

Book Seventh

Protestantism in England, From the Times of Wicliffe to Those of Henry VIII.

Chapter I.

The First Protestant Martyrs in England.

Two Sources of Protestantism—The Bible and the Holy Spirit—Wicliffe's Missionaries—Hopes of the Protestants—Petition Parliament for a Reformation—England not yet ripe—The Movement Thrown Back—Richard II. Persecutes the Lollards—Richard Loses his Throne—Henry IV. Succeeds—Statute De Hoeretico Comburendo—William Sawtre—the First Martyr for Protestantism in England—Trial and Execution of John Badby—Conversation between the Prince of Wales and the Martyr at the Stake—Offered his Life—Refuses and Dies.

The Protestant movement, which, after flowing during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries within narrow channels, began in the sixteenth to develop itself over a wide area, had two sources. The first, which was in heaven, was the Holy Spirit; the second, which was on the earth, was the Bible. For ages the action of both agencies on human society had been suspended. The Holy Spirit was withheld and the Bible was hidden. Hence the monstrous errors that deformed the Church, and hence all the frightful evils that afflicted the world.

At length a new era had opened. That sovereign, beneficent, and eternal Spirit, who acts when and where and how he will, began again to make his presence felt in the world which he had made; he descended to erect a Temple in which he might dwell with men upon the earth. The Omnipotent and Blessed One put forth his creative power through the instrumentality which he himself had prepared, even the Scriptures of Truth, which he inspired holy men to write. The recovery of the Holy Scriptures and their diffusion over Christendom was the one instrumentality, as the Spirit who dwells in and operates through the Scriptures was the one Author, of that great movement which was now renewing the world. On this supposition only—that this great movement was not originated by human forces, but created by a Divine agent—can we account for the fact that in all the countries of Christendom it appeared at the same moment, took the same form, and was followed by the same blessed fruits—virtue in private life and order in public.

We left Luther in the Wartburg. At a moment of great peril, Providence opened for him an asylum; not there to live idly, but to do a work essential to the future progress of Protestantism. While Luther is toiling out of sight, let us look around and note the progress of Protestantism in the other countries of Christendom. We return to England, the parent land of the movement, briefly to chronicle events during the century and a half which divides the era of Wicliffe from that of Luther.

Wicliffe was dead (1384), and now it was seen what a hold he had taken of England, and how widely his doctrine had spread. His disciples, styled sometimes Wicliffites,

sometimes Lollards, traversed the kingdom preaching the Gospel. In the Act of Richard II. (1382), which the clergy, practising upon the youth of the king, got passed without the knowledge of the Commons, mention is made of a great number of persons going about from country to country, and from town to town, in frieze gowns, without the licence of the ordinaries, and preaching, not only in churches and churchyards, but in market-places and at fairs, divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, to the blemishing of the Christian faith, the estate of holy Church, and the great peril of souls.”¹ Wicliffe was yet alive, and these men “in frieze gowns,” which the Act empowered the bishops to seize and confine in their houses and prisons, were the missionaries of the great Reformer. These preachers were not troubled with doubts touching their right to assume the sacred office. They reasoned that the same charter which gave to the Church her right to exist, gave to her members the right to discharge those functions that are needful to her welfare. They went not to Rome, therefore, but to the Bible for their warrant to minister. Their countrymen flocked to their sermons. The soldiers mingled with the civilians, sword in hand, ready to defend the preacher should violence be offered to him. Several of the nobility joined their party, and were not ashamed to confess themselves the disciples of the Gospel. There followed, wherever their doctrine was received, a reformation of manners, and in some places a purging of the public worship by the removal of idolatrous symbols.

These signs promised much; in the eyes of the Wicliffites they promised everything. They believed that England was ready to throw off the yoke of Rome, and in this belief they resolved on striking a vigorous blow at the reigning superstition. Within ten years of the death of Wicliffe (1395) they petitioned Parliament for a reformation in religion, accompanying their petition with twelve “conclusions,” or grounds,² for such a reformation; of which the second, that we give as a sample of the style and spirit of the whole, was as follows:—“That our usual priesthood, which took its original at Rome, and is feigned to be a power higher than angels, is not that priesthood which Christ ordained unto his disciples. This conclusion is thus proved: forasmuch as this priesthood is done with signs, and Pontifical rites, and ceremonies, and benedictions of no force and effect, neither having any ground in Scripture, forasmuch as the bishops ordinal and the New Testament do nothing at all agree: neither do we see that the Holy Ghost doth give any good gift through any such signs or ceremonies, because that he, together with noble and good gifts, cannot consist and be in any person with deadly sin. The corollary or effect of this conclusion is that it is a lamentable and dolorous mockery unto wise men to see the bishops mock and play with the Holy Ghost in the giving of their orders, because they give (shaven) crowns for their characters, and marks instead of white hearts, and this character is the mark of Antichrist, brought into the holy Church, to cloke and cover their idleness.” These conclusions they also posted up on the walls of Westminster, and suspended on the gates of St. Paul’s.³

¹ Fox, pp. 229, 230; Lond., 1838.

² These included the condemnation of transubstantiation; exorcisms; the blessing of bread, oil, wax, water, &c.; the union of spiritual and temporal offices; clerical celibacy; prayers for the dead; the worship of saints and images; pilgrimages; auricular confession; indulgences; conventual vows, &c. &c. (Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., pp. 597, 598; Lond., 1708.)

³ Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, p. 328; *Camdeni Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603. Lewis, *Wiclif*, p. 337; Fox, *Acts and Mon.*, bk. i., p. 662; Lond., 1641.

England was not yet prepared for such “plainness of speech.” The great mass of the nation, without instruction, awed by tradition, and ruled over by the hierarchy, was inert and hostile. The Wicliffites forgot, too, when they went to Parliament, that Reformations are not made, they must grow. They cannot be evoked by royal proclamations, or by Parliamentary edicts; they must be planted by the patient labour of evangelists, and watered not unfrequently by the blood of martyrs. Of all harvests that of truth is the slowest to ripen, although the most plentiful and precious when it has come to full maturity. These were lessons which these early disciples had yet to learn.

The bold step of the Wicliffites threw back the movement, or we ought rather to say, made it strike its roots downward in the nation’s heart. The priests took the alarm. Arundel, Archbishop of York, posted with all speed to Ireland, where Richard II. then was, and implored him to return and arrest the movement, which was growing to a head. His pious wife, Anne of Luxemburg, a disciple of Wicliffe, was dead (1394), and the king readily complied with Arundel’s request. He forbade the Parliament to proceed in the matter of the Lollard petition, and summoning the chief authors of the “conclusions” before him, he threatened them with death should they continue to defend their opinions.⁴ But Richard II did not long retain a sceptre which he had begun to wield against the Lollards. Insurrection broke out in his kingdom; he was deposed, and thrown into the Castle of Pontefract. There are but few steps between the prisons and the graves of princes. Richard perished miserably by starvation, and was succeeded by Henry IV., son of that Duke of Lancaster who had been the friend of Wicliffe.

The cause which the father had defended in the person of its great apostle, found no favour in the eyes of the son. Henry had mounted the throne by Arundel’s help, and he must needs repay the service by devotion to the Church of which Arundel was one of the main pillars. To consolidate his power, the son of John of Gaunt sacrificed the Wicliffites. In his reign was passed a law adjudging men to death for religion—the first that stained the English Statute-book. It enacted that all incorrigible heretics should be burned alive.

The preamble of the Act sets forth that “divers false and perverse people of a certain new sect of the faith of the Sacraments, damnably thinking, and against the law of God and the Church, usurping the office of preaching,” were going from diocese to diocese, holding conventicles, opening schools, writing books, and wickedly teaching the people. To remedy this, the diocesan was empowered to arrest all persons suspected of heresy, confine them in his strong prison, bring them to trial, and if on conviction they refused to abjure, they were to be delivered to the sheriff of the county or the mayor of the town, who were “before the people, in a high place, them to do to be burnt.” Such was the statute *Hoeretico Comburendo*, of which Sir Edward Coke remarks that it appears that the bishops are the proper judges of heresy, and that the business of the sheriff was only ministerial to the sentence of the spiritual court.⁵ “King Henry IV.,” says Fox, “was the

⁴ Fox, bk. i., p. 664.

⁵ *Instit.*, par. 3, cap. 5, fol. 39. Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., pp. 614, 615.

first of all English Kings that began the unmerciful burning of Christ's saints for standing against the Pope."⁶

The law was not permitted to remain a dead letter. William Sawtre, formerly Rector of St. Margaret's in Lynn, and now of St. Osyth in London—"a good man and faithful priest," says Fox—was apprehended, and an indictment preferred against him. Among the charges contained in it we find the following:—"That he will not worship the cross on which Christ suffered, but only Christ who suffered upon the cross." "That after pronouncing the Sacramental words of the body of Christ, the bread remaineth of the same nature that it was before, neither doth it cease to be bread." He was condemned as a heretic by the archbishop's court, and delivered to the secular power to be burned.⁷

As Sawtre was the first Protestant to be put to death in England, the ceremony of his degradation was gone about with great formality. First the paten and chalice were taken out of his hands; next the chasuble was pulled off his back, to signify that now he had been completely stripped of all his functions and dignities as a priest. Next the New Testament and the stole were taken away, to intimate his deposition from the order of deacon, and the withdrawal of his power to teach. His deposition as subdeacon was effected by stripping him of the alb. The candlestick and taper were next taken from him to "put from thee all order of an acolyte." He was next deprived of the holy water book, and with it he was bereft of all power as an exorcist.⁸ By these and sundry other ceremonies, too tedious to recite, William Sawtre was made as truly a layman as before the oil and scissors of the Church had touched him.

Unrobed, disqualified for the mystic ministry, and debarred the sacrificial shrines of Rome, he was now to ascend the steps of an altar, whereon he was to lay costlier sacrifice than any to be seen in the Roman temples. That altar was the stake, that sacrifice was himself. He died in the flames, February 12, 1401. As England had the high honour of

⁶ Fox, bk. i., p. 675. This statute is known as 2 Henry IV., cap. 15. Cotton remarks "that the printed statute differs greatly from the record, not only in form, but much more in matter, in order to maintain ecclesiastical tyranny." His publisher, Prynne, has this note upon it: "This was the first statute and butcherly knife that the impeaching prelates procured or had against the poor preachers of Christ's Gospel." (Cobbett, *Parliament. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 287; Lond., 1806.) The "Statute of Heresy" was passed in the previous reign—Richard II., 1382. It is entitled "An Act to commission sheriffs to apprehend preachers of heresy, and their abettors reciting the enormities ensuing the preaching of heretics." It was surreptitiously obtained by the clergy and enrolled without the consent of the Commons. On the complaint of that body this Act was repealed, but by a second artifice of the priests the Act of repeal was suppressed, and prosecutions carried on in virtue of the "Act of Heresy." (See Cobbett, *Parliament. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 177.) Sir Edward Coke (*Instit.*, par. 3, cap. 5, fol. 39) gives the same account of the matter. He says that the 6th of Richard II., which repealed the statute of the previous year (5th Richard II.), was not proclaimed, thus leaving the latter in force. Collier (*Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 606) argues against this view of the case. The manner of proclaiming laws, printing being then unknown, was to send a copy on parchment, in Latin or French, to each sheriff, who proclaimed them in his county; and had the 6th of Richard II., which repealed the previous Act, been omitted in the proclamation, it would, Collier thinks, have been known to the Commons.

⁷ Fox, bk. i., p. 675. Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 618.

