

CHAPTER XI.

Death of lord Burleigh.—Death of Philip II.—Condition of Ireland.—Rebellion of Tyrone.—Essex appointed Lord-lieutenant of Ireland.—His lootless campaign.—Essex suddenly returns to England.—He is committed to free custody, and then suspended from his offices.—His discontent, and schemes for redress.—Armed assembly at Essex-House.—Attempt at insurrection.—Essex and Southampton tried for high-treason.—Conduct of Bacon on that trial.—Essex executed.—Scotland.—The Gowrie conspiracy.—The last parliament of Elizabeth.—Debates on a subsidy.—Bill for abating monopolies.—The queen's wisdom in yielding to public opinion.—Death of Elizabeth.—Note on the story of Essex's ring.

In August, 1598, died William Cecil, lord Burleigh, the faithful counsellor of Elizabeth for forty years. He was the acknowledged head, by character as well as by office, of that illustrious band, whom Mr. Macaulay terms "the first generation of statesmen by profession that England produced." His consummate prudence, his large experience, his perfect adaptation to the nature of his royal mistress, made his long tenure of power almost as much a political necessity as the security of the throne itself. In his last illness Elizabeth sent him a cordial, saying "that she did entreat Heaven for his longer life; else would her people, nay herself, stand in need of cordials too." * Months after his death, it was written of the queen that her highness "doth often speak of him in tears, and turn aside when he is discoursed of." † Burleigh, like Elizabeth herself, had a deep and abiding sense of responsibility. Walsingham, seeing him come in from prayers, wished he were as good a servant of God as the lord treasurer, "but that he had not been at church for a week past." The reply of Burleigh is worthy to be held in remembrance: "I hold it meet for us to ask God's grace to keep us sound at heart who have so much in our power; and to direct us to the well-doing of all the people, whom it is easy for us to injure and ruin." ‡ Cecil, Walsingham, Smith, Mildmay, Nicholas Bacon, were themselves of the people. They were English gentlemen—the best depositaries of political power that our country has produced; with broader views for the common welfare than the views of the intriguing churchmen, and

* Harrington, "Nugæ Antiquæ," p. 237.

‡ Harrington, "Nugæ Antiquæ," p. 174.

† *Ibid.*, p. 244.

of the ambitious nobles, who had the chief direction of affairs before the days of Elizabeth. When Burleigh died there was a struggle for ascendancy between two court factions, which had a tragical ending, and made the last days of the queen's life dark and dreary.

Within a month of the decease of Burleigh died Philip II. Henry IV. had concluded a separate peace with Spain; for which act, though probably one of imperious necessity, Elizabeth called him "an antichrist of ingratitude." But the two sovereigns had a respect, each for the other; and there was no permanent ill-will between England and France. The death of Philip, however, caused no abatement of the hostility between the Protestant queen and the Most Catholic king. In 1599 Spain again threatened invasion; and extensive preparations for resistance were made with the usual alacrity. The weak place of Elizabeth's dominions was Ireland. The intrigues of Jesuits, who were always scheming and negotiating with the Spanish ministers to obtain money and men for the restoration of the Roman Catholic religion in England, might be detected and defeated by ordinary prudence; but Ireland, with its rude native population, under the control of the Romish priesthood, and with the ancient families of their Anglo-Irish oppressors, haters of Protestantism, was a perpetual trouble to the English government. Ireland yielded no revenue to England; she absorbed a large annual amount of the queen's treasure for her defence. Since the time of Henry VIII., Ireland, without having been wholly neglected, had not been governed with the same vigour that characterised the general administration of Elizabeth. Sir Henry Sidney was engaged for eleven years in keeping down the animosities of the Desmonds and the Ormonds; in repressing insurrections and rebellions; in doing a little, but only a little, for the general civilisation of the people. Lord Gray succeeded Sidney, and had the same chronic difficulties to contend with. The attempt of the elder lord Essex to colonise some forfeited lands was a ruinous failure. Spenser, who made his few years' residence on the banks of the Mulla famous, had his house burned over his head, and his child slaughtered. The neglect and misrule of previous centuries was visited upon those who, in the second half of the sixteenth century, desired "to turn so goodly and commodious a soil to good uses," by "reducing that nation to better government and civility." * So Spenser felt when he prophetically wrote,

* Spenser, "View of the State of Ireland."

"whether it proceed from the very genius of the soil, or influence of the stars; or, that Almighty God hath not yet appointed the time for her reformation; or, that he reserveth her in this unquiet state still, for some secret scourge, which shall by her come unto England,—it is hard to be known but yet much to be feared." The poet, with the practical wisdom of a statesman, saw that the greatest evils of Ireland were social evils; and that her state would never be otherwise than unquiet until these were in some degree remedied. They were so difficult to be remedied that Spenser says that he had often heard it wished,—“even by some whose great wisdom in opinion should seem to judge more soundly of so weighty a consideration—that all that land were a sea-pool.” It was Walsingham who uttered that wish. He could dive into plots with a sagacity that beat the Jesuits at their own weapons; but he could not comprehend the height and breadth and depth of the troubles of Ireland; or, comprehending them, could not see any instant remedy. The footing of the English was still confined to the Pale.* Beyond that narrow region there was barbarism. But where the quiet cultivator took the place of the gallow-glass and kerne, there grew up a system even worse than that of the outlaw, whose boast was that he “did never eat his meat before he had won it with his sword.” It was the foolish oppression of the landlords, who “there use most shamefully to rack their tenants;” it was the inconstancy of the tenant, who “daily looketh after change and alteration, and hovereth in expectation of new worlds,”—that kept Ireland miserable, rebellious, the scourge of England, for three centuries. It was no political evil—it was not even religious differences—that made the description which Spenser gives of the cabin in 1593, the true picture of the same cabin two hundred and fifty years after;—“rather swine-sties than houses”—these dwellings of abject poverty being the chiefest cause of the poor cultivator’s “beastly manner of life and savage condition, lying and living with his beast, in one house, in one room, in one bed, that is, clean straw, or rather a foul dunghill.” The mode in which this accurate observer speaks of the tenure of land in Ireland implies that a wholly contrary practice prevailed in England; and we may thence have one solution of the different rate of industrial progress in the two countries. “There is one general inconvenience, which reigneth almost throughout all Ireland,—that is, the lords of land and freeholders do not there use to set out their land in farm, or

