families. He also says that Daltonism, or color-blindness, has been traced through five generations. The German Hofacker held that even handwriting is hereditary. Certainly disease is. The list of hereditary disease is very large—scrofula, consumption, cancer, insanity, gout, and other afflictions. Mr. Gay says the results of his observations at the Consumption Hospital was that the father transmits the hereditary tendency to his sons, and the mother to her daughters. Gout is supposed to be the rich man's disease. It is handed down from father or mother to son and daughter; and it is sometimes accompanied, not with the richness which initiated it, but with poverty; and then it is hard to bear.

Statistics show that even pauperism runs in families. The evil and idle habits of parents are visited upon their children "even to the third and fourth generation"—a consideration which should help men to watch carefully their ways, and to set a good example, if not for their own sake, at least for the sake of those who are dear to them. "The fathers eat sour grapes, and their children's teeth are set on edge." Prison chaplains show that the convict begets the convict, and workhouse masters prove that the tramp of one generation is the son of the tramp of the generation which preceded him.* All this may seem like cruel fate, but it is nevertheless stern fact. Even agrarian vices descend, and these can only be eradicated by self-control, culture, and wise and just government. It is a remarkable fact, as pointed out by Dr. Ball,† that the vice of assassination has for centuries been confined to nearly the

* Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes says: "*There is something fearful* in the way in which not only characteristic qualities, but particular manifestations of them are repeated from generation to generation. Jonathan Edwards, the younger, tells the story of a brutal wretch in Newhaven who was abusing his father, when the old man cried out, 'Don't drag me any farther, for *I* didn't drag *my* father beyond this tree.'"

† Speech in the House of Commons, 21st March, 1870.

same districts in Ireland. The poet Spenser, whose Irish home was robbed and burnt "when a little child newborn," about three centuries ago, describes the state of the south-west of Ireland in his time, and it remains in the same condition now. It is a remarkable fact, as pointed out by Dr. Ball, that, in his *Faëry Queen*, Spenser should have selected the Glen of Aberlow as the special haunt of the evil spirits,—a place, until recently, too notorious for the ferocity of its agrarian outrages.

A much better result is to be found in the fact that technical and artistic skill descends from father to son. The son of the mechanic is more apt to work skilfully in mechanics than the son of the ploughman. His aptitude seems to come to him by nature. His educability is greater because of his descent. There are families of carvers, inlayers, engravers, and painters. There were fourteen of the Kilians of Augsburg who were distinguished as engravers, extending through four generations. There were three Vanderveldes, four Vernets, two Teniers, and two Rafaelles. The Gaertners, a family of German architects, flourished during two centuries; and the Milnes, mechanics, architects, and engineers, flourished for three hundred years. In these cases the talented father made the talented son. Hence Pascal's grand formula: "The whole succession of mankind during the long course of centuries must be considered as that of one man forever existing and forever learning something new."

The Eastern peoples have great faith in the virtue of race. The Scriptures contain many lines of genealogy. The first chapter of St. Matthew contains the generation of David down to the birth of Christ.* The Arabs continue their belief in genealogy. Abd-el-Kader gave the following illustration: "Take a thorny shrub, and pour rose-water

* See the article, "Genealogy," in Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible.*

over it for a whole year, yet it will produce nothing but thorns; but take a date tree, and leave it without water in the most barren ground, and it will still bring forth an abundance of luscious fruit."

Plutarch is always most particular in describing the descent of his heroes. The chief men claimed descent from the gods or the giants. Plato was descended from Solon, and Alexander from Hercules. "There is in every great family," said Cæsar, "the sanctity of kings who are the rulers of men, and the majesty of the gods who are the rulers of kings." * So common, indeed, is the transmission of character, as well as of organization, that Sir Henry Holland said, that the wonder would be, not that character should be inherited, but that it should ever fail to be inherited. But it must be admitted that resemblance in character is not so traceable as in the case of feature and form,—principally because character depends so much upon circumstances, on education and culture, and the difficulties and obstructions which have to be overcome in building up the intelligent human being.

