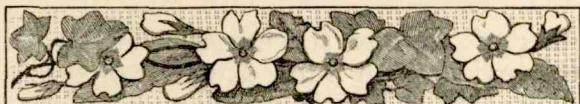




JAMES, (7TH) EARL OF DERBY, K.G., CHARLOTTE, HIS WIFE,  
AND LADY KATHARINE STANLEY, THEIR (3RD) DAUGHTER.

*From a painting by Vandyke, in the possession of the Earl of Clarendon.*

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## JAMES, SEVENTH EARL OF DERBY.

*By Frank John Leslie, F.R.G.S.*

Read 21st February, 1889.

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JAMES, the seventh Earl of Derby, is a figure well known to the student of local chronicles, but there has not, I think, been accorded to him that place in the page of history to which his remarkable career would seem to entitle him.

The eldest born of a family whose hereditary seat was called, from the rank and magnificence of its owners, the "Northern Court"; boasting no distant alliance with the royal blood of England; nurtured with all the care and amid all the luxury that the world could afford; inheriting the possession of a princely estate; living a life of cultured ease, in the society of a loving wife and children; yet putting all aside to espouse the cause of his Sovereign; clinging to that cause unwaveringly, through evil report and good report; losing children, friends, riches, lands, liberty, and at last life itself, for what he deemed the right;—surely such a career as that must have in it something that will repay us for more than a passing notice.

James Stanley was born at Knowsley, on January 31st, 1606. His father was William the sixth Earl, and his mother was Elizabeth Vere, the eldest

daughter of Edward seventeenth Earl of Oxford, by his marriage with Anne, daughter of the famous Lord Treasurer Burghley. The Stanleys were originally a Saxon family of Staffordshire, a younger son of which migrated to Cheshire in the thirteenth century. Sir John Stanley was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under Edward III., and married the heiress of Sir Thomas de Lathom, who had previously married the heiress of Knowsley, thus bringing the great Lathom and Knowsley estates into the family. The fourth Earl married the grand-daughter of Mary Duchess of Suffolk, who was herself the daughter of Henry VII. and widow of Louis XII. of France. James Stanley therefore, of whom we are treating, was the direct descendant of Henry VII., and moreover he had in his veins the blood of the ancient families of Lathom, Neville, Strange, Woodville, Hastings, Howard, Clifford, Brandon, Cecil, and De Vere, besides that of the royal houses of Lancaster, Plantagenet, Tudor, and Stuart. There was, indeed, no man of his time whose pedigree showed a more illustrious descent than his.

Of his earlier years not much is known. His childhood was probably spent at Knowsley and at Lathom, which then belonged to the Stanley family. Afterwards he appears to have gone to school at Bolton, and then to have studied at Oxford.

In his twentieth year he was returned to Parliament, as the member for Liverpool, and later on his connection with that town became even more close, for in 1626 he was chosen the first Mayor of Liverpool, under the new charter just granted by Charles I. In those days the Stanleys had a fortified residence in the town, called the Tower, which stood at the bottom of Water Street, on the present site of Tower Buildings.

In this same year James Stanley, Lord Strange, was married to the Lady Charlotte, daughter of the Duc de Tremouille, and granddaughter of William, Prince of Orange. This lady is almost better known to history than her husband, as the successful defender of Lathom House against the army of the Commonwealth. She was, indeed, worthy of her noble husband, and writing at the close of his life, he says of her—"I acknowledge "the great goodness of God in having given me "such a wife as you—so excellent a companion— "so much of all that can be said of good—I must "confess it impossible to say enough thereof."

The marriage was celebrated at the palace of the Prince of Orange, at the Hague, on June 26th, 1626, and was enlivened, we are told, by a wrangle between the French and English ambassadors, as to which should first sign the marriage register. It will be seen that Lord Strange had not yet attained his majority; when he did he was immediately called to the House of Lords, and created Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Cheshire, and North Wales.

For a time Lord and Lady Strange lived in London, amid the pleasure-loving court of Charles I. and Henrietta Maria. Their eldest son, Charles, was born in 1627, and Charles I. was one of his sponsors. But they had no liking for the idle, frivolous life of the court, and but little in common with its courtiers; so they retired to Lancashire, and for the future visited the capital but seldom. It seems certain that this silent disapproval of the corrupt and vicious counsellors by whom Charles was unhappily surrounded, was keenly resented by the Queen, and led her, later on, to lose no chance of poisoning Charles's mind against Lord Strange, and throwing suspicion upon all his actions.

So at Knowsley and Lathom they lived a quiet, tranquil life, surrounded with great state, and practising wonderful hospitality; yet in an atmosphere of domestic happiness to which, in those days, exalted rank was too often a stranger. His reputation was so high that many of the first families of the county, instead of sending their eldest sons to the king's court as pages of honour, as the custom had been, sent them to the magnificent household of Lord Strange. His education had been worthy of his high position. He was an accomplished linguist, a musician, and an artist; and we are told that his scholarship was remarkable, even in an age of scholars. The question may naturally occur to some, how it came about that Lord Strange should be in possession of the ancestral mansions and estates while his father, William, the sixth Earl, still lived. Earl William had, however, retired from active worldly pursuits, and had given up the whole of his vast property to his son. He lived in absolute seclusion at Bidston Hall, in Cheshire, and seems never again to have visited Knowsley or Lathom. For years Lord Strange led an uneventful life at Knowsley, fulfilling the duties of his high position; occupying his leisure in literary pursuits; happy in the society of his wife and children. A number of relics of the seventh Earl, of great interest, are preserved at Knowsley. Among these are his MS. Book of Private Devotions and his Commonplace-book. These contain evidence of reading unusually wide and varied for a man of that period, and show that he must have spent very much of his time in diligent study.

