Life of WILLIAM GODWIN.

[CONCLUDED.]

In 1794, appeared Mr. Godwin's novel of Caleb Williams. His former production had so completely established his reputation for genius, that it can hardly be said this novel increased his fame. It proved the versatility of his powers; but the creative faculties, the richness, eloquence, and passion, displayed in Political Justice, were not excelled in Caleb Williams, although the latter was a form in which they were more obvious to the vulgar. Perhaps a work on ethics is never sufficient of itself to ensure the undiminished fame of a writer. Investigations of that kind, even when they produce facts, are in the nature of discoveries in arts, which are rendered insignificant by farther improvements in the same art. A work of imagination, if conducted on the principles of human actions and enlivened by copiousness of invention, is eternal in its reputation. Mr. Godwin's Caleb Williams, therefore, gave permanency, rather than accession of quantity, to his fame.

In October, 1794, Mr. Godwin wrote a pamphlet entitled Cursory Strictures on the Charge delivered by Lord Chief-Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury on the 2d of October, 1794. In the charge which preceded the memorable state-trials of that year, certain doctrines were broached relative to the crime of high treason, on the impression of which on the public mind probably depended the lives of the accused. The temper and circumstances of the times gave these doctrines such popularity, that almost instantaneously it was a current opinion that the accused were guilty and would be convicted. Mr. Godwin saw the fallacy and danger of the reasoning in the charge; and, having employed a friend to write to his dictating, within eight-and-forty hours, produced his Cursory Strictures. They first appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, and thence were copied into other papers; and were, at the same time, sent to the press in the form of a pamphlet. On the day the pamphlet was published, the bookseller received an intimation that he would be prosecuted if he sold another copy. He stopped the sale; and another publisher was of course to be sought. But the business of the Cursory Strictures was already completed. The subtle mischiefs of the charge were exhibited in the Strictures with their natural undisguised deformity and coarseness. The public tide was turned; and, instead of the guilt and conviction of the accused, nothing was heard of, in the streets and places of resort, but the flagrancy of the offences of the charge.

Cursory Strictures affords a fine example of that species of writing. The author's vehement indignation, when he presents the charge to the public view stript of its cunning, is a beautiful contrast to his cool and steady temper in removing its artful coverings.

In 1795, Mr. Godwin published an edition of Political Justice, in 8vo. There is, in this edition, something to endear him to every generous mind, intent only on the discovery of truth. In revising the opinions of that book, in the interval between the first and second edition, he tho't some were erroneous; and, with the candour becoming the value of the inquiry, he availed himself of the second edition to inform his readers of the mistakes. The principal difference in the two editions will be found in the treating of the four following topics: *Property; political change; marriage; and sincerity.*

Mr. Godwin, in entertaining that great and comprehensive principle, *that there is no portion of our time and property which virtue does not inflexibly apply to some definite use*, stated, in the first edition, as a natural result, that the existence of property in the hands of individuals, with the rights and powers ascribed to it by the law, is an error in politics. In the second edition he qualifies the statement by acknowledging that the several members of society ought to be allowed a discretion in the use of the property they earn; and that, although it is still true that it is their duty to employ every particle of property according to some mode dictated by the occasion, and not by their caprice, it is inconsistent with political liberty to superintend and direct the application through the medium of political regulations.

In the first edition, Mr. Godwin, in speaking of *political change*, seems to have betrayed an impatience for the hour of its arrival; with the condition, constantly annexed, however, of its being forwarded only by opinion, unassisted with force. In the second edition, he most explicitly and strenuously maintains that there exists, in the nature of things, a necessity for a slow a well as gradual change.

In urging his objections to *marriage*, as it exists at present, Mr. Godwin had left it as a question he did not decide, whether the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, or the selection of an individual of one sex by an individual of the other, would be the result of his system; but, in the second edition, he decides the question distinctly in favor of the latter.

Sincerity, Mr. Godwin, in the first edition, insisted upon as a quality never to be violated, even in any extreme case; and, in the second edition, he qualifies this statement by the rule of utility, which, sometimes, he admits, may demand a sacrifice of sincerity.

Beside these changes in Mr. Godwin's opinions, which are certainly important to his view of the result of his scheme in society, there are many others of considerably less effect. We have nothing at present to do with the truth or error of Mr. Godwin's opinions. But it is a question material to this sketch of his character, how far his authority as a moralist, ought to be affected by these alterations? And this question depends upon the resolution of a previous one, how far the alterations in Political Justice are destructive of the vital principles of the book as first described by the author? If his scheme remains entire in one statement and the other, and the alterations exhibit no more than improvement in subordinate parts, making the whole and even its outline stronger than before, then it will be admitted that Mr. Godwin's candour, in giving the actual state of his mind to his reader, is not the only motive of reliance on him, but that his authority is increased by his activity and penetration in the detection of his own erroneous deductions.

