

### *Imprisonment of the Learned*

IMPRISONMENT has not always disturbed the man of letters in the progress of his studies, but often unquestionably has greatly promoted them.

In prison Boethius composed his work on the Consolations of Philosophy; and Grotius wrote his Commentary on Saint Matthew, with other works: the detail of his allotment of time to different studies, during his confinement, is very instructive.

Buchanan, in the dungeon of a monastery in Portugal, composed his excellent Paraphrases of the Psalms of David.

Cervantes composed the most agreeable book in the Spanish language during his captivity in Barbary.

Fleta, a well-known law production, was written by a person confined in the Fleet for debt: the name of the place, though not that of the author, has thus been preserved; and another work, "Fleta Minor, or the laws of Art and Nature in knowing the Bodies of Metals, &c. by Sir John Pettus, 1683;" who gave it this title from the circumstance of his having translated it from the German during his confinement in this prison.

Louis the Twelfth, when Duke of Orleans, was long imprisoned in the Tower of Bourges; applying himself

to his studies, which he had hitherto neglected, he became, in consequence, an enlightened monarch.

Margaret, queen of Henry the Fourth, King of France, confined in the Louvre, pursued very warmly the studies of elegant literature, and composed a very skilful apology for the irregularities of her conduct.

Charles the First, during his cruel confinement at Holmsby, wrote the Eikon Basilike, *The Royal Image*, addressed to his son; this work has, however, been attributed by his enemies to Dr. Gauden, who was incapable of writing the book, though not of disowning it.

Queen Elizabeth, while confined by her sister Mary, wrote several poems, which we do not find she ever could equal after her enlargement: and it is said Mary Queen of Scots, during her long imprisonment by Elizabeth, produced many pleasing poetic compositions.

Sir Walter Raleigh's unfinished History of the World, which leaves its to regret that later ages had not been celebrated by his sublime eloquence, was the fruits of eleven years of imprisonment. It was written for the use of Prince Henry, as he and Dallington, who also wrote "Aphorisms" for the same prince, have told us; the prince looked over the manuscript. Of Raleigh it is

observed, to employ the language of Hume, "They were struck with the extensive genius of the man, who, being educated amidst naval and military enterprises, had surpassed, in the pursuits of literature, even those of the most recluse and sedentary lines; and they admired his unbroken magnanimity which at his age, and under his circumstances, could engage him to undertake and execute so great a work, as his *History of the World*," He was, however, assisted in this great work by the learning of several eminent persons; a circumstance which has not been noticed.

The plan of the *Henriade* was sketched, and the greater part composed, by Voltaire, during his imprisonment in the Bastille; and "The Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan was produced in a similar situation.

Howel, the author of "Familiar Letters," wrote the chief part of them, and almost all his other works, during his long confinement in the Fleet-prison: he employed his fertile pen for subsistence; and in all his books we find much entertainment.

Lydiat, while confined in the King's Bench for debt, wrote his Annotations on the Parian Chronicle, which were first published by Prideaux. He was the learned scholar whom Johnson alludes to: an allusion not known to Boswell and others.

The learned Selden, committed to prison for his attacks on the divine right of tithes and the king's prerogative, prepared during his confinement his "History of Eadmer," enriched by his notes.

Cardinal Polignac formed the design of refuting the arguments of the sceptics which Bayle had been renewing in his dictionary; but his public occupations hindered him. Two exiles at length fortunately gave him the leisure; and the *Anti-Lucretius* is the fruit of the court disgraces of its author.

Freret, when imprisoned in the Bastille, was permitted only to have Bayle for his companion. His dictionary was always before him, and his principles were got by heart. To this circumstance we owe his works, animated by all the powers of scepticism.

Sir William Davenant finished his poem of Gondibert during his confinement by the rebels in Carisbrook Castle.

De Foe, when imprisoned in Newgate for a political pamphlet, began his *Review*; a periodical paper, which was extended to nine thick volumes in quarto, and it has been supposed served as the model of the celebrated papers of Steele. There he also composed his *Jure Divino*.

Wicquefort's curious work on "Ambassadors" is dated

from his prison, where he had been confined for state affairs. He softened the rigour of those heavy hours by several historical works.

One of the most interesting facts of this kind is the fate of an Italian scholar of the name of Maggi. Early addicted to the study of the sciences, and particularly to the mathematics and military architecture, he defended Famagusta, besieged by the Turks, by inventing machines which destroyed their works. When that city was taken in 1571, they pillaged his library and carried him away in chains. Now a slave, after his daily labours he amused a great part of his nights by literary compositions; *De Tintinnabulis*, on Bells: a treatise still read by the curious, was actually composed by him when a slave in Turkey, without any other resource than the erudition of his own memory, and the genius of which adversity could not deprive him.