CHAPTER IX - JOHN KNOX AND HIS RELATIONS TO WOMEN

I. - THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT FEMALE RULE.

WHEN first the idea became widely spread among men that the Word of God, instead of being truly the foundation of all existing institutions, was rather a stone which the builders had rejected, it was but natural that the consequent havoc among received opinions should be accompanied by the generation of many new and lively hopes for the future. Somewhat as in the early days of the French Revolution, men must have looked for an immediate and universal improvement in their condition. Christianity, up to that time, had been somewhat of a failure politically. The reason was now obvious, the capital flaw was detected, the sickness of the body politic traced at last to its efficient cause. It was only necessary to put the Bible thoroughly into practice, to set themselves strenuously to realise in life the Holy Commonwealth, and all abuses and iniquities would surely pass away. Thus, in a pageant played at Geneva in the year 1523, the world was represented as a sick man at the end of his wits for help, to whom his doctor recommends Lutheran specifics. (1) The Reformers themselves had set their

affections in a different world, and professed to look for the finished result of their endeavours on the other side of death. They took no interest in politics as such; they even condemned political action as Antichristian: notably, Luther in the case of the Peasants' War. And yet, as the purely religious question was inseparably complicated with political difficulties, and they had to make opposition, from day to day, against principalities and powers, they were led, one after another, and again and again, to leave the sphere which was more strictly their own, and meddle, for good and evil, with the affairs of State. Not much was to be expected from interference in such a spirit. Whenever a minister found himself galled or hindered, he would be inclined to suppose some contravention of the Bible. Whenever Christian liberty was restrained (and Christian liberty for each individual would be about coextensive with what he wished to do), it was obvious that the State was Antichristian. The great thing, and the one thing, was to push the Gospel and the Reformers' own interpretation of it. Whatever helped was good; whatever hindered was evil; and if this simple classification proved inapplicable over the whole field, it was no business of his to stop and reconcile incongruities. He had more pressing concerns on hand; he had to save souls; he had to be about his Father's business. This short-sighted view resulted in a doctrine that was actually Jesuitical in application. They had no serious ideas upon politics, and they were ready, nay, they seemed almost bound, to adopt and support whichever

ensured for the moment the greatest benefit to the souls of their fellow-men. They were dishonest in all sincerity. Thus Labitte, in the introduction to a book (2) in which he exposes the hypocritical democracy of the Catholics under the League, steps aside for a moment to stigmatise the hypocritical democracy of the Protestants. And nowhere was this expediency in political questions more apparent than about the question of female sovereignty. So much was this the case that one James Thomasius, of Leipsic, wrote a little paper (3) about the religious partialities of those who took part in the controversy, in which some of these learned disputants cut a very sorry figure.

(1) Gaberel's EGLIST DE GENEVE, i. 88.
(2) LA DEMOCRATIE CHEZ LES PREDICATEURS DE LA LIGUE.
(3) HISTORIA AFFECTUUM SE IMMISCENTIUM CONTROVERSIAE DE GYNAECOCRATIA. It is in his collected prefaces, Leipsic, 1683.

Now Knox has been from the first a man well hated; and it is somewhat characteristic of his luck that he figures here in the very forefront of the list of partial scribes who trimmed their doctrine with the wind in all good conscience, and were political weathercocks out of conviction. Not only has Thomasius mentioned him, but Bayle has taken the hint from Thomasius, and dedicated a long note to the matter at the end of his article on the Scotch Reformer. This is a little less

than fair. If any one among the evangelists of that period showed more serious political sense than another, it was assuredly Knox; and even in this very matter of female rule, although I do not suppose any one nowadays will feel inclined to endorse his sentiments, I confess I can make great allowance for his conduct. The controversy, besides, has an interest of its own, in view of later controversies.

John Knox, from 1556 to 1559, was resident in Geneva, as minister, jointly with Goodman, of a little church of English refugees. He and his congregation were banished from England by one woman, Mary Tudor, and proscribed in Scotland by another, the Regent Mary of Guise. The coincidence was tempting: here were many abuses centring about one abuse; here was Christ's Gospel persecuted in the two kingdoms by one anomalous power. He had not far to go to find the idea that female government was anomalous. It was an age, indeed, in which women, capable and incapable, played a conspicuous part upon the stage of European history; and yet their rule, whatever may have been the opinion of here and there a wise man or enthusiast, was regarded as an anomaly by the great bulk of their contemporaries. It was defended as an anomaly. It, and all that accompanied and sanctioned it, was set aside as a single exception; and no one thought of reasoning down from queens and extending their privileges to ordinary women. Great ladies, as we know, had the privilege of entering into monasteries and cloisters, otherwise forbidden to their sex.

As with one thing, so with another. Thus, Margaret of Navarre wrote books with great acclamation, and no one, seemingly, saw fit to call her conduct in question; but Mademoiselle de Gournay, Montaigne's adopted daughter, was in a controversy with the world as to whether a woman might be an author without incongruity. Thus, too, we have Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigne writing to his daughters about the learned women of his century, and cautioning them, in conclusion, that the study of letters was unsuited to ladies of a middling station, and should be reserved for princesses. (1) And once more, if we desire to see the same principle carried to ludicrous extreme, we shall find that Reverend Father in God the Abbot of Brantome, claiming, on the authority of some lord of his acquaintance, a privilege, or rather a duty, of free love for great princesses, and carefully excluding other ladies from the same gallant dispensation. (2) One sees the spirit in which these immunities were granted; and how they were but the natural consequence of that awe for courts and kings that made the last writer tell us, with simple wonder, how Catherine de Medici would "laugh her fill just like another" over the humours of pantaloons and zanies. And such servility was, of all things, what would touch most nearly the republican spirit of Knox. It was not difficult for him to set aside this weak scruple of loyalty. The lantern of his analysis did not always shine with a very serviceable light; but he had the virtue, at least, to carry it into many places of fictitious holiness, and was not abashed by the

tinsel divinity that hedged kings and queens from his contemporaries. And so he could put the proposition in the form already mentioned: there was Christ's Gospel persecuted in the two kingdoms by one anomalous power plainly, then, the "regiment of women" was Antichristian. Early in 1558 he communicated this discovery to the world, by publishing at Geneva his notorious book - THE FIRST BLAST OF THE TRUMPET AGAINST THE MONSTROUS REGIMENT OF WOMEN. (3)

(1) Oeuvres de d'Aubigne, i. 449.

(2) Dames Illustres, pp. 358-360.

(3) Works of John Knox, iv. 349.

As a whole, it is a dull performance; but the preface, as is usual with Knox, is both interesting and morally fine. Knox was not one of those who are humble in the hour of triumph; he was aggressive even when things were at their worst. He had a grim reliance in himself, or rather in his mission; if he were not sure that he was a great man, he was at least sure that he was one set apart to do great things. And he judged simply that whatever passed in his mind, whatever moved him to flee from persecution instead of constantly facing it out, or, as here, to publish and withhold his name from the title-page of a critical work, would not fail to be of interest, perhaps of benefit, to the world. There may be something more finely sensitive in the modern humour, that tends more and more to withdraw a man's personality from the

lessons he inculcates or the cause that he has espoused; but there is a loss herewith of wholesome responsibility; and when we find in the works of Knox, as in the Epistles of Paul, the man himself standing nakedly forward, courting and anticipating criticism, putting his character, as it were, in pledge for the sincerity of his doctrine, we had best waive the question of delicacy, and make our acknowledgments for a lesson of courage, not unnecessary in these days of anonymous criticism, and much light, otherwise unattainable, on the spirit in which great movements were initiated and carried forward. Knox's personal revelations are always interesting; and, in the case of the "First Blast," as I have said, there is no exception to the rule. He begins by stating the solemn responsibility of all who are watchmen over God's flock; and all are watchmen (he goes on to explain, with that fine breadth of spirit that characterises him even when, as here, he shows himself most narrow), all are watchmen "whose eyes God doth open, and whose conscience he pricketh to admonish the ungodly." And with the full consciousness of this great duty before him, he sets himself to answer the scruples of timorous or worldly-minded people. How can a man repent, he asks, unless the nature of his transgression is made plain to him? "And therefore I say," he continues, "that of necessity it is that this monstriferous empire of women (which among all enormities that this day do abound upon the face of the whole earth, is most detestable and damnable) be openly and plainly declared to the world, to the end that some may

repent and be saved." To those who think the doctrine useless, because it cannot be expected to amend those princes whom it would dispossess if once accepted, he makes answer in a strain that shows him at his greatest. After having instanced how the rumour of Christ's censures found its way to Herod in his own court, "even so," he continues, "may the sound of our weak trumpet, by the support of some wind (blow it from the south, or blow it from the north, it is of no matter), come to the ears of the chief offenders. BUT WHETHER IT DO OR NOT, YET DARE WE NOT CEASE TO BLOW AS GOD WILL GIVE STRENGTH. FOR WE ARE DEBTORS TO MORE THAN TO PRINCES, TO WIT, TO THE GREAT MULTITUDE OF OUR BRETHREN, of whom, no doubt, a great number have heretofore offended by error and ignorance."