In any event, it is a great advantage to be well born; for moral as well as intellectual aptitude runs in the blood. High breeding belongs to certain families, poor as well as rich, and forms one of the most valuable portions of their inheritance. Pascal held, that to have the advantage of good birth gives the person who possesses it at twenty, a position in the recognition and respect of others, which those without the same advantage probably would not reach before the age of forty. The advantage of being well born is not so much in the position of the individual in society, as in his own elevation in moral and mental characteristics. St. Beuve, in a criticism on Lacordaire,† says: "It is by no means an unimportant matter, even as regards one's

* Sueton., *Julius Cæsar*, p. 6. † *Causeries de Lundi*, i. p. 210.

future convictions and beliefs, to have come from a strong and healthy race, as well as from an honest and pure race. When on the foundation of a firm and distinctly-marked organization, we find talent, virtue, and genius; when eloquence bursts forth in words of fire; and all the glorious gifts of manhood appear; then we may be certain that the natural power of the constitution will have the force to sustain them until the end."

Some of the most extraordinay men in history—of wonderful vigor of character and power of intellect—have been born out of wedlock. Isaac D'Israeli, in his memoir of Toland, says that, "illegitimate birth creates strong and determined characters," which Dr. Fletcher accounts for on simple physiological principles.* Without entering into the history of mythical persons, we come to the great name of Charles Martel, surnamed The Hammer, the natural son of Pepin the Fat, who summarily checked the Saracens, then rapidly overrunning Christendom, and finally overthrew them in the great battle of Tours. This, indeed, was one of the great turning points in modern history, and but for the valor of Martel and his army the greater part of Europe might now have been Mahommedan instead of Christian. Martel's son Pepin was proclaimed King of the Franks, and his son and successor Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, was the greatest name in early European history, with the exception, perhaps, of Alexander the Great and Cæsar.

Passing over meaner names, we come to William the Conqueror, the illegitimate and only son of Robert le Diable of Normandy, who won the crown of England at Hastings, and held it with extraordinary vigor. Some of the greatest scions of the house of Stewart were illegitimate: Murray the "Good Regent," son of James V. of Scotland, by Lady

* *Rudiments of Physiology*, Part ii. b., p. 3 (*note*). See also Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part ii. § 3. Memb. 2.

Margaret Erskine; and the Duke of Berwick, son of James II. of England, by Arabella Churchill, sister of the Duke of Marlborough. Montesquieu regards the Duke of Berwick as the very impersonation of a perfect man. "I have seen," he says, "in the books of Plutarch, what great men were; in him I behold at a nearer view what they are." Yet Berwick was cold in manner and plain in speech. When the Queen of Spain was asked why she had not retained the great General's services, she replied, "C'est un grand diable d'Anglais sec, qui va toujours droit devant lui,"—perhaps the greatest compliment which could be paid to an Englishman; who says little, but does his duty.

Erasmus, the greatest scholar of his age, was born out of wedlock; his life, begun in misfortune, was one continuous struggle for light, learning, and freedom. Leonardo da Vinci, too, the universal genius, great alike as painter architect, engineer, and philosopher, was the natural son of a Florentine noble, whose name has long been forgotten, while his son's name will live through all time. The origin of Boccaccio, author of the *Decameron*, and of Jerome Cardan, the physician and philosopher, was no higher, Marshal Saxe was sprung from royal loins, being the illegitimate son of Augustus II., King of Poland and Elector of Saxony, and the Countess Koningsmark, a Swedish lady of high rank, whose vices were inherited by her son. It is not a little remarkable that the late Madame Dudevant, known as "George Sand," gloried in her descent from the great marshal. The poet Prior was supposed to be the son of Lord Dorset,* as the poet Savage was the offspring of the connection between Lord Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield; of whom the one abandoned him, and the other disowned him.

Jean le Rond d'Alembert was another illustrious illegitimate. He was picked up when an infant, one chill November morning, on the steps of St. Jean le Rond at Paris, where he had been exposed, to live or perish. The commissary of police, to whom the almost dying infant was carried committed him to the charge of a poor glazier's wife, by whom Jean le Rond was brought up. The father, M. Destouches, commissary of artillery, afterwards made his appearance, and claimed the child; and it turned out that the mother was no less a person than Mademoiselle de Tencin, sister of Cardinal Tencin, Archbishop, of Lyons. She was a woman afterwards well known in Paris, of great talents and accomplishments. The father provided the means for the boy's education; he was trained at the best schools, and soon displayed that genius for which he eventually became so distinguished. When he had become a famous man, his mother Mademoiselle de Tencin, discovered to him the secret of his birth, and desired that he should come and live with her. "What do you say, madame?" he exclaimed; "Ah! you are only my hard-hearted mother [*maratre*]. It is the glazier's wife who is my real mother!" M. D'Alembert accordingly returned to the humble dwelling of the poor woman who had so tenderly brought him up, and was satisfied to share her home for a period of more than forty years. His kind foster-mother, however, could scarcely conceal her annoyance at his mathematical studies while he was at college. When D'Alembert told her what he had written, she said: "Ah! you will never be anything better than a philosopher! And what is a philosopher? A fool, who torments himself during life, that people may speak of him after he is dead!" Perhaps her highest notion of a prosperous life was that of a glazier, with plenty to eat and drink. Lord Brougham published an admirable memoir of D'Alembert in his *Philosophers of the time of George III.*, in which he ranks him in the first line of mathematicians, and places

