

Historical Lectures and Essays eBook

Historical Lectures and Essays by Charles Kingsley

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Historical Lectures and Essays eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	10
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	17
Page 10.....	18
Page 11.....	19
Page 12.....	21
Page 13.....	22
Page 14.....	23
Page 15.....	25
Page 16.....	27
Page 17.....	29
Page 18.....	30
Page 19.....	31
Page 20.....	32
Page 21.....	33
Page 22.....	34

Page 23.....	35
Page 24.....	36
Page 25.....	38
Page 26.....	40
Page 27.....	41
Page 28.....	43
Page 29.....	44
Page 30.....	46
Page 31.....	47
Page 32.....	49
Page 33.....	50
Page 34.....	52
Page 35.....	53
Page 36.....	55
Page 37.....	57
Page 38.....	59
Page 39.....	60
Page 40.....	61
Page 41.....	62
Page 42.....	63
Page 43.....	64
Page 44.....	65
Page 45.....	66
Page 46.....	67
Page 47.....	68
Page 48.....	69

Page 49.....	70
Page 50.....	71
Page 51.....	72
Page 52.....	73
Page 53.....	74
Page 54.....	75
Page 55.....	76
Page 56.....	77
Page 57.....	78
Page 58.....	79
Page 59.....	80
Page 60.....	81
Page 61.....	82
Page 62.....	83
Page 63.....	85
Page 64.....	87
Page 65.....	88
Page 66.....	89
Page 67.....	90
Page 68.....	91
Page 69.....	93
Page 70.....	94
Page 71.....	95
Page 72.....	96
Page 73.....	97
Page 74.....	98

Page 75.....	99
Page 76.....	100
Page 77.....	101
Page 78.....	102
Page 79.....	103
Page 80.....	104
Page 81.....	105
Page 82.....	106
Page 83.....	107
Page 84.....	108
Page 85.....	109
Page 86.....	111
Page 87.....	113

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
THE FIRST DISCOVERY OF AMERICA		1
CYRUS, THE SERVANT OF-THE LORD {4}		15
ANCIENT CIVILISATION {5} {6}		27
RONDELET, {7} THE HUGUENOT NATURALIST {8}		38
VESALIUS THE ANATOMIST {9}		50
PARACELSUS {13}		62
GEORGE BUCHANAN, SCHOLAR		71
FOOTNOTES		85

Page 1

THE FIRST DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

Let me begin this lecture {1} with a scene in the North Atlantic 863 years since.

“Bjarne Grimolfson was blown with his ship into the Irish Ocean; and there came worms and the ship began to sink under them. They had a boat which they had payed with seals’ blubber, for that the sea-worms will not hurt. But when they got into the boat they saw that it would not hold them all. Then said Bjarne, ‘As the boat will only hold the half of us, my advice is that we should draw lots who shall go in her; for that will not be unworthy of our manhood.’ This advice seemed so good that none gainsaid it; and they drew lots. And the lot fell to Bjarne that he should go in the boat with half his crew. But as he got into the boat, there spake an Icelander who was in the ship and had followed Bjarne from Iceland, ‘Art thou going to leave me here, Bjarne?’ Quoth Bjarne, ‘So it must be.’ Then said the man, ‘Another thing didst thou promise my father, when I sailed with thee from Iceland, than to desert me thus. For thou saidst that we both should share the same lot.’ Bjarne said, ‘And that we will not do. Get thou down into the boat, and I will get up into the ship, now I see that thou art so greedy after life.’ So Bjarne went up into the ship, and the man went down into the boat; and the boat went on its voyage till they came to Dublin in Ireland. Most men say that Bjarne and his comrades perished among the worms; for they were never heard of after.”

This story may serve as a text for my whole lecture. Not only does it smack of the sea-breeze and the salt water, like all the finest old Norse sagas, but it gives a glimpse at least of the nobleness which underlay the grim and often cruel nature of the Norseman. It belongs, too, to the culminating epoch, to the beginning of that era when the Scandinavian peoples had their great times; when the old fierceness of the worshippers of Thor and Odin was tempered, without being effeminated, by the Faith of the “White Christ,” till the very men who had been the destroyers of Western Europe became its civilisers.

It should have, moreover, a special interest to Americans. For—as American antiquaries are well aware—Bjarne was on his voyage home from the coast of New England; possibly from that very Mount Hope Bay which seems to have borne the same name in the time of those old Norsemen, as afterwards in the days of King Philip, the last sachem of the Wampanong Indians. He was going back to Greenland, perhaps for reinforcements, finding, he and his fellow-captain, Thorfinn, the Esquimaux who then dwelt in that land too strong for them. For the Norsemen were then on the very edge of discovery, which might have changed the history not only of this continent but of Europe likewise. They had found and colonised Iceland and Greenland. They had found Labrador, and called it Helluland, from its

Page 2

ice-polished rocks. They had found Nova Scotia seemingly, and called it Markland, from its woods. They had found New England, and called it Vinland the Good. A fair land they found it, well wooded, with good pasturage; so that they had already imported cows, and a bull whose lowings terrified the Esquimaux. They had found self-sown corn too, probably maize. The streams were full of salmon. But they had called the land Vinland, by reason of its grapes. Quaint enough, and bearing in its very quaintness the stamp of truth, is the story of the first finding of the wild fox-grapes. How Leif the Fortunate, almost as soon as he first landed, missed a little wizened old German servant of his father's, Tyrker by name, and was much vexed thereat, for he had been brought up on the old man's knee, and hurrying off to find him met Tyrker coming back twisting his eyes about—a trick of his—smacking his lips and talking German to himself in high excitement. And when they get him to talk Norse again, he says: "I have not been far, but I have news for you. I have found vines and grapes!" "Is that true, foster-father?" says Leif. "True it is," says the old German, "for I was brought up where there was never any lack of them."

The saga—as given by Rafn—had a detailed description of this quaint personage's appearance; and it would not be amiss if American wine-growers should employ an American sculptor—and there are great American sculptors—to render that description into marble, and set up little Tyrker in some public place, as the Silenus of the New World.

Thus the first cargoes homeward from Vinland to Greenland had been of timber and of raisins, and of vine-stocks, which were not like to thrive.

And more. Beyond Vinland the Good there was said to be another land, Whiteman's Land—or Ireland the Mickle, as some called it. For these Norse traders from Limerick had found Ari Marson, and Ketla of Ruykjanes, supposed to have been long since drowned at sea, and said that the people had made him and Ketla chiefs, and baptized Ari. What is all this? and what is this, too, which the Esquimaux children taken in Markland told the Northmen, of a land beyond them where the folk wore white clothes, and carried flags on poles? Are these all dreams? or was some part of that great civilisation, the relics whereof your antiquarians find in so many parts of the United States, still in existence some 900 years ago; and were these old Norse cousins of ours upon the very edge of it? Be that as it may, how nearly did these fierce Vikings, some of whom seemed to have sailed far south along the shore, become aware that just beyond them lay a land of fruits and spices, gold and gems? The adverse current of the Gulf Stream, it may be, would have long prevented their getting past the Bahamas into the Gulf of Mexico; but, sooner or later, some storm must have carried a Greenland viking to San Domingo or to Cuba; and then, as has been well said, some Scandinavian dynasty might have sat upon the throne of Mexico.

Page 3

These stories are well known to antiquarians. They may be found, almost all of them, in Professor Rafn's "Antiquitates Americanae." The action in them stands out often so clear and dramatic, that the internal evidence of historic truth is irresistible. Thorvald, who, when he saw what seems to be, they say, the bluff head of Alderton at the south-east end of Boston Bay, said, "Here should I like to dwell," and, shot by an Esquimaux arrow, bade bury him on that place, with a cross at his head and a cross at his feet, and call the place Cross Ness for evermore; Gudrida, the magnificent widow, who wins hearts and sees strange deeds from Iceland to Greenland, and Greenland to Vinland and back, and at last, worn out and sad, goes off on a pilgrimage to Rome; Helgi and Finnbogi, the Norwegians, who, like our Arctic voyagers in after times, devise all sorts of sports and games to keep the men in humour during the long winter at Hope; and last, but not least, the terrible Freydisa, who, when the Norse are seized with a sudden panic at the Esquimaux and flee from them, as they had three weeks before fled from Thorfinn's bellowing bull, turns, when so weak that she cannot escape, single-handed on the savages, and catching up a slain man's sword, puts them all to flight with her fierce visage and fierce cries—Freydisa the Terrible, who, in another voyage, persuades her husband to fall on Helgi and Finnbogi, when asleep, and murder them and all their men; and then, when he will not murder the five women too, takes up an axe and slays them all herself, and getting back to Greenland, when the dark and unexplained tale comes out, lives unpunished, but abhorred henceforth. All these folks, I say, are no phantoms, but realities; at least, if I can judge of internal evidence.

But beyond them, and hovering on the verge of Mythus and Fairyland, there is a ballad called "Finn the Fair," and how

An upland Earl had twa braw sons,
My story to begin;
The tane was Light Haldane the strong,
The tither was winsome Finn.

and so forth; which was still sung, with other "rimur," or ballads, in the Faroes, at the end of the last century. Professor Rafn has inserted it, because it talks of Vinland as a well-known place, and because the brothers are sent by the princess to slay American kings; but that Rime has another value. It is of a beauty so perfect, and yet so like the old Scotch ballads in its heroic conception of love, and in all its forms and its qualities, that it is one proof more, to any student of early European poetry, that we and these old Norsemen are men of the same blood.

Page 4

If anything more important than is told by Professor Rafn and Mr. Black {2} be now known to the antiquarians of Massachusetts, let me entreat them to pardon my ignorance. But let me record my opinion that, though somewhat too much may have been made in past years of certain rock-inscriptions, and so forth, on this side of the Atlantic, there can be no reasonable doubt that our own race landed and tried to settle on the shore of New England six hundred years before their kinsmen, and, in many cases, their actual descendants, the august Pilgrim Fathers of the seventeenth century. And so, as I said, a Scandinavian dynasty might have been seated now upon the throne of Mexico. And how was that strange chance lost? First, of course, by the length and danger of the coasting voyage. It was one thing to have, like Columbus and Vespucci, Cortes and Pizarro, the Azores as a halfway port; another to have Greenland, or even Iceland. It was one thing to run south-west upon Columbus's track, across the Mar de Damas, the Ladies' Sea, which hardly knows a storm, with the blazing blue above, the blazing blue below, in an ever-warming climate, where every breath is life and joy; another to struggle against the fogs and icebergs, the rocks and currents of the dreary North Atlantic. No wonder, then, that the knowledge of Markland, and Vinland, and Whiteman's Land died away in a few generations, and became but fireside sagas for the winter nights.

But there were other causes, more honourable to the dogged energy of the Norse. They were in those very years conquering and settling nearer home as no other people—unless, perhaps, the old Ionian Greeks—conquered and settled.

Greenland, we have seen, they held—the western side at least—and held it long and well enough to afford, it is said, 2,600 pounds of walrus' teeth as yearly tithe to the Pope, besides Peter's pence, and to build many a convent, and church, and cathedral, with farms and homesteads round; for one saga speaks of Greenland as producing wheat of the finest quality. All is ruined now, perhaps by gradual change of climate.

But they had richer fields of enterprise than Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroes. Their boldest outlaws at that very time—whether from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, or Britain—were forming the imperial life-guard of the Byzantine Emperor, as the once famous Varangers of Constantinople; and that splendid epoch of their race was just dawning, of which my lamented friend, the late Sir Edmund Head, says so well in his preface to Viga Glum's Icelandic Saga, "The Sagas, of which this tale is one, were composed for the men who have left their mark in every corner of Europe; and whose language and laws are at this moment important elements in the speech and institutions of England, America, and Australia. There is no page of modern history in which the influence of the Norsemen and their conquests must not be taken into account—Russia, Constantinople, Greece, Palestine, Sicily, the coasts of Africa, Southern Italy, France, the Spanish Peninsula, England, Scotland, Ireland, and every rock and island round them, have been visited, and most of them at one time or the other ruled, by the men of Scandinavia. The motto on the sword of Roger Guiscard was a proud one:

Page 5

Appulus et Calaber, Siculus mihi servit et Afer.

Every island, says Sir Edmund Head, and truly—for the name of almost every island on the coast of England, Scotland, and Eastern Ireland, ends in either ey or ay or oe, a Norse appellative, as is the word “island” itself—is a mark of its having been, at some time or other, visited by the Vikings of Scandinavia.

Norway, meanwhile, was convulsed by war; and what perhaps was of more immediate consequence, Svend Fork-beard, whom we Englishmen call Sweyn—the renegade from that Christian Faith which had been forced on him by his German conqueror, the Emperor Otto II.—with his illustrious son Cnut, whom we call Canute, were just calling together all the most daring spirits of the Baltic coasts for the subjugation of England; and when that great feat was performed, the Scandinavian emigration was paralysed, probably, for a time by the fearful wars at home. While the king of Sweden, and St. Olaf Tryggvason, king of Norway, were setting on Denmark during Cnut’s pilgrimage to Rome, and Cnut, sailing with a mighty fleet to Norway, was driving St. Olaf into Russia, to return and fall in the fratricidal battle of Stiklestead—during, strangely enough, a total eclipse of the sun—Vinland was like enough to remain still uncolonised. After Cnut’s short-lived triumph—king as he was of Denmark, Norway, England, and half Scotland, and what not of Wendish Folk inside the Baltic—the force of the Norsemen seems to have been exhausted in their native lands. Once more only, if I remember right, did “Lochlin,” really and hopefully send forth her “mailed swarm” to conquer a foreign land; and with a result unexpected alike by them and by their enemies. Had it been otherwise, we might not have been here this day.

Let me sketch for you once more—though you have heard it, doubtless, many a time—the tale of that tremendous fortnight which settled the fate of Britain, and therefore of North America; which decided—just in those great times when the decision was to be made—whether we should be on a par with the other civilised nations of Europe, like them the “heirs of all the ages,” with our share not only of Roman Christianity and Roman centralisation—a member of the great comity of European nations, held together in one Christian bond by the Pope—but heirs also of Roman civilisation, Roman literature, Roman Law; and therefore, in due time, of Greek philosophy and art. No less a question than this, it seems to me, hung in the balance during that fortnight of autumn, 1066.

Poor old Edward the Confessor, holy, weak, and sad, lay in his new choir of Westminster—where the wicked ceased from troubling, and the weary were at rest. The crowned ascetic had left no heir behind. England seemed as a corpse, to which all the eagles might gather together; and the South-English, in their utter need, had chosen for their king the ablest, and it may be the justest, man in Britain—Earl

Page 6

Harold Godwinsson: himself, like half the upper classes of England then, of the all-dominant Norse blood; for his mother was a Danish princess. Then out of Norway, with a mighty host, came Harold Hardraade, taller than all men, the ideal Viking of his time. Half-brother of the now dead St. Olaf, severely wounded when he was but fifteen, at Stiklestead, when Olaf fell, he had warred and plundered on many a coast. He had been away to Russia to King Jaroslaf; he had been in the Emperor's Varanger guard at Constantinople—and, it was whispered, had slain a lion there with his bare hands; he had carved his name and his comrades' in Runic characters—if you go to Venice you may see them at this day—on the loins of the great marble lion, which stood in his time not in Venice but in Athens. And now, king of Norway and conqueror, for the time, of Denmark, why should he not take England, as Sweyn and Canute took it sixty years before, when the flower of the English gentry perished at the fatal battle of Assingdune? If he and his half-barbarous host had conquered, the civilisation of Britain would have been thrown back, perhaps, for centuries. But it was not to be.

England was to be conquered by the Norman; but by the civilised, not the barbaric; by the Norse who had settled, but four generations before, in the North East of France under Rou, Rollo, Rolf the Ganger—so-called, they say, because his legs were so long that, when on horseback, he touched the ground and seemed to gang, or walk. He and his Norsemen had taken their share of France, and called it Normandy to this day; and meanwhile, with that docility and adaptability which marks so often truly great spirits, they had changed their creed, their language, their habits, and had become, from heathen and murderous Berserkers, the most truly civilised people of Europe, and—as was most natural then—the most faithful allies and servants of the Pope of Rome. So greatly had they changed, and so fast, that William Duke of Normandy, the great-great-grandson of Rolf the wild Viking, was perhaps the finest gentleman, as well as the most cultivated sovereign, and the greatest statesman and warrior in all Europe.

So Harold of Norway came with all his Vikings to Stamford Bridge by York; and took, by coming, only that which Harold of England promised him, namely, “forasmuch as he was taller than any other man, seven feet of English ground.”

The story of that great battle, told with a few inaccuracies, but told as only great poets tell, you should read, if you have not read it already, in the “Heimskringla” of Snorri Sturluson, the Homer of the North:

High feast that day held the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, White-tailed erne and sallow glade, Dusky raven, with horny neb, And the gray deer the wolf of the wood.

The bones of the slain, men say, whitened the place for fifty years to come.

And remember, that on the same day on which that fight befell—September 27, 1066—William, Duke of Normandy, with all his French-speaking Norsemen, was sailing across the British Channel, under the protection of a banner consecrated by the Pope, to conquer that England which the Norse-speaking Normans could not conquer.

Page 7

And now King Harold showed himself a man. He turned at once from the North of England to the South. He raised the folk of the Southern, as he had raised those of the Central and Northern shires; and in sixteen days—after a march which in those times was a prodigious feat—he was entrenched upon the fatal down which men called Heathfield then, and Senlac, but Battle to this day—with William and his French Normans opposite him on Telham hill.

Then came the battle of Hastings. You all know what befell upon that day; and how the old weapon was matched against the new—the English axe against the Norman lance—and beaten only because the English broke their ranks. If you wish to refresh your memories, read the tale once more in Mr. Freeman's "History of England," or Professor Creasy's "Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World," or even, best of all, the late Lord Lytton's splendid romance of "Harold." And when you go to England, go, as some of you may have gone already, to Battle; and there from off the Abbey grounds, or from Mountjoye behind, look down off what was then "The Heathy Field," over the long slopes of green pasture and the rich hop-gardens, where were no hop-gardens then, and the flat tide-marshes winding between the wooded heights, towards the southern sea; and imagine for yourselves the feelings of an Englishman as he contemplates that broad green sloping lawn, on which was decided the destiny of his native land. Here, right beneath, rode Taillefer up the slope before them all, singing the song of Roland, tossing his lance in air and catching it as it fell, with all the Norse berserker spirit of his ancestors flashing out in him, at the thought of one fair fight, and then purgatory, or Valhalla—Taillefer perhaps preferred the latter. Yonder on the left, in that copse where the red-ochre gully runs, is Sanguelac, the drain of blood, into which (as the Bayeux tapestry, woven by Matilda's maids, still shows) the Norman knights fell, horse and man, till the gully was bridged with writhing bodies for those who rode after. Here, where you stand—the crest of the hill marks where it must have been—was the stockade on which depended the fate of England. Yonder, perhaps, stalked out one English squire or house-carle after another: tall men with long-handled battle-axes—one specially terrible, with a wooden helmet which no sword could pierce—who hewed and hewed down knight on knight, till they themselves were borne to earth at last. And here, among the trees and ruins of the garden, kept trim by those who know the treasure which they own, stood Harold's two standards of the fighting-man and the dragon of Wessex. And here, close by (for here, for many a century, stood the high altar of Battle Abbey, where monks sang masses for Harold's soul), upon this very spot the Swan-neck found her hero-lover's corpse. "Ah," says many an Englishman—and who will blame him for it—"how grand to have died beneath that standard on that day!"

Page 8

Yes, and how right. And yet how right, likewise, that the Norman's cry of *Dexaie!*—"God Help!"—and not the English hurrah, should have won that day, till William rode up Mountjoye in the afternoon to see the English army, terrible even in defeat, struggling through copse and marsh away toward Brede, and, like retreating lions driven into their native woods, slaying more in the pursuit than they slew even in the fight.

But so it was to be; for so it ought to have been. You, my American friends, delight, as I have said already, in seeing the old places of the old country. Go, I beg you, and look at that old place, and if you be wise, you will carry back from it one lesson: That God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor His ways as our ways.

It was a fearful time which followed. I cannot but believe that our forefathers had been, in some way or other, great sinners, or two such conquests as Canute's and William's would not have fallen on them within the short space of sixty years. They did not want for courage, as Stamford Brigg and Hastings showed full well. English swine, their Norman conquerors called them often enough; but never English cowards. Their ruinous vice, if we are to trust the records of the time, was what the old monks called *accidia*—[Greek text]—and ranked it as one of the seven deadly sins: a general careless, sleepy, comfortable habit of mind, which lets all go its way for good or evil—a habit of mind too often accompanied, as in the case of the Angle-Danes, with self-indulgence, often coarse enough. Huge eaters and huger drinkers, fuddled with ale, were the men who went down at Hastings—though they went down like heroes—before the staid and sober Norman out of France.

But those were fearful times. As long as William lived, ruthless as he was to all rebels, he kept order and did justice with a strong and steady hand; for he brought with him from Normandy the instincts of a truly great statesman. And in his sons' time matters grew worse and worse. After that, in the troubles of Stephen's reign, anarchy let loose tyranny in its most fearful form, and things were done which recall the cruelties of the old Spanish *conquistadores* in America. Scott's charming romance of "Ivanhoe" must be taken, I fear, as a too true picture of English society in the time of Richard I.

And what came of it all? What was the result of all this misery and wrong?

This, paradoxical as it may seem: That the Norman conquest was the making of the English people; of the Free Commons of England.

Paradoxical, but true. First, you must dismiss from your minds the too common notion that there is now, in England, a governing Norman aristocracy, or that there has been one, at least since the year 1215, when Magna Charta was won from the Norman John by Normans and by English alike. For the first victors at Hastings, like the first *conquistadores* in America, perished, as the monk chronicles point out, rapidly by their

own crimes; and very few of our nobility can trace their names back to the authentic Battle Abbey roll. The great majority of the peers have sprung from, and all have intermarried with, the Commons; and the peerage has been from the first, and has become more and more as centuries have rolled on, the prize of success in life.

Page 9

The cause is plain. The conquest of England by the Normans was not one of those conquests of a savage by a civilised race, or of a cowardly race by a brave race, which results in the slavery of the conquered, and leaves the gulf of caste between two races—master and slave. That was the case in France, and resulted, after centuries of oppression, in the great and dreadful revolution of 1793, which convulsed not only France but the whole civilised world. But caste, thank God, has never existed in England, since at least the first generation after the Norman conquest.

The vast majority, all but the whole population of England, have been always free; and free, as they are not where caste exists to change their occupations. They could intermarry, if they were able men, into the ranks above them; as they could sink, if they were unable men, into the ranks below them. Any man acquainted with the origin of our English surnames may verify this fact for himself, by looking at the names of a single parish or a single street of shops. There, jumbled together, he will find names marking the noblest Saxon or Angle blood—Kenward or Kenric, Osgood or Osborne, side by side with Cordery or Banister—now names of farmers in my own parish—or other Norman-French names which may be, like those two last, in Battle Abbey roll—and side by side the almost ubiquitous Brown, whose ancestor was probably some Danish or Norwegian house-carle, proud of his name Biorn the Bear, and the ubiquitous Smith or Smythe, the Smiter, whose forefather, whether he be now peasant or peer, assuredly handled the tongs and hammer at his own forge. This holds true equally in New England and in Old. When I search through (as I delight to do) your New England surnames, I find the same jumble of names—West Saxon, Angle, Danish, Norman, and French-Norman likewise, many of primæval and heathen antiquity, many of high nobility, all worked together, as at home, to form the Free Commoners of England.

If any should wish to know more on this curious and important subject, let me recommend them to study Ferguson's "Teutonic Name System," a book from which you will discover that some of our quaintest, and seemingly most plebeian surnames—many surnames, too, which are extinct in England, but remain in America—are really corruptions of good old Teutonic names, which our ancestors may have carried in the German Forest, before an Englishman set foot on British soil; from which he will rise with the comfortable feeling that we English-speaking men, from the highest to the lowest, are literally kinsmen. Nay, so utterly made up now is the old blood-feud between Norseman and Englishman, between the descendants of those who conquered and those who were conquered, that in the children of our Prince of Wales, after 800 years, the blood of William of Normandy is mingled with the blood of the very Harold who fell at Hastings. And so, by the bitter woes which followed the Norman conquest was the whole population, Dane, Angle, and Saxon, earl and churl, freeman and slave, crushed and welded together into one homogeneous mass, made just and merciful towards each other by the most wholesome of all teachings, a community of suffering; and if they had been, as I fear they were, a lazy and a sensual people, were taught

Page 10

That life is not as idle ore,
But heated hot with burning fears,
And bathed in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the strokes of doom
To shape and use.

