the dramas and the epics, and then you may attempt to teach moral principles. For it is impossible to estimate the influence which polite literature —above all, poetry—exerts upon the moral tone of a

nation. Where the writers are before the age, they direct society; where they are behind it, they are directed by its prevailing sentiments, and, in proportion to their talent, fasten those sentiments, by a reflex action, more powerfully upon the age. The effect of their compositions is, therefore, a theme equally interesting to the poet, the philosopher, and the historian.

The influences both of the statesman and the poet were combined in the instance of John Milton. This illustrious writer was the son of a scrivener of London, (himself an intelligent and accomplished person, descended from a Roman-catholic family), and was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, in 1608. Being intended for the church, he received a liberal education, and graduated at the university of Cambridge with great honour to himself. His diligence as a student is attested by the profound erudition of his poetical writings; of which the masque of "Comus," and the monody of "Lycidas," were produced at an early age. Having adopted, to a considerable extent, the principles of the Puritans, he relinquished all idea of the clerical profession, devoted his leisure to study and travel, and soon after the breaking out of the great civil war, engaged his able pen in eloquent vindication of the popular cause. This ought to be considered a stain upon his character. However large the provocation, the idea of

civil dissension is so abhorrent to every humane and reflective mind, that it must ever be matter of regret, that a genius seraphic as Milton's should have been prostituted to the vindication of strife so infernal. For his treatises defended not only the resort to arms, but the murder of the king; whilst his subsequent conduct, in accepting office under Cromwell in a ministerial, and not, as Hale, in a judicial capacity, proves that he assented also to the usurpation of the Protector. It should be remembered, however, that we are enabled to speak thus freely of his opinions, partly through the moral influence of his own "Defence of the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," for which the British constitution and the British press owe to his memory a debt of everlasting gratitude.

On account of the high situation that Milton had held under Oliver Cromwell, Sir Heneage Finch, at the Restoration, argued, by a process of logic peculiar to political animosity, that he ought to be hanged. From public calamity, however, he escaped, but the close of his life was embittered by domestic afflictions, —the decease of two wives in succession, and the loss of his own eye-sight; the latter deprivation having been hastened by severe application to his duties in Cromwell's bureau at Whitehall. It was in the midst of such external disqualifications that the greatest work of his life was achieved—the immortal

epic of Paradise Lost—the manuscript of which was written by his daughters from his dictation, and sold to the publisher for an immediate payment of only five pounds. The smaller epic of Paradise Regained, and the dramatic poem of Sampson Agonistes, were afterwards composed, in addition to which an historical narrative and a Latin lexicon were compiled subsequently to his blindness; so that the evening of his life, which terminated in the year 1674, may be said to constitute a remarkable chapter in the annals of research conducted under almost insurmountable difficulties.

As a statesman, he was second only to his able but less scrupulous master, to whom, both in public life and personal character, he was infinitely superior. As a poet, he is usually considered alone inferior to that great dramatist whose works are "not for an age, but for all time." It is intended in the present chapter to institute a parallel between the writings of these two gigantic intellects, and the difficulties of such a task are brought to mind by the lines in which Wordsworth has apostrophized an itinerant image vendor:—

"Or through our hamlets thou wilt bear
The sightless Milton, with his hair
Around his placid temples curl'd;
And Shakspere at his side—a freight
If clay could think, and mind were weight,
For him who bore the world."

These great writers were so unquestionably in advance of the respective periods in which they lived, that they are to be classed with those who have led, and not with those who have reflected, the spirit of the age. Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello, are not the compositions we should expect from a companion of deer-stalkers and stage-players in the comparatively uncultivated days of Queen Elizabeth; neither has Paradise Lost the characteristics of a time when polite literature was profoundly immoral.* It is the greatness both of Shakspere and of Milton, which constitutes that resemblance between them, the want of which might have evoked a contrast, but would for ever have prohibited a comparison. Both were minds of the very highest order. Both understood the art of poetry, if indeed it be an art, in the highest perfection to which it can be carried. The works of both will be read as long as the English language and the Anglo-Saxon race continue to possess "a local habitation and a name." So far, the similitude holds

* This great poem has been characterized by one, who, like its author, may be described as a poet, an historian, and a statesman in retirement, as "a song so sublime and so holy, that it would not have misbecome the lips of those ethereal Virtues, whom he saw, with that inner eye which no calamity could darken, flinging down on the jasper pavement their crowns of amaranth and gold."—*Macaulay's History of England,* vol. i. page 399.

good. But there are other circumstances far from parallel. Regarding Shakspere's life we have but very scanty information, and nearly all that we do possess has been disputed. Of Milton's biography we have every particular. His life was as much before the public, as Shakspere's was unknown to them. Shakspere was illustrious only as a bard and a dramatist. Milton was not only a poet, but a statesman, a theologian, a philologist, and an historian. Shakspere's learning does not appear to have extended beyond the knowledge of certain technicalities: Milton's erudition was prodigious. Shakspere's greatest compositions were in the dramatic form; Milton's in the yet loftier style of epic poetry. The great object of Shakspere's compositions is to exhibit the world as it is; that of Milton's, to teach the world what it ought to be. Milton appears to have been a devout Christian, and a man of blameless life; we have no similar evidence with regard to Shakspere.

In several particulars of this contrast, Shakspere may appear to have the advantage. His want of learning, when viewed in connexion with the amazing works he actually produced, seems to argue the possession of a natural genius greater than that of one who, with enormous acquirements, worked out results, which, in point of talent, are perhaps equal rather than superior. The difficulties of dramatic composition as

compared with epic, have also to be taken into account. In a continuous narrative like that of a poem, the character of the several heroes, and the nature of the various scenes, may be detailed in the way of recital. In the drama, however, these have to be inferred from the dialogue, or from dialogue assisted by soliloquy. It follows, that to give a dramatic production all the effect of a poem, which Shakspere has generally done, is to accomplish a more difficult task, than that of imparting to an epic the features of a history. We might, therefore, in comparing nothing more than the abilities of Shakspere and Milton, feel somewhat compromised by absolutely deciding in favour of the latter; but with reference to the moral influence of their writings on the well-being of society, we have no hesitation in affirming that the works of Milton are greatly superior.

This assertion is founded upon the fact, apparently indisputable, that Shakspere represents society as it is, whilst Milton teaches what it ought to be. The one presents to human nature a mirror which reflects its coarseness as faithfully as its beauty: the other sets before it a model to which it ought to conform. That Shakspere, in his creations of fancy, is always true to nature; that his writings evince a vast knowledge of human character; that his incidents come home to our everyday experience,—is the praise

bestowed upon his memory by the warmest admirers of his genius. On this species of talent there is, however, an attendant disadvantage. We are so charmed with the truthfulness of Shakspere's picture of moral deformity, that we are in some danger of being captivated with the original. We are so interested, for example, in the sorrows of Juliet, that we are frequently disposed to regard her character as a model for imitation rather than an example to be avoided. We sympathize so deeply in the wrongs of Hamlet, that we are almost tempted to excuse his murderous and suicidal revenge. Petruchio's churlishness so successfully subdues Katharina, that we are ready to think assumed unkindness and actual coarseness, the most advantageous, if not the most becoming behaviour. Our interest is so engaged in the means taken by Julia to follow the inconstant Proteus, or by Viola to obtain the love of the Duke, that we are willing to justify any young lady, who, for similar objects, should assume the dress of "a well-reputed page." In Henry IV., Henry V., or the Merry Wives of Windsor, we agree so decidedly in the sentiment of Falstaff himself,—"banish plump Jack, and banish all the world," that we begin to think an undue attachment to sensual indulgences nothing more than a very pardonable infirmity. Many instances of a similar kind might be referred

to; but we do not mean to insinuate that this defect attaches to all Shakspere's characters. The propriety of the minute delineation of vice has been frequently discussed. It can only be determined by the nature of the vice to be portrayed. There are crimes ministering to the passions of fallen humanity, that meet with so ready a response in every heart, that the less they are detailed the better. There are others so revolting to nature, that their exhibition is not calculated to excite similar sentiments. Homicide is of this class. The exhibition of a murderer in his true colours can only interest in his character those who have descended to a degree of almost fiendish depravity. We say in his true colours, because we are aware that what is ordinarily called Newgate literature, invests even murder with a fictitious adornment. This is not the case, however, with the historical tragedies of our great dramatist. There is nothing about his delineations of "Macbeth" and "Richard the Third," to palliate the crimes either of high treason or of murder. The portraits are innocuous, just because they are truthful. But the same truthfulness in the drama of "Pericles," from the different nature of the enormities referred to, is an evil rather than a good—a blemish instead of a recommendation.

There is another defect in the moral of Shakspere's writings, arising out of that already noticed as inci-

dental to dramatic composition,—its inability to express character except through the medium of dialogue or soliloquy. When a depraved person is introduced, his real disposition has to be revealed through the medium of language in accordance with his character. This neutralizes the effect of a moral lesson. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." We have this upon the very highest authority. Perhaps of all the pests that afflict society, none are more noxious than conversation of an improper tendency. When it is inserted in a drama, the response which it receives from our own depraved minds will cause it to be remembered much longer than the moral of the story. Yet it is almost inseparable from dramatic literature,—and for this reason we do not agree with those who think that the stage may become an efficient moral instructor. In narrative composition, it can be said, for example, that observations were made of a character unsuitable for repetition; and this mode of expression will be adopted by all writers of history or of fiction, who are gifted either with good taste or moral discernment. The style of the drama, however, requires an insertion of the improprieties. These remarks must not be taken as bearing hardly upon Shakspere,—for the fault is not so much in himself, as in the form of composition to which he directed his genius. Family editions of his

works have been prepared, excluding those portions that are unsuitable for the domestic or social circle. It is almost needless to remark, that in proportion as these are omitted, the characteristics of the heroes are unsustained. We mean not that such editions are altogether to be discouraged; for nothing should be discouraged that is a step in the direction of moral purity or refinement; but we do mean, that in judging of their moral influence, Shakspere's writings ought to be taken as he left them, and not as they may have been amended to suit the taste of recent generations.

Milton united to equal genius a more refined sense of moral propriety. When he depicts human character, it is in connexion with those elements that are calculated to bring about its regeneration. His greatest poetry is fully imbued with the spirit of religion. The epic form of "Paradise Lost" did not oblige him to stoop to the hurtful details of depravity; yet his delineation of the character of Satan is certainly not deficient in the diabolical attributes. But he did not restrict himself to the epic form of composition. One of his earliest productions was the masque of "Comus," and this beautiful drama will bear an advantageous comparison with the masterpieces of Shakspere. In many respects, it presents a striking parallel to the "Midsummer

Night's Dream," and in proportion to that resemblance will be found to be superior.

In "L'Allegro," Milton has paid a just tribute to the talents of his great predecessor :—

"Or sweetest Shakspere, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

No lines can be more truly descriptive of the summer evening's vision so exquisitely sung by the bard of Avon. It contains, perhaps, more acute delineations of character, fewer improprieties of dialogue, more vividness of imagination, and more of those home truths, which, in his own language, are

"Familiar in our mouths as household words,"

than any other of his wonderful compositions. The current sayings, "Single blessedness," "The course of true love never did run smooth," "Maiden meditation, fancy free," "Ay, that way goes the game," "More strange than true," "The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve," have all been derived from this beautiful drama. It includes also several passages well known in quotations, as the following address of Helena to Hermia :—

"Oh happy fair!
Your eyes are load-stars, and your tongue sweet air;
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear."*

* Act i. Scene 2.

