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BY

GEORGE LEWIS SMYTH.

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CHAPTER X.

OUTLINES OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONNECTION WITH ENGLAND—*continued.*

ADMINISTRATION OF LORD STRAFFORD.—PERFIDIOUS DENIAL OF THE GRACES.—NEW INVASIONS OF PROPERTY, AND A NEW ARISTOCRACY.—REVIVED ASCENDANCY OF THE HOUSE OF ORMONDE.—ROGER MOORE, AND THE REBELLION OF 1641.—THE WAR OF THE CONFEDERATES.—CROMWELL LORD LIEUTENANT.—FURTHER FORFEITURES.—ACTS OF SETTLEMENT AND EXPLANATION.—ORMONDE A DUKE, AND AGAIN LORD LIEUTENANT.—HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER.

Irish affairs appear in a new but still in a troubled phase, under Charles I. and Charles II. The royal authority, overturned because overstrained, became, when restored again, overpowering: the Reformation, irresistible in point of law, was nevertheless scarcely established in point of fact; while the liberty of the subject remained unknown. Here, as elsewhere, civil liberty was in no degree extended, though the principle of freedom of conscience was proclaimed.

Ireland was never ruled by a man of more eminent talents, a haughtier spirit, or a firmer mind, than Wentworth, earl of Strafford. In his administration the policy was consummated which, dictating the subjugation of the Anglo-Irish barons and the native chieftains, had erected upon the fall of their wild immunities and licentious pretensions, an absolute and uncontrolled dominion upon the part of the crown. As they are now seen, there was nothing doubtful or obscure in the

objects or manner of Strafford's government;—his personal character, too, was strikingly displayed: it is shown in his actions and in his letters, with an open reality and indomitable earnestness, which often tempt us to admire him most when we should least respect him. He was a man who never hesitated in his course, or brooked concealment of his purpose. Great in personal courage, he was greater still in intellectual daring, and had cultivated his many talents with felicitous care; but he was proud, domineering, and insulting. He poured his whole soul into his office, and was every inch the viceroy. There was no department of government which his genius did not pervade, and in which his influence was not directly felt. A spirit of exalted tyranny was developed throughout his career with a force which, like that of well tempered steel, combined the highest degrees of strength and refinement. He moulded into order the chaos of Irish misgovernment, and in a manner forced the country, by the irresistible vigour of his despotic will, into a condition of comparative prosperity. His early recall to England, where he was carried off with comparative ease, was a fortunate event for the approaching commonwealth. Had he remained in Ireland, his destruction and the prostration of the monarchy would have been a more difficult—perhaps an impossible achievement.

One of the passages quoted from his letters in the last chapter, contained a remark as to himself, which should have made some impression upon the reader. "I spare no man amongst them," he cried; "let no man spare me." His correspondence is full of similar avowals. "Now," he exclaims, on one occasion, "the king is as absolute here as any prince in the whole world can be." In another place he explains the means by which he proposes to obtain a servile House of Commons to execute his behests. "I shall labour to make as many captains and officers burgesses in this parliament as I possibly can, who, having immediate dependence upon the crown, may almost sway the business between the two parties as they please." In a third he relates his success in corrupting the judges, whom he describes with emphatic satisfaction, as men who "now ministering wholly to uphold the sove-