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Book Review of The History of England, From the Accession of James II

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ART. V.—*The History of England, from the accession of James II;* by THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY. Two first volumes. Philips, Sampson & Co. Boston. 1849.

NO PART of the history of the world is so full of instruction to him who seeks after political wisdom as that portion of the history of England to which Mr. Macaulay has devoted his attention. In every thing which bears the name of history there is something to amuse and something to edify. Even fable may be suggestive of truth. The value of the Iliad as a picture of life in the heroic age, and as a provocative to high thoughts and generous purposes, is not impaired by the fruitless search after the ruins of Troy, or the grave doubt whether such a place ever existed. The Macbeth of Shakspeare is a far more important personage, and has had more to do with the good and evil of the world, than any highland chieftain of flesh and blood that ever wore a kilt. For any good they did, the heroes who actually lived and moved upon earth are not worthy to be compared with those who have only existed in the poet's imagination; and the truth, if we could know it, would be worth far less than that which passes for it. If the

Romans had not believed that strength of will and confidence of success had enabled Tarquin to cut the whetstone in two they might not have sent an army out of one gate against Asdrubal, while Hannibal was approaching the other.

In the annals of the little States of Greece, and of the earlier days of Rome, there is much of this suggestive nature, and all the romantic interest which can be generated by the development of individual character. The reader is unconsciously drawn away from the State itself, and finds all his thoughts and all his sympathies engaged on behalf of some man whose talents, whose valor, whose virtues, make him the hero of a tragedy, of which his country is but the theatre. Of the State itself, the structure of its political and social institutions, we learn little or nothing. In the wars which desolate the rival republics we take no interest, but as they are instrumental to the glory, the triumph or the defeat of the chief character in the drama. The country of the hero of the day is that with which we side. In spirit we follow the eagles of Rome wherever they are borne by an Æmilius or Flaminius, but we find ourselves toiling cheerily over the rocks and snows of the Alps under the banner of Hannibal. Our hearts are with Camillus when he drives out the Gaul from Rome, but we can hardly forbear regret when the bold Carthaginian is compelled to relinquish his prey and fall back upon the gates of the seven-hilled city. In Greece, Brasidas or Lysander, Pericles or Alcibiades, divide us in favor of Athens or Sparta. Both are forgotten when the thick cloud which hangs over Bœotia brightens with the glory of Epaminondas; and even Megalopolis becomes an object of interest when identified with the fortunes of Philopœmen. We read but to admire, and, in the end, to mourn over the tragic end of so much greatness.

But what do we learn? We learn a high moral lesson, and, to the youth whose character is "yet in the gristle," no lesson can be more valuable. The facts may not be truly set down and may lead to some false inferences, but the truth he finds is worth more than the truth he misses. He may overlook the difference between the love of country in a small State, of which the man himself and his personal friends form so large a part, and in a great nation, in which they are but a drop in the ocean. He may over-

look the difference between a code of international law, in which the names of enemy and stranger were synonymous, where the power of the State alone protected the citizen from being stripped of all his possessions, and sold, with his family, into slavery, and one in which every inhabitant of a civilized country is at home every where, from the banks of the Volga to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and in which the horrors of war are confined to the battle-field. But he catches the contagion of the patriotism kindled by such causes. He is ready to plunge with Curtius into the gulph, or, standing with Decius on the spear, to devote his head to the infernal Gods. When he proposes to himself the example of this devotion to his country, is it the part of wisdom to set him right? It is true he has but seen men who, being put to choose whether they would fall alone or perish in the general wreck of every thing dear to them, have had the manliness to look the alternative steadfastly in the face and the wisdom to choose the lesser evil. Who of us would not do the same? What man among us is there, who, if he could clearly foresee that he was to be slaughtered on his hearth-stone, his household Gods desecrated, his property seized by strangers and his wife and children sold into bondage, unless he would go forth alone and meet death manfully, when all should be well, would hesitate to do so? Each one will answer for himself. But could he be sure that he could thus answer *truly*, but for the influence exercised over him while his character was under the process of formation, by these old legends of Greece and Rome? The fabulous history of Amadis de Gaul made Don Quixote a madman. But that too is a fable. But read both; and the mind becomes furnished with ideas the value of which is seen in their result—that noblest and most admirable of all the inventions of modern civilization—A GENTLEMAN. It is the fashion of the day to decry the legends of Livy and the romances of Plutarch, and, if the business of education were only to fill the head with facts, they might be worthless. But the heart needs instruction too, and, properly instructed, teaches the head a wisdom it could otherwise never learn.

We repeat, therefore, that in these studies, if we may so denominate them, we learn a high moral lesson. But that is all. We have been reading a romance, in which what

little of truth there may be is indistinguishably blended with falsehood, and the whole, seen through a delusive medium, is so presented as to pass with us for the moment as unquestionable truth. We are thus deceived. What then? What interest have we to know the truth of these remote events? Cæsar and Brutus are both dead. What is it to us which killed the other? We have indeed an interest in being deceived, and in remaining under the deception, and musing on the thoughts and fancies it suggests, until our minds are trained to look with scorn on danger and death, with abhorrence on baseness, and with a hope full of immortality on the fame that lives beyond the tomb.

But we would by no means disparage the labors of those whose untiring industry has explored the dusty receptacles of buried greatness, and drawn forth from thence all of truth that can now be known. It was good for the boy to be deceived; and a time comes when it is good for the man to be undeceived. It is good to be fooled into the love and practice of virtue. It is not good to be fooled into expecting it from other men. While the delusion is operating only on the heart and affections it is salutary. When it is brought to bear on our intercourse with the world, it is time it should be dispelled. The man, who, at the age of thirty, will still prate "about Harmodius and Timoleon, Brutus the elder, or Brutus the younger," deserves to be set upon a dunce-block, and turned back to the lowest form of the Freshman class.

Not much more highly do we deem of the wisdom of him, who would set himself to learning lessons in political science, from the fragmentary relics of what is known to be true in these remote histories. He can never know enough to reason to any safe conclusion. He must have *all* the conditions of the problem before him or he can never work it out. The more accurately he reasons, the more certainly will he go astray. The most accurate arithmetician will be most sure to foot up an account wrong, if one item is left out of the column of figures. A desultory thinker may chance to correct one blunder by another. Staggering right and left he may not wander away from the broad high road of truth. But give to Aristotle one false premise, and he will never get right.

To him, therefore, who studies the future in the past, or

who would learn from the past what is good for the present, nothing is so instructive as a portion of history in which all that needs be known may be known certainly. All other history is, to him, valueless or worse, and the best history of such a time is that which omits nothing of what is worth knowing. Such a history must needs be voluminous, but the labor of the writer and the time of the reader are both well employed. There is nothing lost, if the latter has no time left to read any other history. How else can he learn so much of life, as in living, as it were, in the midst of all the events and all the political and social relations of a great country through the full time of a couple of centuries. If he does not learn wisdom under such teaching he would go to his grave a fool at the age of Methusaleh.

To Mr. Macaulay belongs the merit of conceiving the plan of such a history, and selecting a country and a time of which such a history can be written. It is very common to speak of a date some two thousand years past, as the commencement of the era of authentic history. If it be meant by this, that we do not certainly know that there ever was such a man as Theseus, but that we do know that Julius Cæsar did actually exist, the date may be well chosen. In this sense, the history of Western Europe, since the Norman conquest, is within the era of authentic history. But how much of fable is, even there, mixed up with fact? It is true that we have all needful certainty with regard to those great results of war and negotiation which determine questions of right between nations. When history is called into court as a witness on such questions, she speaks plainly and authentically, and tells all that the *diplomatist* has occasion to know. But when she is appealed to in the more elevated character of "philosophy teaching by example," in order that, from the past, the *statesman* may learn wisdom from the present, and foresight for the future, her lessons can teach nothing profitable, unless she presents us such a picture of the past as may enable us to see it, even as we see the present which we wish to compare with it. It is true that, without seeing all, we may see enough to know that her precedents *do not* apply to our case. Algernon Sydney certainly knew as much of the history of ancient Greece as should have satisfied him that her republics did not afford a proper model for Eng-

land of his day, and Filmer ought to have learned from the very darkness which overhung the history of the middle ages, that institutions which might have suited that night of the human mind, must be wholly unfit when the day-spring from on high was shining on the world through the writings of Bacon, Locke and Newton. Without knowing all the facts of a case, we may yet know enough of it to pronounce, as the lawyer's say, that it is not a case in point. But we cannot know it *to be* a case in point, without knowing *all* the facts; nor can we safely reason from it by analogy, unless we are acquainted with the exact particulars in which the precedent differs from the case to which we would apply it, as well as those in which the two coincide.