But how did these wild Vikings become Christian men? It is a long story. So staunch a race was sure to be converted only very slowly. Noble missionaries as Ansgar, Rembert, and Poppo, had worked for 150 years and more among the heathens of Denmark. But the patriotism of the Norseman always recoiled, even though in secret, from the fact that they were German monks, backed by the authority of the German emperor; and many a man, like Svend Fork-beard, father of the great Canute, though he had the Kaiser himself for godfather, turned heathen once more the moment he was free, because his baptism was the badge of foreign conquest, and neither pope nor kaiser should lord it over him, body or soul. St. Olaf, indeed, forced Christianity on the Norse at the sword's point, often by horrid cruelties, and perished in the attempt. But who forced it on the Norsemen of Scotland, England, Ireland, Neustria, Russia, and all the Eastern Baltic? It was absorbed and in most cases, I believe, gradually and willingly, as a gospel and good news to hearts worn out with the storm of their own passions. And whence came their Christianity? Much of it, as in the case of the Danes, and still more of the French Normans, came direct from Rome, the city which, let them defy its influence as they would, was still the fount of all theology, as well as of all civilisation. But I must believe that much of it came from that mysterious ancient Western Church, the Church of St. Patric, St. Bridget, St. Columba, which had covered with rude cells and chapels the rocky islets of the North Atlantic, even to Iceland itself. Even to Iceland; for when that island was first discovered, about A.D. 840, the Norsemen found in an isle, on the east and west and elsewhere, Irish books and bells and wooden crosses, and named that island Papey, the isle of the popes—some little colony of monks, who lived by fishing, and who are said to have left the land when the Norsemen settled in it. Let us believe, for it is consonant with reason and experience, that the sight of those poor monks, plundered and massacred again and again by the “mailed swarms of Lochlin,” yet never exterminated, but springing up again in the same place, ready for fresh massacre, a sacred plant which God had planted, and which no rage of man could trample out—let us believe, I say, that that sight taught at last to the buccaneers of the old world that there was a purer manliness, a loftier heroism, than the ferocious self-assertion of the Berserker, even the heroism of humility, gentleness, self-restraint, self-sacrifice; that there was a strength which was made perfect in weakness; a glory, not of the sword but of the cross. We will believe that that was the lesson which the Norsemen learnt, after many a wild and blood-stained

Page 11

voyage, from the monks of Iona or of Derry, which caused the building of such churches as that which Sightrys, king of Dublin, raised about the year 1030, not in the Norse but in the Irish quarter of Dublin: a sacred token of amity between the new settlers and the natives on the ground of a common faith. Let us believe, too, that the influence of woman was not wanting in the good work—that the story of St. Margaret and Malcolm Canmore was repeated, though inversely, in the case of many a heathen Scandinavian jarl, who, marrying the princely daughter of some Scottish chieftain, found in her creed at last something more precious than herself; while his brother or his cousin became, at Dublin or Wexford or Waterford, the husband of some saffron-robed Irish princess, “fair as an elf,” as the old saying was; some “maiden of the three transcendent hues,” of whom the old book of Linane says:

Red as the blood which flowed from stricken deer,
White as the snow on which that blood ran down,
Black as the raven who drank up that blood;

—and possibly, as in the case of Brian Boru’s mother, had given his fair-haired sister in marriage to some Irish prince, and could not resist the spell of their new creed, and the spell too, it may be, of some sister of theirs who had long given up all thought of earthly marriage to tend the undying fire of St. Bridget among the consecrated virgins of Kildare.

I am not drawing from mere imagination. That such things must have happened, and happened again and again, is certain to anyone who knows, even superficially, the documents of that time. And I doubt not that, in manners as well as in religion, the Norse were humanised and civilised by their contact with the Celts, both in Scotland and in Ireland. Both peoples had valour, intellect, imagination: but the Celt had that which the burly angular Norse character, however deep and stately, and however humorous, wanted; namely, music of nature, tenderness, grace, rapidity, playfulness; just the qualities, combining with the Scandinavian (and in Scotland with the Angle) elements of character which have produced, in Ireland and in Scotland, two schools of lyric poetry second to none in the world.

And so they were converted to what was then a dark and awful creed; a creed of ascetic self-torture and purgatorial fires for those who escape the still more dreadful, because endless, doom of the rest of the human race. But, because it was a sad creed, it suited better, men who had, when conscience re-awakened in them, but too good reason to be sad; and the minsters and cloisters which sprang up over the whole of Northern Europe, and even beyond it, along the dreary western shores of Greenland itself, are the symbols of a splendid repentance for their own sins and for the sins of their forefathers.

Gudruna herself, of whom I spoke just now, one of those old Norse heroines who helped to discover America, though a historic personage, is a symbolic one likewise, and the pattern of a whole class. She too, after many journeys to Iceland, Greenland, and Winland, goes on a pilgrimage to Rome, to get, I presume, absolution from the Pope himself for all the sins of her strange, rich, stormy, wayward life.

Page 12

Have you not read—many of you surely have—La Motte Fouque's romance of "Sintram?" It embodies all that I would say. It is the spiritual drama of that early Middle Age; very sad, morbid if you will, but true to fact. The Lady Verena ought not, perhaps, to desert her husband, and shut herself up in a cloister. But so she would have done in those old days. And who shall judge her harshly for so doing? When the brutality of the man seems past all cure, who shall blame the woman if she glides away into some atmosphere of peace and purity, to pray for him whom neither warnings nor caresses will amend? It is a sad book, "Sintram." And yet not too sad. For they were a sad people, those old Norse forefathers of ours. Their Christianity was sad; their minsters sad; there are few sadder, though few grander, buildings than a Norman church.

And yet, perhaps, their Christianity did not make them sad. It was but the other and the healthier side of that sadness which they had as heathens. Read which you will of the old sagas—heathen or half-Christian—the Eyrbyggja, Viga Glum, Burnt Niall, Grettir the Strong, and, above all, Snorri Sturluson's "Heimskringla" itself—and you will see at once how sad they are. There is, in the old sagas, none of that enjoyment of life which shines out everywhere in Greek poetry, even through its deepest tragedies. Not in complacency with Nature's beauty, but in the fierce struggle with her wrath, does the Norseman feel pleasure. Nature to him was not, as in Mr. Longfellow's exquisite poem, {3} the kind old nurse, to take him on her knee and whisper to him, ever anew, the story without an end. She was a weird witch-wife, mother of storm demons and frost giants, who must be fought with steadily, warily, wearily, over dreary heaths and snow-capped fells, and rugged nesses and tossing sounds, and away into the boundless sea—or who could live?—till he got hardened in the fight into ruthlessness of need and greed. The poor strip of flat strath, ploughed and re-ploughed again in the short summer days, would yield no more; or wet harvests spoiled the crops, or heavy snows starved the cattle. And so the Norseman launched his ships when the lands were sown in spring, and went forth to pillage or to trade, as luck would have, to summerted, as he himself called it; and came back, if he ever came, in autumn to the women to help at harvest-time, with blood upon his hand. But had he stayed at home, blood would have been there still. Three out of four of them had been mixed up in some man-slaying, or had some blood-feud to avenge among their own kin.

Page 13

The whole of Scandinavia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Orkney, and the rest, remind me ever of that terrible picture of the great Norse painter, Tiddeman, in which two splendid youths, lashed together, in true Norse duel fashion by the waist, are hewing each other to death with the short axe, about some hot words over their ale. The loss of life, and that of the most gallant of the young, in those days must have been enormous. If the vitality of the race had not been even more enormous, they must have destroyed each other, as the Red Indians have done, off the face of the earth. They lived these Norsemen, not to live—they lived to die. For what cared they? Death—what was death to them? what it was to the Jomsburger Viking, who, when led out to execution, said to the headsman: “Die! with all pleasure. We used to question in Jomsburg whether a man felt when his head was off? Now I shall know; but if I do, take care, for I shall smite thee with my knife. And meanwhile, spoil not this long hair of mine; it is so beautiful.”

But, oh! what waste! What might not these men have done if they had sought peace, not war; if they had learned a few centuries sooner to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God?

And yet one loves them, blood-stained as they are. Your own poets, men brought up under circumstances, under ideas the most opposite to theirs, love them, and cannot help it. And why? It is not merely for their bold daring, it is not merely for their stern endurance; nor again that they had in them that shift and thrift, those steady and common-sense business habits, which made their noblest men not ashamed to go on voyages of merchandise. Nor is it, again, that grim humour—humour as of the modern Scotch—which so often flashes out into an actual jest, but more usually underlies unspoken all their deeds. Is it not rather that these men are our forefathers? that their blood runs in the veins of perhaps three men out of four in any general assembly, whether in America or in Britain? Startling as the assertion may be, I believe it to be strictly true.

Be that as it may, I cannot read the stories of your western men, the writings of Bret Harte, or Colonel John Hay, for instance, without feeling at every turn that there are the old Norse alive again, beyond the very ocean which they first crossed, 850 years ago.

Let me try to prove my point, and end with a story, as I began with one.

It is just thirty years before the Norman conquest of England, the evening of the battle of Sticklestead. St. Olaf’s corpse is still lying unburied on the hillside. The reforming and Christian king has fallen in the attempt to force Christianity and despotism on the Conservative and half-heathen party—the free bonders or yeoman-farmers of Norway. Thormod, his poet—the man, as his name means, of thunder mood—who has been standing in the ranks, at last has an arrow in his left side.

Page 14

He breaks off the shaft, and thus sore wounded goes up, when all is lost, to a farm where is a great barn full of wounded. One Kimbe comes, a man out of the opposite or bonder part. "There is great howling and screaming in there," he says. "King Olaf's men fought bravely enough: but it is a shame brisk young lads cannot bear their wounds. On what side wert thou in the fight?" "On the best side," says the beaten Thormod. Kimbe sees that Thormod has a good bracelet on his arm. "Thou art surely a king's man. Give me thy gold ring and I will hide thee, ere the bonders kill thee."

Thormod said, "Take it, if thou canst get it. I have lost that which is worth more;" and he stretched out his left hand, and Kimbe tried to take it. But Thormod, swinging his sword, cut off his hand; and it is said Kimbe behaved no better over his wound than those he had been blaming.

Then Thormod went into the barn; and after he had sung his song there in praise of his dead king, he went into an inner room, where was a fire, and water warming, and a handsome girl binding up men's wounds. And he sat down by the door; and one said to him, "Why art thou so dead pale? Why dost thou not call for the leech?" Then sung Thormod:

"I am not blooming; and the fair
And slender maiden loves to care
For blooming youths. Few care for me,
With Fenri's gold meal I can't fee;"

and so forth, improvising after the old Norse fashion. Then Thormod got up and went to the fire, and stood and warmed himself. And the nurse-girl said to him, "Go out, man, and bring some of the split-firewood which lies outside the door." He went out and brought an armful of wood and threw it down. Then the nurse-girl looked him in the face, and said, "Dreadful pale is this man. Why art thou so?" Then sang Thormod:

"Thou wonderest, sweet bloom, at me,
A man so hideous to see.
The arrow-drift o'ertook me, girl,
A fine-ground arrow in the whirl
Went through me, and I feel the dart
Sits, lovely lass, too near my heart."

The girl said, "Let me see thy wound." Then Thormod sat down, and the girl saw his wounds, and that which was in his side, and saw that there was a piece of iron in it; but could not tell where it had gone. In a stone pot she had leeks and other herbs, and boiled them, and gave the wounded man of it to eat. But Thormod said, "Take it away; I have no appetite now for my broth." Then she took a great pair of tongs and tried to pull

out the iron; but the wound was swelled, and there was too little to lay hold of. Now said Thormod, "Cut in so deep that thou canst get at the iron, and give me the tongs." She did as he said. Then took Thormod the gold bracelet off his hand and gave it the nurse-girl, and bade her do with it what she liked.

"It is a good man's gift," said he. "King Olaf gave me the ring this morning."

Page 15

Then Thormod took the tongs and pulled the iron out. But on the iron was a barb, on which hung flesh from the heart, some red, some white. When he saw that, he said, "The king has fed us well. I am fat, even to the heart's roots." And so leant back and was dead.

CYRUS, THE SERVANT OF-THE LORD {4}

I wish to speak to you to-night about one of those old despotic empires which were in every case the earliest known form of civilisation. Were I minded to play the cynic or the mountebank, I should choose some corrupt and effete despotism, already grown weak and ridiculous by its decay—as did at last the Roman and then the Byzantine Empire—and, after raising a laugh at the expense of the old system say: See what a superior people you are now—how impossible, under free and enlightened institutions, is anything so base and so absurd as went on, even in despotic France before the Revolution of 1793. Well, that would be on the whole true, thank God; but what need is there to say it?

Let us keep our scorn for our own weaknesses, our blame for our own sins, certain that we shall gain more instruction, though not more amusement, by hunting out the good which is in anything than by hunting out its evil. I have chosen, not the worst, but the best despotism which I could find in history, founded and ruled by a truly heroic personage, one whose name has become a proverb and a legend, that so I might lift up your minds, even by the contemplation of an old Eastern empire, to see that it, too, could be a work and ordinance of God, and its hero the servant of the Lord. For we are almost bound to call Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, by this august title for two reasons—First, because the Hebrew Scriptures call him so; the next, because he proved himself to be such by his actions and their consequences—at least in the eyes of those who believe, as I do, in a far-seeing and far-reaching Providence, by which all human history is

Bound by gold chains unto the throne of God.

His work was very different from any that need be done, or can be done, in these our days. But while we thank God that such work is now as unnecessary as impossible; we may thank God likewise that, when such work was necessary and possible, a man was raised up to do it: and to do it, as all accounts assert, better, perhaps, than it had ever been done before or since.

True, the old conquerors, who absorbed nation after nation, tribe after tribe, and founded empires on their ruins, are now, I trust, about to be replaced, throughout the world, as here and in Britain at home, by free self-governed peoples:

The old order changeth, giving place to the new;
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Page 16

And that custom of conquest and empire and transplantation did more than once corrupt the world. And yet in it, too, God may have more than once fulfilled His own designs, as He did, if Scripture is to be believed, in Cyrus, well surnamed the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire some 2400 years ago. For these empires, it must be remembered, did at least that which the Roman Empire did among a scattered number of savage tribes, or separate little races, hating and murdering each other, speaking different tongues, and worshipping different gods, and losing utterly the sense of a common humanity, till they looked on the people who dwelt in the next valley as fiends, to be sacrificed, if caught, to their own fiends at home. Among such as these, empires did introduce order, law, common speech, common interest, the notion of nationality and humanity. They, as it were, hammered together the fragments of the human race till they had moulded them into one. They did it cruelly, clumsily, ill: but was there ever work done on earth, however noble, which was not—alas, alas!—done somewhat ill?

Let me talk to you a little about the old hero. He and his hardy Persians should be specially interesting to us. For in them first does our race, the Aryan race, appear in authentic history. In them first did our race give promise of being the conquering and civilising race of the future world. And to the conquests of Cyrus—so strangely are all great times and great movements of the human family linked to each other—to his conquests, humanly speaking, is owing the fact that you are here, and I am speaking to you at this moment.

It is an oft-told story: but so grand a one that I must sketch it for you, however clumsily, once more.

In that mountain province called Farsistan, north-east of what we now call Persia, the dwelling-place of the Persians, there dwelt, in the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ, a hardy tribe, of the purest blood of Iran, a branch of the same race as the Celtic, Teutonic, Greek, and Hindoo, and speaking a tongue akin to theirs. They had wandered thither, say their legends, out of the far north-east, from off some lofty plateau of Central Asia, driven out by the increasing cold, which left them but two months of summer to ten of winter.

They despised at first—would that they had despised always!—the luxurious life of the dwellers in the plains, and the effeminate customs of the Medes—a branch of their own race who had conquered and intermarried with the Turanian, or Finnish tribes; and adopted much of their creed, as well as of their morals, throughout their vast but short-lived Median Empire. “Soft countries,” said Cyrus himself—so runs the tale—“gave birth to small men. No region produced at once delightful fruits and men of a war-like spirit.” Letters were to them, probably, then unknown. They borrowed them in after years, as they borrowed their art, from Babylonians, Assyrians, and other Semitic nations whom they conquered. From the age of five to that of twenty, their lads were instructed but in two things—to speak the truth and to shoot with the bow. To ride was the third

necessary art, introduced, according to Xenophon, after they had descended from their mountain fastnesses to conquer the whole East.

Page 17

Their creed was simple enough. Ahura Mazda—Ormuzd, as he has been called since—was the one eternal Creator, the source of all light and life and good. He spake his word, and it accomplished the creation of heaven, before the water, before the earth, before the cow, before the tree, before the fire, before man the truthful, before the Devas and beasts of prey, before the whole existing universe; before every good thing created by Ahura Mazda and springing from Truth.

He needed no sacrifices of blood. He was to be worshipped only with prayers, with offerings of the inspiring juice of the now unknown herb Homa, and by the preservation of the sacred fire, which, understand, was not he, but the symbol—as was light and the sun—of the good spirit—of Ahura Mazda. They had no images of the gods, these old Persians; no temples, no altars, so says Herodotus, and considered the use of them a sign of folly. They were, as has been well said of them, the Puritans of the old world. When they descended from their mountain fastnesses, they became the iconoclasts of the old world; and the later Isaiah, out of the depths of national shame, captivity, and exile, saw in them brother-spirits, the chosen of the Lord, whose hero Cyrus, the Lord was holding by His right hand, till all the foul superstitions and foul effeminacies of the rotten Semitic peoples of the East, and even of Egypt itself, should be crushed, though, alas! only for awhile, by men who felt that they had a commission from the God of light and truth and purity, to sweep out all that with the besom of destruction.

But that was a later inspiration. In earlier, and it may be happier, times the duty of the good man was to strive against all evil, disorder, uselessness, incompetence in their more simple forms. “He therefore is a holy man,” says Ormuzd in the Zend-avesta, “who has built a dwelling on the earth, in which he maintains fire, cattle, his wife, his children, and flocks and herds; he who makes the earth produce barley, he who cultivates the fruits of the soil, cultivates purity; he advances the law of Ahura Mazda as much as if he had offered a hundred sacrifices.”

To reclaim the waste, to till the land, to make a corner of the earth better than they found it, was to these men to rescue a bit of Ormuzd’s world out of the usurped dominion of Ahriman; to rescue it from the spirit of evil and disorder for its rightful owner, the Spirit of Order and of Good.

For they believed in an evil spirit, these old Persians. Evil was not for them a lower form of good. With their intense sense of the difference between right and wrong it could be nothing less than hateful; to be attacked, exterminated, as a personal enemy, till it became to them at last impersonate and a person.

Page 18

Zarathustra, the mystery of evil, weighed heavily on them and on their great prophet, Zoroaster—splendour of gold, as I am told his name signifies—who lived, no man knows clearly when or clearly where, but who lived and lives for ever, for his works follow him. He, too, tried to solve for his people the mystery of evil; and if he did not succeed, who has succeeded yet? Warring against Ormuzd, Ahura Mazda, was Ahriman, Angra Mainyus, literally the being of an evil mind, the ill-conditioned being. He was labouring perpetually to spoil the good work of Ormuzd alike in nature and in man. He was the cause of the fall of man, the tempter, the author of misery and death; he was eternal and uncreate as Ormuzd was. But that, perhaps, was a corruption of the purer and older Zoroastrian creed. With it, if Ahriman were eternal in the past, he would not be eternal in the future. Somehow, somewhen, somewhere, in the day when three prophets—the increasing light, the increasing truth, and the existing truth—should arise and give to mankind the last three books of the Zend-avesta, and convert all mankind to the pure creed, then evil should be conquered, the creation become pure again, and Ahriman vanish for ever; and, meanwhile, every good man was to fight valiantly for Ormuzd, his true lord, against Ahriman and all his works.

Men who held such a creed, and could speak truth and draw the bow, what might they not do when the hour and the man arrived? They were not a *big* nation. No; but they were a *great* nation, even while they were eating barley-bread and paying tribute to their conquerors the Medes, in the sterile valleys of Farsistan.

And at last the hour and the man came. The story is half legendary—differently told by different authors. Herodotus has one tale, Xenophon another. The first, at least, had ample means of information. Astyages is the old shah of the Median Empire, then at the height of its seeming might and splendour and effeminacy. He has married his daughter, the Princess Mandane, to Cambyses, seemingly a vassal-king or prince of the pure Persian blood. One night the old man is troubled with a dream. He sees a vine spring from his daughter, which overshadows all Asia. He sends for the Magi to interpret; and they tell him that Mandane will have a son who will reign in his stead. Having sons of his own, and fearing for the succession, he sends for Mandane, and, when her child is born, gives it to Harpagus, one of his courtiers, to be slain. The courtier relents, and hands it over to a herdsman, to be exposed on the mountains. The herdsman relents in turn, and bring the babe up as his own child.

When the boy, who goes by the name of Agradates, is grown, he is at play with the other herdboys, and they choose him for a mimic king. Some he makes his guards, some he bids build houses, some carry his messages. The son of a Mede of rank refuses, and Agradates has him seized by his guards and chastised with the whip. The ancestral instincts of command and discipline are showing early in the lad.

Page 19

The young gentleman complains to his father, the father to the old king, who of course sends for the herdsman and his boy. The boy answers in a tone so exactly like that in which Xenophon's Cyrus would have answered, that I must believe that both Xenophon's Cyrus and Herodotus's Cyrus (like Xenophon's Socrates and Plato's Socrates) are real pictures of a real character; and that Herodotus's story, though Xenophon says nothing of it, is true.

He has done nothing, the noble boy says, but what was just. He had been chosen king in play, because the boys thought him most fit. The boy whom he had chastised was one of those who chose him. All the rest obeyed: but he would not, till at last he got his due reward. "If I deserve punishment for that," says the boy, "I am ready to submit."

The old king looks keenly and wonderingly at the young king, whose features seem somewhat like his own. Likely enough in those days, when an Iranian noble or prince would have a quite different cast of complexion and of face from a Turanian herdsman. A suspicion crosses him; and by threats of torture he gets the truth from the trembling herdsman.

To the poor wretch's rapture the old king lets him go unharmed. He has a more exquisite revenge to take, and sends for Harpagus, who likewise confessed the truth. The wily old tyrant has naught but gentle words. It is best as it is. He has been very sorry himself for the child, and Mandane's reproaches had gone to his heart. "Let Harpagus go home and send his son to be a companion to the new-found prince. To-night there will be great sacrifices in honour of the child's safety, and Harpagus is to be a guest at the banquet."

Harpagus comes; and after eating his fill, is asked how he likes the king's meat? He gives the usual answer; and a covered basket is put before him, out of which he is to take—in Median fashion—what he likes. He finds in it the head and hands and feet of his own son. Like a true Eastern he shows no signs of horror. The king asks him if he knew what flesh he had been eating. He answers that he knew perfectly. That whatever the king did pleased him.

Like an Eastern courtier, he knew how to dissemble, but not to forgive, and bided his time. The Magi, to their credit, told Astyages that his dream had been fulfilled, that Cyrus—as we must now call the foundling prince—had fulfilled it by becoming a king in play, and the boy is let to go back to his father and his hardy Persian life. But Harpagus does not leave him alone, nor perhaps, do his own thoughts. He has wrongs to avenge on his grandfather. And it seems not altogether impossible to the young mountaineer.

He has seen enough of Median luxury to despise it and those who indulge in it. He has seen his own grandfather with his cheeks rouged, his eyelids stained with antimony, living a womanlike life, shut up from all his subjects in the recesses of a vast seraglio.

Page 20

He calls together the mountain rulers; makes friends with Tigranes, an Armenian prince, a vassal of the Mede, who has his wrongs likewise to avenge. And the two little armies of foot-soldiers—the Persians had no cavalry—defeat the innumerable horsemen of the Mede, take the old king, keep him in honourable captivity, and so change, one legend says, in a single battle, the fortunes of the whole East.

And then begins that series of conquests of which we know hardly anything, save the fact that they were made. The young mountaineer and his playmates, whom he makes his generals and satraps, sweep onward towards the West, teaching their men the art of riding, till the Persian cavalry becomes more famous than the Median had been. They gather to them, as a snowball gathers in rolling, the picked youth of every tribe whom they overcome. They knit these tribes to them in loyalty and affection by that righteousness—that truthfulness and justice—for which Isaiah in his grandest lyric strains has made them illustrious to all time; which Xenophon has celebrated in like manner in that exquisite book of his—the “Cyropaedia.” The great Lydian kingdom of Croesus—Asia Minor as we call it now—goes down before them. Babylon itself goes down, after that world-famed siege which ended in Belshazzar’s feast; and when Cyrus died—still in the prime of life, the legends seem to say—he left a coherent and well-organised empire, which stretched from the Mediterranean to Hindostan.

So runs the tale, which to me, I confess, sounds probable and rational enough. It may not do so to you; for it has not to many learned men. They are inclined to “relegate it into the region of myth;” in plain English, to call old Herodotus a liar, or at least a dupe. What means those wise men can have at this distance of more than 2000 years, of knowing more about the matter than Herodotus, who lived within 100 years of Cyrus, I for myself cannot discover. And I say this without the least wish to disparage these hypercritical persons. For there are—and more there ought to be, as long as lies and superstitions remain on this earth—a class of thinkers who hold in just suspicion all stories which savour of the sensational, the romantic, even the dramatic. They know the terrible uses to which appeals to the fancy and the emotions have been applied, and are still applied to enslave the intellects, the consciences, the very bodies of men and women. They dread so much from experience the abuse of that formula, that “a thing is so beautiful it must be true,” that they are inclined to reply: “Rather let us say boldly, it is so beautiful that it cannot be true. Let us mistrust, or even refuse to believe *a priori*, and at first sight, all startling, sensational, even poetic tales, and accept nothing as history, which is not as dull as the ledger of a dry-goods’ store.” But I think that experience, both in nature and in society, are against that ditch-water philosophy. The weather,

Page 21

being governed by laws, ought always to be equable and normal, and yet you have whirlwinds, droughts, thunderstorms. The share-market, being governed by laws, ought to be always equable and normal, and yet you have startling transactions, startling panics, startling disclosures, and a whole sensational romance of commercial crime and folly. Which of us has lived to be fifty years old, without having witnessed in private life sensation tragedies, alas! sometimes too fearful to be told, or at least sensational romances, which we shall take care not to tell, because we shall not be believed? Let the ditch-water philosophy say what it will, human life is not a ditch, but a wild and roaring river, flooding its banks, and eating out new channels with many a landslide. It is a strange world, and man, a strange animal, guided, it is true, usually by most commonplace motives; but, for that reason, ready and glad at times to escape from them and their dullness and baseness; to give vent, if but for a moment, in wild freedom, to that demoniac element, which, as Goethe says, underlies his nature and all nature; and to prefer for an hour, to the normal and respectable ditch-water, a bottle of champagne or even a carouse on fire-water, let the consequences be what they may.

How else shall we explain such a phenomenon as those old crusades? Were they undertaken for any purpose, commercial or other? Certainly not for lightening an overburdened population. Nay, is not the history of your own Mormons, and their exodus into the far West, one of the most startling instances which the world has seen for several centuries, of the unexpected and incalculable forces which lie hid in man? Believe me, man's passions, heated to igniting point, rather than his prudence cooled down to freezing point, are the normal causes of all great human movement. And a truer law of social science than any that political economists are wont to lay down, is that old *Dov' e la donna?* of the Italian judge, who used to ask, as a preliminary to every case, civil or criminal, which was brought before him, *Dov' e la donna?* "Where is the lady?" certain, like a wise old gentleman, that a woman was most probably at the bottom of the matter.