It is for the multitude, then, he writes; he does not greatly hope that his trumpet will be audible in palaces, or that crowned women will submissively discrown themselves at his appeal; what he does hope, in plain English, is to encourage and justify rebellion; and we shall see, before we have done, that he can put his purpose into words as roundly as I can put it for him. This he sees to be a matter of much hazard; he is not "altogether so brutish and insensible, but that he has laid his account what the finishing of the work may cost." He knows that he will find many adversaries, since "to the most part of men, lawful and godly appeareth whatsoever antiquity hath received." He looks for

opposition, "not only of the ignorant multitude, but of the wise, politic, and quiet spirits of the earth." He will be called foolish, curious, despiteful, and a sower of sedition; and one day, perhaps, for all he is now nameless, he may be attainted of treason. Yet he has "determined to obey God, notwithstanding that the world shall rage thereat." Finally, he makes some excuse for the anonymous appearance of this first instalment: it is his purpose thrice to blow the trumpet in this matter, if God so permit; twice he intends to do it without name; but at the last blast to take the odium upon himself, that all others may be purged.

Thus he ends the preface, and enters upon his argument with a secondary title: "The First Blast to awake Women degenerate." We are in the land of assertion without delay. That a woman should bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire over any realm, nation, or city, he tells us, is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, and a subversion of good order. Women are weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish. God has denied to woman wisdom to consider, or providence to foresee, what is profitable to a commonwealth. Women have been ever lightly esteemed; they have been denied the tutory of their own sons, and subjected to the unquestionable sway of their husbands; and surely it is irrational to give the greater where the less has been withheld, and suffer a woman to reign supreme over a great kingdom who would be allowed no authority by her own fireside. He appeals to the Bible; but

though he makes much of the first transgression and certain strong texts in Genesis and Paul's Epistles, he does not appeal with entire success. The cases of Deborah and Huldah can be brought into no sort of harmony with his thesis. Indeed, I may say that, logically, he left his bones there; and that it is but the phantom of an argument that he parades thenceforward to the end. Well was it for Knox that he succeeded no better; it is under this very ambiguity about Deborah that we shall find him fain to creep for shelter before he is done with the regiment of women. After having thus exhausted Scripture, and formulated its teaching in the somewhat blasphemous maxim that the man is placed above the woman, even as God above the angels, he goes on triumphantly to adduce the testimonies of Tertullian, Augustine, Ambrose, Basil, Chrysostom, and the Pandects; and having gathered this little cloud of witnesses about him, like pursuivants about a herald, he solemnly proclaims all reigning women to be traitoresses and rebels against God; discharges all men thenceforward from holding any office under such monstrous regiment, and calls upon all the lieges with one consent to "STUDY TO REPRESS THE INORDINATE PRIDE AND TYRANNY" OF QUEENS. If this is not treasonable teaching, one would be glad to know what is; and yet, as if he feared he had not made the case plain enough against himself, he goes on to deduce the startling corollary that all oaths of allegiance must be incontinently broken. If it was sin thus to have sworn even in ignorance, it were obstinate sin to continue to

respect them after fuller knowledge. Then comes the peroration, in which he cries aloud against the cruelties of that cursed Jezebel of England - that horrible monster Jezebel of England; and after having predicted sudden destruction to her rule and to the rule of all crowned women, and warned all men that if they presume to defend the same when any "noble heart" shall be raised up to vindicate the liberty of his country, they shall not fail to perish themselves in the ruin, he concludes with a last rhetorical flourish: "And therefore let all men be advertised, for THE TRUMPET HATH ONCE BLOWN."

The capitals are his own. In writing, he probably felt the want of some such reverberation of the pulpit under strong hands as he was wont to emphasise his spoken utterances withal; there would seem to him a want of passion in the orderly lines of type; and I suppose we may take the capitals as a mere substitute for the great voice with which he would have given it forth, had we heard it from his own lips. Indeed, as it is, in this little strain of rhetoric about the trumpet, this current allusion to the fall of Jericho, that alone distinguishes his bitter and hasty production, he was probably right, according to all artistic canon, thus to support and accentuate in conclusion the sustained metaphor of a hostile proclamation. It is curious, by the way, to note how favourite an image the trumpet was with the Reformer. He returns to it again and again; it is the Alpha

and Omega of his rhetoric; it is to him what a ship is to the stage sailor; and one would almost fancy he had begun the world as a trumpeter's apprentice. The partiality is surely characteristic. All his life long he was blowing summonses before various Jerichos, some of which fell duly, but not all. Wherever he appears in history his speech is loud, angry, and hostile; there is no peace in his life, and little tenderness; he is always sounding hopefully to the front for some rough enterprise.

And as his voice had something of the trumpet's hardness, it had something also of the trumpet's warlike inspiration. So Randolph, possibly fresh from the sound of the Reformer's preaching, writes of him to Cecil:- "Where your honour exhorteth us to stoutness, I assure you the voice of one man is able, in an hour, to put more life in us than six hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears." (1)

(1) M'Crie's LIFE OF KNOX, ii. 41.

Thus was the proclamation made. Nor was it long in wakening all the echoes of Europe. What success might have attended it, had the question decided been a purely abstract question, it is difficult to say. As it was, it was to stand or fall, not by logic, but by political needs and sympathies. Thus, in France, his doctrine was to have some future, because Protestants suffered there under the feeble and treacherous

regency of Catherine de Medici; and thus it was to have no future anywhere else, because the Protestant interest was bound up with the prosperity of Queen Elizabeth. This stumbling-block lay at the very threshold of the matter; and Knox, in the text of the "First Blast," had set everybody the wrong example and gone to the ground himself. He finds occasion to regret "the blood of innocent Lady Jane Dudley." But Lady Jane Dudley, or Lady Jane Grey, as we call her, was a would-be traitoress and rebel against God, to use his own expressions. If, therefore, political and religious sympathy led Knox himself into so grave a partiality, what was he to expect from his disciples?

If the trumpet gave so ambiguous a sound, who could heartily prepare himself for the battle? The question whether Lady Jane Dudley was an innocent martyr, or a traitoress against God, whose inordinate pride and tyranny had been effectually repressed, was thus left altogether in the wind; and it was not, perhaps, wonderful if many of Knox's readers concluded that all right and wrong in the matter turned upon the degree of the sovereign's orthodoxy and possible helpfulness to the Reformation. He should have been the more careful of such an ambiguity of meaning, as he must have known well the lukewarm indifference and dishonesty of his fellow-reformers in political matters. He had already, in 1556 or 1557, talked the matter over with his great master, Calvin, in "a private conversation;" and the interview (1) must have been truly

distasteful to both parties. Calvin, indeed, went a far way with him in theory, and owned that the "government of women was a deviation from the original and proper order of nature, to be ranked, no less than slavery, among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man." But, in practice, their two roads separated. For the Man of Geneva saw difficulties in the way of the Scripture proof in the cases of Deborah and Huldah, and in the prophecy of Isaiah that queens should be the nursing mothers of the Church. And as the Bible was not decisive, he thought the subject should be let alone, because, "by custom and public consent and long practice, it has been established that realms and principalities may descend to females by hereditary right, and it would not be lawful to unsettle governments which are ordained by the peculiar providence of God." I imagine Knox's ears must have burned during this interview. Think of him listening dutifully to all this - how it would not do to meddle with anointed kings - how there was a peculiar providence in these great affairs; and then think of his own peroration, and the "noble heart" whom he looks for "to vindicate the liberty of his country;" or his answer to Queen Mary, when she asked him who he was, to interfere in the affairs of Scotland:- "Madam, a subject born within the same!" Indeed, the two doctors who differed at this private conversation represented, at the moment, two principles of enormous import in the subsequent history of Europe. In Calvin we have represented that passive obedience, that toleration of injustice and

absurdity, that holding back of the hand from political affairs as from something unclean, which lost France, if we are to believe M. Michelet, for the Reformation; a spirit necessarily fatal in the long run to the existence of any sect that may profess it; a suicidal doctrine that survives among us to this day in narrow views of personal duty, and the low political morality of many virtuous men. In Knox, on the other hand, we see foreshadowed the whole Puritan Revolution and the scaffold of Charles I.

(1) Described by Calvin in a letter to Cecil, Knox's Works, vol. iv.

There is little doubt in my mind that this interview was what caused Knox to print his book without a name. (1) It was a dangerous thing to contradict the Man of Geneva, and doubly so, surely, when one had had the advantage of correction from him in a private conversation; and Knox had his little flock of English refugees to consider. If they had fallen into bad odour at Geneva, where else was there left to flee to? It was printed, as I said, in 1558; and, by a singular MAL-A-PROPOS, in that same year Mary died, and Elizabeth succeeded to the throne of England. And just as the accession of Catholic Queen Mary had condemned female rule in the eyes of Knox, the accession of Protestant Queen Elizabeth justified it in the eyes of his colleagues. Female rule ceases to be an anomaly, not because Elizabeth can "reply to eight

ambassadors in one day in their different languages," but because she represents for the moment the political future of the Reformation. The exiles troop back to England with songs of praise in their mouths. The bright accidental star, of which we have all read in the Preface to the Bible, has risen over the darkness of Europe. There is a thrill of hope through the persecuted Churches of the Continent. Calvin writes to Cecil, washing his hands of Knox and his political heresies. The sale of the "First Blast" is prohibited in Geneva; and along with it the bold book of Knox's colleague, Goodman - a book dear to Milton - where female rule was briefly characterised as a "monster in nature and disorder among men." (2) Any who may ever have doubted, or been for a moment led away by Knox or Goodman, or their own wicked imaginations, are now more than convinced. They have seen the accidental star. Aylmer, with his eye set greedily on a possible bishopric, and "the better to obtain the favour of the new Queen," (3) sharpens his pen to confound Knox by logic. What need? He has been confounded by facts. "Thus what had been to the refugees of Geneva as the very word of God, no sooner were they back in England than, behold! it was the word of the devil." (4)

(1) It was anonymously published, but no one seems to have been in doubt about its authorship; he might as well have set his name to it, for all the good he got by holding it back.
(2) Knox's Works, iv. 358.