* See ante, vol. ii. p. 392.

for term of years to their tenants, but only from year to year, and some during pleasure; neither indeed will the Irish tenant or husbandman otherwise take his land than so long as he list himself.” The natural bonds of mutual interest between landlord and tenant thus hanging loose, there could be no growth of capital, and no improved cultivation: a wretched Cottier tenantry, worn to the bone by exactions, increased in numbers and in poverty generation after generation; till at length the great collapse came, and the merciful severity of God’s providence solved the problem which man’s wisdom could never wholly fathom.

The first remedy for the evils of Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century was to put down rebellion with a sufficient force. Hugh O’Neale, earl of Tyrone, had been for some time in insurrection against the English government. He had received arms and military stores from Spain; he was the leader of all who, according to Spenser, were “waiting when the watch-word should come that they should all arise generally into rebellion.” As yet he had met with no adequate resistance. Sir John Norris, with the few thousand men that the English government maintained, was unable to make head against an enemy whose defeat only drove his wild companies to the woods and morasses, again to sally forth in new strength. Norris died of fatigue and vexation in this troublesome warfare. Another commander, Sir Henry Bagnal, was defeated with great loss, and himself killed, in an attempt to relieve the fortress of Blackwater, which was besieged by Tyrone’s men. It became necessary to make some great effort, if Ireland were to remain to the English crown.

The determination to employ Essex in subduing the Irish rebels was unfortunate for Elizabeth’s government, and more unfortunate for himself. He was a chivalrous soldier, fit for daring exploits, but unqualified for conducting a war requiring not only bravery and decision, but that foresight and faculty of organisation which are rarely united with an ardent temperament. He was a courtier, but not a statesman; and as a courtier he was rash and obstinate to a degree. Friends and foes alike predicted his fall. He differed in council with the queen, and then insolently turned his back upon her. The thin jewelled hand of Elizabeth was raised in uncontrollable anger, and she boxed his ear as a mother would a petted child. The earl put his hand upon his sword, and swore that he would not have borne such an affront from Henry VIII. For months he sulked and kept away from court. At

length, probably to remove him without disgrace, he was appointed to the lord lieutenancy of Ireland, with higher powers than had ever before been granted to that great office. At the end of March, 1599, he left London for Dublin, surrounded by a train of nobles and knights, and greeted by the acclamations of the people, with whom he was an especial object of regard. There were those who said that the high trust bestowed upon Essex would be fatal to him. Bacon, his friend, and probably then a sincere friend, endeavoured to dissuade him from accepting the dangerous appointment; and afterwards declared that he plainly saw his overthrow, "chained as it were, by destiny to that journey." Stow, describing the march of Essex from that city, amidst the blessings of the multitude, says, "When he and his company came forth of London, the sky was very calm and clear; but before he could get past Islington, there arose a great black cloud in the north-east, and suddenly came lightning and thunder, with a great shower of hail and rain, the which some held as an ominous prodigy." The superstition, which saw a presage of danger in the great black cloud in the midst of sunshine, was the natural reflection of the judgment of those who anticipated evil from the too confident deportment of Essex. He swore that "he would beat Tyr-Owen in the field, for nothing worthy her majesty's honour hath yet been achieved."* He underrated the services of all who had preceded him, and the policy they had pursued, of endeavouring to conciliate the Irish malcontents, rather than extirpate them. He was to return from Ireland,

"Bringing rebellion broached on his sword."

He came back in six months, without having accomplished a single object that his predecessors in the government had not more completely effected with a far inferior force. He was entirely ignorant of the difficulties of the enterprise. Raleigh, who knew the country and the people, shrank from the command. Essex maintained that a man of the highest rank, a man popular with soldiers, a man of military experience, should be the queen's vicegerent. He pointed to himself; and his rivals, Robert Cecil and Raleigh, suffered him to fall into the toils. He had a force of sixteen thousand men when he marched out of Dublin on the 10th of May. From some extraordinary vacillation, produced, it is said, by interested advisers in the Irish Council, instead of leading his force against Tyrone, he made a progress of seven weeks through Mun-

* Harrington, p. 246.