Or the passage in which the same speaker so beautifully depicts the juvenile attachment between herself and her friend:—

"Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—O, and is all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our neelds created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;
But yet a union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem:
So with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest."*

We have also the well-known description by Theseus of the glowing visions of a poetic imagination:—

"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."†

Between this drama and Milton's there are many

* Act iii., Scene 2. † Act v., Scene 1.

analogies. "Comus," like the "Midsummer Night's Dream," has been the source from which we have derived some cherished aphorisms. "Be not over exquisite to cast the fashion of uncertain evils," is a maxim well known, and the sentiment of which, it were highly desirable were more universally adopted. The classical and historical allusions with which "Comus" abounds, are worthy of the erudition of its great author. As in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and in the luxuriant similitudes of "Paradise Lost," the unlearned reader requires the aid of Lempriere in order to understand them. To introduce the son of Bacchus and Circe into a forest on the borders of Wales may appear incongruous; but is not more so than Shakspere's location in the neighbourhood of ancient Athens, of Oberon and Titania, creations of Teutonic tradition. In each of these dramas, the greater part of the scene is laid at night in the midst of a wild wood. In both, supernatural beings are introduced, whose duty it is to watch over the destinies of the principal characters. In each, spell-binding potions, or herbs of magic virtue, are powerful agencies. In both, we have examples of the human form partially degraded by enchantment into that of the brute. The one is concluded by a play; the other by the hilarity of a country dance. We must accord to "Comus,"

however, the merit of breathing a much loftier moral. The "Midsummer Night's Dream" has, in fact, no moral at all. It is a beautiful combination of ideas, the lesson to be drawn from which is by no means evident. The reader rises from its perusal, delighted with all the associations that attach to the days of Theseus and Hippolyta, that consecrate the classic ground of ancient Greece, or, in that loveliest of climates, grace the loveliest of seasons, a summer evening. He may be amazed at the genius which has harmoniously combined with such reminiscences the fairy legends of modern Europe, and amused with the exquisite humour that lurks in the dilemma of the misguided lovers, or is displayed in the attempt of low artizans to enact a classic tragedy in the presence of the Duke. Whilst, however, the taste luxuriates in the varied beauties of this exquisite product of a truly magnificent imagination, no great truth is apparent to the mind.

As an illustration, we may refer to the fairy's speech in the first scene of the second act:—

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier;
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moones sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours;
I must go seek some dew drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear."*

This is descriptive only of the imaginary being by whom it is spoken; but the prologue of the Attendant Spirit of Milton's creation, not only introduces us to himself, but to the moral of the whole story:—

"Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call earth; and, with low-thoughted care
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity:
To such my errand is: and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould."†

The slavish attachment to Demetrius, expressed

* Act ii. Scene 1. † Comus, 1st Scene.

by Helena in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," is unworthy of the author who has so often represented the female character as endowed with far more ennobling attributes:—

"I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you;
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you."*

These are ideas widely different from the lofty sentiments expressed by the benighted heroine in Comus:—

"These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, conscience:
O welcome pure-eyed faith, white-handed hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemished form of chastity!
I see thee visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish messengers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed."†

Apart altogether from our main question—the moral tendency of these productions—there are many instances in which the poetry of Milton's masque is superior, both in tenderness and in sublimity, to

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* Act ii., Scene 2. † Comus, 1st Scene.

that of Shakspere's drama. In the latter we have Oberon's description of the mermaid's melody:—

"Once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music."*

This is not, however, to be compared, either in force or in delicacy, with the eulogy of the enchanter on the song of Milton's heroine:—

"Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Syrens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause;
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now."†

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* Act ii., Scene 2. † Comus, 1st Scene.

The description of the same music by the Attendant Spirit is more exquisite still:—

"At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still, to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death."*

This is not the only instance of Milton's superiority in what may be considered a parallel description. In Shakspere, Oberon proceeds:—

"That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
And loos'd his love shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon;
And the imperial vot'ress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free."†

A similar idea is more happily expressed by the elder of the two brothers in Comus, in a reference to the heathen mythology, which, however questionable, may be supposed to afford at least as fair an illustration of the subject as could have been derived

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* Comus, 1st Scene. † Act ii., Scene 2.

from the somewhat dubious reputation of Queen Elizabeth :—

"Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair, silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o'the woods."*

Hermia's description of the night approaches as near to common place, as any of the lines in the "Midsummer Night's Dream :"—

"Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompence."†

The apostrophe by the Lady in "Comus" contains poetry of a much higher order :—

"O thievish night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?"

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* Comus, 1st Scene, † Act iii., Scene 2.

And again:—

"Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?"*

The mischievous spirit who makes such sport in the wood near Athens, thus recites the Epilogue to the "Midsummer Night's Dream:"—

"If we shadows have offended,
Think but this (and all is mended),
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend;
If you pardon, we will mend.
And as I'm an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call;
So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends."†

It must surely be admitted by every impartial judge in matters of taste, that the Epilogue to "Comus," by the Attendant Spirit, is decidedly superior:—

"To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky;

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* Comus, 1st Scene. † Act v., Scene 2.

There I suck the liquid air
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree;
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy bosom'd Hours
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds, with musky wing.
About the cedar'd alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.

* * * * *

Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach thee how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her."*

Such is the magnificent moral of "Comus;" and yet "Comus" contains at least one defect incidental to dramatic composition. The description given by the presiding Genius of his own mission and character, and by the Enchanter himself of his manœuvres and incantations, invest both with the appearance of unreasonable egotism. Such details would not enter into real discourse, nor into the dialogue of any composition that admitted also of narrative. In the drama of the ancients, the chorus supplied the place of a narration, and Milton has resorted to this ex-

* Comus, Scene 3.

pedient in "Samson Agonistes;" but in "Comus," the burden of sustaining the history devolves upon the *dramatis personæ* themselves.

Yet if this masque participates in one of the defects of dramatic literature, it is remarkable how successfully its illustrious author has avoided another, which is a conspicuous blemish in the writings of Shakspere; namely, the introduction of improper conversation in the person of an evil character. The intentions of Comus are clearly of the worst description, but in his epicurean arguments, impure ideas are neither obtruded offensively, nor surreptitiously insinuated. Man, in his depraved condition, requires to be taught by powerful antithesis. Where there is no vice, he fails to discern virtue. To withhold an evil character is therefore to withhold a moral lesson. This is what Shakspere has done in the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" for the fairies are sportively mischievous, rather than morally depraved. Yet to enlarge upon an evil character, is to destroy the effect of the moral lesson which would otherwise be derived from its introduction. This is the obvious defect in the majority of Shakspere's compositions. Milton, however, has extricated himself from this apparent dilemma. He has introduced into his story sufficient vice for the exaltation of virtue, and yet not enough to allure us into depravity. In this respect, "Comus,"

as a drama, is almost unique. To deprecate sensuality, to etherealize the mind, to direct to higher regions than

> "This dim spot,
> Which men call earth,"

is the intent of the whole composition; and when we have closed the book, perhaps at the dusky hour of eve, when the imagination, stimulated by its perusal, strives to picture the fancies of the poet in the expiring embers on the hearth, the deepening shades around powerfully recall the sublime sentiment,

> "Virtue could see to do what virtue would
> By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
> Were in the flat sea sunk."

If we have dwelt too long upon this parallel between the "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Comus," our excuse must be found in the undoubted propriety of comparing the merits of their respective authors from compositions of the same class. Their occasional poems, however, present an equally fair field for discussion; and even Milton's magnificent epics, from their dramatic action, are capable of a much closer comparison with Shakspere's plays, than may appear to a superficial observer.

None of Shakspere's minor poems, as "Venus and Adonis," or "Tarquin and Lucrece," will compete

with those chaste and beautiful embodiments of classic tradition, the "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" of Milton. It is well known how, in the first of these, the bard has expressed his admiration of

"Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse."

And he has yet more happily depicted the harmony between poetry and music in a separate ode:—

"Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,
Sphere born, harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mix'd power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host, in thousand quires,
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportion'd sin
Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.

O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial concert us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light."*

The nearest parallel to these lines in the poems of Shakspere is to be found in the eighteenth stanza of the "Passionate Pilgrim," but the idea, although harmoniously expressed, is there arrayed in pagan, instead of Christian imagery:—

"If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me.
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch
Upon the lute doth ravish human sense,
Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such,
As passing all conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound,
That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes,
And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd,
When as himself to singing he betakes.
One god is god of both, as poets feign,
One knight loves both, and both in thee remain."†

Amongst the hundred and fifty-four sonnets that have emanated from the genius of Shakspere, we find the following exquisite specimen:—

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* Ode—"At a Solemn Music."

† "The Passionate Pilgrim." Stanza 18.

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh no! it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved."*

A parallel to this in Milton's works is to be found in the well-known sonnet to the memory of his deceased wife, which affords an example of such unalterable attachment:—

"Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint,
Purification in the old law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind;
Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked—she fled—and day brought back my night."†

* Sonnet 116. † Sonnet 18.

"To feel the full pathos of the last line," as has been appropriately observed, "we must remember that Milton was now blind."

"Paradise Lost" has been already alluded to, and perhaps a brief allusion may be deemed sufficient; for to enlarge upon its excellencies would be merely an attempt to paint the lily, or to perfume the violet. That immortal work is placed far above the need of extraneous recommendation. Even Dryden, who had so little taste as to imitate the lofty diction of Maro's Latin in strains of the most commonplace English, and to contemplate the conversion of this very poem into a drama in the style of his own monotonous jingle, had yet taste enough to compose an epigram, in which he ascribes to its great author the merit of having combined the beauties of his most illustrious predecessors :—

"Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn;
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,
The next, in majesty; in both, the last.
The force of nature could no farther go;
To make a third, she joined the former two."

That the lyre of Orpheus civilized the savages of Thrace, is a sufficient commendation of the excellence of the music; and that Milton's great epic called forth such praise from one so barbarous of taste as Dryden, is an abundant proof of the superiority of the poetry.

Not only does this wonderful production combine the qualities of the bards of antiquity, but wherever it presents an analogy to the "Jerusalem Delivered," and such parallels are numerous, it unquestionably surpasses the descriptions of Torquato Tasso. That poet, in imitating the machinery of an analogous passage in Virgil, devotes an entire stanza to the inhabitants of the infernal regions:—

"There were Cileno's foul and loathsome rout,
There Sphinges, Centaurs; there were Gorgons fell,
There howling Scyllas yawning round about;
There serpents hiss, there seven mouth'd Hydras yell;
Chimera there spues fire and brimstone out,
And Polyphemus, blind, supporteth hell:
Besides, ten thousand monsters therein dwells,
Mis-shaped, unlike themselves, and like nought else."*

Milton, in a similar description, has produced a more powerful effect in a much shorter passage:—

"all prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable; and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived,
Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire."†

The Italian poet proceeds to give as elaborate a description of Satan as he had previously given of his infernal coadjutors:—

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* "Jerusalem Delivered." Book iv. Stanza 5. Fairfax.
† "Paradise Lost." Book ii.; lines 625—628.

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"Pluton in middest heav'd his trident great,
Of rusty iron huge that forged was,
The rocks on which the salt sea billows beat,
And Atlas tops, the clouds in height that pass,
Compared to his huge person, mole-hills be,
So his rough front, his horns so lifted he.

"The tyrant proud frown'd from his lofty cell,
And with his looks made all his monsters tremble,
His eyes, that full of rage and venom swell,
Two beacons seem, that men to arms assemble;
His felter'd locks, that on his bosom fell,
On rugged mountains briers and thorns resemble;
His yawning mouth, that foamed clotted blood,
Gap'd like a whirlpool wide in Stygian flood.