In 1630 there came to Knowsley, on a visit, the great Duchess de Tremouille, Lady Strange's mother; and Lord Strange, with a following of six hundred of the neighbouring nobles and yeomen,

went out to meet her. The meeting took place on Hoole Heath, a wild spot near Chester, fated, as we shall see hereafter, to be intimately connected with the Earl of Derby in his adversity, as now in his prosperity. The Duchess and the Earl passed through Chester, and the officials of that ancient city seem to have been moved to do her especial honour in their own peculiar way, for we are told in the Harleian MS. No. 1923, that "the Mayor and Aldermen, in their best gowns and apparel, did exhibit themselves on a stage in Eastgate Street, to entertain her."

This tranquil life at Knowsley was varied only by occasional visits to the Isle of Man, of which the Stanleys were the hereditary rulers. Though Lord Strange, when he afterwards succeeded to the earldom, was only the seventh Earl of Derby, he was the tenth Stanley who had held the title of Lord or King of Man. There he ruled on behalf of his father, and there, in his ancient dominion, engaged in the discharge of his sovereign duties, we may take a nearer view of him.

It was Midsummer Day, 1637, and the Manxmen had come together at the Tynwald Hill, near St. John's Church, in the midst of the island. This hill, which had been the meeting-place of the islanders from the time of the Scandinavians, was really a huge mound of earth, 240 feet in circumference at its base, and forming a succession of terraces or platforms, the top being a platform 16 feet in diameter. This summit was occupied by a Throne or Chair of State, shielded by a huge temporary canopy, above which floated a banner, emblazoned with the three legs of Man, and the Stanley crest, the eagle and child. It was an animated scene on that Midsummer Day, the hill and its platform, with the adjacent ground, crowded with the islanders waiting the coming of their Lord

and the ancient ceremonies proper to so great an occasion. Very soon there was seen wending its way to the Hill of Council a long procession, headed by Lord Strange, who was followed by the Bishop, the Council, the members of the House of Keys, and all the leading men of the island, with a guard of honour composed of a chosen band of Lord Strange's Lancashire retainers. He ascended the hill, and took his seat upon the throne. Round him were ranged his court, and before him stood an officer bearing the ancient Sword of Power.

He was a man peculiarly well fitted by nature to occupy the high position to which he was born. The portrait given here is copied from the picture by Vandyke. His figure was tall and commanding, his features were regular and handsome, with a forehead probably lofty, but which in all his portraits is concealed by a mass of overhanging dark hair. His hands, it may be mentioned, were particularly small and delicate. In disposition he was kind and gentle, but essentially just; for anything underhand or mean he entertained the most profound hatred and contempt.

Such, then, was he who now sat looking down on that great assembly, as its Lord. At a signal from him the Acts of the Tynwald Court were read out in Manx and English, and solemnly ratified by the consent of the whole assembly. One of the laws there passed was, it is interesting to find, conceived in the interest of temperance, and put a restraint on the traffic in ale and beer in the island. Then a number of petitions were handed in, Lord Strange made a short address, and dissolved the assembly; whereupon the procession slowly returned as it had come. Shortly afterwards Lord Strange set sail for Lancashire, and rejoined his wife and family at Knowsley.



L.L. Jewitt. P.S.A.

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*While Stanley's life-like face you scan,  
You recognize the King of Men:  
But learn his death from History's pen,  
And then you see the King of Men.*

But the years of his quiet and happy existence at Knowsley were drawing to a close, and there was about to begin that dark and troubrous time which terminated for him only with his life. For some time past discontent and disaffection had been spreading through the land. The people of England were just beginning to feel their own strength, and could no longer be safely ruled with the iron hand of Henry VIII. and his daughters. Charles I. failed to see this, and seems, indeed, to have been quite unable to understand the temper of the times in which he lived. Instead of pursuing a conciliatory policy, he strained the royal prerogative to the utmost, set at nought the power of Parliament, and by his ill-judged actions alienated from him many who would otherwise have been his staunch supporters.

Lord Strange, from his quiet seclusion at Knowsley, was at first only an anxious spectator of events. To him civil strife could be no gain, but rather great and certain loss. He was happy, wealthy, and contented. He has left us the expression of his opinion that "a nation gains more "by one year's peace than it ever can from ten "years' war," and that "war is the curse and "peace the blessing of God upon a nation." But his royal master sent for him, and in October, 1640, in obedience to the command, he joined the King at York. At the council in that city were assembled the King, Hamilton, Strafford, Laud, Falkland, Holland, and Lord Strange, everyone of whom, such was the turbulence of the times, met with a violent death. At that council Lord Strange urged with great insistence that the Royalist standard should be raised at Warrington, as the centre of a well-affected and populous district. This was strongly opposed in the council, but Lord Strange's arguments prevailed, and the King consented.

