



MARY DE MEDICIS AND NOSTRADAMUS.

war, and ended by a prediction of the Restoration, couched in these singular terms—"And after him shall come a dead man, and with him a royal C of the best blood in the world, and he shall have the crown, and set England on the right way." The meaning of which was declared to be the restoration of Charles II., thus:—"Monkery being extinguished, and the Lord-General's name being Monk, is the dead man. The royal C (the gamma of the Greek answering to the C of the Roman alphabet) is Charles II., who, from his extraction, may be said to be of the best blood in the world." If such interpretations as this were to be admitted, any sort of jargon might be made to foretell any imaginable events. Why might not the astrological prediction mean that after all the troubles of civil war, and the termination of the Stuart dynasty in the person of Queen Anne, the dead man, that is to say, the apparently dead branch of the old royal family in Hanover, should come, and with it a royal G (George I., of course), who came of the best blood in the world! Surely one interpretation would be as good as the other.

We have been threatened in our own days with earthquakes that have never happened; with fiery destructions which have not taken place; and with events, "looming in the future," which never gratified their prophets by assuming a tangible form. At the front of a widely-circulated almanac we have, every year, the history of the next twelve months, in crude outline and gaudy colouring, hieroglyphic pictures, capable, like ancient oracles, of almost any interpretation. Human nature appears to retain its credulity with immense tenacity; and the diviner, with commendable caution, to adopt a style of prophecy capable of any interpretation.

When Croesus sent to Delphos to know if his empire and government should be durable or not, the answer he received was, that he was secure until a mule should reign over the Medes. After he was overcome, he sent to Delphos to upbraid the oracle for deceiving him; but Apollo sent him word that by the mule he meant Cyrus, because he was born of parents of two different nations!

In this style of adaptation, Apollo is humbly imitated by the writers of hieroglyphic history, and the predictors by horoscope or cards of future events, and yet these, nevertheless, find dupes by tens of thousands.

Various are the methods by which modern tellers profess to read the future. We have some instances in which weird women have beguiled poor servant-

girls into a belief that their best clothes for holidays and Sundays must be entrusted to the sybil's keeping, ostensibly to be the subject of an incantation at twelve o'clock at night, but really—as the deluded wench finds out in time—to be pledged at the pawnbroker's, or sold at a wardrobe shop. There are other fortune-tellers who carefully avoid direct theft, but who, in taking current coin to read the future—the crossing of their hands with a piece of silver—are unquestionably obtaining money under false pretences. They pretend to tell their dupe's fortune by the lines on the palm of the hand; but can any person, after a moment's reflection, believe the thing possible? Cards are also another very common mode of telling fortunes, and these bits of pasteboard—these specimens of block printing—are represented as being the medium employed for the revelation of the future! In solemn silence the cards are to be shuffled (shuffling in fortune-telling being a most important proceeding); then to be dealt into three packets; then arranged, face uppermost, in certain rows, after which the reading begins, and we are told something like this—that a dark man (the king of spades) is in love with—that is to say, he has several good hearts towards her—a fair woman (the queen of diamonds); close to them is the wedding ring (ace of diamonds) and here is the house (the ace of hearts), and here (several diamonds coming together) a little bit of property! The absurdity of all this is transparent, but it is a humiliating fact that amid the boasted enlightenment of the nineteenth century, such absurdities should be credited, as we know they are. It is not for us to read the future—either by the stars in the heavens, or by the figure on a playing-card—and happy for us is it that such is the case. Were it possible, how many lives would be embittered by the shadow of approaching sorrow! and how much interest in present duty would be lost by knowing the fixed result of failure or success! The popular delusions on this subject have been and still are extravagant in their character; they have associated the extraordinary phenomena of Nature with the common-place facts of a brief human life, have pointed to imaginary signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, as prognostics of some new-born child's future destiny. What shall we say of these omens? What, but the reply of Hotspur to the boastful folly of Glendower:—

"GLENDOVER: At my birth the frame and huge foundation of the earth shook like a coward.