ster; now and then skirmishing with small parties of rebels, and displaying his superfluous energy, "flying like lightning from one part of the army to another;" and having his love of popularity abundantly gratified by his reception in the towns. At Kilkenny the streets were strewed with rushes. At Limerick, "where he arrived by easy journeys," he was "entertained with two English orations." At Waterford he "was received with two Latin orations, and with as much joyful concourse of people as any other town of Ireland." He had marched to Waterford; and he marched back to Dublin by another route, having obtained some useless triumphs over small bodies of rebels, and wasted his army without the least beneficial result. Essex remained at Dublin from the 3rd of July till the 28th of August, and then set forth into Ulster to do battle with Tyrone. After a skirmish, the queen's army and the rebel's army were in sight of each other; and Tyrone sent a message that he desired her majesty's mercy, and asked that the lord lieutenant would hear him. He proposed to meet Essex at the ford of Bellachinche. "Upon this message his lordship sent two gentlemen with H. Hagan to the ford, to view the place. They found Tyrone there, but the water so far out as they told him they thought it no fit place to speak in. Whereupon he grew very impatient, and said, "Then I shall despair ever to speak with him;" and at last, knowing the ford, found a place, where he, standing up to the horse's belly, might be near enough to be heard by the lord lieutenant, though he kept the hard ground; upon which notice the lord lieutenant drew the top of horse to the hill above the ford, and seeing Tyrone there alone, went down alone; at whose coming Tyrone saluted his lordship with a great deal of reverence, and they talked near half an hour, and after went either of them up to their companies on the hills."* There was a second conference, when others on each side were present; and the result was an armistice for six weeks. "This being concluded," says Harrington, "on the 8th of September, on the 9th the lord lieutenant dispersed his army." Tyrone retired with his forces. On the 17th of September Elizabeth wrote a letter to Essex, disapproving of his proceedings in the strongest terms. The impetuous nature of the man would not endure this reproof. He saw, and perhaps justly, that his rivals in Elizabeth's court were working his downfall; and, in a blind confidence in the queen's favour, he took the fatal resolution of leaving his command in Ireland. There is a

* Harrington's "Report concerning the Earl of Essex's Journeys in Ireland, p. 299.

graphic narrative by a contemporary of his arrival in England. On the 28th of September, "about ten o'clock in the morning, my lord of Essex lighted at the court-gate in post, and made all haste up to the presence, and so to the privy chamber, and stayed not till he came to the queen's bed-chamber, where he found the queen newly up, with her hair about her face; he kneeled unto her, kissed her hands, and had some private speech with her, which seemed to give him great contentment; for when he came from her majesty, he was very pleasant, and thanked God, though he had suffered much trouble and storms abroad, he found a sweet calm at home. 'Tis much wondered at here that he went so boldly to her majesty's presence, she not being ready, and he so full of dirt and mire, that his very face was full of it. About eleven he went up to the queen again, and conferred with her till half an hour past twelve. As yet all was well, and her usage very gracious towards him. He was visited frankly by all sorts here of lords and ladies, and gentlemen; only strangeness is observed between him and Mr. Secretary, and that party. After dinner he went up to the queen, but found her much changed in that small time, for she began to call him to question for his return, and was not satisfied in the manner of his coming away, and leaving all things at so great hazard. She appointed the lords to hear him, and so they went to council in the afternoon, and he went with them, where they sat an hour, but nothing was determined on, or yet known: belike it is referred to a full council, for all the lords are sent for to be here this day. It is mistrusted that, for his disobedience he shall be committed."*

The personal affection of the queen for Essex was, as in the instances of other favourites, under subjection to what she held as her public duty. We have avoided, and shall still avoid, those passages of the scandalous chronicles of the reign of this queen, which may add to the interest of a novel, but have little to do with the sober narratives of history. The passions of Elizabeth—if we may apply the term passions to her feminine weaknesses—never turned her aside from an impartial decision upon the political faults of those who appear to have had the largest share of her private regard. These favourites, it must be observed, were always men of great ability and rare accomplishments. They were no low adventurers or fierce desperadoes, such as other female sovereigns have honoured. Leicester, Hatton, Raleigh, Essex, were men that

* Letter of Rowland White, in the "Sidney Papers."

brought no disgrace upon the court; though the queen's relation to them might be so equivocal that historians have chosen to doubt whether, in youth or age,

"the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free."

The adulation which her flatterers, and even Raleigh, heaped upon her was in the exaggerated style of the eulphuistic romance of the time; and, however we may smile at the vanity with which a gray and wrinkled woman received these compliments with approving delight, we must not forget that when she went from the presence chamber to the council-board, the wisest who sat there, the most patriotic, could not excel Elizabeth in sagacity, or show a deeper solicitude for the honour and prosperity of her country. We can forgive every personal folly to the ruler who felt that she held her power as a sacred trust for the benefit of the people. There were many despotic practices recognised as lawful in that period, and the queen had enough of the arbitrary notions of the Tudors in her composition. She required obedience; but she knew what conduct ensured the heartiest and most constant obedience. Harrington has a domestic anecdote which illustrates this principle of Elizabeth's conduct as well as her set orations: "The queen did once ask my wife in merry sort, 'how she kept my good will and love, which I did always maintain to be truly good towards her and my children.' My Mall, in wise and discreet manner, told her highness, 'she had confidence in her husband's understanding and courage, well founded on her own steadfastness not to offend or thwart, but to cherish and obey; hereby did she persuade her husband of her own affection, and in so doing did command his.' —'Go to, go to, mistress,' saith the queen, 'you are wisely bent. I find: after such sort do I keep the good will of all my husbands, my good people; for if they did not rest assured of some special love toward them, they would not readily yield me such good obedience.' We may understand, as Essex did not understand, why his public delinquencies would not escape the displeasure of the queen through her private regard. In the morning of the 28th of September he thought he had escaped from the dangers of his Irish career. In the evening he was commanded to keep his chamber. On the next day he was examined before the Council, and, instead of being restored to favour, was commanded from court, and committed to the "free custody" of the lord keeper, and was