"And as mount Etna vomits sulphur out,
With clifts of burning crags, and fire and smoke,
So from his mouth flew kindled coals about,
Hot sparks and smells, that man and beasts would choke;
The snarling porter durst not whine for doubt,
Still were the furies while their sovereign spoke,
And swift Cocytus stay'd his murmur shrill,
While thus the murderer thunder'd out his will."*

Milton's portraiture of the infernal sovereign is, though more concise, much more effective, and far more sublime:—

"He, above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,

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* "Jerusalem Delivered." Book iv. Stanzas 6 to 8.—Fairfax.

Stood like a tower: his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of glory obscur'd."*

Whatever analogies may be traced in Milton's glorious poem to the writings of Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Dante, and Shakspere, yet the description of the infernal regions in the First Book, the impersonations of Sin and Death, of Chaos and Night, at the close of the second; the exquisite delineations of heaven and paradise in the subsequent parts of the story, are coruscations of genius to which it would be difficult to find a parallel in any human composition. It is sometimes said that in "Paradise Lost," the relations of the spiritual to the physical world are set forth in language exceedingly unphilosophical. But this proves nothing against the poetry of such descriptions. Philosophy is one thing, and poetry is another. The idea of Uriel descending upon a sunbeam is undoubtedly opposed to all the principles of science, but it is so eminently beautiful, that to deprive it of a place in the lay wherein it occurs, would be to despoil that poem of one of its most etherial adornments. Yet, varied as is the imagery of this extraordinary production, we find nothing so out of keeping as some even of Shakspere's illustrations;

* "Paradise Lost." Book i.; lines 589—594.

as, for example, in the "Comedy of Errors," where allusions to America and the Indies are made by persons supposed to be living at a period when Ephesus and Syracuse were trading cities.

It is true that the idea of the invention of gunpowder by the infernal angels, has been ridiculed as fantastic and absurd; but then the sublime lesson which it teaches has been overlooked, namely, that the art of war is so detestable, as to be worthy only of such an origin; a lesson the more valuable, as coming from the pen of one who had been officially connected with a party in the state that invariably appealed to the sword. It is also true that the character ascribed to Satan has been censured as tending to create an interest in depravity; but in this respect it cannot be said to differ from Shakspere's "Macbeth," where the moral is sufficiently obvious. All attempts to traduce the character of this great epic poem have been as futile as the attempt of Prejudice and Ill Will, in Bunyan's celebrated allegory, to cast dirt on the garments of the godly man. Its tendencies, moreover, are evangelical throughout, and for this reason it breathes a much loftier morality than even the purest compositions of the great dramatist.

Milton, who, like all the truly gifted, was graced with aptitude to appreciate the genius of others, has

recorded his own lofty estimate of his illustrious predecessor, in the following epitaph to his memory:—

"What needs my Shakspere for his honour'd bones?
The labour of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallow'd relics should be hid
Under a starry pointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst, to shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easy numbers flow; and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,
That kings, for such a tomb, would wish to die."*

The leading idea of these magnificent lines reminds us of the inscription to the architect of St. Paul's, within the cathedral of his creation. In the case of Shakspere, as in that of Wren, his works are his monument. But this epitaph would be even more appropriate, applied to the memory of its great author. For the value to society of Shakspere's genius, when compared with that of Milton, has been considerably over-rated. There is in the human

* "An epitaph on the admirable dramatic poet, William Shakspere."

mind a disposition to place talent above principle. This has caused the improprieties which lessen the moral tone of Shakspere's writings to be justified on account of his stupendous genius, or to be regarded with as much leniency as the spots on the surface of the sun. But if we profess to consider the highest concerns of men to be their moral and religious interests, we should endeavour to subordinate all things else to their exaltation. This is overlooked when we offer to Shakspere the incense of an unrestricted hero-worship. It is true that unsanctified genius is over-ruled in the workings of Providence to the accomplishment of the highest ends; but this will not justify us in the unqualified commendation of unsanctified genius. If the defects we have pointed out in Shakspere's writings warrant the application, even to his enormous talents, of such a designation, we are not vindicated, either as Christians or philanthropists, in assigning to his works a higher position than to the poems of Milton.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not mean that nothing in relation to the religious ideas can be gathered from Shakspere. Such a passage as the soliloquy of Hamlet may be calculated to impress one who is not to be taught by anything more abstractedly theological:—

"To die, to sleep;
To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause; there's the respect,
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?—Who would fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death—
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns—puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?"*

We have also the moral drawn by King Henry VI. from the awful death scene of Cardinal Beaufort:—

"Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all."†

And in "Measure for Measure," Isabella gives utterance to these well-known words, the position of which, considering the general character of the play, reminds us of the forcible similitude applied by the wise man‡ to beauty without discretion:—

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* Hamlet, Act iii. Scene 1.
† Henry VI. Part II. Act iii. Scene 3.
‡ Proverbs xi. 22. "A jewel of gold in a swine's snout."

"Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
And He, that might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy :—How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are?" *

In the "Merchant of Venice," again, the fair doctor of laws thus addresses the Jew:—

"Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation."†

As a general rule, however, Shakspere's writings are deficient in the religious ideas. His loftiest morality is that of social life, and extends not to the regeneration of the inner man. Those principles of constancy, of friendship, or of attachment, which he has so elegantly portrayed, are, after all, only worldly principles. Those affections, the exercise of which he has depicted with so much loveliness, are but earthly affections. He leads not the soul to that first principle of all excellence—the love of God. This, however, is the object, the sum, the substance, of all Milton's poetry; and we have, therefore, no hesitation in assigning to his equal genius, the moral superiority.

It is an important fact, which should never be

* "Measure for Measure." Act ii. Scene 2.
† "Merchant of Venice." Act iv. Scene 1.

overlooked, that the world is to be regenerated by indirect as well as by direct action. It is in the power of the philosopher, the poet, the historian, the man of taste, or the man of science, to advance the cause of God as effectually as the profoundest theologian. The observation of Dr. Arnold, that we are not so much in want of a religious literature, as of an ordinary literature imbued with religious ideas, will apply to every department of human knowledge. Society requires a theology that is confined not merely to the choir or the oratory, but is interwoven with science, philosophy, literature, and the pursuits of every day life. Yet this is a lesson, which, in great measure, society has still to learn. In many of its varied scenes, the introduction of religious associations is yet too frequently deemed incongruous. It is, however, satisfactory to reflect that the poems of Milton afford splendid examples of the truth, that evangelical piety may be harmoniously combined with exalted genius. The most magnificent epic of which the strains ever ravished mortal ear, inculcates at its conclusion the loftiest of morals ever derived from the fountain of all morality:—

"Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God; to walk
As in His presence; ever to observe
His Providence; and on Him sole depend;

Merciful over all His works; with good
Still overcoming evil; and by small
Accomplishing great things; by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong; and worldly wise
By simply meek; that suffering for truth's sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And to the faithful, death the gate of life,
Taught that by His example, whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest."*

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* Paradise Lost, Book xii., lines 561—573.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN BUNYAN.

If antiquity were identical with truth, orthodox Christianity would certainly exist in the Church of Rome. That is undoubtedly the church to which the great apostle of the Gentiles addressed the Epistle to the Romans. A succession to the apostles, however, is of no avail where there is not also a succession to those glorious principles for the maintenance of which they lived and died. In this, it is easy to prove the deficiency of the Latin church. The Epistle referred to is remarkable for maintaining that salvation is not of works but of grace; the very doctrine that the modern church of Rome, in its dogmas of supererogation, merit, and penance, virtually denies, and thus derogates from the glory due to the blessed and only Mediator. This feature of character is sufficient to exhibit the papal system as a deceiver and an anti-christ, whilst its practices show, not only that it is presided over by a man of sin, who "sitteth in the temple of God, showing

himself that he is God," but that its votaries are those who "forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats, which God has ordained to be received with thanksgiving."

From the vast influence of the Romish system upon the mind of Christendom, we need not be surprised at many of its features having been retained in the Reformation itself. The next obvious fact to the great progress the Reformation has made, is the little it has accomplished in proportion to that progress. This has arisen, in the majority of instances, from the continued maintenance of the union between church and state. That unhappy alliance, which originated when the emperor Constantine endowed religion for political purposes, is based upon a fundamental mistake—the supposition that spiritual religion and temporal government are principles in unison. The fact is, that they are essentially antagonistic. Government is merely a necessary evil, designed to restrain the passions of men by appealing to their fear. Religion, on the other hand, is an indispensable good, intended to extinguish those passions by the subduing influence of love. Where the latter has prevailed, the former is unnecessary. We are told by an inspired writer that "the law is not for a righteous man, but for the disobedient and profane." Legal restraint, therefore, is only neces-

sary during the existence of the present corrupt state of society; but on the arrival of that glorious time when every individual member of the community shall be under the influence of the principles of the gospel, it will give place to "the perfect law of liberty." Civil government will then die a natural death, or the form of it be maintained only for purposes of social combination.

This is no vain dream of Fifth-monarchists, or idle speculation of Millenarians. It is an obvious conclusion from the very nature of things. In proportion to the moral and religious character of a nation, will be the freedom of its institutions. Barbarism requires the exercise of despotic power; civilization that of a milder restraint; whilst social advancement, combined with Christianity, is compatible with a liberal constitution. But when a nation shall have advanced to that degree of spiritual attainment which we anticipate, not in any literal millennium, but in the glory of the latter day, the civil power will give place, not to anarchy, but to an invisible Theocracy, maintained by the love to God and man, implanted by the gospel in the heart of every subject. It is in this sense that the Lord will "overturn, overturn, overturn, until He shall come whose right it is to reign," a prediction sufficient to prove that although government and

religion be co-existent, and it be absolutely necessary to maintain the one until the entire establishment of the other, the two are utterly at variance, and any attempt to combine them must ever be a complete and disastrous failure. This is confirmed by the experience of history. To reverse the saying of Sir William Grant, the effect of the union between church and state has been, not to make the state religious, but the church political.

To come to our own times and our own country, we read the failure of this unfortunate experiment in the annals of the church of England. It was the desire to retain the temporalities of the papal times, that caused its fathers and founders to effect a compromise between popery and protestantism, and endeavour to unite two incompatible extremes. As the result of this attempt, the Anglican establishment is, at the present day, represented by those who are called Puseyite or high-church in their opinions (and who are unquestionably the most candid exponents of its standards in their natural sense), as merely a branch of that Catholic church, of which the Bishop of Rome is the head; whilst, on the other hand, by those who are better Christians and worse churchmen, it is regarded as a most valuable bulwark against the errors and encroachments of the papacy. In one word—embracing every variety

of religious opinion, it presents nothing more than a conglomeration of contradictions, held together solely by the interests of a secular corporation.

It has been said that the church of England destroys more souls than it saves. We cannot accept this statement in its literality, because we do not possess the statistics of the invisible world; but the fact remains indisputable, that even the purest church, when united to the state, is, through the association of worldly advantages with religious position, far more calculated to injure men's souls than to benefit them. It is the belief in this principle that justifies dissent—that renders it a virtue, instead of being, as it was once described by a more zealous than discreet conformist, a crime worse than drunkenness. But were the national church more useful than it is, the fact would avail nothing against the plain declaration of our Saviour, "My kingdom is not of this world." For as the Almighty makes use even of the wicked for Himself, so He has frequently educed a considerable amount of good from systems the most unworthy. "There are a few names, even in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments," was the testimony of the Spirit to the most declining of the Asiatic churches. So have the churches of Rome and of England, the latter more especially, contained, through the abounding grace of

God, the most exemplary members, "men that have hazarded their lives for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And even with reference to the former, the greatest evangelical preacher of modern times,* himself a dissenter and a baptist, administered a severe rebuke to one who would have excluded Fenelon and Pascal from the table of the Lord.