(3) Strype's AYLMER, p. 16.

(4) It may interest the reader to know that these (so says Thomasius) are the "ipsissima verba Schlusselburgii."

Now, what of the real sentiments of these loyal subjects of Elizabeth? They professed a holy horror for Knox's position: let us see if their own would please a modern audience any better, or was, in substance, greatly different.

John Aylmer, afterwards Bishop of London, published an answer to Knox, under the title of AN HARBOUR FOR FAITHFUL AND TRUE SUBJECTS AGAINST THE LATE BLOWN BLAST, CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT OF WOMEN. (1) And certainly he was a thought more acute, a thought less precipitate and simple, than his adversary. He is not to be led away by such captious terms as NATURAL AND UNNATURAL. It is obvious to him that a woman's disability to rule is not natural in the same sense in which it is natural for a stone to fall or fire to burn. He is doubtful, on the whole, whether this disability be natural at all; nay, when he is laying it down that a woman should not be a priest, he shows some elementary conception of what many of us now hold to be the truth of the matter. "The bringing-up of women," he says, "is commonly such" that they cannot have the necessary qualifications, "for they are not brought upon learning in schools, nor trained in disputation." And even so, he can ask, "Are there not in England women, think you, that for learning and wisdom could

tell their household and neighbours as good a tale as any Sir John there?" For all that, his advocacy is weak. If women's rule is not unnatural in a sense preclusive of its very existence, it is neither so convenient nor so profitable as the government of men. He holds England to be specially suitable for the government of women, because there the governor is more limited and restrained by the other members of the constitution than in other places; and this argument has kept his book from being altogether forgotten. It is only in hereditary monarchies that he will offer any defence of the anomaly. "If rulers were to be chosen by lot or suffrage, he would not that any women should stand in the election, but men only." The law of succession of crowns was a law to him, in the same sense as the law of evolution is a law to Mr. Herbert Spencer; and the one and the other counsels his readers, in a spirit suggestively alike, not to kick against the pricks or seek to be more wise than He who made them. (2) If God has put a female child into the direct line of inheritance, it is God's affair. His strength will be perfected in her weakness. He makes the Creator address the objectors in this not very flattering vein:- "I, that could make Daniel, a sucking babe, to judge better than the wisest lawyers; a brute beast to reprehend the folly of a prophet; and poor fishers to confound the great clerks of the world - cannot I make a woman to be a good ruler over you?" This is the last word of his reasoning. Although he was not altogether without Puritanic leaven, shown particularly in

what he says of the incomes of Bishops, yet it was rather loyalty to the old order of things than any generous belief in the capacity of women, that raised up for them this clerical champion. His courtly spirit contrasts singularly with the rude, bracing republicanism of Knox. "Thy knee shall bow," he says, "thy cap shall off, thy tongue shall speak reverently of thy sovereign." For himself, his tongue is even more than reverent. Nothing can stay the issue of his eloquent adulation. Again and again, "the remembrance of Elizabeth's virtues" carries him away; and he has to hark back again to find the scent of his argument. He is repressing his vehement adoration throughout, until, when the end comes, and he feels his business at an end, he can indulge himself to his heart's content in indiscriminate laudation of his royal mistress. It is humorous to think that this illustrious lady, whom he here praises, among many other excellences, for the simplicity of her attire and the "marvellous meekness of her stomach," threatened him, years after, in no very meek terms, for a sermon against female vanity in dress, which she held as a reflection on herself. (3)

(1) I am indebted for a sight of this book to the kindness of Mr. David Laing, the editor of Knox's Works.

(2) SOCIAL STATICS, p. 64, etc.

(3) Hallam's CONST. HIST. OF ENGLAND, i. 225, note m.

Whatever was wanting here in respect for women generally, there was no want of respect for the Queen; and one cannot very greatly wonder if these devoted servants looked askance, not upon Knox only, but on his little flock, as they came back to England tainted with disloyal doctrine. For them, as for him, the accidental star rose somewhat red and angry. As for poor Knox, his position was the saddest of all. For the juncture seemed to him of the highest importance; it was the nick of time, the flood-water of opportunity. Not only was there an opening for him in Scotland, a smouldering brand of civil liberty and religious enthusiasm which it should be for him to kindle into flame with his powerful breath but he had his eye seemingly on an object of even higher worth. For now, when religious sympathy ran so high that it could be set against national aversion, he wished to begin the fusion together of England and Scotland, and to begin it at the sore place. If once the open wound were closed at the Border, the work would be half done. Ministers placed at Berwick and such places might seek their converts equally on either side of the march; old enemies would sit together to hear the gospel of peace, and forget the inherited jealousies of many generations in the enthusiasm of a common faith; or - let us say better - a common heresy. For people are not most conscious of brotherhood when they continue languidly together in one creed, but when, with some doubt, with some danger perhaps, and certainly not without some reluctance, they violently break with the tradition of the past, and go

forth from the sanctuary of their fathers to worship under the bare heaven. A new creed, like a new country, is an unhomely place of sojourn; but it makes men lean on one another and join hands. It was on this that Knox relied to begin the union of the English and the Scotch. And he had, perhaps, better means of judging than any even of his contemporaries. He knew the temper of both nations; and already during his two years' chaplaincy at Berwick, he had seen his scheme put to the proof. But whether practicable or not, the proposal does him much honour. That he should thus have sought to make a love-match of it between the two peoples, and tried to win their inclination towards a union instead of simply transferring them, like so many sheep, by a marriage, or testament, or private treaty, is thoroughly characteristic of what is best in the man. Nor was this all. He had, besides, to assure himself of English support, secret or avowed, for the reformation party in Scotland; a delicate affair, trenching upon treason. And so he had plenty to say to Cecil, plenty that he did not care to "commit to paper neither yet to the knowledge of many." But his miserable publication had shut the doors of England in his face. Summoned to Edinburgh by the confederate lords, he waited at Dieppe, anxiously praying for leave to journey through England. The most dispiriting tidings reach him. His messengers, coming from so obnoxious a quarter, narrowly escape imprisonment. His old congregation are coldly received, and even begin to look back again to their place of

exile with regret. "My First Blast," he writes ruefully, "has blown from me all my friends of England." And then he adds, with a snarl, "The Second Blast, I fear, shall sound somewhat more sharp, except men be more moderate than I hear they are." (1) But the threat is empty; there will never be a second blast - he has had enough of that trumpet. Nay, he begins to feel uneasily that, unless he is to be rendered useless for the rest of his life, unless he is to lose his right arm and go about his great work maimed and impotent, he must find some way of making his peace with England and the indignant Queen. The letter just quoted was written on the 6th of April 1559; and on the 10th, after he had cooled his heels for four days more about the streets of Dieppe, he gave in altogether, and writes a letter of capitulation to Cecil. In this letter, (2) which he kept back until the 22d, still hoping that things would come right of themselves, he censures the great secretary for having "followed the world in the way of perdition," characterises him as "worthy of hell," and threatens him, if he be not found simple, sincere, and fervent in the cause of Christ's gospel, that he shall "taste of the same cup that politic heads have drunken in before him." This is all, I take it, out of respect for the Reformer's own position; if he is going to be humiliated, let others be humiliated first; like a child who will not take his medicine until he has made his nurse and his mother drink of it before him. "But I have, say you, written a treasonable book against the regiment and empire of women. .

. . The writing of that book I will not deny; but to prove it treasonable I think it shall be hard. . . . It is hinted that my book shall be written against. If so be, sir, I greatly doubt they shall rather hurt nor (than) mend the matter." And here come the terms of capitulation; for he does not surrender unconditionally, even in this sore strait: "And yet if any," he goes on, "think me enemy to the person, or yet to the regiment, of her whom God hath now promoted, they are utterly deceived in me, FOR THE MIRACULOUS WORK OF GOD, COMFORTING HIS AFFLICTED BY MEANS OF AN INFIRM VESSEL, I DO ACKNOWLEDGE, AND THE POWER OF HIS MOST POTENT HAND I WILL OBEY. MORE PLAINLY TO SPEAK, IF QUEEN ELIZABETH SHALL CONFESS, THAT THE EXTRAORDINARY DISPENSATION OF GOD'S GREAT MERCY MAKETH THAT LAWFUL UNTO HER WHICH BOTH NATURE AND GOD'S LAW DO DENY TO ALL WOMEN, then shall none in England be more willing to maintain her lawful authority than I shall be. But if (God's wondrous work set aside) she ground (as God forbid) the justness of her title upon consuetude, laws, or ordinances of men, then" - Then Knox will denounce her? Not so; he is more politic nowadays - then, he "greatly fears" that her ingratitude to God will not go long without punishment.