afterwards under the same restricted liberty at his own house. This condition, so irritating to one of the temperaments of Essex, was followed by more decided humiliation. His deportment was penitential; he addressed the queen in letters of the deepest contrition. But the affairs of Ireland had grown worse; Tyrone was again in rebellion. Another lord deputy was sent, and Blount, lord Mountjoy, although without military experience, soon restored obedience to the English authority by his energy and prudence. The contrast was injurious to Essex, and gave new opportunities to his rivals. He was again examined before commissioners; and received the severest censure in being suspended from his offices of privy counsellor, of lord marshal, and of master of the ordnance. He was released from custody in August, but was still commanded not to appear at court. A valuable monopoly of sweet wines which he held having expired, the queen refused to renew the patent, saying "that in order to manage an ungovernable beast, he must be stinted of his provender." Under these indignities the mind of Essex lost all balance. Harrington relates his demeanour in his last conversation with him, before the outbreak which sealed his fate: "It resteth with me in opinion, that ambition thwarted in its career doth speedily lead on to madness. Herein I am strengthened by what I learn in my lord of Essex, who shifteth from sorrow and repentance to rage and rebellion so suddenly, as well proveth him devoid of good reason or right mind. In my last discourse, he uttered strange words bordering on such strange designs, that made me hasten forth and leave his presence. Thank Heaven! I am safe at home, and if I go in such troubles again, I deserve the gallows for a meddling fool. His speeches of the queen becometh no man who hath *mens sana in corpore sano*. He hath ill advisers, and much evil hath sprung from this source. The queen well knoweth how to humble the haughty spirit; the haughty spirit knoweth not how to yield; and the man's soul seemeth tossed to and fro, like the waves of a troubled sea."*

It is difficult to understand what method there was in the madness of Essex. It is still more difficult to understand how other men, not having the same excitement of jealousy and revenge which drove the humiliated favourite to acts of treason, should have joined in his wild projects. There can be no doubt that he contemplated removing the queen's advisers by force; believing them to be, as they to a great extent were, his personal enemies. Cecil, Raleigh,

* "Nugæ Antiquæ," p. 179.

and Cobham were held by him to be the chief obstacles to his restoration to favour. But there were circumstances which rendered his attempt not altogether hopeless. The queen was now sixty-eight years of age; and although she had shown no signs of a failure of intellectual vigour, the people were naturally looking forward to a successor. James VI. of Scotland was intriguing in various quarters to procure his official recognition as the future king of England; but upon this point Elizabeth was unapproachable. The wary Cecil was in secret correspondence with James; but the incautious Essex had not scrupled to contemplate the possibility of compelling the government into such recognition; and had even proposed to Mountjoy, the lord deputy of Ireland, to bring over a body of troops for that purpose. His own plans to the same end during his tardy prosecution of the Irish war were more than suspected. There was great discontent amongst the opposing classes of Papists and Puritans, naturally excited by the penalties to which each was subjected as recusants or non-conformists. Essex, whether conscientiously or politically, professed sentiments of toleration. The citizens of London were greatly inclined to the Puritan opinions; and Essex had his house open to preachers of that denomination. The more fanatical Romanists, in which number were included several of those who were afterwards prominent in the Gunpowder Plot, did not scruple to ally themselves with those of the extreme opposite opinions, in any scheme for the overthrow of the government. Essex surrounded himself with a number of those who had been his companions in arms; but he placed a greater reliance upon his popularity with the Londoners. Extraordinary pains were taken to familiarise the people with that great story of English history which told how a corrupt and imbecile king had been hurled from his throne. Elizabeth was apprehensive of the effect of the example thus made prominent of the deposition of Richard II.; and when, during the period in which Essex was secluded from court, Hayward dedicated his life of Henry IV. to the earl, she asked Bacon whether he did not see treason in it? She persisted in her notion in spite of Bacon's witty answer, that he "saw no treason, but very much felony, for every second sentence was stolen from Tacitus." The queen was perhaps right as to the possible effect of the popular knowledge of this passage of our annals. At any rate those who were concerned in the schemes of Essex fancied that the bringing forward upon the stage the deposition of a king might familiarise the people with an idea that

had long passed out of the English mind, as to the responsibility of sovereign power. Sir Gilly Meyrick, an officer of the household of Essex, on the afternoon of February 1, "procured the out-dated tragedy of 'The Deposition of Richard II.' to be publicly acted at his own charge."* The overt act of treason in which Essex and his adherents were involved took place on the 8th of February. Six months after this event, Elizabeth, in a conversation with Lambarde, keeper of the records in the Tower, in examining a list of historical documents, "her majesty fell upon the reign of Richard II., saying 'I am Richard II.; know ye not that?'" In this conversation the queen also said, "This tragedy was played forty times in open streets and houses."†

On Sunday morning, the 8th of February, the earls of Rutland and Southampton, the lords Sandys and Monteagle, with about three hundred gentlemen, assembled at Essex House, in the Strand. Essex had sent round to say that his life was threatened by Raleigh and Cobham. The queen was apprised of this remarkable gathering, and she despatched the lord keeper, the comptroller of the household, the lord chief justice, and the earl of Worcester to demand the cause of this assembly. They were admitted by the wicket, without their servants, and found the court full of men. The lord keeper declared their errand, to which Essex replied that his life was sought, and that he had been perfidiously dealt with. These great officers assured him that he should have honourable and equal justice. The evidence given by the lord chief justice upon the trial of Essex describes this scene very strikingly. After this conversation, "There was a great clamour raised among the multitude, crying 'Away, my lord, they abuse you, they betray you, they undo you, you lose time.' Whereupon the lord keeper put on his hat, and said with a loud voice, 'My lord, let us speak with you privately, and understand your griefs;' and then he said to the company, 'I command you all, upon your allegiance, to lay down your weapons and to depart, which you ought all to do, being thus commanded, if you be good subjects and owe that duty to the queen's majesty which you profess.' Whereupon they all broke out into an exceeding loud shout, crying, 'All, all, all.' And whilst the lord keeper was speaking, the earl of Essex and most of the company put on their hats. Then the earl of Essex went into the

* There are reasonable doubts whether this play was Shakspeare's "Richard II." See "Studies of Shakspeare," by Charles Knight.