In this restricted sense of the word, there is hardly any thing that deserves the name of authentic history. Of the greater part of the world we have certainly none such. Have we any such history of Spain in the 18th century? Of Germany? Even of France? Have we any such history of England *before the Revolution?*

We are inclined to believe that Mr. Macaulay asked himself this very question, and answered it, as we should do, in the negative. He manifestly designed to write a philosophical history, and he certainly saw that, to prepare himself for this, he must charge his mind with a variety of information, for which he might seek in vain in the annals of any other country, or even in those of England of an earlier time. Since the Revolution, it may be said that all the public records of that kingdom are authentic and complete; all documents and state papers have been preserved; all public events have been related by so many witnesses as to enable any diligent and candid inquirer to collect the truth of prominent facts, and enough has come down from contemporary writers to give the necessary insight into the social condition of the community. Much, doubtless, was said and done and meditated which never came to the knowledge of the public of that day. A part of this is now made known to us by the private letters of men, who acted and influenced in all that was done, which have come down to us in the hand writing of the authors. Still many causes, not yet suspected, were doubtless then at work, as they are now at work among ourselves, producing results which never can be explained. To this extent all

history must be defective, and may mislead. But the teachings of history are therefore not to be rejected, any more than we reject the lessons which may be learned from the experience of others. It will be forever true that no man can become *wise* by the experience of another. To a certain extent every man belongs to that class who will only learn in that dear school, in which alone, it is said, fools will learn any thing. But the son who tries to avail himself, as well as he can, of the wisdom of his father, will escape much of the chastisement which the stern teacher experience is sure to inflict. Of the like use is history to the stateman and the political philosopher, and such a history as this of Mr. Macaulay should be received by him with the gratitude due to one who lays bare to a young friend the faults and follies and failures of his life, that, by avoiding the first, he may escape the last.

That Mr. Macaulay has executed his task in good faith we are bound to believe. His character gives full assurance of that. That he is not entirely free from the bias of party names and associations is quite probable. That he has habitually resisted that bias is manifest. That in some trifling instance he has unconsciously yielded to it, we are only inclined to suspect. But the important inquiry remains whether he has so used his materials as to exhibit a clear view of the political and social constitution of England, and to make his history an instructive and profitable lesson to those who would study the mystery of government, and qualify themselves to act a wise and useful part in the conduct of the affairs of a great people. Not even in England is an English history of this description so desirable as in the United States, and no where is such a one so sure of its due reward of praise and profit.

Of Mr. Macaulay, as a writer, we do not propose to speak. It would be idle to expect that this article will be read by any person not already familiar with his works. They are in the hands of every one, and, while we have no thought of dissenting from the general approbation expressed by this fact, we are just as little disposed to make this notice a mere echo of the applause which resounds on every side.

Comparing Mr. Macaulay with himself, we would say that among the various forms of composition in which he has heretofore employed his eloquent pen, he has seemed

to us to excel in narrative. His articles in the Edinburgh Review, on Warren Hastings and Lord Clive, stand high among his productions, and may compare advantageously with any historical sketches published before or since. Their only fault is one to be looked for in such publications. Since the two great British Reviews of Edinburgh and London became the organs of the two great rival parties in the State, it is to be feared that the function of the reviewer has been supposed to be, not that of a witness or a judge, but that of an advocate. Hence we rarely hear from either, at this day, the unimpassioned tone and measured and guarded language in which evidence should be summed up and sentence pronounced. On the contrary, we always suspect, and we are often permitted to see, that we are listening to one who is engaged, if need be, "to make the worse appear the better reason." Hence the reader is little offended when he finds mere matters of fact put forth in a fervid and impassioned tone, and so grouped and colored as to command the highest degree of censure or applause. By none has this been done more frequently, more unreservedly, or more successfully, than by Mr. Macaulay. We feared that this style had become habitual, and that he would find it hard to "leave the keen encounter of wit," in which he has achieved so many triumphs, and "fall into the slower method," which the sober truth of history demands. We were sure that he would endeavor to do this, and we are happy to say that his success has far exceeded our expectations.

We were particularly struck with the grave conscientious tone in which, in announcing the purpose and plan of his work, he seems to administer to himself the witness-oath, to tell "the truth; the whole truth and nothing but the truth." We were much impressed with this. It showed a becoming sense of the duty of an historian, and was received by us as a solemn and voluntary pledge that it should be faithfully performed.

At p. 19, of the edition before us, Mr. Macaulay makes some striking remarks concerning the difficulties, which he who would write any portion of the English history cannot fail to encounter. These he mainly ascribes to the bias under which all antiquarians and historians have heretofore written. His remarks on this topic are so beautiful, so philo-

sophical and so just, and withal so germane to our purpose, that we beg leave to quote them:

"That the political institutions of England were, at this early period, regarded by the English with pride and affection, and by the most enlightened men of neighboring nations with admiration and envy, is proved by the clearest evidence. But, touching the nature of those institutions, there has been much dishonest and acrimonious controversy.

"The historical literature of England has indeed suffered grievously from a circumstance which has not a little contributed to her prosperity. The change, great as it is, which her polity has undergone during the last six centuries, has been the effect of gradual development, not of demolition and reconstruction. The present constitution of our country is, to the constitution under which she flourished five hundred years ago, what the tree is to the sapling, what the man is to the boy. The alteration has been great. Yet there never was a moment at which the chief part of what existed was not old. A polity thus formed must abound in anomalies. But for the evils arising from mere anomalies we have ample compensation. Other societies possess written constitutions more symmetrical. But no other society has yet succeeded in uniting revolution with prescription, progress with stability, the energy of youth with the majesty of immemorial antiquity.

"This great blessing, however, has its drawbacks; and one of those drawbacks is, that every source of information as to our early history has been poisoned by party spirit. As there is no country where statesmen have been so much under the influence of the past, so there is no country where historians have been so much under the influence of the present. Between these two things, indeed, there is a natural connection. Where history is regarded merely as a picture of life and manners, or as a collection of experiments from which general maxims of civil wisdom may be drawn, a writer lies under no very pressing temptation to misrepresent transactions of ancient date. But where history is regarded as a repository of title-deeds, on which the rights of governments and nations depend, the motive to falsification becomes almost irresistible. A Frenchman is not now impelled by any strong interest either to exaggerate or to underrate the power of the kings of the house of Valois. The privileges of the States General, of the States of Brittany, of the States of Burgundy, are now matters of as little practical importance as the constitution of the Jewish Sanhedrim, or of the Amphictyonic Council. The gulf of a great revolution completely separates the new from the old system. No such chasm divides the existence of the English nation into two distinct parts. Our laws and customs have never been lost in general and irreparable ruin. With us, the precedents of the middle ages are still valid precedents, and are still cited, on the gravest occasions, by the most eminent statesmen. Thus, when King George the Third was

attacked by the malady which made him incapable of performing his regal functions, and when the most distinguished lawyers and politicians differed widely as to the course which ought, in such circumstances, to be pursued, the houses of Parliament would not proceed to discuss any plan of regency till all the examples which were to be found in our annals, from the earliest times, had been collected and arranged. Committees were appointed to examine the ancient records of the realm. The first precedent reported was that of the year 1217; much importance was attached to the precedents of 1326, of 1377 and of 1422; but the case which was justly considered as most in point was that of 1455. Thus in our own country the dearest interests of parties have frequently been staked on the results of the researches of antiquaries. The inevitable consequence was that our antiquaries conducted their researches in the spirit of partisans.

"It is therefore not surprising that those who have written concerning the limits of prerogative and liberty in the old polity of England should generally have shown the temper, not of judges, but of angry and uncandid adovcates. For they were discussing, not a speculative matter, but a matter which had a direct and practical connection with the most momentous and exciting disputes of their own day. From the commencement of the long contest between the Parliament and the Stuarts, down to the time when the pretensions of the Stuarts ceased to be formidable, few questions were practically more important than the question whether the administration of that family had or had not been in accordance with the ancient constitution of the kingdom. This question could be decided only by reference to the records of preceding reigns. Bracton and Fleta, the Mirror of Justice and the Rolls of Parliament, were ransacked to find pretexts for the excesses of the Star Chamber on one side and of the High Court of Justice on the other. During a long course of years every whig historian was anxious to prove that the old English government was all but republican, every tory historian to prove that it was all but despotic.