⁸ Fox, bk. i., p. 674.

sending forth the first Reformer, England had likewise the honour, in William Sawtrey, of giving the first martyr to Protestantism.⁹

His martyrdom was significant of much, for to Protestantism it was a sure pledge of victory, and to Rome a terrible prognostic of defeat! Protestantism had now made the soil of England its own by burying its martyred dead in it. Henceforward it will feel that, like the hero of classic story, it stands on its native earth, and is altogether invincible. It may struggle and bleed and endure many a seeming defeat; the conflict may be prolonged through many a dark year and century, but it must and shall eventually triumph. It has taken a pledge of the soil, and it cannot possibly perish from off it. Its opponent, on the other hand, has written the prophecy of its own defeat in the blood it has shed, and struggle as it may it shall not prevail over its rival, but shall surely fall before it.¹⁰

The names of many of these early sufferers, to whom England owes, under Providence, its liberties and its Scriptural religion, have fallen into oblivion. Among those whom the diligence of our ancient chroniclers has rescued from this fate is that of John Badby. He was a layman of the diocese of Worcester. Arraigned on the doctrine of the Sacrament, he frankly confessed his opinions. In vain, he held, were the "Sacramental words" spoken over the bread on the altar: despite the conjuration it still remained "material bread." If it was Christ whom the priest produced on the altar, let him be shown Him in his true form, and he would believe. There could be but one fate in reserve for the man who, instead of bowing implicitly to his "mother the Church," challenged her to attest her prodigy by some proof or sign of its truth. He was convicted before the Bishop of Worcester of "the crime of heresy," but reserved for final judgment before Arundel, now become the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹¹

On the 1st of March, 1409, the haughty Arundel, assembling his suffragans, with quite a crowd of temporal and spiritual lords, sat down on the judgment-seat in St. Paul's, and commanded the humble confessor to be brought before him. He hoped, perhaps, that Badby would be awed by this display of authority. In this, however, he was mistaken. The opinions he had avowed before the Bishop of Worcester, he maintained with equal courage in presence of the more august tribunal of the primate, and the more imposing assemblage now convened in St. Paul's. The prisoner was remanded till the 15th of the same month, being consigned meanwhile to the convent of the Preaching Friars, the archbishop himself keeping the key of his cell.¹²

When the day for the final sentence, the 15th of March, came, Arundel again ascended his episcopal throne, attended by a yet more brilliant escort of lords spiritual and temporal, including a prince of the blood. John Badby had but the same answer to give, the same confession to make, on his second as on his first appearance. Bread consecrated by the priest was still bread, and the Sacrament of the altar was of less estimation than the

⁹ Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, i. 618. Burnet, *Hist. Ref.*, i. 24.

¹⁰ There is some ground to think that Sawtrey was not the first to be put to death for religion in England. "A chronicle of London," says the writer of the Preface to *Bale's Breve Chronycle*, "mentions one of the Albigenses burned A.D. 1210." And Camden, it is thought, alludes to this when he says: "In the reign of John, Christians began to be put to death in the flames by Christians amongst us." (Bale, Preface ii.)

¹¹ Fox, bk. v., p. 266.

¹² Fox, bk. v., p. 267.

humblest man there present.¹³ This rational reply was too rational for the men and the times. To them it appeared simple blasphemy. The archbishop, seeing “his countenance stout and his heart confirmed,” pronounced John Badby “an open and public heretic,” and the court “delivered him to the secular power, and desired the temporal lords then and there present, that they would not put him to death for that his offence,” as if they had been innocent of all knowledge that that same secular power to which they now delivered him had, at their instigation, passed a law adjudging all heretics to the fire, and that the magistrate was bound under excommunication to carry out the statute *De Hoeretico Comburendo*.

A few hours only elapsed till the fire was lighted. Sentence was passed upon him in the forenoon: on the afternoon of the same day, the king’s writ, ordering the execution, arrived. Badby was hurried to Smithfield, “and there,” says Fox, “being put in an empty barrel, he was bound with iron chains fastened to a stake, having dry wood put about him.”

As he was standing in the barrel, Prince Henry, the king’s eldest son, appeared at the outskirts of the crowd. Touched with pity for the man whom he saw in this dreadful position, he drew near and began to address him, exhorting him to forsake these “dangerous labyrinths of opinion” and save his life. The prince and the man in the barrel were conversing together when the crowd opened and the procession of the Sacrament, with twelve torches burning before it, passed in and halted at the stake. The Prior of St. Bartholomew, coming forward, requested Badby to speak his last word. The slightest act of homage to the Host, once more presented before him, would loose his chain and set him free. But no! amid the faggots that were to consume him, as before the assembled grandees in St. Paul’s, the martyr had but the same confession to make: “it was hallowed bread, not God’s body.” The priests withdrew, the line of their retreat through the dense crowd being marked by their blazing torches, and the Host borne aloft underneath a silken canopy. The torch was now brought. Soon the sharp flames began to prey upon the limbs of the martyr. A quick cry escaped him in his agony, “Mercy, mercy!” But his prayer was addressed to God, not to his persecutors. The prince, who still lingered near the scene of the tragedy, was recalled by this wail from the stake. He commanded the officers to extinguish the fires. The executioners obeyed. Addressing the half-scorched man, he said that if he would recant his errors and return to the bosom of the Church, he would not only save him from the fire, but would give him a yearly stipend all the days of his life.¹⁴ It was kindly meant, no doubt, on the part of the prince, who commiserated the torments but could not comprehend the joys of the martyr. Turn back now, when he saw the gates opening to receive him, the crown ready to be placed upon his head? No! not for all the gold of England. He was that night to sup with a greater Prince. “Thus,” says Fox, “did this valiant champion of Christ, neglecting the prince’s fair words . . . not without a great

¹³ Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 629. Fox, bk. v., p. 266.

¹⁴ Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, p. 570; *Camdeni Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, vol. iii., pp. 48, 49; Lond., 1808. Holinshed says the prince “promised him not only life, but also three pence a day so long as he lived, to be paid out of the king’s coffers.” Cobbett, in his *Parliamentary History*, tells us that the wages of a thresher were at that time twopence per day.

and most cruel battle, but with much greater triumph of victory . . . perfect his testimony and martyrdom in the fire.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Fox, bk. v., pp. 266, 267; Lond., 1838.

Chapter II.

The Theology of the Early English Protestants.

Protestant Preachers and Martyrs before Henry VIII.'s time—Their Theology—Inferior to that of the Sixteenth Century—The Central Truths clearly Seen—William Thorpe—Imprisoned—Dialogue between him and Archbishop Arundel—His Belief—His Views on the Sacrament—The Authority of Scripture—Is Threatened with a Stake—Christ Present in the Sacrament to Faith—Thorpe's Views on Image-Worship—Pilgrimage—Confession—Refuses to Submit—His Fate Unknown—Simplicity of Early English Theology—Convocation at Oxford to Arrest the Spread of Protestantism—Constitutions of Arundel—The Translation and Reading of the Scriptures Forbidden.

This violence did not terrify the disciples of the truth. The stakes they had seen planted in Smithfield, and the edict of "burning" now engrossed on the Statute-book, taught them that the task of winning England would not be the easy one which they had dreamed; but this conviction neither shook their courage nor abated their zeal. A cause that had found martyrs had power enough, they believed, to overcome any force on earth, and would one day convert, not England only, but the world. In that hope they went on propagating their opinions, and not without success, for, says Fox, "I find in registers recorded, that these foresaid persons, whom the king and the Catholic Fathers did so greatly detest for heretics, were in divers counties of this realm increased, especially at London, in Lincolnshire, in Norfolk, in Hertfordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and other quarters."¹ Wicliffe was but newly laid in his grave; Huss had not yet begun his career in Bohemia; in France, in Germany, and the other countries of Christendom, all was dark; but in England the day had broke, and its light was spreading. The Reformation had confessors and martyrs within the metropolis; it had disciples in many of the shires; it had even crossed the sea, and obtained some footing in Calais, then under the English crown: and all this a century well-nigh before Henry VIII., whom Romish writers have credited as the author of the movement, was born.

William Thorpe, in the words of the chronicler, "was a valiant warrior under the triumphant banner of Christ." His examination before Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, shows us the evangelical creed as it was professed by the English Christians of the fifteenth century. Its few and simple articles led very directly to the grand centre of truth, which is Christ. Standing before him, these early disciples were in the Light. Many things, as yet, they saw but dimly; it was only the early morning; the full day was at a distance: those great lights which God had ordained to illuminate the skies of his Church in the following century, had not yet arisen: the mists and shadows of a night, not yet wholly chased away, lay dense on many parts of the field of revelation; but one part of it was, in their eyes, bathed in light; this was the centre of the field, whereon stands the cross, with the great Sacrifice lifted up upon it, the one object of faith, the everlasting Rock of the sinner's hope. To this they clung, and whatever tended to shake their faith in it, or to put something else in its room, they instinctively rejected. They knew the voice of the Shepherd, and a stranger they would not follow.

¹ Fox, bk. v., p. 268.

Imprisoned in the Castle of Saltwood (1407), Thorpe was brought before the primate, Arundel, for examination. The record of what passed between him and the archbishop is from the pen of Thorpe. He found Arundel in “great chamber,” with a numerous circle around him; but the instant the archbishop perceived him, he withdrew into a closet, attended by only two or three clerics.

Arundel: “William, I know well that thou hast this twenty winters or more travelled in the north country, and in divers other countries of England, sowing false doctrine, labouring, with undue teaching, to infect and poison all this land.”

Thorpe: “Sir, since ye deem me a heretic, and out of the faith, will you give me, here, audience to tell you my belief?”

Arundel: “Yea, tell on.”

Hereupon the prisoner proceeded to declare his belief in the Trinity; in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the God-head; and in the events of our Lord’s life, as these are recorded by the four Evangelists: continuing thus—

Thorpe: “When Christ would make an end here of this temporal life, I believe that in the next day before he was to suffer passion, he ordained the Sacrament of his flesh and his blood, in form of bread and wine—that is, his own precious body—and gave it to his apostles to eat; commanding them, and by them all their after-comers, that they should do it in this form that he showed to them, use themselves, and teach and administer to other men and women, this most worshipful and holiest Sacrament, in remembrance of his holiest living, and of his most true preaching, and of his willing and patient suffering of the most painful passion.”

“And I believe that this Christ, our Saviour, after that he had ordained this most worthy Sacrament of his own precious body, went forth willingly . . . and as he would, and when he would, he died willingly for man’s sake upon the cross.”

“And I believe in holy Church—that is, all they that have been, and that now are, and that to the end of the world shall be, a people that shall endeavour to know and keep the commandments of God.”

“I believe that the gathering together of this people, living now here in this life, is the holy Church of God, fighting here on earth against the devil, the prosperity of the world, and their own lusts. . . . I submit myself to this holy Church of Christ, to be ever ready and obedient to the ordinance of it, and of every member thereof, after my knowledge and power, by the help of God.”

The prisoner next confessed his faith in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, “as the council of the Three Persons of the Trinity,” that they were sufficient for man’s salvation, and that he was resolved to guide himself by their light, and willing to submit to their authority, and also to that of the “saints and doctors of Christ,” so far as their teaching agreed with the Word of God.

Arundel: “I require that thou wilt swear to me that thou wilt forsake all the opinions which the sect of the Lollards hold.” Further, the archbishop required him to inform upon

his brethren, and cease from preaching till he should come to be of a better mind. On hearing this the prisoner stood for awhile silent.

Arundel: "Answer, one way or the other."

Thorpe: "Sir, if I should do as you require, full many men and women would (as they might full truly) say that I had falsely and cowardly forsaken the truth, and slandered shamefully the Word of God."

The archbishop could only say that if he persisted in this obstinacy he must tread the same road that Sawtrey had gone. This pointed to a stake in Smithfield.

Hereupon the confessor was again silent. "In my heart," says he, "I prayed the Lord God to comfort me and strengthen me; and to give me then and always grace to speak with a meek and quiet spirit; and whatever I should speak, that I might have authorities of the Scriptures or open reason for it."