* See his epitaph on himself among the mottoes at the head of this chapter.

him "the first among the philosophers and geometricians who succeeded Sir Isaac Newton."

Although great men sometimes spring forth suddenly, unheralded, and unexpected, from a line of unknown ancestors, others, better born, continue to exhibit the capacity, talent, and character which they have inherited. Emile Deschanel holds that you may define a man and decipher him when you know what his surroundings have been in youth, and how he has been brought up.* With this, of course, parentage has very much to do. As regards individual instances, it has been matter of question whether the child is more indebted to the mother or to the father for his moral and intellectual qualities. It has been argued that the child owes most to the mother, and there is much to be said in favor of this view. "Men will always be," said Rousseau, "what women make them; if, therefore, you would have men great and virtuous, impress upon the minds of women what greatness and virtue are."

Napoleon Buonaparte was of opinion that "the future good or bad conduct of a child depends entirely on the mother." Once, in the course of a conversation with Madame Campan on the subject of public education, he remarked: "The old systems of instruction seem to be worthless; what, do you think, is yet wanting for the better instruction of the people?"—"Mothers!" immediately replied Madame Campan. Her reply struck the Emperor. "Yes!" he said, "here you have a system in a word—mothers trained to properly instruct their children." Napoleon himself was accustomed to attribute the training of his character to his mother. She was a woman distinguished for her strength of purpose and vigorous understanding. One of Napoleon's biographers says: "Nobody had any command over him except his mother, who found means,

* *Physiologie des Ecrivains*, p. 7.

by a mixture of tenderness, severity, and strict justice, to make him love, respect, and obey her. From his mother he learnt the virtue of obedience." That greatness of character is, however, in a great measure personal to the individual, is shown from the fact that out of a numerous family Napoleon was the only one who achieved greatness, the others having had "greatness thrust upon them." Joseph, the eldest son, had the same mother as Napoleon; yet the Emperor was constantly complaining of Joseph's blundering incompetence. So Lord Nelson, who was one of the bravest, noblest, and most generous of men, was the brother of the clergyman who was created an earl because of the admiral's valor, and who seems, from his conduct to Lady Hamilton and Nelson's daughter, to have been one of the meanest of men.*

On the whole, however, no fact can be better ascertained than this—that the circumstances which surround and operate upon the tender nature of the child have the most lasting influence upon his future life; and that those impulses to conduct which are rooted the deepest and last the longest, have their origin near his birth. It cannot be otherwise. In the morning of life, when instruction is silently going on, the child is entirely in the mother's hands. Whom can he imitate so naturally as his mother? At the same time, she educates character. Man may direct the intellect, but woman directs the heart. "The mother only," says Richter, "educates humanely. . . . It is true that the sacrifices that women make for the world will be little known by it. Men govern and earn the glory; and the thousand watchful nights and sacrifices by which a mother purchases a hero or a poet for the state are forgotten—not once counted, for the mothers themselves do not count them; and so, one century after another, do

* Pettigrew, *Memoirs of Nelson*, ii. pp. 624, 625.

mothers, unnamed and unthanked, send forth the arrows, the suns, the storm-birds, and the nightingales of time. But seldom does a Cornelia find a Plutarch who connects her with the Gracchi. But as these two sons who bore their mother to the temple of Delphi were rewarded by death, so your guidance of your children will only find its perfect recompense at the termination of life.*

Notwithstanding the comparative meagreness of biography as to the mothers of our greatest men, occasional details are nevertheless to be gleaned from its pages, illustrative of the influence of women in the development of character. We have spoken of Napoleon's mother; but the mother of Cromwell was not less remarkable for her decision of purpose, her energy in business, and her strong common sense. "Ready," say Forster, "for the demands of fortune in its extremest adverse turn; of spirit and energy equal to her mildness and patience; who, with the labor of her own hands, gave dowries to five daughters, sufficient to marry them into families as honorable but more wealthy than their own; whose single pride was honesty, and whose passion love; who preserved in the gorgeous palace at Whitehall the simple tastes that distinguished her in the old brewery at Huntingdon; and whose only care, amidst all her splendor, was for the safety of her beloved son in his dangerous eminence." †

