

Mackay. Again it is Oliver, striding up the aisle of St. Stephen's, dismissing, with the authority of one whom nature has made a king, the ancient parliament of England. Or it is Burnet, full of vulgar curiosity, and by the sheer power of blundering impertinence, effecting a reconciliation between the noblest of men and the most affectionate of women.

Notwithstanding Macaulay's extreme command over the light and sunny artifices of rhetoric, he must not be regarded as a mere literary juggler, or as a trifler with the minds of men. We are certain that he possessed a noble and tender heart. If this were not known from the history of his life, it would yet be easily seen by every reader of his works. His earlier essays especially, those of which he professed to be ashamed, but his peculiar fondness for which shewed itself even in his very act of condemning them, are full of an exalted love and commiseration. That plenitude of love which he gave to Milton was given not to the mere genius of Milton, but chiefly to that heroism which is so inseparably connected with Milton's genius. The profound and stupendous isolation of Milton's character, the one Puritan among poets, the one poet among Puritans, the man who pressed into the forlorn hope, the glory of heterodoxy, the very prophet of the spirit of rebellion, whose bold pamphlets were preached down from the pulpit of the Westminster Assembly, whose Arian bones were not allowed to give a new consecration to Westminster Abbey, the man who, after suffering every earthly calamity, and being deprived of the sight of external nature, still continued to think of those fountains that warble as they flow, and those birds that ascend with music to the gates of heaven, it is little wonder that such a character should have exerted a spell over his heart. Nor did he

regard without affection those who, possessing like greatness of nature and passing through like sufferings, did not display such Herculean powers of resistance. He was fascinated by the study of the lives of those most unhappy of men, the great men of mediæval Italy. For them he had the pity which a great mind has for kindred spirits whose lives have been spent in a less fortunate age.

Macaulay is often condemned for treating with too great severity those literary aspirants who had been less successful than himself. But he justly defends himself in saying that it is due to our regard for the dignity of a really classical literature that it should be sharply and jealously distinguished from pretentious and vicious authorship.

Another point of accusation against him, one that is too light to weigh seriously, is that he was disrespectful towards his remote ancestors, the Scottish Highlanders. The business of a historian is truth; and if the Scottish Highlanders of the seventeenth century were a race of thieves and assassins, Macaulay is not to be blamed for saying so. His patriotism was not the patriotism of a mountain tribe. He looked up at the rafters of Westminster Hall as the civil temple of his country; he read the measures of the *Faerie Queen* and *Paradise Regained* as the works of his kinsmen, kinsmen by adoption if not kinsmen by blood. In him we forget the Celtic lineage and the barbaric prefix. If his ancestors were distinguished by ignorance and grossness, he strove to be distinguished by knowledge and refinement. If they were violators of every human law, he ministered at the very altar of Themis. If he is blamed for being unlike his remote ancestors, it is little wonder that he should be blamed for differing from his immediate father, the distinguished Zachary Macaulay. That two men