Lord Strange immediately returned into Lancashire, and there mustered an army of 60,000 men, from Bury, Ormskirk, and Preston. He also raised 5,000 auxiliaries, whom he equipped at his own expense, and handed the King a contribution of £40,000.

But now began that secret influence, that insidious detraction, which Lord Strange had to endure for all the rest of his life. The courtiers of Charles, and, above all, the Queen herself, disliked him, for having so persistently absented himself from the idle gaieties of the court, and for having ventured to advise the King against the arbitrary policy he was pursuing at their dictation. His enemies made his very popularity a ground for suspicion, and hinted that if he were entrusted with supreme command in the royal army, he might use it, not for the King, but for himself. So Charles, against his own better judgment, was weakly led to alter his decision, and to raise the royal standard at Nottingham. Lord Strange was indignant at such groundless slights, but his loyalty never wavered, his energy never flagged. In his devotion to the cause he supported, he passed over personal wrongs as of no account. He returned into Lancashire, in order to win all whom he could for the King. With this object he went to Manchester, where he was entertained at a banquet by some of the chief citizens.

It was on the 15th July, 1642, that this banquet was given to Lord Strange. This date will always be a notable one in the history of Lancashire, and, indeed, of England, for what then happened there. While the banquet was going on, some of those disaffected to the King flocked together in arms, and blocked up the two ends of the street in which Lord Strange was. The Sheriff, who was dining with him, ran down stairs and attempted to dis-

perse them, but without success ; whereupon Lord Strange came down, and went along the street. In the length of the street he was shot at three times, it is believed, by his relative, Sir Thomas Stanley of Bickerstaffe, who was against the side of the King. One of the gentlemen of Lord Strange's party was struck on the head, whereupon his assailant was killed on the spot. The name of the man who was killed was Richard Percival ; who killed him is uncertain. And so on that summer afternoon, in the old Manchester street, was the first blood shed in England in the great Civil War.

Lord Strange went out of Manchester, and took up his residence for a short time at Ordsall Hall. After wavering somewhat, Manchester declared for the Parliament, while Liverpool remained faithful to the King.

Lord Strange having raised large forces, marched with them towards Manchester. All the disaffected in Lancashire were shut up within it, preparing for the assault which they felt sure would come. They had thrown up mud walls, dug trenches, and barricaded the streets and bridges. They only possessed one cannon, and this they put in position on some high ground near the Collegiate Church, now the Cathedral. The citizens were daily exercised in arms, and waited for the coming of their foes.

On Sunday morning, September 25th, 1642, all the people were in the churches. There was a hush and silence throughout the city, when suddenly on the startled congregations there rang out the appointed signal—the bells of the old Collegiate Church rung backwards. In a few minutes the drums beat to arms in the church porches, the word was given that Lord Strange was coming with a great army, and soon every man was at the

post which had been assigned to him. A furious assault was made by the Royalists, but they were beaten back, and Lord Strange determined to lay siege to the town. No doubt in the end it would have fallen, but Charles, with that inconsistency and infirmity of purpose which did so much to ruin his own cause, suddenly sent for Lord Strange to rejoin the army at Shrewsbury, and to raise the siege. He was compelled to obey, and so Manchester escaped for that time. Many of Lord Strange's chief followers were so disgusted with the King's vacillation and ingratitude that from that time they abandoned the Royal cause, and some went openly over to the Parliamentary party.

During the siege Lord Strange had heard of his father's death, and he had now, therefore, succeeded to the title as the seventh earl. Cromwell, knowing the value of the man, and seeing the slights which were put upon him by the King, made secret overtures to him to join the forces of the Parliament, in which he should have high command ; but Lord Derby indignantly refused the offer, as an insult to his loyalty. In revenge, Cromwell had him impeached of high treason, and soon after his vast estates were declared to be forfeited to the Parliament. In addition, his immediate apprehension was ordered. To order it, however, was easier than to obtain it, and in March, 1643, Lord Derby marched with a considerable force to Lancaster, which the enemy had occupied a short time before. Here he was strongly opposed, but he captured the town after a sharp struggle of two hours' hard fighting ; and in order that it should not afford a cover for the rebels, he burnt a great part of the place. The fine old Castle withstood, however, all his attacks. There was some sharp fighting in the gateway, but the Royalists had at last to give up all hope of taking it.

Lord Derby then made a successful attack upon Bolton, and retook Preston for the King. The people of Preston, though they had been awed by the presence of the leaders of the Parliament, were really loyal to the King, and when the Earl of Derby entered it, after its recapture, they crowded the streets, flung up their hats, and shouted, “God ‘bless the King and the Earl of Derby.’” He advanced across the country to Whalley, everywhere driving the enemy before him.

But now he was brought face to face with a worthy foeman, Ralph Assheton of Middleton, the head of an old historic Lancashire family, whose ancestors had fought in the Wars of the Roses and at Flodden. When the Civil War broke out, Ralph Assheton was the senior member for Lancashire. He at once took a leading position in the troubles which ensued, and was nominated colonel-general of the Parliament’s forces in Lancashire. He set himself the task of breaking the power of Lord Derby, and with this end he marched his forces to intercept the Royalists at Whalley. He came up with them, and a fierce fight ensued, in which, at last, the Royalists were defeated and fled away.

