

MONK'S LIFE OF BENTLEY.*

We opened the book bearing the name of so celebrated an individual, with eager anticipations of gratification ; we have closed it with feelings of disappointment and regret. Early taught to look up to the name of Richard Bentley with respect and awe, we had considered him as one of those mighty individuals, whom Providence sends upon the earth to astonish and instruct mankind ; we trembled at the audacity of the satirist, who dared to ridicule that learning which he could not comprehend, and we turned from the reports of the disputes in his college with surprise, that there could be found in that seat of learning, any who did not feel themselves honoured by being placed under the guidance of such a scholar. But all these visions have now faded away. The faithful narrative of Bentley's life opens to our view such a picture of human weakness and human meanness, that we enter upon the review of it as a task, which duty to our numerous readers compels us to perform, but which we feel the greatest reluctance to undertake. We shall not anticipate. The explanation of this change of feeling will come full soon.

Richard Bentley was born in Yorkshire, in 1662, of a family certainly not wealthy, for he was entered a sub-sizar of St. John's college, Cambridge ; and we find him, after taking his first degree with great credit, accepting the situation of master of the grammar-school of Spalding ; and, when he had remained there about a year, entering into the family of the dean of St. Paul's, as private tutor to his son. An absurd statute of St. John's college, which remained in force till within a very few years, had prevented him from obtaining a fellowship, which his character gave him a right to look for ; but two of the fellows were from Yorkshire, and the statute prohibited more to be taken from any county. His having been admitted into college at the early age of fourteen, gave intimation of his talents and his diligence : his being chosen by Edward Stillingfleet, as the tutor of his eldest son, affords a sufficient proof that he had not disappointed the expectations which had been formed. Had he then adopted the line of study in which his patron was so eminently distinguished, it cannot be doubted that the name of Bentley would now stand in the highest rank as a theologian. His acuteness as a disputant ; his memory, tenacious to retain and ready to supply whatever he had once known ; † and his unwearied diligence, would suffice to satisfy us that such would have been the result, even were we destitute of other proof ; but other and abundant proof we have in his sermons at Boyle's lectures, and in his replies, under the signature of *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis*, to Collins. But, unfortunately, his attention had been turned at a very early age, by what means does not appear, to the metres of Terence ; and investigations of a similar kind, useful indeed, but to which men of far inferior abilities might have been adequate, engrossed a very disproportionate share of his attention

* The life of Richard Bentley, D.D. Master of Trinity College, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge ; with an account of his writings, and anecdotes of many distinguished characters, during the period in which he flourished. By James Henry Monk, D.D. Dean of Peterborough. London : Rivingtons, 1830, 4to. pp. lxxiv. 668, price £3. 3s.

† It is impossible to read even his first work, his observations on *Malala*, without being convinced of the tenaciousness, and, if we may use the phrase, the promptness of his memory. His accounting for a mistake in his *Phalaris*, by attributing it to the badness of his memory, we confess, does not influence our opinion against the internal evidence which his writings afford.

through the whole course of his life. With respect to Terence, he appears to have thought his success so complete, as to imagine that he had recovered the true mode of reciting his comedies, and he undertook to teach Lord Carteret the true *cantilena* of the ancients. His chant, it seems, was not very musical—for a lady who happened to hear it, reproached his Lordship for having kept him till he became intoxicated, which he must have been, she said, or he never could have sung so ridiculously.

We acknowledge the utility of metrical researches, and we reflect with astonishment upon the proficiency of Bentley, who commenced them, we believe, and who certainly arrived at an acquaintance so intimate, not only with the Latin but the Greek metres, the rules of which, even in the days of Martial,* appear to have been reckoned among the arcana of literature, that we believe he still remains without a rival. But we cannot help thinking, that abilities such as Bentley's, ought to have had higher employment. It seems to us, that the rules of prosody might have been discovered by the aid of mere memory and diligence. We wish that Bentley, instead of stopping at *syllables*, had at least advanced to *words*, and given to the world an edition of the Greek lexicographers, as he had at one time intended; or, what, perhaps, would have been a more useful work, an edition of *Hesychius*, freed from those errors the causes of which he had discovered, and augmented and improved with all that his own unlimited reading supplied. But it was not Bentley's fate to become celebrated by becoming useful. He was introduced to the learned world by critical observations on the chronicle of *Malala*, subjoined to an edition published at Oxford by *Mill*, in the form of an epistle to that distinguished scholar. Few works in the Greek language are less read, we believe, than *Malala*, but the Prolegomena by *Hody*, and the *Epistola ad Millium* by *Bentley*, give value to this edition. Bentley had not, at the time this work was published, attained his thirtieth year; but the learning displayed in his observations was such as to excite the admiration of *Grævius* and of *Spanheim*, by whom he was styled, *splendidissimum lumen*, and *lucidum sidus, literatæ Britannicæ*. His biographer admits, that the style of this work is *flippant and somewhat boastful*, a remark against which the reviewer of the life in *Blackwood's Magazine* protests strongly, declaring that *he had read it over without finding any foundation for it in a single instance.*