There is, however, a dark as well as a bright side to every picture. The warmest admirers of the Anglican establishment are unable to deny that there was an age in which their favourite hierarchy conducted the most relentless and unmitigated persecution. We allude not so much to the days of the virgin queen, when dissenters were occasionally burned alive, or to those of Laud, when they were deprived of their ears, and exposed in the pillory, as to the profligate era of the Restoration—a period of misrule for ever associated with the St. Bartholomew of England, and the merciless deeds of the relentless Claverhouse in Scotland. Intolerance then decreed, that not only were papists and presbyterians to be suppressed, but also the various denominations comprising the puritans of the preceding period. Here again, in events as in systems, we discern a Divine hand producing good

* Robert Hall. It is impossible to refer to his name without a tribute of respect to the memory of so distinguished a divine.

out of evil. The two nonconforming bodies most fiercely assailed, were the Society of Friends and the Antipædobaptists. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church: and it developed in the instance of the quakers such a character as William Penn, whilst in that of the baptists, it called forth the genius and the piety of John Bunyan.

In attempting to sketch the history of the last-named character, we are reminded of the principle that the life of a great writer is best read in his works; for this is especially true in the instance of Bunyan, amongst whose writings is to be found one of the most interesting pieces of autobiography in our language, entitled "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners." This, as will appear from its name, is principally devoted to his religious experience; but from it we can gather enough to prove that his capacity for writing the "Pilgrim's Progress" did not proceed from any merely external circumstances of advantage. He was born at Elstow near Bedford, in the year 1628, of obscure but godly parents, who, like many pious persons in all ages of the world, must have fearfully neglected the moral training of their offspring; for it appears that from absolute childhood he grew up to maturity a most determined ruffian. We know of no other word in our language that can more appropriately designate the early cha-

racter of this great man. His father was a tinker, and the son followed the same calling; but during the civil war served in the parliamentary army—a proof that its ranks were not so invariably pure as those who represent Cromwell as a saint, and his Ironsides as men of piety and prayer, are desirous to imagine. In this capacity, Bunyan was present at the siege of Leicester, in 1645, and during his military as well as his ordinary career, experienced escapes so extraordinary that they would have told upon the heart of any, but one so worthless and abandoned as he then was. He was spared, however, in the Divine arrangements, to accomplish the great work of his life, his gradual preparation for which is apparent in almost every line of the "Grace Abounding."

It is remarkable, that in his autobiographical narrative, he never once alludes to any instruction of a religious nature that came in his way during his career as a soldier—remarkable, not because it is at all calculated to excite surprise, but because it completely overthrows the wild dreams of those admirers of the republican army alluded to above. According to them, the regiments of the Puritan commanders were edifying assemblies, replete with holy communion upon topics of religious experience. According to fact, a camp is invariably the scene of ungoverned

passion and unbridled licentiousness, only restrained from open violence by that necessarily severe military discipline which is in itself almost equally demoralizing. An army in active service is the instrument of death and destruction—if unemployed, the vehicle of vice and debauchery. So fearful a position is that of the soldier, that unless Divine grace interfere to prevent, he must kill either time or his fellow-creatures. This is the awful alternative presented to those whose calling, appropriately styled, by one of themselves, an infernal profession, constitutes them the destroyers and defacers of the image of God. And when all the malignant passions that make up the pursuit of warfare are excited, not against some ruthless invader, whose incursions might seem to excuse if not to justify their exercise, but against the very nation to which the soldier himself belongs, nought else than depravity can be expected to distinguish his character.

It was neither in the camp nor on the field, but when withdrawn to the quiet of domestic life, that Bunyan met with the first check to the downward course he had hitherto been pursuing. His wife, whose father, he tells us, had been pious, possessed absolutely nothing of this world's goods but two religious books. The perusal of these—for, low as was his origin, he had been taught to read and write—first awakened his mind to a desire for refor-

mation. In the outset, however, he fell into a condition of pharisaism akin to that engendered by popery. Beginning to frequent his parish church, he regarded with profound reverence the persons of both minister and clerk, and trusted by great attention to the outward proprieties of life, to merit the favour of God, an error that has led to the ruin of thousands. At length, on one occasion, he happened to overhear the conversation of some poor but experimental Christians, which convinced him that they were in possession of something respecting which he was absolutely ignorant. This led him to a diligent investigation of the Scriptures; and no sooner was this begun, than he became exposed to a series of temptations both from within and without such as perhaps no other human mind ever experienced to the same extent, but of which all who "have passed from death unto life" know something in kind, although not in an equal degree. We are aware that many are disposed to regard such experiences as merely the workings of disordered fanaticism. Some, indeed, tell us that there is no such being as Satan, that his name is only an impersonation of the evil principle existing in the human mind, that the spirit is its own tempter, and that to suppose it influenced by any other spirit, is a palpable absurdity. We would refer all such objectors to the

pages of the "Grace Abounding." There is no evidence of anything like a disordered mental equilibrium throughout the entire narrative. It is worthy of the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress," whilst it bears to that far more imaginative composition, the relation that the finder sustains to the telescope. At the same time nothing can be more clear than that there was impressed upon the mind of the writer an influence from without, far beyond his own ability to control, which involved him in a degree of misery and wretchedness that every internal power of the soul was vainly exerted to remove. The detail of these years of spiritual suffering may be appropriately summed up in the words of one of the most eloquent of English historians:—

"His keen sensibility and his powerful imagination made his internal conflicts singularly terrible. He fancied that he was under sentence of reprobation, that he had committed blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, that he had sold Christ, that he was actually possessed by a demon. Sometimes loud voices from heaven cried out to warn him. Sometimes fiends whispered impious suggestions in his ear. He saw visions of distant mountain tops on which the sun shone brightly, but from which he was separated by a waste of snow. He felt the devil behind him pulling his clothes. He thought that the brand of

Cain had been set upon him. He feared that he was about to burst asunder like Judas. His mental agony disordered his health. One day he shook like a man in the palsy. On another day he felt a fire within his breast. It is difficult to understand how he survived sufferings so intense and so long continued. At length the clouds broke. From the depths of despair the penitent passed to a state of serene felicity."*

In his deeply interesting autobiography, Bunyan ascribes the deliverance which at length came to his soul, to an abundant revelation of the righteousness of Christ. He says, "Methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand—there, I say, was my righteousness, so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, he wants my righteousness, for that was just before Him."† This passage is an instructive comment upon the tenets of those who reject what is ordinarily called the evangelical view of Christianity. Papists, high churchmen, worldlings, Unitarians, and

* Macaulay's History of England. Vol. ii. page 227. The above quotation is one of the finest examples of that historian's talent, ripened no doubt by experience in reviewing, to condense the substance of volumes into a few concise and elegant sentences. The paragraph cited is a complete *précis* of the autobiographical narrative of Bunyan's experience.

† Bunyan's Grace Abounding.

mere moralists, have laboured to shew that an undue prominence is given, according to that view, to the doctrine of atonement; but Bunyan's experience proves that they have laboured in vain. There is no real happiness where there is not also an humble and a constant dependence upon the merits and the mediation of a crucified Redeemer. It is true that an individual may, under the influence of false views of truth, deem himself safe for another world, when he is really resting on a false foundation, and so far as he is relieved from apprehension, may possess a negative degree of happiness; but positive satisfaction will never be enjoyed where the gospel is unknown. By the gospel is to be understood that system of which the Saviour constitutes the centre, and the sun. Such is the position assigned to him by the scriptures of inspiration. Of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence. Whilst, therefore, modern theologians, or rather neologians, would bid us look for the development of Christ to that inner life which, rightly viewed, is nought else than the working of our own depravity, let us rather look beyond ourselves, to that glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God, which has power to redeem us from all our corruptions. And

let us put the inquiry to each of our own hearts—"how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard Him?"

"Bunyan," says a modern writer,* "had run the round of sin; had sown the seed of vice, and brought forth the bitter fruits of repentance; had felt intense alarm lest eternal torments should swallow up his soul in death; had fled for and found refuge in the sufferings of Christ. His burden removed, he loved much, because to him much had been forgiven; he had been brought up out of horrible darkness, and well was he qualified to aid those who were walking through the dismal valley of the shadow of death." It is the characteristic of genuine Christianity—though not of highly Calvinistic views, which are certainly anything than evangelical—to be utterly unselfish. The mind that has once tasted the unsearchable riches of Christ, naturally longs to impart them to others. Having united himself with the congregational church at Bedford, of which a large proportion of the members were, like himself, of baptist opinions, he began to itinerate for the purpose of preaching the gospel in the surrounding

* George Offor, Esq., in his Introduction to the edition of the Pilgrim's Progress published by the Hanserd Knollys Society, page xxxii.

neighbourhood; and for this he was cast into prison. The reign of Charles the Second had just commenced, and every effort was being made by a worthless king, a godless church, an abandoned court, and a servile parliament, to increase the severity of the laws against nonconformists, in the hope of extinguishing vital religion. Bunyan was the first, during the reign of the second Charles, punished, according to Dr. Southey, persecuted, according to Dr. Cheever, for nonconformity; and as the old proverb says, "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" we leave our readers to choose which of these two expressions they are inclined to adopt. Often, however, in the history of the Christian church, as in that of the Jewish during the captivity, have the devices of its enemies recoiled upon themselves, and defeated the very end they were intended to serve. Bunyan's long imprisonment in Bedford jail, for refusing to attend his parish church, and use the book of Common Prayer, was the means of calling into existence another book, far better calculated to build up and admonish the church universal than the one last named, admired though that be by its advocates, and admirable as, in many respects, it really is.

It was the first part of the "Pilgrim's Progress," which, together with the "Grace Abounding," and

two other treatises, was written during the confinement of the author for a period of twelve years in that very dungeon, the loathsomeness of which subsequently stimulated the philanthropic genius of Howard to rise up and reform the prison-world of Europe. It was a damp, dark, and dreary cell, wherein, though he had access to the Bible and other good books, Bunyan's time was not all leisure for study and composition—having to work with his own hands, that neither himself nor his family, one of whom was afflicted with blindness, might be chargeable to any one. But true indeed are the words of his great contemporary:—

> "The mind is its own place, and of itself
> Can make a heaven of hell"——

And thus did the piety and genius of Bunyan, who, unlettered as he was, had read much and experienced more, transform the hell upon earth to which his body had been consigned by a nominally Christian and protestant hierarchy, into a heaven of free communion with the Father of Spirits, whence was to issue that wonderful and almost inspired parable which was destined to cheer, console, and direct so many travellers on the way to Zion.

It is, after all, but feeble praise, to say of the "Pilgrim's Progress," that it is worthy of a place

beside those extraordinary productions of the same era, "Paradise Lost" and "Robinson Crusoe;" but we may say that it possesses many attributes in common with those wonderful works. Like them, it failed at its first publication to create the sensation that might have been expected from its intrinsic merit, and for the same reason—that it was in advance of its age. Bunyan no more made a fortune by his great work than did Milton or Defoe by theirs. His history—and we may as well dismiss it at once, for it has been of late so thoroughly elucidated by abler hands, that there is no occasion to dwell upon it in detail—was that of an humble baptist minister to the end of his days. Delivered at last from his protracted imprisonment, through the humane intercession of a spiritual peer, he lived to become pastor of the church from which he had been severed, and to publish to the world, not only the valuable results of his prison experience, but other works of great merit, which were, however, at the time, appreciated only by a few. Having nobly repudiated the indulgence which James the Second proffered to the protestant dissenters at the expense of the constitution, he at length died whilst on a visit to London, on the eve of the revolution of 1688, leaving his dust to be interred in a cemetery which his ashes have made memorable, and committing his spirit to the hands

of God who gave it. Whilst he rests from his labours, his works do follow him, and his name will shine, as that of one who "turned many to righteousness. as the stars for ever and ever."

