

SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH'S POSTHUMOUS WORK.

It is a singular coincidence that the two men, best qualified in our time to write a history of the Revolution of 1688, should both have undertaken it, and should both have been cut off prematurely before they had brought it to a conclusion. Of these two eminent men, Mr. Fox has been the most fortunate in his editor. No rash attempt was made to complete what he had left imperfect, nothing was prefixed to the historical fragment he had written, but a short account of the researches in which it had engaged him. Sir James Mackintosh has met with a different treatment from the publishers of his posthumous work. To the excellent though unfinished specimen he had left of his intended history of England, they have appended a continuation of nearly equal length, written, not without ability, but in a totally different spirit, and with a manifest disposition to undervalue that great event, and to depreciate the persons who brought it about. In this appendage to the original work the changes effected in 1688 are judged, not by their intrinsic merit, or by the state from which they delivered us, or even by the consequences to which they led—but by comparison with the demands of public opinion in 1830. Every charge or insinuation against the authors of the revolution is brought forward, and no allowance made for the difficulties with which they were encompassed, or for the prejudices to which they were opposed. William III., instead of appearing as “the deliverer of Holland and the preserver of Europe,” is painted as a selfish ambitious hypocrite, who had long projected and at length accomplished, under false pretences, the overthrow of his father-in-law. The hard-hearted unrelenting James is made to call on us for our sympathy and commiseration; and, notwithstanding the persecutions for religion he had sanctioned or approved of, he is represented as a friend of toleration, and converted into a *quasi* martyr for religious liberty. Never was there a book where the concluding part was at such variance with the commencement. It is probably the first time that the continuator of a posthumous work took advantage of his situation to write an answer to the book he was employed to publish, and to incorporate both in the same volume. It reminds us of some Indian or Egyptian idols, where the head is human, and the extremity from some animal hostile to man.

Not content with this offence against propriety, the publishers have prefixed to their book a common-place life of Sir James Mackintosh, of no small dimensions, full of errors and omissions, made up of extracts from his published works and from the reports of his speeches in parliament, interspersed with criticisms on his talents and political character, calculated to lower him in public estimation below the station he deserves to occupy.

For the continuation of his history, had it been written in the same spirit with the original work, there might have been some excuse. The portion left by Sir James Mackintosh was small and incomplete, and some allowance must be made for booksellers disappointed in their expectation of a larger book. But for the *Life* there can be no apology. The publishers were aware that a biographical account of Sir James Mackintosh, drawn from his own papers, letters, and journals, was in preparation by his family. To anticipate such a publication was not creditable; and with no original materials in their hands, they could have had no motive for undertaking the *Life* they have put forth, but to increase the size and enhance the price of their book.

The perusal of Sir James Mackintosh's part of this ponderous volume makes us regret, as much as his booksellers can have done, that there is not more of it. If, in some respects, it has disappointed, it has, in general, exceeded, our expectations. We had no doubt of his patience and minuteness of research—of his calm and dispassionate investigation of truth—of his candour in estimating characters, and doing justice to those most opposed to him in opinion. We were fully aware of his ardent but enlightened attachment to civil and religious liberty, without distinction of sect or party. We expected in him, as we have found, a generous sympathy for the unfortunate, and a warmth of indignation against cruelty and oppression. But, knowing his turn for dissertation and habits of critical disquisition, we were not prepared for the clearness and spirit of his narrative, or for the entertainment, as well as instruction, he affords us by his biographical notices of the individuals who appear in succession on the scene, few of whom are dismissed without some account of who they were and what became of them, interspersed with anecdotes characteristic of them and of the age in which

they lived. His portraits of individuals are drawn with care and discrimination, and with that mixture of light and shade, of strength and weakness, which is always found in real life, though often wanting in the delineations of the closet. Let us take, for example, his character of Lord Sunderland, long the prime minister of James II., and by many regarded as the principal, if not the intentional, instrument of his fall.

“Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, who soon acquired the chief ascendancy in this administration, entered on public life with all the external advantages of birth and fortune. His father fell in the royal army at the battle of Newbury, with those melancholy forebodings of danger from the victory of his own party which filled the breasts of the more generous royalists, and which, on the same occasion, saddened the dying moments of Lord Falkland. His mother was Lady Dorothy Sidney, celebrated by Waller under the name of Saccharissa. He was early employed in diplomatic missions, where he acquired the political knowledge, insinuating address, and polished manners, which are learnt in that school, together with the subtlety, dissimulation, flexibility of principle, indifference on questions of constitutional policy, and impatience of the restraints of popular government, which have been sometimes contracted by English ambassadors in the course of a long intercourse with the ministers of absolute princes. A faint and superficial preference of the general principles of civil liberty was blended in a manner not altogether unusual with his diplomatic vices. He seems to have gained the support of the Duchess of Portsmouth to the administration formed by the advice of Sir William Temple, and to have then gained the confidence of that incomparable person, who possessed all the honest arts of a negotiator. He gave an early earnest of the inconstancy of an over-refined character by fluctuating between the exclusion of the Duke of York and the limitations of the royal prerogative. He was removed from the administration for his vote on the Bill of Exclusion. The love of office soon prevailed over his feeble spirit of independence, and he made his peace with the court by the medium of the Duke of York, who had long been well disposed to him, and of the Duchess of Portsmouth, who found no difficulty in reconciling the king to a polished as well as pliant courtier, an accomplished negotiator, and a minister more versed in foreign affairs than any of his colleagues. Negligence and profusion bound him to office

by stronger though coarser ties than those of ambition : he lived in an age when a delicate purity in pecuniary matters had not begun to have a general influence on statesmen, and when a sense of personal honour, growing out of long habits of co-operation and friendship, had not yet contributed to secure them against political inconstancy. He was one of the most distinguished of a species of men who perform a part more important than noble in great events ; who, by powerful talents, captivating manners, and accommodating opinions ; by a quick discernment of critical moments in the rise and fall of parties ; by not deserting a cause till the instant before it is universally discovered to be desperate, and by a command of expedients and connexions which render them valuable to every new possessor of power, find means to cling to office or to recover it, and who, though they are the natural offspring of quiet and refinement, often creep through stormy revolutions without being crushed. Like the best and most prudent of his class, he appears not to have betrayed the secrets of the friends whom he abandoned, and never to have complied with more evil than was necessary to keep his power. His temper was without rancour ; he must be acquitted of prompting, or even preferring, the cruel acts which were perpetrated under his administration : deep designs and premeditated treachery were irreconcilable both with his indolence and his impetuosity ; and there is some reason to believe, that, in the midst of total indifference about religious opinions, he retained to the end some degree of that preference for civil liberty which he might have derived from the examples of his ancestors, and the sentiments of some of his early connexions.”

In the character given by Sir James Mackintosh of Lord Halifax, a man of greater genius than Lord Sunderland, though less qualified to make his way as a politician, we meet with similar traits of the tact and discrimination of his portraits. Lord Halifax had, it seems, in the generous fervour of youth, embraced the opinions of a republican ; but finding soon that “his political speculations were incapable of being reduced to practice, he suffered them to melt away in the sunshine of royal favour. The disappointment of visionary hopes led him to despair of great improvements, to despise the moderate service which an individual may render to the community, and to turn with disgust from public principles to the indulgence of his own vanity and ambition. He had a stronger passion for praise than for power, and loved

the display of talent more than the possession of authority. The unbridled exercise of his wit exposed him to lasting animosities, and threw a shade of levity over his character. He was too acute in discovering difficulties, too ingenious in devising objections. He had too keen a perception of human weakness and folly not to find many pretexts and temptations for changing his measures and deserting his connexions. The subtlety of his genius tempted him to projects too refined to be understood or supported by numerous bodies of men. His appetite for praise, when sated by the admiration of his friends, was too apt to seek a new and more stimulating gratification in the applauses of his opponents. His weakness and even his talents contributed to betray him into inconstancy; which, if not the worst quality of a statesman, is the most fatal to his permanent importance."

Of the brutal Jeffreys he speaks with more unqualified reprobation than of any other person mentioned in his history. Some sentences deserve to be extracted. "The union of a powerful understanding, with boisterous violence, and the basest subserviency, singularly fitted him to be the tool of a tyrant. He wanted, indeed, the aid of hypocrisy, but he was free from its restraints. He had that reputation for boldness which many men preserve, as long as they are personally safe, by violence in their counsels and in their language. If he at last feared danger, he never feared shame, which much more frequently restrains the powerful."

But we must have done with quotations. Those we have selected are favourable specimens of Sir James Mackintosh's style and manner of composition. In the latter part of the fragment, there are many sentences that want the correcting hand of the author. Some are obscure, others ungrammatical, and many might be divided or shortened with advantage. We do not blame the editor for leaving untouched these defects; but, in justice to the author, the publishers ought to have remembered, that he had marked with his own hand on the latter part of his MS., that it required to be revised and corrected before it went to the press.