Assheton pursued them by forced marches from Whalley to Ribchester, from Ribchester to Preston, and from Preston to Wigan ; driving the fugitives before him, until, in despair, they fled from the county. He placed garrisons in all the Lancashire towns he had captured, including Wigan. Lathom House, the principal seat of Lord Derby, was only a very few miles from Wigan, and the Earl, apprehensive of an attack, commenced to strengthen that fortress.

While so engaged, there came news of dissensions in the Isle of Man, and the King, fearful of the island falling into the hands of the Parliament, requested Lord Derby to go there. About Mid-

summer of 1643 he crossed to the island, and did his utmost to counteract the disaffection which the emissaries of the Parliament had fostered there. Lady Derby did not accompany him, but remained with her children at Lathom House.

The grand story of the successful defence of Lathom House by the Countess of Derby has been often told, but yet no sketch of its heroic lord would be complete without some mention of it. No part of that fine old fortress now remains, but minute descriptions exist, from which we learn its characteristic features. It was a quaint looking building, almost a town in itself, encircled by high outer walls, two yards in thickness ; strengthened by seven lofty towers, and a great square tower, called the Eagle Tower, rising over all in the centre. On that grand old tower, in former days, the beacon fire of the Stanleys had been often kindled, to warn the country round of the approach of some feudal foe. The fortress was surrounded by a moat, eight yards wide.

The Parliamentary troops arrived opposite the house on the 27th February, 1644. Within were Lady Derby, her children, and about 300 men, chiefly retainers on the estate. The besiegers did not doubt that after a few days the garrison would be starved out, so they threw up earthworks and surrounded the place. But it was well stocked with provisions, and the delay enabled Lady Derby to train her soldiers, repair the walls, and organise a plan of resistance. At the end of a fortnight, just as Rigby, the colonel in command, was expecting a surrender, the garrison made a vigorous sally, killed thirty of the enemy, and captured some prisoners and muskets. Rigby now determined on mounting cannon against the walls, and after some weeks' work the besiegers found themselves in a position to fire a shot, which, it was expected,

would greatly terrify the garrison ; but which, it is said, in the result went altogether wide of the mark, and buried itself in a neighbouring field.

But the triumph of their skill was the placing of their great mortar-piece, which cast stones eighty pounds in weight, and balls of fire. This monster could only be fired about once a day, and sometimes had an uncomfortable trick of scattering its contents among its owners, instead of in the midst of the enemy ; so that, after lighting the fuse, the gunners were instructed to run away as hard as they could before it went off. One of the balls from it entered the Countess of Derby's chamber, as she was sitting at breakfast with her children ; and she merely remarked that since they were likely to have disagreeable intruders, they must change their quarters.

That night, so the story goes, a most horrible appearance caused the hasty flight of the Parliament's army. Suddenly the darkness was lit up with what seemed to be a multitude of torches coming from the castle, and waving in all directions. The air was rent with shouts, and the besiegers, thinking that a mighty army was advancing, turned and fled in the utmost confusion. Rigby alone had the courage to face this awful and hostile appearance, which turned out to be produced by two old horses, which had been driven out of the castle gates with a number of cords fastened to them, and on these were placed lights, which shook and flickered about.

Rigby and his army were highly incensed at the way in which the garrison had amused themselves at their expense, and determined to make a final assault. But they first sent a drummer with a summons to surrender, for delivery to the Countess herself, in the hope that he might be able to spy out the true strength of the garrison. But this

envoy was blindfolded at the gates, and marched by many sentries and with much unbarring of gates, until he came in the presence of the Countess. Then the bandage was removed, and he was allowed to give her the letter. She rose, and reading aloud the letter, which was insulting in its terms, she tore it into pieces before his eyes, bidding him take that to Rigby for his answer, and declaring that she would burn the fortress, and with her children and the garrison perish in the flames, rather than fall into the hands of that insolent rebel. The soldiers who were present cheered her words lustily, and shouted, "Long live the King and 'your Ladyship.'" There is a picture of this incident hanging in the "king's chamber" at Knowsley, showing the drummer standing in the presence of the Countess.

The next morning, about four o'clock, a desperate sally was made by the garrison, with the purpose of silencing the mortar. They were not only successful in this, but were even able to drag it within the walls; whereat there were great rejoicings, and a solemn thanksgiving of the garrison. The besiegers were now disheartened. The siege had lasted four months, and the soldiers had received no pay; and the plunder of Lathom, which they had been promised, seemed as far off as ever. And now, to add to their further discomfiture, they obtained an intercepted letter from Lord Derby to his wife, announcing the immediate advance of Prince Rupert to her relief. So they deemed discretion the better part of valour, and departed in the night for Manchester and Bolton.

So ended the famous siege of Lathom, after the place had been closely beset for four months; during which the enemy had lost 500 men, and the garrison only six. We can imagine how deeply affecting must have been the meeting between the

Earl and his heroic wife when he reached Lathom on the following day, with Prince Rupert, who was himself a cousin of Lady Derby's. But they did not long remain there. Rigby had retired to Bolton, and so long as he was so close, there could be no security for Lathom.

