

THE HERO OF ENGLISH LAW REFORM.

as well as to other descriptions of property, in reference to which actions to recover for damages for injury may be brought. On the contrary, ever so little an encroachment on the soil would entitle the plaintiff to seek protection by the interference of the Court."

(To be continued.)

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"HAVE I a genius for legislation?" I gave myself the answer, fearfully and tremblingly, 'Yes.'" At the early age of twenty Jeremy Bentham came to this decision. The mode in which he arrived at it, is strikingly illustrative of the earnestness of purpose that marked his life from its beginning. He had been asked to define genius for the entertainment of his friends, before whom he was displaying his youthful precocity. At the time he was unable to do so, but subsequent reflections on its etymology convinced him that its proper meaning was "production." He then set himself to consider what was the most important earthly pursuit, and adopted the opinion of Helvetius, that it is legislation. His life was thenceforth devoted to that work, and he amply justified the decision which his self-knowledge had led him to arrive at so early in life. He was called to the bar, but the natural disgust of a mind inspired by an intense love of justice with the irrational mode in which it was then administered, quickly drove him from the profession. On one occasion, he found that an opinion he had given, which was right according to all the accessible authorities, was proved wrong by the production of a decision, recorded only in a secret manuscript. Such an occurrence was not infrequent before the system of official reporting was intro-

duced. In his twenty-second year, he happily discovered a phrase which served as a guiding star to his labours and the watchword of his faith. "The greatest happiness of the greatest number," a phrase found in the writings of Priestley, had as great an influence upon his mind as the sentence "*securus judicat orbis terrarum*" had subsequently in determining the direction and ultimate goal of Newman's opinions. Sir Roland Wilson, in his excellent "History of Modern Law," justly observes that Bentham's phrase, which has been the subject of so much ridicule by Carlyle and others, substantially denotes the same thing to which others prefer to apply such terms as right, duty, justice, will of God.

Bentham, in his sixteenth year, had listened to a few of the lectures of Sir William Blackstone, and his first work was an attack on that author's theory of government, contained in the introductory chapter of his "Commentaries." This "Fragment on Government," in its re-translation from the French of Dumont, is now perhaps the best known of Bentham's works, and at the time of its anonymous publication in 1776, attracted great attention, and was attributed by some to Lord Mansfield. His next appearance was on Blackstone's side, in an endeavour to make his Hand Labour Bill intelligible to the public, and to excite public interest in the objects it had in view. After the termination of his relations with Lord Shelburne, he withdrew into the strictest privacy for the remainder of his life, which reached the mature age of eighty-three, avoiding society and all personal contact with his opponents. The obvious disadvantages of this plan of life greatly marred his work. "Paying little attention to the labours of others, and working out every problem for himself, he occasionally announced things generally known with the air of an original discoverer. The seclusion