We should be inclined to say, that there appear to us grounds, not merely for the guarded censure thus exclaimed against, but for something much more severe. We shall give a few extracts in support of our opinion:—

“*Solus adeo me docuit Hesychius, et fortasse solum. Alios, qui depravata ejus verba non poterant intelligere, non item. Again—Hesychii locum emendatum curabo, quem nec ille (this ille is only Casaubon!) nec alius quisquam intelligere videtur. Yet again—Illud alterum Hesychii peccatum, scuticâ dignum! We shall add but one more, relating also to Hesychius. Quam turpiter autem hic se dedit, adeoquidem ut hominis me pudeat pigeatque!*”

These expressions seem to us, not merely *somewhat boastful*, but eminently arrogant. Not *flippant*, but insolent. The style of the letter appears to have produced a very unfavourable feeling in the distinguished scholar, who had contributed a valuable preface to this edition of *Malala*. We allude to *Hody*, who was chaplain to bishop *Stilling-*

* Vide *Epig.* ix. lib. 2.

fleet, along with *Bentley*. Much learning had been displayed in *Bentley's Epistola ad Millium*, to prove that the chronicler's name should be written *Malelas*. *Hody* replied in a short dissertation, which concludes with this remarkable passage :

" *Faxit Numen*
 Ut vel æterno ego silentio inter non scribentes delitescam,
 Vel semper ut virum *ingenuum, liberalis ac generosæ educationis*
Veræque philosophiæ studiosum decet, scribam :
 Veritatis unicæ indagator
 Absque omni styli acerbitate
 Mitis, urbanus, candidus,
 Ad id quod indecens est adeo non pronus ut nec movendus :
 Nugarum denique contemptor."

Before *Bentley's* next classical publication, he seems to have been unfortunate enough to have established a character far different from that here depicted, as we collect from an incidental circumstance connected with it. The Hon. Charles Boyle, of Christ Church, Oxford, had undertaken to publish the epistles of *Phalaris*. A MS. copy was in the king's library. *Bentley*, the librarian, was applied to for it ; he lent it—but it was alleged that he recalled it before it could be collated, and in the preface to the *Phalaris*, this circumstance was mentioned in very harsh terms—*pro singulari sua humanitate*, is the expression by which the act was characterised. Now, we believe, that the complaint against *Bentley* was not well founded, but we rely upon the language employed as proving not merely the opinion of the writer, but his reliance upon his being supported in his attack by the general voice. Had he been attacking *Hody*, he would have felt the necessity of using language far different. But enough of this. The *Emollit mores nec sinit esse feros*, was certainly not the effect of the *Literæ Humaniores* upon the critics of that day ; we mean not to represent *Bentley* as without associates in the use of the scalping knife and the tomahawk, but merely to state that in this, *the first of his fields*, he warred with the fierceness, as well as with the skill of a veteran.

His second contest arose out of the publication of a book, of value inferior even to the chronicle of *Malala*, these epistles of *Phalaris*. *Bentley* questioned their genuineness, and, in proving from internal evidence, that centuries must have elapsed between the reign of *Phalaris* and the time at which they were written, displayed an extent of learning, which astonished even those who were acquainted with his observations on *Malala*. He had the advantage—for to him it was an advantage to meet an opponent with whom it was creditable to contend,—to be answered in the name of Boyle, by the combined classical strength of Christ Church ; and that his triumph in reply was complete, is now universally acknowledged. Thus established at the early age of six and thirty, as decidedly the greatest classical scholar in England, and conscious that even on the continent, there were none who would willingly contest his pre-eminence, it is more to be lamented than wondered at, that thenceforward he bore not "meekly his high faculties," but, treating commentators with contempt, almost adventured to question the authority of the writers themselves upon whose works he exercised his daring pen. *Ego vero Ciceronem ita scripsisse, ne ipsi quidem Ciceroni affirmanti crediderim*,* indicated, perhaps, more truly, the reliance he had upon his own judgment, than he was aware of when he made use of

* Ep. ad Mill. p. 80.

the expression. That with such a disposition the critical works of Bentley should abound more in daring alterations, than in judicious corrections will not be wondered at, and the consequence has been that no classic published by him has become a standard work.