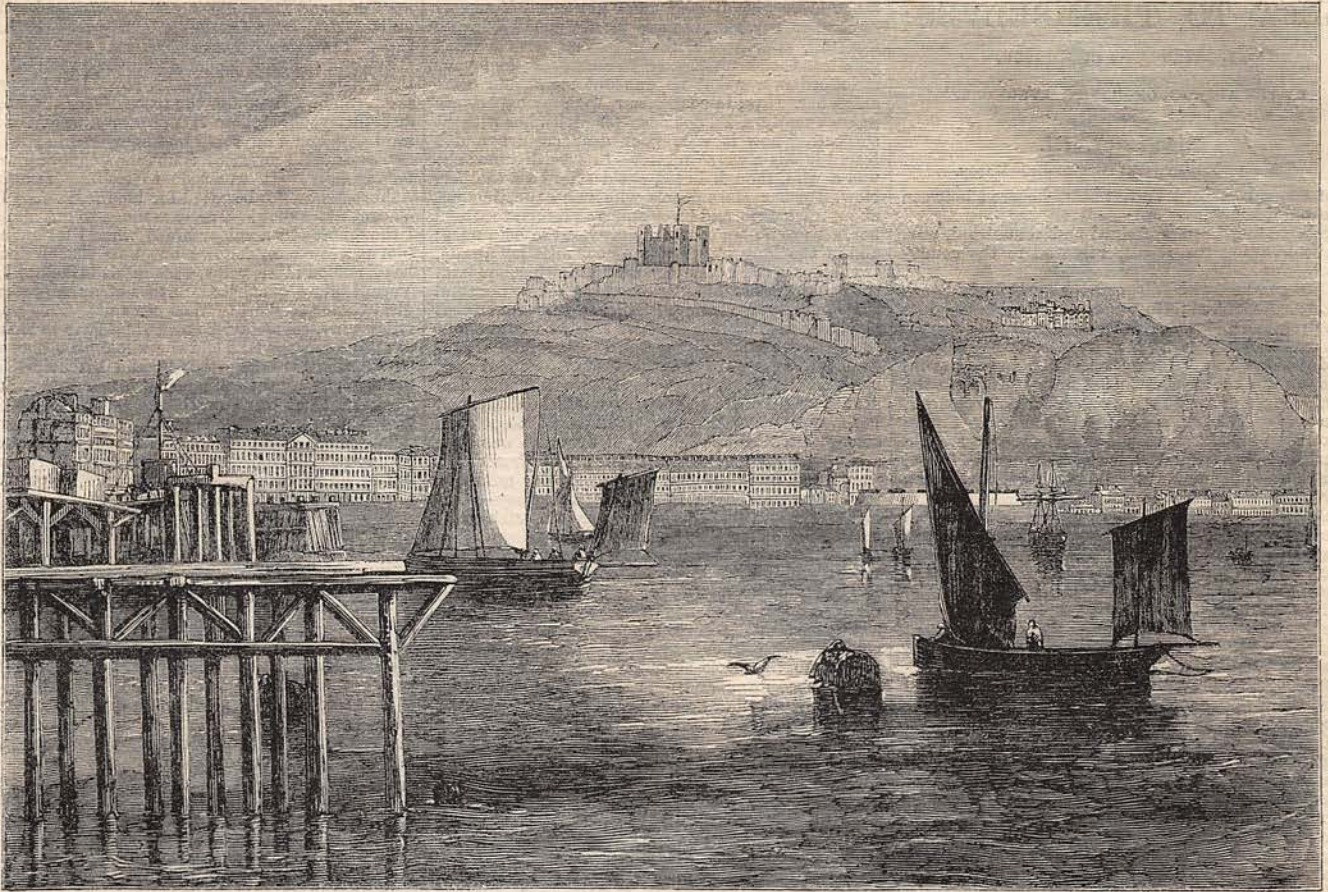
"HOTSPUR: Why, so it would have done if your mother's cat had kilted, though yourself had ne'er been born."

DOVER.

HOMEWARD-BOUND vessels, sailing up channel with a favourable breeze, pass close to the more prominent points of the English shore. Very cheering to the tired voyager is this near view of the white cliffs, and the whiter towns nestling beneath them, as on a summer evening he stands, telescope in hand, and spies out the loungers along the shore of some southern watering-place; and they, for their part, enjoy a new sensation, as they look curiously at the new arrival from the other side of the world, gliding smoothly and rapidly by, and wonder what news she brings.

To the persons upon her deck there is no object more striking along the line of coast than the town and castle of Dover, the fine position of which can only be fully appreciated by those who have seen it from a similar point of view. Standing at nearly the narrowest point of the channel, enjoying great natural advantages, and having been fortified by the labours of successive generations, Dover may be regarded as the key to the national defences. As the great thoroughfare to the continent, and the point of departure of the French mails, its commercial importance is considerable; and even apart from the circumstances to which we have alluded, the historical associations connected with the town must always render it an object of interest.

Dover, as every one knows, is one of the Cinque Ports, a name given to an association of towns on the south coast which have enjoyed, from very ancient times, special privileges and immunities. It is supposed that these privileges were originally conferred by Edward the Confessor; but it is certain that they existed, in some shape or other, before the Norman Conquest. Dover, Sandwich, and Romney only being mentioned in Domesday-book, it has been inferred that these three towns were banded together in the first instance. If so, William the Conqueror promptly improved the existing organisation, for the purpose of securing a communication with the Continent, and added two other towns, Hythe and Hastings, giving to the whole the name of the Cinque Ports, or five ports. Before the reign of Henry III., two other ports, Winchelsea and Rye, were admitted to equal privileges, and to each of the principal ports was attached a subordinate port, called a member of it. Strange to say, the changes in the coast line since that period have been so great as wholly to change the position of many of the Cinque Ports. Rye and Romney, which once stood upon the



VIEW OF THE PORT AND CASTLE OF DOVER.

shore, are now at a considerable distance from it; and these places, as well as Hythe and Winchelsea, are no longer ports at all. Sandwich, now two miles from the sea, can only be reached by small vessels. The Cinque Ports were bound to furnish fifty-seven ships whenever the king should require them, in return for which service they were permitted the entire control of their own towns, the freemen of which were called barons. These could only be tried by their peers, before the Lord Warden or Governor of the Cinque Ports, or before the king in person. They were exempt from military duties in the field, and enjoyed other minor privileges. Twice every year a "Court of Brotherhood" was held to arrange their affairs and watch over their interests. The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports still retains his jurisdiction over this part of the coast, and the lawyers have on some occasions found a difficulty in drawing the line between his authority and that of the lord lieutenant of the county; but the special privileges of the Cinque Ports have been, to a great extent, abolished since the Municipal Reform Act was passed.