"With such feelings, both parties looked into the chronicles of the middle ages. Both readily found what they sought, and both obstinately refused to see any thing but what they sought. The champions of the Stuarts could easily point out instances of oppression exercised on the subject. The defenders of the Roundheads could as easily produce instances of determined and successful resistance offered to the crown. The tories quoted, from ancient writings, expressions almost as servile as were heard from the pulpit of Mainwaring. The whigs discovered expressions as bold and as severe as any that resounded from the judgment-seat of Bradshaw. One set of writers adduced numerous instances in which kings had extorted money without the authority of Parliament. Another set cited cases in which the Parliament had assumed to itself the power of inflicting punishment on kings.

Those who saw only one half of the evidence would have concluded that the Plantagenets were as absolute as the Sultans of Turkey; those who saw only the other half would have concluded that the Plantagenets had as little real power as the Doges of Venice: and both conclusions would have been equally remote from the truth."

In all this we were happy to recognize a pledge on the part of Mr. Macaulay that the great duty of the historian should be faithfully performed, and we have the higher pleasure of adding that this pledge seems to have been faithfully redeemed. In this country, at such a distance from the sources of information, and without the possibility of access to many of the materials used by Mr. Macaulay, it would be impertinence in us to scan the accuracy of his statements. But a tone of exaggeration might have made us receive the whole with distrust; and this fault Mr. Macaulay has so carefully avoided that we find ourselves believing as we read, with undoubting confidence. In saying this, we are conscious of having pronounced the very highest eulogium on the style of the work.

Yet there are moments when this trusting faith is a little disturbed. Mr. Macaulay is too fine a writer to forbear the graces of style which seem as natural to him as his voice or his features. He has manifestly sought to refrain from the free indulgence of his faculty of coloring and adorning, for he understands too well the laws of mind not to know how these things tell on those who only desire to know the truth. The balanced sentence, the pointed antithesis, the well turned epigram, are things which few men are capable of producing with such facility, as to exclude all temptation, in a narrative, to do some little violence to truth, for the sake of effect. In the beginning of his history, we find Mr. Macaulay studiously and judiciously avoiding all this. As he warms to his work, his style undergoes a slight change in this respect, and if we did not remember that it is as hard for him to be dull as for another to write like him, we might think that we could detect something of the tone and temper of a witness, whose feelings are deeply engaged for the success of the party on whose behalf he testifies. But it is due to Mr. Macaulay to say that we have no where been more struck with this graceful fault than in passages where there can be no room to doubt the accuracy of his statements, and

where the little feeling he has permitted himself to display has commanded all our sympathy.

We should be very sorry to say as much of the effect produced on our minds by another occasional departure from the sober tone of history. We know, and we detest the characters of both the Charles's, of the second James, and of Marlborough. But there are few men of "untaught feelings," who *read* the history of the past as Mr. Macaulay says it should be *written*, who do not see something in most of these which indisposes them to hear them habitually spoken of in the language of vituperation. No man, says the law, shall be judged for the same offence more than once, and then only after a full and fair hearing. Such should be the method of the historian. Such *is* the method of history. In her courts the offender is not arraigned on insulated acts, but she sits in judgment on the whole course of his life. She gives him *all his life* to correct his errors, to repair injuries, to redress wrongs, to atone for crimes; and when atonement is not complete until he dies the death of a malefactor, she takes his death too into her account. She does not, like Jeffries, berate the culprit in the language of a fish-woman. She feels that the dignity of her court is offended when, like Raleigh, he is insulted even by an advocate. Her final judgment, through stern is calm, and her harshest condemnation is couched in language dictated by self-respect. Her punishments are appropriate to the dignity of the stations the offender has filled, unless he has himself degraded them. She may set a Jeffries in the pillory, but she erects a scaffold for Charles and covers it with the pall of mourning.

Such is the spirit in which history should be written. Such is the spirit in which *it will be read* by those whose approbation the historian should most desire to secure. Such readers are not pleased, when they who have filled great space in the eyes of men, whose deeds live after them, and the impress of whose greatness still remains stamped on the political condition of the civilized world, are habitually spoken of in opprobrious terms. When the power of France was sweeping over Europe like a flood, who was he that said to it, "thus far and no farther?" Yet the name of that man is first introduced in the work before us, with an allusion to the sordid vices which sullied his fame; and Mr. Macaulay never again speaks of him, throughout

his two volumes without reminding the reader of his baseness. When we remember that the Churchill thus spoken of is no other than the great Marlborough, our feelings are not exactly such as the historian would wish to inspire.

In the mixed character of Charles I. there is much to awaken sympathy, even in those who most severely condemn him. It is hard indeed to conceive a code of morality by which he could justify, even to himself, his tortuous policy and bad faith. It is impossible to conceive that he could have justified to himself the death of Strafford. But the last scenes of Charles's life were acted under the eyes of the world, and all could see that he went to his fate at peace with himself. He died as a gentleman and a king should die, and the name of martyr, though entirely misapplied, was but an exaggerated expression of what is still felt, even by those who think that his death was necessary and not undeserved.

A sentiment so earnest and so generous is easily provoked to reaction, and few are so free from it as not to be roused, by any harsh dealing with the memory of this unfortunate prince, to seek apologies for his faults. They will not fail to scan with jealous scrutiny, and to condemn severely, every thing that borders on exaggeration or unfairness in stating it. They will remember that Charles was born during the reign of Elizabeth: that he grew up and passed his youth and early manhood among those who were old enough to remember the enormous power which she had been permitted to exercise without question: that the oppressive monopolies by which she ground her people, in order to raise money by the sale of these mischievous privileges, were submitted to until they were intolerable: that Parliament did not presume to remonstrate against them until, under their operation, the price of some of the prime necessaries of life had been increased tenfold and more: that even then they were not denounced as usurpations, but complained of as abuses of unquestioned power; and that, finally, the queen's declaration that she would recall and not renew them was received as an act of grace and favor, with a burst of loyal gratitude. When told by Mr. Macaulay, (vol. i., p. 66,) that, immediately before the signing of the petition of right by Charles, the "Parliament had granted him an ample supply," they will be tempted to look at the amount of the grant and the circumstances

under which it was made. They will find that Charles, on his accession to the throne, found his scanty resources burthened with a debt of more than £300,000: that he was engaged in wars with the two most powerful nations of Europe, undertaken in compliance with the popular sentiment: that, three years before, he had laid before Parliament estimates which showed that more than a million was indispensable to the charges of one of these wars and the conduct of the government at home; that in these three years the only supply given had been the sum of £112,000, and that the "ample supply," as it was called by Mr. Macaulay, did not amount to £300,000. On looking further, they will find that the authority to levy tonnage and poundage had been, for two centuries, habitually conferred for life on every king at his accession to the crown: that it had been regarded so much as a matter of course that it had been uniformly exercised by all of them, without waiting for the formal action of Parliament, and without remonstrance or complaint: that Charles had followed the example of his predecessors in this, nothing doubting that the formal grant would be made in due time; and that, as soon as the Commons had obtained his sanction to the petition of right by the grant of £300,000, they, instead of going on to sanction and authorize the levy of tonnage and poundage, took measures to deprive him of the revenue derived from that source. It was to defeat these measures that he dissolved the Parliament, arriving at the conclusion, which many will think not unreasonable, that the vote of supply was a snare; that there was a want of good faith on the part of the Commons, which discharged him from all obligation to keep faith with them; and that, if he meant to reign at all, he must contrive to reign without a Parliament.

In suggesting these thoughts, we by no means adopt them. We do not join with those who impute a breach of faith to the Commons. We would as soon give that character to a stratagem in war. They saw that the time to strike for liberty was come, and they resolved to strike for liberty as a thing of *imprescriptible right*, not derived from charters, but only acknowledged by them, and equally a right whether charters acknowledged it or no. That this was the true view of the matter all men, at this day, believe; and no one can reasonably condemn the morality of acting

upon it and taking measures suited to every emergency, and commensurate with the importance of the object. But Charles, on his part, had as little doubt of his right to reign. At this time no one in England will hesitate to deny that any man can have a right to reign over any people against their will. Yet who can blame Charles for holding an opinion which was held by nine men in ten in the civilized world; and who can blame him for acting on it? Here was a strife on behalf of rights of vital importance, held by each party to be unquestionable. It wanted nothing but actual violence to give it all the characteristics of war. When the parties in such a strife are both fully determined to yield nothing, it becomes a struggle of life and death. When either is sure of himself—that he will not give way, and becomes convinced that his antagonist is equally resolved, he is a fool to regard or treat it as otherwise than a death-struggle. Violence may be postponed, but it is only until the parties are prepared for action. Where this preparation is to be made by influencing the opinions of men in masses it may be postponed for a long time. But what passes in the mean time is not negotiation but manœuvering.

