

others; men, all of them, not merely of great talents and accomplishments, but of vast compass and reach of understanding, and of minds truly creative and original; not perfecting art by the delicacy of their taste, or digesting knowledge by the greatness of their reasonings, but making vast and substantial additions to the materials upon which taste and reason must hereafter be employed, and enlarging to an incredible and unparalleled extent both the stores and the resources of the human faculties."

It is impossible to account for so great a fertility of mind at one period. The strong impulse of the Reformation could not but have its influence, and it was then too that England became more widely acquainted with the literature of the Continent, as well as with the classical writers of antiquity. Elizabeth too was a great encourager of learning and genius; nor did her successor fail in this respect. But none of these causes seem adequate to the effect. Jeffrey's analogy does not help us, when he compares the works of that period to "the productions of a soil for the first time broken up, when all indigenous plants spring up with a rank and irrepressible fertility, and display whatever is peculiar and excellent on a scale the most conspicuous and magnificent." We are inclined to think this is an illustration rather than a real analogy. There may, for aught we know, be a correspondence between the mind and the soil in the circumstances described; but we cannot definitely pronounce that it is so. To make the analogy good we must be prepared to say, that as the cultivation of a nation's mind proceeds, mind itself decreases, great and original powers decay, productive talent diminishes or disappears. This surely could not be maintained. It is not the same mind, as it is the same soil, that is wrought upon by successive cultivation: the soil may be exhausted, but there is ever new mind coming forward; besides, it were strange if mental cultivation exhausted the mind as physical does the soil. Indeed what is called cultivation, in the one instance, is rather simply taking out of the soil, in the way of crops, what may or may not be returned to it, under a wise or an ignorant system of husbandry: is mental cultivation anything like this? There followed indeed on the revival of learning in Italy something like what took place in England at the Reformation; and that was just the period of Italy's greatest names, of Dante and Petrarch; and it was then too that Giotto gave its new impulse to Art. The most useful discoveries and inventions also followed upon, or soon after, the revival of learning. The fresh stimulus given to thought by any such event may have an effect both as to the originality and the vigour which mind may exhibit. There seems to be some connexion between any great event and the development of mind. The struggles immediately preceding the commonwealth would appear to have had their influence in the production of such characters as Hampden and Pym, and such writers as the great Puritans, and Milton, and the ruling spirit of Cromwell. Thought is called out at such periods, and has scope for exercise, and materials upon which to be exercised. Has America yet exhibited an equal to Washington and Franklin? But instead of seeking an explanation in any secondary causes, shall we not rather find it in the designs of Providence, which has at particular periods great purposes to accomplish, and raises up the instruments for their accomplishment? Such results, too, are seldom brought about by any one cause or influence, but generally by a number of conspiring causes, converging to one point, a climax or consummation. It is perhaps "the long result of time," the outcome of many previous years, the blossom of the ages, the product of centuries.

It would be impossible to dwell at length upon individual writers of this