One word is due to the memory of this great writer, so long since removed to the glorious fellowship of the church above, in vindication of the position which he occupied in the communion of saints upon earth. He belonged to the denomination now usually called Baptist, but originally Antipædobaptist, on account of the tenet by which it is distinguished from the whole of Christendom besides. This has appeared to many a trivial point of difference. We are, on the contrary, disposed to consider it one of the most essential and vital importance. Nearly all the errors that have ever corrupted Christianity—the ceremonies of the Greek church, the superstitions of Romanism, and the absurdities attaching to several protestant systems—have arisen from the want of strict adherence to the practices of the New Testament. One of those practices is, unquestionably, the baptism of believers. None other is recorded in the pages of inspiration, except the baptism of John, a ceremonial connected with the old economy; the baptism for the dead, a superstitious observance introduced by Judaizing teachers at an early period of the church,

and that baptism "in the Holy Ghost and in fire,"* which is the substance of that of which all other baptisms are merely the shadow. The argument in favour of the baptism of children, drawn from the instance of Lydia's household, may well be denominated a conjecture, but is scarcely entitled to the designation of an inference. To base infant baptism upon such a hypothesis, is to make the point of a needle the foundation for a pyramid. Hence other arguments are usually sought from precedents immediately subsequent to the apostolic age, but which the impartial inquirer ought to reject; for it is evident from the Pauline and other epistles, that a vast amount of error had crept into the churches, even during the lifetime of the apostles, and therefore a still larger amount was likely to prevail after they had passed away. This supposition is confirmed by the writings of the Fathers, whence we find that Judaizing Christians, arguing from the rite of circumcision under the old economy, admitted infants to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

* Such is the force of the original in those passages where, in the authorized version, the particle is translated *with*. It may be as well to observe here, that although in many, perhaps in most cases, the early disciples baptized by immersion, we have no reason for supposing that this mode was invariably pursued.

Although the latter abuse soon became extinct, the former has obtained throughout Christendom to the present day, and been the fruitful parent of baptismal regeneration, and other dangerous and absurd theories, by which the ungodly have been induced to repose their confidence upon outward formalities, instead of a change of heart. The first step towards this fearful conclusion is avoided by cleaving to the primitive simplicity of the antipædobaptists. It is clear from the New Testament scriptures, that believers were baptized, whilst the same authority is absolutely silent as to the participation of unconscious children in that intelligent ordinance. The most, therefore, that can be said on behalf of pædobaptists is that they may be right: but a baptist, in following the practice of the apostles, cannot by any possibility be wrong.

We have already spoken of Bunyan, as the pastor of a congregational church (for it was one in which the mode and subjects of baptism were, very properly, open questions), and this circumstance leads us to a distinguishing excellence of his persuasion—strict adherence to the principles of Congregationalism, which, we have reason to believe, are nearly akin to the church order of the New Testament. Those who consider independents as the best baptists, have willingly admitted baptists to be the best indepen-

dents. By this is meant, that in adherence to congregational principles they have been more uniformly consistent than those brethren with whom, in the matter of order, they have divided the palm of orthodoxy. That they have scriptural warrant for such consistency, it is comparatively easy to prove. We read in the apostolic writings of churches in the plural: the notion of the essential visible unity of the church is a fabrication of later times. We believe, it is true, in "one catholic and apostolic church," that is, "the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven;" but these form an organization absolutely invisible, so far as regards the earth. The distribution of believers throughout geographical space, is one of many proofs that a system of centralization, like the Church of Rome, was never intended in a present world. Temporal circumstances necessitate, not diversities of sentiment, but separations of assembly. Hence, in the book of Revelation, the seven churches of Asia are distinctly addressed through the angel or bishop of each, and no reference is made to the metropolitan of any diocese in which they might have been comprehended. Diocesan episcopacy seems to have arisen from the increase of missionary churches, but in the days of inspiration, such arrangements were evidently unknown. When a church is addressed by

an apostle, as that of the Philippians by St. Paul, reference is made only to two classes of officers, bishops and deacons. From the epistles to Timothy and Titus, as well as from the Acts of the Apostles, it appears that the former attended to the spiritual instruction, the latter to the temporal arrangements of the flock. This was a state of things very different from that in which a bishop has become a superintendent of pastors, a deacon an inferior class of minister, and a minister or pastor has been styled a priest, as though he had a sacrifice to offer, whereas the Redeemer himself has "by one offering perfected for ever those who are sanctified." The independents and baptists of our own age and country, have, in their ecclesiastical system, restored church government to something like its original simplicity—the only valid objection to modern congregationalism being its usual limitation of a church to one bishop or pastor; whereas it would seem that in the apostolic times there were several, although, of course, one must have had precedence over the rest.

To return from this digression respecting John Bunyan's denominational views, to the character of his great work, we find it to have been eminently catholic and unsectarian. This proves that a firm adherence to conscientious ews upon religious subjects, is perfectly consistent with the utmost libe-

rality. The "Pilgrim's Progress," so far from being a baptist or a congregationalist book, is one in which every Christian has a kind of freehold interest. It has received the approval of writers of every variety of religious sentiment. As a testimony in its favour, we may again cite the great historian already quoted with reference to Bunyan.

"The 'Pilgrim's Progress' was, in his own lifetime, translated into several foreign languages. It was, however, scarcely known to the learned and polite, and had been during near a century the delight of pious cottagers and artizans, before it was publicly commended by any man of high literary eminence. At length critics condescended to inquire where the secret of so wide and durable a popularity lay. They were compelled to own that the ignorant multitude had judged more correctly than the learned, and that the despised little book was really a master-piece. Bunyan is, indeed, as decidedly the first of allegorists, as Demosthenes is the first of orators, or Shakspere the first of dramatists. Other allegorists have shewn equal ingenuity, but no other allegorist has ever been able to touch the heart, and to make abstractions objects of terror, of pity, and of love."*

Had the above encomium been written by other

* History of England, by T. B. Macaulay. Vol. ii., p. 228.

than the accomplished author who composed it, an appropriate parallel to the position of Bunyan amongst allegorists might have been found in that of its writer amongst historians. But to turn from eloquent prose to graceful verse, a merited tribute to our hero's talents and piety may be traced in the poetic eulogy of Cowper.

"Oh thou, whom, borne on fancy's eager wing,
Back to the season of life's happy spring,
I pleased remember, and while memory yet
Holds fast her office here, can ne'er forget;
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale,
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail;
Whose hum'rous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile;
Witty, and well-employed, and, like thy Lord
Speaking in parables his slighted word;
I name thee not, lest so despised a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame;
Yet e'en in transitory life's late day,
That mingles all my brown with sober grey,
Revere the man whose *Pilgrim* marks the road,
And guides the *Progress* of the soul to God."*

Whether indeed this extraordinary parable be read in childhood as a mystic tale, or in riper years as an illustrative exposition of religious experience, the fascination which it obtains over the mind is the same. It is a book which no one lays down without

* "Tirocinium; or a Review of Schools."

regret, or, on arriving at the close, does not wish to begin again. From England's great lexicographer to England's latest historian, our native critics have been, in its praise, almost equally unanimous. We do not remember to have met with any remarks to its disparagement in our language, except in the biographical notice which its author has received in the "Penny Cyclopædia."* Even the Church of Rome has not been content to dispense with this production of an anabaptist heretic, but has furnished its disciples with abridgments in which all that is considered un-orthodox has been omitted. Its continuations and imitations, both in poetry and prose, have been almost innumerable, and in most instances serve, like base coin, to prove the intrinsic excellence of the original. That excellence has been attested, by its translation into nearly all the languages of the

* One cannot but regret that the pages of a Dictionary so truly national should be disfigured by the following sentiments. "If a judgment is to be formed of the merits of a book by the number of times it has been reprinted, and the many languages into which it has been translated, no production in English literature is superior to this coarse allegory. On a composition which has been extolled by Dr. Johnson, and which in our own times has received a very high critical opinion in its favour, it is hazardous to venture a disapproval, and we perhaps speak the opinion of a small minority when we confess that to us it appears to be mean, jejune, and wearisome."—Penny Cyclopædia. Vol. vi., page 20.

world, civilized or barbarous, living or dead, the Latin and the Hebrew not excepted. Commentators upon the allegory and the history of its author are about as numerous as those upon Shakspere; and in this department of literature the prize must be awarded to a transatlantic competitor, Dr. Cheever, the excellence of whose Lectures on Bunyan, renders it difficult to write more upon the same subject without being painfully reminded of the position of the public speaker, who thought he could do no better than say "ditto" to Mr. Burke.

In the "Pilgrim's Progress," Bunyan has painted the real with the fidelity of Shakspere; and portrayed the unreal with the imagination of Milton. When we remember that the writer who united talents so seldom combined, was originally only an unlettered tinker, the book becomes as striking a monument of his genius as it is of his piety. The volume, of course, has its faults, or it would not be of merely human origin; and one of these is a disposition to discover similitudes in Scripture without sufficient authority—although this is not so apparent as in other of the author's works. If the Bible, however, be not itself an allegory, it is possible to construct a magnificent one in illustration of the sublime truths it reveals: and this is precisely what Bunyan has done in the instance of the "Pilgrim's

Progress"; a far more splendid monument of his fame than the marble statue appropriately erected to his memory in the decorated halls of our national legislature. Notwithstanding its defects—for they are few indeed, and small—that volume forms a tomb, for which, as Milton said of Shakspere's works, even kings might wish to die. He has left, moreover, another memorial of his piety and genius in an allegory nearly equal in extent, but not in execution; the "Holy War"—one that if its predecessor had never been written, might have immortalized his fame, but which, as it is, occupies, with reference to the "Pilgrim's Progress," the position which "Paradise Regained" sustains to "Paradise Lost." It is by the beautiful parable of the Pilgrim, that the name of John Bunyan will ever be remembered—that parable, the substance of which has been exquisitely condensed in verse, by one of the most pathetic of our poets—himself a minister of the very communion that, in less enlightened days, had originally incarcerated the illustrious dreamer.

"Pilgrim, burthen'd with thy sin,
Come the way to Zion's gate;
There, till Mercy let thee in,
Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.
Knock!—He knows the sinner's cry;
Weep!—He loves the mourner's tears;
Watch!—for saving grace is nigh,
Wait!—till heavenly light appears.

"Hark! it is the Bridegroom's voice;—
Welcome, Pilgrim, to thy rest;
Now within the gate rejoice,
Safe, and sealed, and bought, and blest!
Safe—from all the lures of vice;
Seal'd—by signs the chosen know;
Bought—by love and life the price;
Blest—the mighty debt to owe.

"Holy Pilgrim! what for thee
In a world like this remain?
From thy guarded breast shall flee
Fear, and shame, and doubt, and pain.
Fear—the hope of heaven shall fly;
Shame—from glory's view retire;
Doubt—in certain rapture die;
Pain—in endless bliss expire."*

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* Crabbe's Miscellaneous Poems. "Sir Eustace Grey."

CHAPTER VI.

DANIEL DEFOE.