In such cases, though there is always a right and a wrong, yet, to a certain extent, both are to be considered as in the right. The lion has as good a right to live as we, and, that he may live, he must prey upon our flocks and herds, and even upon us. Can we blame him for this? Were he a moral agent, could we blame him? Are we to criticise his mode of warfare, his prowling by night, his lying in ambush for his unsuspecting victim, or stealing on it unawares? He must do all this, or starve. But this does not interfere with our right to hunt and destroy him. In the fierce death-struggle which ensues the blood is heated and we srrike with all the fury of hate; but when all is over, and our terrible enemy lies in blood before us; and when we remember how he bore himself in the fight, and how he died in silence, respect and sadness mingle with our triumph—we offer no indignity to the carcass of the noble brute, but we strip him of his royal robe, and, wearing it as a trophy, we unconsciously honor him in death.

It is such a feeling as we have sought to illustrate by this comparison that is offended, when, in the very para-

graph that announces Charles' accession to the throne we find this passage:

"Faithlessness was the chief cause of his disasters, and is the chief stain on his memory. He was, in truth, impelled by an incurable propensity to dark and crooked ways. It may seem strange that his conscience, which, on occasions of little moment, was sufficiently sensitive, should never have reproached him with this great vice. But there is reason to believe that he was perfidious, not only from constitution and from habit, but also on principle. He seems to have learned from the theologians whom he most esteemed, that between him and his subjects there could be nothing of the nature of mutual contract, that he could not, even if he would, divest himself of his despotic authority, and that in every promise which he made there was an implied reservation that such promise might be broken in case of necessity, and that of the necessity he was the sole judge."

Again, at p. 82, Mr. Macaulay says: "So notorious was his duplicity that there was no treachery of which his subjects might not, with some show of reason, believe him capable." In the next page, again, we have the following sarcastic epigram, in which it is hard to say whether delicacy of polish or severity of censure predominates. "The truth seems to be that he detested both the parties into which the House of Commons was divided. Nor is this strange; for in both, the love of *liberty* and the love of *order* were mingled, though in different proportions." These are certainly hard sayings to be applied to one who certainly had hard measure from the hands of those who hunted him to destruction—to one, who, whatever his offences, atoned for them with his blood.

At p. 76, we find a few words which may help us to account for the bitterness of feeling displayed in these passages. Mr. Macaulay is speaking of the Parliament which sat in the autumn of 1641.

"The recess of the English Parliament lasted six weeks. The day on which the Houses met again is one of the most remarkable epochs in our history. From that day dates the corporate existence of the two great parties which have ever since alternately governed the country."

If Mr. Macaulay, is, "as a *Statesman*, so much under the influence of the past" as to identify his political opponents with the Wentworth's and Lauds of the 17th cen-

tury, it is quite in order that he should be, "as an *Historian*, so much under the influence of the present" as to find it hard to deal candidly by those whom he regards as the founders of the party which he now judges so harshly.

We should be glad to enrich our pages with Mr. Macaulay's skilful delineation of the character of Charles II. But the work is in the hands of all our readers, and we only refer to it as an instance of that strange influence which that strange man has always exerted, both over friends and foes. A man whom no one esteemed, but towards whom no one cherished ill-will: who commanded no man's confidence, but against whom no man could be ever on his guard: who loved nobody, but who possessed the love of all who approached him: they who, at this day, would censure him most severely, find it impossible to do so in the harsh terms, which they do not hesitate to apply to better men. When we have said that he was cheerful, affable, and courteous; good-natured, witty and brave; we have said all that can be said in his favor. But he has imparted so much of his *bonhommie* to other men, that when they come to speak of the other parts of his character they deal in negatives. He was a worse man and a worse king than his father; and it is not much to the credit of human nature, that so many more are ready to give their sympathies to old Rowley, than to the faithful husband and devout Christian. Mr. Macaulay himself is quite willing that we shall think of him as well as we can of a man to whom no one virtue can be attributed. His delineation is perfect, but the colors are laid on so smoothly, that all that is hirsute and rugged is suppressed, and we hardly perceive the deformity of the object pourtrayed. We are persuaded that in this he has hit the temper of his readers, for we have never yet met with a man who could talk about Charles for five minutes without talking himself into a good humor.

When Mr. Macaulay comes to speak of the gloomy, morose, cruel and bigot, James II. he dips his pen in ink of quite another color. Nor is it at all too black, and we ourselves, though bent to do justice, are almost unwilling to suggest that, in one instance, it has been laid on with too heavy a hand. It is the case of Alderman Cornish. As Mr. Macaulay states it, we are led to suppose that he was selected as a victim from the same sordid considera-

tion that led to the pardon of that profligate wretch Lord Grey, who having large life estates had nothing to enrich the crown by forfeiture, but was able to pay a high price for his life, which he did. On coming to the case of Cornish, Mr. Macaulay introduces it with this caustic epigram. "In the case of Grey and of men situated like him, it was impossible to gratify cruelty and rapacity at once; but a rich trader might be both hanged and plundered." We are then told how he was hunted to death by means of perjured witnesses. There Mr. Macaulay stops. Hume goes on to say that as soon as the perjury was discovered James restored his property to his family. We do not know Mr. Hume's authority for this. If he had, none, we have wronged Mr. Macaulay. If he had Mr. Macaulay must have had access to it, and ought not to have suppressed the only fact that goes to exhibit James as one "not altogether evil."

We now gladly leave this unpleasant and invidious part of our task, and turn to the more pleasing duty of speaking of the beauties and excellencies of this work. But as these are found in it every where, *passim* not *sparsim*, we could only speak of them in such general terms as it would be impertinent in us to apply to a writer of Mr. Macaulay's established reputation. We have already assigned the reason why we cannot feel at liberty to adorn our pages with copious extracts. We will make only one exception from the rule we have imposed on ourselves, by inserting a sketch of the character of Viscount Halifax:

"Among the statesmen of that age Halifax was, in genius, the first. His intellect was fertile, subtle and capacious. His polished, luminous and animated eloquence, set off by the silver tones of his voice, was the delight of the House of Lords. His conversation overflowed with thought, fancy and wit. His political tracts well deserve to be studied for their literary merit, and fully entitle him to a place among English classics. To the weight derived from talents so great and various he united all the influence which belongs to rank and ample possessions. Yet he was less successful in politics than many who enjoyed smaller advantages. Indeed, those intellectual peculiarities which make his writings valuable frequently impeded him in the contests of active life. For he always saw passing events, not in the point of view in which they commonly appear to one who bears a part in them, but the point of view in which, after the lapse of many years, they appear to the

philosophic historian. With such a turn of mind, he could not long continue to act cordially with any body of men. All the prejudices, all the exaggerations of both the great parties in the State, moved his scorn. He despised the mean arts and unreasonable clamors of demagogues. He despised still more the tory doctrines of divine right and passive obedience. He sneered impartially at the bigotry of the churchman and the bigotry of the puritan. He was equally unable to comprehend how any man should object to saints' days and surplices, and how any man should persecute any other man for objecting to them. In temper he was what in our time is called a conservative. In theory he was a republican. Even when his dread of anarchy and his disdain for vulgar delusions led him to side for a time with the defenders of arbitrary power, his intellect was always with Locke and Milton. Indeed, his jests upon hereditary monarchy were sometimes such as would have better become a member of the Calf's Head Club than a privy councillor of the Stuarts. In religion he was so far from being a zealot that he was called by the uncharitable an atheist; but this imputation he vehemently repelled; and in truth, though he sometimes gave scandal by the way in which he exerted his rare powers, both of argumentation and of ridicule, on serious subjects, he seems to have been by no means unsusceptible of religious impressions.