(1) Knox to Mrs. Locke, 6th April 1559. Works, vi. 14.

(2) Knox to Sir William Cecil, 10th April 1559. Works, ii. 16, or vi. 15.

His letter to Elizabeth, written some few months later, was a mere amplification of the sentences quoted above. She must base her title entirely upon the extraordinary providence of God; but if she does this, "if thus, in God's presence, she humbles herself, so will he with tongue and pen justify her authority, as the Holy Ghost hath justified the same in Deborah, that blessed mother in Israel." (1) And so, you see, his consistency is preserved; he is merely applying the doctrine of the "First Blast." The argument goes thus: The regiment of women is, as before noted in our work, repugnant to nature, contumely to God, and a subversion of good order. It has nevertheless pleased God to raise up, as exceptions to this law, first Deborah, and afterward Elizabeth Tudor - whose regiment we shall proceed to celebrate.

(1) Knox to Queen Elizabeth, July. 20th, 1559. Works, vi. 47, or ii. 26.

There is no evidence as to how the Reformer's explanations were received, and indeed it is most probable that the letter was never shown to Elizabeth at all. For it was sent under cover of another to Cecil, and as it was not of a very courtly conception throughout, and was, of all things, what would most excite the Queen's uneasy jealousy about her title, it is like enough that the secretary exercised his discretion (he had Knox's leave in this case, and did not

always wait for that, it is reputed) to put the letter harmlessly away beside other valueless or unpresentable State Papers. I wonder very much if he did the same with another, (1) written two years later, after Mary had come into Scotland, in which Knox almost seeks to make Elizabeth an accomplice with him in the matter of the "First Blast." The Queen of Scotland is going to have that work refuted, he tells her; and "though it were but foolishness in him to prescribe unto her Majesty what is to be done," he would yet remind her that Mary is neither so much alarmed about her own security, nor so generously interested in Elizabeth's, "that she would take such pains, UNLESS HER CRAFTY COUNSEL IN SO DOING SHOT AT A FURTHER MARK." There is something really ingenious in this letter; it showed Knox in the double capacity of the author of the "First Blast" and the faithful friend of Elizabeth; and he combines them there so naturally, that one would scarcely imagine the two to be incongruous.

(1) Knox to Queen Elizabeth, August 6th, 1561. Works, vi. 126.

Twenty days later he was defending his intemperate publication to another queen - his own queen, Mary Stuart. This was on the first of those three interviews which he has preserved for us with so much dramatic vigour in the picturesque pages of his history. After he had avowed the authorship in his usual haughty style, Mary asked: "You

think, then, that I have no just authority?" The question was evaded. "Please your Majesty," he answered, "that learned men in all ages have had their judgments free, and most commonly disagreeing from the common judgment of the world; such also have they published by pen and tongue; and yet notwithstanding they themselves have lived in the common society with others, and have borne patiently with the errors and imperfections which they could not amend." Thus did "Plato the philosopher:" thus will do John Knox. "I have communicated my judgment to the world: if the realm finds no inconvenience from the regiment of a woman, that which they approve, shall I not further disallow than within my own breast; but shall be as well content to live under your Grace, as Paul was to live under Nero. And my hope is, that so long as ye defile not your hands with the blood of the saints of God, neither I nor my book shall hurt either you or your authority." All this is admirable in wisdom and moderation, and, except that he might have hit upon a comparison less offensive than that with Paul and Nero, hardly to be bettered. Having said thus much, he feels he needs say no more; and so, when he is further pressed, he closes that part of the discussion with an astonishing sally. If he has been content to let this matter sleep, he would recommend her Grace to follow his example with thankfulness of heart; it is grimly to be understood which of them has most to fear if the question should be reawakened. So the talk wandered to other subjects. Only, when the Queen was

summoned at last to dinner ("for it was afternoon") Knox made his salutation in this form of words: "I pray God, Madam, that you may be as much blessed within the Commonwealth of Scotland, if it be the pleasure of God, as ever Deborah was in the Commonwealth of Israel." (1) Deborah again.

(1) Knox's Works, ii. 278-280.

But he was not yet done with the echoes of his own "First Blast." In 1571, when he was already near his end, the old controversy was taken up in one of a series of anonymous libels against the Reformer affixed, Sunday after Sunday, to the church door. The dilemma was fairly enough stated. Either his doctrine is false, in which case he is a "false doctor" and seditious; or, if it be true, why does he "avow and approve the contrare, I mean that regiment in the Queen of England's person; which he avoweth and approveth, not only praying for the maintenance of her estate, but also procuring her aid and support against his own native country?" Knox answered the libel, as his wont was, next Sunday, from the pulpit. He justified the "First Blast" with all the old arrogance; there is no drawing back there. The regiment of women is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, and a subversion of good order, as before. When he prays for the maintenance of Elizabeth's estate, he is only following the example of those prophets of God who warned and comforted the wicked kings of Israel; or of Jeremiah, who bade the Jews

pray for the prosperity of Nebuchadnezzar. As for the Queen's aid, there is no harm in that: QUIA (these are his own words) QUIA OMNIA MUNDA MUNDIS: because to the pure all things are pure. One thing, in conclusion, he "may not pretermit" to give the lie in the throat to his accuser, where he charges him with seeking support against his native country. "What I have been to my country," said the old Reformer, "What I have been to my country, albeit this unthankful age will not know, yet the ages to come will be compelled to bear witness to the truth. And thus I cease, requiring of all men that have anything to oppone against me, that he may (they may) do it so plainly, as that I may make myself and all my doings manifest to the world. For to me it seemeth a thing unreasonable, that, in this my decrepit age, I shall be compelled to fight against shadows, and howlets that dare not abide the light." (1)

(1) Calderwood's HISTORY OF THE KIRK OF Scotland, edition of the Wodrow Society, iii. 51-54.

Now, in this, which may be called his LAST BLAST, there is as sharp speaking as any in the "First Blast" itself. He is of the same opinion to the end, you see, although he has been obliged to cloak and garble that opinion for political ends. He has been tacking indeed, and he has indeed been seeking the favour of a queen; but what man ever sought a queen's favour with a more virtuous purpose, or with as little

courtly policy? The question of consistency is delicate, and must be made plain. Knox never changed his opinion about female rule, but lived to regret that he had published that opinion. Doubtless he had many thoughts so far out of the range of public sympathy, that he could only keep them to himself, and, in his own words, bear patiently with the errors and imperfections that he could not amend. For example, I make no doubt myself that, in his own heart, he did hold the shocking dogma attributed to him by more than one calumniator; and that, had the time been ripe, had there been aught to gain by it, instead of all to lose, he would have been the first to assert that Scotland was elective instead of hereditary - "elective as in the days of paganism," as one Thevet says in holy horror. (1) And yet, because the time was not ripe, I find no hint of such an idea in his collected works. Now, the regiment of women was another matter that he should have kept to himself; right or wrong, his opinion did not fit the moment; right or wrong, as Aylmer puts it, "the BLAST was blown out of season." And this it was that he began to perceive after the accession of Elizabeth; not that he had been wrong, and that female rule was a good thing, for he had said from the first that "the felicity of some women in their empires" could not change the law of God and the nature of created things; not this, but that the regiment of women was one of those imperfections of society which must be borne with because yet they cannot be remedied. The thing had seemed so obvious to him, in his

sense of unspeakable masculine superiority, and his fine contempt for what is only sanctioned by antiquity and common consent, he had imagined that, at the first hint, men would arise and shake off the debasing tyranny. He found himself wrong, and he showed that he could be moderate in his own fashion, and understood the spirit of true compromise. He came round to Calvin's position, in fact, but by a different way. And it derogates nothing from the merit of this wise attitude that it was the consequence of a change of interest. We are all taught by interest; and if the interest be not merely selfish, there is no wiser preceptor under heaven, and perhaps no sterner.

(1) BAYLE'S HISTORICAL DICTIONARY, art. Knox, remark G.

Such is the history of John Knox's connection with the controversy about female rule. In itself, this is obviously an incomplete study; not fully to be understood, without a knowledge of his private relations with the other sex, and what he thought of their position in domestic life. This shall be dealt with in another paper.

II. - PRIVATE LIFE.

TO those who know Knox by hearsay only, I believe the matter

of this paper will be somewhat astonishing. For the hard energy of the man in all public mattress has possessed the imagination of the world; he remains for posterity in certain traditional phrases, browbeating Queen Mary, or breaking beautiful carved work in abbeys and cathedrals, that had long smoked themselves out and were no more than sorry ruins, while he was still quietly teaching children in a country gentleman's family. It does not consist with the common acceptation of his character to fancy him much moved, except with anger. And yet the language of passion came to his pen as readily, whether it was a passion of denunciation against some of the abuses that vexed his righteous spirit, or of yearning for the society of an absent friend. He was vehement in affection, as in doctrine. I will not deny that there may have been, along with his vehemence, something shifty, and for the moment only; that, like many men, and many Scotchmen, he saw the world and his own heart, not so much under any very steady, equable light, as by extreme flashes of passion, true for the moment, but not true in the long run. There does seem to me to be something of this traceable in the Reformer's utterances: precipitation and repentance, hardy speech and action somewhat circumspect, a strong tendency to see himself in a heroic light and to place a ready belief in the disposition of the moment. Withal he had considerable confidence in himself, and in the uprightness of his own disciplined emotions, underlying much sincere aspiration after spiritual humility. And it is this

confidence that makes his intercourse with women so interesting to a modern. It would be easy, of course, to make fun of the whole affair, to picture him strutting vainglorioously among these inferior creatures, or compare a religious friendship in the sixteenth century with what was called, I think, a literary friendship in the eighteenth. But it is more just and profitable to recognise what there is sterling and human underneath all his theoretical affectations of superiority. Women, he has said in his "First Blast," are, "weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish;" and yet it does not appear that he was himself any less dependent than other men upon the sympathy and affection of these weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish creatures; it seems even as if he had been rather more dependent than most.

