

Literature, &c.

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From Graham's Magazine.
LANDS DOWN,
 OR THE FIELD OF GENTLE BLOOD.
A True Tale of the Great Civil War.
 BY HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT.

Chapter II.

A MELANCHOLY MEDITATION.

[Continued from our last.]

THERE was no error in the reasoning of Bevil Greenvil. All that he said, all that he foresaw, with the anticipation of a strong, vigorous, and forecasting mind, was but too true.

Whether there be anything of reality in personal presentiment, is a thing of which poor humanity can speak but doubtfully; it may be that such dim shadowings of death, nigh at hand, are but the dreamings of impressible and sentimental intellects.

It may be that these are true prophets. There is much show of evidence to carry out the latter judgment.

But of this men will believe according as their minds lean to faith and veneration, or to the opposite extreme of scepticism and incredulity.

It is not, therefore, of his self anticipations that I speak, but of his fears for his country's welfare. For the civil war had indeed fairly broken out—the sword was drawn, and who should say when it again would find its scabbard.

War, at the best, is a hideous thing, and civil war an accursed. Decorate it as you will with the phantom hues of glory; ennoble it as you may by all the deeds of generous self-devotion, of great self-sacrifice, that have been wrought at its bidding, from time's commencement until now—and still what is it?

Ruthless defacing of the Creator's image; a wholesale annihilating, so far as this world is concerned, of the best and highest minds, the brightest intellects; a trampling under foot of all the sweet domestic charities; a breaking of thousands and ten thousands of affectionate and tender hearts; a steeping of innumerable hearths, from the castle to the cottage, in rayless irremediable gloom. And for what all this agony, this desecration, this waste of the human soul?

For nothing, in most cases; and if for any thing, for that which is lighter than the gossamer of an October morning, and less substantial than the shadow of a shade.

For a few acres or a few leagues, of barren and unprofitable desert; for a disputed right, comprehended probably by neither party; belonging absolutely, for the most part, to neither; and, when won, valueless, unsaleable at a pin's fee.

If this be true, as who can dispute it, of war in general and in the abstract, what shall be said of those intestine and domestic strifes, which, far from being mitigated, are enflamed tenfold and are made more merciless and cruel, by the community of language, interest, and blood?

When wives behold a father on one side, a husband on the other, and find their tears, unlike Hersilia and her Sabines, fruitless to reconcile the kindred combatants?

When mothers, their natural instincts perverted by the fell sway of what is party spirit, however they may deem its principle, send forth their offspring, in emulation of the barbarous Spartan, commanding them to die, but never to return defeated?

When sons meet their fathers front to front in the battle's hurly?

What shall be said of these miseries, these horrors? And what, when we consider, that never yet was there a civil war, in which the best and purest minds on both sides did not believe themselves religiously to have the right in the controversy altogether?—in which, when viewed by the impartial judgment of posterity, justice was not so evenly divided, so balanced as it were between the two, so blinded on both sides by prejudice, so blent with error, so distorted by excess, that it must then have been scarce possible for the soundest intellect to determine—

"Which had the better cause, until success conclude the victor innocent, the vanquished most miserably guilty."

We are too apt, I think, all of us, the most thoughtful hardly in a less degree than the most superficial, to look upon all those disputes which have given rise to wars as having a right side and a wrong; and consequently on all those who wrote, spoke, and acted, with one party or the other, as being virtuous or villainous, patriots or tyrants. Whereas, we should regard them, as groping obscurely for the light, on either side; on either fancying that they had found it; while in truth it was the same feeble ray, reflected and refracted by the mists of circumstance and opinion, that was seen by both, and seen only to distract and bewilder.

I think too that it will be found, in almost every instance, if we look narrowly into consequences, that nations have in no respect really gained by civil war those great advantages, which it has been the fashion of writers to ascribe to them—that no permanent benefits have accrued to the people, to counter-balance, in the least degree of equality the temporary calamities which preceded them. I do not believe, in a word, that the winning of the rights, for which nations have so fiercely warred at home,

has given superior happiness to the winners—much less that the happiness, so won, if any, is sufficient to compensate the individual sufferings, the lamentable heart-breaks, the demoralization consequent on warfare, and the irreparable loss of the best lives, the noblest spirits, the most exalted intellects, by the unsparing ravage of the sword.