In 1796, Mr. Godwin published a volume of miscellaneous essays under the title of The Inquirer. This book assumes a very modest appearance, affecting to contain nothing more than hints on important subjects. But these are strongly conceived, and have an original cast; and the work affords one more proof of the writer's unquenchable passion for the discovery of truth.

In 1797, a third edition of Political Justice was published. A second and third edition of Caleb Williams were published in 1795 and 1797.

There is but one publication more from Mr. Godwin's pen that we have to notice, and that is connected with a story of peculiar interest. We allude to the Memoirs of Mrs. Godwin's Life. The story connected with that work deserves to be told at length, if it could come within our limits. It exhibited Mr. Godwin in that difficult moment for him when the lofty doctrines he had taught made heavy claims on his own practice. He had loudly proclaimed his objections to marriage, and his hatred of that state was indeed inveterate enough. The time came, when he was to subject the woman of his choice to unmerited obloquy, or comply with forms he could not approve. The situation was trying. But Mr. Godwin conceived the production of happiness to be the true criterion of morality; and he did not hesitate to chose, where unlimited mischiefs were to be incurred on one hand, and a definite and comparatively small evil on the other.

Mr. Godwin was married to Mrs. Wolstonecraft in 1797. He had slightly known that most celebrated and most injured woman before her residence in France. After her return, accident brought him into her company. He learnt her sorrowful situation at that period; and, with a zeal the vulgar are accustomed to call romantic, attached himself to the design of restoring a noble mind to itself and to society. The elevated talents, and perhaps still more elevated temper, of Mrs. Wolstonecraft, were almost universally known in the world; and the sweetest of the feminine attractions were not less the qualities of this extraordinary woman than the grandeur of mind so generally acknowledged in her. She was one of those, that the powers of nature and the cultivation of society sometimes unite to form, for whom every sensible and polished mind almost loses its veneration in the excess of its love.

The manner in which Mr. and Mrs. Godwin lived together may be presented as a model for conjugal life. Mr. Godwin's former dislike of marriage was occasioned chiefly by the tyranny it almost always includes. It is not surprising, therefore, that his enlightened views of that intercourse should enable him to shun that rock. But it is not by the mere absence of prominent mischiefs that we can describe Mr. Godwin's roof while his wife lived. To all that is dignified in the delicate relation of married persons, we must add those innumerable requisites of domestic peace that are found in chearfulness, good will, and mutual deference to the adverse opinions that, in two minds of great vigor, must almost necessarily exist. One of the passions that has the most powerful hold on Mr. Godwin's mind is, a fondness for conversation with persons of superior talents. He has always asserted it to be the most fertile cause of intellectual improvement, when rich and congenial souls chance to meet. We shall not, therefore, be very much in danger of exaggerating, if we endeavor to form a picture of the perfection to which he now carried this favorite scheme of pleasure and improvement. So many accessory temptations as conversation offered, in his intercourse with Mrs. Godwin, would not fail to bring its cultivation, in this instance, to a very unusual degree of excellence.

Mrs. Godwin died in September, 1797. In the scenes that belong to that afflicting period, Mr. Godwin was still to be exhibited in an unexpected light to those who were accustomed to regard him as a hard unfeeling theorist. He watched over the means attempted for her recovery with a fortitude and presence of mind that recalled to his friends the recollection of the philosopher they had been used to contemplate in his writings; but, when hope was gone, he abandoned himself to sorrow that seemed to assimilate him with the weakest of mankind: and, when Mrs. Godwin was no more, he admitted of no consolation, in the first moments of his anguish, but that of paying a superstitious respect to her remains.

It was in January, 1798, that Mr Godwin published his Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Godwin. In May, of the same year, a second edition of that work appeared. A painful choice seems to present itself to every ingenuous person who composes memoirs of himself, or of any one so nearly connected with himself as in the present instance. He must either expose himself with disadvantage to the illiberal and malicious temper that exists in the world, or violate the honor and integrity of his feelings. Yet, that the heart should be known in all its windings, is an object of infinite importance to him who would benefit the human race. Mr. Godwin did not prefer a cowardly silence, nor treachery to the public, having chosen to write.—Perhaps such works as the Memoirs of Mrs. Godwin's Life, and Rousseau's Confessions, will ever disgrace their writers with the meaner spirits of the world; but then it is to be remembered, that this herd neither confers, nor can take away, fame.

Of Mr. Godwin's character, both as a man and a writer, the chief features are obvious in this slight sketch of his life.—His writings display greatness of talent; and his life, virtue practised on principles supposed to be too refined to be applicable to ordinary affairs. Without laying claim to the power of raising his conduct to the elevation of his doctrines, which he does not hold to be necessary to their solidity, he perhaps is foremost among these who approach that rule, of making the happiness of society the object of moral conduct. And, if society never reaches that state of improvement in which that fine maxim is the general law, Mr. Godwin has, nevertheless, this recompense for his labours,—that there will always be a virtuous class to whom his speculations will have afforded new motives for the exertion of their humanity, to alleviate at least the miseries to which men, on that supposition, are unhappily doomed.

Three Dollars Reward.