Strangeness? Romance? Did any of you ever read—if you have not you should read—Archbishop Whately's "Historic Doubts about the Emperor Napoleon the First"? Therein the learned and witty Archbishop proved, as early as 1819, by fair use of the criticism of Mr. Hume and the Sceptic School, that the whole history of the great Napoleon ought to be treated by wise men as a myth and a romance, that there is little or no evidence of his having existed at all; and that the story of his strange successes and strange defeats was probably invented by our Government in order to pander to the vanity of the English nation.

Page 22

I will say this, which Archbishop Whately, in a late edition, foreshadows, wittily enough—that if one or two thousand years hence, when the history of the late Emperor Napoleon the Third, his rise and fall, shall come to be subjected to critical analysis by future Philistine historians of New Zealand or Australia, it will be proved by them to be utterly mythical, incredible, monstrous—and that all the more, the more the actual facts remain to puzzle their unimaginative brains. What will they make two thousand years hence, of the landing at Boulogne with the tame eagle? Will not that, and stranger facts still, but just as true, be relegated to the region of myth, with the dream of Astyages, and the young and princely herdsman playing at king over his fellow-slaves?

But enough of this. To me these bits of romance often seem the truest, as well as the most important portions of history.

When old Herodotus tells me how, King Astyages having guarded the frontier, Harpagus sent a hunter to young Cyrus with a fresh-killed hare, telling him to open it in private; and how, sewn up in it was the letter, telling him that the time to rebel was come, I am inclined to say, That must be true. It is so beneath the dignity of history, so quaint and unexpected, that it is all the more likely *not* to have been invented.

So with that other story—How young Cyrus, giving out that his grandfather had made him general of the Persians, summoned them all, each man with a sickle in his hand, into a prairie full of thorns, and bade them clear it in one day; and how when they, like loyal men, had finished, he bade them bathe, and next day he took them into a great meadow and feasted them with corn and wine, and all that his father's farm would yield, and asked them which day they liked best; and, when they answered as was to be expected, how he opened his parable and told them, "Choose, then, to work for the Persians like slaves, or to be free with me."

Such a tale sounds to me true. It has the very savour of the parables of the Old Testament; as have, surely, the dreams of the old Sultan, with which the tale begins. Do they not put us in mind of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, in the Book of Daniel?

Such stories are actually so beautiful that they are very likely to be true. Understand me, I only say likely; the ditch-water view of history is not all wrong. Its advocates are right in saying great historic changes are not produced simply by one great person, by one remarkable event. They have been preparing, perhaps for centuries. They are the result of numberless forces, acting according to laws, which might have been foreseen, and will be foreseen, when the science of History is more perfectly understood.

For instance, Cyrus could not have conquered the Median Empire at a single blow, if first that empire had not been utterly rotten; and next, if he and his handful of Persians had not been tempered and sharpened, by long hardihood, to the finest cutting edge.

Page 23

Yes, there were all the materials for the catastrophe—the cannon, the powder, the shot. But to say that the Persians must have conquered the Medes, even if Cyrus had never lived, is to say, as too many philosophers seem to me to say, that, given cannon, powder, and shot, it will fire itself off some day if we only leave it alone long enough.

It may be so. But our usual experience of Nature and Fact is, that spontaneous combustion is a rare and exceptional phenomenon; that if a cannon is to be fired, someone must arise and pull the trigger. And I believe that in Society and Politics, when a great event is ready to be done, someone must come and do it—do it, perhaps, half unwittingly, by some single rash act—like that first fatal shot fired by an electric spark.

But to return to Cyrus and his Persians.

I know not whether the “Cyropaedia” is much read in your schools and universities. But it is one of the books which I should like to see, either in a translation or its own exquisite Greek, in the hands of every young man. It is not all fact. It is but a historic romance. But it is better than history. It is an ideal book, like Sidney’s “Arcadia” or Spenser’s “Fairy Queen”—the ideal self-education of an ideal hero. And the moral of the book—ponder it well, all young men who have the chance or the hope of exercising authority among your follow-men—the noble and most Christian moral of that heathen book is this: that the path to solid and beneficent influence over our fellow-men lies, not through brute force, not through cupidity, but through the highest morality; through justice, truthfulness, humanity, self-denial, modesty, courtesy, and all which makes man or woman lovely in the eyes of mortals or of God.

Yes, the “Cyropaedia” is a noble book, about a noble personage. But I cannot forget that there are nobler words by far concerning that same noble personage, in the magnificent series of Hebrew Lyrics, which begins “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord”—in which the inspired poet, watching the rise of Cyrus and his Puritans, and the fall of Babylon, and the idolatries of the East, and the coming deliverance of his own countrymen, speaks of the Persian hero in words so grand that they have been often enough applied, and with all fitness, to one greater than Cyrus, and than all men:

Who raised up the righteous man from the East,
And called him to attend his steps?
Who subdued nations at his presence,
And gave him dominion over kings?
And made them like the dust before his sword,
And the driven stubble before his bow?
He pursueth them, he passeth in safety,
By a way never trodden before by his feet.
Who hath performed and made these things,
Calling the generations from the beginning?
I, Jehovah, the first and the last, I am the same.

Page 24

Behold my servant, whom I will uphold;
My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth;
I will make my spirit rest upon him,
And he shall publish judgment to the nations.
He shall not cry aloud, nor clamour,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets.
The bruised reed he shall not break,
And the smoking flax he shall not quench.
He shall publish justice, and establish it.
His force shall not be abated, nor broken,
Until he has firmly seated justice in the earth,
And the distant nations shall wait for his Law.
Thus saith the God, even Jehovah,
Who created the heavens, and stretched them out;
Who spread abroad the earth, and its produce:
I, Jehovah, have called thee for a righteous end,
And I will take hold of thy hand, and preserve thee,
And I will give thee for a covenant to the people,
And for a light to the nations;
To open the eyes of the blind,
To bring the captives out of prison,
And from the dungeon those who dwell in darkness.
I am Jehovah—that is my name;
And my glory will I not give to another,
Nor my praise to the graven idols.

Who saith to Cyrus—Thou art my shepherd,
And he shall fulfil all my pleasure:
Who saith to Jerusalem—Thou shalt be built;
And to the Temple—Thou shalt be founded.
Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed,
To Cyrus whom I hold fast by his right hand,
That I may subdue nations under him,
And loose the loins of kings;
That I may open before him the two-leaved doors,
And the gates shall not be shut;
I will go before thee
And bring the mountains low.
The gates of brass will I break in sunder,
And the bars of iron hew down.
And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
And the hoards hid deep in secret places,
That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah.



I have surnamed thee, though thou knowest not me.
I am Jehovah, and none else;
Beside me there is no God.
I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me,
That they may know from the rising of the sun,
And from the west, that there is none beside me;
I am Jehovah, and none else;
Forming light and creating darkness;
Forming peace, and creating evil.
I, Jehovah, make all these.

This is the Hebrew prophet's conception of the great Puritan of the Old World who went forth with such a commission as this, to destroy the idols of the East, while

The isles saw that, and feared,
And the ends of the earth were afraid;
They drew near, they came together;
Everyone helped his neighbour,
And said to his brother, Be of good courage.

The carver encouraged the smith,
He that smoothed with the hammer
Him that smote on the anvil;
Saying of the solder, It is good;
And fixing the idol with nails, lest it be moved;

Page 25

But all in vain; for as the poet goes on:

Bel bowed down, and Nebo stooped;
Their idols were upon the cattle,
A burden to the weary beast.
They stoop, they bow down together;
They could not deliver their own charge;
Themselves are gone into captivity.

And what, to return, what was the end of the great Cyrus and of his empire?

Alas, alas! as with all human glory, the end was not as the beginning.

We are scarce bound to believe positively the story how Cyrus made one war too many, and was cut off in the Scythian deserts, falling before the arrows of mere savages; and how their queen, Tomyris, poured blood down the throat of the dead corpse, with the words, "Glut thyself with the gore for which thou hast thirsted." But it may be true—for Xenophon states it expressly, and with detail—that Cyrus, from the very time of his triumph, became an Eastern despot, a sultan or a shah, living apart from his people in mysterious splendour, in the vast fortified palace which he built for himself; and imitating and causing his nobles and satraps to imitate, in all but vice and effeminacy, the very Medes whom he had conquered. And of this there is no doubt—that his sons and their empire ran rapidly through that same vicious circle of corruption to which all despotisms are doomed, and became within 250 years, even as the Medes, the Chaldeans, the Lydians, whom they had conquered, children no longer of Ahura Mazda, but of Ahriman, of darkness and not of light, to be conquered by Alexander and his Greeks even more rapidly and more shamefully than they had conquered the East.

This is the short epic of the Persian Empire, ending, alas! as all human epics are wont to end, sadly, if not shamefully.

But let me ask you, Did I say too much, when I said, that to these Persians we owe that we are here to-night?

I do not say that without them we should not have been here. God, I presume, when He is minded to do anything, has more than one way of doing it.

But that we are now the last link in a chain of causes and effects which reaches as far back as the emigration of the Persians southward from the plateau of Pamir, we cannot doubt.

For see. By the fall of Babylon and its empire the Jews were freed from their captivity—large numbers of them at least—and sent home to their own Jerusalem. What motives prompted Cyrus, and Darius after him, to do that deed?

Those who like to impute the lowest motives may say, if they will, that Daniel and the later Isaiah found it politic to worship the rising sun, and flatter the Persian conquerors: and that Cyrus and Darius in turn were glad to see Jerusalem rebuilt, as an impregnable frontier fortress between them and Egypt. Be it so; I, who wish to talk of things noble, pure, lovely, and of good report, would rather point you once more to the magnificent poetry of the later Isaiah which commences at the 40th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, and say—There, upon the very face of the document, stands written the fact that the sympathy between the faithful Persian and the faithful Jew—the two puritans of the Old World, the two haters of lies, idolatries, superstitions, was actually as intense as it ought to have been, as it must have been.

Page 26

Be that as it may, the return of the Jews to Jerusalem preserved for us the Old Testament, while it restored to them a national centre, a sacred city, like that of Delphi to the Greeks, Rome to the Romans, Mecca to the Muslim, loyalty to which prevented their being utterly absorbed by the more civilised Eastern races among whom they had been scattered abroad as colonies of captives.

Then another, and a seemingly needful link of cause and effect ensued: Alexander of Macedon destroyed the Persian Empire, and the East became Greek, and Alexandria, rather than Jerusalem, became the head-quarters of Jewish learning. But for that very cause, the Scriptures were not left inaccessible to the mass of mankind, like the old Pehlevi liturgies of the Zend-avesta, or the old Sanscrit Vedas, in an obsolete and hieratic tongue, but were translated into, and continued in, the then all but world-wide Hellenic speech, which was to the ancient world what French is to the modern.

Then the East became Roman, without losing its Greek speech. And under the wide domination of that later Roman Empire—which had subdued and organised the whole known world, save the Parthian descendants of those old Persians, and our old Teutonic forefathers in their German forests and on their Scandinavian shores—that Divine book was carried far and wide, East and West, and South, from the heart of Abyssinia to the mountains of Armenia, and to the isles of the ocean, beyond Britain itself to Ireland and to the Hebrides.

And that book—so strangely coinciding with the old creed of the earlier Persians—that book, long misunderstood, long overlain by the dust, and overgrown by the parasitic fungi of centuries, that book it was which sent to these trans-Atlantic shores the founders of your great nation. That book gave them their instinct of Freedom, tempered by reverence for Law. That book gave them their hatred of idolatry; and made them not only say but act upon their own words, with these old Persians and with the Jewish prophets alike, Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldst not; Then said we, Lo, we come. In the volume of the book it is written of us, that we come to do thy will, O God. Yes, long and fantastic is the chain of causes and effects, which links you here to the old heroes who came down from Central Asia, because the land had grown so wondrous cold, that there were ten months of winter to two of summer; and when simply after warmth and life, and food for them and for their flocks, they wandered forth to found and help to found a spiritual kingdom.

And even in their migration, far back in these dim and mystic ages, have we found the earliest link of the long chain? Not so. What if the legend of the change of climate be the dim recollection of an enormous physical fact? What if it, and the gradual depopulation of the whole north of Asia, be owing, as geologists now suspect, to the slow and age-long uprising of the whole of Siberia, thrusting the warm Arctic sea farther and farther to the northward, and placing between it and the Highlands of Thibet an ever-increasing breadth of icy land, destroying animals, and driving whole races southward, in search of the summer and the sun?

Page 27

What if the first link in the chain, as yet conceivable by man, should be the cosmic changes in the distribution of land and water, which filled the mouths of the Siberian rivers with frozen carcasses of woolly mammoth and rhinoceros; and those again, doubt it not, of other revolutions, reaching back and back, and on and on, into the infinite unknown? Why not? For so are all human destinies

Bound with gold chains unto the throne of God.

ANCIENT CIVILISATION {5} {6}

There is a theory abroad in the world just now about the origin of the human race, which has so many patent and powerful physiological facts to support it that we must not lightly say that it is absurd or impossible; and that is, that man's mortal body and brain were derived from some animal and ape-like creature. Of that I am not going to speak now. My subject is: How this creature called man, from whatever source derived, became civilised, rational, and moral. And I am sorry to say that there is tacked on by many to the first theory, another which does not follow from it, and which has really nothing to do with it, and it is this: That man, with all his wonderful and mysterious aspirations, always unfulfilled yet always precious, at once his torment and his joy, his very hope of everlasting life; that man, I say, developed himself, unassisted, out of a state of primæval brutishness, simply by calculations of pleasure and pain, by observing what actions would pay in the long run and what would not; and so learnt to conquer his selfishness by a more refined and extended selfishness, and exchanged his brutality for worldliness, and then, in a few instances, his worldliness for next-worldliness. I hope I need not say that I do not believe this theory. If I did, I could not be a Christian, I think, nor a philosopher either. At least, if I thought that human civilisation had sprung from such a dunghill as that, I should, in honour to my race, say nothing about it, here or elsewhere.

Why talk of the shame of our ancestors? I want to talk of their honour and glory. I want to talk, if I talk at all, about great times, about noble epochs, noble movements, noble deeds, and noble folk; about times in which the human race—it may be through many mistakes, alas! and sin, and sorrow, and blood-shed—struggled up one step higher on those great stairs which, as we hope, lead upward towards the far-off city of God; the perfect polity, the perfect civilisation, the perfect religion, which is eternal in the heavens.

Of great men, then, and noble deeds I want to speak. I am bound to do so first, in courtesy to my hearers. For in choosing such a subject I took for granted a nobleness and greatness of mind in them which can appreciate and enjoy the contemplation of that which is lofty and heroic, and that which is useful indeed, though not to the purses merely or the mouths of men, but to their intellects and spirits; that highest philosophy which, though she can (as has been sneeringly said of her) bake no bread, she—and

she alone, can at least do this—make men worthy to eat the bread which God has given them.

Page 28

I am bound to speak on such subjects, because I have never yet met, or read of, the human company who did not require, now and then at least, being reminded of such times and such personages—of whatsoever things are just, pure, true, lovely, and of good report, if there be any manhood and any praise to think, as St. Paul bids us all, of such things, that we may keep up in our minds as much as possible a lofty standard, a pure ideal, instead of sinking to the mere selfish standard which judges all things, even those of the world to come, by profit and by loss, and into that sordid frame of mind in which a man grows to believe that the world is constructed of bricks and timber, and kept going by the price of stocks.

We are all tempted, and the easier and more prosperous we are, the more we are tempted, to fall into that sordid and shallow frame of mind. Sordid even when its projects are most daring, its outward luxuries most refined; and shallow, even when most acute, when priding itself most on its knowledge of human nature, and of the secret springs which, so it dreams, move the actions and make the history of nations and of men. All are tempted that way, even the noblest-hearted. *Adhaesit pavimento venter*, says the old psalmist. I am growing like the snake, crawling in the dust, and eating the dust in which I crawl. I try to lift up my eyes to the heavens, to the true, the beautiful, the good, the eternal nobleness which was before all time, and shall be still when time has passed away. But to lift up myself is what I cannot do. Who will help me? Who will quicken me? as our old English tongue has it. Who will give me life? The true, pure, lofty human life which I did *not* inherit from the primaeval ape, which the ape-nature in me is for ever trying to stifle, and make me that which I know too well I could so easily become—a cunninger and more dainty-featured brute? Death itself, which seems at times so fair, is fair because even it may raise me up and deliver me from the burden of this animal and mortal body:

'Tis life, not death for which I pant;
'Tis life, whereof my nerves are scant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

Man? I am a man not by reason of my bones and muscles, nerves and brain, which I have in common with apes and dogs and horses. I am a man—thou art a man or woman—not because we have a flesh—God forbid! but because there is a spirit in us, a divine spark and ray, which nature did not give, and which nature cannot take away. And therefore, while I live on earth, I will live to the spirit, not to the flesh, that I may be, indeed, a *man*; and this same gross flesh, this animal ape-nature in me, shall be the very element in me which I will renounce, defy, despise; at least, if I am minded to be, not a merely higher savage, but a truly higher civilised man. Civilisation with me shall mean, not more wealth, more finery, more self-indulgence—even more aesthetic and

Page 29

artistic luxury; but more virtue, more knowledge, more self-control, even though I earn scanty bread by heavy toil; and when I compare the Caesar of Rome or the great king, whether of Egypt, Babylon, or Persia, with the hermit of the Thebaid, starving in his frock of camel's hair, with his soul fixed on the ineffable glories of the unseen, and striving, however wildly and fantastically, to become an angel and not an ape, I will say the hermit, and not the Caesar, is the civilised man.

There are plenty of histories of civilisation and theories of civilisation abroad in the world just now, and which profess to show you how the primeval savage has, or at least may have, become the civilised man. For my part, with all due and careful consideration, I confess I attach very little value to any of them: and for this simple reason that we have no facts. The facts are lost.

Of course, if you assume a proposition as certainly true, it is easy enough to prove that proposition to be true, at least to your own satisfaction. If you assert with the old proverb, that you may make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, you will be stupider than I dare suppose anyone here to be, if you cannot invent for yourselves all the intermediate stages of the transformation, however startling. And, indeed, if modern philosophers had stuck more closely to this old proverb, and its defining verb "make," and tried to show how some person or persons—let them be who they may—men, angels, or gods—made the sow's ear into the silk purse, and the savage into the sage—they might have pleaded that they were still trying to keep their feet upon the firm ground of actual experience. But while their theory is, that the sow's ear grew into a silk purse of itself, and yet unconsciously and without any intention of so bettering itself in life, why, I think that those who have studied the history which lies behind them, and the poor human nature which is struggling, and sinning, and sorrowing, and failing around them, and which seems on the greater part of this planet going downwards and not upwards, and by no means bettering itself, save in the increase of opera-houses, liquor-bars, and gambling-tables, and that which pertaineth thereto; then we, I think, may be excused if we say with the old Stoics—[Greek text]—I withhold my judgment. I know nothing about the matter yet; and you, oh my imaginative though learned friends, know I suspect very little either.

Eldest of things, Divine Equality:

so sang poor Shelley, and with a certain truth. For if, as I believe, the human race sprang from a single pair, there must have been among their individual descendants an equality far greater than any which has been known on earth during historic times. But that equality was at best the infantile innocence of the primary race, which faded away in the race as quickly, alas! as it does in the individual child. Divine—therefore it was one of the first blessings which man lost; one of the last, I fear, to which he will return; that to which civilisation, even at its best yet known, has not yet attained, save here and

there for short periods; but towards which it is striving as an ideal goal, and, as I trust, not in vain.

Page 30

The eldest of things which we see actually as history is not equality, but an already developed hideous inequality, trying to perpetuate itself, and yet by a most divine and gracious law, destroying itself by the very means which it uses to keep itself alive.

“There were giants in the earth in those days. And Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth”—

A mighty hunter; and his game was man.

No; it is not equality which we see through the dim mist of bygone ages.

What we do see is—I know not whether you will think me superstitious or old-fashioned, but so I hold—very much what the earlier books of the Bible show us under symbolic laws. Greek histories, Roman histories, Egyptian histories, Eastern histories, inscriptions, national epics, legends, fragments of legends—in the New World as in the Old—all tell the same story. Not the story without an end, but the story without a beginning. As in the Hindoo cosmogony, the world stands on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise, and the tortoise on—what? No man knows. I do not know. I only assert deliberately, waiting, as Napoleon says, till the world come round to me, that the tortoise does not stand—as is held by certain anthropologists, some honoured by me, some personally dear to me—upon the savages who chipped flints and fed on mammoth and reindeer in North-Western Europe, shortly after the age of ice, a few hundred thousand years ago. These sturdy little fellows—the kinsmen probably of the Esquimaux and Lapps—could have been but the *avant-couriers*, or more probably the fugitives from the true mass of mankind—spreading northward from the Tropics into climes becoming, after the long catastrophe of the age of ice, once more genial enough to support men who knew what decent comfort was, and were strong enough to get the same, by all means fair or foul. No. The tortoise of the human race does not stand on a savage. The savage may stand on an ape-like creature. I do not say that he does not. I do not say that he does. I do not know; and no man knows. But at least I say that the civilised man and his world stand not upon creatures like to any savage now known upon the earth. For first, it seems to be most unlikely; and next, and more important to an inductive philosopher, there is no proof of it. I see no savages becoming really civilised men—that is, not merely men who will ape the outside of our so-called civilisation, even absorb a few of our ideas; not merely that; but truly civilised men who will think for themselves, invent for themselves, act for themselves; and when the sacred lamp of light and truth has been passed into their hands, carry it on unextinguished, and transmit it to their successors without running back every moment to get it relighted by those from whom they received it: and who are bound—remember that—patiently and lovingly to relight it for them; to give freely to all their fellow-men of that which God has given to them and to their ancestors; and let God, not man, be judge of how much the Red Indian or the Polynesian, the Caffre or the Chinese, is capable of receiving and of using.

Page 31

Moreover, in history there is no record, absolutely no record, as far as I am aware, of any savage tribe civilising itself. It is a bold saying. I stand by my assertion: most happy to find myself confuted, even in a single instance; for my being wrong would give me, what I can have no objection to possess, a higher opinion than I have now, of the unassisted capabilities of my fellow-men.

But civilisation must have begun somewhen, somewhere, with some person, or some family, or some nation; and how did it begin?

I have said already that I do not know. But I have had my dream—like the philosopher—and as I have not been ashamed to tell it elsewhere, I shall not be ashamed to tell it here. And it is this:

What if the beginnings of true civilisation in this unique, abnormal, diseased, unsatisfied, incomprehensible, and truly miraculous and supernatural race we call man, had been literally, and in actual fact, miraculous and supernatural likewise? What if that be the true key to the mystery of humanity and its origin? What if the few first chapters of the most ancient and most sacred book should point, under whatever symbols, to the actual and the only possible origin of civilisation, the education of a man, or a family by beings of some higher race than man? What if the old Puritan doctrine of Election should be even of a deeper and wider application than divines have been wont to think? What if individuals, if peoples, have been chosen out from time to time for a special illumination, that they might be the lights of the earth, and the salt of the world? What if they have, each in their turn, abused that divine teaching to make themselves the tyrants, instead of the ministers, of the less enlightened? To increase the inequalities of nature by their own selfishness, instead of decreasing them, into the equality of grace, by their own self-sacrifice? What if the Bible after all was right, and even more right than we were taught to think?

So runs my dream. If, after I have confessed to it, you think me still worth listening to, in this enlightened nineteenth century, I will go on.

At all events, what we see at the beginning of all known and half-known history, is not savagery, but high civilisation, at least of an outward and material kind. Do you demur? Then recollect, I pray you, that the three oldest peoples known to history on this planet are Egypt, China, Hindostan. The first glimpses of the world are always like those which the book of Genesis gives us; like those which your own continent gives us. As it was 400 years ago in America, so it was in North Africa and in Asia 4000 years ago, or 40,000 for aught I know. Nay, if anyone should ask—And why not 400,000 years ago, on Miocene continents long sunk beneath the Tropic sea? I for one have no rejoinder save—We have no proofs as yet.

There loom up, out of the darkness of legend, into the as yet dim dawn of history, what the old Arabs call Races of pre-Adamite Sultans—colossal monarchies, with fixed and

often elaborate laws, customs, creeds; with aristocracies, priesthoods—seemingly always of a superior and conquering race; with a mass of common folk, whether free or half-free, composed of older conquered races; of imported slaves too, and their descendants.

Page 32

But whence comes the royal race, the aristocracy, the priesthood? You inquire, and you find that they usually know not themselves. They are usually—I had almost dared to say, always—foreigners. They have crossed the neighbouring mountains. They have come by sea, like Dido to Carthage, like Manco Cassae and Mama Belle to America, and they have sometimes forgotten when. At least they are wiser, stronger, fairer, than the aborigines. They are to them—as Jacques Cartier was to the Indians of Canada—as gods. They are not sure that they are not descended from gods. They are the Children of the Sun, or what not. The children of light, who ray out such light as they have, upon the darkness of their subjects. They are at first, probably, civilisers, not conquerors. For, if tradition is worth anything—and we have nothing else to go upon—they are at first few in number. They come as settlers, or even as single sages. It is, in all tradition, not the many who influence the few, but the few who influence the many.

So aristocracies, in the true sense, are formed.

But the higher calling is soon forgotten. The purer light is soon darkened in pride and selfishness, luxury and lust; as in Genesis, the sons of God see the daughters of men, that they are fair; and they take them wives of all that they choose. And so a mixed race springs up and increases, without detriment at first to the commonwealth. For, by a well-known law of heredity, the cross between two races, probably far apart, produces at first a progeny possessing the forces, and, alas! probably the vices of both. And when the sons of God go in to the daughters of men, there are giants in the earth in those days, men of renown. The Roman Empire, remember, was never stronger than when the old Patrician blood had mingled itself with that of every nation round the Mediterranean.

