

For the Calliopean.

Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth.

TO THE EDITRESS.—The chief argument which we brought forward in our last communication, that cruelty was more criminal than vanity, and consequently Queen Mary less worthy of admiration than Queen Elizabeth, your correspondent, Ida, has carefully left altogether unnoticed. The principal points, which she attempts to show, are, that "Queen Mary, from her weakness of mind and of body, should have some allowance for having had bad councillors and allowed impolitic measures;" while "the vices of Queen Elizabeth were so much the more inexcusable, from her superiority in intellect and policy."

Though feebleness of intellect will account, satisfactorily, for her choice of *incompetent* ministers, it will not do so for that of *bad ones*. She had witnessed the insatiable cruelty of Gardiner and Bonner, for a long period, during the despotic rule of her father, yet these were the very persons, whom she, on her accession to the throne, delighted to honor; while they—as the cruel are noted for being towards—turned with the tide, and at the bidding of Mary, hurled the same deadly shafts at the protestants, which they had formerly used against the papists under Henry VIII. In the same manner, we conceive that her weakness of mind might afford an excuse for *impolitic*, but not for *cruel* measures.

The sickness with which she was afflicted during a great part of her reign, will not cause us to look with any less repugnance upon the atrocities of her bloody persecution. If compunction ever visits the cruel, it will surely be when they are suffering themselves under the pangs of disease.

Of a similar character is her argument, that the faults of Elizabeth were more inexcusable than those of her sister, from her superiority in intellect and policy; for we think that most of her faults arose from vanity, for which great intellectual powers afford no necessary antidote; indeed, as they give some foundation for pride, they tend rather to induce, than to restrain it.

We presume, however, that Ida will not allow, that vanity was the source of most of her culpable actions, for she has given a very dark picture of what she calls Elizabeth's vanity, which she thinks could have been drawn only after reading the prejudiced narration of Agnes Strickland, who is a catholic, and the constant defender of Queen Mary, and enemy of Elizabeth, who had so successfully suppressed the catholic religion. On some of these traits of character, we will give the opinions of Hume, an infidel, who would therefore be impartial; and of Hannah More, who is considered by all, a clear and discerning, and not an impartial judge.

Ida calls her "the most shameless and intriguing of coquettes;" and her coquetry, and these intrigues, were often the result of a feeling; and when such, were frequently restrained and broken off, when the interests of her kingdom required it. Hume says, "the force of the tender passions was great over her; but the force of her mind was still superior; and the combat which her victory visibly cost her, serves only to display the firmness of her resolution and the loftiness of her ambitious sentiments."

Though "the most selfish and sensual of friends, all whose emotions were passions; who required of her favorites nothing less than adulation, for which she bartered most disgustingly in state offices;" yet, Hannah More says, that "in one instance only, her favoritism was prejudicial to the state;" so that her choice must have been placed upon the worthiest individuals, and not been dictated by sensual motives. She is said to have had a "concentrated selfishness, which could endure no rival;" yet, the only "rivalship," of which Hume speaks in his excellent character of Queen Elizabeth, is that of "beauty"—arising from a kind of vanity, certainly, not worthy the name of "concentrated selfishness."

We do not wish, however, to gloss over the faults of Queen Elizabeth; many of the statements of Ida are true; but we are still of opinion, that most of them had their origin in a vanity which does not deserve the name of "vice." We would rather call it the foible, and not the vice of a strong mind (and strong minds have foibles as well as weak ones)—Napoleon took snuff,

and Robert Hall smoked tobacco; but would we call these the vices of their powerful minds? Elizabeth became so vain, when she grew old, that she would not look in the mirror, for fear of seeing her deformities, and thus, on one occasion, got her nose painted red, by her attendants, instead of her cheeks; and shall we call this "the vice of her strong mind?"

After all, we think the more equitable plan is, to take Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth just as they were—without saying anything as to what faults Elizabeth's strength of mind ought to have corrected, (which has nothing to do with the question,) but simply drawing a comparison between their various qualities, as we find them. If excusing, or non-excusing circumstances are to be brought forward at all, there would be found a very large number excusing the conduct of Elizabeth. Witness the noble manner in which she made everything, even her faults, subservient to the good of her subjects; the more unlimited her control over her family, her court and her people, the more the advantages which she procured for them. However inordinate her attachment to favorites, she lavished no treasures upon them, nor swerved for a moment from that prudent economy, which was one of the most distinguishing virtues of her reign. It is better, however, to take them as history has handed them down to us, and this brings us to our original position, stated in the commencement of this article.

Which, among all the depraved dispositions of the human heart, do we most detest? Cruelty. Who has the worst name in the whole of earth's history? Nero. But, when a woman, she whose crowning virtue and native atmosphere is kindness, drenches herself in blood, like another Nero, what place should we assign to her in the annals of crime? We are filled with horror, when we read the barbarities of a Domitian, but find ourselves at a loss for words to express our feelings, when we see a young Queen, educated in a christian country, commit nearly the same enormities.

That Mary was exceedingly cruel, scarcely needs any proof. In less than four years, two hundred and seventy-seven victims were led to the stake; besides great numbers who suffered by imprisonment, fines, and confiscations. The young and the old, the peasant and the bishop, the blooming maiden and the aged matron, were alike consigned to the flames; but exhibited an unyielding constancy and a heavenly tranquillity, which will be remembered as long as the cruelty which placed them there. One would imagine her agents were inhuman enough, of themselves; but the Queen, "by her letters, exhorted them to pursue the pious work without pity or interruption." The same slaughter was intended to be perpetrated on the fields of the "Emerald Isle," but was prevented by a fortunate accident. Doctor Cole received the royal commission to "lash," as he called it, "all the heretics in Ireland;" but, while he was on his journey, a landlady, fearing for a near relative in Dublin, managed to substitute a pack of cards for the fatal document. He did not perceive the mistake till he reached his destination, and then contrary winds prevented his return for another, until the death of the Queen put an end to the career of bloodshed.

But, if cruelty is the worst trait in the female character, vanity, on the other hand, is the one which is treated with the greatest indulgence, and considered more in the light of a failing than a crime. Even if we supposed Elizabeth to possess the whole catalogue of faults, which Ida has so vividly charged against her, still their criminality would bear no comparison to that of the cruelty which Queen Mary displayed. Catharine De Medici possessed haughtiness, intrigue, coquetry, and selfishness, in a very high degree; yet, these will be forgotten, while her memory will be rendered forever execrable for the part which she took in the fearful massacre of St. Bartholomew's day.

We cannot forgive Elizabeth for a few foibles, during a glorious reign of forty-five years; but Mary's concentrated wickedness, in hers of only five, is comparatively excusable. We can brand Elizabeth with the epithets of "a haughty virago," "the most shameless and intriguing of coquettes," "the most selfish and sensual of friends," because she sometimes gave vent to "her womanish vanity;" but Mary, because she was feeble in mind and in body, could commit murder by wholesale, and only be said to have "allowed impolitic measures," and "sacri-