THERE are, probably, but few, who, in the earlier period of life, have not perused, with the most intense interest, the romantic adventures of Robinson Crusoe. In reading that wonderful fiction, we ever seem to be present with the hero. We are with him when he is thrown by the waves on the shore of the desolate island; when, year after year, he resides there alone; when, after a lengthened period, the accidental discovery of a human footprint in the sand causes him, like the bird of night in Gray's Elegy, to

> "complain
> "Of such as wandering near" his "lonely bower
> "Molest" his "ancient solitary reign;"

We are identified with him whilst he views with horror from the top of a hill the cannibal feast of the barbarians on the shore, and when, on a subsequent occasion, his rescue of their victim procures

him at last a companion in his loneliness; whilst we sympathize in his gratitude when the mutiny of an English vessel becomes the means of his return to his native country. We seem, in short, to be in the midst of his every perilous adventure, and his every happy deliverance. So well is the story told, that the reader, by a powerful sympathy, becomes, as it were, the hero of the tale.

That tale has found readers in every quarter of the globe; yet few of them have reflected that great as was the author in fiction, he was greater far in truth; that he was a man who went to the pillory for his opinions, and gave proof that, if needful, he would have gone to the stake; that he was one who frequented a meeting-house, who conducted a review, and who would, in later times, have been branded with the name of a political dissenter. Daniel Defoe dared to think for himself at a time when independence of thought was comparatively unknown. If an honest man be, as the poet tells us, "the noblest work of God," Defoe was most undoubtedly entitled to that appellation. It is in this point of view that we propose to regard his character. That he was a novelist not to be equalled is a mere accident of his history:—that his opinions were in advance of his time, and yet that he never hesitated to avow them, constitute his highest claim to an approval which

succeeding generations have practically awarded, by carrying out the principles which he was among the first to maintain.

That district of the metropolis which possesses the tomb of the nonconformist poet who successfully disputed the honours of Parnassus with Homer and Virgil, is also distinguished as the birth-place of the greatest of English prose writers. It was in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, where his father, an honest dissenter, carried on the business of a butcher, that Daniel Defoe was born, in the year 1661. It was no light thing to be a dissenter in those days. The Stewart tyranny had just been restored in the person of an abandoned profligate; the Church of England, that Dagon which had fallen before the ark, not of the covenant, but of the covenanters, had been again set up in its place; and the legislature, drunk with loyalty, wreaked the vengeance of offended despotism upon unhappy nonconformity. The Conventicle and Five-mile Acts virtually abolished all public worship except that of the Established Church. Dissenters were compelled to hold their religious meetings in secret; and whenever they were discovered, their fellowship was put an end to by the civil officer, with an order to depart in the king's name. A social prayer-meeting would often procure for its members a night's incarceration.

Dissenters of the present day, who, with no fear of fines or forfeitures before them, frequent the meeting-house in as much security as their episcopalian neighbours the parish church; who, from the counting-house or the market, resort to their happy fire-sides without any to make them afraid on account of their religious belief, can form but a very inadequate idea of the sufferings which their predecessors underwent for their attachment to the glorious cause of truth and freedom. But it is still a question whether the religion of modern dissent be as vital as the piety of those early nonconformists. Earnest wrestlings with God must have been the prayers of holy men, who dared to address Him in their own words, when the church and the state had combined to forbid them. The supplications of those who were every moment expecting their assembly to be violently dispersed, could have been nothing less than "words that breathe," and "thoughts that burn." Persecution is undoubtedly the wind that fans the flame of genuine Christianity, and if it increase to a hurricane, the fire, instead of being blown out, will only burn with the more vivid intensity. No wonder that in the times of intolerance, a poor tinker of Bedford, incarcerated for daring to preach without authority from the state, should compose the "Pilgrim's Progress" in his dreary dungeon. No

wonder that the Latin secretary to Cromwell, whom government would gladly have brought alive to the punishment which it inflicted on the dead body of his master, should retire into private life, and write "Paradise Lost." Such works as those, which are "not for an age, but for all time," are not produced now, just because religion is in circumstances so easy, that the value of its principles is not felt to the same degree by those who profess them.

In process of time, it was discovered, even by the besotted government of Charles the Second, that the outbreak of persecution it had at first engendered, failed in accomplishing the ends for which it was designed. An indulgence to dissenters was granted, which licensed their ministers and meeting-houses, under certain restrictions. At the same time that Bunyan came forth to enlighten the town of Bedford with the practical lessons of his prison experience, Annesley, whom the Bartholomew Act had ejected from the living of St. Giles, Cripplegate, was enabled to preach publicly in the meeting-house of Little St. Helen's. Upon the ministry of this godly man the father of Defoe attended, and not the least interested of his hearers was the youthful Daniel. The young nonconformist, fearing, in his zeal for the Word of God, that the intolerant government might go to the popish length of forbidding its circulation alto-

gether, actually copied for himself the whole Pentateuch in manuscript. In this incident of his early life, we discern the character of the future man; a character which Annesley was, undoubtedly, a great instrument in forming. Defoe, in mature life, drew the following beautiful picture of his early instructor.

"The sacred bow he so divinely drew,
That every shot both hit and overthrew;
His native candour, and familiar style,
Which did so oft his hearer's hours beguile,
Charmed us with godliness, and while he spake,
We loved the doctrine for the teacher's sake,
While he informed us what those doctrines meant
By dint of practice more than argument.

* * * *

A Moses for humility and zeal,
For innocence a true Nathaniel;
Faithful as Abraham, or the truer spies;
No man more honest, and but few so wise;
Exemplar virtue shone through every part,
For grace had full possession of his heart;

* * * *

With such a soul, that, had he mines in store,
He'd ne'er be rich while any man was poor:
A heart so great, that had he but a purse,
'Twould have supplied the poor of th' universe.
Now he's above the praises of my pen,
The best of ministers, and best of men!"*

In addition to these advantages of a purely reli-

* "A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of the True-born Englishman. The character of the late Mr. Samuel Annesley, by way of Elegy," pages 113, 115.

gious character, Defoe had the benefit of a superior education at the first dissenters' school of the day, the proprietor of which became ultimately the vice-president of a college in that land of the far west whither the pilgrim fathers had emigrated.

> "Aye, call it holy ground,
> The spot where first they trod;
> They have left unstained what there they found,
> Freedom to worship God!"

The times of Defoe's early life were well calculated, from the preposterous tyranny that disgraced them, to impress a mind like his with a sense of the value of genuine freedom. Whilst the monstrous fiction of the popish plot sent its innocent victims to the scaffold, and banished the catholic peers from parliament, Louis XIV. retained in his pay not only the heartless libertine upon the throne, but the so-called representatives of the people on the benches of St. Stephen's. Lauderdale and Claverhouse were carrying fire and sword throughout Scotland in the name of Christianity, and torturing the unhappy presbyterians with the thumbscrew and the boot. These enormities were followed by the successful attempt of the profligate tyrant to govern England without any parliament whatever; and, as its natural result, the Rye-House plot, which, whether real or pretended, brought to an untimely end, besides other

illustrious names, one of that noble house which in happier times has witnessed another of its members the author of the Reform Bill, and the first minister of a constitutional government. Such a state of things could not fail to excite the ardent spirit of our youthful hero, who had just embarked in business as a hose-factor in the city, and at the age of two-and-twenty, he appeared before the public as a political pamphleteer.

The reign of the second Charles was followed by that of James the Second, whose attempts to bring about a condition of religious equality by a violation of the constitution, whilst they offended not merely the state-endowed episcopalians, but all who had any regard for the authority of parliament, were calculated to prove a severe trial to the patriotism of the hitherto despised and degraded dissenters. Defoe, however, saw at once that the efforts of the priest-ridden monarch were directed to no other end than the establishment of his favourite creed, which, when possessed of the power to persecute, is never wanting in the will. The motives of the sovereign our hero did not hesitate to expose, in publications for which some infatuated nonconformists gave him no thanks at the time. But the event proved that his views on the subject had been correct. The protestant ecclesiastical establishment constituted the Diana, for

which state-paid clergy made silver shrines, and when they saw their craft in danger, they were the foremost to raise the cry of Demetrius. Their intrigues, joined to the more disinterested efforts of honester men, soon brought to this country William of Orange, a prince whose personal opinions were far in advance of many who had called in his aid. But, by whomsoever summoned, Defoe felt that he could conscientiously support a monarch whose very position pledged him to oppose unconstitutional interference with the liberty of the subject, and he joined heart and soul in the revolution (though often unduly extolled, yet truly glorious), which was the means of placing that monarch on the throne.

Whilst thus occupied with the public events of the day, our hero did not fail faithfully to discharge the private duties of life; and in this he sets a striking example to many modern politicians, especially of the radical school, who too frequently neglect their homes and their business to hurrah for democracy. He was now married, and the success of his undertakings in Freeman's-court, Cornhill, afforded him the means of relaxation in a country house at Tooting. In that secluded village, instead of making the want of a meeting-house a pretext for conformity, he had the honesty and the principle to erect one himself, and to supply it with a minister

upon whose teaching the educated and the respectable might attend. We may safely venture to assert that few nonconformists of modern times would have done as much for the cause of religion in the midst of a revolution like that of 1688; a revolution of such political importance, that it may be said to have first given a settled constitution to this country, which it transformed into a republic in fact, though not in name, by vesting the right of nomination to the throne in the representatives of the people.

He was not permitted, however, to remain in that condition of prosperity, which, whilst it continued, he had turned to such good account. The concern in which he was embarked failed in 1692, but his character stood the test of adversity, as well as it had borne the honours of wealth. One of his creditors made him a bankrupt, and to avoid the difficulties of such a position, he took refuge in the city of Bristol. It was not, however, to flee from his obligations that he sought retirement. Upon the surrender of his property, he obtained a composition with his creditors; but so far was he from regarding this as a final settlement, that, as soon as his circumstances permitted, he voluntarily paid the difference between the amount at which he was discharged, and twenty shillings in the pound.

At Bristol, Defoe composed his "Essay on Pro-

jects," which he afterwards published in 1697. It was a remarkable work, suggestive of several ingenious and well-adapted schemes for the improvement of society. These were lost upon the age in which they were published, and of which they were in advance, but it has been left to succeeding generations to carry many of them out. Dr. Franklin has recorded his obligations to this work, and other social and political reformers might well afford to do the same. It treated, amongst other subjects, of the banking system, of bankruptcy laws, insurance-offices, friendly societies, the necessity for a national academy, the improvement of female education, and in order thereto, of that which the nineteenth century has only just devised, a college for the fairer sex. Perhaps in nothing was Defoe more in advance of his time, than in that sure indication of a great mind, the high estimate which he formed of the

> "fairest of creation, last and best
> Of all God's works."

In a passage of the essay which the Edinburgh Reviewer* has compared to the best writings of Steele, he says:—"A woman well-bred and well-taught, furnished with the additional accomplishments of knowledge and behaviour, is a creature

* Vol. lxxxii. p. 493.

without comparison. Her society is the emblem of sublimer enjoyments; she is all softness and sweetness, love, wit, and delight." These sentiments will appear the most valuable, when we reflect that they are the result of the experience of one who for ten years had been initiated into the cares as well as the pleasures of the marriage state.