To return, however, to Dover. The situation of the town is pleasant; it lies in a valley at the foot of the Castle Hill, down which runs the little stream called by the Saxons *Dwr* (water), or by the moderns *Dour*. The Romans, who knew how to choose a good military position, built a town here, and called it *Dubra*, after the little stream beside it; and from that day to this Dover has been one of the most important strongholds of Britain. We need not minutely trace the history of the town, for the details are known to all who are acquainted with the history of their country. At the time of the Conquest, Dover was burnt; but soon afterwards became a place of great importance. The castle was re-built and fortified, and within its walls Hubert de Burgh withstood a siege by Louis of France, in 1216. Since that period the defences of Dover have been gradually extended until the entire hill became covered with fortifications. About the end of the last century these were completed, nearly as they appear at present, as far as the outer works and general aspect of the castle are concerned. The chalk cliff is excavated in all direc-

tions, and there are subterranean passages, communicating with different parts of the town, and with magazines for provisions and powder. On the cliff stands a cannon, of the great length of 24 feet, commonly called "Queen Elizabeth's pocket-pistol." It was presented to Elizabeth by the States of Holland, and concerning it there is a popular rhyme:—

"Load me true, and keep me clean,
I'll carry a ball to Calais-green."

At present, this piece of ordnance is so decayed that it could not carry a ball anywhere; and it would be for the happiness of mankind if the rival nations could safely leave every other cannon on both sides of the Channel in the same condition. The visitor to Dover should, if possible, pay a visit to the castle; but the excavations in the cliff are only shown by an order from the Governor.

The modern town of Dover offers nothing very remarkable. The Hospital of St. Mary, founded by Hubert de Burgh as a resting-place for pilgrims, was afterwards called the *Maison Dieu*, and the present *Maison Dieu Hall*, which is used as the Town Hall, is part of the old hospital. The hall, to the credit of the town, has recently been restored, and contains a handsome memorial window, presented by Mr. and Mrs. Bell, and a few portraits of historical personages. Dover Museum, which is open to the public, contains many antiquities and interesting objects of natural history.

The most important public works connected with the town are those of the new Harbour of Refuge. For many centuries past, the earth and stones brought down from the neighbouring hills have been washed into Dover harbour, which has consequently been driven further and further out; and had this process, aided by the shifting of the shingle on the beach, been suffered to continue, the harbour would ultimately have been closed up altogether. To meet the danger, considerable works have, from time to time, been carried on, dating from the reign of Henry VIII., who commenced to erect a great pier here, but died before it was completed, and it was suffered to fall to decay. The works undertaken under Elizabeth and her successors were more suc-

cessful; and in 1844 the Harbour Commissioners undertook and carried out the enlarging of the outer harbour. A handsome quay wall has been built round the principal basin, and other sea-walls have lately been completed. The construction of the Admiralty Pier, forming a part of the new Harbour of Refuge, dates from 1847, and is so far advanced as to afford a convenient landing-place for steamers at all times of the tide—a very important advantage.

The pier projects from the south pier of the harbour, and will, when finished, extend some 600 or 700 feet into the sea. It is well constructed, has a very imposing appearance, and is one of the principal attractions of Dover. The Harbour of Refuge will inclose, when completed, the whole of the bay, including that portion seen in the engraving. The South-Eastern Railway Company have recently evinced a disposition to effect a transfer of the continental mail-traffic from Dover to Folkestone; but, as a good low-water landing-place has now been completed, such a change does not appear to be desirable.

It is a common observation that this country owes its greatness, in no small degree, to its insular position. There is reason to believe, however, that France and England were once connected together by an isthmus, which has been gradually broken through by the sea. As an evidence of this, an eminent geologist states that the greatest depth of the Straits of Dover is twenty-nine fathoms, or only one fathom more than that of the Mississippi at New Orleans.

It is needless to say that Dover is surrounded by localities interesting either as the sites of historical events, or as possessing great natural beauty. Folkestone, more fashionable and more rural than Dover, is close at hand. If the visitor be a volunteer, twenty minutes by railway will take him from Dover to Hythe station, whence it is not far to the celebrated "school of musketry." The London, Chatham, and Dover Railway Company promise the completion of their line to Dover in the course of next year, when it may be expected that the communication between London and the Continent will be considerably accelerated.