On the next day, therefore, the 28th May, Prince Rupert and Lord Derby set out for Bolton, and reached it about two o'clock in the afternoon. The assault was at once ordered, and Lord Derby led the van. Rigby defended it to the utmost, but so fierce was the attack from all quarters that, after a very sharp and bloody contest, the place was taken. The sudden and rapid capture of the town was attributed, by the historians of the time, chiefly to the heroism and courage of Lord Derby, who fought at the head of a body of the late defenders of Lathom, and who was fired by the knowledge of the sufferings and trials which his noble Countess had but just experienced at the hands of these very defenders of Bolton. He was the first to scale the walls and enter the town, where there was an utter defeat and great slaughter of the army of the Parliament. The colours taken by Prince Rupert at Bolton were presented by him to Lady Derby, and were hung up at Lathom. It was now felt that Lancashire was no safe place for the Countess and her children, and so they retired to the Isle of Man.

Lord Derby proceeded with Prince Rupert to the siege of Liverpool. The history of that protracted siege has been often written. Prince Rupert made his headquarters in Everton, and there it seems likely that Lord Derby resided with him. The preparations for defence had been hastily but very efficiently made. Liverpool then was, of course, a small place. As the Prince looked down on Liverpool he called it, we are told, "a nest of crows,

" which any schoolboy could take." After he had besieged it for three weeks, and had lost a large number of his men without obtaining any advantage, he began to acknowledge that it was more like "a nest of eagles." There were in the town at that time two fortified strongholds—the Tower, the Liverpool residence of Lord Derby, and the Castle, the residence of Lord Molyneux, the ancestor of the Earl of Sefton. These, with the rest of the town, were in the hands of the Parliament.

At last Liverpool was taken by storm, and again the royal standard waved on the Castle and the Tower. After the capture of Liverpool, all Lancashire, except Manchester, was once more regained for the King. But whilst this result had been attained in Lancashire—thanks, chiefly, to the heroism of Lord Derby and his Countess—the King had been unsuccessful in other parts; and on the 2nd July, 1644, his misfortunes culminated in the defeat at Marston Moor. Lord Derby was present there, and, we are told, did much to stave off defeat for a time; but he was not well supported, and the Royalist cause received its crowning and most crushing blow. Its army no longer existed, and its leaders fled for their lives. Lord Derby found his way across to the Isle of Man, and there joined his family at Castle Rushen, where he lived for some years in the strictest retirement.

During this period misfortunes crowded thick upon him. His estates had been confiscated; his ancestral mansions were going to ruin; Lathom, after a second siege, had been sacked and burnt. The ruin of this noble house he seems to have felt most deeply, and in his book of reflections, which, with his other manuscripts, is still preserved at Knowsley, he exclaims with the Psalmist, "Our "holy and beautiful house, where our fathers

"praised Thee, is burnt with fire, and all our  
"pleasant things are laid waste. O how sits the  
"city solitary which was full of people ! Her  
"adversaries are the chief : her enemies prosper."

Two of his children, who had crossed over to Knowsley, had been cast into prison in Liverpool. He himself, his wife, and the rest of his family, were almost in a state of siege. They were positively in want of proper food and clothes. A sea-captain, who chanced to visit the island, tells us that even the Earl's personal servants were in rags. His king was dead, at the hands of the executioner ; and that king's son was a wanderer on the face of the earth. Even among his own followers he had good reason to suspect the presence of traitors and spies. All around seemed dark and foreboding. In his MS. observations appear frequent remarks and quotations which bear witness to his despondent condition of mind. Thus in one place he quotes a saying of Sir Walter Raleigh, that "fame which ploughs up the air and "sows in the wind has often been dangerous to "the living, and what the dead get by it let the "dead tell." "I," adds Lord Derby, "and some "more who are almost dead, have in the meantime "some guess."

Then again there came to him, in that hour of dejection and misery, the offer of peace. Cromwell offered him, if he would submit to the Parliament and deliver up the Isle of Man, the restoration and the peaceable possession of half his estates. If he had yielded now, for his wife and children's sake, we might well have excused him : his enemies had triumphed, and there seemed no hope of better things in the future. But now it is that in adversity his extraordinary force of character is brought into strongest relief. His reply must have stung even Cromwell's not very susceptible conscience.

"Sir," he replies, "I received your letter with  
"indignation and scorn, and return you this  
"answer, that I cannot but wonder whence you  
"should gather any hopes from me that I should,  
"like you, prove treacherous to my sovereign. . . I  
"scorn your proffers, disdain your favour, and  
"abhor your treason; and am so far from delivering  
"up this island to your advantage, that I will  
"keep it to the utmost of my power and your  
"destruction. Take this for your final answer,  
"and forbear any further solicitations; for if you  
"trouble me with any more messages on this  
"occasion, I will burn the paper and hang the  
"bearer. This is the immutable resolution, and  
"shall be the undoubted practice, of him who  
"accounts it his chiefest glory to be His Majesty's  
"most loyal and obedient servant—Derby."

He had been buoyed up for a time by the news of the success in the Royalist cause of the united English and Scotch armies under Hamilton. But on August 17th, 1648, there was fought the fatal battle of Preston. Cromwell himself was in command of the Parliamentary forces, and a terrible fight, which lasted the whole day, ended in the utter defeat of the Royalists. They made their last stand upon the bridge over the Ribble. Throughout the whole day the rain had descended in torrents, and when night came both victors and vanquished, equally wet, wounded, and exhausted, had to spend it, without food and without shelter, in the fields south of Preston. To such fearful misery had civil war reduced the people of this unhappy country. In that awful battle near kinsmen, bearing the same names, and even sons of the same mother, fought on opposite sides, intent only on mutual slaughter.