But it does not last. Selfishness, luxury, ferocity, spread from above, as well as from below. The just aristocracy of virtue and wisdom becomes an unjust one of mere power and privilege; that again, one of mere wealth corrupting and corrupt; and is destroyed, not by the people from below, but by the monarch from above. The hereditary bondsmen may know

Who would be free,
Himself must strike the blow.

But they dare not, know not how. The king must do it for them. He must become the State. “Better one tyrant,” as Voltaire said, “than many.” Better stand in fear of one lion far away, than of many wolves, each in the nearest wood. And so arise those truly monstrous Eastern despotisms, of which modern Persia is, thank God, the only remaining specimen; for Turkey and Egypt are too amenable of late years to the influence of the free nations to be counted as despotisms pure and simple—despotisms in which men, instead of worshipping a God-man, worship the hideous counterfeit, a Man-god—a poor human being endowed by

Page 33

public opinion with the powers of deity, while he is the slave of all the weaknesses of humanity. But such, as an historic fact, has been the last stage of every civilisation—even that of Rome, which ripened itself upon this earth the last in ancient times, and, I had almost said, until this very day, except among the men who speak Teutonic tongues, and who have preserved through all temptations, and reasserted through all dangers, the free ideas which have been our sacred heritage ever since Tacitus beheld us, with respect and awe, among our German forests, and saw in us the future masters of the Roman Empire.

Yes, it is very sad, the past history of mankind. But shall we despise those who went before us, and on whose accumulated labours we now stand?

Shall we not reverence our spiritual ancestors? Shall we not show our reverence by copying them, at least whenever, as in those old Persians, we see in them manliness and truthfulness, hatred of idolatries, and devotion to the God of light and life and good? And shall we not feel pity, instead of contempt, for their ruder forms of government, their ignorances, excesses, failures—so excusable in men who, with little or no previous teaching, were trying to solve for themselves for the first time the deepest social and political problems of humanity.

Yes, those old despotisms we trust are dead, and never to revive. But their corpses are the corpses, not of our enemies, but of our friends and predecessors, slain in the world-old fight of Ormuzd against Ahriman—light against darkness, order against disorder. Confusedly they fought, and sometimes ill: but their corpses piled the breach and filled the trench for us, and over their corpses we step on to what should be to us an easy victory—what may be to us, yet, a shameful ruin.

For if we be, as we are wont to boast, the salt of the earth and the light of the world, what if the salt should lose its savour? What if the light which is in us should become darkness? For myself, when I look upon the responsibilities of the free nations of modern times, so far from boasting of that liberty in which I delight—and to keep which I freely, too, could die—I rather say, in fear and trembling, God help us on whom He has laid so heavy a burden as to make us free; responsible, each individual of us, not only to ourselves, but to Him and all mankind. For if we fall we shall fall I know not whither, and I dare not think.

How those old despotisms, the mighty empires of old time, fell, we know, and we can easily explain. Corrupt, luxurious, effeminate, eaten out by universal selfishness and mutual fear, they had at last no organic coherence. The moral anarchy within showed through, at last burst through, the painted skin of prescriptive order which held them together. Some braver and abler, and usually more virtuous people, often some little,

hardy, homely mountain tribe, saw that the fruit was ripe for gathering; and, caring
naught for

Page 34

superior numbers—and saying with German Alaric when the Romans boasted of their numbers, “The thicker the hay the easier it is mowed”—struck one brave blow at the huge inflated wind-bag—as Cyrus and his handful of Persians struck at the Medes; as Alexander and his handful of Greeks struck afterwards at the Persians—and behold, it collapsed upon the spot. And then the victors took the place of the conquered; and became in their turn an aristocracy, and then a despotism; and in their turn rotted down and perished. And so the vicious circle repeated itself, age after age, from Egypt and Assyria to Mexico and Peru.

And therefore, we, free peoples as we are, have need to watch, and sternly watch, ourselves. Equality of some kind or other is, as I said, our natural and seemingly inevitable goal. But which equality? For there are two—a true one and a false; a noble and a base; a healthful and a ruinous. There is the truly divine equality, and there is the brute equality of sheep and oxen, and of flies and worms. There is the equality which is founded on mutual envy. The equality which respects others, and the equality which asserts itself. The equality which longs to raise all alike, and the equality which desires to pull down all alike. The equality which says: Thou art as good as I, and it may be better too, in the sight of God. And the equality which says: I am as good as thou, and will therefore see if I cannot master thee.

Side by side, in the heart of every free man, and every free people, are the two instincts struggling for the mastery, called by the same name, but bearing the same relation to each other as Marsyas to Apollo, the Satyr to the God. Marsyas and Apollo, the base and the noble, are, as in the old Greek legend, contending for the prize. And the prize is no less a one than all free people of this planet.

In proportion as that nobler idea conquers, and men unite in the equality of mutual respect and mutual service, they move one step farther towards realising on earth that Kingdom of God of which it is written: “The despots of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they that exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But he that will be great among you let him be the servant of all.”

And in proportion as that base idea conquers, and selfishness, not self-sacrifice, is the ruling spirit of a State, men move on, one step forward, towards realising that kingdom of the devil upon earth, “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.” Only, alas! in that evil equality of envy and hate, there is no hindmost, and the devil takes them all alike.

And so is a period of discontent, revolution, internecine anarchy, followed by a tyranny endured, as in old Rome, by men once free, because tyranny will at least do for them what they were too lazy and greedy and envious to do for themselves.



Page 35

And all because they have forgot
What 'tis to be a man—to curb and spurn.
The tyrant in us: the ignobler self
Which boasts, not loathes, its likeness to the brute;
And owns no good save ease, no ill save pain,
No purpose, save its share in that wild war
In which, through countless ages, living things
Compete in internecine greed. Ah, loving God,
Are we as creeping things, which have no lord?
That we are brutes, great God, we know too well;
Apes daintier-featured; silly birds, who flaunt
Their plumes, unheeding of the fowler's step;
Spiders, who catch with paper, not with webs;
Tigers, who slay with cannon and sharp steel,
Instead of teeth and claws:—all these we are.
Are we no more than these, save in degree?
Mere fools of nature, puppets of strong lusts,
Taking the sword, to perish by the sword
Upon the universal battle-field,
Even as the things upon the moor outside?

The heath eats up green grass and delicate herbs;
The pines eat up the heath; the grub the pine;
The finch the grub; the hawk the silly finch;
And man, the mightiest of all beasts of prey,
Eats what he lists. The strong eat up the weak;
The many eat the few; great nations, small;
And he who cometh in the name of all
Shall, greediest, triumph by the greed of all,
And, armed by his own victims, eat up all.
While ever out of the eternal heavens
Looks patient down the great magnanimous God,
Who, Master of all worlds, did sacrifice
All to Himself? Nay: but Himself to all;
Who taught mankind, on that first Christmas Day,
What 'tis to be a man—to give, not take;
To serve, not rule; to nourish, not devour;
To lift, not crush; if need, to die, not live.

“He that cometh in the name of all”—the popular military despot—the “saviour of his country”—he is our internecine enemy on both sides of the Atlantic, whenever he rises—the inaugurator of that Imperialism, that Caesarism into which Rome sank, when not her liberties merely, but her virtues, were decaying out of her—the sink into which all wicked States, whether republics or monarchies, are sure to fall, simply because men

must eat and drink for to-morrow they die. The Military and Bureaucratic Despotism which keeps the many quiet, as in old Rome, by *panem et circenses*—bread and games—or, if need be, Pilgrimages; that the few may make money, eat, drink, and be merry, as long as it can last. That, let it ape as it may—as did the Caesars of old Rome at first—as another Emperor did even in our own days—the forms of dead freedom, really upholds an artificial luxury by brute force; and consecrates the basest of all aristocracies, the aristocracy of the money-bag, by the divine sanction of the bayonet.

That at all risks, even at the price of precious blood, the free peoples of the earth must ward off from them; for, makeshift and stop-gap as it is, it does not even succeed in what it tries to do. It does not last. Have we not seen that it does not, cannot last? How can it last? This falsehood, like all falsehoods, must collapse at one touch of Ithuriel's spear of truth and fact. And—

Page 36

"Then saw I the end of these men. Namely, how Thou dost set them in slippery places, and casteth them down. Suddenly do they perish, and come to a fearful end. Yea, like as a dream when one awaketh, so shalt Thou make their image to vanish out of the city."

Have we not seen that too, though, thank God, neither in England nor in the United States?

And then? What then? None knows, and none can know.

The future of France and Spain, the future of the Tropical Republics of Spanish America, is utterly blank and dark; not to be prophesied, I hold, by mortal man, simply because we have no like cases in the history of the past whereby to judge the tendencies of the present. Will they revive? Under the genial influences of free institutions will the good seed which is in them take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards? and make them all what that fair France has been, in spite of all her faults, so often in past years—a joy and an inspiration to all the nations round? Shall it be thus? God grant it may; but He, and He alone, can tell. We only stand by, watching, if we be wise, with pity and with fear, the working out of a tremendous new social problem, which must affect the future of the whole civilised world.

For if the agonising old nations fail to regenerate themselves, what can befall? What, when even Imperialism has been tried and failed, as fail it must? What but that lower depth within the lowest deep?

That last dread mood
Of sated lust, and dull decrepitude.
No law, no art, no faith, no hope, no God.
When round the freezing founts of life in peevish ring,
Crouched on the bare-worn sod,
Babbling about the unreturning spring,
And whining for dead creeds, which cannot save,
The toothless nations shiver to their grave.

And we, who think we stand, let us take heed lest we fall. Let us accept, in modesty and in awe, the responsibility of our freedom, and remember that that freedom can be preserved only in one old-fashioned way. Let us remember that the one condition of a true democracy is the same as the one condition of a true aristocracy, namely, virtue. Let us teach our children, as grand old Lilly taught our forefathers 300 years ago—"It is virtue, gentlemen, yea, virtue that maketh gentlemen; that maketh the poor rich, the subject a king, the lowborn noble, the deformed beautiful. These things neither the whirling wheel of fortune can overturn, nor the deceitful cavillings of worldlings separate, neither sickness abate, nor age abolish."



Yes. Let us teach our children thus on both sides of the Atlantic. For if they—which God forbid—should grow corrupt and weak by their own sins, there is no hardier race now left on earth to conquer our descendants and bring them back to reason, as those old Jews were brought by bitter shame and woe. And all that is before them and the whole civilised world, would be long centuries of anarchy such as the world has not seen for ages—a true Ragnarok, a twilight of the very gods, an age such as the wise woman foretold in the old Voluspa.

Page 37

When brethren shall be
Each other's bane,
And sisters' sons rend
The ties of kin.
Hard will be that age,
An age of bad women,
An axe-age, a sword-age,
Shields oft cleft in twain,
A storm-age, a wolf-age,
Ere earth meet its doom.

So sang, 2000 years ago, perhaps, the great unnamed prophetess, of our own race, of what might be, if we should fail mankind and our own calling and election.

God grant that day may never come. But God grant, also, that if that day does come, then may come true also what that wise Vala sang, of the day when gods, and men, and earth should be burnt up with fire.

When slaked Surtur's flame is,
Still the man and the maiden,
Hight Valour and Life,
Shall keep themselves hid
In the wood of remembrance.
The dew of the dawning
For food it shall serve them:
From them spring new peoples.

New peoples. For after all is said, the ideal form of human society is democracy.

A nation—and, were it even possible, a whole world—of free men, lifting free foreheads to God and Nature; calling no man master—for one is their master, even God; knowing and obeying their duties towards the Maker of the Universe, and therefore to each other, and that not from fear, nor calculation of profit or loss, but because they loved and liked it, and had seen the beauty of righteousness and trust and peace; because the law of God was in their hearts, and needing at last, it may be, neither king nor priest, for each man and each woman, in their place, were kings and priests to God. Such a nation—such a society—what nobler conception of mortal existence can we form? Would not that be, indeed, the kingdom of God come on earth?

And tell me not that that is impossible—too fair a dream to be ever realised. All that makes it impossible is the selfishness, passions, weaknesses, of those who would be blest were they masters of themselves, and therefore of circumstances; who are miserable because, not being masters of themselves, they try to master circumstance,

to pull down iron walls with weak and clumsy hands, and forget that he who would be free from tyrants must first be free from his worst tyrant, self.

But tell me not that the dream is impossible. It is so beautiful that it must be true. If not now, nor centuries hence, yet still hereafter. God would never, as I hold, have inspired man with that rich imagination had He not meant to translate, some day, that imagination into fact.

The very greatness of the idea, beyond what a single mind or generation can grasp, will ensure failure on failure—follies, fanaticisms, disappointments, even crimes, bloodshed, hasty furies, as of children baulked of their holiday.

But it will be at last fulfilled, filled full, and perfected; not perhaps here, or among our peoples, or any people which now exist on earth: but in some future civilisation—it may be in far lands beyond the sea—when all that you and we have made and done shall be as the forest-grown mounds of the old nameless civilisers of the Mississippi valley.

Page 38

RONDELET, {7} THE HUGUENOT NATURALIST {8}

“Apollo, god of medicine, exiled from the rest of the earth, was straying once across the Narbonnaise in Gaul, seeking to fix his abode there. Driven from Asia, from Africa, and from the rest of Europe, he wandered through all the towns of the province in search of a place propitious for him and for his disciples. At last he perceived a new city, constructed from the ruins of Maguelonne, of Lattes, and of Substantion. He contemplated long its site, its aspect, its neighbourhood, and resolved to establish on this hill of Montpellier a temple for himself and his priests. All smiled on his desires. By the genius of the soil, by the character of the inhabitants, no town is more fit for the culture of letters, and above all of medicine. What site is more delicious and more lovely? A heaven pure and smiling; a city built with magnificence; men born for all the labours of the intellect. All around vast horizons and enchanting sites—meadows, vines, olives, green champaigns; mountains and hills, rivers, brooks, lagoons, and the sea. Everywhere a luxuriant vegetation—everywhere the richest production of the land and the water. Hail to thee sweet and dear city! Hail, happy abode of Apollo, who spreadest afar the light of the glory of thy name!”

“This fine tirade,” says Dr. Maurice Raynaud—from whose charming book on the “Doctors of the Time of Moliere” I quote—“is not, as one might think, the translation of a piece of poetry. It is simply part of a public oration by Francois Fanchon, one of the most illustrious chancellors of the faculty of medicine of Montpellier in the seventeenth century.” “From time immemorial,” he says, “‘the faculty’ of Montpellier had made itself remarkable by a singular mixture of the sacred and the profane. The theses which were sustained there began by an invocation to God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Luke, and ended by these words: ‘This thesis will be sustained in the sacred Temple of Apollo.’”

But however extravagant Chancellor Fanchon’s praises of his native city may seem, they are really not exaggerated. The Narbonnaise, or Languedoc, is perhaps the most charming district of charming France. In the far north-east gleam the white Alps; in the far south-west the white Pyrenees; and from the purple glens and yellow downs of the Cevennes on the north-west, the Herault slopes gently down towards the “Etangs,” or great salt-water lagoons, and the vast alluvial flats of the Camargue, the field of Caius Marius, where still run herds of half-wild horses, descended from some ancient Roman stock; while beyond all glitters the blue Mediterranean. The great almond orchards, each one sheet of rose-colour in spring; the mulberry orchards, the oliveyards, the vineyards, cover every foot of available upland soil: save where the rugged and arid downs are sweet with a thousand odoriferous

Page 39

plants, from which the bees extract the famous white honey of Narbonne. The native flowers and shrubs, of a beauty and richness rather Eastern than European, have made the "Flora Montpelienensis," and with it the names of Rondelet and his disciples, famous among botanists; and the strange fish and shells upon its shores afforded Rondelet materials for his immortal work upon the "Animals of the Sea." The innumerable wild fowl of the Benches du Rhone; the innumerable songsters and other birds of passage, many of them unknown in these islands, and even in the north of France itself, which haunt every copse of willow and aspen along the brook-sides; the gaudy and curious insects which thrive beneath that clear, fierce, and yet bracing sunlight; all these have made the district of Montpellier a home prepared by Nature for those who study and revere her.

Neither was Chancellor Fanchon misled by patriotism, when he said the pleasant people who inhabit that district are fit for all the labours of the intellect. They are a very mixed race, and, like most mixed races, quick-witted, and handsome also. There is probably much Roman blood among them, especially in the towns; for Languedoc, or Gallia Narbonnensis, as it was called of old, was said to be more Roman than Rome itself. The Roman remains are more perfect and more interesting—so the late Dr. Whewell used to say—than any to be seen now in Italy; and the old capital, Narbonne itself, was a complete museum of Roman antiquities ere Francis I. destroyed it, in order to fortify the city upon a modern system against the invading armies of Charles V. There must be much Visigothic blood likewise in Languedoc: for the Visigothic Kings held their courts there from the fifth century, until the time that they were crushed by the invading Moors. Spanish blood, likewise, there may be; for much of Languedoc was held in the early Middle Age by those descendants of Eudes of Aquitaine who established themselves as kings of Majorca and Arragon; and Languedoc did not become entirely French till 1349, when Philip le Bel bought Montpellier of those potentates. The Moors, too, may have left some traces of their race behind. They held the country from about A.D. 713 to 758, when they were finally expelled by Charles Martel and Eudes. One sees to this day their towers of meagre stonework, perched on the grand Roman masonry of those old amphitheatres, which they turned into fortresses. One may see, too—so tradition holds—upon those very amphitheatres the stains of the fires with which Charles Martel smoked them out; and one may see, too, or fancy that one sees, in the aquiline features, the bright black eyes, the lithe and graceful gestures, which are so common in Languedoc, some touch of the old Mahommedan race, which passed like a flood over that Christian land.

Page 40

Whether or not the Moors left behind any traces of their blood, they left behind, at least, traces of their learning; for the university of Montpellier claimed to have been founded by Moors at a date of altogether abysmal antiquity. They looked upon the Arabian physicians of the Middle Age, on Avicenna and Averrhoes, as modern innovators, and derived their parentage from certain mythic doctors of Cordova, who, when the Moors were expelled from Spain in the eighth century, fled to Montpellier, bringing with them traditions of that *primaeval* science which had been revealed to Adam while still in Paradise; and founded Montpellier, the mother of all the universities in Europe. Nay, some went farther still, and told of Bengessaus and Ferragius, the physicians of Charlemagne, and of Marilephus, chief physician of King Chilperic, and even—if a letter of St. Bernard's was to be believed—of a certain bishop who went as early as the second century to consult the doctors of Montpellier; and it would have been in vain to reply to them that in those days, and long after them, Montpellier was not yet built. The facts are said to be: that as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century Montpellier had its schools of law, medicine, and arts, which were erected into a university by Pope Nicholas IV. in 1289.

The university of Montpellier, like—I believe—most foreign ones, resembled more a Scotch than an English university. The students lived, for the most part, not in colleges, but in private lodgings, and constituted a republic of their own, ruled by an abbe of the scholars, one of themselves, chosen by universal suffrage. A terror they were often to the respectable burghers, for they had all the right to carry arms; and a plague likewise, for, if they ran in debt, their creditors were forbidden to seize their books, which, with their swords, were generally all the property they possessed. If, moreover, anyone set up a noisy or unpleasant trade near their lodgings, the scholars could compel the town authorities to turn him out. They were most of them, probably, mere boys of from twelve to twenty, living poorly, working hard, and—those at least of them who were in the colleges—cruelly beaten daily, after the fashion of those times; but they seem to have comforted themselves under their troubles by a good deal of wild life out of school, by rambling into the country on the festivals of the saints, and now and then by acting plays; notably, that famous one which Rabelais wrote for them in 1531: “The moral comedy of the man who had a dumb wife;” which “joyous *patelinage*” remains unto this day in the shape of a well-known comic song. That comedy young Rondelet must have seen acted. The son of a druggist, spicer, and grocer—the three trades were then combined—in Montpellier, and born in 1507, he had been destined for the cloister, being a sickly lad. His uncle, one of the canons of Maguelonne, near by, had even given him the revenues of a small chapel—a job of nepotism which was common enough in those days. But his heart was in science and medicine. He set off, still a mere boy, to Paris to study there; and returned to Montpellier, at the age of eighteen, to study again.

Page 41

The next year, 1530, while still a scholar himself, he was appointed procurator of the scholars—a post which brought him in a small fee on each matriculation—and that year he took a fee, among others, from one of the most remarkable men of that or of any age, Francois Rabelais himself.

And what shall I say of him?—who stands alone, like Shakespeare, in his generation; possessed of colossal learning—of all science which could be gathered in his days—of practical and statesmanlike wisdom—of knowledge of languages, ancient and modern, beyond all his compeers—of eloquence, which when he speaks of pure and noble things becomes heroic, and, as it were, inspired—of scorn for meanness, hypocrisy, ignorance—of esteem, genuine and earnest, for the Holy Scriptures, and for the more moderate of the Reformers who were spreading the Scriptures in Europe,—and all this great light wilfully hidden, not under a bushel, but under a dunghill. He is somewhat like Socrates in face, and in character likewise; in him, as in Socrates, the demigod and the satyr, the man and the ape, are struggling for the mastery. In Socrates, the true man conquers, and comes forth high and pure; in Rabelais, alas! the victor is the ape, while the man himself sinks down in cynicism, sensuality, practical jokes, foul talk. He returns to Paris, to live an idle, luxurious life; to die—says the legend—saying, “I go to seek a great perhaps,” and to leave behind him little save a school of Pantagruelists—careless young gentlemen, whose ideal was to laugh at everything, to believe in nothing, and to gratify their five senses like the brutes which perish. There are those who read his books to make them laugh; the wise man, when he reads them, will be far more inclined to weep. Let any young man who may see these words remember, that in him, as in Rabelais, the ape and the man are struggling for the mastery. Let him take warning by the fate of one who was to him as a giant to a pigmy; and think of Tennyson’s words—

Arise, and fly
The reeling faun, the sensual feast;
Strive upwards, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

But to return. Down among them there at Montpellier, like a brilliant meteor, flashed this wonderful Rabelais, in the year 1530. He had fled, some say, for his life. Like Erasmus, he had no mind to be a martyr, and he had been terrified at the execution of poor Louis de Berquin, his friend, and the friend of Erasmus likewise. This Louis de Berquin, a man well known in those days, was a gallant young gentleman and scholar, holding a place in the court of Francis I., who had translated into French the works of Erasmus, Luther, and Melancthon, and had asserted that it was heretical to invoke the Virgin Mary instead of the Holy Spirit, or to call her our Hope and our Life, which titles—Berquin averred—belonged alone to God. Twice had the doctors of the Sorbonne, with that terrible persecutor, Noel Beda, at their

Page 42

head, seized poor Berquin, and tried to burn his books and him; twice had that angel in human form, Marguerite d'Angouleme, sister of Francis I., saved him from their clutches; but when Francis—taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia—at last returned from his captivity in Spain, the suppression of heresy and the burning of heretics seemed to him and to his mother, Louise of Savoy, a thank-offering so acceptable to God, that Louis Berquin—who would not, in spite of the entreaties of Erasmus, purchase his life by silence—was burnt at last on the Place de Greve, being first strangled, because he was of gentle blood.

Montpellier received its famous guest joyfully. Rabelais was now forty-two years old, and a distinguished savant; so they excused him his three years' undergraduate's career, and invested him at once with the red gown of the bachelors. That red gown—or, rather, the ragged phantom of it—is still shown at Montpellier, and must be worn by each bachelor when he takes his degree. Unfortunately, antiquarians assure us that the precious garment has been renewed again and again—the students having clipped bits of it away for relics, and clipped as earnestly from the new gowns as their predecessors had done from the authentic original.

Doubtless, the coming of such a man among them to lecture on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates, and the *Ars Parva* of Galen, not from the Latin translations then in use, but from original Greek texts, with comments and corrections of his own, must have had a great influence on the minds of the Montpellier students; and still more influence—and that not altogether a good one—must Rabelais's lighter talk have had, as he lounged—so the story goes—in his dressing-gown upon the public place, picking up quaint stories from the cattle-drivers off the Cevennes, and the villagers who came in to sell their olives and their grapes, their vinegar and their vine-twigs faggots, as they do unto this day. To him may be owing much of the sound respect for natural science, and much, too, of the contempt for the superstition around them, which is notable in that group of great naturalists who were boys in Montpellier at that day. Rabelais seems to have liked Rondelet, and no wonder: he was a cheery, lovable, honest little fellow, very fond of jokes, a great musician and player on the violin, and who, when he grew rich, liked nothing so well as to bring into his house any buffoon or strolling-player to make fun for him. Vivacious he was, hot-tempered, forgiving, and with a power of learning and a power of work which were prodigious, even in those hard-working days. Rabelais chaffs Rondelet, under the name of Rondibilis; for, indeed, Rondelet grew up into a very round, fat, little man; but Rabelais puts excellent sense into his mouth, cynical enough, and too cynical, but both learned and humorous; and, if he laughs at him for being shocked at the offer of a fee, and taking it, nevertheless, kindly enough, Rondelet is not the first doctor who has done that, neither will he be the last.

Page 43

Rondelet, in his turn, put on the red robe of the bachelor, and received, on taking his degree, his due share of fisticuffs from his dearest friends, according to the ancient custom of the University of Montpellier. He then went off to practise medicine in a village at the foot of the Alps, and, half-starved, to teach little children. Then he found he must learn Greek; went off to Paris a second time, and alleviated his poverty there somewhat by becoming tutor to a son of the Viscomte de Turenne. There he met Gonthier of Andernach, who had taught anatomy at Louvain to the great Vesalius, and learned from him to dissect. We next find him setting up as a medical man amid the wild volcanic hills of the Auvergne, struggling still with poverty, like Erasmus, like George Buchanan, like almost every great scholar in those days; for students then had to wander from place to place, generally on foot, in search of new teachers, in search of books, in search of the necessities of life; undergoing such an amount of bodily and mental toil as makes it wonderful that all of them did not—as some of them doubtless did—die under the hard training, or, at best, desert the penurious Muses for the paternal shop or plough.