This controversy about the epistles of Phalaris, called into action all the talents, and all the learning of Bentley. His sagacity in discovering the points of attack, the skill with which he brings his arguments to bear upon them, and the prodigious extent of reading manifested in collecting those arguments, cannot be paralleled in any controversial writing, which we recollect to have seen. If a city is mentioned, history is searched for the name of its founder, chronology for the period at which he lived, and thence it is shown, that in the time of Phalaris it had not existed. Perhaps it had existed, and then we learn the history of its change of name, and that the name by which Phalaris is made to denominate it, had not been used till long after he was dead. A work of art is mentioned. The origin of the name by which it is called is investigated. It is that of an artist. The age at which he lived is discovered from *Athenæus*, and his testimony confirmed by a fragment of *Eubulus*, a poet who had been the artist's contemporary. This appears to have been that of *Aristophanes*, and thus it is proved, that the earliest of his comedies was not written till more than a century after the death of Phalaris. Forms of expression which occur in the epistles are examined, and traced to authors who flourished long after the time of Phalaris. Among these is an Iambic verse, given as a quotation, and hence we are led into the history of the Greek drama, and proof given that the earliest dramatic production had been long subsequent to the time of Phalaris. This leads to a discussion on words, Bentley proving that the word *Tragedy*, which occurs in the epistles, was not in use in the time at which they are pretended to have been written. Other words are found of a similar description, and even the variations in the meaning of words is investigated, and some are shown to be used in these epistles, in significations which *Phalaris* could not have given them. In proving these letters to be a forgery, Bentley has shown how difficult it is to fabricate writings in such a manner as to place the fraud beyond the reach of detection; and thus teaches us the true value of the argument in support of the genuineness of our sacred writings, which Patey has given us in his *Horæ Paulinæ*.

His second dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris was printed in 1699. In 1702 he declared his intention of publishing an edition of Horace; but ten years passed away without its appearance; and when it did come from the press, it was with every disadvantage of imprudent haste. The text was printed, with all the alterations,—not suggested in the margin or proposed in notes,—but actually substituted for the received readings, as of unquestionable authority—a confidence of which, it is believed, no other instance can be produced. When the notes to defend these alterations were to be written, Bentley himself confesses, in his preface, that he had altered his mind upon more than twenty of them! The cause of his precipitancy in publishing, we shall have occasion to notice, when treating of his proceedings as Master of Trinity College. That preface has been most justly censured for the display of overweening vanity which it exhibits. He describes in it the qualifications necessary for an editor who undertakes to restore the text of a classic. First stating it to be indispensable that he should be completely acquainted with all the Greek and Latin authors, he proceeds:

“Est et peracri insuper iudicio opus: est sagacitate et ἀγχιβολία; est, ut de Aristarcho olim prædicabant, divinandi quadam peritia et μαριχῆ: quæ, nulla laborandi pertinacia, vitæ longinquitate acquiri possunt, sed naturæ solius munere, nascendique felicitate contingunt.”

Of these qualifications his manner of writing shows that he assumed to be possessed.* We do believe, indeed, that he did possess them in a more eminent degree, than any editor of modern times. But his confidence that he possessed them, marred their use, leading to a rash reliance upon his own opinions, which prevented him from employing that caution in forming them, that we must beg leave to deem at least equally important with any of the qualifications he had enumerated. There are qualities, somewhat of a moral nature, that should exercise a wholesome control in regulating the judgment, which has often a difficult task in restraining the vanity of making discoveries where others have not even made inquiries; of finding errors which had not been suspected; and of suggesting alterations which called for talents far different from those the decyphering of a manuscript would require.

Whether Bentley, in his Horace, gave proof of such an exercise of judgment, may, we believe, be conjectured from the mere fact, that his edition altered the common readings in between seven and eight hundred places! That in many of these, the qualities which he stated as necessary for an editor have been eminently displayed, is, we believe, universally acknowledged; but that those qualities alone were not sufficient, very many, indeed, of his alterations would equally prove. We do not intend to enter into a discussion upon the text of this edition; but we cannot avoid taking a glance at the celebrated change of *tornatos* into *ternatos*, in the Art of Poetry, supported as it was by Grævius, who, assuming that Horace was incapable of falling into such a fault as a confusion of metaphors, concludes his censure upon all the defenders of the common reading, with *Quid enim torno cum incude?* Perhaps it might be a sufficient reply to this question to say, *idem quod plumis cum pisce*; and refer to the first sentence of the Art of Poetry, in proof that, even Horace was not always on his guard. But, in fact, the word *Tornus* was used very loosely by the poets of that age, for we find it in Virgil,† employed to signify a graving tool; and what is more to our purpose, we find it in Propertius applied to the forming verses, *Angusto versus includere torno*. If the word must be changed, we should prefer the later conjecture of *formatos*, mean as the expression appears to us to be, to sending the verses back, a thrice unfortunate offspring, to try their chance of being born a fourth time from their parent anvil, under better auspices.