A clerk: "What thing musest thou? Do as my lord hath commanded thee." Still the confessor spoke not.

Arundel: "Art thou not yet determined whether thou wilt do as I have said to thee?"

Thorpe humbly assured the primate that the knowledge which he taught to others he had learned at the feet of the wisest, the most learned, and the holiest priests he could hear of in England.

Arundel: "Who are these holy and wise men of whom thou hast taken thine information?"

Thorpe: "Master John Wicliffe. He was held by many men the greatest clerk that they knew then living: great men communed often with him. This learning of Master John Wicliffe is yet held by many men and women the learning most in accordance with the living and teaching of Christ and his apostles, and most openly showing how the Church of Christ has been, and yet should be, ruled and governed."

Arundel: "That learning which thou callest truth and soothfastness is open slander to holy Church; for though Wicliffe was a great clerk, yet his doctrine is not approved of by holy Church, but many sentences of his learning are damned, as they well deserve. Wilt thou submit thee to me or no?"

Thorpe: "I dare not, for fear of God, submit me to thee."

Arundel, angrily to one of his clerks: "Fetch hither quickly the certificate that came to me from Shrewsbury, under the bailiff's seal, witnessing the errors and heresies which this fellow hath venomously sown there."

The clerk delivered to the archbishop a roll, from which the primate read as follows:—"The third Sunday after Easter, the year of our Lord 1407, William Thorpe came unto the town of Shrewsbury, and through leave granted unto him to preach, he said openly, in St. Chad's Church, in his sermon, that the Sacrament of the altar, after the consecration, was material bread; and that images should in nowise be worshipped; and that men should not go on pilgrimages; and that priests have no title to tithes; and that it is not lawful to swear in anywise."

Arundel, rolling up the paper: "Lo, here it is certified that thou didst teach that the Sacrament of the altar was material bread after the consecration. What sayest thou?"

Thorpe: "As I stood there in the pulpit, busying me to teach the commandment of God, a sacred bell began ringing, and therefore many people turned away hastily, and with noise ran towards it; said I, seeing this, said to them thus: 'Good men, ye were better to stand here still, and to hear God's Word. For the virtue of the most holy Sacrament of the altar stands much more in the faith that you ought to have in your soul, than in the outward sight of it, and therefore ye were better to stand still quietly to hear God's Word, because that through the hearing of it men come to true belief.'"

Arundel: "How teachest thou men to believe in this Sacrament?"

Thorpe: "Sir, as I believe myself, so I teach other men."

Arundel: "Tell out plainly thy belief thereof."

Thorpe: "Sir, I believe that the night before Jesus Christ suffered for mankind, he took bread in his holy hands, lifting up his eyes, and giving thanks to God his Father, blessed this bread and brake it, and gave it unto his disciples, saying to them, 'Take and eat of this, all you; this is my body.' I believe, and teach other men to believe, that the holy Sacrament of the altar is the Sacrament of Christ's flesh and blood in the form of bread and wine."

Arundel: "Well, well, thou shalt say otherwise before I leave thee; but what say you to the second point, that images ought not to be worshipped in anywise?"

Thorpe repudiated the practice as not only without warrant in Scripture, but as plainly forbidden in the Word of God. There followed a long contention between him and the archbishop, Arundel maintaining that it was good to worship images on the ground that reverence was due to those whom they represented, that they were aids in devotion, and that they possessed a secret virtue that showed itself at times in the working of miracles.

The prisoner intimated that he had no belief in these miracles; that he knew the Word of God to be true; that he held, in common with the early doctors of the Church, Augustine, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, that its teaching was in nowise doubtful on the point in question, that it expressly forbade the making of images, and the bowing down to them, and held those who did so as guilty of the sin and liable to the doom of idolaters. The archbishop found that the day was wearing, and passed from the argument to the next point.

Arundel: "What sayest thou to the third point that is certified against thee, that pilgrimage is not lawful?"

Thorpe: "There are true pilgrimages, and lawful, and acceptable to God."

Arundel: "Whom callest thou true pilgrims?"

Thorpe: "Those travelling towards the bliss of heaven. Such busy themselves to know and keep the biddings of God; flee the seven deadly sins; do willingly all the works of mercy, and seek the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Every good thought they think, every virtuous word they speak, every fruitful work they accomplish, is a step numbered of God toward him into heaven.

“But,” continued the confessor, “the most part of men and women that now go on pilgrimages have not these conditions, nor love to have them. For, as I well know, since I have full often tried, examine whoever will twenty of these pilgrims, and he shall not find three men or women that know surely a commandment of God, nor can say their Paternosters and Ave Maria, nor their creed, readily, in any manner of language. Their pilgrimage is more to have here worldly and fleshy friendship, than to have friendship of God and of his saints in heaven. Also, sir, I know that when several men and women go thus after their own wills, and fixing on the same pilgrimage, they will arrange beforehand to have with them both men and women that can sing wanton songs, and other pilgrims will have with them bagpipes; so that every town that they come through, what with the noise of their singing, and with the sound of their piping, and with the tangling of their Canterbury bells, and with the barking of dogs after them, they make more noise than if the king came there with all his clarions and minstrels.”

Arundel: “What! janglest thou against men’s devotion? Whatever thou or such other say, I say that the pilgrimage that now is used is to them that do it a praiseworthy and a good means to come to grace.”

After this there ensued another long contention between Thorpe and the primate, on the subject of confession. The archbishop was not making much way in the argument, when one of the clerks interposed and put an end to it.

“Sir,” said he, addressing the primate, “it is late in the day, and ye have far to ride to-night; therefore make an end with him, for he will make none; but the more, sir, that ye busy you to draw him toward you, the more contumacious he is made.”

“William, kneel down,” said another, “and pray my Lord’s Grace, and leave all thy fancies, and become a child of holy Church.” The archbishop, striking the table fiercely with his hand, also demanded his instant submission. Others taunted him with his eagerness to be promoted to a stake which men more learned than he had prudently avoided by recanting their errors.

“Sir,” said he, replying to the archbishop, “as I have said to you several times to-day, I will willingly and humbly obey and submit to God, and to his law, and to every member of holy Church, as far as I can perceive that these members accord with their Head, Christ, and will teach me, rule me, or chastise me by authority, especially of God’s law.”

This was a submission; but the additions with which it was qualified robbed it of all grace in the eyes of the archbishop. Once more, and for the last time, the primate put it plainly thus: “Wilt thou not submit thee to the ordinance of holy Church?”

“I will full gladly submit me,” replied Thorpe, “as I showed you before.”²

Hereupon Thorpe was delivered to the constable of the castle. He was led out and thrown into a worse prison than that in which he had before been confined. At his prison-

² This account of Thorpe’s examination is from Fox greatly abridged. Our aim has been to bring out his doctrinal views, seeing they may be accepted as a good general representation of the Lollard theology of his day. The threats and contumelious epithets addressed to him by the primate, we have all but entirely suppressed.

door we lose all trace of him. He never again appears, and what his fate was has never been ascertained.³

This examination, or rather conference between the primate and Thorpe, enables us to form a tolerable idea of English Protestantism, or Lollardism, in the twilight time that intervened between its dawn, in the days of Wicliffe, and its brighter rising in the times of the sixteenth century. It consisted, we may say, of but three facts or truths. The first was Scripture, as the supreme and infallible authority; the second was the Cross, as the sole fountain of forgiveness and salvation; and the third was Faith, as the one instrumentality by which men come into possession of the blessings of that salvation. We may add a fourth, which was not so much a primary truth as a consequence from the three doctrines which formed the skeleton, or frame-work, of the Protestantism of those days—Holiness. The faith of these Christians was not a dead faith: it was a faith that kept the commandments of God, a faith that purified the heart, and enriched the life.

If, in one sense, Lollard Protestantism was a narrow and limited system, consisting but of a very few facts, in another sense it was perfect, inasmuch as it contained the germ and promise of all theology. Given but one fundamental truth, all must follow in due time.

In the authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, and the death of Christ as a complete and perfect atonement for human guilt, they had found more than one fundamental truth. They had but to go forward in the path on which they had entered, guiding themselves by these two lights, and they would come, in due time, into possession of all revealed truth. At every step the horizon around them would grow wider, the light falling upon the objects it embraced would grow continually clearer, the relations of truth to truth would be more easily traceable, till at last the whole would grow into a complete and harmonious system, truth linked to truth, and all ranging themselves in beautiful order around the grand central truths of the religion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Meanwhile these early English Christians were beset *without* by scrupulosities and prejudices, arising from the dimness and narrowness of their vision. They feared to lay their hand on the New Testament and be sworn; they scrupled to employ instrumental music in public worship; and some of them condemned all war. But *within* what a vast enlargement had they already experienced! Bowing to the authority of the Word of God, their understandings were emancipated from the usurped authority of man. Having this anointing, they refused to look with the eyes of others, and see on the inspired page doctrines which no rule of exegesis could discover there, and from which their reason revolted as monstrous. In leaning on the Cross, they had found that relief of heart which so many of their countrymen were seeking, but not finding, in fasts, in penances, in offerings to the Saints, and in pilgrimages, performed sometimes in sackcloth and tears, and severe mortification of the flesh, and sometimes in gay apparel, and on soft-paced and richly-caparisoned mules, to the screaming of bagpipes and the music of merry songs.

The best evidence of the continued spread of Lollardism—in other words, of Protestantism—is the necessity under which its opponents evidently felt to adopt more vigorous measures for its repression. The “well” which Wicliffe had digged at Oxford was

³ There were clearly but two courses open to him—retraction or condemnation. We agree with Fox in thinking that he was not likely to retract.

still flowing; its waters must be stopped. The light he had kindled in his vernacular Bible was still burning, and sending its rays over England; it must be extinguished. The accomplishment of these two objects became now the main labour of Arundel. Convening at Oxford (1408) the bishops and clergy of his province, he promulgated certain provisions for the checking of heresy, digested into thirteen chapters, and known as the Constitutions of Arundel,⁴ a designation they are entitled to bear, seeing they all run under the authority of the archbishop. The drift of these Constitutions was, first, to prohibit all from exercising the function of preacher who had not a special licence from the diocesan, or had not undergone an examination before him touching their orthodoxy; secondly, to charge preachers to eschew all Wicliffite novelties, and to frame their discourses in every respect according to the doctrine of holy Church; and thirdly, seeing “the errors of the Lollards have seized the University of Oxford, therefore, to prevent the fountain being poisoned, ‘tis decreed by the Synod that every warden, master, or principal of any college or hall shall be obliged to inquire, at least every month, into the opinions and principles of the students in their respective houses, and if they find them maintain anything repugnant to the Catholic faith, to admonish them; and if they continue obstinate, to expel them.” “In regard that,” said the sixth Constitution, “the new roads in religion are more dangerous to travel than the old ones,” the primate, careful for the safety of wayfarers, proceeded to shut up all the new roads thus: “we enjoin and require that no book or tract, written by John Wicliffe, or any other person either in Wicliffe’s time or since, or who for the future shall write any other book upon a subject in divinity, shall be suffered to be read either in schools, halls, or any other places within our Province of Canterbury, unless such books shall first be examined by the University of Oxford or Cambridge,” &c. The infraction of this enactment subjected the offender to prosecution, “as one that makes it his business to spread the infection of schism and heresy.”⁵

The seventh Constitution began thus: “‘Tis a dangerous undertaking, as St. Jerome assures us, to translate the Holy Scriptures. We therefore decree and ordain,” it continued, “that from henceforward no unauthorised person *shall translate any part of Holy Scripture into English, or any other language*, under any form of book or treatise. Neither shall any such book, treatise, or version, made either in Wicliffe’s time or since, be read, either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, under the penalty of the *greater excommunication*, till the said translation shall be approved either by the bishop of the diocese or a provincial council, as occasion shall require.”⁶

No such authorisation was ever given. Consequently all translations of the Sacred Scriptures into English, or any other tongue, and all reading of the Word of God in whole or in part, in public or in private, were by this Constitution proscribed, under the penalty of the greater excommunication.

