

and presided over by a monarch who claimed the allegiance of all, had not broken down in England. This loyalty, like Protestant piety, was braced by the peculiar dangers of the State, and by the special perils to which the life of a virgin queen was now exposed. It had little in common with decrepit affection for a dynasty, or with such homage as nobles paid their prince in the Italian despotisms. It was fed by the belief that the commonwealth demanded monarchy for its support. The Stuarts had not yet brought the name of loyalty into contempt; and at the same time this virtue, losing its feudal rigidity, assumed something of romantic grace and poetic sentiment. England was personified by the lady on the throne.

In his statesmanship, Sidney displayed the independent spirit of a well-born Englishman, controlled by loyalty as we have just described it. He was equally removed from servility to his sovereign, and from the underhand subtleties of a would-be Machiavelli. In serving the queen he sought to serve the State. His Epistle on the French Match, and his Defence of Sir Henry Sidney's Irish Administration, revealed a candour rare among Elizabeth's courtiers. With regard to England's policy in Europe, he declared for a bold, and possibly a too Quixotic interference in foreign affairs. Surveying the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, Spanish tyranny and national liberties, he apprehended the situation as one of extreme gravity, and was by no means willing to temporise or trifle with it. In his young-eyed enthusiasm, so different from Burleigh's world-worn prudence, he desired that Elizabeth should place herself at the head of an alliance of the Reformed Powers. Mature experience of the home government, however, reduced these expectations; and Sidney threw himself upon a romantic but well-weighed scheme