† Nicholls' "Progresses of Queen Elizabeth."

house, and we followed him, thinking that his purpose had been to speak with us privately as we had required; and at that instant one at my back cried, 'Kill them, kill them.' I know him not, if I should see him again, but he had on a white satin doublet. And as we were going into the great chamber some cried 'Cast the great seal out of the window;' some others cried there, 'Kill them,' and some others said, 'Nay, let us shut them up.' The lord keeper did often call to the earl of Essex to speak with us privately, thinking still that his meaning had been so, until the earl brought us into his back chamber, and there gave order to have the farther door of that chamber shut fast. And at his going forth out of that chamber, the lord keeper pressing again to have spoken with the earl of Essex, the earl said, 'My lords, be patient awhile and stay here, and I will go into London and take order with the mayor and sheriffs for the city, and will be here again within this half hour.'

When Essex left the lord keeper and the others in custody, he drew his sword, and rushed out of his house, followed by a large number of his adherents, and he shouted, "For the queen, a plot is laid for my life." The people, as he rode at the head of his company, either did not comprehend his object, or were unwilling to assist him; for though they were provided with arms, and trained, as they always were during any apprehension of foreign invasion, not a sword or a musket was brought forth to give him assistance. Camden shrewdly says, "Though the citizens were, according to the temper of the common people, desirous enough of change, yet their wealth made them cautious and loyal. And, to say the truth, poverty is that, which, above all things, prompts the English to rebellion." Disheartened, the unhappy nobleman and his friends attempted to return from the city; but they found the streets barricaded with empty carriages. At Ludgate the chains were drawn; and a party of soldiers opposed their progress. A fight ensued, in which several were killed. Essex escaped by water to his own house; which he attempted to defend, with those who got in with him. But no succour from the city reached him, and they surrendered. Essex and Southampton were that night removed to the Tower.

On the 19th of February the two noble friends were put upon their trial, in the court of the lord high steward. The facts against them were too clearly proved to allow of any verdict of the Peers but that of Guilty. They were tried upon the old statute of Ed-

ward III. "As far as can be ascertained, it seems to have been intended to rest the charge on two propositions: first, that the design to restrain the queen's person, and remove her counsellors, amounted to treason, in the article of compassing the queen's death, of which general treason, the consultation at Drury-house, the insurrection in London, the imprisonment of the lord keeper and his companions, and the refusal to dismiss the company upon the queen's command, were overt acts; and, secondly, that the insurrection in the city was in itself a rebellion, and, consequently, a levying of war against the queen, within the statute of Edward III., of which the skirmish at Ludgate, the defence of Essex-house against the queen's troops, and many other actions of the earl's on that day, were overt acts." * There was no straining of the law to procure the condemnation of these rash men; although we may well believe the truth of the solemn averment of Essex, "Here I protest before the living God, as he may have mercy upon me, that my conscience is clear from any disloyal thought of harm to her majesty, and my desire ever hath been to be free from bloodshed." Coke, the attorney-general, bitterly alluded to that part of the indictment which accused him of aiming to be king, saying of Essex, "He of his earldom shall be Robert the Last, that of a kingdom sought to be Robert the First." Essex, to this charge, made his denial in these words: "And thou, O God, which knowest the secrets of all hearts, knowest that I never sought the crown of England, nor ever wished to be of higher degree than a subject."

There is an incidental circumstance connected with the trial of Essex which cannot be passed over, affecting as it does the moral character of one of the most illustrious in the roll of England's immortals. Francis Bacon was one of the queen's counsel, and he was officially employed against Essex in this trial. He was bound to Essex by no common obligations. The generous earl had given him an estate, because he could not procure for him a lucrative appointment. Essex had struggled against the ill-will of the Cecils to advance Bacon's fortunes, in season and out of season. Yet upon the trial Bacon said stronger things against his friend than were urged by his bitterest adversaries. Bacon compared his proceeding in saying his life was in danger, to that of "one Pisistratus, in Athens, who, coming into the city with the purpose to procure the subversion of the kingdom, and wanting aid for the accomplishing his aspiring desires, and as the surest means to win

* Jardine, "Criminal Trials," vol. i. p. 351.

the hearts of the citizens unto him, he entered the city, having cut his body with a knife, to the end they might conjecture he had been in danger of his life." He compared "this rebellion of my lord of Essex to the duke of Guise's, that came upon the barricades at Paris in his doublet and hose; and when he failed, alleged that he was there upon a private quarrel." There was a general indignation expressed against Bacon for this severity; but what his contemporaries objected to him was mildness itself, compared with the judgment of an eloquent modern writer upon these passages of his speeches. They were intended, Mr. Macaulay holds, to deprive the prisoner of those excuses which "might incline the queen to grant a pardon"—"to produce a strong impression on the mind of the haughty and jealous princess on whose pleasure the earl's fate depended." * Bacon, in the "Apology" which he wrote of his conduct in this trial, says, "that which I performed at the bar in my public service, by the rules of duty I was bound to do it honestly and without prevarication." To shut out Essex from mercy, Mr. Macaulay says that Bacon "employed all his wit, his rhetoric, and his learning." We would, rather than impute deliberate blood-guiltiness to this great man, whose kindness of nature was as conspicuous as his genius, entertain the belief that the temptation to a counsel, almost for the first time employed on a great cause, to show forth "his wit, his rhetoric, and his learning" to the best advantage, was a temptation too great to be resisted, even at the sacrifice of his gratitude. That Bacon was a high-minded man in public transactions is as difficult to believe as that he possessed a treacherous and cruel nature. His concern with the official publication entitled "The Declaration of the Treasons of the late earl of Essex and his complices," is as little to be defended as his rhetorical flights upon the trial. It is a garbled and partial narrative. He says, "never secretary had more particular and express directions and instructions, in every point, how to guide my hand in it.—Myself, indeed, gave only words and style in pursuing their directions;"—those of certain principal counsellors. We must feel acutely the meanness of the great writer—he who had already published a volume of his noble "Essays"—in becoming such an unworthy instrument of expediency. But there were excuses. He was poor; he was ambitious. In penning his Apology for his conduct in the unhappy affair of Essex, he is manifestly unconscious of his own degradation. There was a