⁴ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii. p. 625.

⁵ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii. p. 626.

⁶ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii. p. 626.

Chapter III.

Growth of English Protestantism.

The Papal Schism—Its Providential Purpose—Council of Pisa—Henry's Letter to the Pope—The King exhorts the Pope to Amendment—The Council of Pisa Deposes both Popes—Elects Alexander V.—The Schism not Healed—Protestantism in England continues to grow—Oxford Purged—A Catholic Revival—Aves to Our Lady—Aves to the Archbishop—Persecution of Protestants grows Hotter—Cradle of English Protestantism—Lessons to be Learned beside it.

We have already spoken of the schism by which the Papal world was divided, and its governing head weakened, at the very moment when Wicliffe was beginning his Reformation.¹ To this event, in no small degree, was it owing that the Reformer was permitted to go to his grave in peace, and that the seeds of truth which he had scattered were suffered to spring up and take some hold of the soil before the tempest burst. But if the schism was a shield over the infant Reformation, it was a prolific source of calamities to the world. Consciences were troubled, not knowing which of the two chairs of Peter was the indubitable seat of authority and true fountain of grace. The nations were distracted, for the rival Popes had carried their quarrel to the battle-field, and blood was flowing in torrents. To put an end to these scandals and miseries, the French king sent an embassy to Pope Gregory XII., to induce him to fulfil the oath he had taken at his election, to vacate the chair provided his rival could be brought to terms. "He received," says Collier, "a shuffling answer."²

In November, 1409, the Cardinal of Bordeaux arrived in England from France, on the design of engaging the two crowns to employ their authority in compelling Gregory to make good his oath. The cardinals, too, lent their help towards terminating the schism. They took steps for commencing a General Council at Pisa, to which the English clergy sent three delegates.³ King Henry had previously dispatched ambassadors, who carried, with other instructions, a letter to the Pope from the king. Henry IV. spoke plainly to his "most Holy Father." He prayed him to "consider to what degree the present schism has embarrassed and embroiled Christendom, and how many thousand lives have been lost in the field in this quarrel." Would he lay these things to heart, he was sure that "his Holiness" would renounce the tiara sooner than keep it at the expense of creating "division in the Church, and fencing against peace with evasive answers. For," added he, "were your Holiness influenced by serviceable motives, you would be governed by the tenderness of the true mother, who pleaded before King Solomon, and rather resign the child than suffer it to be cut in pieces."⁴ He who gives good advice, says the proverb, undertakes a thankless office. The proverb especially holds good in the case of him who presumes to advise an infallible man. Gregory read the letter, but made no sign. Archbishop Arundel, by way of seconding his sovereign, got Convocation to agree that Peter's pence should be withheld till the breach, which so afflicted Christendom, were healed. If with the one hand

¹ See *ante*, bk. ii., chap, 10.

² Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 628.

³ Collier, vol. i., p. 628.

⁴ Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, p. 569; Camdeni *Anglica*, Frankfort, 1603.

the king was castigating the Pope, with the other he was burning the Lollards: what wonder that he sped so ill in his efforts to abate the Papal haughtiness and obstinacy?

Still the woeful sight of two chairs and two Popes continued to afflict the adherents of the Papacy. The cardinals, more earnestly than ever, resolved to bring the matter to an issue between the Pope and the Church; for they foresaw, if matters went on as they were doing, the speedy ruin of both. Accordingly they gave notice to the princes and prelates of the West, that they had summoned a General Council at Pisa, on the 25th of March next ensuing (1409). The call met a universal response. "Almost all the prelates and venerable men of the Latin world," says Walsingham, "repaired to Pisa."⁵ The Council consisted of 22 cardinals, 4 patriarchs, 12 archbishops in person and 14 by proxy, 80 bishops in person and a great many by their representatives, 87 abbots, the ambassadors of nearly all the princes of Europe, the deputies of most of the universities, the representatives of the chapters of cathedral Churches, &c.⁶ The numbers, rank, and authority of the Council well entitled it to represent the Church, and gave good promise of the extinction of the schism.

It was now to be seen how much the Papacy had suffered in prestige by being cleft in twain, and how merciful this dispensation was for the world's deliverance. Had the Papacy continued entire and unbroken, had there been but one Pope, the Council would have bowed down before him as the true Vicar; but there were two; this forced the question upon the members—Which is the false Pope? May not both be false? And so in a few days they found their way to the conclusion which they put into a definite sentence in their fourteenth session, and which, when we take into account the age, the men, and the functionaries over whom their condemnation was suspended, is one of the most remarkable decisions on record. It imprinted a scar on the Papal power which is not effaced to this day. The Council pronounced Gregory XII. and Benedict XIII. "to be notorious and incorrigible schismatics and heretics, and guilty of plain perjury; which amputations being evidently proved, they deprive them both of their titles and authority, pronounce the Apostolic See vacant, and all the censures and promotions of these pretended Popes void and of none effect."⁷

The Council, having ejected ignominiously the two Popes, and having rescued, as it thought, the chair on which each had laid hold with so tenacious and determined a grasp, proceeded to place in it the Cardinal of Milan, who began to reign under the title of Alexander V.⁸ This Pontificate was brief, for within the year Alexander came by his end in a manner of which Balthazar, who succeeded him as John XXIII., was supposed to know more than he was willing to disclose. The Council, instead of mending matters, had made them worse. John, who was now acknowledged the legitimate holder of the tiara, contributed nothing either to the honour of the Church or the repose of the world. The two Popes, Gregory and Benedict, refusing to submit themselves to the Council, or to acknowledge the new Pope, were still in the field, contending with both spiritual and temporal arms. Instead of two rival Popes there were now three; "not three crowns upon one Pope's head," says Fox, "but three heads in one Popish Church," each with a body of

⁵ Walsingham, *Hist. Anglioe*, p. 570.

⁶ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., pp. 628, 629.

⁷ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 629. *Concil. Lab. et Cossar.*, tom. xi., pars. 2, col. 2126.

⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 2131.

followers to support his pretensions. The schism thus was not only not healed, it was wider than ever; and the scandals and miseries that flowed from it, so far from being abated or extinguished, were greatly aggravated and a few years later, we find another General Council assembling at Constance, if haply it might effect what that of Pisa had failed to accomplish.⁹

We return to England. While the schism continued to scandalise and vex Romanists on the Continent, the growth of Lollardism was not less a torment to the clergy in England. Despite the vigour of Arundel, who spared neither edicts nor faggots, the seeds which that arch-enemy of the Papacy, Wicliffe, had sown, would ever be springing up, and mingling the wheat of Rome with the tares of heresy. Oxford, especially, demanded the primate's attention. That fountain had savoured of Lollardism ever since Wicliffe taught there. It must be purified. The archbishop set out, with a pompous retinue, to hold a visitation of the university (1411). The chancellor, followed by a numerous body of proctors, masters, and students, met him at a little distance from the gates, and told him that if he came merely to see the town he was welcome, but if he came in his character of *visitor*, he begged to remind his Grace that the University of Oxford, in virtue of the Papal bull, was exempt from episcopal and archiepiscopal jurisdiction. This rebuff Arundel could ill bear. He left Oxford in a day or two, and wrote an account of the affair to the king. The heads of the university were sent for to court, and the chancellor and proctors were turned out of their office. The students, taking offence at this rigour, ceased their attendance on the public lectures, and were on the point of breaking up and dissolving their body.

After a warm contention between the university and the archbishop, the matter, by consent of both parties, was referred to the king. Henry decided that the point should remain on the footing on which Richard II. had placed it.¹⁰ Thus judgment was given in favour of the archbishop, and the royal decision was confirmed first by Parliament and next by John XXIII., in a bull that made void the privilege of exemption which Pope Boniface had conferred on the university.¹¹

This opened the door of Oxford to the archbishop. Meanwhile, Convocation raised a yet louder cry of Wicliffitism in the university, and pressed the primate to interpose his authority ere that "former seat of learning and virtue" had become utterly corrupt. It was an astounding fact, Convocation added, that a testimonial in favour of Wicliffe and his doctrines, with the seal of the university affixed to it, had lately issued from the halls of Oxford.¹² Arundel did not delay. Presently his delegates were down on the college. These inquisitors of heretical pravity summoned before them the suspected professors, and by threats of Henry's burning statute compelled them to recant. They next examined the writings of Wicliffe. They extracted out of them 246 propositions which they deemed heretical.¹³ This list they sent to the archbishop. The primate, after branding it with his

⁹ See *ante*, bk. iii., chap. 4.

¹⁰ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 630.

¹¹ This bull was afterwards voided by Sixtus IV. Wood, *Hist. Univ.*; Oxon, 205. Cotton's Abridgment, p. 480. Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 630.

¹² The university seal, it is believed, was surreptitiously obtained; but the occurrence proves that among the professors at Oxford were not a few who thought with Wicliffe.

¹³ Fox, bk. v., p. 282; Lond., 1838.

condemnation, forwarded it to the Pope, with a request that he would stamp it with his final anathema, and that he would send him a bull, empowering him to dig up Wicliffe's bones and burn them. "The Pope," says Collier, "granted the first, but refused the latter, not thinking it any useful part of discipline to disturb the ashes of the dead."¹⁴

While, with the one hand, Arundel maintained the fight against the infant Protestantism of England, with the other he strove to promote a Catholic revival. He bethought him by what new rite he could honour, with what new grace he could crown the "mother of God." He instituted, in honour of Mary, "the tolling of Aves," with certain Aves, the due recital of which were to earn certain days of pardon.¹⁵ The ceremonies of the Roman Church were already very numerous, requiring a whole technological vocabulary to name them, and well-nigh all the days of the year for their observance. In his mandate to the Bishop of London, Arundel set forth the grounds and reasons of this new observance. The realm of England verily owed "Our Lady" much, the archbishop argued. She had been the "buckler of our protection." She had "made our arms victorious," and "spread our power through all the coasts of the earth." Yet more, to the Virgin Mary the nation owed its escape from a portentous evil that menaced it, and of which it was dreadful to think what the consequences would have been, had it overtaken it. The archbishop does not name the monstrous thing; but it was easy to see what was meant, for the archbishop goes on to speak of a new species of wolf that waited to attack the inhabitants of England and destroy them, not by tearing them with their teeth after the usual manner of wild beasts, but in the exercise of some novel and strange instinct, by mingling poison with their food. "To whom [Mary] we may worthily ascribe, now of late in these our times, our deliverance from the ravening wolves, and the mouths of cruel beasts, who had prepared against our banquets a mess of meat mingled full of gall."¹⁶ On these grounds the archbishop issued his commands (Feb. 10th, 1410), that peals should be tolled, morning and evening, in praise of Mary; with a promise to all who should say the Lord's prayer and a "hail Mary" five times at the morning peal, of a forty-days' pardon.¹⁷ To whom, after "Our Lady," the archbishop doubtless thought, did England owe so much as to himself? Accordingly, we find him putting in a modest claim to share in the honours he had decreed to his patroness. This next mandate, directed to Thomas Wilton, his somner, enjoined that, at what time he should pass through his Province of Canterbury, having his cross borne before him, the bells of all the parish churches should be rung, "in token of special reverence that they bear to us."¹⁸ Certain churches in London were temporarily closed by the archbishop, because "on Tuesday last, when we, between eight and nine of the clock, before dinner, passed openly on foot as it were through the midst of the City of London, with our cross carried before us, they showed toward us unreverence, ringing not their bells at all at our coming." "Wherefore we command you that by our authority you put all

¹⁴ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 631.