The Horace was attacked from various quarters. The enemies of Bentley were not few, and, as might be expected, but too well inclined to employ against him a severity of language, of which he had so often given them examples. Eight pamphlets, if we mistake not, appeared within a very short period, all written with more ill temper, than talent and research; nor did hostilities terminate with these. Ten years after, Cuninghame, whose abilities were equal to the task, and whose diligence was unwearied, brought out an edition of Horace, in which he examined

* His classical recollections would have readily supplied him with the words which Cicero gives to Crassus, when describing the qualities of an orator, “Nunquam mehercule, hoc dicerem, si eum, quem fingo, meipsum esse arbitrarer;” had any feeling of modesty existed in his mind.

† Ecl. iii. 38.

Bentley's emendations with unsparing severity: but, here too, Bentley was fortunate in an antagonist, who chose to imitate his vituperative style, rather than write with the coolness which becomes a gentleman and a scholar, and who indulging in manifold emendations of his own, perpetually exposed himself to the criticism of his reader, and turned attention away from Bentley's mistakes, to the consideration of his own.

His next classical publication was Terence, the text of which he altered from the common editions in more than a thousand places, and in a very great proportion of this great number his alterations have been approved. It was, indeed, a work for which he was peculiarly well qualified, by his intimate acquaintance with the metrical laws by which the comic writer was governed, and the extraordinary correctness of his ear, which enabled him to perceive, and to correct what was amiss. His success in this work becomes a matter of astonishment, when it is considered that he allowed himself but a week to write the notes on each play. Twelve years, indeed, had elapsed since the publication of his Horace, and he had very early in that period turned his thoughts towards Terence, but his time had been engaged in business which absorbed his whole attention, and Terence was forgotten till the publication of an edition by Dr. Hare, the dean of Worcester, roused him to a sudden and felicitous exertion,—in every respect felicitous, except the angry spirit with which he attacks Hare's edition throughout the whole of his notes, in language selected as most likely to gall and irritate the object of it.

It was understood that Hare intended to publish an edition of Phædrus. In an unfortunate moment of irritation, Bentley resolved to anticipate him, and soon after Terence he sent out a Phædrus, with a greater proportion of indefensible alterations than in any other of his works, and with notes, which bore but little mark of the learning of their author. This unworthy attempt was punished as it deserved. Hare, however angry at the treatment which he had met with from Bentley, did not permit his resentment to overpower his prudence, but employing more than a year in preparing remarks upon the Phædrus, he effected more, in a volume of one hundred and fifty pages, towards depreciating the reputation of Bentley, than any of his former adversaries.

The last classic which Bentley published was Manilius: the edition had been prepared nearly half a century before. It does not appear to have excited much attention, and is characterised by Monk in the cold terms, of containing more to be approved than condemned. Of the latter class appears to be his rejection of many verses as spurious, which did not deserve the censure; and this leads us to consider his edition of Milton. To this most unfortunate attempt, he was induced by Queen Caroline, who had expressed a wish to see a specimen of his critical skill exercised upon an English author. He was almost entirely destitute of the learning requisite to understand Milton. With the Italian writers, to whom Milton was so much indebted, he had no acquaintance. Of the early writers of Romance, he was equally ignorant. Nor can we, in enumerating his disqualifications for the task, stop here. He had no poetical talent; the *mens divini* of the poet, which should exist in no mean degree in the commentator upon a poet, was not to be found in Bentley. To the *Os magna sonans*, no chord in his heart responded. Yet under all these disadvantages, he, relying upon that *divinandi peritia* and *μαρτυρη*, which he claimed to possess, undertook to discover what Milton had intended to write, and to substitute it for what his ignorant and most presumptuous editor had introduced, relying on Milton's

blindness for protection from discovery. Never, surely, was so wild a scheme. To a limited extent, such as Elijah Fenton had suggested, serving to correct such words as might have deceived the ear of an amanuensis, an editor might have made some use of this circumstance; but carried to the extent of changing, not merely words of this nature, but whole lines, nay passages of ten or twenty, or even fifty lines together, and that too, when it was known that a second edition of the work was published during Milton's life, could be apologised for by nothing but actual dotage—an apology which cannot be offered, for Bentley was in full possession of his faculties. We can see in it nothing but an inordinate vanity, excited by the occasion beyond all former limits, and wildly anxious to show that he was worthy of the queen's notice, by a performance such as no man before him had dared to attempt.

