

"The other morning," writes Mrs. More, "the Captain of one of Commodore Johnson's Dutch prizes breakfasted at Sir Charles Middleton's, and related the following little anecdote. One day he went out of his own ship, to dine on board another. While he was there a storm arose, which, in a short time, made an entire wreck of his own ship, to which it was impossible for him to return. He had left on board two little boys, one four, the other five years old, under the care of a poor black servant. The people struggled to get out of the sinking ship into a large boat, and the poor black took his two little children, and having tied them into a bag, and put in a little pot of sweatments for them, slung them cross his shoulder and put them into the boat. The boat by this time was quite full; the black was stepping into it himself, but was told by the master there was no room for him, so that either he or the children must perish, for the weight of both would sink the boat. The exalted heroic negro did not hesitate a moment. Very well said he, give my duty to my master, and tell him I beg pardon for all my faults.— And, then, guess the rest—plunged to the bottom never to rise again, till the sea shall give up her dead. I told it the other day to Lord Monboddo, who fairly burst into tears. The greatest lady in this land wants me to make an elegy on it, but it is above poetry."

It does not appear that Mrs. More was the subject of any sudden change in her religious views. It seems to have been with her gradual, and, as we may hope from her after-life, a progressive work. In her earliest years she was much given to reading and reflection; and her books were not limited to any particular school, but she ranged over the whole compass of our British literature. Now, the greatest danger incident to such discipline, is lest the mind should receive a bias prejudicial to the calm investigation of truth. And that this was one of no small amount in the case of this lady, is manifest from her temperament and position in society. Endowed by her Maker with the highest powers of intellect, she had cultivated these in early years by strenuous application. She possessed, moreover, a fine imagination and lively wit, as well as the faculty of conveying her sentiments in a pleasing style. She was surrounded too by a coterie of devoted admirers, ready to cheer her on in the career of literary reputation and honor, and beyond this circle was the reading community of Britain, prepared already to listen to her strains, and to sound her name over the earth. On this side the Atlantic was a sister community, prejudiced indeed by their recent politics, but still belonging to the same great republic of letters with their brethren in the east. Hannah More had entered the lists, and by her tragic muse had gained for her brows the unfading wreath; and when all eyes were intent upon her, and her friends had anticipated she would rival the great poets and dramatists of past times, she retired from the arena, confessing that genius, with all its graces and honors, was only vanity. Had her reading been confined to Dryden and Shakspeare, and such writers, doubtless she might have proceeded in

the course she had begun; but, Britain has a sacred literature, originating with the great reformation, and proceeding downwards through successive generations,—like a great river, it diffuses itself over its banks, and our authoress, straying by its margin, was led to taste of its waters. Many have said they are bitter, but she found them to be sweet, and the more that she drank, she relished them the more. The High Church, in their sectarianism, would claim Hannah More as their own, and seek favor from the ignorant, because she was of their communion; but in this they are unjust to other men. If she was of their communion, her dignitaries had but a partial share in teaching her religion. She drew it rather from the school of the Puritans than the High Church, and from Mathew Henry than Beilby Porteous. And that we do not in any measure overstate the matter, is plain from her own testimony while she was moving in the fashionable circles. And so on one occasion, in the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, referring to a conversation with Johnson, she says:—

"I was very bold in combating some of his darling prejudices; nay, I ventured to defend one or two of the Puritans, whom I forced him to allow to be good men and good writers."

Were the subject not of too serious a cast, one could scarcely restrain a laugh at the effect which Johnson's pedantry must have had over the mind of this female writer. What was he compared with the least of the Puritans? The bat might as well have been compared with the eagle soaring in the pure vault of heaven, with the rays of the meridian sun streaming over his pinions; as the verbose, semi-heathen papers of the Idler and Rambler, with the pure, evangelical writings of Baxter or of Owen. And yet, here we find Johnson, a mere coiner of phrases, raised so high in her estimation, that it is needful to become an apologist for one or two of them; and even this small act of clemency requires an exercise of boldness. That Mrs. More should be led to esteem the character of a Puritan is not wonderful, since she had received much spiritual benefit from their writings. It was about this period, as she mentions in one of her letters, that she spent much of her time in reading the works of a worthy son of the Puritans, Mr. Mathew Henry; drinking out of this pure fountain of evangelical truth, it is no wonder she became a low Church-woman in principle as well as practice, and was often ill at ease when invited to the card-playing parties of certain officials, who wished to consider her as their own. Mrs. More, indeed, was evidently, at this time, receding from the High Church, as the following passage will shew:—

"On Monday I was at a very great assembly at the Bishop of St. Casaph's. Conceive to yourself one