Such is the train of thought into which I have been led by a recent perusal of the seventh book of Lord Clarendon's history of the rebellion—a book which relates the death of Mr. Hampden, upon Chalgrovefield, and of Sir Bevil Greenvil, upon Lansdown—a history, which contains the recital of more bloodshed of the high, the good, and the noble—bloodshed both on the field and the scaffold, bloodshed for opinion's sake, than any other narrative, comprising the same space of years, in the world's history—a rebellion, which was the prime cause of the consequences which we now see and feel and of which we are ourselves a part, both in England and America at this very day.

Are we, the people of both countries, or of either, the happier for those consequence, or through those causes, to day?

I believe not.

Whatever was the cause of that memorable struggle, the ultimate effect of it was to promote what had been commenced by the wars of the Roses, what was completed by the passage of the Reform Bill, the wresting, I mean, the powers of government from the landholder, and giving it to the burgher; the substitution of the commercial and manufacturing to the agricultural interest, the conversion of England from a poor, frugal, moderate landed aristocracy, with a well fed, contented yeomanry, to a vast, powerful, wealthy, commercial timocracy, with a squalid, starving, miserable populace—from a land of green fields and happy cottages, to a realm of gorgeous palaces and hideous lazar houses.

So much for the consequences.

Now for the causes.

On one side there was a king, who wished undoubtedly to pervert the constitution, to limit the privilege of Parliament, to encroach upon the rights of his people.

On the other was a parliament, whose after conduct went far to show that the privileges they would have claimed needed limiting—for their acts were more arbitrary, their encroachment on the liberty of the subject more unconstitutional, their usurpation of power more oppressive, than those of any king since the days of the eighth Henry—so arbitrary, so unconstitutional, so oppressive, that they drove the English people to seek for repose in the wise despotism of Cromwell, and afterwards to rest content under the licentious and factitious tyranny of the second Charles, rather than again risk a subjugation to Parliamentary Privilege.

Look to the men on either side—and first look at the great poet, the great champion, the great self devoted martyr, to the cause of English liberty. Look at John Milton, the indomitable assertor of freedom—and then the most able apologist of the one man who overthrew it!

Was John Milton sure of his own principle; was he right in that principle—when we find him supporting first the dethronement and decapitation of the king by the parliament, and then the dismissal and destruction of the parliament by the despot?

Look at the other pure and noble souls, arrayed one against the other—

Look at John Hampden, and Lucius Carey, better known as Lord Falkland—pure patriots both, as ever drew the sword, for what they deemed the right—true Englishmen both, with no selfish aspiration, no aim but their country's welfare—wise men, calm men, prudent men, good men, both—nay! men so little differing in their principles themselves, although so widely in their practice, that had their parties but been changed, John Hampden would have been scarce less royalist than Lucius Carey—Lord Falkland scarce less the people's champion than John Hampden.

Hear now, how Clarendon, a very moderate royalist, a staunch upholder of the constitution, a rebuker of the King's inordinate ambition, so little of a partisan that he refused to take office in the beginning of the troubles—hear, I say, how Clarendon speaks of John Hampden's death, and compare that sentence with the words I have prefixed to these wandering thoughts, touching Sir Bevil Greenvil.

Hear this, I say, and then, seeing how differently moderate and wise men viewed these things in their days, and observing that increased happiness of the body politic has not gone hand in hand with increased wealth and power, and intelligence, and liberty, in England—consider if it may not be possible that we, too, are in error both as to the magnitude of grievances and the consequences of righting them; both as to the soundness of the appeal to the sword, and the benefits to be achieved by murdering those who differ from us in opinion honestly, and by eradicating their errors, if they be errors, by the axe of the headman.

But that which would have been looked upon as a considerable recompense for a defeat, could not but be thought a glorious crown of a victory, which was the death of Mr. Hampden, who, being shot in the shoulder with a brace of bullets, which broke the bone, within three weeks after died with extraordinary pain, to as great a consternation of all that party as if their whole army had been defeated or cut off.

And thereupon the historian proceeds to give his character, which is, unfortunately, too long for quotation; a character, which, in what light soever the writer may have viewed it, is in fact almost an unqualified panegyric—a panegyric of which I know no man of any after

time unless it be Washington—between whom, in truth, and John Hampden there are very many points of strong resemblance—whom I would venture to pronounce deserving.

