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England and Rome, temp. Charles II.

HERE is a sermon, printed in 1682, which brings us, as it were, into personal touch with the most interesting political career of Charles II.'s reign—namely, that of Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury. The sermon was preached by S. J. (Stephen Jay), Rector of Chinner, in the County of Oxford; its title, "Daniel in the Den; or, The Lord President's Imprisonment and Miraculous Deliverance."

In order to understand the position of the preacher and the allusions of the sermon, we must glance at the history of the remarkable man who is the hero of this remarkable discourse. It is impossible to sketch the history of his career even in the briefest outline, but to understand something of his character and of his attitude to the questions of the day is essential to our purpose. Few men, probably, who have acted a prominent part in the history of our country have been more maligned. It is now generally agreed that the portrait presented by Lord Macaulay, especially in his essay on Sir William Temple, is a gross caricature. Lingard, as a Roman Catholic, is naturally hardly fairer than Macaulay. Even Green, in his "Shorter History of England," fails to do him justice. All alike they bear ungrudging witness to his talents, but leave upon our minds the impression that those talents were systematically used for the advancement of unworthy ends and to gratify his own personal ambition. I believe that an impartial study of his career leads to a different conclusion.

Throughout his life Anthony Ashley Cooper was the champion of political liberty and religious toleration. Politically, his ideal was a limited and constitutional monarchy. Distrust of Charles I. made a Parliamentarian of him, and he remained the friend and counsellor of Cromwell until the Protector showed unmistakable signs of his aim at absolute power. In 1659 he joined General Monk in his design for placing Charles II. on the throne of his father. Upon the Restoration, his extraordinary and versatile ability at once made its mark, and step by step he occupied, one after the other, the highest places open to an English subject.

On the King's return he was forthwith made a Privy Councillor; in 1661 he became a peer of the realm; 1662 saw him Chancellor of the Exchequer; and in 1673 he was raised to the position of Lord Chancellor, from which, however, falling under the royal displeasure, he was dismissed in the following year. In 1679, after some years of varying fortune and unvarying conflict, he was appointed President of a Coalition Council. It was whilst occupying this position that he was committed to the Tower on a charge of treason. His release, in Stephen Jay's judgment as miraculous as Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions, is the subject of the sermon entitled " Daniel in the Den."

In an age of intolerance, Shaftesbury was the consistent friend of religious toleration. If he made an exception in respect of the religion of Rome, it was because he regarded that religion as the enemy of political liberty. That he had good reason for this belief was made clear by the course of events. Every form of dissent that, in his opinion, threatened no danger to the State was sure of his sympathy and protection. As to his own religious views, it would be difficult to say whether he had any. The story went that, on being catechized by a lady as to his religious opinions, " Madam," said he, " wise men are but of one religion." " And what is that ?" pursued his interviewer." " Madam," he replied, " wise men never tell." His liberal and comprehensive sympathies were political rather than religious, and his determined antipathy to the Papists was rooted in the conviction that the religion of Rome and Absolutism were something more than akin.

In pursuing his aims, Shaftesbury cannot be acquitted of double-dealing and want of principle, and the close of his career was discredited by recklessness and violence. We must not, however, in forming our judgment, shut our eyes to his environment. Think of the Sovereign whose subject and servant he was; examine the conditions under which his work was done. He was the patriotic Minister of a Sovereign who betrayed his kingdom's honour and his kingdom's religion; who, from the first years of his reign, was in the pay of Louis XIV., England's natural enemy. Shaftesbury had been the friend and adviser of Cromwell, when that great man almost dictated terms to Europe;

now he was the servant of a master who brought England to a depth of dishonour that filled every lover of his country with indignation. Shaftesbury was fully conscious that his influence at Court acted as a check on the King in his discreditable career, and if sometimes he stooped to unworthy concessions, we must not judge him harshly. Who that reads the history of Charles II.'s reign can censure Shaftesbury's determination that, if he could not save his royal master from selling himself to the King of France, he would save his country from the tyranny of Rome?