That night many of the Scotch fled away northwards, across the Ribble. Many were drowned;

many escaped that fate only to perish on the way from their wounds or from starvation. Cromwell himself, writing of the pursuit of the flying foe, says "he never rode such a journey in all his life." All along the road the sick and the starving were lying, forsaken by their comrades ; and as a grim satire upon the bitter religious and political enmities of the age, there lay together Roundhead and Royalist, Presbyterian and Papist, dying literally in promiscuous heaps. The troops of the Parliament revenged themselves for their previous defeats in Lancashire by ruthlessly burning and pillaging the houses and mansions of the Royalist leaders. They threw valuable pictures out of windows to the flames, they cut down the old timber, and reduced those fine old buildings to blackened ruins. The deer parks at Lathom and Knowsley were laid waste, the pictures in the galleries were taken away, and the library pillaged. The contents of the muniment rooms, and Lord Derby's private papers, were taken to London and sold. The timber in the parks was felled, and a common soldier of the Parliament, and his wife and family, inhabited Knowsley Hall.

All this sad news was carried to Lord Derby, in his exile at Castle Rushen. In that book of private devotions the bitterness of his grief is unconcealed. "My goods," he says, "are divided amongst the robbers : my soul is bowed down to the dust. I am forgotten, as a dead man out of mind. I have forsaken my house ; I have left my heritage ; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul to the hands of enemies." It was about this time that when he was sailing along the Manx coast in a boat, he narrowly escaped being killed by a shot fired from a ship which was cruising there.

In his book are a series of pious reflections on his marvellous preservation. There are also in

this book some curious entries respecting another remarkable incident, which he records as having befallen him on the 22nd September, 1647. The following is his own account of the occurrence, as entered in his diary :—“ 1647, Sept. 22nd. As “ I was reading alone in my chamber at Castle “ Rushen, about twelve in the night, blood fell in a “ very strange manner upon my booke.” He seems to have been much impressed by the incident, and to have regarded it as an omen ; for in his book of devotions he says, “ He did please for some good “ unto me that blood fell strangely on my book, “ while I was reading late alone in the dead of “ night, being at that time very sad and pensive. “ Lord, wilt Thou make Thy wonders known in “ the dark ? Lord, let this which thus happened be “ a token of Thy favour to me, as it was to Israel.”

Soon, amid all his despondency, a ray of hope crossed his path. He heard of Charles II.’s advance from Scotland, and at once prepared to join him. He crossed the channel and landed near Rossall, on the River Wyre, on the night of the 15th August, 1651. The next morning he moved on to Lathom, arousing as he went a degree of enthusiasm, and gathering together such an army of brave men for the King, as probably no other man in England could then have done.

The evening shadows of a summer’s day were closing in as he quitted Lathom for Preston. Moving on to his fate, he looked for the last time on the desolate home he had loved so well. He had not seen it since it had been sacked and burnt, and as he looked on its grand old blackened walls in the quiet summer twilight, it must have seemed to him but a fitting simile for his own ruined but not dishonoured life.

So with a force of about 600 men he marched away to the assistance of his King. As he went

the numbers increased. The news went out through all Lancashire that the Earl of Derby had come back, and not to join him was accounted a disgrace. So strict was his discipline, that it was said a flock of geese might feed all night in his camp and not one be missing in the morning.

But on his march he met with a great disaster. In a narrow lane between Preston and Wigan, now part of the latter town, he fell in with a body of the Parliamentary forces, outnumbering his men by five to one, and after a long and doubtful battle he was utterly defeated.

There are few more desperate fights recorded in history than this battle of Wigan Lane. For two hours the gallant Royalist band encountered the enemy in the narrow lane, and in the end left 700 of them dead, besides the wounded. Lord Derby himself received seven shots on his breastplate, thirteen cuts on his helmet, and five or six wounds upon his arms, shoulders, and face; and he had two horses killed under him.

With difficulty he escaped at last, and took refuge in a house in Wigan market-place, now the Dog Inn, where he managed to elude the vigilant search of his enemies. Here his wounds were dressed, and then, wearied and exhausted as he was, he set out almost alone at midnight, after the battle, to join the King at Worcester. On his way, worn out from loss of blood, he tarried for two days at Boscobel House, in Worcestershire, the seat of a Royalist friend, though then tenanted only by two old servants. Next day he joined the King, and fought with all his old valour at the Battle of Worcester. But once again fortune was with the Parliament, and the last hope of the Royalists was gone.

The King and a few of his most faithful followers escaped, and were guided by the Earl of Derby to

Boscobel House, his own late refuge. But even there they did not feel safe, and at midnight the King, disguised, was secretly let out of a back door of the house into the forest. And so, with a sad heart, Lord Derby took leave of his sovereign, for whom so soon he was to lay down his life. The stirring story of the events which followed, who does not know? How Charles wandered for days, hungry and alone, in the woods round Boscobel House, closely tracked by his foes; how he is said, on one occasion, to have saved himself from capture only by climbing among the leaves of the famous oak; and how, after many privations, he at last made his way to France,—all this is among the best-known stories of our history.