¹⁵ Fox, bk. v., p. 280.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

these churches under our indictment, suspending God's holy organs and instruments in the same."¹⁹

"Why," inquires the chronicler, "though the bells did not clatter in the steeples, should the body of the church be suspended? The poor organs, methinks, suffered some wrong in being put to silence in the quire, because the bells rang not in the tower." There are some who may smile at these devices of Arundel to strengthen Popery, as betokening vainglory rather than insight. But we may grant that the astute archbishop knew what he was about. He thus made "the Church" ever present to Englishmen of that age. She awoke them from slumber in the morning, she sang them to repose at night. Her chimes were in their ears and her symbols before their eyes all day long. Every time they kissed an image, or repeated an Ave, or crossed themselves with holy water, they increased their reverence for "mother Church." Every such act was a strengthening of the fetter which dulled the intellect and bound the soul. At each repetition the deep sleep of the conscience became yet deeper.

The persecution against the Protestants did not abate. The pursuit of heretics became more strict; and their treatment, at the hands of their captors, more cruel. The prisons in the bishops' houses, heretofore simply places of confinement, were now often provided with instruments of torture. The Lollards' Tower, at Lambeth, was crowded with confessors, who have left on the walls of their cell, in brief but touching phrase, the record of their "patience and faith," to be read by the men of after-times; nay, by us, seeing these memorials are not yet effaced. Many, weak in faith and terrified by the violence that menaced them, appeared in penitential garb, with lighted tapers in their hand, at market crosses, and church doors, and read their recantation. But not all: else England at this day would have been what Spain is. There were others, more largely strengthened from on high, who aspired to the glory, than which there is no purer or brighter on earth, of dying for the Gospel. Thus the stake had its occasional victim.

So passed the early years of English Protestantism. It did not grow up in dalliance and ease, amid the smiles of the great and the applause of the multitude; no, it was nurtured amid fierce and cruel storms. From its cradle it was familiar with hardship, with revilings and buffetings, with cruel mockings and scourgings, nay, moreover, with bonds and imprisonments. The mob derided it; power frowned upon it; and lordly Churchmen branded it as heresy, and pursued it with sword and faggot. Let us draw around its cradle, placed under no gorgeous roof, but in a prison-cell, with gaolers and executioners waiting beside it. Let us forget, if only for awhile, the denominational names, and ecclesiastical classifications, that separate us; let us lay aside, the one his lawn and the other his Genevan cloak, and, simply in our character of Christians and Protestants, come hither, and contemplate the lowliness of our common origin. It seems as if the "young child" had been cast out to perish; the Roman Power stands before it ready to destroy it, and yet it has been said to it, "To thee will I give England." There is a lesson here which, could we humble ourselves, and lay it duly to heart, would go far to awaken the love and bring back the union and strength of our first days.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter IV.

Efforts for the Redistribution of Ecclesiastical Property.

The Burning Bush—Petition of Parliament—Redistribution of Ecclesiastical Property—Defence of Archbishop Arundel—The King stands by the Church—The Petition Presented a Second Time—Its Second Refusal—More Powerful Weapons than Royal Edicts—Richard II. Deposed—Henry IV.—Edict De Hoeretico Comburendo—Griefs of the King—Calamities of the Country—Projected Crusade—Death of Henry IV.

In the former chapter we saw the Protestants of England stigmatised as Lollards, proscribed by edicts, and haled to prisons, which they left, the many to read their recantation at cathedral doors and market crosses, and the few to fulfil their witness-bearing at the stake. The tempest was growing in violence every hour, and the little company on whom it beat so sorely seemed doomed to extinction. Yet in no age or country, perhaps, has the Church of God more perfectly realised the promise wrapped up in her earliest and most significant Symbol, than in England at the present time. As amid the granite peaks of Horeb, so here in England, “The bush burned and was not consumed.”

This way of maintaining their testimony by suffering, was a surer path to victory than that which the English Protestants had fondly chalked out for themselves. In the sixth year of Henry IV., they had moved the king, through Parliament, to take possession of the temporalities of the Church, and redistribute them in such a manner as would make them more serviceable to both the crown and the nation.

The Commons represented to the king that the clergy possessed a third of the lands in the realm, that they contributed nothing to the public burdens, and that their riches disqualified them from the due performance of their sacred functions. Archbishop Arundel was by the king’s side when the petition was presented by the Speaker of the House, Sir John Cheney. He was not the man to stand silent when such an accusation was preferred against his order. True it was, said the archbishop, that the clergy did not go in person to the wars, but it was not less true that they always sent their vassals and tenants to the field, and in such numbers, and furnished with such equipments, as corresponded to the size of their estates; and further, the archbishop maintained that as regarded the taunt that the clerics were but drones, who lived idly at home while their countrymen were serving abroad, the Speaker had done them injustice. If they donned the surplice or betook them to their breviary, when their lay brethren buckled on the coat of mail, and grasped rapier or cross-bow, it was not because they were chary of their blood or enamoured of ease, but because they wished to give their days and nights to prayer for the country’s welfare, and especially for the success of its arms. While the soldiers of England were fighting, her priests were supplicating;¹ the latter, not less than the former, contributed to those victories which were shedding such lustre on the arms of England.

The Speaker of the Commons, smiling at the primate’s enthusiasm, replied that “he thought the prayers of the Church but a *slender supply*.” Stung by this retort, Arundel

¹ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 30. Cobbett, vol. i., cols. 295, 296. Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 620.

quickly turned on Sir John, and charged him with profaneness. “I perceive, sir,” said the prelate, “how the kingdom is likely to thrive, when the aids of devotion, and the favour of Heaven, are thus slighted and ridiculed.”

The king “hung, as it were, in a balance of thought.” The archbishop, perceiving his indecision, dropped on his knees before him, and implored Henry to remember the oath he had sworn on coming to the crown, to maintain the rights of the Church and defend the clergy; and he counselled him, above all, to beware incurring the guilt of sacrilege, and the penalties thereto annexed. The king was undecided no longer; he bade the archbishop dismiss his fears, and assured him that the clergy need be under no apprehensions from such proposals as the present, while he wore the crown; that he would take care to leave the Church in even a better condition than that in which he had found it. The hopes of the Lollards were thus rudely dashed.²

But their numbers continued to increase; by-and-by there came to be a “Lollard party,” as Walsingham calls it, in Parliament, and in the eleventh year of Henry’s reign they judged the time ripe for bringing forward their proposal a second time. They made a computation of the ecclesiastical estates, which, according to their showing, amounted to 485,000 merks of yearly value, and contained 18,400 ploughs of land. This property, they suggested, should be divided into three parts, and distributed as follows: one part was to go to the king, and would enable him to maintain 6,000 men-at-arms, in addition to those he had at present in his pay; it would enable him besides to make a new creation of earls and knights. The second was to be divided, as an annual stipend, among the 15,000 priests who were to conduct the religious services of the nation; and the remaining third was to be appropriated to the founding of 100 new hospitals. But the proposal found no favour with the king, even though it promised to augment considerably his military following. He dared not break with the hierarchy, and he might be justly suspicious of the changes which so vast a project would draw after it.

Addressing the Commons in a tone of great severity, he charged them never again, so long as he lived, to come before the throne with any such proposal. He even refused to listen to the request with which they had accompanied their petition, that he would grant a mitigation of the edict against heresy, and permit convicted Lollards to be sent to his own prisons, rather than be immured in the more doleful strongholds of the bishops. Even these small favours the Protestants could not obtain, and lest the clergy should think that Henry had begun to waver between the two faiths, he sealed his devotion to the Church by anew kindling the pile for the Lollards.³

By other weapons were the Wicliffites to win England than by royal edicts and Parliamentary petitions. They must take slow and laborious possession of it by their tears and their martyrdoms. Although the king had done as they desired, and the edict had realised all that they expected from it, it would after all have been but a fictitious and barren acquisition, liable to be swept away by every varying wind that blew at court. But when, by their painful teachings, by their holy lives, and their courageous deaths, they had enlightened the understandings and won the hearts of their countrymen to the Protestant

² Walsingham, pp. 371, 372. Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., pp. 620, 621. Hume, chap. 18—Hen. IV.

³ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 48. Walsingham, p. 379. Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 629.

doctrine, then would they have taken possession of England in very deed, and in such fashion that they would hold it for ever. These early disciples did not yet clearly see wherein lay the great strength of Protestantism. The political activity into which they had diverged was an attempt to gather fruit, not only before the sun had ripened it, but even before they had well sowed the seed. The fabric of the Roman Church was founded on the belief, in the minds of Englishmen, that the Pope was Heaven's delegate for conferring on men the pardon of their sins and the blessings of salvation. That belief must first be exploded. So long as it kept its hold, no material force, no political action, could suffice to overthrow the domination of Rome. Amid the scandals of the clergy and the decay of the nation, it would have continued to flourish to our day, had not the reforming and spiritual forces come to the rescue. We can the more easily pardon the mistake of the English Protestants of the fifteenth century when we reflect that, even yet, the sole efficacy—the omnipotency—of these forces finds only partial belief in the general mind of even the religious world.

From the hour that the stake for Protestantism was planted in England, neither the king nor the nation had rest. Henry Plantagenet (Bolingbroke) had returned from exile, on his oath not to disturb the succession to the crown. He broke his vow, and dethroned Richard II. The Church, through her head the primate, was an accomplice with him in this deed. Arundel anointed the new king with oil from that mysterious vial which the Virgin was said to have given to Thomas à Becket, during his exile in France, telling him that the kings on whose head this oil should be poured would prove valiant champions of the Church.⁴ The coronation was followed by the dark tragedy in the Castle of Pontefract; and that, again, by the darker, though more systematic, violence of the edict *De Hoeretico Comburendo*, which was followed in its turn by the imprisonings in the Tower, and the burning in Smithfield. The reign thus inaugurated had neither glory abroad nor prosperity at home. Faction rose upon faction; revolt trod on the heels of revolt; and a train of national calamities followed in rapid succession, till at last Henry had completely lost the popularity which helped him to mount the throne; and the terror with which he reigned made his subjects regret the weak, frivolous, and vicious Richard, whom he had deprived first of his crown, and next of his life. Rumours that Richard still lived, and would one day claim his own, were continually springing up, and occasioned, not only perpetual alarms to the king, but frequent conspiracies among his nobles; and the man who was the first to plant the stake in England for the disciples of the Gospel had, before many days passed by, to set up scaffolds for the peers of his realm. His son, Prince Henry, added to his griefs. The thought, partly justified by the wild life which the prince then led, and the abandoned companions with whom he had surrounded himself, that he wished to seize the crown before death had given it to him in the regular way, continually haunted the royal imagination; and, to obviate this danger, the monarch took at times the ludicrous precaution of placing the regalia on his pillow when he went to sleep.⁵ His brief reign of thirteen years and five months wore away, as an old chronicler says, “with little pleasure.”

⁴ Walsingham, pp. 360, 361. This vial, the chronicler tells us, had lain for many years, neglected, locked up in a chest in the Tower of London.