We have opened the edition at random, and in a single page we find the following alterations—(Book xii. line 556,)

“Eternity, whose *end* no eye can reach”—

Here Bentley substitutes *extent* for *end*, proving his want of ear for English versification, and showing that he did not perceive that *extent* is more properly applied to space than to duration; nor that the form of expression he substitutes merely denotes indefinite greatness, not infinity. Again, (line 565,)

“————— with good
Still overcoming evil; and by small
Accomplishing great things”—

Bentley proposes to change to

“————— and great things
Accomplishing by small”—

Not perceiving the force given to the expression by calling attention first to the inadequateness of the agent, to say nothing of the injured harmony of the two lines. But his want of ear is most conspicuous in his changing (line 538,)

“To good malignant, to bad men benign,”

Into

“Malignant to good men, to bad benigna,”

A line which, even if it were free from the gross fault of a double alliteration, could not be endured by any person who had an ear for poetry. How remote Bentley's feelings were from those of Milton, and how incapable he was of discriminating between what was genuine, and what (if any such there were) was spurious, may be judged from his having rejected, in the fourth book, the eighteen lines beginning with “*nor that fair field,*” and in the third book, the fifty-four lines, beginning with

“None yet, but store hereafter from the earth.”

It is unnecessary to point out the internal evidence which these passages bear, of having come from the pen of Milton. But let us turn from this subject.

Besides the publications which we have mentioned, Bentley contributed valuable assistance to many others, and much of his time was occupied in preparing an edition of the Greek Testament, and also one of Homer, which he did not live to finish. To his labours upon Homer, we owe the revival of the Greek digamma, and with it the explanation of many anomalies in Homer's versification. This discovery alone would have been sufficient to place him in a very high rank as a commentator. He could not be satisfied until he had removed every

difficulty which occurred in the great poet's versification, and not succeeding to his wish he would not publish.

The idea of publishing an edition of the Greek Testament had been entertained by Bentley, so early as the year 1716, and he announced with great confidence, that it should be *exactly agreeable to the best copies in the time of the Council of Nice, not differing in twenty words, or even particles, and carrying a demonstration of being thus perfect in every verse.* His plan was to print, in two columns, the Vulgate and the Greek, both corrected from ancient manuscripts, *which should agree word for word, and order for order, so that no two tallies, nor two indentures could agree better.*

That his attention should ever, even for a moment, have been turned away from such a work, is quite unaccountable. He lived for six and twenty years after it had been announced. To have completed it, would have placed him in a rank far above that of a classical scholar or a critical commentator. It would have entitled him to the highest seat among those who have laboured in the service of religion. And while we wonder that such a prospect of fame did not suffice to keep him steady in his great purpose, more serious feelings arise in our mind, and we lament that the voice of duty, a duty so imperative, was disregarded.

We have now done with Bentley, as a classical scholar, and we turn to him as a theologian. Of the expectations which were very early formed of his proficiency in divinity, a strong proof was given by his being chosen, when but in deacon's orders, to preach the first series of sermons at the lectures founded by the celebrated Robert Boyle. His subject was a confutation of Atheism, which had made considerable progress in consequence of the writings of Hobbes. In treating this subject, Bentley was eminently successful. His arguments were intelligible to those who were not competent to understand the learned works of Cudworth and Cumberland, and thenceforward Atheism began to shelter itself under a pretence of some form of Deism. These sermons, eight in number, are published in the *collection of sermons preached at Boyle's lecture.* The words of Bishop Monk, who pronounces that *this department of natural theology has, perhaps, never yet been so satisfactorily illustrated,* prove sufficiently that their author was fully equal to the task imposed upon him. Two years afterwards he was again appointed preacher at those lectures, but his sermons have not been published, though the publication was solicited earnestly, and promises given, that the solicitations should be complied with. These sermons were said to be in existence in 1778, but into whose hands they have fallen cannot be discovered.

Twenty years elapsed, ere we find Bentley's pen again employed in defence of religion. Under the designation of Phileleutherus Lipsiensis, he published his admirable answer to *Collins's Discourse on Freethinking.* The first part having been universally applauded, a second speedily followed with equal success. Some years afterwards, at the suggestion of the Princess of Wales,* he undertook to complete the work by printing a third part, and a sheet was actually printed, when taking offence at not being supported in a dispute about his fees as divinity professor, which Conyers Middleton had refused to pay as unreasonable and unprecedented, he discontinued the work, saying, *that those whom he wrote for, were as bad as those whom he wrote against.* We should have hoped that the professor of divinity would have undertaken a defence of Christianity with views far different from those disclosed in these unhappy words.

* Afterwards the celebrated Queen Caroline.