"He was the chief of those politicians whom the two great parties contemptuously called trimmers. Instead of quarrelling with this nickname he assumed it as a title of honor, and vindicated with great vivacity the dignity of the appellation. Every thing good, he said, trims between extremes. The temperate zone trims between the climate in which men are roasted and the climate in which they are frozen. The English Church trims between the Anabaptist madness and the Papist lethargy. The English constitution trims between Turkish despotism and Polish anarchy. Virtue is nothing but a just temper between propensities, any one of which, if indulged to excess, becomes vice. Nay, the perfection of the Supreme Being himself consists in the exact equilibrium of attributes, none of which could preponderate without disturbing the whole moral and physical order of the world.* Thus Halifax was a trimmer on principle. He was also a trimmer by the constitution both of his head and of his heart. His understanding was keen, sceptical, inexhaustibly fertile in distinctions and objections, his taste refined, his sense of the ludicrous exquisite, his temper placid and forgiving, but fastidious, and by no means prone either to malevolence or to enthusiastic admiration. Such a man could not long be constant to any band of political allies. He must not, however, be confounded with the vulgar crowd of renegades—for though, like them,

* "It will be seen that I believe Halifax to have been the author, or at least one of the authors, of the 'Character of a Trimmer,' which, for a time, went under the name of his kinsman, Sir William Coventry.

he passed from side to side, his transition was always in a direction opposite to theirs. He had nothing in common with those who fly from extreme to extreme, and who regard the party which they have deserted with an animosity far exceeding that of consistent enemies. His place was between the hostile divisions of the community, and he never wandered far beyond the frontier of either. The party to which he at any moment belonged was the party which, at that moment, he liked least, because it was the party of which, at that moment, he had the nearest view. He was therefore always severe upon his violent associates, and was always in friendly relations with his moderate opponents. Every faction, in the day of its insolent and vindictive triumph, incurred his censure, and every faction, when vanquished and persecuted, found in him a protector. To his lasting honor it must be mentioned that he attempted to save those victims whose fate has left the deepest stain both on the whig and the tory name.

"He had greatly distinguished himself in opposition, and had thus drawn on himself the royal displeasure, which was indeed so strong that he was not admitted into the council of thirty without much difficulty and long altercation. As soon, however, as he had obtained a footing at court the charms of his manner and of his conversation made him a favorite. He was seriously alarmed by the violence of the public discontent. He thought that liberty was for the present safe, and that order and legitimate authority were in danger. He therefore, as was his fashion, joined himself to the weaker side. Perhaps his conversion was not wholly disinterested, for study and reflection, though they had emancipated him from many vulgar prejudices, had left him a slave to vulgar desires. Money he did not want, and there is no evidence that he ever obtained it by any means which, in that age, even severe censors considered as dishonorable; but rank and power had strong attractions for him. He pretended, indeed, that he considered titles and great offices as baits which could allure none but fools, that he hated business, pomp and pageantry, and that his dearest wish was to escape from the bustle and glitter of Whitehall to the quiet woods which surrounded his ancient hall at Rufford; but his conduct was not a little at variance with his professions. In truth he wished to command the respect at once of courtiers and of philosophers, to be admired for attaining high dignities, and to be at the same time admired for despising them."

Nothing, ancient or modern, can surpass the felicity of this sketch. Sallust has nothing superior in graphic individuality, in the exact balance of antithesis and the perfect harmony of contrast. We place it before our readers to be admired and studied by all who would attain to that highest reach of excellence in writing, in which the most

consummate art is make to look like nature; in which ornament seems a part of the thing adorned, and refinement wears the air of simplicity.

No part of Mr. Macaulay's work is more interesting or more instructive than his sketch of the social condition of England in the time of Charles II., and of various miscellaneous matters, which all together make up what has been called "the inner life" of a community. Without some knowledge of these things our view of the catenation of cause and effect must be necessarily imperfect; and the coincidence of events may often seem fortuitous, because each link of the chain that connects them moves noiselessly beneath that surface over which historians are so often content to glide. When we look for the causes of that remarkable reaction of the public mind which took place between the battle of Sedgmoor and the declaration of indulgence, we can never rightly understand them if we overlook the difference between the chateau and the manor-house—between the French seigneur and the English squire—between the French peasant and the English farmer—between the French village and the English hamlet.

As an instance of the use which a philosophic historian may make of materials of this sort, we will bring together two passages from different parts of Mr. Macaulay's work. In the first he is sketching the character of the country squire. When he speaks of his intellectual attainments, his manners and his habits, the picture is by no means flattering. Ignorant, unpolished, addicted to low sports and low debauchery, his enlightened and refined descendant of the 19th century must acknowledge that there is nothing there to increase his pride of lineage. But then follows this passage:

"From this description it might be supposed that the English esquire of the seventeenth century did not materially differ from a rustic miller or alehouse keeper of our time. There are, however, some important parts of his character still to be noted, which will greatly modify this estimate. Unlettered as he was and unpolished, he was still in some most important points a gentleman. He was a member of a proud and powerful aristocracy, and was distinguished by many both of the good and of the bad qualities which belong to aristocrats. His family pride was beyond that of a Talbot or a Howard. He knew the genealogies and coats of arms of all his neighbors, and could tell which of them had assumed supporters without any right and which of them were so

unfortunate as to be great-grandsons of aldermen. He was a magistrate, and, as such, administered gratuitously to those who dwelt around him a rude patriarchal justice, which, in spite of innumerable blunders and of occasional acts of tyranny, was yet better than no justice at all. He was an officer of the trainbands, and his military dignity, though it might move the mirth of gallants who had served a campaign in Flanders, raised his character in his own eyes and in the eyes of his neighbors. Nor indeed was his soldiership justly a subject of derision. In every county there were elderly gentlemen who had seen service that was no child's play. One had been knighted by Charles the First after the battle of Edgehill. Another still wore a patch over the scar which he had received at Naseby A third had defended his old house till Fairfax had blown in the door with a petard. The presence of these old cavaliers, with their old swords and holsters, and with their old stories about Goring and Lunsford, gave to the musters of militia an earnest and warlike aspect which would otherwise have been wanting. Even those country gentlemen who were too young to have themselves exchanged blows with the cuirassiers of the Parliament had, from childhood, been surrounded by the traces of recent war and fed with stories of the martial exploits of their fathers and uncles. Thus the character of the English esquire of the seventeenth century was compounded of two elements which we are not accustomed to find united. His ignorance and uncouthness, his low tastes and gross phrases, would, in our time, be considered as indicating a nature and a breeding thoroughly plebeian; yet he was essentially a patrician, and had, in large measure, both the virtues and the vices which flourish among men set from their birth in high place, and accustomed to authority, to observance and to self-respect. It is not easy for a generation which is accustomed to find chivalrous sentiments only in company with liberal studies and polished manners to imagine to itself a man with the deportment, the vocabulary and the accent of a carter, yet punctilious on matters of genealogy and precedence, and ready to risk his life rather than see a stain cast on the honor of his house. It is only, however, by joining together things seldom or never found together in our own experience that we can form a just idea of that rustic aristocracy which constituted the main strength of the armies of Charles the First, and which long supported, with strange fidelity, the interest of his descendants,

"The gross, uneducated, untravelled country gentleman was commonly a tory, but though devotedly attached to hereditary monarchy, he had no partiality for courtiers and ministers. He thought, not without reason, that Whitehall was filled with the most corrupt of mankind, that of the great sums which the House of Commons had voted to the crown since the restoration part had been embezzled by cunning politicians and part squandered on buffoons and foreign courtesans. His

stout English heart swelled with indignation at the thought that the government of his country should be subject to French dictation. Being himself generally an old cavalier, or the son of an old cavalier, he reflected with bitter resentment on the ingratitude with which the Stuarts had requited their best friends. Those who heard him grumble at the neglect with which he was treated and at the profusion with which wealth was lavished on the bastards of Nell Gwynn and Madam Carwell would have supposed him ripe for rebellion. But all this ill humor lasted only till the throne was really in danger. It was precisely when those whom the sovereign had loaded with wealth and honors shrank from his side that the country gentlemen, so surly and mutinous in the season of his prosperity, rallied round him in a body. Thus, after murmuring twenty years at the misgovernment of Charles the Second, they came to his rescue in his extremity, when his own secretaries of state and lords of the treasury had deserted him, and enabled him to gain a complete victory over the opposition; nor can there be any doubt that they would have shown equal loyalty to his brother James, if James would, even at the moment, have refrained from outraging their strongest feeling. For there was one institution, and one only, which they prized even more than hereditary monarchy, and that institution was the Church of England. Their love of the Church was not, indeed, the effect of study or meditation. Few among them could have given any reason, drawn from Scripture or ecclesiastical history, for adhering to her doctrines, her ritual and her polity, nor were they, as a class, by any means strict observers of that code of morality which is common to all Christian sects. But the experience of many ages proves that men may be ready to fight to the death, and to persecute without pity, for a religion whose creed they do not understand and whose precepts they habitually disobey.*"