⁵ The chronicler, Holinshed, records a curious interview between the prince and his father, in the latter days of Henry. The prince heard that he had been slandered to the king, and went to court, with a

The last year of Henry's life was signalised by a projected expedition to the Holy Land. The monarch deemed himself called to the pious labour of delivering Jerusalem from the Infidel. If he should succeed in a work so meritorious, he would spend what might remain to him of life with an easier conscience, as having made atonement for the crimes by which he had opened his way to the throne. As it turned out, however, his efforts to achieve this grand enterprise but added to his own cares, and to his subjects' burdens. He had collected ships, money, provisions, and soldiers. All was ready; the fleet waited only till the king should come on board to weigh anchor and set sail.⁶ But before embarking, the monarch must needs visit the shrine of St. Edward. "While he was making his prayers," says Holinshed, "there as it were to take his leave, and so to precede forth on his journie, he was suddenlie and grievouslie taken, that such as were about him feared that he should have died presentlie; wherefore, to relieve him, if it were possible, they bare him into a chamber that was next at hand, belonging to the Abbot of Westminister, where they laid him on a pallet before the fire, and used all remedies to revive him. At length he recovered his speech and understanding, and perceiving himself in a strange place which he knew not, he willed to know if the chamber had any particular name, whereunto answer was made that it was called 'Jerusalem.' Then said the king, 'Lauds be given to the Father of Heaven, for I know that I shall die here in this chamber, according to the prophecy of me, which declared that I should depart this life in Jerusalem.'"⁷

numerous train, to clear himself. "He was appareled," says Holinshed, "in a gown of blue satin and full of small owlet holes, at every hole the needle hanging by a silk thread with which it was sewed." Falling on his knees, he pulled out a dagger, and presenting it to the king, he bade him plunge it into his breast, protesting that he did not wish to live a single day under his father's suspicions. The king, casting away the dagger, kissed the prince, and was reconciled to him. (*Chron.*, vol. iii., p. 54.)

⁶ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 632. Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 57.

⁷ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 58.

Chapter V.

Trial and Condemnation of Sir John Oldcastle.

Henry V.—A Coronation and Tempest—Interpretations—Struggles for Liberty—Youth of Henry—Change on becoming King—Arundel his Evil Genius—Sir John Oldcastle—Becomes Lord Cobham by Marriage—Embraces Wicliffe's Opinions—Patronises the Lollard Preachers—Is Denounced by Arundel—Interview between Lord Cobham and the King—Summoned by the Archbishop—Citations Torn Down—Confession of his Faith—Apprehended—Brought before the Archbishop's Court—Examination—His Opinions on the Sacrament, Confession, the Pope, Images, the Church, &c.—His Condemnation as a Heretic—Forged Abjuration—He Escapes from the Tower

Struck down by apoplexy in the prime of manhood, March 20th, 1413, Henry IV. was carried to his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, and his son, Henry V., mounted his throne. The new king was crowned on Passion Sunday, the 9th of April. The day was signalised by a fearful tempest, that burst over England, and which the spirit of the age variously interpreted.¹ Not a few regarded it as a portent of evil, which gave warning of political storms that were about to convulse the State of England.² But others, more sanguine, construed this occurrence more hopefully. As the tempest, said they, disperses the gloom of winter, and summons from their dark abodes in the earth the flowers of spring, so will the even-handed justice of the king dispel the moral vapours which have hung above the land during the late reign, and call forth the virtues of order and piety to adorn and bless society.³ Meanwhile the future, which men were striving to read, was posting towards them, bringing along with it those sharp tempests that were needful to drive away the exhalations of a night which had long stagnated over England. Religion was descending to resume the place that superstition had usurped, and awaken in the English people those aspirations and tendencies, which found their first arena of development on the field of battle; and their second, and more glorious one, in the halls of political and theological discussion; and their final evolution, after two centuries, in the sublime fabric of civil and religious liberty that stood completed in England, that other nations might study its principles and enjoy its blessings.

The youth of Henry V., who now governed England, had been disorderly. It was dishonoured by “the riot of pleasure, the frolic of debauchery, the outrage of wine.”⁴ The jealousy of his father, by excluding him from all public employment, furnished him with an excuse for filling the vacancies of his mind and his time with low amusements and degrading pleasures. But when the prince put on the crown he put off his former self. He dismissed his old associates, called around him the counsellors of his father, bestowed the honours and offices of the State upon men of capacity and virtue; and, pensioning his former companions, he forbade them to enter his presence till they had become better men. He made, in short, a commendable effort to effect a reformation in manners and religion. “Now placed on the royal seat of the realm,” says the chronicler, “he determined to begin

¹ “A sore, ruggie, and tempestuous day, with wind, snow, and sleet, that men greatly marvelled thereat, making diverse interpretations what the same might signifie” (Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 61.)

² Fox, bk. v., p. 282.

³ Walsingham, p. 382.

⁴ Hume, chap. 19.

with something acceptable to the Divine Majesty, and therefore commanded the clergy sincerelie and trulie to preach the Word of God, and to live accordinglie, that they might be lanterns of light to the temporalitie, as their profession required. The laymen he willed to serve God and obey their prince, prohibiting them, above all things, breach of matrimonie, custom in swearing and wilful perjurie.”⁵

It was the unhappiness of Henry V., who meant so well by his people, that he knew not the true source whence alone a real reformation can proceed. The astute Arundel was still by his side, and guided the steps of the prince into the same paths in which his father had walked. Lollard blood still continued to flow, and new victims from time to time mounted the martyr’s pile.

The most illustrious of the Protestants of that reign was Sir John Oldcastle, a knight of Herefordshire. Having married the heiress of Cowling Castle, near Rochester, he sat in Parliament under the title of Lord Cobham, in right of his wife’s barony.⁶ The youth of Lord Cobham had been stained with gay pleasures; but the reading of the Bible, and the study of Wicliffe’s writings, had changed his heart; and now, to the knightly virtues of bravery and honour, he added the Christian graces of humility and purity. He had borne arms in France, under Henry IV., who set a high value on his military accomplishments. He was not less esteemed by the son, Henry V., for his private worth,⁷ his shrewd sense, and his gallant bearing as a soldier.⁸ But the “dead fly” in the noble qualities and upright character of the stout old baron, in the opinion of the king, was his Lollardism.

With characteristic frankness, Lord Cobham made no secret of his attachment to the doctrines of Wicliffe. He avowed, in his place in Parliament, so early as the year 1391, “that it would be very commodious for England if the Pope’s jurisdiction stopped at the town of Calais, and did not cross the sea.”⁹

It is said of him, too, that he had copies made of Wicliffe’s works, and sent them to Bohemia, France, Spain, Portugal, and other countries.¹⁰ He threw open Cowling Castle to the Lollard preachers, making it their headquarters while they itinerated in the neighbourhood, preaching the Gospel. He himself often attended their sermons, taking his stand, sword in hand, by the preacher’s side, to defend him from the insults of the Friars.¹¹ Such open disregard of the ecclesiastical authority was not likely long to either escape notice or be exempt from censure.

Convocation was sitting at the time (1413) in St. Paul’s. The archbishop rose and called the attention of the assembly to the progress of Lollardism, and, pointing specially to Lord Cobham, declared that “Christ’s coat would never be without seam” till that notorious abettor of heretics were taken out of the way. On that point all were agreed; but Cobham had a friend in the king, and it would not do to have him out forthwith into

⁵ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 62.

⁶ See Dugdale, *Baronetage*.

⁷ Walsingham, p. 382.

⁸ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 632.

⁹ Bale, *Brefe Chron.*, p. 13; Lond., 1729.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 632.

Smithfield and burn him, as if he were an ordinary heretic. They must, if possible, take the king along with them in all they did against Lord Cobham. Accordingly, Archbishop Arundel, with other bishops and members of Convocation, waited on the king, and laid before him their complaint against Lord Cobham. Henry replied that he would first try what himself could do with the brave old knight whom he bore in so high esteem.¹²

The king sent for Cobham, and exhorted him to abandon his scruples, and submit to his mother the Church. "You, most worthy prince," was the reply, "I am always prompt and willing to obey, forasmuch as I know you are a Christian king, and minister of God; unto you, next to God, I owe my whole obedience, and submit me thereunto. But, as touching the Pope and his spiritualitie, trulie I owe them neither suit nor service, forasmuch as I know him, by the Scriptures, to be the great Antichrist, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place."¹³ At the hearing of these words the king's countenance fell; his favour for Cobham gave way to his hatred of heresy; he turned away, purposing with himself to interfere no farther in the matter.

The archbishop came again to the king, who now gave his ready consent that they should proceed against Lord Cobham according to the laws of the Church. These, in all such cases as the present, were compendiously summarised in the one statute of Henry IV., *De Hoeretico Comburendo*. The archbishop dispatched a messenger to Cobham, summoning him to appear before him on September 2nd, and answer to the articles of accusation. Acting on the principle that he "owed neither suit nor service" to the Pope and his vassals, Lord Cobham paid no attention to the summons. Arundel next prepared citations, in due form, and had them posted up on the gates of Cowling Castle, and on the doors of the neighbouring Cathedral of Rochester. These summonses were speedily torn down by the friends and retainers of Lord Cobham. The archbishop, seeing the Church in danger of being brought into contempt, and her authority of being made a laughing-stock, hastened to unsheathe against the defiant knight her ancient sword, so terrible in those ages. He excommunicated the great Lollard; but even this did not subdue him. A third time were citations posted up, commanding his appearance, under threat of severe penalties;¹⁴ and again the summonses were contemptuously torn down.

Cobham had a stout heart in his bosom, but he would show the king that he had also a good cause. Taking his pen, he sat down and drew out a statement of his belief. He took, as the groundwork of his confession of faith, the Apostles' Creed, giving, mainly in the words of Scripture, the sense in which he received its several articles. His paper has all the simplicity and spirituality, but not the clear, well-defined and technical expression, of the Reformation theology of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ He carried it to the king, craving him to have it examined "by the most godly, wise, and learned men of his realm." Henry refused to look at it. Handing it to the archbishop, the king said that, in this matter, his Grace was judge.

¹² Bale, p. 23. Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 62.

¹³ Bale, pp. 24, 25. Fox, bk. v., p. 282.

¹⁴ Bale, pp. 25-28. Collier, vii. 633. Fox, v. 282.

¹⁵ The document is given in full by Bale and Fox.

There followed, on the part of Cobham, a proposal which, doubtless, would cause astonishment to a modern divine, but which was not accounted incongruous or startling in an age when so many legal, political, and even moral questions were left for decision to the wager of battle. He offered to bring a hundred knights and esquires into the field, for his purgation, against an equal number on the side of his accusers; or else, said he, "I shall fight, myself, for life or death, in the quarrel of my faith, with any man living, Christian or heathen, the king and the lords of his council excepted."¹⁶ The proposal was declined, and the issue was that the king suffered him to be seized, in his privy chamber, and imprisoned in the Tower.

On Saturday, September 23rd, 1413, Lord Cobham was brought before Archbishop Arundel, who, assisted by the Bishops of London and Winchester, opened his court in the chapter-house of St. Paul's. The primate offered him absolution if he would submit and confess himself. He replied by pulling out of his bosom and reading a written statement of his faith, handing a copy to the primate, and keeping one for himself. The court then adjourned till the Monday following, when it met in the Dominican Friars, on Ludgate Hill, with a more numerous attendance of bishops, doctors, and friars. Absolution was again offered the prisoner, on the old terms: "Nay, forsooth will I not," he replied, "for I never yet trespassed against you, and therefore I will not do it." Then falling down on his knees on the pavement, and extending his hands toward heaven, he said, "I shrive me here unto thee, my eternal living God, that in my frail youth I offended thee, O Lord, most grievously, in pride, wrath, and gluttony, in covetousness and in lechery. Many men have I hurt, in mine anger, and done many horrible sins; good Lord, I ask thee, mercy." Then rising up, the tears streaming down his face, he turned to the people, and cried, "Lo, good people, for the breaking of God's law these men never yet cursed me; but now, for their own laws and traditions, they most cruelly handle me and other men."¹⁷

The court took a little while to recover itself after this scene. It then proceeded with the examination of Lord Cobham, thus:—

The archbishop: "What say you, sir, to the four articles sent to the Tower for your consideration, and especially to the article touching the Sacrament of the altar?"