And now we must come, however reluctant, to review the conduct of Bentley, as Master of Trinity College—a situation which, unfortunately for the College and for himself, he held for upwards of forty years. We should have been inclined to pass as lightly as possible over these transactions, had it not become necessary to enter somewhat deeply into them, in order to vindicate the honest and public-spirited men by whom he was opposed, from the censures passed upon them by a reviewer in BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, who adopts a declaration of Doctor Parr's, that "*Bentley was eminently right, and the College infamously wrong;*" and follows it with the avowal of a principle, which we are sorry to find that any man should entertain, and amazed that he should openly acknowledge: "*That though such had not been the case, yet, at this time of day, Bentley should be pronounced right, and his enemies utterly in the wrong—lest the current of our sympathies with an illustrious man should be unpleasantly distracted between his talents on the one hand, and his knavery on the other!*"

Fiat justitia, be our motto. Let us state fairly the case between Bentley and those honest and disinterested men who opposed his rapacious tyranny, at the expense of their time, their peace, and their fortune. We must begin by a brief statement, which may counteract the authoritative decision of Doctor Parr. Bentley was tried for his conduct as Master of Trinity College, by two successive Visitors, Bishop Moore and Bishop Greene, and the result of each trial was a sentence of deprivation. Let us go into the detail of his conduct. His first act as Master showed his rapacious and tyrannical spirit. He extorted from the bursar, by threats, a large sum of money, which was the undoubted property of his predecessor in the Mastership.

The reviewer to whom we have referred, tells us, indeed, that "*We may characterise his conduct as one continued series of munificent patronage to literature, beneficial reforms in college usages and discipline, and finally, by the most splendid and extensive improvements of the college buildings.*" Now, these improvements in college buildings consisted mainly in most expensive alterations in his own residence, made by his own order, without the consent of the senior fellows, which, by the statutes, he was obliged to ask—and that to the amount of upwards of four thousand pounds, an enormous sum of money at that time. As to discipline, he who showed a bad example, by neglecting the performance of his highest duty, can scarcely be supposed to have contributed much to its improvement. Now, one of the accusations against Bentley, and one which was proved, was, that for twenty years he had scarcely ever been seen at prayers in the college chapel, in the morning; and that for the last ten years he had as seldom been seen there in the evening. His conduct, indeed, in this respect was so notorious, that it became a practice not to light the candles in his stall; and when, after his restoration to his degree in 1724, he went to the chapel, the lock of his stall had from long disuse become so rusty that he could not open it. Bentley attempted to defend himself by a plea of ill-health—a ridiculous one, when it is recollected, that at the commencement of the period of his neglect he was but forty-seven years of age, and that he lived to be above eighty; and so it was judged to be on trial.

But he was a munificent patron of literature. It is true that for the first five or six years of his Mastership, he regarded only the merits of the candidates for Fellowships; but in 1706, to gratify one of his partizans, he appointed his nephew, a young man of bad character, and every way unfit, to a Fellowship. And this act, wrong in itself, he

made worse, by doing it irregularly. There had been a custom of electing into future vacancies, and such appointments were denominated *præ-elections*. This was thought an abuse, and prohibited expressly by a king's letter, in the time of James the First; but Bentley revived the practice in this instance, and entrenched himself in a new name, calling it a *presumption*. And this being submitted to by the Fellows, who, instead of being impatient under his proceedings, really permitted him to play the tyrant much too long, he had two Fellows appointed by *presumption* the next year, and never gave up the practice. "*Having made one deviation from the path of justice, he never afterwards returned to it.*" Such is the remark of Whiston, who considered this as his first breach of integrity. Of the shameless use which he made of the power of appointing Fellows, it may be sufficient to give one instance: He made his son a Fellow at the age of fifteen!

His management with respect to Scholarships was a curious instance of audacious knavery. He prohibited any students from being candidates except those he named, and he limited the number nominated to the amount of vacancies—thus assuming to himself the absolute appointment. That his appointments were matters of favour, and that he had not always the decency to conceal their being so, is proved by an anecdote relative to Pearse, whom he appointed a Fellow at the recommendation of the Chief Justice—saying to him, "My Lord has made me your friend, let him make you mine!"

The disposal of College livings, as of Fellowships and Scholarships, he kept in his own hands, making it an instrument of favour or of vengeance. No Fellow could hold a living unless he was a preacher, and the nomination of the preachers lay with the Master; nor did he disguise the purpose for which he employed this power. To a Fellow who applied to him to be appointed preacher, he said, "You must change sides before you can be judged fit to be a college preacher." It is scarcely necessary to add, that the Fellow had been one of his opponents. This practice was coupled with another directly injurious, inasmuch as it prevented the students from receiving instruction of the most important kind. The statutes direct that on every Sunday and holiday a lecture on some part of the Catechism shall be read in the chapel; and for this purpose five or six of the Fellows are to be nominated, one of whom, whenever a vacancy occurs, is to be appointed a preacher. For years these places were kept vacant, that the Master might have a double power over the approach to a college living.