Hampden, the patriot, was related to Cromwell by the female side—his mother, Elizabeth Cromwell, being sister to Oliver's father. One of her daughters, John Hampden's sister and Oliver's cousin, married Squire Waller of Agmondesham; and their only son was Edmund Waller, the poet. St. Beuve was of opinion that great poets more usually inherit their genius and temperament from their

* J. P. Richter, *Levana: or the Doctrine of Education.*
† Forster, *Life of Oliver Cromwell* (Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*), i. p. 9.

mother. On the contrary, Swedenborg held that man takes his soul from his father, and his body from his mother. This was his own case, though there are many memorable exceptions. St. Beuve says: "Those who seek in the parents of great men the trace and origin of brilliant careers,—those who seek in the mothers of Walter Scott, Byron, and Lamartine,* the secret of the genius of their sons, will remember the melancholy and at the same time the highly-cultivated character of Madame de Chateaubriand." At the same times St. Beuve adds that one of Chateaubriand's paternal uncles, a priest, was a poet, and that another uncle devoted himself to learned and historical research.†

Walter Scott's mother was the daughter of Professor Rutherford of Edinburgh; a woman of great sagacity. She had a considerable taste for letters, and encouraged her son in his pursuits, of which his father,—an ordinary man, and a stern Presbyterian,—knew nothing. Writing to George Ellis, Scott said of his ancestry: "My grandfather was a horse-jockey and cattle-dealer, and made a fortune; my great-grandfather was a Jacobite and traitor (as the times called him) and lost one; and after him intervened one or two half-starved lairds, who rode a lean horse, and were followed by leaner greyhounds; gathered with difficulty a hundred pounds from a hundred tenants; fought duels, cocked their hats, and called themselves gentlemen." ‡

Catherine Gordon of Gight, the mother of Lord Byron, was a woman of extreme quickness and vehemence of feeling, and of violent and ill-regulated temper. Most probably she supplied that Celtic passion which gave such a *vis* to the poetry of her son. In *Don Juan*, Byron boasts

* St. Beuve also mentions the sisters of Lamartine. Royer-Collard, who personally knew them, spoke of them as charming and melodious, like "a nest of nightingales."
† *Portraits Contemporains*, i. p. 22.
‡ Lockhart, *Life of Scott* (8vo edition), p. 231.

that he was "half a Scot by birth, and bred a whole one." His mother's fitfulness and waywardness doubtless exercised a powerful influence upon his character, which showed itself in the morbid wilfulness and defiant bitterness of his short but brilliant career. Careworn, unhappy, great yet weak, he carried about with him through life the burden of his maternal inheritance.

Of other poets, Gray and Cowper derived their poetical instincts from their mothers, to whom they were ardently attached. Gray wrote to a friend after the death of his mother: "I felt then, with all my full heart, that one can have but one mother." Cowper's mother, Anne Donne, was descended from Donne the poet. Swift also was of true poetic descent, for his mother was a Herrick, and his grandmother a Dryden. Thomson derived his poetic instincts from his mother, who was a woman of uncommon natural powers, and gifted with a great warmth of imagination. Southey speaks with great feeling and affection of his mother. "Never," says he, in his *Autobiography* "was a human being blessed with a sweeter temper or happier disposition. She had an excellent understanding, and a readiness of apprehension which I have rarely known surpassed. In quickness of capacity, in the kindness of her nature, and in that kind of moral magnetism which wins the affection of all within her sphere, I never knew her equal."

Fontanelle acknowledges that he derived his gifts from his mother, the sister of Corneille; while Charlotte Corday was lineally descended from a nother sister. De Tocqueville's mother was the grand-daughter of Malesherbes. Ballanche derived his physical constitution from his father, but, "like most celebrated men," says St. Beuve, "he inherited his feeling and sentiment from his mother." *

* *Portraits Contemporains*, i. p. 300.

Manzoni's mother was daughter of the Marquis of Beccaria, the political philosopher, author of the celebrated *Treatise on Crimes and Punishments.* Kant, the German philosopher, was accustomed to declare that he owed to the ascendancy of his mother's character the severe inflexibility of his own moral principles. Sir. John Moore, who fell at Corunna, had for his father Dr. Moore, the auther of *Zeluco* and many other works, and for his mother the daughter of Professor Simson of the University of Glasgow,—a woman of extraordinary force of character.