It was to this object that the closing years of his life were almost exclusively devoted. In 1670 Charles entered into a secret treaty with Louis XIV., by which he bound himself to an alliance offensive and defensive with France, at the same time, and as part of the arrangement, offering to declare himself a Papist and to use his best endeavours to Romanize his kingdom, on condition that the King of France would provide him with a subsidy of a million sterling per annum. To all save Lords Arlington and Clifford, themselves Papists, the King's change of religion was kept secret. In a moment of drunken confidence Shaftesbury learned this secret from Lord Arlington. This proved to be the parting of the ways between Shaftesbury and his Sovereign. He was both staggered and humiliated by the discovery, and from this time forward he was, above and before everything else, the leader of Liberalism. Good reason had he to say that the King had "brought his affairs to that pass that there is not a person in the world, man or woman, that dares rely upon him, or put any confidence in his word or friendship." Is it any wonder that, in dealing with such a Sovereign and such a situation, Shaftesbury should have been led into desperate measures in his efforts to protect the country from Papal aggression. The King was childless, and likely to remain so; his brother James, a bigoted Papist, was next in succession to the throne. It was this fact that henceforth dominated Shaftesbury's political programme, and his last years were devoted to schemes and projects for the exclusion of James, the King's brother, or any Papist, from the throne of England. At the close, therefore, of his career he figures as little more than a Protestant agitator, ready, whether by fair means or foul, to promote the end he had in view.

In these last years he set himself to fan the flame of Protestant zeal throughout the country, even lending his powerful influence to the support of Titus Oates in his mendacious tale of a Jesuit plot against the life of the King. It was now, too, that he made the fatal mistake of openly espousing the cause of the Duke of Monmouth, the eldest of King Charles's bastard sons, and supporting his claim to be Charles's successor.[1] Few things are more remarkable—indeed, unaccountable—in the history of those times than the reaction of popular feeling in the King's favour, and even in that of James, during the last three years of Charles's life. It was as a consequence of this reaction that Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of high treason for suborning false witnesses in the Popish plot, and committed to the Tower. This is the imprisonment of the Lord President alluded to in the title of the sermon now before us. His release was due to the fact that London now, as ever, stood faithful to the causes for which Shaftesbury was fighting. As a consequence of this similarity of views, the Middlesex Grand Jury on November 24, 1681, ignored the Bill of Indictment. This led to Shaftesbury's immediate release, and here is the miraculous deliverance claimed by Stephen Jay for his hero. The triumph was short-lived. Shaftesbury plunged with desperation into schemes for defeating the policy of the Court, but the resuscitated royal power was too strong for him. After concealing himself for a while among London friends, he sought safety in flight. Disguised as a Presbyterian minister, he travelled to Harwich, and thence, on November 28, 1682, crossed to Holland, where he died in the following January.[2]

Before turning to the sermon we must recall two facts. First, England was permeated with the profoundest dread of Roman Catholic supremacy, and, in consequence, had lent too ready an ear to the lies of Titus Oates and his confederates. "How they

[1] Shaftesbury's espousal of Monmouth's cause, instead of that of the Prince of Orange, is, I believe, one of the unsolved mysteries of history.

[2] "Sleep, thou most active of mankind! oh, make
Thy last low bed, and death's long requiem take!
Thou who, whilst living, kept'st the world awake."
Elegy on Lord Shaftesbury in "Raleigh Redivivus."

must have hated popery!" says Lord Rosebery, to bring William from Holland and the Georges from Hanover, all as un-English as they could be.[1] Secondly, the action of the Grand Jury in acquitting Shaftesbury had been enthusiastically welcomed in London, always a strong centre of Protestant interests, and the release of their hero had been hailed with wild delight. Bells were rung, bonfires were lighted, and a medal was struck in Shaftesbury's honour, his bust and title on the obverse, the reverse bearing a representation of the Tower of London, with the sun emerging from a cloud. The inscription, *Lætamur* ("We rejoice"), and the date, November 24, 1681, add significance to this act of homage.[2]

These facts will help us to enter with sympathy into the frame of mind in which the Rector of Chinner composed his sermon. Stephen Jay was a convinced believer in the Earl of Shaftesbury and the cause he championed. He has nothing but good to say of him. The very quotation from Scripture on the title-page proclaims the worth and virtue he is about to celebrate: "Innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O King, I have done no hurt."