Rondelet got his doctorate in 1537, and next year fell in love with and married a beautiful young girl called Jeanne Sandre, who seems to have been as poor as he.

But he had gained, meanwhile, a powerful patron; and the patronage of the great was then as necessary to men of letters as the patronage of the public is now. Guillaume Pellicier, Bishop of Maguelonne—or rather then of Montpellier itself, whither he had persuaded Paul II. to transfer the ancient see—was a model of the literary gentleman of the sixteenth century; a savant, a diplomat, a collector of books and manuscripts, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac, which formed the original nucleus of the present library of the Louvre; a botanist, too, who loved to wander with Rondelet collecting plants and flowers. He retired from public life to peace and science at Montpellier, when to the evil days of his master, Francis I., succeeded the still worse days of Henry II., and Diana of Poitiers. That Jezebel of France could conceive no more natural or easy way of atoning for her own sins than that of hunting down heretics, and feasting her wicked eyes—so it is said—upon their dying torments. Bishop Pellicier fell under suspicion of heresy: very probably with some justice. He fell, too, under suspicion of leading a life unworthy of a celibate churchman, a fault which—if it really existed—was, in those days, pardonable enough in an orthodox prelate, but not so in one whose orthodoxy was suspected. And for awhile Pellicier was in prison. After his release he gave himself up to science, with Rondelet and the school of disciples who were growing up around him. They rediscovered together the *Garum*, that classic sauce, whose praises had been sung of old by

Page 44

Horace, Martial, and Ausonius; and so child-like, superstitious if you will, was the reverence in the sixteenth century for classic antiquity, that when Pellicier and Rondelet discovered that the Garum was made from the fish called Picarel—called Garon by the fishers of Antibes, and Giroli at Venice, both these last names corruptions of the Latin Gerres—then did the two fashionable poets of France, Etienne Dolet and Clement Marot, think it not unworthy of their muse to sing the praises of the sauce which Horace had sung of old. A proud day, too, was it for Pellicier and Rondelet, when wandering somewhere in the marshes of the Camargue, a scent of garlic caught the nostrils of the gentle bishop, and in the lovely pink flowers of the water-germander he recognised the Scordium of the ancients. “The discovery,” says Professor Planchon, “made almost as much noise as that of the famous Garum; for at that moment of naive fervour on behalf of antiquity, to re-discover a plant of Dioscorides or of Pliny was a good fortune and almost an event.”

I know not whether, after his death, the good bishop's bones reposed beneath some gorgeous tomb, bedizened with the incongruous half-Pagan statues of the Renaissance; but this at least is certain, that Rondelet's disciples imagined for him a monument more enduring than of marble or of brass, more graceful and more curiously wrought than all the sculptures of Torrigiano or Cellini, Baccio Bandinelli or Michael Angelo himself. For they named a lovely little lilac snapdragon, *Linaria Domini Pellicerii* —“Lord Pellicier's toad-flax;” and that name it will keep, we may believe, as long as winter and summer shall endure.

But to return. To this good Patron—who was the Ambassador at Venice—the newly-married Rondelet determined to apply for employment; and to Venice he would have gone, leaving his bride behind, had he not been stayed by one of those angels who sometimes walk the earth in women's shape. Jeanne Sandre had an elder sister, Catharine, who had brought her up. She was married to a wealthy man, but she had no children of her own. For four years she and her good husband had let the Rondelets lodge with them, and now she was a widow, and to part with them was more than she could bear. She carried Rondelet off from the students who were seeing him safe out of the city, brought him back, settled on him the same day half her fortune, and soon after settled on him the whole, on the sole condition that she should live with him and her sister. For years afterwards she watched over the pretty young wife and her two girls and three boys—the three boys, alas! all died young—and over Rondelet himself, who, immersed in books and experiments, was utterly careless about money; and was to them all a mother—advising, guiding, managing, and regarded by Rondelet with genuine gratitude as his guardian angel.

Page 45

Honour and good fortune, in a worldly sense, now poured in upon the druggist's son. Pellicier, his own bishop, stood godfather to his first-born daughter. Montluc, Bishop of Valence, and that wise and learned statesman, the Cardinal of Tournon, stood godfathers a few years later to his twin boys; and what was of still more solid worth to him, Cardinal Tournon took him to Antwerp, Bordeaux, Bayonne, and more than once to Rome; and in these Italian journeys of his he collected many facts for the great work of his life, that "History of Fishes" which he dedicated, naturally enough, to the cardinal. This book with its plates is, for the time, a masterpiece of accuracy. Those who are best acquainted with the subject say, that it is up to the present day a key to the whole ichthyology of the Mediterranean. Two other men, Belon and Salviani, were then at work on the same subject, and published their books almost at the same time; a circumstance which caused, as was natural, a three-cornered duel between the supporters of the three naturalists, each party accusing the other of plagiarism. The simple fact seems to be that the almost simultaneous appearance of the three books in 1554-55 is one of those coincidences inevitable at moments when many minds are stirred in the same direction by the same great thoughts—coincidences which have happened in our own day on questions of geology, biology, and astronomy; and which, when the facts have been carefully examined, and the first flush of natural jealousy has cooled down, have proved only that there were more wise men than one in the world at the same time.

And this sixteenth century was an age in which the minds of men were suddenly and strangely turned to examine the wonders of nature with an earnestness, with a reverence, and therefore with an accuracy, with which they had never been investigated before. "Nature," says Professor Planchon, "long veiled in mysticism and scholasticism, was opening up infinite vistas. A new superstition, the exaggerated worship of the ancients, was nearly hindering this movement of thought towards facts. Nevertheless, Learning did her work. She rediscovered, reconstructed, purified, commented on the texts of ancient authors. Then came in observation, which showed that more was to be seen in one blade of grass than in any page of Pliny. Rondelet was in the middle of this crisis a man of transition, while he was one of progress. He reflected the past; he opened and prepared the future. If he commented on Dioscorides, if he remained faithful to the theories of Galen, he founded in his 'History of Fishes' a monument which our century respects. He is above all an inspirer, an initiator; and if he wants one mark of the leader of a school, the foundation of certain scientific doctrines, there is in his speech what is better than all systems, the communicative power which urges a generation of disciples along the path of independent research, with Reason for guide, and Faith for aim."

Page 46

Around Rondelet, in those years, sometimes indeed in his house—for professors in those days took private pupils as lodgers—worked the group of botanists whom Linnaeus calls “the Fathers,” the authors of the descriptive botany of the sixteenth century. Their names, and those of their disciples and their disciples again, are household words in the mouth of every gardener, immortalised, like good Bishop Pellicier, in the plants that have been named after them. The *Lobelia* commemorates Lobel, one of Rondelet’s most famous pupils, who wrote those “Adversaria” which contain so many curious sketches of Rondelet’s botanical expeditions, and who inherited his botanical (as Joubert his biographer inherited his anatomical) manuscripts. The *Magnolia* commemorates the Magnols; the *Sarracenia*, Sarrasin of Lyons; the *Bauhinia*, Jean Bauhin; the *Fuchsia*, Bauhin’s earlier German master, Leonard Fuchs; and the *Clusia*—the received name of that terrible “Matapalo” or “Scotch attorney,” of the West Indies, which kills the hugest tree, to become as huge a tree itself—immortalises the great Clusius, Charles de l’Escluse, citizen of Arras, who, after studying civil law at Louvain, philosophy at Marburg, and theology at Wittenberg under Melancthon, came to Montpellier in 1551, to live in Rondelet’s own house, and become the greatest botanist of his age.

These were Rondelet’s palmy days. He had got a theatre of anatomy built at Montpellier, where he himself dissected publicly. He had, says tradition, a little botanic garden, such as were springing up then in several universities, specially in Italy. He had a villa outside the city, whose tower, near the modern railway station, still bears the name of the “Mas de Rondelet.” There, too, may be seen the remnants of the great tanks, fed with water brought through earthen pipes from the Fountain of Albe, wherein he kept the fish whose habits he observed. Professor Planchon thinks that he had salt-water tanks likewise; and thus he may have been the father of all “Aquariums.” He had a large and handsome house in the city itself, a large practice as physician in the country round; money flowed in fast to him, and flowed out fast likewise. He spent much upon building, pulling down, rebuilding, and sent the bills in seemingly to his wife and to his guardian angel Catharine. He himself had never a penny in his purse: but earned the money, and let his ladies spend it; an equitable and pleasant division of labour which most married men would do well to imitate. A generous, affectionate, careless little man, he gave away, says his pupil and biographer, Joubert, his valuable specimens to any savant who begged for them, or left them about to be stolen by visitors, who, like too many collectors in all ages, possessed light fingers and lighter consciences. So pacific was he meanwhile, and so brave withal that even in the fearful years of “The Troubles,” he would never carry sword, nor even tuck or dagger: but went about on the most lonesome journeys as one who wore a charmed life, secure in God and in his calling, which was to heal, and not to kill.

Page 47

These were the golden years of Rondelet's life; but trouble was coming on him, and a stormy sunset after a brilliant day. He lost his sister-in-law, to whom he owed all his fortunes, and who had watched ever since over him and his wife like a mother; then he lost his wife herself under most painful circumstances; then his best-beloved daughter. Then he married again, and lost the son who was born to him; and then came, as to many of the best in those days, even sorer trials, trials of the conscience, trials of faith.

For in the meantime Rondelet had become a Protestant, like many of the wisest men round him; like, so it would seem from the event, the majority of the university and the burghers of Montpellier. It is not to be wondered at. Montpellier was a sort of halfway resting-place for Protestant preachers, whether fugitive or not, who were passing from Basle, Geneva, or Lyons, to Marguerite of Navarre's little Protestant court at Pan or at Nerac, where all wise and good men, and now and then some foolish and fanatical ones, found shelter and hospitality. Thither Calvin himself had been, passing probably through Montpellier and leaving—as such a man was sure to leave—the mark of his foot behind him. At Lyons, no great distance up the Rhone, Marguerite had helped to establish an organised Protestant community; and when in 1536 she herself had passed through Montpellier, to visit her brother at Valence, and Montmorency's camp at Avignon, she took with her doubtless Protestant chaplains of her own, who spoke wise words—it may be that she spoke wise words herself—to the ardent and inquiring students of Montpellier. Moreover, Rondelet and his disciples had been for years past in constant communication with the Protestant savants of Switzerland and Germany, among whom the knowledge of nature was progressing as it never had progressed before. For—it is a fact always to be remembered—it was only in the free air of Protestant countries the natural sciences could grow and thrive. They sprung up, indeed, in Italy after the restoration of Greek literature in the fifteenth century; but they withered there again only too soon under the blighting upas shade of superstition. Transplanted to the free air of Switzerland, of Germany, of Britain, and of Montpellier, then half Protestant, they developed rapidly and surely, simply because the air was free; to be checked again in France by the return of superstition with despotism super-added, until the eve of the great French Revolution.

So Rondelet had been for some years Protestant. He had hidden in his house for a long while a monk who had left his monastery. He had himself written theological treatises: but when his Bishop Pellicier was imprisoned on a charge of heresy, Rondelet burnt his manuscripts, and kept his opinions to himself. Still he was a suspected heretic, at last seemingly a notorious one; for only the year before his death, going to visit patients at Perpignan, he was waylaid by the Spaniards, and had to get home through bypasses of the Pyrenees, to avoid being thrown into the Inquisition.

Page 48

And those were times in which it was necessary for a man to be careful, unless he had made up his mind to be burned. For more than thirty years of Rondelet's life the burning had gone on in his neighbourhood; intermittently it is true: the spasms of superstitious fury being succeeded, one may charitably hope, by pity and remorse; but still the burnings had gone on. The Benedictine monk of St. Maur, who writes the history of Languedoc, says, quite *en passant*, how someone was burnt at Toulouse in 1553, luckily only in effigy, for he had escaped to Geneva: but he adds, "next year they burned several heretics," it being not worth while to mention their names. In 1556 they burned alive at Toulouse Jean Escalle, a poor Franciscan monk, who had found his order intolerable; while one Pierre de Lavaur, who dared preach Calvinism in the streets of Nismes, was hanged and burnt. So had the score of judicial murders been increasing year by year, till it had to be, as all evil scores have to be in this world, paid off with interest, and paid off especially against the ignorant and fanatic monks who for a whole generation, in every university and school in France, had been howling down sound science, as well as sound religion; and at Montpellier in 1560-61, their debt was paid them in a very ugly way. News came down to the hot southerners of Languedoc of the so-called conspiracy of Amboise.—How the Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Lorraine had butchered the best blood in France under the pretence of a treasonable plot; how the King of Navarre and the Prince de Conde had been arrested; then how Conde and Coligny were ready to take up arms at the head of all the Huguenots of France, and try to stop this life-long torturing, by sharp shot and cold steel; then how in six months' time the king would assemble a general council to settle the question between Catholics and Huguenots. The Huguenots, guessing how that would end, resolved to settle the question for themselves. They rose in one city after another, sacked the churches, destroyed the images, put down by main force superstitious processions and dances; and did many things only to be excused by the exasperation caused by thirty years of cruelty. At Montpellier there was hard fighting, murders—so say the Catholic historians—of priests and monks, sack of the new cathedral, destruction of the noble convents which lay in a ring round Montpellier. The city and the university were in the hands of the Huguenots, and Montpellier became Protestant on the spot.

Next year came the counter-blow. There were heavy battles with the Catholics all round the neighbourhood, destruction of the suburbs, threatened siege and sack, and years of misery and poverty for Montpellier and all who were therein.

Page 49

Horrible was the state of France in those times of the wars of religion which began in 1562; the times which are spoken of usually as "The Troubles," as if men did not wish to allude to them too openly. Then, and afterwards in the wars of the League, deeds were done for which language has no name. The population decreased. The land lay untilled. The fair face of France was blackened with burnt homesteads and ruined towns. Ghastly corpses dangled in rows upon the trees, or floated down the blood-stained streams. Law and order were at an end. Bands of robbers prowled in open day, and bands of wolves likewise. But all through the horrors of the troubles we catch sight of the little fat doctor riding all unarmed to see his patients throughout Languedoc; going vast distances, his biographers say, by means of regular relays of horses, till he too broke down. Well, for him, perhaps, that he broke down when he did; for capture and recapture, massacre and pestilence, were the fate of Montpellier and the surrounding country, till the better times of Henry IV. and the Edict of Nantes in 1598, when liberty of worship was given to the Protestants for awhile.

In the burning summer of 1566, Rondelet went a long journey to Toulouse, seemingly upon an errand of charity, to settle some law affairs for his relations. The sanitary state of the southern cities is bad enough still. It must have been horrible in those days of barbarism and misrule. Dysentery was epidemic at Toulouse then, and Rondelet took it. He knew from the first that he should die. He was worn out, it is said, by over-exertion; by sorrow for the miseries of the land; by fruitless struggles to keep the peace, and to strive for moderation in days when men were all immoderate. But he rode away a day's journey—he took two days over it, so weak he was—in the blazing July sun, to a friend's sick wife at Realmont, and there took to his bed, and died a good man's death. The details of his death and last illness were written and published by his cousin Claude Formy; and well worth reading they are to any man who wishes to know how to die. Rondelet would have no tidings of his illness sent to Montpellier. He was happy, he said, in dying away from the tears of his household, and "safe from insult." He dreaded, one may suppose, lest priests and friars should force their way to his bedside, and try to extort some recantation from the great savant, the honour and glory of their city. So they sent for no priest to Realmont; but round his bed a knot of Calvinist gentlemen and ministers read the Scriptures, and sang David's psalms, and prayed; and Rondelet prayed with them through long agonies, and so went home to God.

Page 50

The Benedictine monk-historian of Languedoc, in all his voluminous folios, never mentions, as far as I can find, Rondelet's existence. Why should he? The man was only a druggist's son and a heretic, who healed diseases, and collected plants, and wrote a book on fish. But the learned men of Montpellier, and of all Europe, had a very different opinion of him. His body was buried at Realmont; but before the schools of Toulouse they set up a white marble slab, and an inscription thereon setting forth his learning and his virtues; and epitaphs on him were composed by the learned throughout Europe, not only in French and Latin, but in Greek, Hebrew, and even Chaldee.

So lived and so died a noble man; more noble, to my mind, than many a victorious warrior, or successful statesman, or canonised saint. To know facts, and to heal diseases, were the two objects of his life. For them he toiled, as few men have toiled; and he died in harness, at his work—the best death any man can die.

VESALIUS THE ANATOMIST {9}

I cannot begin a sketch of the life of this great man better than by trying to describe a scene so picturesque, so tragic in the eyes of those who are wont to mourn over human follies, so comic in the eyes of those who prefer to laugh over them, that the reader will not be likely to forget either it or the actors in it.

It is a darkened chamber in the College of Alcala, in the year 1562, where lies, probably in a huge four-post bed, shrouded in stifling hangings, the heir-apparent of the greatest empire in the then world, Don Carlos, only son of Philip II. and heir-apparent of Spain, the Netherlands, and all the Indies. A short sickly boy of sixteen, with a bull head, a crooked shoulder, a short leg, and a brutal temper, he will not be missed by the world if he should die. His profligate career seems to have brought its own punishment. To the scandal of his father, who tolerated no one's vices save his own, as well as to the scandal of the university authorities of Alcala, he has been scouring the streets at the head of the most profligate students, insulting women, even ladies of rank, and amenable only to his lovely young stepmother, Elizabeth of Valois, Isabel de la Paz, as the Spaniards call her, the daughter of Catherine de Medici, and sister of the King of France. Don Carlos should have married her, had not his worthy father found it more advantageous for the crown of Spain, as well as more pleasant for him, Philip, to marry her himself. Whence came heart-burnings, rage, jealousies, romances, calumnies, of which two last—in as far at least as they concern poor Elizabeth—no wise man now believes a word.

Page 51

Going on some errand on which he had no business—there are two stories, neither of them creditable nor necessary to repeat—Don Carlos has fallen downstairs and broken his head. He comes, by his Portuguese mother's side, of a house deeply tainted with insanity; and such an injury may have serious consequences. However, for nine days the wound goes on well, and Don Carlos, having had a wholesome fright, is, according to Doctor Olivarez, the *medico de camara*, a very good lad, and lives on chicken broth and dried plums. But on the tenth day comes on numbness of the left side, acute pains in the head, and then gradually shivering, high fever, erysipelas. His head and neck swell to an enormous size; then comes raging delirium, then stupefaction, and Don Carlos lies as one dead.

A modern surgeon would, probably, thanks to that training of which Vesalius may be almost called the father, have had little difficulty in finding out what was the matter with the luckless lad, and little difficulty in removing the evil, if it had not gone too far. But the Spanish physicians were then, as many of them are said to be still, as far behind the world in surgery as in other things; and indeed surgery itself was then in its infancy, because men, ever since the early Greek schools of Alexandria had died out, had been for centuries feeding their minds with anything rather than with facts. Therefore the learned morosophs who were gathered round Don Carlos's sick bed had become according to their own confession, utterly confused, terrified, and at their wits' end.

It is the 7th of May, the eighteenth day after the accident according to Olivarez's story: he and Dr Vega have been bleeding the unhappy prince, enlarging the wound twice, and torturing him seemingly on mere guesses. "I believe," says Olivarez, "that all was done well: but as I have said, in wounds in the head there are strange labyrinths." So on the 7th they stand round the bed in despair. Don Garcia de Toledo, the prince's faithful governor, is sitting by him, worn out with sleepless nights, and trying to supply to the poor boy that mother's tenderness which he has never known. Alva, too, is there, stern, self-compressed, most terrible, and yet most beautiful. He has a God on earth, and that is Philip his master; and though he has borne much from Don Carlos already, and will have to bear more, yet the wretched lad is to him as a son of God, a second deity, who will by right divine succeed to the inheritance of the first; and he watches this lesser deity struggling between life and death with an intensity of which we, in these less loyal days, can form no notion. One would be glad to have a glimpse of what passed through that mind, so subtle and so ruthless, so disciplined and so loyal withal: but Alva was a man who was not given to speak his mind, but to act it.

Page 52

One would wish, too, for a glimpse of what was passing through the mind of another man, who has been daily in that sick chamber, according to Olivarez's statement, since the first of the month: but he is one who has had, for some years past, even more reason than Alva for not speaking his mind. What he looked like we know well, for Titian has painted him from the life—a tall, bold, well-dressed man, with a noble brain, square and yet lofty, short curling locks and beard, an eye which looks as though it feared neither man nor fiend—and it has had good reason to fear both—and features which would be exceeding handsome, but for the defiant snub-nose. That is Andreas Vesalius, of Brussels, dreaded and hated by the doctors of the old school—suspect, moreover, it would seem to inquisitors and theologians, possibly to Alva himself; for he has dared to dissect human bodies; he has insulted the mediaevalists at Paris, Padua, Bologna, Pisa, Venice, in open theatre; he has turned the heads of all the young surgeons in Italy and France; he has written a great book, with prints in it, designed, some say, by Titian—they were actually done by another Netherlander, John of Calcar, near Cleves—in which he has dared to prove that Galen's anatomy was at fault throughout, and that he had been describing a monkey's inside when he had pretended to be describing a man's; and thus, by impudence and quackery, he has wormed himself—this Netherlander, a heretic at heart, as all Netherlanders are, to God as well as to Galen—into the confidence of the late Emperor Charles V., and gone campaigning with him as one of his physicians, anatomising human bodies even on the battle-field, and defacing the likeness of Deity; and worse than that, the most religious King Philip is deceived by him likewise, and keeps him in Madrid in wealth and honour; and now, in the prince's extreme danger, the king has actually sent for him, and bidden him try his skill—a man who knows nothing save about bones and muscles and the outside of the body, and is unworthy the name of a true physician.

One can conceive the rage of the old Spanish pedants at the Netherlander's appearance, and still more at what followed, if we are to believe Hugo Bloet of Delft, his countryman and contemporary. {10} Vesalius, he says, saw that the surgeons had bound up the wound so tight that an abscess had formed outside the skull, which could not break: he asserted that the only hope lay in opening it; and did so, Philip having given leave, "by two cross-cuts. Then the lad returned to himself, as if awakened from a profound sleep, affirming that he owed his restoration to life to the German doctor."

Dionysius Daza, who was there with the other physicians and surgeons, tells a different story: "The most learned, famous, and rare Baron Vesalius," he says, advised that the skull should be trepanned; but his advice was not followed.

Page 53

Olivarez's account agrees with that of Daza. They had opened the wounds, he says, down to the skull before Vesalius came. Vesalius insisted that the injury lay inside the skull, and wished to pierce it. Olivarez spends much labour in proving that Vesalius had "no great foundation for his opinion:" but confesses that he never changed that opinion to the last, though all the Spanish doctors were against him. Then on the 6th, he says, the Bachelor Torres came from Madrid, and advised that the skull should be laid bare once more; and on the 7th, there being still doubt whether the skull was not injured, the operation was performed—by whom it is not said—but without any good result, or, according to Olivarez, any discovery, save that Vesalius was wrong, and the skull uninjured.

Whether this second operation of the 7th of May was performed by Vesalius, and whether it was that of which Bloet speaks, is an open question. Olivarez's whole relation is apologetic, written to justify himself and his seven Spanish colleagues, and to prove Vesalius in the wrong. Public opinion, he confesses, had been very fierce against him. The credit of Spanish medicine was at stake: and we are not bound to believe implicitly a paper drawn up under such circumstances for Philip's eye. This, at least, we gather: that Don Carlos was never trepanned, as is commonly said; and this, also, that whichever of the two stories is true, equally puts Vesalius into direct, and most unpleasant, antagonism to the Spanish doctors. {11}

But Don Carlos still lay senseless; and yielding to popular clamour, the doctors called in the aid of a certain Moorish doctor, from Valencia, named Priotarete, whose unguents, it was reported, had achieved many miraculous cures. The unguent, however, to the horror of the doctors, burned the skull till the bone was as black as the colour of ink; and Olivarez declares he believes it to have been a preparation of pure caustic. On the morning of the 9th of May, the Moor and his unguents were sent away, "and went to Madrid, to send to heaven Hernando de Vega, while the prince went back to our method of cure."

Considering what happened on the morning of the 10th of May, we should now presume that the second opening of the abscess, whether by Vesalius or someone else, relieved the pressure on the brain; that a critical period of exhaustion followed, probably prolonged by the Moor's premature caustic, which stopped the suppuration: but that God's good handiwork, called nature, triumphed at last; and that therefore it came to pass that the prince was out of danger within three days of the operation. But he was taught, it seems, to attribute his recovery to a very different source from that of a German knife. For on the morning of the 9th, when the Moor was gone, and Don Carlos lay seemingly lifeless, there descended into his chamber a *Deus e machina*, or rather a whole pantheon of greater or lesser deities,

Page 54

who were to effect that which medical skill seemed not to have effected. Philip sent into the prince's chamber several of the precious relics which he usually carried about with him. The miraculous image of the Virgin of Atocha, in embroidering garments for whom, Spanish royalty, male and female, has spent so many an hour ere now, was brought in solemn procession and placed on an altar at the foot of the prince's bed; and in the afternoon there entered, with a procession likewise, a shrine containing the bones of a holy anchorite, one Fray Diego, "whose life and miracles," says Olivarez, "are so notorious;" and the bones of St. Justus and St. Pastor, the tutelar saints of the university of Alcala. Amid solemn litanies the relics of Fray Diego were laid upon the prince's pillow, and the sudarium, or mortuary cloth, which had covered his face, was placed upon the prince's forehead.

Modern science might object that the presence of so many personages, however pious or well intentioned, in a sick chamber on a hot Spanish May day, especially as the bath had been, for some generations past, held in religious horror throughout Spain, as a sign of Moorish and Mussulman tendencies, might have somewhat interfered with the chances of the poor boy's recovery. Nevertheless the event seems to have satisfied Philip's highest hopes; for that same night (so Don Carlos afterwards related) the holy monk Diego appeared to him in a vision, wearing the habit of St. Francis, and bearing in his hand a cross of reeds tied with a green band. The prince stated that he first took the apparition to be that of the blessed St. Francis; but not seeing the stigmata, he exclaimed, "How? Dost thou not bear the marks of the wounds?" What he replied Don Carlos did not recollect; save that he consoled him, and told him that he should not die of that malady.