STRAYED away from the subscriber living near Barry's wharf in the city of Washington, on the 3d inst. a bright bay HORSE about 15 hands high, with a small star in his forehead. He is supposed to be about ten years old, shod all round, switched tail, and midling long mane, was branded on the near side, the letter or letters not remembered, his two hind feet white — The above reward will be given to any person that will deliver said horse to me, and if taken up at a distance all reasonable expences paid.

MARK CROWLEY.

October 16. 3t

To be Rented.

THE subscriber will rent by the year, or during the session of Congress, four large, convenient three-story BRICK HOUSES—they are well calculated for Boarding Houses, being all situate on the Capitol Hill, and the nearest houses to the Capitol; two of them adjoin the well known tavern occupied by Mr. Stille the other two are situate equally convenient to the Capitol. Any person qualified to keep such houses may know the terms by applying to

DANIEL CARROL, of Dud'n.

Sept. 28. eptf

TO SUBSCRIBERS.

THE period is approaching when, according to the original and indispensable terms of The NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER, each subscriber will be required to pay Five Dollars in advance for his second year. As the chief support of the paper depends upon subscriptions, it is confidently hoped that subscribers will be punctual in their remittances, which may be made in any Bank Paper, or in Gold, the postage being paid.

A considerable number of subscribers of respectability, as far as the Editor is acquainted with their characters, have requested papers, which have been accordingly forwarded, under the unequivocal engagement to render immediate payment. This, in many cases, has not been done. Unless payment be soon made, a discontinuance of their papers will be unavoidable.

In order that each Subscriber may be informed in time duly to make remittances the period of payment and the sum required to be paid will be stated on his Paper, in general some time before hand. After such notice, immediate payment will be expected, nor will any subscriber, it is hoped, take offence at a discontinuance of his paper in case payment is not made, as the heavy expences attending a Newspaper cannot be defrayed without the regular remittances of subscriptions.

Some misconception of the provisions of the post-office law existing, the Editor informs his subscribers, that the mode of stating his accounts was not adopted, until he had obtained the approbation of the Post Master General. On examination it will be seen, that the *existing law does not*, though the previous law did, *prohibit such statement.*

BY AUCTION.

On Friday the 23d instant, at 11 o'clock, at Mr. Henry Wilson's wharf, Fells Point, will be sold

THE United States Sloop of War MARYLAND. Burthen about 460 tons, built of the very best materials, is only two years old, coppered to the bends, has two suits of sails, her running and standing riging complete. Her inventory may be seen at the auction room.—Terms of sale at 6 and 9 months credit, for negociable notes, with two approved indorsers

Immediate after the sale of the ship, will be sold—A quantity of iron ballast, on 90 days credit, some provisions, armouries, coopers tools, water casks, &c.

JOSHUA DORSEY.

October. 12. eptf.

FOR SALE.

In pursuance of an order of the Orphans Court for the county of Washington, in the District of Columbia, will be exposed to sale on Friday the 23d of October Inst. at 10 o'clock, A. M. at ROCK-HILL, late the residence of GUSTAVUS SCOTT, Esq. deceased.

A number of Negroes, household and kitchen Furniture, Horses, Cows, and a variety of other articles. The terms of sale will be as follow:—Where the property sold to any one purchaser shall not exceed twenty dollars, cash; but where the property sold to any one purchaser shall amount to more than that sum, a credit of six months will be given, on the purchaser's passing bond, with good security, for the payment thereof, with interest from the day of sale.

And on Tuesday following, being the 27th day of October, at 10 o'clock A. M. will be exposed at public sale, at the farm called Strawberry-Vale, situate in Virginia, about nine miles from George-Town,

A number of Negroes, Horses, Mules, Cows, Calves, and Farming Utensils, belonging to the estate of the said Gustavus Scott. The terms of sale the same as above.

On the day of sale at Rock-hill, will likewise be sold at public vendue, one moiety of a GRIST-MILL, standing on Rock-Creek. Likewise a number of well situated Lots in the City of Washington. Also, a number of Potomac, and Potomac Bridge Shares, belonging to said estate.—The terms will be made known on the day of sale.

ELIAS B. CALDWELL, Adm'r.

Washington, October 2. epts

IN THE CASE

Of GEORGE W. KIRKLAND, Bankrupt.

Whereas a commission of bankruptcy is awarded against George W. Kirkland, late of Washington County, in the District of Columbia; and he being declared a bankrupt, is hereby required to surrender himself to the commissioners on the twentieth day of the present month of October, on the thirtieth day of the present month of October, and on the twentieth day of November next, at four o'clock in the afternoon of the said days, at the house of William Rhodes, inkeeper, in the City and County of Washington, and district of Columbia; at the second of which meetings the creditors are to come prepared to prove their debts and choose assignees. And all persons indebted to the said Bankrupt, or that have any goods or effects of his in their hands, are desired to give notice thereof, to

ELIAS B. CALDWELL,
Clerk to the Commissioners.

October 7, 1801. ep3w