In 1688 James was disposed to call a Parliament, if he could get one suited to his mind. To secure this object preliminary arrangements were made, which were intended to place the elections under the control of his friends in every county. New lords lieutenant were appointed, new justices of the peace, new sheriffs, and these were uniformly selected from among the staunchest adherents of the house of Stuart, and, as often as practicable, from among papists. But Mr. Macaulay goes on to say,

"There was good reason to believe that there was a point beyond which the king could not reckon on the support of even those she-

* "My notion of the country gentleman of the seventeenth century has been derived from sources too numerous to be recapitulated. I must leave my description to the judgment of those who have studied the history and the lighter literature of that age."

riffs who were members of his own Church. Between the Roman Catholic courtier and the Roman Catholic country gentleman there was very little sympathy. That cabal which domineered at Whitehall consisted partly of fanatics, who were ready to break through all rules of morality and throw the world into confusion for the purpose of propagating their religion, and partly of hypocrites who, for lucre, had apostatized from the faith in which they had been brought up, and who now overacted the zeal characteristic of neophytes. Both the fanatical and the hypocritical courtiers were generally destitute of all English feeling. In some of them devotion to their Church had extinguished every national sentiment. Some of them were Irishmen, whose patriotism consisted in mortal hatred of the Saxon conquerors of Ireland. Some, again, were traitors, who received regular hire from a foreign power. Some had passed a great part of their lives abroad, and either were mere cosmopolites or felt a positive distaste for the manners and institutions of the country which was now subjected to their rule. Between such men and the lord of a Cheshire or Staffordshire manor who adhered to the old Church, there was scarcely any thing in common. He was neither a fanatic nor a hypocrite. He was a Roman Catholic because his father and grandfather had been so, and he held his hereditary faith as men generally hold an hereditary faith, sincerely, but with little enthusiasm. In all other points he was a mere English squire, and, if he differed from the neighboring squires, differed from them by being somewhat more simple and clownish than they. The disabilities under which he lay had prevented his mind from expanding to the standard, moderate as that standard was, which the minds of Protestant country gentlemen then ordinarily attained. Excluded, when a boy, from Eton and Westminster, when a youth, from Oxford and Cambridge, when a man, from Parliament and from the bench of justice, he generally vegetated as quietly as the elms of the avenue which led to his ancestral grange. His corn-fields, his dairy and his cider press, his greyhounds, his fishing-rod and his gun, his ale and his tobacco, occupied almost all his thoughts. With his neighbors, in spite of his religion, he was generally on good terms. They knew him to be unambitious and inoffensive. He was almost always of a good family. He was always a cavalier. His peculiar notions were not obtruded, and caused no annoyance. He did not, like a puritan, torment himself and others with scruples about every thing that was pleasant. On the contrary, he was as keen a sportsman and as jolly a boon companion as any man who had taken the oath of supremacy and the declaration against transubstantiation. He met his brother squires at the cover, was in with them at the death, and when the sport was over took them home with him to a venison pasty and to October four years in bottle. The oppressions he had undergone had not been such as to impel him to any desperate resolution. Even when his Church

was barbarously persecuted his life and property were in little danger. The most impudent false witnesses could hardly venture to shock the common sense of mankind by accusing him of being a conspirator. The papists whom Oates selected for attack were peers, prelates, Jesuits, Benedictines, a busy political agent, a lawyer in high practice, a court physician. The Roman Catholic country gentleman, protected by his obscurity, by his peaceable demeanor, and by the good will of those among whom he lived, carted his hay or filled his bag with game unmolested, while Coleman and Langhorne, Whitbread and Pickering, Archbishop Plunkett and Lord Strafford, died by the halter or the axe. An attempt was indeed made by a knot of villains to bring home a charge of treason to Sir Thomas Gascoigne, an aged Roman Catholic baronet of Yorkshire; but twelve of the best gentlemen of the West Riding, who knew his way of life, could not be convinced that their honest old acquaintance had hired cutthroats to murder the king, and, in spite of charges which did very little honor to the bench, found a verdict of Not Guilty. Sometimes, indeed, the head of an old and respectable provincial family might reflect with bitterness that he was excluded, on account of his religion, from places of honor and authority which men of humbler descent and less ample estate were thought competent to fill; but he was little disposed to risk land and life in a struggle against overwhelming odds, and his honest English spirit would have shrunk with horror from such means as were contemplated by the Petres and Tyrconnels. Indeed he would have been as ready as any of his protestant neighbors to gird on his sword and to put pistols in his holsters for the defence of his native land against an invasion of French or Irish papists. Such was the general character of the men to whom James now looked as to his most trustworthy instruments for the conduct of county elections. He soon found that they were not inclined to throw away the esteem of their neighbors and to endanger their heads and estates by rendering him an infamous and criminal service. Several of them refused to be sheriffs. Of those who accepted the shrievalty many declared that they would discharge their duty as fairly as if they were members of the Established Church, and would return no candidate who had not a real majority."

The reader can hardly fail to see the intimate connection between the result set forth in the last of these extracts and the character portrayed in the first. The rough country squire, with his independent unincumbered estate, his blunt manners and coarse habits, and rude but high sense of honor, was the very man to repel with disgust any attempt to make him the instrument of any unworthy design. Mr. Macaulay is a statesman as well as an historian, and we would recommend to him, in his former character, the lesson he teaches in the latter.

"When ancient opinions and rules of life," says Burke, "are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated." It may not be very great, and it may be, and often is, more than compensated by accompanying gain. But even when the change is from worse to better there is always some loss, and it will not do to rely on any calculations which, looking only to the gain, do not take that loss into the account. The steadiness of habit is lost, the prompt energy of prejudice is lost, and there is nothing to which men have generally consented in which there is not something essentially good, in itself or its consequences. The Englishman was, perhaps, never prouder of his country and of himself, than at this day. He is as proud of his *cuisine*—of his *paté de foie gras*, and his *omelette soufflée*, as he used to be of his roast beef and plum-pudding. He is as proud of his villas and *cottages ornées*, his statues and his paintings, as he used to be of his old halls, his old oaks, and his old rookeries. He is as proud of his claret and champaigne as he used to be of his home-brewed October. He is as proud of the opera as he used to be of the theatre, and would be prouder of a Jenny Lind than a Garrick. He is as proud of things copied and borrowed from other rival nations as he used to be of things exclusively English. Is there nothing lost in this? We are much mistaken if there is not more of that pride which kindles the eye, and steels the nerves, and strengthens the heart, in the old absurd notion that one Englishman could whip three Frenchmen, than all the modern Englishman could derive from painters like Raffaelle, and sculptors like Canova, and from singers and dancers and fiddlers, as far superior to the best of France and Italy, as these to the bumpkins at a village ball. We too are English; and all the far-descended honors of the English name are ours by inheritance. It is our pride that "Chatham's language is our mother tongue;" that when Edward scattered the hosts of France at Poictiers and Henry at Agincourt, and when Wolfe scaled the heights of Abraham, it was our blood that was poured forth like water on those glorious fields. We were proud of the victories of Wellington in Spain, and we were proud to meet his heroes at New-Orleans, and to show that we were not degenerate. It is not the least of our pride, that, while our race reads lessons to the world in philosophy, in science, in mechanic skill, in the arts of

government, in Christian morality, in all that makes for the temporal and eternal happiness of man, we are far behind in the light and frivolous arts which do but tickle the ear and please the eye. "Are you not ashamed to play so well on the flute?" was a question well put to one born to be a king; and would be equally well addressed to the imperial Anglo-Saxon race, whose mission on earth is like that of the Jews in Canaan, "to subdue the land and possess it." Let England forget her part in this high vocation. Let her add the fine arts to her causes of pride, until she is prouder of her Angelos and Titians, her Paganinis, and her Elslers, than of Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton and Newton—but then, the next time we cross bayonets, let her beware. "We are all of the House of Bourbon," said Henry IV. to the princes of the blood around him, when going into battle. We are all of the House of Bourbon, but I will let you see to-day that I am your elder brother." Far distant be the day when England, pursuing her career of false glory, in rivalling the follies of those she used to despise, shall lay herself open to that rebuke.