Of those who are to act influentially on their fellows, we should expect always something large and public in their way of life, something more or less urbane and comprehensive in their sentiment for others. We should not expect to see them spend their sympathy in idyls, however beautiful. We should not seek them among those who, if they have but a wife to their bosom, ask no more of womankind, just as they ask no more of their own sex, if they can find a friend or two for their immediate need. They will be quick to feel all the pleasures of our association - not the great ones alone, but all. They will know not love only, but all those other ways

in which man and woman mutually make each other happy - by sympathy, by admiration, by the atmosphere they bear about them - down to the mere impersonal pleasure of passing happy faces in the street. For, through all this gradation, the difference of sex makes itself pleasurably felt. Down to the most lukewarm courtesies of life, there is a special chivalry due and a special pleasure received, when the two sexes are brought ever so lightly into contact. We love our mothers otherwise than we love our fathers; a sister is not as a brother to us; and friendship between man and woman, be it never so unalloyed and innocent, is not the same as friendship between man and man. Such friendship is not even possible for all. To conjoin tenderness for a woman that is not far short of passionate with such disinterestedness and beautiful gratuity of affection as there is between friends of the same sex, requires no ordinary disposition in the man. For either it would presuppose quite womanly delicacy of perception, and, as it were, a curiosity in shades of differing sentiment; or it would mean that he had accepted the large, simple divisions of society: a strong and positive spirit robustly virtuous, who has chosen a better part coarsely, and holds to it steadfastly, with all its consequences of pain to himself and others; as one who should go straight before him on a journey, neither tempted by wayside flowers nor very scrupulous of small lives under foot. It was in virtue of this latter disposition that Knox was capable of those intimacies with women that embellished

his life; and we find him preserved for us in old letters as a man of many women friends; a man of some expansion toward the other sex; a man ever ready to comfort weeping women, and to weep along with them.

Of such scraps and fragments of evidence as to his private life and more intimate thoughts as have survived to us from all the perils that environ written paper, an astonishingly large proportion is in the shape of letters to women of his familiarity. He was twice married, but that is not greatly to the purpose; for the Turk, who thinks even more meanly of women than John Knox, is none the less given to marrying. What is really significant is quite apart from marriage. For the man Knox was a true man, and woman, the EWIG-WEIBLICHE, was as necessary to him, in spite of all low theories, as ever she was to Goethe. He came to her in a certain halo of his own, as the minister of truth, just as Goethe came to her in a glory of art; he made himself necessary to troubled hearts and minds exercised in the painful complications that naturally result from all changes in the world's way of thinking; and those whom he had thus helped became dear to him, and were made the chosen companions of his leisure if they were at hand, or encouraged and comforted by letter if they were afar.

It must not be forgotten that Knox had been a presbyter of the old Church, and that the many women whom we shall see

gathering around him, as he goes through life, had probably been accustomed, while still in the communion of Rome, to rely much upon some chosen spiritual director, so that the intimacies of which I propose to offer some account, while testifying to a good heart in the Reformer, testify also to a certain survival of the spirit of the confessional in the Reformed Church, and are not properly to be judged without this idea. There is no friendship so noble, but it is the product of the time; and a world of little finical observances, and little frail proprieties and fashions of the hour, go to make or to mar, to stint or to perfect, the union of spirits the most loving and the most intolerant of such interference. The trick of the country and the age steps in even between the mother and her child, counts out their caresses upon niggardly fingers, and says, in the voice of authority, that this one thing shall be a matter of confidence between them, and this other thing shall not. And thus it is that we must take into reckoning whatever tended to modify the social atmosphere in which Knox and his women friends met, and loved and trusted each other. To the man who had been their priest and was now their minister, women would be able to speak with a confidence quite impossible in these latter days; the women would be able to speak, and the man to hear. It was a beaten road just then; and I daresay we should be no less scandalised at their plain speech than they, if they could come back to earth, would be offended at our waltzes and worldly fashions. This, then, was the

footing on which Knox stood with his many women friends. The reader will see, as he goes on, how much of warmth, of interest, and of that happy mutual dependence which is the very gist of friendship, he contrived to ingraft upon this somewhat dry relationship of penitent and confessor.

It must be understood that we know nothing of his intercourse with women (as indeed we know little at all about his life) until he came to Berwick in 1549, when he was already in the forty-fifth year of his age. At the same time it is just possible that some of a little group at Edinburgh, with whom he corresponded during his last absence, may have been friends of an older standing. Certainly they were, of all his female correspondents, the least personally favoured. He treats them throughout in a comprehensive sort of spirit that must at times have been a little wounding. Thus, he remits one of them to his former letters, "which I trust be common betwixt you and the rest of our sisters, for to me ye are all equal in Christ." (1) Another letter is a gem in this way. "Albeit" it begins, "albeit I have no particular matter to write unto you, beloved sister, yet I could not refrain to write these few lines to you in declaration of my remembrance of you. True it is that I have many whom I bear in equal remembrance before God with you, to whom at present I write nothing, either for that I esteem them stronger than you, and therefore they need the less my rude labours, or else because they have not provoked me by their writing to recompense

their remembrance." (2) His "sisters in Edinburgh" had evidently to "provoke his attention pretty constantly; nearly all his letters are, on the face of them, answers to questions, and the answers are given with a certain crudity that I do not find repeated when he writes to those he really cares for. So when they consult him about women's apparel (a subject on which his opinion may be pretty correctly imagined by the ingenious reader for himself) he takes occasion to anticipate some of the most offensive matter of the "First Blast" in a style of real brutality. (3) It is not merely that he tells them "the garments of women do declare their weakness and inability to execute the office of man," though that in itself is neither very wise nor very opportune in such a correspondence one would think; but if the reader will take the trouble to wade through the long, tedious sermon for himself, he will see proof enough that Knox neither loved, nor very deeply respected, the women he was then addressing. In very truth, I believe these Edinburgh sisters simply bored him. He had a certain interest in them as his children in the Lord; they were continually "provoking him by their writing;" and, if they handed his letters about, writing to them was as good a form of publication as was then open to him in Scotland. There is one letter, however, in this budget, addressed to the wife of Clerk-Register Mackgil, which is worthy of some further mention. The Clerk-Register had not opened his heart, it would appear, to the preaching of the Gospel, and Mrs. Mackgil has written, seeking the

Reformer's prayers in his behalf. "Your husband," he answers, "is dear to me for that he is a man indued with some good gifts, but more dear for that he is your husband. Charity moveth me to thirst his illumination, both for his comfort and for the trouble which you sustain by his coldness, which justly may be called infidelity." He wishes her, however, not to hope too much; he can promise that his prayers will be earnest, but not that they will be effectual; it is possible that this is to be her "cross" in life; that "her head, appointed by God for her comfort, should be her enemy." And if this be so, well, there is nothing for it; "with patience she must abide God's merciful deliverance," taking heed only that she does not "obey manifest iniquity for the pleasure of any mortal man." (4) I conceive this epistle would have given a very modified sort of pleasure to the Clerk-Register, had it chanced to fall into his hands. Compare its tenor - the dry resignation not without a hope of merciful deliverance therein recommended - with these words from another letter, written but the year before to two married women of London: "Call first for grace by Jesus, and thereafter communicate with your faithful husbands, and then shall God, I doubt not, conduct your footsteps, and direct your counsels to His glory." (5) Here the husbands are put in a very high place; we can recognise here the same hand that has written for our instruction how the man is set above the woman, even as God above the angels. But the point of the distinction is plain. For Clerk-Register Mackgil was not

a faithful husband; displayed, indeed, towards religion a "coldness which justly might be called infidelity." We shall see in more notable instances how much Knox's conception of the duty of wives varies according to the zeal and orthodoxy of the husband.

(1) Works, iv. 244.

(2) Works, iv. 246.

(3) IB. iv. 225.

(4) Works, iv. 245.

(5) IB. iv. 221.