And over the death of such a man, such a hero, such a patriot as this, Great God!—the patriots—for they were patriot likewise—who honestly believed the maintenance of monarchy to be good in itself, and for the good of their country, were compelled to rejoice and triumph!

The death of Falkland, too, of whom it is recorded by the same true and trustworthy historian, that "when there was any overture or hope of peace, he would be more erect and vigorous, and exceeding solicitous to press anything he thought would promote it; and sitting among his friends, often, after deep silence and frequent sighs, would, with a sad and shrill accent, ingeminate the word *Peace! Peace!* and would passionately profess, 'that the very agony of the war, and the view of the calamities and desolation the kingdom did and must endure, took his sleep from him, and must shortly break his heart;'" the death of this man, too, caused vehement and great rejoicing among the adverse party.

It is recorded that when Hoche, the republican commander of the French army of the Sambre and Meuse, fell near the Rhine, warring against a foreign and a hostile land, the very foes who slew him joined in the funeral lamentations of his followers.

"He had kept

The whiteness of his soul, and nations o'er him wept."

But was the soul of Hoche whiter than that of Falkland, that of Hampden, that for him, an invader, foreigners and foes should weep, and over these half their own England, that very England for the good of which each, as he saw it, died! should raise a shout of triumph and rejoicing?

Verily civil war is an accursed thing.

Oh! may we never live to see it kindled more on either side the broad Atlantic!

It is itself a cursed thing, and it carries this curse with it. That all the wise and the good, who are at first its leaders, slaughtered, the conduct of affairs passes to the ambitious, the unscrupulous, the bold, the vicious—that the first causes are forgotten, and in the end one wrong is torn down from its altar, and, perhaps greater, wrong is enshrined in its place, again to be cast down by a counter revolution.

There is a high, broad, grassy hill, or range of hills more properly, near to the beautiful city of Bath, a portion of which is indeed situated on one flank and brow of the elevation. For the most part it bears, even now, the character which its name indicates, Lansdown; for it is open, unenclosed, swelling in round, gentle slopes, and smooth, green summits, covered with short, soft, mossy grass—in short, it is a down.

A few scattered clumps of fir-trees dot its brow, and when the western wind sweeps unchecked and unbroken over the bare expanse, it howls and sighs, with strange and melancholy wailings, among the thin sad foliage and knarled arms of those ghostly evergreens.

To one of an imaginative mind, walking that lonely hill, on some wild gusty evening, when the low clouds scud fast across the near horizon, ominous of the tempest, when the gray mists are closing in on all sides, assuming shades fantastical and frightful, and when the rise and fall of the moaning gale, in a thousand unearthly cadences, sings dirges through the laboring branches, it is not difficult to fancy that the spirits of the good, the great, and the self-devoted, who presided on that field of gentle-blood, are abroad, and bewailing their useless self-immolation on the altar of mistaken patriotism.

It is a strange thing that some places, without any marked or evident reason why such should be the case, have been, time after time, from earliest ages, the scene of great events, the battle-field of tribes or nations.

Such, whatsoever is the cause, for certainly there is no such thing as accident, has been the case with Lansdown.

Tradition, handed down orally from generation to generation of illiterate peasants, asserts that thereon was fought one of the famous battles of King Arthur and his knights of the table round; and whether we reject as wholly fabulous or not the legends of the great British Prince, we cannot shut our eyes to the evidences of the fact, that the game of war has been played there in olden days, beyond the period of authentic history. For the long lines of old encampments, rampart and fosse and circular redoubt, may be traced clearly to this hour upon the mossy green sward, which has grown there unchanged, a natural everlasting carpet, unturned by the rude ploughshare, undisturbed by the growth of tree or coppice, century after century—which has borne, perhaps, the creaking wheels of the scythed cars of Caradoc and his azure-tintured hordes, rebounded under the ordered tread of Rome's brazen legions; being dented by the horse-hoofs of the mailed Barons of the Norman chivalry, and torn up by the groaning weight of the Parliament's artillery.

Well has that fatal ridge been named, and truly, the field of gentle blood.

In the last battle only, which devastated its green brow, and filled its pleasant slopes and breezy hollows with blood, and agony and death—in the last battle only, it is on record that, "on the king's part there were more officers and gentlemen of quality slain than common men; and more hurt than slain."