After suffering long under this misrule, the Fellows lodged a complaint with the Bishop of Ely, as being Visitor of the College. A question arose as to the validity of the statute under which it was supposed he had this power. Bentley, conscious of the consequences that would attend a trial, put in practice every art that his own ingenuity or that of his counsel could suggest, to prevent such an event. Nor did he rest here, but cultivated higher interests; and it was with this view that he hurried forward his edition of Horace, dedicating it to Harley, then Prime Minister, and professing in his dedication to follow the example of Horace, in changing his party, looking for such forgiveness for his former political conduct as Mæcenas had given.

After a delay of four years Bishop Moore heard the cause, but died before he pronounced his decision. The sentence, however, was found ready prepared; and it declared Bentley guilty of having wasted the goods and violated the statutes of the college, and removed him from the Mastership. The cause had thus fallen to the ground. Fleetwood,

who succeeded to the Bishopric of Ely, could never be persuaded to hear it, alarmed by the disputes about his being Visitor. Thus matters remained for nine years. In 1723 Greene succeeded him, and in 1734 heard the appeal against Bentley. His sentence was the same as that formerly pronounced by Bishop Moore. But, by an extraordinary provision in the statutes of the college, the execution of the Visitor's sentence is given to the Vice-Master. Bentley took care to have a Vice-Master who would not execute it; and thus he remained, though sentence of deprivation had actually been pronounced against him, Master of Trinity College till his death.

There are other parties who had a share in these transactions, little creditable to them. When a dispute existed of such magnitude, and such duration, in a college of Royal Foundation, involving not only the present but the future interests of the society, to leave it without a visitor was to leave it a prey to incurable dissension; it was clearly the duty of ministers to advise the crown to pass a new statute removing the difficulty, or if any legal difficulty impeded such a proceeding, to bring in a bill to settle the question for ever. But to favour a convert to their party, to reward the contrivance which procured an address, or the activity which supported their candidate at an election, were of greater consequence in their eyes than the interests of the first college in Cambridge, and the ministers did neither the one nor the other. Nor was the conduct of the judges of the King's Bench blameless. They must at once have seen the importance of the question. They must have known that delay was Bentley's object;—that he was at no expense in the suit, but that the college, or in other words, the complainants, would have to pay both his expenses and their own. This may demand a word of explanation. The surplus at the end of each year becomes a dividend, in that college, among the Fellows, and thus, whatever expense the college may be at, ultimately falls upon the Fellows. The law expenses paid by the college for Bentley's costs, in these proceedings amounted to above £4000. They cost the complainants, therefore, double that sum. We know not whether this practice of dividends exists in other colleges in Cambridge or in Oxford. Its not existing in Dublin college, makes this explanation more necessary.

But to return to the King's Bench. It was the duty of the judges to grapple immediately with the real difficulties of the question, instead of which they spent four or five years in listening to every point of form that ingenuity could suggest, and in inventing some themselves calculated only to delay a decision of the question. The proceedings in that court were not confined to the question relating to the visitatorial power. Other suits arose in the course of the contest. Dr. Colbatch, the much respected leader of the party, who undertook the cause of the college against Bentley, published a pamphlet upon the Rights of the University, to show that no prohibition would lie from the Court of King's Bench, such as had been applied for by Bentley, against their Courts of Judicature. In this he had said, that

“A strange doctrine had got into Westminster-hall, and was likely to continue, unless notice was taken of it in Parliament, that the king's pardon could stop proceedings for the reformation of manners, or *pro salute animæ*, in the Spiritual Courts.”

He asks,

“How will the Reverend Judges of the King's Bench resent their being surprised into such a thing?”

And then remarks that,

“It had been a general observation of foreign writers, often made good in England, that they who design to subvert the laws and liberties of any nation commonly begin with the privileges and immunities of the Universities.”

And these paragraphs were tortured into a libel on the Court of King's Bench, by the judges, Pratt, Powis, Eyre, and Fortescue, and bail, to the enormous amount of £2000, was required from the printer, and two sureties, the prosecution being, in the first instance, against him; a demand which these Whig judges well knew he could not comply with, and which was evidently a violation of the great charter that guards the liberty of the subject, by prohibiting excessive bail. But Colbatch, the real object of persecution, was a Tory. Colbatch, at length, was brought before the court to receive sentence for the libel, and Powis, as senior puisné judge, pronounced it. He wished to enlarge the charge, and for that purpose had recourse to the motto of the pamphlet—

“*Jure negat sibi nata, nihil non arrogat.*”

This, evidently meant for Bentley, Powis took up as an attack upon the judges, and repeated it three times, changing each time the word *arrogat*, to *abrogat*, alleging that Colbatch charged the judges with abrogating the law. Colbatch corrected the error, but the court said he could not be listened to, as he was in contempt! and Pratt, and Eyre, and Fortescue, listened to their blundering and ignorant brother, Powis, censuring, in their name, Colbatch for writing what they knew he never had written. But Colbatch was a Tory.