Philip had returned to Madrid, and shut himself up in grief in the great Jeronymite monastery. Elizabeth was praying for her step-son before the miraculous images of the same city. During the night of the 9th of May prayers went up for Don Carlos in all the churches of Toledo, Alcala, and Madrid. Alva stood all that night at the bed's foot. Don Garcia de Toledo sat in the arm-chair, where he had now sat night and day for more than a fortnight. The good preceptor, Honorato Juan, afterwards Bishop of Osma, wrestled in prayer for the lad the whole night through. His prayer was answered: probably it had been answered already, without his being aware of it. Be that as it may, about dawn Don Carlos's heavy breathing ceased; he fell into a quiet sleep; and when he awoke all perceived at once that he was saved.

Page 55

He did not recover his sight, seemingly on account of the erysipelas, for a week more. He then opened his eyes upon the miraculous image of Atocha, and vowed that, if he recovered, he would give to the Virgin, at four different shrines in Spain, gold plate of four times his weight; and silver plate of seven times his weight, when he should rise from his couch. So on the 6th of June he rose, and was weighed in a fur coat and a robe of damask, and his weight was three arrobas and one pound—seventy-six pounds in all. On the 14th of June he went to visit his father at the episcopal palace; then to all the churches and shrines in Alcala, and of course to that of Fray Diego, whose body it is said he contemplated for some time with edifying devotion. The next year saw Fray Diego canonised as a saint, at the intercession of Philip and his son; and thus Don Carlos re-entered the world, to be a terror and a torment to all around him, and to die—not by Philip's cruelty, as his enemies reported too hastily indeed, yet excusably, for they knew him to be capable of any wickedness—but simply of constitutional insanity.

And now let us go back to the history of “that most learned, famous, and rare Baron Vesalius,” who had stood by and seen all these things done; and try if we cannot, after we have learned the history of his early life, guess at some of his probable meditations on this celebrated clinical case; and guess also how those meditations may have affected seriously the events of his afterlife.

Vesalius (as I said) was a Netherlander, born at Brussels in 1513 or 1514. His father and grandfather had been medical men of the highest standing in a profession which then, as now, was commonly hereditary. His real name was Wittag, an ancient family of Wesel, on the Rhine, from which town either he or his father adopted the name of Vesalius, according to the classicising fashion of those days. Young Vesalius was sent to college at Louvain, where he learned rapidly. At sixteen or seventeen he knew not only Latin, but Greek enough to correct the proofs of Galen, and Arabic enough to become acquainted with the works of the Mussulman physicians. He was a physicist too, and a mathematician, according to the knowledge of those times; but his passion—the study to which he was destined to devote his life—was anatomy.

Little or nothing (it must be understood) had been done in anatomy since the days of Galen of Pergamos, in the second century after Christ, and very little even by him. Dissection was all but forbidden among the ancients. The Egyptians, Herodotus tells us, used to pursue with stones and curses the embalmers as soon as they had performed their unpleasant office; and though Herophilus and Erasistratus are said to have dissected many subjects under the protection of Ptolemy Soter in Alexandria itself: yet the public feeling of the Greeks as well as of the Romans continued the same as that of the ancient Egyptians;

Page 56

and Galen was fain—as Vesalius proved—to supplement his ignorance of the human frame by describing that of an ape. Dissection was equally forbidden among the Mussulmans; and the great Arabic physicians could do no more than comment on Galen. The same prejudice extended through the Middle Age. Medical men were all clerks, *clerici*, and as such forbidden to shed blood. The only dissection, as far as I am aware, made during the Middle Age was one by Mundinus in 1306; and his subsequent commentaries on Galen—for he dare allow his own eyes to see no more than Galen had seen before him—constituted the best anatomical manual in Europe till the middle of the fifteenth century.

Then, in Italy at least, the classic Renaissance gave fresh life to anatomy as to all other sciences. Especially did the improvements in painting and sculpture stir men up to a closer study of the human frame. Leonardo da Vinci wrote a treatise on muscular anatomy. The artist and the sculptor often worked together, and realised that sketch of Michael Angelo's in which he himself is assisting Fallopius, Vesalius's famous pupil, to dissect. Vesalius soon found that his thirst for facts could not be slaked by the theories of the Middle Age; so in 1530 he went off to Montpellier, where Francis I. had just founded a medical school, and where the ancient laws of the city allowed the faculty each year the body of a criminal. From thence, after becoming the fellow-pupil and the friend of Rondelet, and probably also of Rabelais and those other luminaries of Montpellier, of whom I spoke in my essay on Rondelet, he returned to Paris to study under old Sylvius, whose real name was Jacques Dubois, alias Jock o' the Wood; and to learn less—as he complains himself—in an anatomical theatre than a butcher might learn in his shop.

Were it not that the whole question of dissection is one over which it is right to draw a reverent veil, as a thing painful, however necessary and however innocent, it would be easy to raise ghastly laughter in many a reader by the stories which Vesalius himself tells of his struggles to learn anatomy. How old Sylvius tried to demonstrate the human frame from a bit of a dog, fumbling in vain for muscles which he could not find, or which ought to have been there, according to Galen, and were not; while young Vesalius, as soon as the old pedant's back was turned, took his place, and, to the delight of the students, found for him—provided it were there—what he could not find himself;—how he went body-snatching and gibbet-robbing, often at the danger of his life, as when he and his friend were nearly torn to pieces by the cannibal dogs who haunted the Butte de Montfaucon, or place of public execution;—how he acquired, by a long and dangerous process, the only perfect skeleton then in the world, and the hideous story of the robber to whom it had belonged—all these horrors those who list may read for themselves elsewhere. I hasten past them with this remark—that

Page 57

to have gone through the toils, dangers, and disgusts which Vesalius faced, argued in a superstitious and cruel age like his, no common physical and moral courage, and a deep conscience that he was doing right, and must do it at all risks in the face of a generation which, peculiarly reckless of human life and human agony, allowed that frame which it called the image of God to be tortured, maimed, desecrated in every way while alive; and yet—straining at the gnat after having swallowed the camel—forbade it to be examined when dead, though for the purpose of alleviating the miseries of mankind.

The breaking out of war between Francis I. and Charles V. drove Vesalius back to his native country and Louvain; and in 1535 we hear of him as a surgeon in Charles V.'s army. He saw, most probably, the Emperor's invasion of Provence, and the disastrous retreat from before Montmorency's fortified camp at Avignon, through a country in which that crafty general had destroyed every article of human food, except the half-ripe grapes. He saw, perhaps, the Spanish soldiers, poisoned alike by the sour fruit and by the blazing sun, falling in hundreds along the white roads which led back into Savoy, murdered by the peasantry whose homesteads had been destroyed, stifled by the weight of their own armour, or desperately putting themselves, with their own hands, out of a world which had become intolerable. Half the army perished. Two thousand corpses lay festering between Aix and Frejus alone. If young Vesalius needed "subjects," the ambition and the crime of man found enough for him in those blazing September days.

He went to Italy, probably with the remnants of the army. Where could he have rather wished to find himself? He was at last in the country where the human mind seemed to be growing young once more; the country of revived arts, revived sciences, learning, languages; and—though, alas! only for awhile of revived free thought, such as Europe had not seen since the palmy days of Greece. Here at least he would be appreciated; here at least he would be allowed to think and speak: and he was appreciated. The Italian cities, who were then, like the Athenians of old, "spending their time in nothing else save to hear or to tell something new," welcomed the brave young Fleming and his novelties. Within two years he was professor of anatomy at Padua, then the first school in the world; then at Bologna and at Pisa at the same time; last of all at Venice, where Titian painted that portrait of him which remains unto this day.

These years were for him a continual triumph; everywhere, as he demonstrated on the human body, students crowded his theatre, or hung round him as he walked the streets; professors left their own chairs—their scholars having deserted them already—to go and listen humbly or enviously to the man who could give them what all brave souls throughout half Europe were craving for, and craving in vain—facts.

Page 58

And so, year after year, was realised that scene which stands engraved in the frontispiece of his great book—where, in the little quaint Cinquecento theatre, saucy scholars, reverend doctors, gay gentlemen, and even cowled monks, are crowding the floor, peeping over each other's shoulders, hanging on the balustrades; while in the centre, over his "subject"—which one of those same cowled monks knew but too well—stands young Vesalius, upright, proud, almost defiant, as one who knows himself safe in the impregnable citadel of fact; and in his hand the little blade of steel, destined—because wielded in obedience to the laws of nature, which are the laws of God—to work more benefit for the human race than all the swords which were drawn in those days, or perhaps in any other, at the bidding of most Catholic Emperors and most Christian Kings.

Those were indeed days of triumph for Vesalius; of triumph deserved, because earned by patient and accurate toil in a good cause: but Vesalius, being but a mortal man, may have contracted in those same days a temper of imperiousness and self-conceit, such as he showed afterwards when his pupil Fallopius dared to add fresh discoveries to those of his master. And yet, in spite of all Vesalius knew, how little he knew! How humbling to his pride it would have been had he known then—perhaps he does know now—that he had actually again and again walked, as it were, round and round the true theory of the circulation of the blood, and yet never seen it; that that discovery which, once made, is intelligible, as far as any phenomenon is intelligible, to the merest peasant, was reserved for another century, and for one of those Englishmen on whom Vesalius would have looked as semi-barbarians.

To make a long story short: three years after the publication of his famous book, "De Corporis Humani Fabrica," he left Venice to cure Charles V., at Regensburg, and became one of the great Emperor's physicians.

This was the crisis of Vesalius's life. The medicine with which he had worked the cure was China—Sarsaparilla, as we call it now—brought home from the then newly-discovered banks of the Paraguay and Uruguay, where its beds of tangled vine, they say, tinge the clear waters a dark-brown like that of peat, and convert whole streams into a healthful and pleasant tonic. On the virtues of this China (then supposed to be a root) Vesalius wrote a famous little book, into which he contrived to interweave his opinions on things in general, as good Bishop Berkeley did afterwards into his essay on the virtues of tar-water. Into this book, however, Vesalius introduced—as Bishop Berkeley did not—much, and perhaps too much, about himself; and much, though perhaps not too much, about poor old Galen, and his substitution of an ape's inside for that of a human being. The storm which had been long gathering burst upon him. The old school, trembling for their time-honoured reign, bespattered, with all that pedantry, ignorance,

Page 59

and envy could suggest, the man who dared not only to revolutionise surgery, but to interfere with the privileged mysteries of medicine; and, over and above, to become a greater favourite at the court of the greatest of monarchs. While such as Eustachius, himself an able discoverer, could join in the cry, it is no wonder if a lower soul, like that of Sylvius, led it open-mouthed. He was a mean, covetous, bad man, as George Bachanan well knew; and, according to his nature, he wrote a furious book—"Ad Vesani calumnias depulsandas." The punning change of Vesalius into Vesanus (madman) was but a fair and gentle stroke for a polemic, in days in which those who could not kill their enemies with steel or powder, held themselves justified in doing so, if possible, by vituperation, calumny, and every engine of moral torture. But a far more terrible weapon, and one which made Vesalius rage, and it may be for once in his life tremble, was the charge of impiety and heresy. The Inquisition was a very ugly place. It was very easy to get into it, especially for a Netherlander: but not so easy to get out. Indeed Vesalius must have trembled, when he saw his master, Charles V., himself take fright, and actually call on the theologians of Salamanca to decide whether it was lawful to dissect a human body. The monks, to their honour, used their common sense, and answered Yes. The deed was so plainly useful that it must be lawful likewise. But Vesalius did not feel that he had triumphed. He dreaded, possibly, lest the storm should only have blown over for a time. He fell, possibly, into hasty disgust at the folly of mankind, and despair of arousing them to use their common sense, and acknowledge their true interest and their true benefactors. At all events, he threw into the fire—so it is said—all his unpublished manuscripts, the records of long years of observation, and renounced science thenceforth.

We hear of him after this at Brussels, and at Basle likewise—in which latter city, in the company of physicians, naturalists, and Grecians, he must have breathed awhile a freer air. But he seems to have returned thence to his old master Charles V., and to have finally settled at Madrid as a court surgeon to Philip II., who sent him, but too late, to extract the lance splinters from the eye of the dying Henry II.

He was now married to a lady of rank from Brussels, Anne van Hamme by name; and their daughter married in time Philip II.'s grand falconer, who was doubtless a personage of no small social rank. Vesalius was well off in worldly things; somewhat fond, it is said, of good living and of luxury; inclined, it may be, to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and to sink more and more into the mere worldling, unless some shock should awake him from his lethargy.

And the awakening shock did come. After eight years of court life, he resolved, early in the year 1564, to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Page 60

The reasons for so strange a determination are wrapped in mystery and contradiction. The common story was that he had opened a corpse to ascertain the cause of death, and that, to the horror of the bystanders, the heart was still seen to beat; that his enemies accused him to the Inquisition, and that he was condemned to death, a sentence which was commuted to that of going on pilgrimage. But here, at the very outset, accounts differ. One says that the victim was a nobleman, name not given; another that it was a lady's maid, name not given. It is most improbable, if not impossible, that Vesalius, of all men, should have mistaken a living body for a dead one; while it is most probable, on the other hand, that his medical enemies would gladly raise such a calumny against him, when he was no longer in Spain to contradict it. Meanwhile Llorente, the historian of the Inquisition, makes no mention of Vesalius having been brought before its tribunal, while he does mention Vesalius's residence at Madrid. Another story is, that he went abroad to escape the bad temper of his wife; another that he wanted to enrich himself. Another story—and that not an unlikely one—is, that he was jealous of the rising reputation of his pupil Fallopius, then professor of anatomy at Venice. This distinguished surgeon, as I said before, had written a book, in which he added to Vesalius's discoveries, and corrected certain of his errors. Vesalius had answered him hastily and angrily, quoting his anatomy from memory; for, as he himself complained, he could not in Spain obtain a subject for dissection; not even, he said, a single skull. He had sent his book to Venice to be published, and had heard, seemingly, nothing of it. He may have felt that he was falling behind in the race of science, and that it was impossible for him to carry on his studies in Madrid; and so, angry with his own laziness and luxury, he may have felt the old sacred fire flash up in him, and have determined to go to Italy and become a student and a worker once more.

The very day that he set out, Clusius of Arras, then probably the best botanist in the world, arrived at Madrid; and, asking the reason of Vesalius's departure, was told by their fellow-countryman, Charles de Tisnacq, procurator for the affairs of the Netherlands, that Vesalius had gone of his own free will, and with all facilities which Philip could grant him, in performance of a vow which he had made during a dangerous illness. Here, at least, we have a drop of information, which seems taken from the stream sufficiently near to the fountain-head: but it must be recollected that De Tisnacq lived in dangerous times, and may have found it necessary to walk warily in them; that through him had been sent, only the year before, that famous letter from William of Orange, Horn, and Egmont, the fate whereof may be read in Mr. Motley's fourth chapter; that the crisis of the Netherlands which sprung out of that letter was coming fast; and that, as De

Page 61

Tisnacq was on friendly terms with Egmont, he may have felt his head at times somewhat loose on his shoulders; especially if he had heard Alva say, as he wrote, "that every time he saw the despatches of those three senors, they moved his choler so, that if he did not take much care to temper it, he would seem a frenzied man." In such times, De Tisnacq may have thought good to return a diplomatic answer to a fellow-countryman concerning a third fellow-countryman, especially when that countryman, as a former pupil of Melancthon at Wittemberg, might himself be under suspicion of heresy, and therefore of possible treason.

Be this as it may, one cannot but suspect some strain of truth in the story about the Inquisition; for, whether or not Vesalius operated on Don Carlos, he had seen with his own eyes that miraculous Virgin of Atocha at the bed's foot of the prince. He had heard his recovery attributed, not to the operation, but to the intercession of Fray, now Saint Diego; {12} and he must have had his thoughts thereon, and may, in an unguarded moment, have spoken them.

For he was, be it always remembered, a Netherlander. The crisis of his country was just at hand. Rebellion was inevitable, and, with rebellion, horrors unutterable; and, meanwhile, Don Carlos had set his mad brain on having the command of the Netherlands. In his rage, at not having it, as all the world knows, he nearly killed Alva with his own hands, some two years after. If it be true that Don Carlos felt a debt of gratitude to Vesalius, he may (after his wont) have poured out to him some wild confidence about the Netherlands, to have even heard which would be a crime in Philip's eyes. And if this be but a fancy, still Vesalius was, as I just said, a Netherlander, and one of a brain and a spirit to which Philip's doings, and the air of the Spanish court, must have been growing ever more and more intolerable. Hundreds of his country folk, perhaps men and women whom he had known, were being racked, burnt alive, buried alive, at the bidding of a jocular ruffian, Peter Titelmann, the chief inquisitor. The "day of the *maubruez*," and the wholesale massacre which followed it, had happened but two years before; and, by all the signs of the times, these murders and miseries were certain to increase. And why were all these poor wretches suffering the extremity of horror, but because they would not believe in miraculous images, and bones of dead friars, and the rest of that science of unreason and unfact, against which Vesalius had been fighting all his life, consciously or not, by using reason and observing fact? What wonder if, in some burst of noble indignation and just contempt, he forgot a moment that he had sold his soul, and his love of science likewise, to be a luxurious, yet uneasy, hanger-on at the tyrant's court; and spoke unadvisedly some word worthy of a German man?

Page 62

As to the story of his unhappy quarrels with his wife, there may be a grain of truth in it likewise. Vesalius's religion must have sat very lightly on him. The man who had robbed churchyards and gibbets from his youth was not likely to be much afraid of apparitions and demons. He had handled too many human bones to care much for those of saints. He was probably, like his friends of Basle, Montpellier, and Paris, somewhat of a heretic at heart, probably somewhat of a pagan, while his lady, Anne van Hamme, was probably a strict Catholic, as her father, being a councillor and master of the exchequer at Brussels, was bound to be; and freethinking in the husband, crossed by superstition in the wife, may have caused in them that wretched *vie a part*, that want of any true communion of soul, too common to this day in Catholic countries.

Be these things as they may—and the exact truth of them will now be never known—Vesalius set out to Jerusalem in the spring of 1564. On his way he visited his old friends at Venice to see about his book against Fallopius. The Venetian republic received the great philosopher with open arms. Fallopius was just dead; and the senate offered their guest the vacant chair of anatomy. He accepted it: but went on to the East.

He never occupied that chair; wrecked upon the Isle of Zante, as he was sailing back from Palestine, he died miserably of fever and want, as thousands of pilgrims returning from the Holy Land had died before him. A goldsmith recognised him; buried him in a chapel of the Virgin; and put up over him a simple stone, which remained till late years; and may remain, for aught I know, even now.

So perished, in the prime of life, “a martyr to his love of science,” to quote the words of M. Burggraave of Ghent, his able biographer and commentator, “the prodigious man, who created a science at an epoch when everything was still an obstacle to his progress; a man whose whole life was a long struggle of knowledge against ignorance, of truth against lies.”

Plaudite: Exeat: with Rondelet and Buchanan. And whensoever this poor foolish world needs three such men, may God of His great mercy send them.

PARACELSUS {13}

I told you of Vesalius and Rondelet as specimens of the men who three hundred years ago were founding the physical science of the present day, by patient investigation of facts. But such an age as this would naturally produce men of a very different stamp, men who could not imitate their patience and humility; who were trying for royal roads to knowledge, and to the fame and wealth which might be got out of knowledge; who meddled with vain dreams about the occult sciences, alchemy, astrology, magic, the cabala, and so forth, who were reputed magicians, courted and feared for awhile, and then, too often, died sad deaths.

Such had been, in the century before, the famous Dr. Faust—Faustus, who was said to have made a compact with Satan—actually one of the inventors of printing—immortalised in Goethe's marvellous poem.

Page 63

Such, in the first half of the sixteenth century, was Cornelius Agrippa—a doctor of divinity and a knight-at-arms; secret-service diplomatist to the Emperor Maximilian in Austria; astrologer, though unwilling, to his daughter Margaret, Regent of the Low Countries; writer on the occult sciences and of the famous “De Vanitate Scientiarum,” and what not? who died miserably at the age of forty-nine, accused of magic by the Dominican monks from whom he had rescued a poor girl, who they were torturing on a charge of witchcraft; and by them hunted to death; nor to death only, for they spread the fable—such as you may find in Delrio the Jesuit’s “Disquisitiones on Magic” {14}—that his little pet black dog was a familiar spirit, as Butler has it in “Hudibras”:

Agrippa kept a Stygian pug
I’ the garb and habit of a dog—
That was his taste; and the cur
Read to th’ occult philosopher,
And taught him subtly to maintain
All other sciences are vain.

Such also was Jerome Cardan, the Italian scholar and physician, the father of algebraic science (you all recollect Cardan’s rule,) believer in dreams, prognostics, astrology; who died, too, miserably enough, in old age.

Cardan’s sad life, and that of Cornelius Agrippa, you can, and ought to read for yourselves, in two admirable biographies, as amusing as they are learned, by Professor Morley, of the London University. I have not chosen either of them as a subject for this lecture, because Mr. Morley has so exhausted what is to be known about them, that I could tell you nothing which I had not stolen from him.

But what shall I say of the most famous of these men—Paracelsus? whose name you surely know. He too has been immortalised in a poem which you all ought to have read, one of Robert Browning’s earliest and one of his best creations.

I think we must accept as true Mr. Browning’s interpretation of Paracelsus’s character. We must believe that he was at first an honest and high-minded, as he was certainly a most gifted, man; that he went forth into the world, with an intense sense of the worthlessness of the sham knowledge of the pedants and quacks of the schools; an intense belief that some higher and truer science might be discovered, by which diseases might be actually cured, and health, long life, happiness, all but immortality, be conferred on man; an intense belief that he, Paracelsus, was called and chosen by God to find out that great mystery, and be a benefactor to all future ages. That fixed idea might degenerate—did, alas! degenerate—into wild self-conceit, rash contempt of the ancients, violent abuse of his opponents. But there was more than this in Paracelsus. He had one idea to which, if he had kept true, his life would have been a happier one—the firm belief that all pure science was a revelation from God; that it was not to be obtained at second or third hand, by blindly adhering to the words of Galen or

Hippocrates or Aristotle, and putting them (as the scholastic philosophers round him did) in the place of God: but by going straight to nature at first hand, and listening to what Bacon calls “the voice of God revealed in facts.” True and noble is the passage with which he begins his “Labyrinthus Medicorum,” one of his attacks on the false science of his day,

Page 64

"The first and highest book of all healing," he says, "is called wisdom, and without that book no man will carry out anything good or useful . . . And that book is God Himself. For in Him alone who hath created all things, the knowledge and principle of all things dwells . . . without Him all is folly. As the sun shines on us from above, so He must pour into us from above all arts whatsoever. Therefore the root of all learning and cognition is, that we should seek first the kingdom of God—the kingdom of God in which all sciences are founded . . . If any man think that nature is not founded on the kingdom of God, he knows nothing about it. All gifts," he repeats again and again, confused and clumsily (as is his wont), but with a true earnestness, "are from God."

The true man of science, with Paracelsus, is he who seeks first the kingdom of God in facts, investigating nature reverently, patiently, in faith believing that God, who understands His own work best, will make him understand it likewise. The false man of science is he who seeks the kingdom of this world, who cares nothing about the real interpretation of facts: but is content with such an interpretation as will earn him the good things of this world—the red hat and gown, the ambling mule, the silk clothes, the partridges, capons, and pheasants, the gold florins chinking in his palm. At such pretenders Paracelsus sneered, at last only too fiercely, not only as men whose knowledge consisted chiefly in wearing white gloves, but as rogues, liars, villains, and every epithet which his very racy vocabulary, quickened (it is to be feared) by wine and laudanum, could suggest. With these he contrasts the true men of science. It is difficult for us now to understand how a man setting out in life with such pure and noble views should descend at last (if indeed he did descend) to be a quack and a conjuror—and die under the imputation that

Bombastes kept a devil's bird
Hid in the pommel of his sword,

and have, indeed, his very name, Bombast, used to this day as a synonym of loud, violent, and empty talk. To understand it at all, we must go back and think a little over these same occult sciences which were believed in by thousands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The reverence for classic antiquity, you must understand, which sprang up at the renaissance in the fifteenth century, was as indiscriminating as it was earnest. Men caught the trash as well as the jewels. They put the dreams of the Neoplatonists, Iamblicus, Porphyry, or Plotinus, or Proclus, on the same level as the sound dialectic philosophy of Plato himself. And these Neoplatonists were all, more or less, believers in magic—Theurgy, as it was called—in the power of charms and spells, in the occult virtues of herbs and gems, in the power of adepts to evoke and command spirits, in the significance of dreams, in the influence of the stars upon men's characters and destinies. If the great and wise philosopher Iamblicus believed such things, why might not the men of the sixteenth century?

Page 65

And so grew up again in Europe a passion for what were called the Occult sciences. It had always been haunting the European imagination. Mediaeval monks had long ago transformed the poet Virgil into a great necromancer. And there were immense excuses for such a belief. There was a mass of collateral evidence that the occult sciences were true, which it was impossible then to resist. Races far more ancient, learned, civilised, than any Frenchman, German, Englishman, or even Italian, in the fifteenth century had believed in these things. The Moors, the best physicians of the Middle Ages, had their heads full, as the “Arabian Nights” prove, of enchanters, genii, peris, and what not? The Jewish rabbis had their Cabala, which sprang up in Alexandria, a system of philosophy founded on the mystic meaning of the words and the actual letters of the text of Scripture, which some said was given by the angel Ragiel to Adam in Paradise, by which Adam talked with angels, the sun and moon, summoned spirits, interpreted dreams, healed and destroyed; and by that book of Ragiel, as it was called, Solomon became the great magician and master of all the spirits and their hoarded treasures.