* "Essays," vol. iii., art. "Bacon."

singular combination, in those times, of private virtue and public immorality, amongst courtiers and statesmen. "High-erected thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy" were to be found in the English gentleman as his general characteristic; but the rivalry for power, when power was to be reached chiefly by subserviency, made the aspirant too often a sycophant and a tool. Bacon pocketed the wages of an hireling, when he received a large sum out of the fine which Catesby, one of the Romanist followers of Essex, paid for his pardon. But Bacon probably did not himself see that this was the price of his dishonour.

The earl of Essex was beheaded within the walls of the Tower on Wednesday morning, the 25th of February. There were few persons present at the execution, which was stated to have been in private by his own desire. There were politic reasons for avoiding the manifestations of popular sympathy which one so generally beloved would have called forth in his dying hour. His end was truly "pious and Christian," to use the words of Camden. To the noblemen and others who sat upon the scaffold he addressed a brief speech, in which he deplored the "last sin," which had drawn others for love of him to offend God, to offend their sovereign. But he besought them to hold a charitable opinion of him for his intention towards her majesty, "whose death I protest I never meant, nor violence to her person." Lord Southampton, who had been found guilty and sentenced to death at the same time with Essex, was spared from the scaffold but was confined during the remainder of Elizabeth's reign. Sir Gilly Meyrick, Henry Cuffe, Sir Christopher Blount, and Sir Charles Danvers, were executed as adherents to the conspiracy.

The correspondence of Essex with king James VI. was certainly amongst the causes which prevented his restoration to the favour of Elizabeth. The harshness with which he was treated in the autumn of 1600 was a natural consequence of the indignation of the English government at the proceedings of James. At a convention of the Scottish estates, in June of that year, the king proposed that a tax should be levied, for the purpose of asserting his claim to the succession to the crown of England. This demand met with the most strenuous resistance. Amongst those who led the opposition was the young earl of Gowrie, who had recently returned from the court of Elizabeth. The king was furious against his parliament. They had laughed at his notion of raising money to make a conquest of England; and altogether refused to give

him more than forty thousand pounds Scots. After this, Robert Cecil was informed that James had a party in England, and intended not to tarry for the queen's death. The mutual ill-will that subsisted at this time between James and Elizabeth has led to the belief, resting upon very insufficient foundation, that what is called the Gowrie plot may be traced to the contrivance of the English queen. * The whole of this dark affair is involved in the greatest mystery. The facts which are commonly related are briefly these. On the morning of the 5th of August, 1600, James was going forth from his palace at Falkland to hunt, when Alexander Ruthven, the younger brother of Gowrie, desired to speak with him privately. He whispered something about an unknown man having found a pot of gold; and the treasure, which was in Gowrie house, at Perth, might be seen by the king if he would come thither without his attendants. The scent of gold was irresistible to James. After the chase he rode off to Perth with young Ruthven; but he was ultimately joined by his attendants. James dined alone; and after dinner Gowrie, with James's suite, went into the pleasure garden. Alexander Ruthven then told the king it was now time to go and look at the gold! They went together through various apartments, Ruthven locking the doors as they passed along. At length they reached a small round room; and then Ruthven, removing a curtain, disclosed a portrait of his father, and asked James who murdered him? He held a dagger to the king's breast, and said that if he made any attempt to open the window, or to cry out, the dagger should be in his heart. There was a man in the room, Henderson, who had been placed there to aid in the plot. Young Ruthven left the king alone with this man. James appealed to Henderson for protection. Ruthven, soon returning, ran upon the king and attempted to bind him. A desperate struggle ensued; in which James managed to reach the window and cry out for help. Lennox and the other courtiers in the garden saw the king's flushed face at the window, as he uttered the cry of "Treason." Some rushed up the great staircase; but found the door locked. Ramsay, one of the suite, remembered a back stair; and reaching the door of the round chamber, dashed it open, and found the king still struggling with Ruthven. Ramsay stabbed the youth, who was quickly dispatched by others who came up the turnpike-stair. Gowrie himself, with his servants, having seen the dead body of his brother, rushed frantically to the gallery where some of the

* Robertson, "History of Scotland."

attendants of James were assembled, and was quickly slain. The populace in the streets of Perth were roused to madness when they heard of the deaths of the two Ruthvens; and they cried to the king, as he looked out, "Come down, thou son of signor Davie; thou hast slain a better man than thyself." Some of the preachers of the kirk maintained that the king conspired against the Gowries, and not the Gowries against the king; and this belief was by no means confined to the Presbyterian ministers.

