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Hallam's Middle Ages

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have we seen the best characteristics of the illustrious Roman half so well displayed, as in the "Middle Ages." The same burning yet well tempered love of liberty; the same hatred of tyranny and injustice; the same vein of sage remark, developing in a single sentence, momentous political truth; the same power of sarcasm, conveyed usually in the very words which carry forward the narrative; the same condensed and forcible brevity of recital. Often; than in Tacitus, or in Hume, there occur in Hallam passages of eminent rhetorical beauty; much resembling those occasional observations, at once elegant and profound, in which Burke abounds. But they are neither frequent nor long enough, to violate the becoming chastity of historical composition. Far from being superfluous ornaments, which lead oft the reader's mind from the facts detailed, or suggest a doubt concerning the truth of a story so embellished, they enliven and rivet his attention, by illustrating the subject; and interrupt not, for a moment, the course of the narration. The work takes a wide range. It gives the History of France—Italy—Spain—Germany—the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire—Ecclesiastical Power—the Feudal System—the English Constitution—and the State of Society in Europe—during the Middle Ages; that is, for about eight or nine centuries. The manner in which it groups and details the multitude of facts comprised in this great outline, is lucid and happy. With equal judgment are the instructive or important selected, and the trivial or useless passed in silence.

But it is above all as the enlightened friend of liberty, that Mr. Hallam deserves the esteem of American readers. Some extracts we propose making, will evince this, and also the Tacitus-like pith and pungency we have ascribed to him. The indices and small capitals are ours.

EXTRACTS.

A generous disdain of one man's will, is to republish governments what chastity is to women; (\[\ldots\])

Rienzi's character was not unusual among literary politicians; a combination of knowledge, eloquence, and enthusiasm for ideal excellence, with vanity, inexperience of mankind, untendenseness, and physical timidity.

'The most deadly hatred, is that which men exasperated by proscription and forfeiture bear to their country.'

On the triumphant return of Cosmo de' Medici, in 1434, from the exile into which the opposite faction of Albizzi had driven him, Hallam remarks,—'It is in vain to expect that a victorious faction will scruple to retaliate upon its enemies a still greater measure of injustice than it experienced at their hands. The vanquished have no rights in the eye of their conquerors. The sword of returning exiles, flushed by victory and incensed by suffering, falls successively upon their enemies, upon those whose sins they suspect of being their enemies, and upon those who may hereafter become such.'

Policy of employing Foreign Mercenaries.) 'Considered with reference to economy, almost any taxes must be a cheap commutation for personal service. But economy may be regarded too exclusively; and can

HALLAM'S MIDDLE AGES.*

It is surprising, that this work is not more admired, and more read, than it seems to be. It is surpassingly well written, and equalled by no historical production in the English language, since the times of the great British three, of the last century. Indeed, several merits tempt us strongly, to place it above even their works. It is more copious than Hume; more simply and pointedly sententious than Robertson; more clear, and infinitely less pompous, than Gibbon. Nothing can be more striking, than the contrast between Hallam's distinct, straightforward statements, and shrewd, concise, often pungent remarks,—and Gibbon's elaborately swollen and belaboured periods, that after thrice reading, leave it still doubtful what fact he tells, or what opinion he expresses. If it had not become vulgar to compare his historian to Tacitus (Dr. Ramsey has been called 'The Tacitus of America'), we should say, that no worse

* View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages. By Henry Hallam, Esq. 2 vols. 8vo.
never counterbalance that degradation of national character, which proceeds from intrusting the public defense to foreigners.

1. Historians have in general more indulgence for splendid crimes, than for the wretchedness of virtue. 1

1 None of Charlemagne's wars can be compared with the Saracenic history of Charles Martel: but this was a contest for freedom; those for conquest; and fame is more partial to successful aggression than to patriotic resistance.

In the unswerving 'probit, strictness of conscience,' and benevolence, of Louis IX. (St. Louis), he found all the effects of far-sighted policy. 2 Not is it the privilege only of virtuous minds, to perceive what wisdom dwells in moderate counsels. No sacricy ever taught a selfish and ambitious sovereign to forego the sweetness of immediate power.

2 Has in Historical Studies. Intimate tumults, &c., are among the eternal lessons of History: for the unjust encroachments of courts, the intemperate passions of the multitude, the ambition of demagogues, the cruelty of victorious factions, will never cease to have their parallels and their analogies; while the military achievements of distant times afford, in general, no instruction; and can hardly occupy too little of our time in historical studies. Note.

Historians have in general more indulgence for splendid crimes, than for the wretchedness of virtue. 1

3. No sagacity or thought can allay the prejudices, be
defence to foreigners.'

4. The Arnbian monarchs of Cordova found in their
time in historical studies.'

Bul the sting of taxation is irremediable. Castile}, retained for 35 years an absolute control over

3. Still with the holy See: even Innocent

4. It is difficult to name a limit beyond which taxes will not be borne without impatience, 'The Armenian monarchs of Cordova found in their

5. Utility of Purify Names. About A.D. 1200, 'the two leading parties which had divided the cities of Lombardy, and whose mutual animosity, having no general subject of contention, required the association of a name to direct as well as invigorate its prejudices, became distinguished by the celebrated apppellations of Guelphs and Ghibelines.' 3 * * * Terms of this de

5. Note.

3. The Armenian monarchs of Cordova found in their

6. Even those historians who have no particular motives for concealment, turn away from the monotonous and disgusting crimes of tyranny.

6. The very virtues which a state of hostility excites, are not proof against its long continuance; and shat at last into brutal fierceness.'

6. A visitation of Republic. In a superficial view of history, we are sometimes apt to exagerate the vices of free states, and to lose sight of those inherent in tyrannical power. The bold censuriosity of Rep

7. John II. did not long survive his minister; dying in 1454, after a reign that may be considered as inglo

7. Of John Eumnades, the Hungarian patriot, who

8. About A.D. 1200, 'the two leading parties which had divided the cities of Lombardy, and whose mutual animosity, having no general subject of contention, required the association of a name to direct as well as invigorate its prejudices, became distinguished by the celebrated apppellations of Guelphs and Ghibelines.' 3 * * * Terms of this de

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26. John II. did not long survive his minister; dying in 1454, after a reign that may be considered as inglo
(except Burke) from any other writer of any other class, could a larger number of sentences be called, harmonious in structure, graceful and impressive in phraseology, and rich in sound political philosophy.