Lord Cobham: "My Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, sitting at his last supper, with his most dear disciples, the night before he should suffer, took bread in his hand, and, giving thanks to his eternal Father, blessed it, brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, 'Take it unto you, and eat thereof, all. This is my body, which shall be betrayed for you. Do this hereafter in my remembrance.' This do I thoroughly believe."

The archbishop: "Do you believe that it was bread after the Sacramental words had been spoken?"

Lord Cobham: "I believe that in the Sacrament of the altar is Christ's very body, in form of bread; the same that was born of the Virgin, done on the cross, and now is glorified in heaven."

¹⁶ Bale, p. 35.

¹⁷ Bale, pp. 50, 51. Fox. bk. v., p. 284.

A doctor: "After the Sacramental words be uttered there remaineth no bread, but only the body of Christ."

Lord Cobham: "You said once to me, in the Castle of Cowling, that the sacred Host was not Christ's body. But I held then against you, and proved that therein was his body, though the seculars and friars could not therein agree, but held one against the other."

Many doctors, *with great noise*: "We say all that it is God's body."

They angrily insisted that he should answer whether it was material bread after consecration, or no.

Lord Cobham (looking earnestly at the archbishop): "I believe surely that it is Christ's body in form of bread. Sir, believe not you thus?"

The archbishop: "Yea, marry, do I."

The doctors: "Is it only Christ's body after the consecration of a priest, and no bread, or not?"

Lord Cobham: "It is both Christ's body and bread. I shall prove it thus: For like as Christ, dwelling here upon the earth, had in him both Godhood and manhood, and had the invisible Godhood covered under that manhood which was only visible and seen in him: so in the Sacrament of the altar is Christ's very body, and very bread also, as I believe. The bread is the thing which we see with our eyes; the body of Christ, which is his flesh and his blood, is hidden thereunder, and not seen but in faith."

Smiling to one another, and all speaking together: "It is a foul heresy."

A bishop: "It is a manifest heresy to say that it is bread after the Sacramental words have been spoken."

Lord Cobham: "St. Paul, the apostle, was, I am sure, as wise as you are, and more godly-learned, and he called it bread: writing to the Corinthians, he says, 'The bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the body of Christ?'"

All: "St. Paul must be otherwise understood; for it is heresy to say that it is bread after consecration."

Lord Cobham: "How do you make that good?"

The court: "It is against the determination of holy Church."

The archbishop: "We sent you a writing concerning the faith of the blessed Sacrament, clearly determined by the Church of Rome, our mother, and by the holy doctors."

Lord Cobham: "I know none holier than is Christ and his apostle. And for that determination, I wot, it is none of theirs, for it standeth not with the Scriptures, but is manifestly against them. If it be the Church's, as ye say it is, it hath been hers only since she received the great poison of worldly possessions, and not afore."

The archbishop: "What do you think of holy Church?"

Lord Cobham: "Holy Church is the number of them which shall be saved, of which Christ is the head. Of this Church, one part is in heaven with Christ; another in purgatory (you say); and the third is here on earth."

Doctor John Kemp: "Holy Church hath determined that every Christian man ought to be shriven by a priest. What say ye to this?"

Lord Cobham: "A diseased or sore wounded man had need to have a wise surgeon and a true. Most necessary were it, therefore, to be first shriven unto God, who only knoweth our diseases, and can help us. I deny not in this the going to a priest, if he be a man of good life and learning. If he be a vicious man, I ought rather to flee from him; for I am more likely to have infection than cure from him."

Doctor Kemp: "Christ ordained St. Peter to be his Vicar here on earth, whose see is the Church of Rome; and he granted the same power to all St. Peter's successors in that see. Believe ye not this?"

Lord Cobham: "He that followeth St. Peter most nearly in holy living is next unto him in succession."

Another doctor: "What do ye say of the Pope?"

Lord Cobham: "He and you together maketh the whole great Antichrist. The Pope is the head; you, bishops, priests, prelates, and monks, are the body; and the Begging Friars are the tail, for they hide the wickedness of you both with their sophistry."

Doctor Kemp: "Holy Church hath determined that it is meritorious to go on pilgrimage to holy places, and there to worship holy relics and images of saints and martyrs. What say ye to this?"

Lord Cobham: "I owe them no service by any commandment of God. It were better to brush the cobwebs from them and put them away, or bury them out of sight, as ye do other aged people, which are God's images. But this I say unto you, and I would all the world should know it, that with your shrives and idols, your feigned absolutions and pardons, ye draw unto you the substance, wealth, and chief pleasures of all Christian realms."

A priest: "What, sir, will ye not worship good images?"

Lord Cobham: "What worship should I give them?"

Friar Palmer: "Sir, will ye worship the cross of Christ, that he died upon?"

Lord Cobham: "Where is it?"

The friar: "I put the case, sir, that it were here even now before you."

Lord Cobham: "This is a wise man, to put to me an earnest question of a thing, and yet he himself knows not where the thing is. Again I ask you, what worship should I give it?"

A priest: "Such worship as St. Paul speaks of, and that is this, 'God forbid that I should joy, but only in the cross of Jesus Christ.'"

The Bishop of London: "Sir, ye wot well that Christ died on a material cross."

Lord Cobham: “Yea, and I wot also that our salvation came not by that material cross, but by him alone that died thereon; and well I wot that holy St. Paul rejoiced in no other cross but Christ’s passion and death.”

The archbishop: “Sir, the day passeth away. Ye must either submit yourself to the ordinance of holy Church, or else throw yourself into most deep danger. See to it in time, for anon it will be too late.”

Lord Cobham: “I know not to what purpose I should submit me.”

The archbishop: “We once again require you to look to your self, and to have no other opinion in these matters, save that is the universal faith and belief of the holy Church of Rome; and so, like an obedient child, return to the unity of your mother. See to it, I say, in time, for yet ye may have remeid, whereas anon it will be too late.”

Lord Cobham: “I will none otherwise believe in these points than I have told you before. Do with me what you will.”

The archbishop: “We must needs do the law: we must proceed to a definite sentence, and judge and condemn you for an heretic.”

Hereupon the archbishop stood up to pronounce sentence. The whole assembly—bishops, doctors, and friars—rose at the same time, and uncovered. The primate drew forth two papers which had been prepared beforehand, and proceeded to read them. The first set forth the heresies of which Lord Cobham had been convicted, and the efforts which the court, “desiring the health of his soul,” had made to bring him to “the unity of the Church;” but he, “as a child of iniquity and darkness,¹⁸ had so hardened his heart that he would not listen to the voice of his pastor.” “We, thereupon,” continued the archbishop, turning to the second paper, “judge, declare, and condemn the said Sir John Oldcastle, knight, for a most pernicious and detestable heretic, committing him to the secular jurisdiction and power, to do him thereupon to death.”

This sentence Arundel pronounced with a sweet and affable voice, the tears trickling down his face. It is the primate himself who tells us so; otherwise we should not have known it, for certainly we can trace no signs of pity or relenting in the terms of the sentence. “I pronounced it,” says the archbishop, referring to the sentence dooming Sir John to the fire, “*in the kindest and sweetest manner, with a weeping countenance.*”¹⁹ If the primate wept, no one saw a tear on the face of Lord Cobham. “Turning to the multitude,” says Bale, “Lord Cobham said, with a most cheerful voice, ‘Though ye judge my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet can ye do no harm to my soul. He that created it will, of his infinite mercy, save it. Of that I have no manner of doubt.’ Then falling down on his knees, and lifting up his eyes, with hands outstretched toward heaven, he prayed, saying, ‘Lord God eternal, I beseech thee, for thy great merey’s sake, to forgive my

¹⁸ “Iniquitatis et tenebrarum filius.” (Walsingham, *Hist. Ang.*, p. 385.)

¹⁹ “Affabiliter et suaviter recitavit excommunicationem, flebili vultu.” (Rymer, *Foedera*, vol. iv., p. 50. Walsingham, p. 384.)

pursuers, if it be thy blessed will.' He was thereupon delivered to Sir Robert Morley, and led back to the Tower."²⁰

The sentence was not to be executed till after fifty days.²¹ This respite, so unusual, may have been owing to a lingering affection for his old friend on the part of the king, or it may have been prompted by the hope that he would submit himself to the Church, and that his recantation would deal a blow to the cause of Lollardism. But Lord Cobham had counted the cost, and his firm resolve was to brave the horrors of Smithfield, rather than incur the guilt of apostacy. His persecutors, at last, despaired of bringing him in a penitent's garb, with lighted tapers, to the door of St. Paul's, as they had done humbler and weaker confessors, there to profess his sorrow for having scoffed at the prodigious mystery of transubstantiation, and placed the authority of the Scriptures above that of the Church. But if a *real* recantation could not be had, a *spurious* one might be fabricated, and given forth as the knight's confession. This was the expedient to which his enemies had now recourse. They gave out that "Sir John had now become a good man, and had lowlily submitted himself in all things to holy Church;" and thereupon they produced and published a written "*abjuration*," in which they made Lord Cobham profess the most unbounded homage for the Pope (John XXIII.!), "Christ's Vicar on earth and head of the Church," his clergy, his Sacraments, his laws, his pardons and dispensations, and recommend "all Christian people to observe, and also most meekly to obey, the aforesaid;" and further, they made him, in this "*abjuration*," renounce as "errors and heresies" all the doctrines he had maintained before the bishops, and, laying his hand upon the "holy evangel of God," to swear that he should nevermore henceforth hold these heresies, "or any other like unto them, wittingly."²²

The fabricators of this "*abjuration*" had overshot the mark. But small discernment, truly, was needed to detect so clumsy a forgery. Its authors were careful, doubtless, that the eye of the man whom it so grievously defamed should not light upon it; and yet it would appear that information was conveyed to Cobham, in his prison, of the part the priests were making him act in public; for we find him sending out to rebut the slanders and falsehoods that were spread abroad regarding him, and protesting that as he had professed when he stood before the archbishop, so did he still believe.²³ "This *abjuration*," says Fox, "never came into the hands of Lord Cobham, neither was it compiled by them for that purpose, but only to blear the eyes of the unlearned multitude for a time."²⁴ Meanwhile—whether by the aid of his friends, or by connivance of the governor, is not certainly known—Lord Cobham escaped from the Tower and fled to Wales, where he remained secreted for four years.

²⁰ We give this account of Lord Cobham's (Sir John Oldcastle) examination, slightly abridged, from Bale's *Brefe Chronycle*, pp. 49-73. Walsingham gives substantially, though more briefly, the same account of the matter (pp. 383, 384). See also Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 634. "Lingard's commentary on the trial," says M'Crie (*Ann. Eng. Presb.*, 51), "is in the true spirit of the religion which doomed the martyr to the stake with crocodile tears: 'The prisoner's conduct was as arrogant and insulting as that of his judge was *mild and dignified!*'" (*Hist. Eng.*, vol. v., p. 5.)

²¹ Walsingham, p. 385.

²² Bale, pp. 83-88. Fox, bk. v., p. 288.

²³ Fox, bk. v., p. 287.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. v., p. 288.

Chapter VI.

Lollardism Denounced as Treason.

Spread of Lollardism—Clergy Complain to the King—Activity of the Lollards—Accused of Plotting the Overthrow of the Throne and Commonwealth—Midnight Meeting of Lollards at St. Giles-in-the-Fields—Alarm of the King—He Attacks and Disperses the Assembly—Was it a Conspiracy or a Conventicle?—An Old Device Revived.