The last parliament of Elizabeth met on the 27th of October, 1601. There were debates on the question of a subsidy, which it would be scarcely necessary here to notice, but for a mis-statement of Hume. The prejudiced historian affirms that, when Mr. Serjeant Heyle said, "all we have is her majesty's, and she may lawfully at her pleasure take it from us," there was no one who "cared to take him down, or oppose those monstrous positions." In the Reports of D'Ewes, where Hume found Serjeant Heyle's speech, he would have read the reply of Mr. Montague: "If all preambles of subsidies were looked upon, he should find it were of free gift. And although her majesty requireth this at our hands, yet it is in us to give, not in her to exact of duty." Hume compares the government of England, under Elizabeth, to that of Turkey. "The sovereign possessed every power except that of imposing taxes; and in both countries this limitation, unsupported by other privileges, appears rather prejudicial to the people. In Turkey, it obliges the sultan to permit the extortion of the bashas and governors of provinces, from whom he afterwards squeezes presents or takes forfeitures: in England, it engaged the queen to erect monopolies, and grant patents for exclusive trade; an invention so pernicious, that had she gone on during a tract of years at her own rate, England, the seat of riches, and arts, and commerce, would have contained at present as little industry as Morocco, or the coast of Barbary."* There was one difference between England and Turkey which the historian does not point out in this commentary upon the English government. Public opinion, expressed to herself in person, and through the House of Commons, led Elizabeth, with true wisdom, entirely to reform that system which many members of her Council had an interest in upholding. On the 20th of November a bill was brought in by Mr. Lawrence Hyde, entitled, "An Act for the explanation of the Common Law in certain cases of Letters Patent." Bacon, as attorney-general,

* "History of England," vol. v. Appendix iii.

opposed the bill, saying, "the use hath been ever to humble ourselves unto her majesty, and by petition desire to have our grievances remedied, especially when the remedy toucheth her so nigh in point of prerogative." Many independent members used strong language in support of the bill, for considering which a committee was formed. On the 25th of November, the Speaker stood up, the House wondering at the cause, and said that he had been commanded to attend upon the queen, and had a message to deliver. She thanked them, he said, most heartily for the subsidy; and then added, "that partly by the intimation of her Council, and partly by divers petitions that have been delivered unto her both going to the chapel and also to walk abroad, she understood that divers patents, which she had granted, were grievous to her subjects; and that the substitutes of the patentees had used great oppressions." She concluded by declaring, said Mr. Speaker, "that further order should be taken presently, and not 'in futuro;' and that some should be presently repealed, some suspended, and none put in execution but such as should first have a trial according to the law, for the good of the people." Then Mr. Secretary Cecil stood up, and in a speech as important as amusing, declared that no new patents should be granted, and that the old ones should be revoked: "I say, therefore, there shall be a proclamation general throughout the realm, to notify her majesty's resolution in this behalf. And because you may eat your meat more savoury than you have done, every man shall have salt as good and cheap as he can buy it or make it, freely without danger of that patent which shall be presently revoked. The same benefit shall they have which have cold stomachs, both for aquavitæ and aqua composita and the like. And they that have weak stomachs, for their satisfaction, shall have vinegar and alegar, and the like, set at liberty. Train-oil shall go the same way; oil of blubber shall march in equal rank; brushes and bottles endure the like judgment." The proclamation against the growth of woad was to be revoked, only the queen "prayeth thus much, that when she cometh on progress to see you in your countries, she be not driven out of your towns by suffering it to infect the air too near them. Those that desire to go sprucely in their ruffs, may at less charge than accustomed obtain their wish; for the patent for starch, which hath so much been prosecuted, shall now be repealed." The patents for calf-skins and felts, for leather, for cards, for glass, should also be suspended, and left to the law. From this speech we may judge how extensive

was the evil of monopolies; and although Cecil disclaimed a desire to yield to popular clamour, he was not insensible to the words which he says he heard as he came along in his coach, "God prosper those that further the overthrow of these monopolies! God send the Prerogative touch not our Liberty." The House was in a fever of rapture at the declaration of the queen; and it was moved that the Speaker should convey their thanks to her majesty. On the 30th, a hundred and forty members of the House were received by Elizabeth; and, after the Speaker's address, he, with the rest, knelt down, and the queen gave her answer. Having spoken a few sentences she begged them to rise, and then proceeded: "Mr. Speaker, you give me thanks, but I doubt me, I have more cause to thank you all, than you me; and I charge you to thank them of the House of Commons from me; for had I not received a knowledge from you, I might have fallen into the lap of an error, only for lack of true information. Since I was queen, yet never did I put my pen to any grant, but that upon pretext and semblance made unto me that it was both good and beneficial to the subjects in general, though a private profit to some of my ancient servants who had deserved well; but the contrary being found by experience, I am exceeding beholding to such subjects as would move the same at first. ~~And~~ I have ever used to set the last judgment-day before mine eyes, and so to rule as I shall be judged to answer before a higher judge. To whose judgment seat I do appeal, that never thought was cherished in my heart that tended not to my people's good. And now if my kingly bounty hath been abused, and my grants turned to the hurt of my people, contrary to my will and meaning; or if any in authority under me have neglected or perverted what I have committed to them, I hope God will not lay their culps and offences to my charge. ~~And~~ Though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise, sitting in this seat, yet you never had, or shall have, any that will be more careful and loving." This was the last address of Elizabeth to the Commons of England.

The remaining events of this reign may be briefly told. Lord Mountjoy was more fortunate than Essex in his Irish administration. The Spaniards had landed in Ireland to assist the Roman Catholic insurgents. They took up a strong position at Kinsale, with four thousand troops. Tyrone came to the assistance of the Spanish commander, with six thousand Irish, and some foreigners. Mountjoy defeated him; and the Spaniards capitulated. Tyrone, in 1602, surrendered, upon a promise of life and lands.