There are several disquisitions of a general nature dispersed through the work. The most important and elaborate is a dissertation on the right of resistance, on the circumstances in which it is justifiable, and on the limitations to which it is subject. At the close of this discussion he examines the question, whether a people aggrieved by their own government may call in the aid

of foreigners to their assistance. He decides in the affirmative; but considers the policy in most cases doubtful. The case of Holland against Philip of Spain, of England against James II., and of America against George III., are examples of the experiment being made with safety and advantage; but it is too hazardous to be tried unless under very peculiar circumstances.

There is a digression of first-rate excellence on the good and evil produced by the Jesuits, in which the objections to a society of that description, on whatever pretext it may be formed, are stated in the most forcible and convincing manner.

The remarkable calm that preceded the revolution excites the curiosity of Sir James Mackintosh. Some of the reasons he assigns for it may appear fanciful, and others are not in strict accordance with historical truth. But one of the explanations he suggests, if not true, is at least plausible. Popular commotions are commonly preceded by public meetings, or secret assemblies, where the passions of the multitude are excited to violence and turbulence by harangues and exhortations from persons of their own condition. But on this occasion the whole body of the clergy, and all the protestant gentry, were for the first and only time embarked in the popular cause. There was no occasion for demagogues to rouse the multitude; the nation trusted their natural leaders. The people were calm, because those above them were equally alive to their common danger, and equally determined to resist it. "Hence arose the facility of caution and secrecy at one time, of energy and speed at another, of concert and co-operation throughout, which are indispensable in enterprises so perilous."

We are tempted to make one quotation more, on account of its connexion with a prevailing political heresy of our own times. It is not unusual for the declaimers in favour of popular rights to under-rate the struggles with the crown in the middle ages, as contests in which the body of the people had no sort of interest. In reference to such opinions Sir James Mackintosh has the following remark: "In a contest between one tyrant and many, where a nation in a state of personal slavery is equally disregarded by both, reason and humanity might be neutral, if reflection did not remind us, that even the contests and factions of a turbulent aristocracy call forth an energy and magnanimity and ability which are extinguished under the quieter and more fatally lasting domination of a single master." So just is this

observation, and so strongly confirmed by history, that it may truly be said of the convention at Runnemed, that it was the impulse which has guided and directed us ever since. If the barons, who extorted Magna Charta, were to make their appearance before the Reformed House of Commons of 1834, they might say with truth, "If it had not been for us, you would not have been here." The greatest mistake in judging of past times is to estimate the conduct of our ancestors by the standard of our own opinions. The

most grievous error in modern legislation is to argue, that an institution must be good at present because it was useful a hundred years ago. We might as well insist on talking the language of Chaucer as maintain that whatever is antient ought on that account to be preserved. Every thing human is subject to change. Gas lights have superseded whale oil, as the new boroughs have taken place of the old. Let us neither despise our ancestors for having paved their streets, nor refuse to macadamise our own.

LINES ADDRESSED TO MARY.

BY ANN OF SWANSEA.

THE paths of life, alas! are rough and steep—
 Much I have toil'd an upward point to reach,
 Where I might poverty at distance keep,
 And my aspiring hopes contentment teach;
 For oft in days of youth I've fondly thought
 That fame and splendid fortune might be mine;
 But now, by sad experience wisdom taught,
 I smile at idle dreams of "auld lang syne."

Friends I have had, some flattering lovers too;
 Soon they grew cold, inconstant, and unkind—
 Perhaps the fault was mine they prov'd untrue,
 Well, be it so—'tis o'er—and I'm resign'd.
 If wrongs have alter'd me, am I to blame?
 Neglect's cold serpents have a numbing twine—
 Reproach not if my heart's no more the same,
 Ardent, and trusting, as in "auld lang syne."

Little my faithless memory retains
 Of joys that seldom came, and pass'd in haste;
 Yet the sweet thought of thee unchang'd remains,
 The bright oasis of a desert waste!
 Yes, though the wreaths for thee my fancy bound,
 Withering, their bloom and odour must resign;
 Yet I will hope with thee are smiling found
 Some sunny gleams, resembling "auld lang syne."

The charm is broke, my harp remains unstrung,
 The faithless muse from me withdraws her spell;
 Mournful, and wild, upon my ear is flung
 A dirge-like note, that murmurs "Fare thee well.
 Yet grieve not thou when silent is my strain,
 When fairy visions shall no more be mine;
 But search thy memory, it may still retain
 The lays I wrote for thee, in "auld lang syne."