The narration brings home to us, with especial force, what a little thing it is upon which sometimes hangs the destiny of a nation. If Lord Derby had not rested at Boscobel House, and so been able at once to lead the King to timely shelter there, Charles would, in all human probability, have been taken; and if taken, would certainly have been executed. So the whole current of English history must have been entirely changed.

Lord Derby, having provided for the safety of his King, set out, with a few horsemen, for the North, to rally, if possible, the fugitives from Worcester. But they had to fight continually for their lives, with small skirmishing parties of the enemy; and it is recorded that as Captain Oliver Edge, a Parliamentary officer, was riding slowly along, on his way to Worcester, he was hailed by a party of the King's horse, blood-stained and wounded, who rode up to him, dismounted, and surrendered as prisoners of war. Captain Edge granted quarter for life, according to the rules of war, and conducted them to his regiment, where it was found, to their delight, that the leader of the prisoners was the famous and dreaded Earl of Derby.

He was brought to Chester, and on the express instructions of Cromwell, and in spite of the fact that he had been granted quarter on his surrender, he was at once put on his trial for his life, as a declared traitor to the Commonwealth. A commission of Parliament committeemen, all of whom were known to be hostile to Lord Derby, was appointed to preside at his trial. The whole performance was a mockery, for his fate had already been decided upon. There is a letter preserved which was written by one of the Bradshaws, before the commission opened, in which he coolly says, "Darbie will be tried at Chester and 'dye at Bolton.'" The commission had no legal status or jurisdiction whatever, but was simply the creature of Cromwell, called together under his personal order.

The only constitutional offence upon which the lawyers of the Commonwealth found themselves able to frame an indictment against Lord Derby was for acting in contravention of an Act of Parliament hurriedly passed in the previous month, on the 12th of August, 1651, just three days before Lord Derby's departure from the Isle of Man—entitled, "An Act prohibiting correspondence with 'Charles Stuart or his party.'" Of this Act Lord Derby had not even heard.

On the 29th September the so-called trial began, in a small dingy room in Chester Castle. Judges and spectators were all alike his bitter enemies, and the proceedings were so ordered that he had not a friend in the room. The indictment against him was read, and on the Earl asking that counsel might plead for him, the request was at once refused, and he was told he must say what he had to say in person, at nine o'clock on the following morning. This he did, and the long and able speech which he made, hastily prepared as it was,

affords ample proof of his great mental powers. He urged that he had of his own free will surrendered, and that when he did so he had been solemnly promised quarter for life, and that he was the first man ever tried by court-martial after such a promise had been given. He pleaded that the powers of the Court were limited by the Act, which provided no new rules, and that the Act did not apply to the Isle of Man ; and he appealed from the Court to the Lord General Cromwell.

But he had neither mercy nor justice to expect from his enemies. They had suffered too much from his courage and loyalty to make them inclined to listen to his arguments. Without making any reply to those arguments, or even noticing his appeal, they proceeded to judgment ; and that same afternoon the prearranged sentence was pronounced, and he was adjudged to die at Bolton on the 15th October. It was doubtless a refinement of cruelty that induced his enemies to select Bolton as the place of his execution. It was his own place, among his own people, whom he had known as a boy. The sight of the place, they thought, and doubtless thought rightly, would add to the bitterness of his sorrow.

Through it all there is clearly traceable the pitiless hand of Cromwell himself, who hated the Earl for his contemptuous treatment of him years before, and for his unswerving loyalty to the King, whom Cromwell had already put to death. In spite of all his precautions, he nearly missed his victim, for during the night Lord Derby escaped. Climbing from his cell he reached the leads which overhung the castle walls, and by means of a rope he lowered himself by a desperate effort from the top of the castle to the ground. He got out of the city and was escaping across the low-lying ground by the Dee, which now forms Chester race-course,

when by some mistake he revealed his identity to one whom he thought was a friend, but who was in truth one of his bitterest enemies. He was taken back to prison, and, needless to say, he never again got the opportunity of repeating his attempt.

Two days before his death he wrote to his wife and children, and nothing can be conceived more tender and pathetic than those letters of farewell. They are too long to quote in full here, but I cannot forbear from giving some passages from them. To his wife he says :—

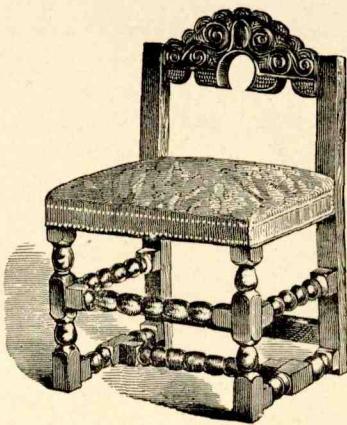
“ My dear Heart,—I have heretofore sent you  
“ comfortable lines, but alas! I have no word of  
“ comfort now ; saving to our last and best refuge,  
“ which is Almighty God, to whose will we must  
“ submit. . . . I conjure you, my dearest heart, by  
“ all those graces which God hath given you, that  
“ you exercise your patience in this great and  
“ strange trial. If harm come to you, then I am  
“ dead indeed ; and until then I shall live in you,  
“ who is truly the best part of myself. When there  
“ is no such thing as I, then look upon yourself and  
“ my dear children ; there take comfort, and God  
“ will bless you. . . . Oh, my dear, I have reason to  
“ believe that this may be the last time that ever  
“ I shall write unto you. I thank you for all your  
“ goodness to me ; for Jesus’ sake forgive me,  
“ when at any time I have not been good to you.  
“ Comfort yourself the best you can. . . . When you  
“ so do, rejoice thereat, I beseech you, as doing  
“ me a great favour ; and for my sake keep not too  
“ strict or too severe a life, but endeavour to live  
“ for your children’s sake, which by an over melan-  
“ choly course you cannot do, but both destroy them  
“ and yourself, and neglect my last request. . . .  
“ I draw near the bottom of the paper, and I am  
“ drawing on to the grave ; for presently I must

"away to the fatal stroke, which shews little mercy  
"in this nation, and as for justice, the Great Judge  
"is judge thereof. —Amen.—Your faithful Derby."

