

LXIV.

ADMIRAL BLAKE AT BRIDGEWATER.

Robert Blake, "Admiral and General at Sea," was born in 1598, at Bridgewater, in a house of the Tudor age, which remains to this day; adjoining is the secluded garden, in which "the ruddy-faced and curly-haired boy, Robert Blake, played and pondered, as was his habit, until the age of sixteen." He was sent early to the Bridgewater Grammar School, which had been founded some five-and-forty years before, and endowed by Queen Elizabeth; and was then considered one of the best foundations of its kind in England. "At the Grammar School he made some progress in his Greek and Latin; something of navigation, shipbuilding, and the routine of sea duties he probably learned from his father, or from his father's factors and servants. His own taste, however, the habit of his mind, and the bent of his ambition, led to literature. He was the first of the race who had shown any vocation to letters and learning, and his father, proud of his talents and his studies, resolved that he should have some chance of rising to eminence. Nor was this early culture thrown away. At sixteen he was already prepared for the university, and at his earnest desire was sent to Oxford, where he matriculated as a member of St. Alban's Hall, in 1615." He removed to Wadham College, and there remained several years, took the usual honours, and completed his education; and in the great dining-hall of Wadham a portrait of the Admiral is shown with pride as that of its most illustrious scholar. Blake, in good time, took his degree of Master of Arts at Oxford; he had read the best authors in Greek and Latin, and wrote the latter language sufficiently well for verse and epigram. Even in the busiest days of his public life, it was his pride not to forget his old studies.

LXV.

WALLER'S DULNESS.

Edmund Waller, the poet, one of the best examples of poetic style and diction, was born at Coleshill, in Berkshire, in 1605, and was sent early to the Grammar School or Market Wickham, where he was said to be "dull and slow in his task." Mr. Thomas Bigge, of Wickham, who had been Waller's schoolfellow, and of the same form, told Aubrey, that "he little thought that Waller would have made so rare a poet; for he was wont to make his exercise for him." He was removed at an unusually early age to King's College, Cambridge, where his scholastic attainments are said to have led to his being elected member of parliament for the borough of Aymouthesham at the age of 16; though this is, with greater probability, attributed to Waller's name and local influence.

This account of Waller's dulness at school is probable; for says Mr. Bell, "it indicates the character of Waller's genius, which demanded time and labour in the accomplishment of the smallest results."

Aubrey describes Waller's writing as "a lamentable hand, as bad as the scratching of a hen;" but this is an exaggeration, and disproved by his autograph, which is, however, very rare.

Waller took his seat in the House of Commons before he was the age of 17. He became (as Bishop Burnet expresses it) "the delight of the House," and, when old, "said the liveliest things of any among them." Being present once, when the Duke of Buckingham was paying his court to the King, by arguing against Revelation, Mr. Waller said; "My Lord, I am a great deal older than your Grace; and have, I believe, heard more arguments for atheism than ever your Grace did; but I have lived long enough to see there is nothing in them: and so, I hope, your Grace will." Waller died in 1682, in his 33rd year.

LXVI.

DR. BUSBY, HEAD MASTER OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

This most eminent schoolmaster of his time, who is said, in the *Genus Alumnorum*, "to have educated the greatest number of learned scholars that ever adorned at one time any age or nation," was born at Luton, in Northamptonshire, in 1606. Having passed through Westminster School, he was elected student of Christ Church, Oxford; but he was so poor that he received the sum of 5*l.* of the parish of St. Margaret, to enable him to proceed bachelor; and 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* to proceed master of arts: as entered in the Churchwarden's accounts. Of this timely aid he made a noble acknowledgment by making a bequest of 50*l.* to poor housekeepers, an estate worth 52*l.*, and in personal property nearly 5000*l.*, to St. Margaret's parish.

Busby achieved a great reputation at Oxford, as an "exact Latinist and Grecian," and likewise for his power of oratory. While still a resident in the university, he acted the part of Cratander, in

Cartwright's *Royal Slave*, before the King and Queen at Christchurch, when being more applauded than his fellow-students, his success excited in him so violent a passion for the stage, that he had well nigh engaged himself as an actor.

In 1640 he was appointed master of Westminster School. During the Civil War, though he was ejected from his church appointments, but was allowed to retain his studentship of Christchurch, and the chief mastership of the school, a tribute to his pre-eminent qualities as an instructor. He laboured in his masorahip during more than half a century; and by his diligence, learning and assiduity, has become the proverbial representative of his class.

Dr. Busby is said to have been not only witty, learned, and highly accomplished, but also modest and unassuming: his piety was unaffected, and his liberality unbounded. He died in 1695, and was interred in Westminster Abbey. His works were principally for the use of his school, and either consist of expurgated editions of certain classics which he wished his boys to read in a harmless form, or grammatical treatises, mostly metrical. There is a tradition that some of these were the compositions of his scholars, superintended and corrected by himself. Several of his publications, more or less altered, were used in Westminster School until a few years since.

The severity of Busby's discipline is traditional, but we do not find that it was so; and strange as it may appear, no records are preserved of him in the school over which he so long presided. The charitable intentions of his will are carried into effect by old Westminsters, who meet in the Jerusalem Chamber. The picture by Biley of Dr. Busby with one of his scholars, said to be Philip Henry, is in the Hall at Christchurch; there are also other portraits of him, and a bust of him by Rysbrack; all from a cast in plaster taken after death, for during his life he never would sit for his portrait. Bagshaw states that he never spoilt the rod by sparing the child: according to Dr. Johnson, he used to call the rod his "sieve," and to say "whoever did not pass through it was no boy for him." Pope thus commemorates one of the class:—

"Lo! a spectre rose, whose index-hand
Held forth the virtues of the dreadful wand.
His beaver'd brow a birchen garland wears,
Drooping with infants' blood and mothers' tears.
O'er every vein a shudd'ring horror runs,—
Eton and Winton shake through all their sons.
All flesh is humbled; Westminster's bold race
Shriek and confess the genius of the place:
The pale boy senator yet tingling stands,
And holds his garments close with quiv'ring hands."

Nevertheless, Busby was much beloved by his scholars, as may be seen by letters from Cowley, Dryden, and others. He is said to have taken especial pains in preparing his scholars for the reception of the Eucharist.

Wood describes him as "eminent and exemplary for piety and justice, an encourager of virtuous and forward youth, of great learning and hospitality, and the chief person that educated more youths that were afterwards eminent in the Church and State than any master of his time."

LXVII.

LORD CLARENDON.

Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, one of the illustrious men whose talents were called into action by the Civil Wars, was born in 1633, at Dinton, near Salisbury, where his father enjoyed a competent fortune. He was first instructed at home by the clergyman of the parish, who was also a schoolmaster; but his principal improvement arose from the care and conversation of his father, who had travelled much in his youth. Edward, being a younger son, was destined for the church; and with this view was sent to Magdalen College, Oxford, in his fourteenth year. But on the death of his eldest brother, which soon after took place, his destination was altered; and he was now designed for the profession of the law. He quitted the University with the reputation rather of talents than of industry; and from some dangerous habits in which he had been initiated, he afterwards looked on this early removal as not the least fortunate incident of his life.

He commenced his professional studies in the Middle Temple, under the direction of his uncle, Sir Nicholas Hyde, then treasurer of that Society. His early legal studies were impeded by his health. Nor was his application considerable after his recovery; he lost another year amidst the pleasures of dissipation; and when his dangerous companions had disappeared, he still felt little inclination to immerse himself amidst the records of the law. He was fond of polite literature, and particularly attached to the Latin classics; he therefore bestowed only so much attention on his les-