Even now, let her pause and ponder. Let her study the hand writing on the walls of the catacombs of Egypt, and the ruins of Nineveh, Persepolis and Balbec, explored by the restless curiosity of her travellers. Her Daniels have marvellously succeeded in *decyphering* the inscription. Let her now try to *interpret* it. What does she find there? Wealth—art—elegance—refinement. What next? DESOLATION! What do these recently exhumed marvels of buried greatness tell so clearly as that fate delays the doom of her most tempting victims until they are fat and full of pasture? Do they not remind her that "Pride goeth before destruction." Does she see nothing in the working of the causes developed by that highest degree of prosperity which she has attained, that may suggest a fear that the ruin which has so often trod upon the halls of splendor like hers, was not fortuitous, but followed as effect follows its cause? Does she hear no buzzing in that Northern hive which has sent forth so many swarms? Does she learn nothing from the flight of those birds of passage who, impelled by a sort of unreasoning instinct, are flocking to our shores, and peopling our forests and prairies with wretches flying as from a wrath to come? Does she not see a mighty wave, heaped up, and rolling

westward, with an unbroken combing crest extending from the Baltic to the Euxine? The Mussulman believes every madman to be inspired, and listens to his ravings as to words of him who knew the end from the beginning, giving dark warnings of wrath to come. With something of the same feelings we have always read the magnificent Jeremiad of England's holy madman Cowper, over the desolation wrought by the great earthquake in Sicily. Apply what he says to the moral condition of Western Europe.

> "What solid was, by transformation strange,
> Grows fluid; and the fixed and rooted earth,
> Tormented into billows, heaves and swells,
> Or, with vatiginous and hideous whirl,
> Sucks down its prey insatiable.
> * * * * *
> "Ocean has caught the frenzy, and upwrought
> To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
> Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice,
> Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore.
> * * * * *

Who is not reminded by what follows, of that strange paradox in political economy so strikingly exposed by Carlyle in his apologue of Midas?

> "The very elements, tho' each be meant
> The minister of man to serve his wants,
> Conspire against him. *With his breath he draws*
> *A plague into his blood, and cannot use*
> *Life's necessary means, but he must die.*
> Storms rise t' o'erwhelm him, or if stormy winds
> Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
> And, needing none assistance of the storm,
> Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.
> The earth shall shake him out of all his holds
> And make his house his grave; nor so content,
> Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
> And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs."

There is not a feature in all this terrible picture to which, by the least effort of imagination, a resemblance may not be found in what is now passing in France, Germany and England. In these, the most advanced countries of Eu-

rope, we see causes at work, over which the power and the wisdom of man have no more control than over the heavings of an earthquake or the bursting of a volcano. May it not be said that this too is a case

> "Where God performs, upon the trembling stage
> Of his own works, his dreadful part alone."

We have no pleasure in such vaticinations. We will not even copy the fearful lines in which the poet himself applies them to England. But we are persuaded that there are statesmen in England who see these things as we do. But what can they do? They see the *risus sardonicus*, on the face of the patient, and sadly force themselves to smile in turn, and administer anodynes of self-gratulation at the great improvement that the country gentleman of England at this day has made on the manners and habits of his rude ancestors. God forbid that these thoughts should not fill our minds with sadness! In the midst of them we remember that England has one cause of pride, which will be precious to her when all the rest are gone. She may then proudly rejoice that it was she who, by transplanting her people and her manners and institutions to this continent, prepared her a city of refuge for the Teutonic and Celtic races, escaping from the tumbling ruins of their own greatness, or flying before the face of a modern Attila.

We have been so swept along by a current of thought and feeling in which we have been unexpectedly involved that we have hardly left ourselves room for the little we have to add. That little it might indeed be the part of prudence to forbear, for we shall be sure to incur the charge of presumption, if we venture to hint a blemish in the style of a gentleman confessedly the best writer of his day. In saying this, we sufficiently manifest our disposition to do full justice to Mr. Macaulay; and we are content to abide the censures of those who would deem it impiety to the god of day, to take notice of the spots upon his disk. Indeed the few blemishes we have detected in Mr. Macaulay are such as we should not take notice of in any other writer. They are perhaps such as would not be found in any other. We are often reminded of Shakspeare's shrewd hit at one of the forms of vanity, which is

equally applicable to many others. "There was never yet," said he, "a fair woman, but she made mouths in the glass." We have seen the pretty creatures practicing this, and never was their beauty more radiant, than when thus playfully trying how much distortion it would bear without ceasing to be beauty. How hideous such grimace is when used by imitators to set off an ugly face, no *man* needs to be told. Yet men *will offend* in the like kind, and we would warn the admirers of Mr. Macaulay against too close an imitation of him. It is hardly to be expected that the wantonness which a sense of power is so apt to engender, should not manifest itself in some things which would not be tolerated in inferior writers. Yet these are the very things in which he will be imitated by those who might strive in vain to imitate his beauties.

For example, we think that Mr. Macaulay is the only writer, who, unless driven to it by the necessities of the rhyme, would use the word pleasure as a verb. The word we know was so used, two centuries ago, and is to be found in the writings of Bacon and Tillotson. But it has long been condemned by the highest authority, and might be looked for in vain in the prose of any respectable writer within the last hundred years. It was condemned for reasons just and good, and founded in the laws of the language. These do indeed admit that a noun may be used as a verb, and many are so used. Such are "love, quarrel, fight," and many more. Sometimes the verb was the original word, which, in like manner was used as a noun. Of this the word "hate" in an instance. But when, as commonly happens, a noun is formed from the verb by adding a nominal termination, there is no law to justify the use of *such* a noun as a verb expressive of the *very thing* which the radical verb expressed.

Another, and more prevailing reason is that the word has fallen into low company, and though never seen in the works of a good writer, nor heard from the lips of an educated man, is still used by the illiterate. *We* have heard it often from negroes. Never from a white man.

For the use of the phrase "all but" (vol. 1, p. 14, l. 15) as equivalent to "almost," there is absolutely no authority. It is a bold attempt to introduce the dialect of the kitchen into the parlor. "All but," is a legitimate combination of words, and is used to express what they literally mean,

that is "all except." "All but one" is all "minus one." Mr. Macaulay uses it to express "less than one." Is it a righteous use of Mr. Macaulay's authority as a writer to introduce an innovation which would make "all but one" and "all but all" mean nearly the same thing. According to Mr. Macaulay the first expresses the deficit exactly, the second vaguely. If such were the idiom of the language it ought to be corrected. But it is not so. "Almost" is the appropriate word for the latter purpose. We may vary it, if we please, by substituting "nearly," and two forms of speech are entirely enough for such a purpose. Either would have been quite proper in the place where Mr. Macaulay has used this vulgarism. Indeed, it is manifest that it must have been done in the wantonness of power, from the fact that the author has never thought it necessary to use it, in any other case, throughout his two volumes.

At p. 53, l. 4, of the first volume, we find the words "significant," used as the opposite of "insignificant." The popular meaning of the latter is admitted to be a corruption, and is denounced by high authority as a vulgarism. This is the first time that we have such a primitive word called on to surrender its meaning to a derivative. Are we to take this as one of the characteristics of that new order of things in which the lead is taken by those who have been always accustomed to follow? We lately saw this word so used for the first time, in an English Review. It occurred frequently in an article of great pretension, which, in other respects, did no credit to the periodical in which it appeared. We soon after saw it copied by a Northern penny-a-liner. There is no good authority for it. Eighty years ago Johnson spoke of it only to condemn it as low, corrupt, and unsupported by any authority. Its use did but suggest to us the thought that, if reviewers do not mean to betray their trust, as guardians of the purity of language and as masters of style, each editor would do well to devote one article at least annually to the castigation of his own contributors. Such part of it as falls upon ourselves we promise to accept with thankfulness.

We may perhaps be thought to deserve censure for this word-catching captiousness. Our apology will be found in a sort of conspiracy against the English language, of which the first overt act has been perpetrated through the instrumentality of this very work of Mr. Macaulay. We

allude to an edition issued by a great publishing house in New-York, with the avowed purpose of changing the orthography of the language. The object of this is to give currency to a dictionary of the Yankee dialect, which these publishers, doubtless for valuable consideration, have undertaken to patronize. If they succeed in this, the English language must go by the board, and Johnson must be superseded by a "classical dictionary of the Yankee tongue," which every *Stoodent* may then acquire in all its *poority;* and if he becomes *pussy* from too great application, he may relieve himself by mounting his *mool* and taking a ride.

The audacity of this attack on the rights of Mr. Macaulay struck us with astonishment. We well remembered the severe castigation administered by him many years ago to Mr. Mitford, for a similar outrage on the language, and hoped to see this impertinence of the publisher rebuked by him. What was our amazement when a letter appeared, purporting to come from Mr. Macaulay, in which he surrenders the English language to its fate, and protesses to be content that his words be spelt in any way the publisher may think proper, if the words themselves are but retained.