It is impossible to read the life of Bentley, without perceiving that he maintained himself in his situation, by making himself useful to the minister of the day, changing his politics with that hardened effrontery, which was a prominent feature in his character. Of character, indeed, his biographer, though sufficiently lenient, pronounces him to have been utterly careless. Bishop Monk's words are—

“His aim was always to distress and baffle his antagonists, while it must be allowed that he seemed strangely regardless of the opinion which might be entertained of the rectitude of his own conduct.”

We have stated enough to satisfy the reader, that Bentley was not *eminently right* in his conduct, but we cannot refrain from adding a few more instances. He appointed one of the fellows, Miller, to be the college lawyer. Some years afterwards, Miller gave his assistance in drawing up the articles of accusation against him, and he struck his name off the boards for not being a physician! After some time, he found it expedient to court him, and he bribed him with between five and six hundred pounds, *of the college money*, to withdraw his aid from the prosecution!

Nor did he disdain petty profit. As Master, he was allowed to draw upon the college butler for bread, beer, and fuel; this he not only did to an enormous extent, nearly £300 in one year—a sum more than equivalent to £600 at the present day—but when he took four private pupils into his house, he continued to draw for this increased family! Among his buildings was a barn, into which he brought the tithe-corn from his parish, and sold it to the college steward at high prices, and not always of good quality. In the setting of leases, too, he committed gross frauds, by favouring his own family. Most truly does Bishop Monk give his character, in assigning his reasons for not entering into the particulars of it. His words are:

“It appears to me, that his passions were not always under the control, nor his actions under the guidance of Christian principles; that, in conse-

quence, pride and ambition, the faults to which his nature was most exposed, were suffered to riot without restraint; and that hence proceeded the display of arrogance, selfishness, obstinacy, and oppression, by which it must be confessed that his career was disfigured."

The Bishop adds, that nature had not denied him certain amiable qualities of the heart, and that he possessed in a considerable degree many of the social and endearing virtues, as appeared by the warm and steady affection with which he was regarded by his family and intimate friends. This it has never been attempted to question; but it lies like a feather in the scale, against the great weight of evil with which his character is loaded, in the description we have just now copied. We look not to his private life, but to his conduct as the Master of Trinity College—and we hesitate not at inverting the words of Doctor Parr, and pronouncing, "*that the College was eminently right, and Bentley infamously wrong.*"

THE MURDERED TRAVELLER.

(AN INCIDENT ON THE SOUTHERN ROAD.)

"Hallo, waiter."

"Coming, Sir."

"Has my horse been fed?"

"He has just had his oats, Sir."

"Did you see that his near hind shoe was secured, as I desired?"

"All's right, Sir: the smith is only this moment gone."

"Well, my good fellow, please to have him saddled and brought round in about half an hour; meantime, you may amuse yourself by making out my bill."

The servitor vanished, and the gentleman was left alone to his meditations and a pint of port. He was evidently an old and experienced traveller, well appointed in all respects for the road; he was a stout-built, well-fed Englishman, exhibiting that thoughtful and practical expression of countenance which so much characterises the man of business in the sister island. He had already travelled twenty Irish miles, and nearly the same number yet intervened between where he then was, and the village at which he purposed to put up for the night. He had not been long in Ireland; and the tales he had read and heard repeated (too often grossly exaggerated) of pikes sixteen feet long, of houghings, burnings, and other aboriginal amusements, had not conveyed an over-favourable impression regarding the country he had undertaken to journey through. Evening was fast closing in; and when from the window he looked on the wide black bog through which his road lay—presenting as it did, after a heavy day's wet in November, a dismal contrast to the level surface of the English 'turnpike road,'—and then turned alternately to the pleasant turf fire which glowed upon the hearth, and to the fine old wine that sparkled seductively in his glass, he sighed at the thought of resigning the comforts which these conferred, for the cheerless misery which that presented. He was not a man, however, to be easily depressed; so, finishing his port, and ordering a few more sods to the fire, he mixed, by way of a finisher, a fiery tumbler, strongly impregnated with the 'spirit of the mountain.' He then turned his huge 'Petersham,' so as to acquire more of the genial influence of the blazing turf, and proceeded to examine his arms. These consisted of a