DEATH OF ELIZABETH. — Vol. iii. 225.

NOTE ON THE STORY OF ESSEX'S RING.

THERE is, in the State Paper Office, an Account written in French, by Dudley Carleton, of the death of queen Elizabeth, as caused by melancholy on the death of the earl of Essex.* This paper, which bears the date of April 4th, 1603, to a certain extent confirms the court belief which the French ambassador refers to, but to which he reasonably gives little credit. The story of the ring which Essex sent to Elizabeth, as the token that he asked her mercy, but which token was never delivered, has been circumstantially told by Hume. We have not inserted a similar narrative in our text, believing, with a very competent judge of evidence, that "it is of too doubtful authenticity."† But as we are unwilling entirely to omit so romantic a story, we here give it, as related by Dr. Birch:—

"The following curious story was frequently told by lady Elizabeth Spelman, great-grand-daughter of Sir Robert Carey, brother of lady Nottingham, and afterwards earl of Monmouth, whose curious Memoirs of himself were published a few years ago by lord Corke:—When Catherine, countess of Nottingham, was dying (as she did, according to his lordship's own account, about a fortnight before queen Elizabeth), she sent to her majesty to desire that she might see her, in order to reveal something to her majesty, without the discovery of which she could not die in peace. Upon the queen's coming, lady Nottingham told her that while the earl of Essex lay under sentence of death, he was desirous of asking her majesty's mercy in the manner prescribed by herself under the height of his favour; the queen having given him a ring, which, being sent to her as a token of his distress, might entitle him to her protection. But the earl, jealous of those about him, and not caring to trust any of them with it, as he was looking out of his window one morning, saw a boy with whose appearance he was pleased; and, engaging him by money and promises, directed him to convey the ring, which he took from his finger and threw down, to lady Scroop, a sister of the countess of Nottingham, and a friend of his lordship, who attended upon the queen; and to beg of her, that she would present it to her majesty. The boy, by mistake, carried it to lady Nottingham, who showed it to her husband, the admiral, an enemy of lord Essex, in order to take his advice. The admiral forbade her to carry it, or return any answer to the message; but insisted upon her keeping the ring. The countess of Nottingham, having made this discovery, begged the queen's forgiveness; but her majesty answered, 'God may forgive, but I never can,' and left the room with great emotion. Her mind was so struck with the story, that she never went into bed, or took any sustenance from that instant; for Camden is of opinion that her chief reason for suffering the earl to be executed was his supposed obstinacy in not applying to her for mercy."

A sequel to this story was communicated by a trustworthy correspondent to the editor of "Old England." The substance of this communication is, that when Mary, queen of Scots, married Darnley, she sent Elizabeth a ring, being a plain gold circle, to fit the thumb having a rose diamond, in the form of a heart; that Elizabeth gave this ring to Essex; that it passed into the hands of king James; that it was given by him to sir Thomas Warner; and has remained in the possession of his descendants to the present time. It must be clear to every reader that the existence of such a ring does not in the slightest degree add to the authenticity of the original story. In the relation as given by Dr. Birch there is manifest exaggeration. The countess of Nottingham died, according to lord Corke, "about a fortnight before queen Elizabeth." It has been ascertained that she died on the 25th of February; Elizabeth died on the 24th of March. The death of the queen must have been even more remarkable than her life, if, upon this fatal disclosure, "she never took any sustenance from that instant." A drawing of the "Warner" ring was engraved in "Old England."

* "Calendar of State Papers of the reign of James I." edited by Mrs. Green, 1857.

† Jardine "Criminal Trials," vol. i. p. 370.

CHAPTER XII.

Literature and Art characteristic of the periods of their production.—First years of Elizabethan literature bore the impress of the two preceding reigns.—Sackville.—The early popular drama.—Marlowe and the contemporary dramatists.—Growing refinement.—Spenser.—Shakspeare.—Lyrical poetry.—Its association with Music.—Rural images in the poets connected with the pleasurable aspects of country life.—Architecture.—The palatial mansion.—Gardens.—The gentleman's manor-house.—Classical education.

THE historian Hume, in his desire to exhibit the reign of Elizabeth as a period of uncontrolled despotism, says, "It is remarkable that in all the historical plays of Shakspeare, where the manners and characters, and even the transactions, of the several reigns are so exactly copied, there is scarcely any mention of *civil liberty!*"* Mr. Hallam, without adverting to this passage, has furnished an answer to it; "These dramatic chronicles borrowed surprising liveliness and probability from the national character and form of government. A prince, and a courtier, and a slave, are the stuff on which the historical dramatist would have to work in some countries; but every class of free men, in the just subordination without which neither human society nor the stage, which should be its mirror, can be more than a chaos of huddled units, lay open to the selection of Shakspeare."† The "manners and characters," not only of Shakspeare's historical plays, but of all his other dramas, are instinct with all the vitality that belongs to a state of social freedom, in which what we hold as tyranny was exceptional. The very fact which Hume alleges, but which must be taken with some limitation, that in Shakspeare's historical plays "there is scarcely any mention of civil liberty," is really a proof of the existence of such liberty. In our own time a French writer has recorded, that after attending a debate in our House of Commons, he observed to an English statesman that he had heard no assertion of the general principles of constitutional freedom. The answer was, "We take all that for granted." We are not about to analyse the characters of Shakspeare's dramas to show that "they

* "History," Appendix iii. vol. v. † "Literature of Europe," vol. ii. p. 395.