As I have said, he may possibly have made the acquaintance of Mrs. Mackgil, Mrs. Guthrie, or some other, or all, of these Edinburgh friends while he was still Douglas of Longniddry's private tutor. But our certain knowledge begins in 1549. He was then but newly escaped from his captivity in France, after pulling an oar for nineteen months on the benches of the galley NOSTRE DAME; now up the rivers, holding stealthy intercourse with other Scottish prisoners in the castle of Rouen; now out in the North Sea, raising his sick head to catch a glimpse of the far-off steeples of St. Andrews. And now he was sent down by the English Privy Council as a preacher to Berwick-upon-Tweed; somewhat shaken in health by all his hardships, full of pains and agues, and tormented by gravel, that sorrow of great men; altogether, what with his romantic story, his weak health, and his great faculty of

eloquence, a very natural object for the sympathy of devout women. At this happy juncture he fell into the company of a Mrs. Elizabeth Bowes, wife of Richard Bowes, of Aske, in Yorkshire, to whom she had borne twelve children. She was a religious hypochondriac, a very weariful woman, full of doubts and scruples, and giving no rest on earth either to herself or to those whom she honoured with her confidence. From the first time she heard Knox preach she formed a high opinion of him, and was solicitous ever after of his society. (1) Nor was Knox unresponsive. "I have always delighted in your company," he writes, "and when labours would permit, you know I have not spared hours to talk and commune with you." Often when they had met in depression he reminds her, "God hath sent great comfort unto both." (2) We can gather from such letters as are yet extant how close and continuous was their intercourse. "I think it best you remain till the morrow," he writes once, "and so shall we commune at large at afternoon. This day you know to be the day of my study and prayer unto God; yet if your trouble be intolerable, or, if you think my presence may release your pain, do as the Spirit shall move you. . . . Your messenger found me in bed, after a sore trouble and most dolorous night, and so dolour may complain to dolour when we two meet. . . . And this is more plain than ever I spoke, to let you know you have a companion in trouble." (3) Once we have the curtain raised for a moment, and can look at the two together for the length of a phrase. "After the writing of this preceding," writes Knox,

"your brother and mine, Harrie Wycliffe, did advertise me by writing, that our adversary (the devil) took occasion to trouble you because that I DID START BACK FROM YOU REHEARSING YOUR INFIRMITIES. I REMEMBER MYSELF SO TO HAVE DONE, AND THAT IS MY COMMON ON CONSUETUDE WHEN ANYTHING PIERCETH OR TOUCHETH MY HEART. CALL TO YOUR MIND WHAT I DID STANDING AT THE CUPBOARD AT ALNWICK. In very deed I thought that no creature had been tempted as I was; and when I heard proceed from your mouth the very same words that he troubles me with, I did wonder and from my heart lament your sore trouble, knowing in myself the dolour thereof." (4) Now intercourse of so very close a description, whether it be religious intercourse or not, is apt to displease and disquiet a husband; and we know incidentally from Knox himself that there was some little scandal about his intimacy with Mrs. Bowes. "The slander and fear of men," he writes, "has impeded me to exercise my pen so oft as I would; YEA, VERY SHAME HATH HOLDEN ME FROM YOUR COMPANY, WHEN I WAS MOST SURELY PERSUADED THAT GOD HAD APPOINTED ME AT THAT TIME TO COMFORT AND FEED YOUR HUNGRY AND AFFLICTED SOUL. GOD IN HIS INFINITE MERCY," he goes on, "REMOVE NOT ONLY FROM ME ALL FEAR THAT TENDETH NOT TO GODLINESS, BUT FROM OTHERS SUSPICION TO JUDGE OF ME OTHERWISE THAN IT BECOMETH ONE MEMBER TO JUDGE OF ANOTHER," (5) And the scandal, such as it was, would not be allayed by the dissension in which Mrs. Bowes seems to

have lived with her family upon the matter of religion, and the countenance shown by Knox to her resistance. Talking of these conflicts, and her courage against "her own flesh and most inward affections, yea, against some of her most natural friends," he writes it, "to the praise of God, he has wondered at the bold constancy which he has found in her when his own heart was faint." (6)

(1) Works, vi. 514.

(2) IB. iii. 338.

(3) IB. iii. 352, 353.

(4) Works, iii. 350.

(5) IB. iii. 390, 391.

(6) Works, iii. 142.

Now, perhaps in order to stop scandalous mouths, perhaps out of a desire to bind the much-loved evangelist nearer to her in the only manner possible, Mrs. Bowes conceived the scheme of marrying him to her fifth daughter, Marjorie; and the Reformer seems to have fallen in with it readily enough. It seems to have been believed in the family that the whole matter had been originally made up between these two, with no very spontaneous inclination on the part of the bride. (1) Knox's idea of marriage, as I have said, was not the same for all men; but on the whole, it was not lofty. We have a curious letter of his, written at the request of Queen Mary, to the Earl of Argyle, on very delicate household matters;

which, as he tells us, "was not well accepted of the said Earl." (2) We may suppose, however, that his own home was regulated in a similar spirit. I can fancy that for such a man, emotional, and with a need, now and again, to exercise parsimony in emotions not strictly needful, something a little mechanical, something hard and fast and clearly understood, would enter into his ideal of a home. There were storms enough without, and equability was to be desired at the fireside even at a sacrifice of deeper pleasures. So, from a wife, of all women, he would not ask much. One letter to her which has come down to us is, I had almost said, conspicuous for coldness. (3) He calls her, as he called other female correspondents, "dearly beloved sister;" the epistle is doctrinal, and nearly the half of it bears, not upon her own case, but upon that of her mother. However, we know what Heine wrote in his wife's album; and there is, after all, one passage that may be held to intimate some tenderness, although even that admits of an amusingly opposite construction. "I think," he says, "I THINK this be the first letter I ever wrote to you." This, if we are to take it literally, may pair off with the "two OR THREE children" whom Montaigne mentions having lost at nurse; the one is as eccentric in a lover as the other in a parent. Nevertheless, he displayed more energy in the course of his troubled wooing than might have been expected. The whole Bowes family, angry enough already at the influence he had obtained over the mother, set their faces obdurately against

the match. And I daresay the opposition quickened his inclination. I find him writing to Mrs. Bowes that she need no further trouble herself about the marriage; it should now be his business altogether; it behoved him now to jeopard his life "for the comfort of his own flesh, both fear and friendship of all earthly creature laid aside." (4) This is a wonderfully chivalrous utterance for a Reformer forty-eight years old; and it compares well with the leaden coquetries of Calvin, not much over thirty, taking this and that into consideration, weighing together dowries and religious qualifications and the instancy of friends, and exhibiting what M. Bungener calls "an honourable and Christian difficulty" of choice, in frigid indecisions and insincere proposals. But Knox's next letter is in a humbler tone; he has not found the negotiation so easy as he fancied; he despairs of the marriage altogether, and talks of leaving England, - regards not "what country consumes his wicked carcass." "You shall understand," he says, "that this sixth of November, I spoke with Sir Robert Bowes" (the head of the family, his bride's uncle) "in the matter you know, according to your request; whose disdainful, yea, despiteful, words hath so pierced my heart that my life is bitter to me. I bear a good countenance with a sore troubled heart, because he that ought to consider matters with a deep judgment is become not only a despiser, but also a taunter of God's messengers - God be merciful unto him! Amongst others his most unpleasing words, while that I was about to have

declared my heart in the whole matter, he said, `Away with your rhetorical reasons! for I will not be persuaded with them.' God knows I did use no rhetoric nor coloured speech; but would have spoken the truth, and that in most simple manner. I am not a good orator in my own cause; but what he would not be content to hear of me, God shall declare to him one day to his displeasure, unless he repent." (5) Poor Knox, you see, is quite commoved. It has been a very unpleasant interview. And as it is the only sample that we have of how things went with him during his courtship, we may infer that the period was not as agreeable for Knox as it has been for some others.

(1) IB. iii. 378.

(2) LB. ii. 379.

(3) Works, iii. 394.

(4) Works, iii. 376.

(5) Works, iii. 378.

However, when once they were married, I imagine he and Marjorie Bowes hit it off together comfortably enough. The little we know of it may be brought together in a very short space. She bore him two sons. He seems to have kept her pretty busy, and depended on her to some degree in his work; so that when she fell ill, his papers got at once into disorder. (1) Certainly she sometimes wrote to his dictation; and, in this capacity, he calls her "his left

hand." (2) In June 1559, at the headiest moment of the Reformation in Scotland, he writes regretting the absence of his helpful colleague, Goodman, "whose presence" (this is the not very grammatical form of his lament) "whose presence I more thirst, than she that is my own flesh." (3) And this, considering the source and the circumstances, may be held as evidence of a very tender sentiment. He tells us himself in his history, on the occasion of a certain meeting at the Kirk of Field, that "he was in no small heaviness by reason of the late death of his dear bed-fellow, Marjorie Bowes." (4) Calvin, condoling with him, speaks of her as "a wife whose like is not to be found everywhere" (that is very like Calvin), and again, as "the most delightful of wives." We know what Calvin thought desirable in a wife, "good humour, chastity, thrift, patience, and solicitude for her husband's health," and so we may suppose that the first Mrs. Knox fell not far short of this ideal.

(1) Works, vi. 104.

(2) IB. v. 5.

(3) IB. vi. 27.

(4) IB. ii. 138.

