

George:" Louis XVI "goes for nothing; he hunts one half the day, is drunk the other, and signs whatever he is bid."

Edmund Burke was a writer of the first class, and excelled in almost every kind of prose composition; but he often descended to coarseness, abuse, and scurrility; and is apt to betray what Johnson imputes to Swift, a proneness to "revolve ideas from which other minds shrink with disgust." For instance:—"They are not repelled, through a fastidious delicacy at the stench of their arrogance and presumption, from a medicinal attention to their mental blotches and running sores." Some passages are not fit to be cited, on account of the indecency of their allusions. He compares a Republican ruler to a cannibal in his den, where he paints him as having actually devoured a king, and suffering from indigestion.

Neither good taste nor humanity of feeling restrained Byron from a savage exultation over the grave of a political foe. He speaks of

"Carotid-artery-cutting Castlereagh."

The same grossness marks Walter Savage Landor, when, in the "Imaginary Conversations," he puts into the mouth of Aristotle—"And our negotiator, whose opinion (a very common one) was, that exposure alone is ignominy, at last *severed his weapon* with an ivory-handled knife."

M. Capefigue, one of the most prolific authors of France, bestows a plentiful vocabulary of abuse on the heads of all modern historians—himself excepted. When he announced his "History of the Consulate and Empire of Napoleon," he observed, in allusion to Thiers and Mignet, that "no one, in treating the history of the Revolution, had risen beyond the babblings of the assemblies, the petty reports of policemen, and the vulgarities of mobs."

An amusing instance of bathos is afforded in the published tour of a lady who attained some celebrity in literature. Describing a storm to which she was exposed when crossing in a steam vessel from Dover to Calais, her ladyship says: "In spite of the most earnest solicitations to the contrary, in which the captain eagerly joined, I firmly persisted in remaining upon deck, although the tempest had now increased to such a frightful hurricane that it was not without great difficulty I could—hold up my parasol!"

#### A KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS.

Laws are necessary to the well-being and preservation of order in a community; but hitherto it has been but little considered that, to prevent their infraction, it is equally important that a knowledge of them should be universally disseminated and fully understood by those they are formed to control. It must be admitted that a knowledge of the laws among the people is the exception to the rule, and that, in a majority of instances, the offender becomes first cognizant of offending after the sentence of punishment has been passed. The laws of the realm, bound up in massive volumes and sold at a high price, are inaccessible to the many, and although written in the English language, it is not of the plain every-day character such

as is in use by the people; every fresh Bill or Act of Parliament appears in the same uninviting garb it assumed centuries ago. In former times and the early dawn of English civilization, the population was comparatively scanty and the laws were few. In this 19th century, both people and laws have increased to a vast extent, for the latter have more than kept pace with the actual necessities of the community, it is much to be feared. At present, the only persons who know anything about the laws are chiefly our judges, barristers and solicitors, and a small portion of our statesmen and members of Parliament; and their knowledge of the constitution and fundamental laws of our empire is at best an imperfect one, or there would not be so many bungling attempts at law-making and frequent revision and alteration of the laws.

It is an evident and gross injustice to punish those who may break the laws, for offences of whose nature and principles they are commonly totally ignorant; yet such is the anomalous condition of law-dispensing in England in this 19th century. To popularize the laws already made, and those that may hereafter follow, they should be published in an attractive form, somewhat after the style of the ordinary popular literature of the day. The criminal laws should of course be kept distinct from the civil, and published at the cost price of editing, printing, etc., or as nearly so as possible, and sold to news-venders just like any other periodical or publication. So long as it may be considered necessary that the verbiage of our laws should be antiquated, prolix, and dubious in style, there should be copious explanatory notes accompanying them, for the information of the general public; attorneys and barristers might have a separate edition compiled for them, without such lucid addenda, if it so pleased them. Copies should be given to all institutions of a public character, whether they be clubs for the rich or mechanics and literary associations for the middling and poorer classes of the community, and every society not properly belonging to those just named, yet resorted to by sections of the people, and of a beneficial if not directly instructional tendency, might be advantageously furnished with them. This is the age of reformatory institutions; and doubtless they are, when judiciously managed, capable of good results, though not probably to the extent their promoters, with a too sanguine confidence, anticipate. Would it not be well if greater attention were bestowed on the prevention of crime, and might not the establishment of "Preventatories," (to coin a word,) where such as were unemployed, and, as is often the case, unacquainted with any useful occupation, might be taught one, and thus prevented from falling into a criminal way of life? In cases where laws are specially enacted for any particular trade or calling, it might be advisable that they should be framed and suspended against the walls of work-rooms, shops, warehouses, etc., so as to be constantly before the eyes of those immediately concerned. There is good reason for believing that the diffusion of a knowledge of the laws would operate against law-breaking to a very great extent, and that a familiarity with the penalties thereby ensuing would deter from the commission of numerous minor offences, now resulting offener from heedlessness and ignorance than from a pre-disposed criminality.