

brief, general, without being abstract, and expressed in terms of authority, not of argument, yet commonly so reasonable as to carry with it the intrinsic evidence of its own fitness. It was understood by the simplest of the unlettered age for which it was intended. It was remembered by them, and although they did not perceive the extensive consequences which might be derived from it, their feelings were, unconsciously, elevated by its comprehensiveness and its grandeur.

From this time forth new life and spirit were infused into the English people. Long enslaved and subject to the caprices of tyrants they became, although much was yet to be desired, a truly free people, who felt their power and who wisely exerted it.

No sculptured marble marks the spot where Freedom achieved its first triumph over despotism on English soil. Yet to him who thinks on Runnymede and the glory which it suggests the following lines of Akenside serve for a lasting memorial :

“Thou who the verdant plain dost traverse here
While Thames among his willows from thy view
Retires; O stranger, stay thee, and the scene
Around contemplate well. This is the place
Where England's ancient Barons, clad in arms
And stern with conquest, from their tyrant King
(Then render'd tame) did challenge and secure
The Charter of thy Freedom. Pass not on
Till thou hast blessed their memory and paid
Those thanks which God appointed the reward
Of public virtue. And if chance thy house
Salute thee with a father's honoured name,
Go, call thy sons; instruct them what a debt
They owe their ancestors; and make them swear
To pay it, by transmitting down entire
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.”