The sermon is prefaced by an epistle dedicatory to the Right Honourable Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, late Lord President of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council. In this preamble Shaftesbury is compared to Lazarus, because by reason of him many of the Jews believed in Jesus. It follows (and we almost shrink from saying it) that in Shaftesbury's master, King Charles, is found a parallel to our Blessed Lord. Shaftesbury

[1] "These monarchs knew that they were not chosen from affection, or for their qualities, certainly not for their attractions. They were taken as necessities, almost odious necessities, to keep out a Romanist dynasty, which represented something to the people that was more odious still."—"Chatham: His Early Life and Connections," p. 198.

[2] This medal was the subject of one of Dryden's most powerful satires, to which he gave the title of "The Medal," dedicating it to the Whigs, of whom Shaftesbury was the acknowledged leader. It was Dryden's practice to side with success. Having composed some noble lines, "Heroic Stanzas," to the memory of Cromwell, he welcomed Charles with his "Astræa Redux." His description of Shaftesbury, whether in "Absalom and Achitophel" or "The Medal," is the work of a bitter partisan. A good account of the circumstances that led to the arrest and release of Shaftesbury will be found in Sir Walter Scott's Introduction to "The Medal," Scott's "Dryden," vol. ix., p. 409.

himself is addressed in the most fulsome terms as the champion of Protestantism. "It is certain, My Lord, that every Turn of your Head, Glance of your Eye, Motion of your Hand, Step of your Foot, is a vexation and a Plague to your Enemies the Papists, who believe your very Shadow so fatal to all their Contrivances and Aims that whilst You live they Shrivel and Wither. Your Breath strikes confusion to all their Plots, and therefore no wonder they have variously consulted your Death, as well as your Great Master's: Lazarus must dye also. . . . Praised be God, who hath frustrated (hitherto) all their Hellish attempts both against your Sovereign and Self. May His Majesty live for ever, a sure Defender of our Faith and Church. And may your Lordship live, too, the Dread and Eye-sore of the Enemies of its peace." Had the preacher been acquainted with State-secrets, he would hardly have represented Charles as "the Defender of our Faith and Church." Alike in this dedication and in the sermon itself, the writer ignores the fact that there had been an open rupture between the King and his Minister, and that the subject was in virtual rebellion against his Sovereign. From first to last the King's interests and wishes are treated as identical with those of Shaftesbury. The picture, therefore, presented by Stephen Jay is quite untrue to history.

The text of the sermon is Heb. xi. 33: "Who through faith stopped the mouths of lions." Daniel, representing the Earl, is held up to admiration as an example of high birth, perfect beauty, good breeding, praiseworthy abstinence, sublime wisdom, merited promotion, exemplary piety, at the same time as anxious for the advancement of those who brought honour to their God by refusing to worship the golden image. The golden image, it is hardly necessary to say, is the power of the Pope. As applied to Lord Shaftesbury, such language was gross exaggeration, but the charges of profligacy constantly brought against him were the baseless inventions of his enemies. "Shaftesbury's private life was one of rare purity for the age!"[1] "He was temperate by nature and habit. . . . His hands were clean. He stood far above his contemporaries in his scorn of personal profit."[2]

[1] "Dictionary of National Biography."
[2] Green's "Shorter History of England."

" How happy is that Prince whose affairs are securely lodged in the ministration of those who had rather die than betray their Sovereign by an ill act; no, not by easy humouring him in his sin, and sooner resign themselves into the hazard of his utmost displeasure than to flatter him in designs so dishonourable to God, pernicious to himself, and opposite to their principles and consciences."[1]

The preacher urges that in one respect the plotters against Daniel stand in honourable contrast to those who had conspired against Shaftesbury, in that they stopped short of suborning false witnesses. " Be it remarked, to the honour of these eager conspirators, that the height of this feverish rage did not distemper them into the distraction of perjurious revenge. . . . They will not damn souls to destroy bodies. Their very heathen conscience boggled at the hellish practice. 'Tis enough for Rome and Hell to boast such impious customs and to produce such frightful monsters." If such have found their way to England, " O God, may these vermin return again to their own home, and no longer infest our air with their infectious breath."