The actual date of the marriage is uncertain but by September 1566, at the latest, the Reformer was settled in Geneva with his wife. There is no fear either that he will be dull; even if the chaste, thrifty, patient Marjorie should not

altogether occupy his mind, he need not go out of the house to seek more female sympathy; for behold! Mrs. Bowes is duly domesticated with the young couple. Dr. M'Crie imagined that Richard Bowes was now dead, and his widow, consequently, free to live where she would; and where could she go more naturally than to the house of a married daughter? This, however, is not the case. Richard Bowes did not die till at least two years later. It is impossible to believe that he approved of his wife's desertion, after so many years of marriage, after twelve children had been born to them; and accordingly we find in his will, dated 1558, no mention either of her or of Knox's wife. (1) This is plain sailing. It is easy enough to understand the anger of Bowes against this interloper, who had come into a quiet family, married the daughter in spite of the father's opposition, alienated the wife from the husband and the husband's religion, supported her in a long course of resistance and rebellion, and, after years of intimacy, already too close and tender for any jealous spirit to behold without resentment, carried her away with him at last into a foreign land. But it is not quite easy to understand how, except out of sheer weariness and disgust, he was ever brought to agree to the arrangement. Nor is it easy to square the Reformer's conduct with his public teaching. We have, for instance, a letter by him, Craig, and Spottiswood, to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, anent "a wicked and rebellious woman," one Anne Good, spouse to "John Barron, a minister of Christ Jesus his

evangel," who, "after great rebellion shown unto him, and divers admonitions given, as well by himself as by others in his name, that she should in no wise depart from this realm, nor from his house without his license, hath not the less stubbornly and rebelliously departed, separated herself from his society, left his house, and withdrawn herself from this realm." (2) Perhaps some sort of license was extorted, as I have said, from Richard Bowes, weary with years of domestic dissension; but setting that aside, the words employed with so much righteous indignation by Knox, Craig, and Spottiswood, to describe the conduct of that wicked and rebellious woman, Mrs. Barron, would describe nearly as exactly the conduct of the religious Mrs. Bowes. It is a little bewildering, until we recollect the distinction between faithful and unfaithful husbands; for Barron was "a minister of Christ Jesus his evangel," while Richard Bowes, besides being own brother to a despiser and taunter of God's messengers, is shrewdly suspected to have been "a bigoted adherent of the Roman Catholic faith," or, as Know himself would have expressed it, "a rotten Papist."

(1) Mr. Laing's preface to the sixth volume of Knox's Works, p. lxii.

(2) Works. vi. 534.

You would have thought that Know was now pretty well supplied with female society. But we are not yet at the end of the

roll. The last year of his sojourn in England had been spent principally in London, where he was resident as one of the chaplains of Edward the Sixth; and here he boasts, although a stranger, he had, by God's grace, found favour before many. (1) The godly women of the metropolis made much of him; once he writes to Mrs. Bowes that her last letter had found him closeted with three, and he and the three women were all in tears. (2) Out of all, however, he had chosen two. "GOD," he writes to them, "BROUGHT US IN SUCH FAMILIAR ACQUAINTANCE, THAT YOUR HEARTS WERE INCENSED AND KINDLED WITH A SPECIAL CARE OVER ME, AS A MOTHER USETH TO BE OVER HER NATURAL CHILD;

and my heart was opened and compelled in your presence to be more plain than ever I was to any." (3) And out of the two even he had chosen one, Mrs. Anne Locke, wife to Mr. Harry Locke, merchant, nigh to Bow Kirk, Cheapside, in London, as the address runs. If one may venture to judge upon such imperfect evidence, this was the woman he loved best. I have a difficulty in quite forming to myself an idea of her character. She may have been one of the three tearful visitors before alluded to; she may even have been that one of them who was so profoundly moved by some passages of Mrs. Bowes's letter, which the Reformer opened, and read aloud to them before they went. "O would to God," cried this impressionable matron, "would to God that I might speak with that person, for I perceive there are more tempted than I." (4) This may have been Mrs. Locke, as I say; but even if it

were, we must not conclude from this one fact that she was such another as Mrs. Bowes. All the evidence tends the other way. She was a woman of understanding, plainly, who followed political events with interest, and to whom Knox thought it worth while to write, in detail, the history of his trials and successes. She was religious, but without that morbid perversity of spirit that made religion so heavy a burden for the poor-hearted Mrs. Bowes. More of her I do not find, save testimony to the profound affection that united her to the Reformer. So we find him writing to her from Geneva, in such terms as these:- "You write that your desire is earnest to see me. DEAR SISTER, IF I SHOULD EXPRESS THE THIRST AND LANGUOR WHICH I HAVE HAD FOR YOUR PRESENCE, I SHOULD APPEAR TO PASS MEASURE. . . YEA, I WEEP AND REJOICE IN REMEMBRANCE OF YOU; but that would evanish by the comfort of your presence, which I assure you is so dear to me, that if the charge of this little flock here, gathered together in Christ's name, did not impede me, my coming should prevent my letter." (5) I say that this was written from Geneva; and yet you will observe that it is no consideration for his wife or mother-in-law, only the charge of his little flock, that keeps him from setting out forthwith for London, to comfort himself with the dear presence of Mrs. Locke. Remember that was a certain plausible enough pretext for Mrs. Locke to come to Geneva - "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles" - for we are now under the reign of that "horrible monster Jezebel of

England," when a lady of good orthodox sentiments was better out of London. It was doubtful, however, whether this was to be. She was detained in England, partly by circumstances unknown, "partly by empire of her head," Mr. Harry Locke, the Cheapside merchant. It is somewhat humorous to see Knox struggling for resignation, now that he has to do with a faithful husband (for Mr. Harry Locke was faithful). Had it been otherwise, "in my heart," he says, "I could have wished - yea," here he breaks out, "yea, and cannot cease to wish - that God would guide you to this place." (6) And after all, he had not long to wait, for, whether Mr. Harry Locke died in the interval, or was wearied, he too, into giving permission, five months after the date of the letter last quoted, "Mrs. Anne Locke, Harry her son, and Anne her daughter, and Katherine her maid," arrived in that perfect school of Christ, the Presbyterian paradise, Geneva. So now, and for the next two years, the cup of Knox's happiness was surely full. Of an afternoon, when the bells rang out for the sermon, the shops closed, and the good folk gathered to the churches, psalm-book in hand, we can imagine him drawing near to the English chapel in quite patriarchal fashion, with Mrs. Knox and Mrs. Bowes and Mrs. Locke, James his servant, Patrick his pupil, and a due following of children and maids. He might be alone at work all morning in his study, for he wrote much during these two years; but at night, you may be sure there was a circle of admiring women, eager to hear the new paragraph, and not sparing of applause. And what work,

among others, was he elaborating at this time, but the notorious "First Blast"? So that he may have rolled out in his big pulpit voice, how women were weak, frail, impatient, feeble, foolish, inconstant, variable, cruel, and lacking the spirit of counsel, and how men were above them, even as God is above the angels, in the ears of his own wife, and the two dearest friends he had on earth. But he had lost the sense of incongruity, and continued to despise in theory the sex he honoured so much in practice, of whom he chose his most intimate associates, and whose courage he was compelled to wonder at, when his own heart was faint.

(1) Works, iv. 220.

(2) IB. iii. 380.

(3) IB. iv. 220.

(4) Works, iii. 380.

(5) Works, iv. 238.

(6) Works, iv. 240.

We may say that such a man was not worthy of his fortune; and so, as he would not learn, he was taken away from that agreeable school, and his fellowship of women was broken up, not to be reunited. Called into Scotland to take at last that strange position in history which is his best claim to commemoration, he was followed thither by his wife and his mother-in-law. The wife soon died. The death of her daughter did not altogether separate Mrs. Bowes from Knox,

but she seems to have come and gone between his house and England. In 1562, however, we find him characterised as "a sole man by reason of the absence of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Bowes," and a passport is got for her, her man, a maid, and "three horses, whereof two shall return," as well as liberty to take all her own money with her into Scotland. This looks like a definite arrangement; but whether she died at Edinburgh, or went back to England yet again, I cannot find.

With that great family of hers, unless in leaving her husband she had quarrelled with them all, there must have been frequent occasion for her presence, one would think. Knox at least survived her; and we possess his epigraph to their long intimacy, given to the world by him in an appendix to his latest publication. I have said in a former paper that Knox was not shy of personal revelations in his published works. And the trick seems to have grown on him. To this last tract, a controversial onslaught on a Scottish Jesuit, he prefixed a prayer, not very pertinent to the matter in hand, and containing references to his family which were the occasion of some wit in his adversary's answer; and appended what seems equally irrelevant, one of his devout letters to Mrs. Bowes, with an explanatory preface. To say truth, I believe he had always felt uneasily that the circumstances of this intimacy were very capable of misconstruction; and now, when he was an old man, taking "his good night of all the faithful in both realms," and only desirous "that without any

notable sclander to the evangel of Jesus Christ, he might end his battle; for as the world was weary of him, so was he of it;" - in such a spirit it was not, perhaps, unnatural that he should return to this old story, and seek to put it right in the eyes of all men, ere he died. "Because that God," he says, "because that God now in His mercy hath put an end to the battle of my dear mother, Mistress Elizabeth Bowes, before that He put an end to my wretched life, I could not cease but declare to the world what was the cause of our great familiarity and long acquaintance; which was neither flesh nor blood, but a troubled conscience upon her part, which never suffered her to rest but when she was in the company of the faithful, of whom (from the first hearing of the word at my mouth) she judged me to be one. . . . Her company to me was comfortable (yea, honourable and profitable, for she was to me and mine a mother), but yet it was not without some cross; for besides trouble and fashery of body sustained for her, my mind was seldom quiet, for doing somewhat for the comfort of her troubled conscience." (1) He had written to her years before, from his first exile in Dieppe, that "only God's hand" could withhold him from once more speaking with her face to face; and now, when God's hand has indeed interposed, when there lies between them, instead of the voyageable straits, that great gulf over which no man can pass, this is the spirit in which he can look back upon their long acquaintance. She was a religious hypochondriac, it appears, whom, not without some cross and

fashery of mind and body, he was good enough to tend. He might have given a truer character of their friendship, had he thought less of his own standing in public estimation, and more of the dead woman. But he was in all things, as Burke said of his son in that ever memorable passage, a public creature. He wished that even into this private place of his affections posterity should follow him with a complete approval; and he was willing, in order that this might be so, to exhibit the defects of his lost friend, and tell the world what weariness he had sustained through her unhappy disposition. There is something here that reminds one of Rousseau.