To his children, for whom his love was unbounded, and in whom his chief happiness consisted, he writes :—“ My dear Mall, my Ned, my Billy,—I  
“remember well how sad you were to part with me  
“when I left the Isle for England, but now I fear  
“you will be more sad to know that you can never  
“see me more in this world. But I charge you all  
“to strive against too great a sorrow . . . . and my  
“desire and prayer to God are, that you may have  
“a happy life. Let it be as holy a life as you can,  
“and as little sinful. . . . Obey your mother with  
“cheerfulness, for you have great reason so to do ;  
“for besides that of mother, she is your example,  
“your nurse, your counsellor, your all under God....  
“I am called away, and fear this may be the last I  
“shall write : the Lord my God bless you and guard  
“you. So prays your father, that sorrows most at  
“this time to part with Malekey, Neddy, and Billy.  
“Remember.”

But the Earl had two other children—two young and unoffending girls—whom the heartless president, Bradshaw, had seized at Knowsley, and shut up under close restraint for two years: first in Liverpool Castle, then in the Water Tower of Chester. From them their father was permitted, as we shall see, to take a personal farewell.

On Tuesday, October 14th, he was led out of Chester, on his way to Bolton, and when Hoole Heath was reached his daughters met him. There they paused on the desolate moor, and the Earl and his mourning children knelt down and prayed by the roadside. A far different scene was that to the one I spoke of on that same Heath twenty years before, when the Earl and all his neighbours had marched gaily out to meet the Princess of Orange



CHAIR AT WHICH JAMES, EARL OF DERBY, KNELT  
IN PRAYER WHEN ON THE SCAFFOLD.

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and conduct her to Knowsley. Now he parted tearful, yet resigned, from the last of those he loved on earth, and turning, passed on upon his way to the scaffold.

There are several narratives of those last days of his, and of his end; but all concur in admiration of his unwavering faith, his modest yet firm demeanour, his gracious and forgiving disposition. When they reached Bolton the scaffold was not ready, for all the people of the place had refused even to carry a plank or drive a nail. There was a cry in all the streets—"O sad day! O woeful day! Shall the great and good Earl die here." At last the scaffold was finished; and to add to his sorrows, he was told that it was built of timber from the ruins of Lathom House. To it he walked, firmly and slowly, through the ranks of the people weeping and wailing.

When he reached the scaffold, he looked up and said—"My God, I thank thee that I am not afraid "to go up here. There are but these few steps to "my eternity."

On the scaffold he addressed a long speech to the people—a simple but powerful justification of the acts of his life, for which he was brought to die. In concluding it—"Good friends," he said, "I die for the King, the laws of the land, and the Protestant religion maintained in the Church of England, all of which I was ready to maintain "with my life; so I cheerfully suffer for them in "this welcome death." Then, kneeling down by the quaint old chair, still preserved at Knowsley, he prayed silently for some time. Rising, he caused the block to be turned, so that he might look upon the old Parish Church. Then, kneeling at the block, he said the words—"Blessed be God's "glorious name for ever and ever. Amen"; and giving a sign, the executioner did his work at one

blow, amid the cries and lamentations of the people.

His body was placed in the coffin, and into it was thrown by an unknown hand a paper with this couplet—

“Bounty, wit, courage, here in one lie dead;  
“A Stanley’s hand, Vere’s heart, and Cecil’s head.”

He was borne to Ormskirk by a few faithful friends, and there interred. So died James the seventh Earl of Derby, at the early age of 46.

None, I think, who follows the story of his life, even more closely than time has permitted me here to do,—none who studies with attention the reflection of his inner self in his writings, can fail to observe how his every thought and action was influenced by a keen sense of duty and an innate love of justice. His life was pre-eminently that of a Christian gentleman who feared God and honoured the King. And this Society—whose special province it is to preserve and bring to our remembrance all that is worth remembering in the historied past—can have, I think, no more fitting subject for its consideration than the life and character of James the seventh Earl of Derby.

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NOTE.—The sincere thanks both of the writer and of the Society are due to the Earl of Derby, for his kindness in lending many relics of his distinguished ancestor, for exhibition at the meeting at which the paper was read. These included a Calendar and Book of Private Devotions in the handwriting of Earl James, his Commonplace-book, copies by Winstanley of the Portraits of the Earl and Countess by Vandyke, and the very curious old chair used by the Earl on the scaffold, an illustration of which is given above.

The writer of the paper also desires to express his indebtedness to the publications of the Chetham Society, especially the Stanley Papers, edited by Canon Raines, for much valuable information and assistance.