It may seem almost profane to compare the author of such a passage as that just quoted, with one who sacrificed so little to the Graces (at least in public) as did the late William Cobbett: yet it is impossible to review the career of the two men without discovering in several points of their character, a striking similarity. Many of Cobbett's publications were directed to the same end as Defoe's "Essay on Projects," namely, the domestic and social improvement of the masses. Like Defoe, he was an earnest and an active politician, yet he disdained not to look down from the sphere, almost of statesmanship, to which his talents had raised him, to write a work on "Cottage Economy," and to publish a practical treatise on Gardening. On the benches of St. Stephen's, he could remember the home whence he came, the humble fireside of the labouring man. Like Defoe also, his principles were not understood by the men of his generation, because they penetrated far beyond them. He was shunned as a radical, just

as Defoe was avoided for being a dissenter. He conducted his "Register," as Defoe his "Review." He reproved the follies of his day, as forcibly as Defoe had satirized those of a preceding age. As Defoe sought relaxation from politics in the composition of such works as "Robinson Crusoe," or the "History of the Plague," so did Cobbett, like Horne Tooke in the "Diversions of Purley," find his recreations in the subtleties of French and English grammar. As Defoe, unappreciated by his contemporaries, was better understood by those who came after, so the opinions of Cobbett have been adopted since his death by men who never avowed them in his life-time. Just as we behold the correctness of Defoe's principles practically admitted by our modern reformers, so have we already witnessed the correctness of Cobbett's views; even to his anathema upon Sir Walter Raleigh's favourite tuber, the justness of which has been discerned more than once, when it has pleased the Almighty to visit with the withering blast of famine the Emerald isle. So far may the parallel be traced; it ceases if we endeavour to pursue it into the loftier regions of religion and morality. The builder of dissenting meeting-houses, the author of the "Family Instructor," was not, with all his love of liberty, one who would have burned incense to the reliques of a profligate free-

thinker like Tom Paine. Defoe stands before us as an honest, upright, God-fearing man; but the sturdy reformer who has bequeathed a very unwelcome "Legacy to Parsons," displays a flippancy on the sublimest topics, which belongs not to one who successfully preceded him, in exposing, more decorously, the evils of our ecclesiastical establishment.

To return from this long, and perhaps inappropriate digression, we find that Defoe, after the failure of his business in Freeman's-court, became the proprietor of some extensive brick and tile works near Tilbury Fort, in Essex, and resided in their vicinity on the banks of the Thames. At this period of his life were produced several of his most important political treatises. William the Third, now established upon the throne, was a foreign prince; his victories had been gained by alien troops, and there were not wanting in the nation many to raise the cry, familiar even in our own days, of the danger of dependence upon foreigners. The king himself was called upon to dismiss his Dutch guards. The rights of "*true-born* Englishmen" were everywhere asserted, in opposition to those of aliens who could claim no title to so honourable an appellation. Defoe came to the assistance of liberality and justice, with a powerful satire upon the narrow sentiments of merely national prejudice. His "True-born Englishman," a rhyming

pamphlet, appeared in the first year of the eighteenth century, and was successful in its object, by at once putting an end to the cant against which it was directed. "The intent of the satire," says the author in his explanatory preface, "is pointed at the vanity of those who talk of their antiquity, and value themselves upon their pedigree, their ancient families, and being true born; whereas 'tis impossible we should be true born, and if we could, should have lost by the bargain. * * * Our English nation may value themselves for their wit, wealth, and courage, and I believe few nations will dispute it with them; but for long originals, and ancient true-born families of English, I would advise them to waive the discourse. A *true* Englishman is one that deserves a character, and I have nowhere lessened him that I know of; but as for a *true-born* Englishman, I confess I do not understand him."* The following lines may serve as a specimen of the work itself.

"Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
The Devil always builds a chapel there;
And 'twill be found, upon examination,
The latter has the largest congregation,
For ever since he first debauched the mind,
He made a perfect conquest of mankind.

* True Collection, before cited, published 1705. Preface.

With uniformity of service, he
Reigns with a general aristocracy.
No nonconforming sects disturb his reign,
For of his yoke there's very few complain."†

Such is the exordium of the whole: the especial subject of the treatise is introduced as follows:—

"The Romans first with Julius Cæsar came,
Including all the nations of that name,
Gauls, Greeks, and Lombards, and by computation,
Auxiliaries, or slaves of every nation.
With Hengist, Saxons; Danes with Sueno came,
In search of plunder, not in search of fame.
Scots, Picts, and Irish, from th' Hibernian shore;
And conquering William brought the Normans o'er.
All these their barb'rous offspring left behind,
The dregs of armies, they of all mankind;
Blended with Britons who before were here,
Of whom the Welsh ha' blest the character.
From this amphibious ill-born mob began,
That vain, ill-natured thing, an Englishman.

* * * * *

"These are the heroes who despise the Dutch,
And rail at new-come foreigners so much;
Forgetting that themselves are all derived
From the most scoundrel race that ever lived,
A horrid crowd of rambling thieves and drones,
Who ransacked kingdoms, and dispeopled towns.
The Pict and painted Briton, treach'rous Scot,
By hunger, theft, and rapine, hither brought;

† True Collection, page 1.

Norwegian pirates, buccaneering Danes,
Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains;
Who, joined with Norman-French, compound the breed
From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed.

* * * * *

"The wonder which remains is at our pride,
To value that which all wise men deride,
For Englishmen to boast of generation,
Cancels their knowledge, and lampoons the nation.
A *true-born* Englishman's a contradiction,
In speech an irony, in fact a fiction;
A banter made to be a jest of fools,
Which those that use it justly ridicules.
A metaphor invented to express
A man *akin* to all the universe.

* * * * *

"We blame the king that he relies too much
On strangers, Germans, Hugonots, and Dutch;
And seldom would his great affairs of state
To English councillors communicate.
The fact might very well be answered thus;
He has so often been betrayed by us,
He must have been a madman to rely
On English gentlemen's fidelity.
For laying other arguments aside,
This thought might mortify our English pride,
That foreigners have faithfully obeyed him,
And none but English have e'er betrayed him."†

There were sold eighty thousand copies of this rhyming pamphlet, which procured for its non-

† Ibid. pp. 5-34.

conformist author the honour of becoming one of the private advisers of the king, on whose death he produced a similar diatribe, directed against the "Mock Mourners," who pretended, and only pretended, to lament the demise of the crown. The closing lines of this publication contain a sentiment referring to the accession of Anne, which may be considered equally appropriate in the nineteenth century:

> "And let it once more to the world be seen,
> *Nothing can make us greater than a queen.*" *

There was much, however, the reverse of great in the character of the daughter of James the Second. She adored the protestant ecclesiastical establishment, which her father had laboured to overthrow. The high-church and Tory party found in the new sovereign a standard around which they might vigorously rally. The ministry brought a bill into parliament for prohibiting the occasional conformity of dissenters. Up to this period, any one was eligible to a seat in parliament, or to a civil and municipal office, who duly qualified himself by receiving the Communion according to the ritual of the Church of England. It was not essential that he should be a member of that church, but only that he should for once, or occasionally, pass through the ceremonial. Such an

* True Collection, p. 63.

extension of the demand was only consistent: the unreasonableness of the matter lay in the existence of the demand altogether. It was an awful and an irrational thing to prostitute a religious ordinance by making it a stepping-stone to place and power; and surely it was no light matter for dissenters to unite occasionally in that to which they could not constantly conform. If dissent be worth anything at all, it ought to be a garment continually worn, and not thrown aside whenever it may be desirable to put on a holiday dress. This was Defoe's view of the matter, as he brings it before us in his "Discourses on Occasional Conformity," published at this juncture, and in which we find the following remarks:

"He who dissents from an established church from any other reasons but such as these,—that he really believes the said established church is not of the purest institution, but that he can serve God in a form more agreeable to his will, and that accordingly 'tis his duty to do it so, and no otherwise; such an one ought to conform, because to make a wilful schism in the church is doubtless a great sin, and if I can avoid it, I ought to avoid it. * * * He who dissents from the established church, except from a true principle of conscience, is guilty of a great sin. He who conforms to the established church *against* his conscience, is guilty of a great sin. He who

both dissents and conforms at the same time, and in the same point of religion, must be guilty of *one* of these great sins. He who has committed either of these sins, ought not to be received again on either side on any other terms than as a penitent. * * * He who dissents from an established church on any account but from a real principle of conscience, is a political, not a religious dissenter. To explain myself: he who dissents from any other reasons but such as these;—that he firmly believes the said established church is not of the purest institution, but that he can really serve God more agreeably to His will, and that accordingly 'tis his duty to do it so, and not otherwise. Nay, he that cannot die, or at least desire to do so, rather than conform, ought to conform. Schism from the church of Christ is, doubtless, a great sin, and if I can avoid it, I ought to avoid it; but, if not, the cause of that sin carries the guilt with it. But if I shall thus dissent, and yet at the same time conform, by conforming I deny my dissent being lawful, or by my dissenting I condemn my conforming as sinful. Nothing can be lawful and unlawful at the same time. If it be not lawful for me to dissent, I ought to conform; but if it be unlawful for me to conform, I must dissent. Several opinions may at the same time consist in a country, in a city, in a family, but not in one entire

person; that is impossible. * * * Methinks men should seem what they are. If a man dissent from the church, let him do so, and his principle being well grounded for such dissent, let him hold it; if not well grounded, let him leave it. If he cannot suffer one way, let him suffer another; and why should we not be as honest to God as to our country? * * * But to make the matter a game, to dodge religions, and go in the morning to church, and in the afternoon to the meeting; to communicate in private with the Church of England to save a penalty, and then go back to the dissenters and communicate again there: this is such a retrograde devotion, that I can see no colour of pretence for in all the sacred Book."*

Such arguments against occasional conformity ought to have convinced the dissenters of their inconsistency, far sooner than the persecuting bill which that inconsistency had called forth. They met, however, upon this occasion, with a milder fate than they might have anticipated. The bill, though passed by a large majority in the Lower House, was not so acceptable to the Upper, where it found opponents, even on the episcopal bench, in such men as Archbishop Tenison and Bishop Burnet; and the consequence was, that the measure entirely failed.

* True Collection, &c., pp. 332 and 312-321.

The aristocracy had, for once, been too liberal for the multitude. The Establishment, in those days, was literally "the poor man's church," for its cause was eagerly espoused by the rabble,—by a mob that delighted in pulling down meeting-houses, in insulting dissenters, and in raising the famous cry of "High-church for ever, and down with the Whigs!" So infatuated a democracy could easily become the tool of a demagogue, and a demagogue was soon found in Sacheverell, a member of the University of Oxford; who, himself the grandson of a persecuted nonconformist, found his chief delight in abusing the community his ancestor had adorned. This hero of high-churchism published a sermon, in which he denounced, in the most violent terms, anything like toleration to dissenters. His rabid discourse was greedily devoured by the public. Defoe, seeing that mischief was likely to ensue, drew up an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "The Shortest way with the Dissenters; or, Proposals for the Establishment of the Church." This superb burlesque on the spirit of the church faction served to show what its principles would lead to, if they were fully carried out. Assuming the tone of extreme high-churchism, the writer thus proceeds:—

"It is now near fourteen years that the glory and peace of the purest and most flourishing church in

the world has been eclipsed, buffeted, and disturbed, by a sort of men whom God in His providence has suffered to insult over her and bring her down; these have been the days of her humiliation and tribulation: she has borne with an invincible patience the reproach of the wicked, and God has at last heard her prayers, and delivered her from the oppression of the stranger. And now they find their day is over, their power gone, and the throne of this nation possessed by a royal, English, true and ever constant member of and friend to the Church of England; now they find that they are in danger of the Church of England's just resentments; now they cry out peace, union, forbearance, and charity, as if the church had not too long harboured her enemies under her wing, and nourished the viperous brood, till they hiss and fly in the face of the mother that cherished them. No, gentlemen; the time of mercy is past; your day of grace is over: you should have *practised* peace, and moderation, and charity, if you expected any for yourselves."