Many other instances might be mentioned,—such as Lord Chief-Justice Mansfield, whose mother—a woman of character and ability, descended from Drummond of Hawthornden,—while his father was a good-for-nothing man of fashion. The mother of Lord-Chancellor Erskine was a woman of strong judgment; it was by her advice that her son forsook the navy, and educated himself for the bar, of which he proved so great an ornament. The Duke of Wellington also greatly resembled his mother, both in features and person. "She was," says Mr. Gleig, "a woman of great ability and strength of character;" while his father, the Earl of Mornington, was chiefly distinguished for his love of music,—his glee of "Here in Cool Grot" being still admired. The Napiers also were sons of a noble, beautiful, and heroic woman, Lady Sarah Lennox, the last surviving great-grand-daughter of Charles II. Lord Brougham's mother, for whom he had always a tender regard, was the niece of Professor Robertson, the historian. She was a woman of strong intellectual powers, while his father was a country gentleman of very ordinary qualities. Baron Cuvier was the son of a half-pay officer, quite undistinguished: but his mother was a woman of superior character, who assiduously devoted herself to her son's education. Although she did not herself know Latin, she made him repeat his lessons to her, taught him to draw,

encouraged him to read works in history and literature, and developed in him that passion for knowledge, and that curiosity for all things animate and inanimate, which to use Curvier's own words, "formed the mainspring of my life." Madame de Sévigné was also repeated in her children,—in her son the Chevalier, who was so full of grace and spirit and in her daughter Madame de Grignan, in whom, says St. Beuve, "we see reason supreme in all its dignity and state."

Before leaving this subject, there is one notable circumstance to be mentioned in connection with the moral character of families. Where the mother is good and virtuous —no matter whether the father be reckless, profligate, or debased—she can by the influence of her example, and the coercive power of her gentleness and affection, save her children, and bring them up to virtuous courses in life. But when her character is bad—in spite of the excellence and goodness of the father—the cases are exceedingly rare in which any good comes of the children. No mere educational advantages, no surroundings of wealth or comfort, will compensate for the want of good mothers. It is they who mainly direct the influences of home—Home, which is the seminary not only of the social affections, but of the ideas and maxims which govern the world. Nations are gathered out of nurseries, and the leading-strings of children become in the hands of good mothers the reins of moral government.

Many men of mark have been equally fortunate in both parents, and were thus doubly wellborn. Of these Lord Bacon was a notable instance. His father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, held the great seal for the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign. He was a man of high culture, of noble character, and eminent alike as a lawyer and statesman; for he ranked next to Burleigh amongst the great men of his time. Bacon's mother was Anne Cooke, one of the

daughters of the learned Sir Anthony Cooke. She was a woman of uncommon learning and numerous accomplishments,—a good Greek and Latin scholar, and acquainted with most of the modern languages. She translated Ochine's sermons from the Tuscan, and Bishop Jewel's *Apology* from the Latin. Her three sisters were equally learned and accomplished. Mildred, the eldest, married the great Lord Burleigh, and was described by Roger Ascham as the best Greek scholar amongst the women of England, with the exception of Lady Jane Grey. Lady Burleigh's son Robert, Earl of Salisbury and Lord High-Treasurer, was a man of great energy and far-reaching sagacity; he was acknowledged to be one of the ablest ministers of his time. Of the two remaining sisters, Elizabeth wrote epistles and elegies in Greek and Latin, as well as made translations from the French; and the third sister, Katherine, was famous for her scholarship in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, as well as for her talent in poetry Queen Elizabeth herself was a proficient in languages, being learned in Latin and Greek, as well as in French, Spanish, Italian, and German.

Luther, Tasso, Schiller, Goethe, Burns, and Wesley, were alike fortunate in both parents. Luther's mother has been described as "a virtuous, chaste, and God-fearing girl, the pride of Moerha."* His father, John, was a man of unsophisticated honesty and firmness of purpose; his character was not inaptly symbolized by his arms—a hammer on a granite block. Tasso's father, Bernardo, was a poet of considerable distinction, though his fame has been thrown into the shade by that of his son; while his mother was a woman of the most tender and beautiful character. During the exile of her husband, she carefully nurtured

* Audin, *Histoire de Martin Luther.*