There are, I know, some persons who will

view this fact as a matter of no moment; who will regard a life as a life, and no more; who can see that distinction between the shedding of a prince's and a peasant's blood.

And, in that the one is a prince, and the other a peasant, there is in truth no distinction.

But is there indeed none between this life and that?

Is it a matter of no more moment to the world at large, to the people of the day, and not of the day only, but of far ages yet to come, whether the good, the wise, the noble, and the great of soul, are sacrificed to the fell rage of party spirit, or the mere mercenary, fighting for his pay, killing mechanically for his wages, and ignorant of the very cause for which he battles?

Does it, indeed, concern humanity, and truth, and nature nothing, whether it be the blood of a Hampden or a Falkland that bedews and fattens the dull earth, or that of the Dalgettys and the Bothwells who make up the mass of armies?

Would it have been no greater loss to mankind whether the gore of Washington or Arnold had dimmed the shine of some Hessian bayonet or broadsword?

The loss of the man is as the value of the man.

The loss of a great bad man is the world's great gain; and whether we absolve or condemn the hand that strikes him down, we must admit humanity the gainer by his fall—and his, the unit's, loss is not to be compared with the gain of the million.

The death of a great good man is not his loss alone—is not perhaps his loss at all, for who shall measure the things that are to be, beyond perishable?—it is the loss of the universe and all its countless dwellers; the loss of time, almost of eternity.

And thus though the heart may recoil at the thoughts of the carnage, may groan at the recorded sufferings of the masses, it is over the fall of the men who fell for principle, and what they believed virtue, that the reasoning mind sends forth its lamentation.

It was not for the knights who fell at Cannæ, although their rings of gold might fill the measure of a bushel; it was not for the legionaries, though they were numbered forty thousand, that Rome mourned a year; but for the one man, prodigal of his great soul, who brooked not to survive defeat by the proud Carthaginian, who by his death deserved more of his country than had been merited by all the lives of all the forty thousand.

Thus was it here on Lansdown—thus, "that which would have clouded any victory, and made the loss of others less spoken of, was the death of Sir Bevil Greenvil."

[To be concluded.]

THE STUDY OF SCIENCE.

THE pleasure derived from ascertaining that the pressure of the air and the creation of a vacuum alike cause the rise of the mercury in the barometer, and give the power to flies of walking on the ceiling of a room, is wholly independent of any practical use obtained from the discovery; inasmuch as it is a pleasure superadded to that of contemplating the doctrine proved by the Torricellian experiment, which had conferred all its practical benefits long before the cause of the fly's power was found out. Thus, again, it is one of the most sublime truths in science, and the contemplation of which, as mere contemplation, affords the greatest pleasure, that the same power which makes a stone fall to the ground keeps the planets in their course, moulds the huge masses of those heavenly bodies into their appointed forms, and reduces to perfect order all the apparent irregularities of the system; so that the handful of sand which for an instant ruffles the surface of the lake, acts by the same law which governs, through myriads of ages, the mighty system composed of myriads of worlds.

There is a positive pleasure in generalizing facts and arguments—in perceiving the wonderful production of most unlike results from a few very simple principles—in finding the same powers or agents reappearing in different situations, and producing the most diverse and unexpected effects—in tracing unexpected resemblances and differences—in ascertaining that truths or facts apparently unlike are of the same nature, and observing wherein those apparently similar are various; and this pleasure is quite independent of all considerations relating to practical application; nay, the additional knowledge that those truths are susceptible of a beneficial application, gives a further gratification of the like kind to those who are certain never to have the opportunity of sharing the benefits obtained, and who, indeed, may earnestly desire never to be in the condition of being able to share them. Thus, in addition to the pleasure received from contemplating a truth in animal physiology, we have another gratification from finding that one of its corollaries is the construction of an instrument useful in some painful surgical operation. Yet, assuredly, we have no desire ever to receive advantage from this corollary; and our scientific gratification was wholly without regard to any such view.—Lord Brougham.

FIRST MONEY TRANSACTION.

THE first money transaction we read of in the world was the sum paid by Abraham to the sons of Heth for the cave of Macpelah. Till then, and indeed long after, wealth was estimated by the number and quantity of cattle, and cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. We read in Homer of a coat of mail worth an hundred oxen, a cauldron worth twenty sheep, a cup or goblet worth twelve