(1) Works, vi. 513, 514.

I do not think he ever saw Mrs. Locke after he left Geneva; but his correspondence with her continued for three years. It may have continued longer, of course, but I think the last letters we possess read like the last that would be written. Perhaps Mrs. Locke was then remarried, for there is much obscurity over her subsequent history. For as long as their intimacy was kept up, at least, the human element remains in the Reformer's life. Here is one passage, for example, the most likable utterance of Knox's that I can quote:- Mrs Locke has been upbraiding him as a bad correspondent. "My remembrance of you," he answers, "is not so dead, but I trust it shall be fresh enough, albeit it be renewed by no outward

token for one year. OF NATURE, I AM CHURLISH; YET ONE THING I ASHAME NOT TO AFFIRM, THAT FAMILIARITY ONCE THOROUGHLY CONTRACTED WAS NEVER YET BROKEN ON MY DEFAULT. THE CAUSE MAY BE THAT I HAVE RATHER NEED OF ALL, THAN THAT ANY HAVE NEED OF ME. However it (THAT) be, it cannot be, as I say, the corporal absence of one year or two that can quench in my heart that familiar acquaintance in Christ Jesus, which half a year did engender, and almost two years did nourish and confirm. And therefore, whether I write or no, be assuredly persuaded that I have you in such memory as becometh the faithful to have of the faithful." (1) This is the truest touch of personal humility that I can remember to have seen in all the five volumes of the Reformer's collected works: it is no small honour to Mrs. Locke that his affection for her should have brought home to him this unwonted feeling of dependence upon others. Everything else in the course of the correspondence testifies to a good, sound, down-right sort of friendship between the two, less ecstatic than it was at first, perhaps, but serviceable and very equal. He gives her ample details is to the progress of the work of reformation; sends her the sheets of the CONFESSION OF FAITH, "in quairs," as he calls it; asks her to assist him with her prayers, to collect money for the good cause in Scotland, and to send him books for himself - books by Calvin especially, one on Isaiah, and a new revised edition of the "Institutes." "I must be bold on your liberality," he writes, "not only in

that, but in greater things as I shall need." (2) On her part she applies to him for spiritual advice, not after the manner of the drooping Mrs. Bowes, but in a more positive spirit, - advice as to practical points, advice as to the Church of England, for instance, whose ritual he condemns as a "mingle-mangle." (3) Just at the end she ceases to write, sends him "a token, without writing." "I understand your impediment," he answers, "and therefore I cannot complain. Yet if you understood the variety of my temptations, I doubt not but you would have written somewhat." (4) One letter more, and then silence.

(1) Works, vi. ii.
(2) Works, vi. pp. 21. 101, 108, 130.
(3) IB. vi. 83.
(4) IB. vi. 129.

And I think the best of the Reformer died out with that correspondence. It is after this, of course, that he wrote that ungenerous description of his intercourse with Mrs. Bowes. It is after this, also, that we come to the unlovely episode of his second marriage. He had been left a widower at the age of fifty-five. Three years after, it occurred apparently to yet another pious parent to sacrifice a child upon the altar of his respect for the Reformer. In January 1563, Randolph writes to Cecil: "Your Honour will take it for a great wonder when I shall write unto you that Mr. Knox

shall marry a very near kinswoman of the Duke's, a Lord's daughter, a young lass not above sixteen years of age." (1) He adds that he fears he will be laughed at for reporting so mad a story. And yet it was true; and on Palm Sunday, 1564, Margaret Stewart, daughter of Andrew Lord Stewart of Ochiltree, aged seventeen, was duly united to John Knox, Minister of St. Giles's Kirk, Edinburgh, aged fifty-nine, - to the great disgust of Queen Mary from family pride, and I would fain hope of many others for more humane considerations. "In this," as Randolph says, "I wish he had done otherwise." The Consistory of Geneva, "that most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles," were wont to forbid marriages on the ground of too great a disproportion in age. I cannot help wondering whether the old Reformer's conscience did not uneasily remind him, now and again, of this good custom of his religious metropolis, as he thought of the two-and-forty years that separated him from his poor bride. Fitly enough, we hear nothing of the second Mrs. Knox until she appears at her husband's deathbed, eight years after. She bore him three daughters in the interval; and I suppose the poor child's martyrdom was made as easy for her as might be. She was extremely attentive to him "at the end, we read and he seems to have spoken to her with some confidence. Moreover, and this is very characteristic, he had copied out for her use a little volume of his own devotional letters to other women.

(1) Works, vi. 532.

This is the end of the roll, unless we add to it Mrs. Adamson, who had delighted much in his company "by reason that she had a troubled conscience," and whose deathbed is commemorated at some length in the pages of his history. (1)

(1) Works, i. 246.

And now, looking back, it cannot be said that Knox's intercourse with women was quite of the highest sort. It is characteristic that we find him more alarmed for his own reputation than for the reputation of the women with whom he was familiar. There was a fatal preponderance of self in all his intimacies: many women came to learn from him, but he never condescended to become a learner in his turn. And so there is not anything idyllic in these intimacies of his; and they were never so renovating to his spirit as they might have been. But I believe they were good enough for the women. I fancy the women knew what they were about when so many of them followed after Knox. It is not simply because a man is always fully persuaded that he knows the right from the wrong and sees his way plainly through the maze of life, great qualities as these are, that people will love and follow him, and write him letters full of their "earnest desire for him" when he is absent. It is not over a man,

whose one characteristic is grim fixity of purpose, that the hearts of women are "incensed and kindled with a special care," as it were over their natural children. In the strong quiet patience of all his letters to the weariful Mrs. Bowes, we may perhaps see one cause of the fascination he possessed for these religious women. Here was one whom you could besiege all the year round with inconsistent scruples and complaints; you might write to him on Thursday that you were so elated it was plain the devil was deceiving you, and again on Friday that you were so depressed it was plain God had cast you off for ever; and he would read all this patiently and sympathetically, and give you an answer in the most reassuring polysyllables, and all divided into heads - who knows? - like a treatise on divinity. And then, those easy tears of his. There are some women who like to see men crying; and here was this great-voiced, bearded man of God, who might be seen beating the solid pulpit every Sunday, and casting abroad his clamorous denunciations to the terror of all, and who on the Monday would sit in their parlours by the hour, and weep with them over their manifold trials and temptations. Nowadays, he would have to drink a dish of tea with all these penitents. . . . It sounds a little vulgar, as the past will do, if we look into it too closely. We could not let these great folk of old into our drawing-rooms. Queen Elizabeth would positively not be eligible for a housemaid. The old manners and the old customs go sinking from grade to grade, until, if some mighty emperor revisited

the glimpses of the moon, he would not find any one of his way of thinking, any one he could strike hands with and talk to freely and without offence, save perhaps the porter at the end of the street, or the fellow with his elbows out who loafs all day before the public-house. So that this little note of vulgarity is not a thing to be dwelt upon; it is to be put away from us, as we recall the fashion of these old intimacies; so that we may only remember Knox as one who was very long-suffering with women, kind to them in his own way, loving them in his own way - and that not the worst way, if it was not the best - and once at least, if not twice, moved to his heart of hearts by a woman, and giving expression to the yearning he had for her society in words that none of us need be ashamed to borrow.

And let us bear in mind always that the period I have gone over in this essay begins when the Reformer was already beyond the middle age, and already broken in bodily health: it has been the story of an old man's friendships. This it is that makes Knox enviable. Unknown until past forty, he had then before him five-and-thirty years of splendid and influential life, passed through uncommon hardships to an uncommon degree of power, lived in his own country as a sort of king, and did what he would with the sound of his voice out of the pulpit. And besides all this, such a following of faithful women! One would take the first forty years gladly, if one could be sure of the last thirty. Most of us, even

if, by reason of great strength and the dignity of gray hairs, we retain some degree of public respect in the latter days of our existence, will find a falling away of friends, and a solitude making itself round about us day by day, until we are left alone with the hired sick-nurse. For the attraction of a man's character is apt to be outlived, like the attraction of his body; and the power to love grows feeble in its turn, as well as the power to inspire love in others. It is only with a few rare natures that friendship is added to friendship, love to love, and the man keeps growing richer in affection - richer, I mean, as a bank may be said to grow richer, both giving and receiving more - after his head is white and his back weary, and he prepares to go down into the dust of death.