So strong, indeed, was the belief in the mysteries of the Cabala, that Reuchlin, the restorer of Hebrew learning in Germany, and Pico di Mirandola, the greatest of Italian savants, accepted them; and not only Pope Leo X. himself, but even statesmen and warriors received with delight Reuchlin’s cabalistic treatise, “De Verbo Mirifico,” on the mystic word “Schemhamphorash”—that hidden name of God, which whosoever can pronounce aright is, for the moment, lord of nature and of all daemons.

Amulets, too, and talismans; the faith in them was exceeding ancient. Solomon had his seal, by which he commanded all daemons; and there is a whole literature of curious nonsense, which you may read if you will, about the Abraxas and other talismans of the Gnostics in Syria; and another, of the secret virtues which were supposed to reside in gems: especially in the old Roman and Greek gems, carved into intaglios with figures of heathen gods and goddesses. Lapidaria, or lists of these gems and their magical virtues, were not uncommon in the Middle Ages. You may read a great deal that is interesting about them at the end of Mr. King’s book on gems.

Astrology too; though Pico di Mirandola might set himself against the rest of the world, few were found daring enough to deny so ancient a science. Luther and Melancthon merely followed the regular tradition of public opinion when they admitted its truth. It sprang probably from the worship of the Seven Planets by the old Chaldees. It was brought back from Babylon by the Jews after the Captivity, and spread over all Europe—perhaps all Asia likewise.

The rich and mighty of the earth must needs have their nativities cast, and consult the stars; and Cornelius Agrippa gave mortal offence to the Queen-Dowager of France (mother of Francis I.) because, when she compelled him to consult the stars about Francis’s chance of getting out of his captivity in Spain after the battle of Pavia, he wrote and spoke his mind honestly about such nonsense.

Page 66

Even Newton seems to have hankered after it when young. Among his MSS. in Lord Portsmouth's library at Hurstbourne are whole folios of astrologic calculations. It went on till the end of the seventeenth century, and died out only when men had begun to test it, and all other occult sciences, by experience, and induction founded thereon.

Countless students busied themselves over the transmutation of metals. As for magic, necromancy, pyromancy, geomancy, coscinomancy, and all the other mancies—there was then a whole literature about them. And the witch-burning inquisitors like Sprenger, Bodin, Delrio, and the rest, believed as firmly in the magic powers of the poor wretches whom they tortured to death, as did, in many cases, the poor wretches themselves.

Everyone, almost, believed in magic. Take two cases. Read the story which Benvenuto Cellini, the sculptor, tells in his life (everyone should read it) of the magician whom he consults in the Coliseum at Rome, and the figure which he sees as he walks back with the magician, jumping from roof to roof along the tiles of the houses.

And listen to this story, which Mr. Froude has dug up in his researches. A Church commissioner at Oxford, at the beginning of the Reformation, being unable to track an escaped heretic, "caused a figure to be made by an expert in astronomy;" by which it was discovered that the poor wretch had fled in a tawny coat and was making for the sea. Conceive the respected head of your College—or whoever he may be—in case you slept out all night without leave, going to a witch to discover whether you had gone to London or to Huntingdon, and then writing solemnly to inform the Bishop of Ely of his meritorious exertions!

In such a mad world as this was Paracelsus born. The son of a Swiss physician, but of noble blood, Philip Aureolus Theophrastus was his Christian name, Bombast von Hohenheim his surname, which last word he turned, after the fashion of the times, into Paracelsus. Born in 1493 at Einsiedeln (the hermitage), in Schweiz, which is still a famous place of pilgrimage, he was often called Eremita—the hermit. Erasmus, in a letter still extant, but suspected not to be genuine, addressed him by that name.

How he passed the first thirty-three years of his life it is hard to say. He used to boast that he had wandered over all Europe, been in Sweden, Italy, in Constantinople, and perhaps in the far East, with barber-surgeons, alchemists, magicians, haunting mines, and forges of Sweden and Bohemia, especially those which the rich merchants of that day had in the Tyrol.

Page 67

It was from that work, he said, that he learnt what he knew: from the study of nature and of facts. He had heard all the learned doctors and professors; he had read all their books, and they could teach him nothing. Medicine was his monarch, and no one else. He declared that there was more wisdom under his bald pate than in Aristotle and Galen, Hippocrates and Rhasis. And fact seemed to be on his side. He reappeared in Germany about 1525, and began working wondrous cures. He had brought back with him from the East an arcanum, a secret remedy, and laudanum was its name. He boasted, says one of his enemies, that he could raise the dead to life with it; and so the event all but proved. Basle was then the university where free thought and free creeds found their safest home; and hither OEcolampadius the reformer invited young Paracelsus to lecture on medicine and natural science.

It would have been well for him, perhaps, had he never opened his lips. He might have done good enough to his fellow-creatures by his own undoubted powers of healing. He cured John Frobenius, the printer, Erasmus's friend, at Basle, when the doctors were going to cut his leg off. His fame spread far and wide. Round Basle and away into Alsace he was looked on, even an enemy says, as a new AEsculapius.

But these were days in which in a university everyone was expected to talk and teach, and so Paracelsus began lecturing; and then the weakness which was mingled with his strength showed itself. He began by burning openly the books of Galen and Avicenna, and declared that all the old knowledge was useless. Doctors and students alike must begin over again with him. The dons were horrified. To burn Galen and Avicenna was as bad as burning the Bible. And more horrified still were they when Paracelsus began lecturing, not in the time-honoured dog-Latin, but in good racy German, which everyone could understand. They shuddered under their red gowns and hats. If science was to be taught in German, farewell to the Galenists' formulas, and their lucrative monopoly of learning. Paracelsus was bold enough to say that he wished to break up their monopoly; to spread a popular knowledge of medicine. "How much," he wrote once, "would I endure and suffer, to see every man his own shepherd—his own healer." He laughed to scorn their long prescriptions, used the simplest drugs, and declared Nature, after all, to be the best physician—as a dog, he says, licks his wound well again without our help; or as the broken rib of the ox heals of its own accord.

Such a man was not to be endured. They hated him, he says, for the same reason that they hated Luther, for the same reason that the Pharisees hated Christ. He met their attacks with scorn, rage, and language as coarse and violent as their own. The coarseness and violence of those days seem incredible to us now; and, indeed, Paracelsus, as he confessed himself, was, though of gentle blood, rough and unpolished; and utterly, as one can see from his writings, unable to give and take, to conciliate—perhaps to pardon. He looked impatiently on these men who were (not unreasonably) opposing novelties which they could not understand, as enemies of God, who were balking him in his grand plan for regenerating science and alleviating the woes of humanity, and he outraged their prejudices instead of soothing them.

Page 68

Soon they had their revenge. Ugly stories were whispered about. Oporinus, the printer, who had lived with him for two years, and who left him, it is said, because he thought Paracelsus concealed from him unfairly the secret of making laudanum, told how Paracelsus was neither more nor less than a sot, who came drunk to his lectures, used to prime himself with wine before going to his patients, and sat all night in pothouses swilling with the boors.

Men looked coldly on him—longed to be rid of him. And they soon found an opportunity. He took in hand some Canon of the city from whom it was settled beforehand that he was to receive a hundred florins. The priest found himself cured so suddenly and easily that, by a strange logic, he refused to pay the money, and went to the magistrates. They supported him, and compelled Paracelsus to take six florins instead of the hundred. He spoke his mind fiercely to them. I believe, according to one story, he drew his long sword on the Canon. His best friends told him he must leave the place; and within two years, seemingly, after his first triumph at Basle, he fled from it a wanderer and a beggar.

The rest of his life is a blank. He is said to have recommenced his old wanderings about Europe, studying the diseases of every country, and writing his books, which were none of them published till after his death. His enemies joyfully trampled on the fallen man. He was a “dull rustic, a monster, an atheist, a quack, a maker of gold, a magician.” When he was drunk, one Wetter, his servant, told Erastus (one of his enemies) that he used to offer to call up legions of devils to prove his skill, while Wetter, in abject terror of his spells, entreated him to leave the fiends alone—that he had sent his book by a fiend to the spirit of Galen in hell, and challenged him to say which was the better system, his or Paracelsus’, and what not?

His books were forbidden to be printed. He himself was refused a hearing, and it was not till after ten years of wandering that he found rest and protection in a little village of Carinthia.

Three years afterwards he died in the hospital of St. Sebastian at Salzburg, in the Tyrol. His death was the signal for empirics and visionaries to foist on the public book after book on occult philosophy, written in his name—of which you may see ten folios—not more than a quarter, I believe, genuine. And these foolish books, as much as anything, have helped to keep up the popular prejudice against one who, in spite of all his faults was a true pioneer of science. {15} I believe (with those moderns who have tried to do him justice) that under all his verbiage and confusion there was a vein of sound scientific, experimental common sense.

When he talks of astronomy as necessary to be known by a physician, it seems to me that he laughs at astrology, properly so called; that is, that the stars influence the character and destiny of man. Mars, he says, did not make Nero cruel. There would have been long-lived men in the world if Saturn had never ascended the skies; and

Helen would have been a wanton, though Venus had never been created. But he does believe that the heavenly bodies, and the whole skies, have a physical influence on climate, and on the health of men.

Page 69

He talks of alchemy, but he means by it, I think, only that sound science which we call chemistry, and at which he worked, wandering, he says, among mines and forges, as a practical metallurgist.

He tells us—what sounds startling enough—that magic is the only preceptor which can teach the art of healing; but he means, it seems to me, only an understanding of the invisible processes of nature, in which sense an electrician or a biologist, a Faraday or a Darwin, would be a magician; and when he compares medical magic to the Cabalistic science, of which I spoke just now (and in which he seems to have believed), he only means, I think, that as the Cabala discovers hidden meaning and virtues in the text of Scripture, so ought the man of science to find them in the book of nature. But this kind of talk, wrapt up too in the most confused style, or rather no style at all, is quite enough to account for ignorant and envious people accusing him of magic, saying that he had discovered the philosopher's stone, and the secret of Hermes Trismegistus; that he must make gold, because, though he squandered all his money, he had always money in hand; and that he kept a “devil's-bird,” a familiar spirit, in the pommel of that famous long sword of his, which he was only too ready to lug out on provocation—the said spirit, Agoth by name, being probably only the laudanum bottle with which he worked so many wondrous cures, and of which, to judge from his writings, he took only too freely himself.

But the charm of Paracelsus is in his humour, his mother-wit. He was blamed for consorting with boors in pot-houses; blamed for writing in racy German, instead of bad school-Latin: but you can hardly read a chapter, either of his German or his dog-Latin, without finding many a good thing—witty and weighty, though often not a little coarse. He talks in parables. He draws illustrations, like Socrates of old, from the commonest and the oddest matters to enforce the weightiest truths. “Fortune and misfortune,” he says, for instance nobly enough, “are not like snow and wind, they must be deduced and known from the secrets of nature. Therefore misfortune is ignorance, fortune is knowledge. The man who walks out in the rain is not unfortunate if he gets a ducking.”

“Nature,” he says again, “makes the text, and the medical man adds the gloss; but the two fit each other no better than a dog does a bath;” and again, when he is arguing against the doctors who hated chemistry—“Who hates a thing which has hurt nobody? Will you complain of a dog for biting you, if you lay hold of his tail? Does the emperor send the thief to the gallows, or the thing which he has stolen? The thief, I think. Therefore science should not be despised on account of some who know nothing about it.” You will say the reasoning is not very clear, and indeed the passage, like too many more, smacks strongly of wine and laudanum. But such is his quaint racy style. As humorous a man, it seems to me, as you shall meet with for many a day; and where there is humour there is pretty sure to be imagination, tenderness, and depth of heart.

Page 70

As for his notions of what a man of science should be, the servant of God, and of Nature—which is the work of God—using his powers not for money, not for ambition, but in love and charity, as he says, for the good of his fellow-man—on that matter Paracelsus is always noble. All that Mr. Browning has conceived on that point, all the noble speeches which he has put into Paracelsus's mouth, are true to his writings. How can they be otherwise, if Mr. Browning set them forth—a genius as accurate and penetrating as he is wise and pure?

But was Paracelsus a drunkard after all?

Gentlemen, what concern is that of yours or mine? I have gone into the question, as Mr. Browning did, cannot say, and don't care to say.

Oporinus, who slandered him so cruelly, recanted when Paracelsus was dead, and sang his praises—too late. But I do not read that he recanted the charge of drunkenness. His defenders allow it, only saying that it was the fault not of him alone, but of all Germans. But if so, why was he specially blamed for what certainly others did likewise? I cannot but fear from his writings, as well as from common report, that there was something wrong with the man. I say only something. Against his purity there never was a breath of suspicion. He was said to care nothing for women; and even that was made the subject of brutal jests and lies. But it may have been that, worn out with toil and poverty, he found comfort in that laudanum which he believed to be the arcanum—the very elixir of life; that he got more and more into the habit of exciting his imagination with the narcotic, and then, it may be, when the fit of depression followed, he strung his nerves up again by wine. It may have been so. We have had, in the last generation, an exactly similar case in a philosopher, now I trust in heaven, and to whose genius I owe too much to mention his name here.

But that Paracelsus was a sot I cannot believe. That face of his, as painted by the great Tintoretto, is not the face of a drunkard, quack, bully, but of such a man as Browning has conceived. The great globular brain, the sharp delicate chin, is not that of a sot. Nor are those eyes, which gleam out from under the deep compressed brow, wild, intense, hungry, homeless, defiant, and yet complaining, the eyes of a sot—but rather the eyes of a man who struggles to tell a great secret, and cannot find words for it, and yet wonders why men cannot understand, will not believe what seems to him as clear as day—a tragical face, as you well can see.

God keep us all from making our lives a tragedy by one great sin. And now let us end this sad story with the last words which Mr. Browning puts into the mouth of Paracelsus, dying in the hospital at Salzburg, which have come literally true:

Page 71

Meanwhile, I have done well though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt;
'Tis for their good; and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true in me:
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time. I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom. I shall emerge one day.

GEORGE BUCHANAN, SCHOLAR

The scholar, in the sixteenth century, was a far more important personage than now. The supply of learned men was very small, the demand for them very great. During the whole of the fifteenth, and a great part of the sixteenth century, the human mind turned more and more from the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages to that of the Romans and the Greeks; and found more and more in old Pagan Art an element which Monastic Art had not, and which was yet necessary for the full satisfaction of their craving after the Beautiful. At such a crisis of thought and taste, it was natural that the classical scholar, the man who knew old Rome, and still more old Greece, should usurp the place of the monk, as teacher of mankind; and that scholars should form, for a while, a new and powerful aristocracy, limited and privileged, and all the more redoubtable, because its power lay in intellect, and had been won by intellect alone.

Those who, whether poor or rich, did not fear the monk and priest, at least feared the "scholar," who held, so the vulgar believed, the keys of that magic lore by which the old necromancers had built cities like Rome, and worked marvels of mechanical and chemical skill, which the degenerate modern could never equal.

If the "scholar" stopped in a town, his hostess probably begged of him a charm against toothache or rheumatism. The penniless knight discoursed with him on alchemy, and the chances of retrieving his fortune by the art of transmuting metals into gold. The queen or bishop worried him in private about casting their nativities, and finding their fates among the stars. But the statesman, who dealt with more practical matters, hired him as an advocate and rhetorician, who could fight his master's enemies with the weapons of Demosthenes and Cicero. Wherever the scholar's steps were turned, he might be master of others, as long as he was master of himself. The complaints which he so often uttered concerning the cruelty of fortune, the fickleness of princes and so forth, were probably no more just then than such complaints are now. Then, as now, he got his deserts; and the world bought him at his own price. If he chose to sell himself to this patron and to that, he was used and thrown away: if he chose to remain in honourable independence, he was courted and feared.

Page 72

Among the successful scholars of the sixteenth century, none surely is more notable than George Buchanan. The poor Scotch widow's son, by force of native wit, and, as I think, by force of native worth, fights his way upward, through poverty and severest persecution, to become the correspondent and friend of the greatest literary celebrities of the Continent, comparable, in their opinion, to the best Latin poets of antiquity; the preceptor of princes; the counsellor and spokesman of Scotch statesmen in the most dangerous of times; and leaves behind him political treatises, which have influenced not only the history of his own country, but that of the civilised world.

Such a success could not be attained without making enemies, perhaps without making mistakes. But the more we study George Buchanan's history, the less we shall be inclined to hunt out his failings, the more inclined to admire his worth. A shrewd, sound-hearted, affectionate man, with a strong love of right and scorn of wrong, and a humour withal which saved him—except on really great occasions—from bitterness, and helped him to laugh where narrower natures would have only snarled,—he is, in many respects, a type of those Lowland Scots, who long preserved his jokes, genuine or reputed, as a common household book. {16} A schoolmaster by profession, and struggling for long years amid the temptations which, in those days, degraded his class into cruel and sordid pedants, he rose from the mere pedagogue to be, in the best sense of the word, a courtier: "One," says Daniel Heinsius, "who seemed not only born for a court, but born to amend it. He brought to his queen that at which she could not wonder enough. For, by affecting a certain liberty in censuring morals, he avoided all offence, under the cloak of simplicity." Of him and his compeers, Turnebus, and Muretus, and their friend Andrea Govea, Ronsard, the French court poet, said that they had nothing of the pedagogue about them but the gown and cap. "Austere in face, and rustic in his looks," says David Buchanan, "but most polished in style and speech; and continually, even in serious conversation, jesting most wittily." "Rough-hewn, slovenly, and rude," says Peacham, in his "Compleat Gentleman," speaking of him, probably, as he appeared in old age, "in his person, behaviour, and fashion; seldom caring for a better outside than a rugge-gown girt close about him: yet his inside and conceipt in poesie was most rich, and his sweetness and facilitie in verse most excellent." A typical Lowland Scot, as I said just now, he seems to have absorbed all the best culture which France could afford him, without losing the strength, honesty, and humour which he inherited from his Stirlingshire kindred.

Page 73

The story of his life is easily traced. When an old man, he himself wrote down the main events of it, at the request of his friends; and his sketch has been filled out by commentators, if not always favourable, at least erudite. Born in 1506, at the Moss, in Killearn—where an obelisk to his memory, so one reads, has been erected in this century—of a family “rather ancient than rich,” his father dead in the prime of manhood, his grandfather a spendthrift, he and his seven brothers and sisters were brought up by a widowed mother, Agnes Heriot—of whom one wishes to know more; for the rule that great sons have great mothers probably holds good in her case. George gave signs, while at the village school, of future scholarship; and when he was only fourteen, his uncle James sent him to the University of Paris. Those were hard times; and the youths, or rather boys, who meant to become scholars, had a cruel life of it, cast desperately out on the wide world to beg and starve, either into self-restraint and success, or into ruin of body and soul. And a cruel life George had. Within two years he was down in a severe illness, his uncle dead, his supplies stopped; and the boy of sixteen got home, he does not tell how. Then he tried soldiering; and was with Albany’s French Auxiliaries at the ineffectual attack on Wark Castle. Marching back through deep snow, he got a fresh illness, which kept him in bed all winter. Then he and his brother were sent to St. Andrews, where he got his B.A. at nineteen. The next summer he went to France once more; and “fell,” he says, “into the flames of the Lutheran sect, which was then spreading far and wide.” Two years of penury followed; and then three years of school-mastering in the College of St. Barbe, which he has immortalised—at least, for the few who care to read modern Latin poetry—in his elegy on “The Miseries of a Parisian Teacher of the Humanities.” The wretched regent-master, pale and suffering, sits up all night preparing his lecture, biting his nails and thumping his desk; and falls asleep for a few minutes, to start up at the sound of the four-o’clock bell, and be in school by five, his Virgil in one hand, and his rod in the other, trying to do work on his own account at old manuscripts, and bawling all the while at his wretched boys, who cheat him, and pay each other to answer to truants’ names. The class is all wrong. “One is barefoot, another’s shoe is burst, another cries, another writes home. Then comes the rod, the sound of blows, and howls; and the day passes in tears.” “Then mass, then another lesson, then more blows; there is hardly time to eat.” I have no space to finish the picture of the stupid misery which, Buchanan says, was ruining his intellect, while it starved his body. However, happier days came. Gilbert Kennedy, Earl of Cassilis, who seems to have been a noble young gentleman, took him as his tutor for the next five years; and with him he went back to Scotland.

Page 74

But there his plain speaking got him, as it did more than once afterward, into trouble. He took it into his head to write, in imitation of Dunbar, a Latin poem, in which St. Francis asks him in a dream to become a Gray Friar, and Buchanan answered in language which had the unpleasant fault of being too clever, and—to judge from contemporary evidence—only too true. The friars said nothing at first; but when King James made Buchanan tutor to one of his natural sons, they, “men professing meekness, took the matter somewhat more angrily than befitted men so pious in the opinion of the people.” So Buchanan himself puts it: but, to do the poor friars justice, they must have been angels, not men, if they did not writhe somewhat under the scourge which he had laid on them. To be told that there was hardly a place in heaven for monks, was hard to hear and bear. They accused him to the king of heresy; but not being then in favour with James, they got no answer, and Buchanan was commanded to repeat the castigation. Having found out that the friars were not to be touched with impunity, he wrote, he says, a short and ambiguous poem. But the king, who loved a joke, demanded something sharp and stinging, and Buchanan obeyed by writing, but not publishing, “The Franciscans,” a long satire, compared to which the “Somnium” was bland and merciful. The storm rose. Cardinal Beaten, Buchanan says, wanted to buy him of the king, and then, of course, burn him, as he had just burnt five poor souls; so, knowing James’s avarice, he fled to England, through freebooters and pestilence.

There he found, he says, “men of both factions being burned on the same day and in the same fire”—a pardonable exaggeration—“by Henry VIII., in his old age more intent on his own safety than on the purity of religion.” So to his beloved France he went again, to find his enemy Beaten ambassador at Paris. The capital was too hot to hold him; and he fled south to Bordeaux, to Andrea Govea, the Portuguese principal of the College of Guienne. As Professor of Latin at Bordeaux, we find him presenting a Latin poem to Charles V.; and indulging that fancy of his for Latin poetry which seems to us nowadays a childish pedantry, which was then—when Latin was the vernacular tongue of all scholars—a serious, if not altogether a useful, pursuit. Of his tragedies, so famous in their day—the “Baptist,” the “Medea,” the “Jephtha,” and the “Alcestis”—there is neither space nor need to speak here, save to notice the bold declamations in the “Baptist” against tyranny and priestcraft; and to notice also that these tragedies gained for the poor Scotsman, in the eyes of the best scholars of Europe, a credit amounting almost to veneration. When he returned to Paris, he found occupation at once; and, as his Scots biographers love to record, “three of the most learned men in the world taught humanity in the same college,” viz. Turnebus, Muretus, and Buchanan.

Page 75

Then followed a strange episode in his life. A university had been founded at Coimbra, in Portugal, and Andrea Govea had been invited to bring thither what French savants he could collect. Buchanan went to Portugal with his brother Patrick, two more Scotsmen, Dempster and Ramsay, and a goodly company of French scholars, whose names and histories may be read in the erudite pages of Dr. Irving, went likewise. All prospered in the new Temple of the Muses for a year or so. Then its high-priest, Govea, died; and, by a peripeteia too common in those days and countries, Buchanan and two of his friends migrated unwillingly from the Temple of the Muses for that of Moloch, and found themselves in the Inquisition.

Buchanan, it seems, had said that St. Augustine was more of a Lutheran than a Catholic on the question of the mass. He and his friends had eaten flesh in Lent; which, he says, almost everyone in Spain did. But he was suspected, and with reason, as a heretic; the Gray Friars formed but one brotherhood throughout Europe; and news among them travelled surely if not fast, so that the story of the satire written in Scotland had reached Portugal. The culprits were imprisoned, examined, bullied—but not tortured—for a year and a half. At the end of that time, the proofs of heresy, it seems, were insufficient; but lest, says Buchanan with honest pride, “they should get the reputation of having vainly tormented a man not altogether unknown,” they sent him for some months to a monastery, to be instructed by the monks. “The men,” he says, “were neither inhuman nor bad, but utterly ignorant of religion;” and Buchanan solaced himself during the intervals of their instructions, by beginning his Latin translation of the Psalms.

At last he got free, and begged leave to return to France; but in vain. And so, wearied out, he got on board a Candian ship at Lisbon, and escaped to England. But England, he says, during the anarchy of Edward VI.’s reign, was not a land which suited him; and he returned to France, to fulfil the hopes which he had expressed in his charming “*Desiderium Lutitiae*,” and the still more charming, because more simple, “*Adventus in Galliam*,” in which he bids farewell, in most melodious verse, to “the hungry moors of wretched Portugal, and her clods fertile in naught but penury.”

Some seven years succeeded of schoolmastering and verse-writing: the Latin paraphrase of the Psalms; another of the “*Alcestis*” of Euripides; an Epithalamium on the marriage of poor Mary Stuart, noble and sincere, however fantastic and pedantic, after the manner of the times; “*Pomps*,” too, for her wedding, and for other public ceremonies, in which all the heathen gods and goddesses figure; epigrams, panegyrics, satires, much of which latter productions he would have consigned to the dust-heap in his old age, had not his too fond friends persuaded him to republish the follies and coarsenesses of his youth. He was now one of the most famous scholars in Europe, and the intimate friend of all the great literary men. Was he to go on to the end, die, and no more? Was he to sink into the mere pedant; or, if he could not do that, into the mere court versifier?