We learned this with great regret. As the first writer, and the most perfect master of the English language at this day, we looked to him to defend and save it from this pollution. We humbly think that it was his duty to do so, and we had no doubt that he would be ready to perform it.

In this we have been disappointed. What then is to be done? Luckily, we find a precedent in our own history. When our fathers appealed to the king to protect them against the usurpations of Parliament, and found their appeal treated with contempt, they resolved to take care of themselves. Not having the fear of publishers before *our* eyes, we shall not shrink from this contest: though this is not the place to do more than to enter our protest against the whole proceeding. We do this because we love the English language which we think the finest in the world. Unlike the language of the south of Europe, which reminds us of those boneless reptiles that have no red blood in their veins, it has consonants enough to give it firmness and strength, while it is free from the unpronounceable combinations which overload the German. It is rich, too,

in those idioms which constitute the main strength of every language, and which, defying all rule, make it impossible for any school-master to teach a clown to talk like a gentleman, or a Yankee, to pass himself (as he would be always glad to do) for any thing but what he is. We should be loath to lose the advantage of being thus guarded, as by a sort of instinct, against blackguards and knaves; and protest against all attempts of grammarians, orthographers and orthoepists, to simplify *their* task, by forcing upon the language laws of analogy which it disowns, and by suppressing all those graceful modifications of pronunciation which they do not know how to express. When they tell us that the A in "mast," has the same sound as in "mat"—and that both the G and the A in "gape" are to be pronounced exactly as in "gap," they pronounce sentence against themselves or their art. We set our faces against them all, from Sheridan to Webster, and would be glad to have it forever impossible, as it now is, for any man to learn to talk like a *gentleman*, but by being bred among gentlemen, and keeping the company of gentlemen.

We should be sorry to lose the aid of Mr. Macaulay in this warfare, and we, therefore, say to him that if he supposes the favor of the publisher to be as necessary to literary fame here, as in England, he quite mistakes the fact. His power over the pens of writers who live by his countenance is perhaps as great; but we beg leave to say that the men among us whose approbation Mr. Macaulay might have reason to be proud of, are not commonly the men who write books. There is indeed a "petty cabal," somewhere in the north, "who attempt to hide their total want of consequence in bustle and noise, and puffing and mutual quotation of each other," that presumes to call itself the "*literary public.*" We often find articles in the newspapers professing to tell us what the LITERARY PUBLIC are about; and there we learn that a certain Mr. Rufus Griswold is preparing an enlarged edition of one of those compilations, which show his zeal and skill in the Christian duty of "seeking and saving that which was lost;" that Mr. or Miss (*qu.*) N. P. Willis is about inditing "letters from under a cow-shed," or some such place; that Mr. C. Edwards Lester, of Italian *notoriety*, is about to produce a drama; and that some other gentleman of

equal celebrity and merit is working on a romance. We see all this, and thus, and by like means, we know that such men are. We do read the writings of Irving and Prescott; such of us as are not particular about truth in a history, read Bancroft; we sometimes spare time and eyesight for one of Cooper's novels; but as to the rest, whatever favor they may find with the shop boys and sempstresses of New-York, we beg to assure Mr. Macaulay, that *our literary public* (if there be such a thing) heed them no more than the twittering of so many hedge sparrows. Our reading men are familiar with the best writers of England, and with some of those of France and Germany, and try to keep up with the literature of the day. In doing this they have little time to spare for those who write only because they think that *what they call America ought* to have a literature *of its own*. We, here in the South, are not aware of any such necessity. We are for *free trade*, and go for getting what we want, of the best quality and at the cheapest market. Both objects we think are best secured, by not taking any of the wares of our northern *brethren*, (qu. plunderers and slanderers) whether mechanical, intellectual or moral.

We think we have been trained, and we wish to train our children, in a better school. We seek to imbue them with the high, bold, manly morality of *Old* England, (not *New* England, or *modern* England,) and decidedly prefer Harry Sandford, as an exemplar, to any of the *good children* that die in the odor of sanctity at seven years of age. We teach our boys to walk by the light that was in the world sixty years ago, when the last shades of darkness had been dispelled by the flame kindled by the heats of our Revolution. We believe that no discoveries of importance have been made since then in morals or in politics. Like Lord Halifax, we are conservatives and republicans: and we are conservative *because* we are republican. This may seem a paradox to Mr. Hume or Mr. Roebuck. Mr. Macaulay will understand it. Lamartine understood it once, until he got his head turned, and it is probable he now understands it again. For ourselves, we are favorable to all improvement, but have no wish to see it moving, like every thing else, at rail road speed. We believe a sense of progress highly conducive to comfort, and *therefore*, we are in no hurry to get to the stopping

place. We believe that the happiest condition of society is that in which every man, at the end of each year, finds himself better off than at the beginning; and *therefore*, we are not impatient to arrive at that point at which farther amelioration becomes impossible. We are not severe economists, but we believe that, in forbearing to *use up* this fund of happiness, though at the expense of what others save, we practice the wisest economy; and see no reason to envy those who have brought themselves to "draff and husks," though eaten out of golden troughs. Solomon tells us of one that "maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing," and of one that "maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." J. J. Astor was a wise man too, in his way, and he said "that a man with $500,000 was as well off as a rich man." We think we understand both.

We understand and appreciate the character so admirably sketched by Mr. Macaulay,

> "Of the worshipful old gentleman who had a great estate,
> That kept a brave old house at a bountiful rate,
> And an old porter to relieve the poor at his gate."

We love him and we honor him too, and while we "fear God and keep his commandments," we shall continue to honor him. For was he not our great grandsire's grandsire? And shall we grudge him

> "His cup of old sherry to comfort his old copper nose!"

or bless ourselves, and say, with the pharisee: "Had we lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers of their sins?" On the contrary, we dwell with pleasure on the picture. We recognize its truth, for we are fully aware how a man, living in the country, on his own independent estate, surrounded by men in like circumstances, and never coming in contact with any who are not at all points his equals, or confessedly his subordinates and dependents, can hardly help being a gentleman, in spite of ignorance, low sports, and low debauchery. We rejoice in believing this, for we have all his advantages, and we are not, as he was, cut off from the means of knowledge, and access to intellectual and refined society. We have indeed not yet caught the devil-may-care air of the whiskered Snob, nor the cool impudence of Brummel, nor the dignified *insouciance*, the quiet insolence, and the tranquil indifference to the comfort and feelings of all but

ourselves, which constitute the last refinement of the *polisson poli*. We have still remaining among us some specimens of an older school, by which we would have our children to form their manners.

We teach them too, to speak the language of their forefathers, with only such changes as our acquaintance with English literature has made familiar to us. We love it, for it is the language of Shakspeare and Milton, of Chatham and Burke, of Scott and Byron; and we rejoice to believe that no dialect of any language known among men is so uniformly and so extensively spoken as the present idiom of the English language. Over a space of one thousand miles square—(we do not answer for any thing north of Mason and Dixon) Mr. Macaulay would meet no man of English blood, who would not understand and answer him in the very dialect, the power and beauty of which are so successfully displayed by him. He would find in the poorest and most ignorant no difference but that which education must make between the cultivated man and the clown, and even this would show itself mainly in the absense of that peculiar *tone* by which, as Scott says, we know a well bred man.

We preserve another trait of the honest old squire. The circumstances of our country life are such as to promote hospitality, and they give it the same character which like causes have produced elsewhere. Old Christmas is not dead and forgotten from among us, and we welcome him with the same cheer that has always made his old grey beard wag merrily. In short, we try to keep the travelled coxcomb and the French cook at bay, and with them, the Yankee school-master with his new fangled spelling-books and pronouncing dictionaries; and we are resolved that, if it be decreed that English minced pies, and plumb pudding and roast beef, and the English gentleman, and the English language, are to be swept from the face of the earth, and be no more found among men, the last specimen of each, in all its purity, shall be found among ourselves.

In taking leave of Mr. Macaulay, we have to express our regret at the thought that we may not live to see the completion of his work. Yet we do not think it will be too voluminous. On the contrary, it is our earnest wish that he may not be induced to curtail his plan. It is only by

going on as he has begun that he can produce a history worthy of the subject and adequate to true ends of history.

In parting with him then, for the present, instead of the Spanish formula, "may you live a thousand years," we would say to him, "may you live to perfect a monument to your country, which will be to your fame what the statue of Minerva was to Phidias."