The author then goes on to show how these wicked nonconformists are to be dealt with. "If ever," he tells the government, "you will establish the best Christian church in the world; if ever you will suppress the spirit of enthusiasm; if ever you will free the nation from the viperous brood that

have so long sucked the blood of their mother; if ever you will leave your posterity free from faction and rebellion,—*this is the time.* This is the time to pull up this heretical weed of sedition, that has so long disturbed the peace of our church, and poisoned the good corn. * * * I do not prescribe fire and faggot, but as Scipio said of Carthage, '*Delenda est Carthago,*' they are to be rooted out of this nation, if ever we will live in peace, serve God, or enjoy our own. As for the manner, I leave it to those hands who have a right to execute God's justice on the nation's and the church's enemies. * * * 'Tis vain to trifle in this matter; the light foolish handling of them by mulcts, fines, &c., 'tis their glory and advantage. If the gallows instead of the compter, and the galleys instead of the fines, were the reward of going to a conventicle to preach or hear, there would not be so many sufferers. The spirit of martyrdom is over: they that will go to church to be chosen sheriffs and mayors, would go to forty churches rather than be hanged.* If one severe law were made and punctually executed, that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished the nation, and the preacher be hanged, we should soon see an end of the tale, they would all come to

* The severity of this rebuke to the practice of occasional conformity, is worthy of notice.

church, and one age would make us all one again. To talk of five shillings a month for not coming to the Sacrament, and one shilling per week for not coming to church, this is such a way of converting people as never was known: this is selling them a liberty to transgress for so much money. If it be not a crime, why don't we give them full licence? And if it be, no price ought to compound for the committing it, for that is selling a liberty to people to sin against God and the government. * * * I am not supposing that all the dissenters in England should be hanged or banished; but as in cases of rebellions and insurrections, if a few of the ringleaders suffer, the multitude are dismissed, so, a few obstinate people being made examples, there is no doubt but the severity of the law would find a stop in the compliance of the multitude. * * * Alas, the Church of England! What with popery on one hand, and schismatics on the other, how has she been crucified between two thieves! Now let us crucify *the thieves*. Let her foundations be established on the destruction of her enemies; the doors of mercy being always open to the returning part of the deluded people. Let the obstinate be ruled with a rod of iron. Let all true sons of so holy and oppressed a mother, exasperated by her afflictions, harden their hearts

against those who have oppressed her. And may God Almighty put it into the hearts of all the friends of truth, to lift up a standard against pride and antichrist, that the posterity of the sons of error may be rooted out from the face of this land for ever."*

For some little time this pamphlet was seriously taken, and it consequently obtained the approbation and support of the high-church party. The extreme character of its views, however, speedily undeceived its admirers, who, finding that the whole was a powerful irony upon themselves, prevailed with the government to consign the book to the hangman, and to offer a reward of fifty pounds for the apprehension of the author. Defoe, upon the imprisonment of the bookseller and printer, discovered himself, and surrendered to law, though not to justice. He was sent to Newgate, and after being tried for libel, and found guilty, was sentenced to stand thrice in the pillory. His works, however, and particularly a "Hymn to the Pillory," which he published at the time, had produced a powerful moral effect upon the multitude. Not a hand was raised to hurl a missile against him in a mob which so lately had been rampant with high-churchism and loyalty. Even an uncultivated rabble, when it beholds a man thus

* True Collection, &c., pp. 425-440.

nobly sustaining persecution for conscience sake, can only admire the firmness of his principles and the decision of his character.

At the time when Defoe wrote his "Shortest Way with the Dissenters," he occupied a position which the world calls respectable. He carried on a prosperous business; he lived in a suburban villa at Hackney; he kept his carriage; he numbered knights of the shire amongst his acquaintance: and it would have been to his interest to have maintained all this reputation, by keeping on smooth terms with the world around him. As a man, however, of no ordinary mind, and of no ordinary principle, instead of shrinking from rendering efficient service to the cause of dissent, he did not hesitate, for the sake of maintaining it, to go from his drawing-room to a cell in Newgate, and to exchange the luxury of his own private carriage for the giddy whirl of the wooden collar which constituted one of the most disgraceful punishments that had been derived from a semi-barbarous age.

Dragged back from the pillory to the prison, the unconquerable mind of Defoe was active even there. It was in Newgate that he published the first number of his "Review," a periodical publication which, says the "Penny Magazine," has been usually regarded

as the parent, and in some respects the model, of the "Spectator."* Of this "Review" he was the sole author. It lashed the vices, exposed the follies of the age, and suggested plans for the improvement of society. Originally issued once a week, its circulation so increased that it came to be published three times. Like the other works of its author, it was beyond the age; and as the result of this, we find that although it excited great attention at the time, a perfect copy is not now to be found.

After Defoe had been imprisoned for more than a year, his release was procured from the queen by the intervention of secretary Harley. That minister, who appears to have been fully sensible of our hero's talents and ability, proceeded to employ him upon secret service on the Continent, and afterwards on business preparatory to the legislative union between England and Scotland, which was brought about in 1707, and of which he published a history. During the continuance of his "Review," Defoe employed his pen upon other productions. Amongst these were three treatises upon the succession to the crown, which, issued in 1713, occasioned him to suffer a second imprisonment in Newgate, during which he brought the "Review" to a termination. From this

* Vol. ii. p. 151.

latter incarceration he was again liberated by the queen, who had the good sense to perceive that the prosecution which had been instituted against him was dictated wholly by the spirit of party. After the death of Anne, Defoe retired from political life; and upon his recovery from an apoplectic fit, superinduced by anxiety, devoted himself, at the age of fifty-four, to other departments of literature.

"The Family Instructor," adapted to the religious and domestic, and "The Complete English Tradesman," to the commercial scenes of human existence, now issued from his pen. They were succeeded by works of a lighter character. Foremost amongst these we find the extraordinary fiction which has made his name immortal. The publisher who purchased the manuscript of "Robinson Crusoe," after every other bookseller had refused it, is said to have gained a thousand pounds; and although the author himself obtained but little, its extraordinary success insured him a higher price for subsequent productions. Many of these are open to the objection which generally attaches to popular works of fiction—the minute delineation of vice. But be this as it may, Defoe was unquestionably the father of the English novel. From Richardson down to Dickens, his successors in this department have been to some extent his imitators. We are inclined to believe, however, that

his works of imagination constitute the least valuable of his labours; and the time he expended upon them, the period of his life least advantageously employed. They were, it is true, the recreations of a great mind; but it is doubtful whether a great mind can be either benefited by such recreations, or usefully employed in pursuing them. Apart from the evil influence upon society which attaches more or less to all prose fiction, it is painful to reflect that one who could once write so well upon subjects of direct improvement, did not continue so to do. Such a spectacle is like that of the author of the "Task," spending years in translation which might have been advantageously given to original composition, even though the translation he accomplished be the best in our language of the greatest poet of ancient times. The most plausible excuse we can offer for Defoe is, that he wrote for money, and he knew human nature well enough to be aware that, to its depraved taste, fiction is always far more acceptable than truth. His imaginative works, however, have this advantage, that they serve to show the opponents of freedom that the character of a political reformer is by no means inconsistent with the possession of taste and of genius. With regard to the works themselves, it is their truthfulness that constitutes their charm. The "History of

the Plague," for example, has all the force of a true narrative, whilst it is essentially a fabrication.

Defoe, like many other novelists, mingled with all classes of society. During his two imprisonments in Newgate, he had abundant opportunities of observing the character and habits of thieves, swindlers, and highwaymen, who make so conspicuous a figure in several of his tales. He had, moreover, resided in Wapping, where his acute observation would readily take cognizance of the habits and pursuits of seamen, and where his retentive memory would be stored with the narratives of those wondrous adventures so ably embodied in "Robinson Crusoe." His own journeyings do not appear to have extended beyond the continent of Europe; but it is not improbable that several incidents of his wondrous fiction, such as the dangerous adventure with wolves in France, may have been derived from personal experience. His imaginative writings close the vast catalogue of his works—a list that ceases only with his death, which occurred on the 24th of April, 1731, in his native parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate. His remains lie mouldering with the ashes of many other of the great, the wise, and the good, in the illustrious cemetery of Bunhill Fields.

From that career which we have now followed to

its close, we derive a magnificent example of heroism. One who could withstand, as Defoe did, the opposition of an age which comprehended not his principles, is indeed a hero—a moral hero—in every sense of the word. His opinions were, in his own day, those of a despised and an insulted minority; but he and they who thought with him continued, nevertheless, to uphold and to maintain them; and the result of their firmness we read in the fact, that those very principles of a discerning few are now embraced by the enlightened many. The most illustrious of all examples, that of Christianity itself at the commencement of its career, is sufficient to show that the truth of any principle is by no means proved by the number who receive it. We are not, therefore, to condemn Defoe because his principles were singular. Principles are to be judged by their intrinsic value, and not by their popularity.

In literature, he was an admirable Crichton; and this has been well said in effect by one who, perhaps, of all subsequent writers, has most appropriately merited the same appellation. Sir Walter Scott has observed—"The fertility of Defoe was astonishing. He wrote on all occasions, and all subjects, and seemingly had little time for preparation on the subject in hand, but treated it from the stores which his memory retained of early reading, and such hints as

he had caught up in society, not one of which seems to have been lost upon him." The eulogium pronounced by the bard of Abbotsford we can scarcely consider too high. Defoe's prose style is remarkably superior to that of the generality of his contemporaries. His versification, however, is more remarkable for the point of its satire and the worth of its principles, than for anything like an approximation to poetry. One of the most favourable specimens we have met with is "Annesley's Elegy," already referred to, the closing lines of which we may now appropriately quote, as applicable, we trust, to the departed spirit of its illustrious author.*

"And now seraphic joys surround his soul,
Which feel no diminution or control;
But what they are, or how far they extend,
No pen can write, or thought can comprehend,
But he who at that happy place arrives;—
For heaven is only known by negatives.
How much celestial vision comprehends,
Whether to human actions it extends,
Whether he's now informed of things below,
Is needless as impossible to know;
For sight of spirits is unprescrib'd by space;
What see they not, who see the Eternal Face?—
The bright transforming rays of heavenly light,
Immense, immortal, pure, and infinite,

* True Collection, pp. 117, 118.

Their likeness with their light communicate,
The spirit exalt, and all its frame dilate;
Infusing with the bright similitude
An inexpressible beatitude!
And could he now, in his exalted state,
His thoughts by sympathy communicate,
Or some superior way; "for spirits converse
Without the helps of voice;" could he rehearse
To our conception, what is heaven above,
'Twould be concisely thus—*All heaven is love;*
Love infinite, magnificent, and true,
Divine in magnitude, and object too;
Love, joy, and glory constitute the place,
The exalted triumphs of victorious grace:
No sorrow can be there, because no sin,
For all is peace without, and pure within.
There all are gods, and yet they all adore
The One Supreme First Cause of Sovereign Power,
And all that adoration's mixed with love,
The great essential of the joys above;
That heaven-born passion, which, with purest flame,
Burns only there; for here 'tis but a name,
An empty name, by interest limited,
A slave to scandal, and by fancy led.
Friendship, unmixed with sexes, reigns above,
The true extreme of high superior love;
Emblem of heaven, which it resembles so,
It almost seems to form a heaven below;
For love in heaven is God communicate,
Souls collateral, both supremely great;
The enjoyment as reciprocal as high,
For love's no passion, but a quality;
Through it the Almighty glory darts his beams
Known only by unutterable names;

With light and splendour unapproach'd, enthron'd;
Millions of fiery spirits attending round,
Who all, like stars, have brightness from his rays,
And they reflect it back again in praise.
Where'er this blest society shall dwell,
That place is heaven, and all elsewhere is hell."

THE END.

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