Page 76

The wars of religion saved him, as they saved many another noble soul, from that degradation. The events of 1560-62 forced Buchanan, as they forced many a learned man besides, to choose whether he would be a child of light or a child of darkness; whether he would be a dilettante classicist, or a preacher—it might be a martyr—of the Gospel. Buchanan may have left France in “The Troubles” merely to enjoy in his own country elegant and learned repose. He may have fancied that he had found it, when he saw himself, in spite of his public profession of adherence to the Reformed Kirk, reading Livy every afternoon with his exquisite young sovereign; master, by her favour, of the temporalities of Crossraguel Abbey, and by the favour of Murray, Principal of St. Leonard’s College in St. Andrew’s. Perhaps he fancied at times that “to-morrow was to be as to-day, and much more abundant;” that thenceforth he might read his folio, and write his epigram, and joke his joke, as a lazy comfortable pluralist, taking his morning stroll out to the corner where poor Wishart had been burned, above the blue sea and the yellow sands, and looking up to the castle tower from whence his enemy Beaton’s corpse had been hung out; with the comfortable reflection that quieter times had come, and that whatever evil deeds Archbishop Hamilton might dare, he would not dare to put the Principal of St. Leonard’s into the “bottle dungeon.”

If such hopes ever crossed Geordie’s keen fancy, they were disappointed suddenly and fearfully. The fire which had been kindled in France was to reach to Scotland likewise. “Revolutions are not made with rose-water;” and the time was at hand when all good spirits in Scotland, and George Buchanan among them, had to choose, once and for all, amid danger, confusion, terror, whether they would serve God or Mammon; for to serve both would be soon impossible.

Which side, in that war of light and darkness, George Buchanan took, is notorious. He saw then, as others have seen since, that the two men in Scotland who were capable of being her captains in the strife were Knox and Murray; and to them he gave in his allegiance heart and soul.

This is the critical epoch in Buchanan’s life. By his conduct to Queen Mary he must stand or fall. It is my belief that he will stand. It is not my intention to enter into the details of a matter so painful, so shocking, so prodigious; and now that that question is finally set at rest, by the writings both of Mr. Froude and Mr. Burton, there is no need to allude to it further, save where Buchanan’s name is concerned. One may now have every sympathy with Mary Stuart; one may regard with awe a figure so stately, so tragic, in one sense so heroic,—for she reminds one rather of the heroine of an old Greek tragedy, swept to her doom by some irresistible fate, than of a being of our own flesh and blood, and of our modern and Christian times. One may sympathise with the great womanhood which charmed so many while

Page 77

she was alive; which has charmed, in later years, so many noble spirits who have believed in her innocence, and have doubtless been elevated and purified by their devotion to one who seemed to them an ideal being. So far from regarding her as a hateful personage, one may feel oneself forbidden to hate a woman whom God may have loved, and may have pardoned, to judge from the punishment so swift, and yet so enduring, which He inflicted. At least, he must so believe who holds that punishment is a sign of mercy; that the most dreadful of all dooms is impunity. Nay, more, those "Casket" letters and sonnets may be a relief to the mind of one who believes in her guilt on other grounds; a relief when one finds in them a tenderness, a sweetness, a delicacy, a magnificent self-sacrifice, however hideously misplaced, which shows what a womanly heart was there; a heart which, joined to that queenly brain, might have made her a blessing and a glory to Scotland, had not the whole character been warped and ruinated from childhood, by an education so abominable, that anyone who knows what words she must have heard, what scenes she must have beheld in France, from her youth up, will wonder that she sinned so little: not that she sinned so much. One may feel, in a word, that there is every excuse for those who have asserted Mary's innocence, because their own high-mindedness shrank from believing her guilty: but yet Buchanan, in his own place and time, may have felt as deeply that he could do no otherwise than he did.

The charges against him, as all readers of Scotch literature know well, may be reduced to two heads. 1st. The letters and sonnets were forgeries. Maitland of Lethington may have forged the letters; Buchanan, according to some, the sonnets. Whoever forged them, Buchanan made use of them in his Detection, knowing them to be forged. 2nd. Whether Mary was innocent or not, Buchanan acted a base and ungrateful part in putting himself in the forefront amongst her accusers. He had been her tutor, her pensioner. She had heaped him with favours; and, after all, she was his queen, and a defenceless woman: and yet he returned her kindness, in the hour of her fall, by invectives fit only for a rancorous and reckless advocate, determined to force a verdict by the basest arts of oratory.

Now as to the Casket letters. I should have thought they bore in themselves the best evidence of being genuine. I can add nothing to the arguments of Mr. Froude and Mr. Burton, save this: that no one clever enough to be a forger would have put together documents so incoherent, and so incomplete. For the evidence of guilt which they contain is, after all, slight and indirect, and, moreover, superfluous altogether; seeing that Mary's guilt was open and palpable, before the supposed discovery of the letters, to every person at home and abroad who had any knowledge of the facts. As for the alleged inconsistency of the letters with proven facts:

Page 78

the answer is, that whosoever wrote the letters would be more likely to know facts which were taking place around them than any critic could be one hundred or three hundred years afterwards. But if these mistakes as to facts actually exist in them, they are only a fresh argument for their authenticity. Mary, writing in agony and confusion, might easily make a mistake: forgers would only take too good care to make none.

But the strongest evidence in favour of the letters and sonnets, in spite of the arguments of good Dr. Whittaker and other apologists for Mary, is to be found in their tone. A forger in those coarse days would have made Mary write in some Semiramis or Roxana vein, utterly alien to the tenderness, the delicacy, the pitiful confusion of mind, the conscious weakness, the imploring and most feminine trust which makes the letters, to those who—as I do—believe in them, more pathetic than any fictitious sorrows which poets could invent. More than one touch, indeed, of utter self-abasement, in the second letter, is so unexpected, so subtle, and yet so true to the heart of woman, that—as has been well said—if it was invented there must have existed in Scotland an earlier Shakespeare; who yet has died without leaving any other sign, for good or evil, of his dramatic genius.

As for the theory (totally unsupported) that Buchanan forged the poem usually called the “Sonnets;” it is paying old Geordie’s genius, however versatile it may have been, too high a compliment to believe that he could have written both them and the Detection; while it is paying his shrewdness too low a compliment to believe that he could have put into them, out of mere carelessness or stupidity, the well-known line, which seems incompatible with the theory both of the letters and of his own Detection; and which has ere now been brought forward as a fresh proof of Mary’s innocence.

And, as with the letters, so with the sonnets: their delicacy, their grace, their reticence, are so many arguments against their having been forged by any Scot of the sixteenth century, and least of all by one in whose character—whatever his other virtues may have been—delicacy was by no means the strongest point.

As for the complaint that Buchanan was ungrateful to Mary, it must be said: That even if she, and not Murray, had bestowed on him the temporalities of Crossraguel Abbey four years before, it was merely fair pay for services fairly rendered; and I am not aware that payment, or even favours, however gracious, bind any man’s soul and conscience in questions of highest morality and highest public importance. And the importance of that question cannot be exaggerated. At a moment when Scotland seemed struggling in death-throes of anarchy, civil and religious, and was in danger of becoming a prey either to England or to France, if there could not be formed out of the heart of her a people, steadfast, trusty, united, strong politically

Page 79

because strong in the fear of God and the desire of righteousness—at such a moment as this, a crime had been committed, the like of which had not been heard in Europe since the tragedy of Joan of Naples. All Europe stood aghast. The honour of the Scottish nation was at stake. More than Mary or Bothwell were known to be implicated in the deed; and—as Buchanan puts it in the opening of his “De Jure Regni”—“The fault of some few was charged upon all; and the common hatred of a particular person did redound to the whole nation; so that even such as were remote from any suspicion were inflamed by the infamy of men’s crimes.” {17}

To vindicate the national honour, and to punish the guilty, as well as to save themselves from utter anarchy, the great majority of the Scotch nation had taken measures against Mary which required explicit justification in the sight of Europe, as Buchanan frankly confesses in the opening of his “De Jure Regni.” The chief authors of those measures had been summoned, perhaps unwisely and unjustly, to answer for their conduct to the Queen of England. Queen Elizabeth—a fact which was notorious enough then, though it has been forgotten till the last few years—was doing her utmost to shield Mary. Buchanan was deputed, it seems, to speak out for the people of Scotland; and certainly never people had an abler apologist. If he spoke fiercely, savagely, it must be remembered that he spoke of a fierce and savage matter; if he used—and it may be abused—all the arts of oratory, it must be remembered that he was fighting for the honour, and it may be for the national life, of his country, and striking—as men in such cases have a right to strike—as hard as he could. If he makes no secret of his indignation, and even contempt, it must be remembered that indignation and contempt may well have been real with him, while they were real with the soundest part of his countrymen; with that reforming middle class, comparatively untainted by French profligacy, comparatively undebauched by feudal subservience, which has been the leaven which has leavened the whole Scottish people in the last three centuries with the elements of their greatness. If, finally, he heaps up against the unhappy Queen charges which Mr. Burton thinks incredible, it must be remembered that, as he well says, these charges give the popular feeling about Queen Mary; and it must be remembered also, that that popular feeling need not have been altogether unfounded. Stories which are incredible, thank God, in these milder days, were credible enough then, because, alas! they were so often true. Things more ugly than any related of poor Mary were possible enough—as no one knew better than Buchanan—in that very French court in which Mary had been brought up; things as ugly were possible in Scotland then, and for at least a century later; and while we may hope that Buchanan has overstated his case, we must not blame him too severely for yielding to a temptation common to all men of genius when their creative power is roused to its highest energy by a great cause and a great indignation.

Page 80

And that the genius was there, no man can doubt; one cannot read that “hideously eloquent” description of Kirk o’ Field, which Mr. Burton has well chosen as a specimen of Buchanan’s style, without seeing that we are face to face with a genius of a very lofty order: not, indeed, of the loftiest—for there is always in Buchanan’s work, it seems to me, a want of unconsciousness, and a want of tenderness—but still a genius worthy to be placed beside those ancient writers from whom he took his manner. Whether or not we agree with his contemporaries, who say that he equalled Virgil in Latin poetry, we may place him fairly as a prose writer by the side of Demosthenes, Cicero, or Tacitus. And so I pass from this painful subject; only quoting—if I may be permitted to quote—Mr. Burton’s wise and gentle verdict on the whole. “Buchanan,” he says, “though a zealous Protestant, had a good deal of the Catholic and sceptical spirit of Erasmus, and an admiring eye for everything that was great and beautiful. Like the rest of his countrymen, he bowed himself in presence of the lustre that surrounded the early career of his mistress. More than once he expressed his pride and reverence in the inspiration of a genius deemed by his contemporaries to be worthy of the theme. There is not, perhaps, to be found elsewhere in literature so solemn a memorial of shipwrecked hopes, of a sunny opening and a stormy end, as one finds in turning the leaves of the volume which contains the beautiful epigram ‘Nympha Caledoniae’ in one part, the ‘Detectio Mariae Reginae’ in another; and this contrast is, no doubt, a faithful parallel of the reaction in the popular mind. This reaction seems to have been general, and not limited to the Protestant party; for the conditions under which it became almost a part of the creed of the Church of Rome to believe in her innocence had not arisen.”

If Buchanan, as some of his detractors have thought, raised himself by subserviency to the intrigues of the Regent Murray, the best heads in Scotland seem to have been of a different opinion. The murder of Murray did not involve Buchanan’s fall. He had avenged it, as far as pen could do it, by that “Admonition Direct to the Trew Lordis,” in which he showed himself as great a master of Scottish, as he was of Latin prose. His satire of the “Chameleon,” though its publication was stopped by Maitland, must have been read in manuscript by many of those same “True Lords;” and though there were nobler instincts in Maitland than any Buchanan gave him credit for, the satire breathed an honest indignation against that wily turncoat’s misgoings, which could not but recommend the author to all honest men. Therefore it was, I presume, and not because he was a rogue, and a hired literary spadassin, that to the best heads in Scotland he seemed so useful, it may be so worthy, a man, that he be provided with continually increasing employment. As tutor to James I.; as director, for a short time,

Page 81

of the chancery; as keeper of the privy seal, and privy councillor; as one of the commissioners for codifying the laws, and again—for in the semi-anarchic state of Scotland, government had to do everything in the way of organisation—in the committee for promulgating a standard Latin grammar; in the committee for reforming the University of St. Andrew's: in all these Buchanan's talents were again and again called for; and always ready. The value of his work, especially that for the reform of St. Andrew's, must be judged by Scotsmen, rather than by an Englishman; but all that one knows of it justifies Melville's sentence in the well-known passage in his memoirs, wherein he describes the tutors and household of the young king. "Mr. George was a Stoic philosopher, who looked not far before him;" in plain words, a high-minded and right-minded man, bent on doing the duty which lay nearest him. The worst that can be said against him during these times is, that his name appears with the sum of 100 pounds against it, as one of those "who were to be entertained in Scotland by pensions out of England;" and Ruddiman, of course, comments on the fact by saying that Buchanan "was at length to act under the threefold character of malcontent, reformer, and pensioner:" but it gives no proof whatsoever that Buchanan ever received any such bribe; and in the very month, seemingly, in which that list was written—10th March, 1579—Buchanan had given a proof to the world that he was not likely to be bribed or bought, by publishing a book, as offensive probably to Queen Elizabeth as it was to his own royal pupil; namely, his famous "*De Jure Regni apud Scotos*," the very primer, according to many great thinkers, of constitutional liberty. He dedicates that book to King James, "not only as his monitor, but also as an importunate and bold exactor, which in these his tender and flexible years may conduct him in safety past the rocks of flattery." He has complimented James already on his abhorrence of flattery, "his inclination far above his years for undertaking all heroical and noble attempts, his promptitude in obeying his instructors and governors, and all who give him sound admonition, and his judgment and diligence in examining affairs, so that no man's authority can have much weight with him unless it be confirmed by probable reasons." Buchanan may have thought that nine years of his stern rule had eradicated some of James's ill conditions; the petulance which made him kill the Master of Mar's sparrow, in trying to wrest it out of his hand; the carelessness with which—if the story told by Chytraeus, on the authority of Buchanan's nephew, be true—James signed away his crown to Buchanan for fifteen days, and only discovered his mistake by seeing Buchanan act in open court the character of King of Scots. Buchanan had at last made him a scholar; he may have fancied that he had made him likewise a manful man: yet he may have dreaded that, as James grew up, the old inclinations

Page 82

would return in stronger and uglier shapes, and that flattery might be, as it was after all, the cause of James's moral ruin. He at least will be no flatterer. He opens the dialogue which he sends to the king, with a calm but distinct assertion of his mother's guilt, and a justification of the conduct of men who were now most of them past helping Buchanan, for they were laid in their graves; and then goes on to argue fairly, but to lay down firmly, in a sort of Socratic dialogue, those very principles by loyalty to which the House of Hanover has reigned, and will reign, over these realms. So with his *History of Scotland*; later antiquarian researches have destroyed the value of the earlier portions of it: but they have surely increased the value of those later portions, in which Buchanan inserted so much which he had already spoken out in his *Detection of Mary*. In that book also *liberavit animam suam*; he spoke his mind fearless of consequences, in the face of a king who he must have known—for Buchanan was no dullard—regarded him with deep dislike, who might in a few years be able to work his ruin.

But those few years were not given to Buchanan. He had all but done his work, and he hastened to get it over before the night should come wherein no man can work. One must be excused for telling—one would not tell it in a book intended to be read only by Scotsmen, who know or ought to know the tale already—how the two Melvilles and Buchanan's nephew Thomas went to see him in Edinburgh, in September, 1581, hearing that he was ill, and his *History* still in the press; and how they found the old sage, true to his schoolmaster's instincts, teaching the Hornbook to his servant-lad; and how he told them that doing that was "better than stealing sheep, or sitting idle, which was as bad," and showed them that dedication to James I., in which he holds up to his imitation as a hero whose equal was hardly to be found in history, that very King David whose liberality to the Romish Church provoked James's witticism that "David was a sair saint for the crown." Andrew Melville, so James Melville says, found fault with the style. Buchanan replied that he could do no more for thinking of another thing, which was to die. They then went to Arbutnot's printing-house, and inspected the history, as far as that terrible passage concerning Rizzio's burial, where Mary is represented as "laying the miscreant almost in the arms of Maud de Valois, the late queen." Alarmed, and not without reason, at such plain speaking, they stopped the press, and went back to Buchanan's house. Buchanan was in bed. "He was going," he said, "the way of welfare." They asked him to soften the passage; the king might prohibit the whole work. "Tell me, man," said Buchanan, "if I have told the truth." They could not, or would not, deny it. "Then I will abide his feud, and all his kin's; pray, pray to God for me, and let Him direct all." "So," says Melville, "before the printing of his chronicle was ended, this most learned, wise, and godly man ended his mortal life."

Page 83

Camden has a hearsay story—written, it must be remembered, in James I.'s time—that Buchanan, on his death-bed, repented of his harsh words against Queen Mary; and an old Lady Rosyth is said to have said that when she was young a certain David Buchanan recollected hearing some such words from George Buchanan's own mouth. Those who will, may read what Ruddiman and Love have said, and oversaid, on both sides of the question: whatever conclusion they come to, it will probably not be that to which George Chalmers comes in his life of Ruddiman: that "Buchanan, like other liars, who, by the repetition of falsehoods are induced to consider the fiction as truth, had so often dwelt with complacency on the forgeries of his *Detections*, and the figments of his *History*, that he at length regarded his fictions and his forgeries as most authentic facts."

At all events his fictions and his forgeries had not paid him in that coin which base men generally consider the only coin worth having, namely, the good things of this life. He left nothing behind him—if at least Dr. Irving has rightly construed the "Testament Dative" which he gives in his appendix—save arrears to the sum of 100 pounds of his Crossraguel pension. We may believe as we choose the story in Mackenzie's "Scotch Writers" that when he felt himself dying, he asked his servant Young about the state of his funds, and finding he had not enough to bury himself withal, ordered what he had to be given to the poor, and said that if they did not choose to bury him they might let him lie where he was, or cast him in a ditch, the matter was very little to him. He was buried, it seems, at the expense of the city of Edinburgh, in the Greyfriars' Churchyard—one says in a plain turf grave—among the marble monuments which covered the bones of worse or meaner men; and whether or not the "Throughstone" which, "sunk under the ground in the Greyfriars," was raised and cleaned by the Council of Edinburgh in 1701, was really George Buchanan's, the reigning powers troubled themselves little for several generations where he lay.

For Buchanan's politics were too advanced for his age. Not only Catholic Scotsmen, like Blackwood, Winzet, and Ninian, but Protestants, like Sir Thomas Craig and Sir John Wemyss, could not stomach the "De Jure Regni." They may have had some reason on their side. In the then anarchic state of Scotland, organisation and unity under a common head may have been more important than the assertion of popular rights. Be that as it may, in 1584, only two years after his death, the Scots Parliament condemned his *Dialogue and History* as untrue, and commanded all possessors of copies to deliver them up, that they might be purged of "the offensive and extraordinary matters" which they contained. The "De Jure Regni" was again prohibited in Scotland, in 1664, even in manuscript; and in 1683, the whole of Buchanan's political works had the honour of being burned by the University of Oxford,

Page 84

in company with those of Milton, Languet, and others, as “pernicious books, and damnable doctrines, destructive to the sacred persons of Princes, their state and government, and of all human society.” And thus the seed which Buchanan had sown, and Milton had watered—for the allegation that Milton borrowed from Buchanan is probably true, and equally honourable to both—lay trampled into the earth, and seemingly lifeless, till it tillered out, and blossomed, and bore fruit to a good purpose, in the Revolution of 1688.

To Buchanan’s clear head and stout heart, Scotland owes, as England owes likewise, much of her modern liberty. But Scotland’s debt to him, it seems to me, is even greater on the count of morality, public and private. What the morality of the Scotch upper classes was like, in Buchanan’s early days, is too notorious; and there remains proof enough—in the writings, for instance, of Sir David Lindsay—that the morality of the populace, which looked up to the nobles as its example and its guide, was not a whit better. As anarchy increased, immorality was likely to increase likewise; and Scotland was in serious danger of falling into such a state as that into which Poland fell, to its ruin, within a hundred and fifty years after; in which the savagery of feudalism, without its order or its chivalry, would be varnished over by a thin coating of French “civilisation,” and, as in the case of Bothwell, the vices of the court of Paris should be added to those of the Northern freebooter. To deliver Scotland from that ruin, it was needed that she should be united into one people, strong, not in mere political, but in moral ideas; strong by the clear sense of right and wrong, by the belief in the government and the judgments of a living God. And the tone which Buchanan, like Knox, adopted concerning the great crimes of their day, helped notably that national salvation. It gathered together, organised, strengthened, the scattered and wavering elements of public morality. It assured the hearts of all men who loved the right and hated the wrong; and taught a whole nation to call acts by their just names, whoever might be the doers of them. It appealed to the common conscience of men. It proclaimed a universal and God-given morality, a bar at which all, from the lowest to the highest, must alike be judged.

The tone was stern: but there was need of sternness. Moral life and death were in the balance. If the Scots people were to be told that the crimes which roused their indignation were excusable, or beyond punishment, or to be hushed up and slipped over in any way, there was an end of morality among them. Every man, from the greatest to the least, would go and do likewise, according to his powers of evil. That method was being tried in France, and in Spain likewise, during those very years. Notorious crimes were hushed up under pretence of loyalty; excused as political necessities; smiled away as natural and

Page 85

pardonable weaknesses. The result was the utter demoralisation, both of France and Spain. Knox and Buchanan, the one from the standpoint of an old Hebrew prophet, the other rather from that of a Juvenal or a Tacitus, tried the other method, and called acts by their just names, appealing alike to conscience and to God. The result was virtue and piety, and that manly independence of soul which is thought compatible with hearty loyalty, in a country labouring under heavy disadvantages, long divided almost into two hostile camps, two rival races.

And the good influence was soon manifest, not only in those who sided with Buchanan and his friends, but in those who most opposed them. The Roman Catholic preachers, who at first asserted Mary's right to impurity while they allowed her guilt, grew silent for shame, and set themselves to assert her entire innocence; while the Scots who have followed their example have, to their honour, taken up the same ground. They have fought Buchanan on the ground of fact, not on the ground of morality: they have alleged—as they had a fair right to do—the probability of intrigue and forgery in an age so profligate: the improbability that a Queen so gifted by nature and by fortune, and confessedly for a long while so strong and so spotless, should as it were by a sudden insanity have proved so untrue to herself. Their noblest and purest sympathies have been enlisted—and who can blame them?—in loyalty to a Queen, chivalry to a woman, pity for the unfortunate and—as they conceived—the innocent; but whether they have been right or wrong in their view of facts, the Scotch partisans of Mary have always—as far as I know—been right in their view of morals; they have never deigned to admit Mary's guilt, and then to palliate it by those sentimental, or rather sensual, theories of human nature, too common in a certain school of French literature, too common, alas! in a certain school of modern English novels. They have not said, "She did it; but after all, was the deed so very inexcusable?" They have said, "The deed was inexcusable: but she did not do it." And so the Scotch admirers of Mary, who have numbered among them many a pure and noble, as well as many a gifted spirit, have kept at least themselves unstained; and have shown, whether consciously or not, that they too share in that sturdy Scotch moral sense which has been so much strengthened—as I believe by the plain speech of good old George Buchanan.

FOOTNOTES

{1} This lecture was delivered in America in 1874.

{2} Black, translator of Mallett's "Northern Antiquities," Supplementary Chapter I., and Rafn's "Antiquitates Americanae."

{3} On the Fiftieth Birthday of Agassiz.

{4} This lecture was given in America in 1874.

{5} This lecture was given in America in 1874.

{6} This lecture and the two preceding ones, being published after the author's death, have not had the benefit of his corrections.

Page 86

{7} A Life of Rondelet, by his pupil Laurent Joubert, is to be found appended to his works; and with an account of his illness and death, by his cousin, Claude Formy, which is well worth the perusal of any man, wise or foolish. Many interesting details beside, I owe to the courtesy of Professor Planchon, of Montpellier, author of a discourse on “Rondelet et vies Disciples,” which appeared, with a learned and curious Appendix, in the “Montpellier Medical” for 1866.

{8} This lecture was given at Cambridge in 1869.

{9} This lecture was given at Cambridge in 1869.

{10} I owe this account of Bloet’s—which appears to me the only one trustworthy—to the courtesy and erudition of Professor Henry Morley, who finds it quoted from Bloet’s “Acroama,” in the “Observationum Medicarum Rariorum,” lib. vii., of John Theodore Schenk. Those who wish to know several curious passages of Vesalius’s life, which I have not inserted in this article, would do well to consult one by Professor Morley, “Anatomy in Long Clothes,” in “Fraser’s Magazine” for November, 1853. May I express a hope, which I am sure will be shared by all who have read Professor Morley’s biographies of Jerome Cardan and of Cornelius Agrippa, that he will find leisure to return to the study of Vesalius’s life; and will do for him what he has done for the two just-mentioned writers?

{11} Olivarez’s “Relacion” is to be found in the Granvelle State Papers. For the general account of Don Carlos’s illness, and of the miraculous agencies by which his cure was said to have been effected, the general reader should consult Miss Frere’s “Biography of Elizabeth of Valois,” vol. i. pp. 307-19.

{12} In justice to poor Doctor Olivarez, it must be said that, while he allows all force to the intercession of the Virgin and of Fray Diego, and of “many just persons,” he cannot allow that there was any “miracle properly so called,” because the prince was cured according to “natural order,” and by “experimental remedies” of the physicians.

{13} This lecture was given at Cambridge in 1869, and has not had the benefit of the author’s corrections for the press.

{14} Delrio’s book, a famous one in its day, was published about 1612.

{15} For a true estimate of Paracelsus you must read “Fur Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus von Hohenheim,” by that great German physician and savant, Professor Marx, of Gottiingen; also a valuable article founded on Dr. Marx’s views in the “Nouveau Biographie Universelle;” and also—which is within the reach of all—Professor Maurice’s article on Paracelsus in Vol. II. of his history of “Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy.” But the best key to Paracelsus is to be found in his own works.

{16} So says Dr. Irving, writing in 1817. I have, however, tried in vain to get a sight of this book. I need not tell Scotch scholars how much I am indebted throughout this article to Mr. David Irving's erudite second edition of Buchanan's Life.

Page 87

{17} From the quaint old translation of 1721, by “A Person of Honour of the Kingdom of Scotland.”