The attacks of these informers are in reality directed against God. " Nor can an arrow be shot against piety without hitting God Himself directly in the face. . . . The malice that wounds a saint would destroy Deity, if it could." We may see a picture of Lord Shaftesbury in Daniel's relation to the conspiring nobles of Babylon. " The trepanners begin to sneak about the Lord President's lodgings. Malice degenerates them into eaves-droppers; they creep up and down under his very windows. If the casement chance to fly open, the project thrives, their hopes swell, and the blood capers in their veins. . . . And what know we but some were so impudent as to steal upstairs and peep through the very keyhole to discover but the first motion towards a genuflection. . . . Brave Belteshazzar, how little do we know what various passions agitate thy sacred breast at this time!" How flesh and spirit may have striven for the mastery! The preacher

[1] It was notorious that Lord Shaftesbury had not only opposed the King in the matter of his brother's succession, but had done his utmost to check the King in respect of personal expenditure, and especially in the extravagant grants lavished upon his mistresses.

seems to hear their voice, and records their words. The spirit is the first to speak, and thus concludes its soliloquy: " I'll venture an ingorgement into the bowels of the lions, ere they shall glory over mine apostacy from my religion and my God." The argument of the flesh follows, and is a really fine specimen of rhetoric and casuistry, concluding thus: " Mayest thou not offer up the purer sacrifice from the secret altar of a flaming heart, and be safe? What an advantage hast thou to baffle the conspiracy by a mental devotion, and to countermine the villanies of their cursed policy by locking up thy soul in itself!" The spirit prevails over the flesh, and celebrates its victory in a very beautiful prayer, which, however, ends with something of an anti-climax: " ' Redeem Thy Church and people '—— But here a noise interrupts him. The confederates cry out amain: ' Treason, treason! a traitor against our King and his law; away with him to the lions! Darius himself cannot save him.' " The nobles proceed to accuse Daniel to the King.

" Now is the King almost dead with sorrow. The fatal news more wounds his royal heart than the prisoner's; he hath not a better subject in the kingdom, who must now be rent from his bosom by a stratagem." Daniel is not allowed to be carried off to the den without convincing proof of his Sovereign's affection. " How do I see the great Darius hugging him in his arms!" Stephen Jay is nothing if not dramatic. The King addresses Daniel at some length: " Daniel, my dearest Daniel, the brightest star that ever illustrated a Prince's Court! the faithfullest servant that ever bless'd a master. . . . I am distress'd for thee, my dearest Daniel. How willingly could I unclothe myself from these vain badges of majesty to *pass into spirit* with thee, were it not that I stay behind to sacrifice hecatombs of thine enemies to thy ghost. . . . But stay, may not thy God meet thee in the den as (I have heard) Shadrach's did in the furnace; and methinks I have faith to believe He will."

After a sleepless night, Darius rises early and goes in haste to the lions' den. " How nimbly do I see his royal feet pace the streets while yet his affections lacquey before him, and are impatient for the first tidings." To the King's cry, " Is thy God

able to deliver thee ?" Daniel replies in a sermon of considerable length concerning God's goodness and his own innocency, " though the chapel-door is not open, and Darius is content to be his auditor in the porch. . . . The King never heard one that better pleased him, and the very lions themselves seem to understand it."

The prophet is then miraculously ejected from his subterranean prison. " The sermon, now finished, has the effects of thunder. The seals are rent away, the stony door of the chapel flies open, the preacher is hurled, he hardly knows how, into the royal presence, where he finds the King heaven-strucken too. An ecstasy of joy had ravish'd away his senses, and he talks distractedly, ' Ah, Daniel, art thou indeed my very Daniel ? May mine heart believe what mine eyes see ? ' then stands like a statue (his rolling eye the only index of his life): is astonish'd, and admires what he cannot express. At length, recovering himself into majesty again, he thunders out his dreadful mandates, and orders the execution of his own and the Lord President's enemies." Then follows a realistic and gruesome description of the fate of the conspirators, of which the following sentences may be taken as a specimen of the whole: " The lions all together tip off the King's health and Daniel's in the very heart-blood of their enemies; they leave not a drop behind, and should any chance to drivel down their beards, they lick them clean again, and make a clear riddance and quick despatch. So let all Thine enemies (and Thy people's) perish, O Lord ! "

As a matter of curiosity, one would like to know whether a copy of this discourse ever reached the great man in whose honour it was preached. One can imagine the cynical smile that would play over the careworn features of the sceptical philosopher, who for more than twenty years had fought the real enemies of his country, but was at last beaten, and was soon to die in dishonoured exile.

G. S. STREATFEILD.