Lord Cobham had for the time escaped from the hands of his persecutors, but humbler confessors were within their reach, and on these Arundel and his clergy now proceeded to wreak their vengeance. This thing, which they branded as heresy, and punished in the fire, was spreading over England despite all their rigours. That the new opinions were dangerous to the authority of the Roman Church was sufficiently clear, but it suited the designs of the hierarchy to represent them as dangerous also to the good order of the State. They went to the king, and complaining of the spread of Lollardism, told him that it was the enemy of kings and the foe of commonwealths, and that if it were allowed to remain longer unsuppressed, it would in no long time be the undoing of his realm. "The heretics and Lollards of Wicliffe's opinion," said they, "are suffered to preach abroad so boldly, to gather conventicles unto them, to keep schools in men's houses, to make books, compile treatises, and write ballads; to teach privately in angles and corners, as in woods, fields, meadows, pastures, groves, and caves of the ground. This," they added, "will be a destruction to the commonwealth, a subversion to the land, and an utter decay of the king's estate royal, if a remedy be not sought in time."¹

This picture, making allowance for some little exaggeration, shows us the wonderful activity of these early Protestants, and what a variety of agencies they had already begun to employ for the propagation of their opinions. It justifies the saying of Bale, that "if England at that time had not been unthankful for the singular benefit that God then sent it in these good men, the days of Antichrist and his tyrannous brood had been shortened there long ago."²

The machinations of the priests bore further fruit. The more effectually to rouse the apprehensions of the king, and lead him to cut off the very men who would have sowed the seeds of order in his dominions, and been a bulwark around his throne, they professed to adduce a specific instance in support of their general allegations of disloyalty and treason against the Lollards. In January, 1414, they repaired to Eltham, where the king was then residing, and startled him with the intelligence of a formidable insurrection of the Wicliffites, with Lord Cobham at their head, just ready to break out. The Lollards, they declared, proposed to dethrone the king, murder the royal household, pull down Westminster Abbey, and all the cathedrals in the realm, and to wind up by confiscating all the possessions of the Church.³ To give a colouring of truth to the story, they specified the time and place fixed upon for the outbreak of the diabolical plot. The conspirators were to

¹ Bale, p. 90.

² Bale, p. 16.

³ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 634.

meet on a certain midnight “in Ficket Field beside London, on the back side of St. Giles,” and then and there begin their terrible work.⁴ The king on receiving the alarming news quitted Eltham, and repaired, with a body of armed men, to his Palace of Westminster, to be on the spot and ready to quell the expected rebellion. The night came when this terrible plot was to explode, and to leave before morning its memorials in the overthrow of the throne, and the destruction of the hierarchy. The martial spirit of the future hero of Agincourt was roused. Giving orders for the gates of London to be closed, and “unfurling a banner,” says Walden, “with a cross upon it”—after the Pope’s example when he wars against the Turk—the king marched forth to engage the rebels. He found no such assembly as he had been led to expect. There was no Lord Cobham there; there were no armed men present. In short, instead of conspirators in rank and file, ready to sustain the onset of the royal troops, the king encountered only a congregation of citizens, who had chosen this hour and place as the fittest for a field preaching. Such, in sober truth, appears to have been the character of the assembly. When the king rode in among them with his men-at-arms, he met absolutely with no resistance. Without leaders and without arms, the multitude broke up and fled. Some were cut down on the spot, the rest were pursued, and of these many were taken. The gates of the city had been closed, and why? “To prevent the citizens joining the rebels,” say the accusers of the Lollards, who would fain have us believe that this was an organised conspiracy. The men of London, say they, were ready to rush out in hundreds to support the Lollards against the king’s troops. But where is the evidence of this? We do not hear of a single citizen arming himself. Why did not the Londoners sally forth and join their friends outside before night had fallen and they were attacked by the soldiery? Why did they not meet them the moment they arrived on Ficket Field? Their coming was known to their foes, why not also to their friends? No; the gates of London were shut for the same reason, doubtless, which led, at an after-period, to the closing of the gates of Paris when a conventicle was held outside its walls—even that the worshippers, when attacked, might not find refuge in the city.

The idea that this was an insurrection, planned and organised, for the overthrow of Government, and the entire subversion of the whole ecclesiastical and political estate of England, appears to us too absurd to be entertained.⁵ Such revolutionary and sanguinary

⁴ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 63.

⁵ The allegation of conspiracy, advanced beforehand by the priests, was of course entered on the records of King’s Bench as the ground of proceedings, but it stands altogether unsupported by proof or probability. No papers containing the plan of revolution were ever discovered. No confession of such a thing was made by any of those who were seized and executed. Even Walsingham can only say, “The king *heard* they intended to destroy him and the monasteries,” &c., and “Many were taken who were *said to have conspired*” (*qui dicebantur conspirasse*).—*Hist. Ang.*, p. 386. When four years afterwards Lord Cobham was taken and condemned, his judges did not dare to confront him with the charge of conspiracy, but simply outlawry, passed upon him when he fled. As an instance of the wild rumours then propagated against the Lollards, Walden, the king’s confessor, and Polydore Virgil, the Pope’s collector of Peter’s pence in England, in their letters to Martin V., give vivid descriptions of terrible insurrections in England, wherein, as Bale remarks, “never a man was hurt;” and Walden, in his first preface to his fourth book against the Wicliffites, says that Sir John Oldcastle conspired against King Henry V. in the first year of his reign, and offered a golden noble for every head of monk, canon, friar, or priest that should be brought to him; while in his *Fasciculus Zizaniorum Wiclevi*, he tells us that Sir John was at that very time a prisoner in the Tower (Bale, p. 101). Fox, the martyrologist, charges the Papists with not only inventing the plot, but forging the records which accuse Sir John Oldcastle of complicity in it; and though Collier

schemes were not more alien to the character and objects of the Lollards than they were beyond their resources. They sought, indeed, the sequestration or redistribution of the ecclesiastical property, but they employed for this end none but the legitimate means of petitioning Parliament. Rapine, bloodshed, revolution, were abhorrent to them. If the work they now had in hand was indeed the arduous one of overturning a powerful Government, how came they to assemble without weapons? Why, instead of making a display of their numbers and power, as they would have done had their object been what their enemies alleged, did they cover themselves with the darkness of the night? While so many circumstances throw not only doubt, but ridicule upon the idea of conspiracy, where are the proofs of such a thing? When searched to the bottom, the matter rests only on the allegations of the priests. The priests said so to the king. Thomas Walsingham, monk of St. Albans, reported it in his Chronicles; and one historian after another has followed in his wake, and treated us to an account of this formidable rebellion, which they would have us believe had so nearly plunged the kingdom into revolution, and extinguished the throne in blood. No: the epithet of heresy alone was not enough to stigmatise the young Protestantism of England. To heresy must be joined treason, in order to make Lollardism sufficiently odious; and when this double-headed monster should be seen by the terrified imaginations of statesmen, stalking through the land, striking at the throne and the altar, trampling on law as well as on religion, confiscating the estate of the noble as well as the glebe of the bishop, and wrapping castle and hamlet in flames, then would the monarch put forth all his power to crush the destroyer and save the realm. The monks of Paris a hundred and twenty years after drew the same hideous picture of Protestantism, and frightened the King of France into planting the stake for the Huguenots. This was the game which had begun to be played in England. Lollardism, said the priests, means revolution. To make such a charge is an ancient device. It is long since a certain city was spoken of before a powerful monarch as “the rebellious and the bad,” within which they had “moved sedition of old time.”⁶ The calumny has been often repeated since; but no king ever yet permitted himself to be deceived by it, who had not cause to rue it in the tarnishing of his throne and the impoverishing of his realm, and it might be in the ruin of both.

has attempted to reply to Fox, it is with no great success. All dispassionate men will now grant that the meeting was a voluntary one for worship, or a trap laid for the Lollards by their enemies.

⁶ Ezra iv. 12-15.

Chapter VII.

Martyrdom of Lord Cobham.

Imprisonments and Martyrdoms—Flight of Lollards to other Countries—Death of Archbishop Arundel—His Character—Lord Cobham—His Seizure in Wales by Lord Powis—Brought to London—Summoned before Parliament—Condemned on the Former Charge—Burned at St. Giles-in-the-Fields—His Christian Heroism—Which is the Greater Hero, Henry V. or Lord Cobham?—The World's True Benefactors—The Founders of England's Liberty and Greatness—The Seeds Sown—The Full Harvest to Come.

The dispersion of this unarmed assembly, met in the darkness of the night, on the then lonely and thicket-covered field of St. Giles, to listen, it might be, to some favourite preacher, or to celebrate an act of worship, was followed by the execution of several Lollards. The most distinguished of these was Sir Roger Acton, known to be a friend of Lord Cobham. He was seized at the midnight meeting on St. Giles' Field, and was immediately thereafter condemned and executed. The manner of his death has been variously reported. Some chroniclers say he was burned,¹ others that he was drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn, and there hanged.² Two other Lollards were put to death at the same time—Master John Brown, and John Beverly, formerly a priest, but now a Wicliffite preacher. “So many persons were apprehended,” says Holinshed, “that all the prisons in and about London were full.” The leaders only, however, were put to death, “being condemned,” says the chronicler, “for heresy by the clergy, and attainted of high treason in the Guildhall of London, and adjudged for that offence to be drawn and hanged, and for heresy to be consumed with fire, gallows and all, which judgment was executed the same month on the said Sir Roger Acton, and twenty-eight others.”³ The chronicler, however, goes on to say, what strongly corroborates the view we have taken of this affair, even that the overthrow of the Government formed no part of the designs of these men, that their only crime was attachment to Protestant truth, and that their assembling, which has been magnified into a dark and diabolical plot, was simply a peaceful meeting for worship. “Certain affirm,” says Holinshed, “that it was for feigned causes, surmised by the spirituality, more upon displeasure than truth; and that they were assembled to hear their preacher (the aforesaid Beverly) in that place there, out of the way from resort of people, sith they might not come together openly about any such matter, without danger to be apprehended.”⁴ Other martyrdoms followed. Of these sufferers some were burned in Smithfield, others were put to death in the provinces; and not a few, to escape the stake, fled into exile, as Bale testifies. “Many fled out of the land into Germany, Bohemia, France, Spain, Portugal, and into the wilds of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.”⁵ Such terror had the rigour of the archbishop infused into the now numerous adherents of the Protestant doctrines.

¹ Bale, p. 10.

² Fox, bk. v., p. 288.

³ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 63.

⁴ Hollinshed, vol. iii., p. 64.

⁵ Bale, p. 92.

We pause to record another death, which followed, at the distance of less than a month, those of which we have just made mention. This death takes us, not to Smithfield, where the stake glorifies those whom it consumes, but to the archiepiscopal Palace of Lambeth. There on his bed, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, together with his life, was yielding up his primacy, which he had held for seventeen years.⁶

Thomas Arundel was of noble birth, being the son of Richard Fitz-Alan, Earl of Arundel. His talents, naturally good, had been improved by study and experience; he was fond of pomp, subtle, resolute, and as stern in his measures as he was suave in his manners. A devoted son of his mother the Church, he was an uncompromising foe of Protestantism, which bore in his days the somewhat concealing name of Lollardism, but which his instincts as a Churchman taught him to regard as the one mortal enemy of that system, wherewith were bound up all dignities, titles, and happiness. He had experienced great diversity of fortune. He shared the exile of Henry Plantagenet, and he returned with him to assist in dethroning the man who had condemned and banished him as a traitor, and in elevating in his room Henry IV., whom he anointed with oil from the sacred vial which fell down from Mary out of heaven. He continued to be the evil genius of the king. His stronger will and more powerful intellect asserted an easy supremacy over Henry, who never felt quite sure of the ground on which he stood.

When at last the king was carried to Canterbury, and laid in marble, Arundel took his place by the side of his son, Henry V., and kept it during the first year of his reign. This prince was not naturally cruel, but Arundel's arrogant spirit and subtle counsel seduced him into paths of intolerance and blood. The stakes which the king and Arundel had planted were still blazing when the latter breathed his last, and was carried to lie beside his former master in Canterbury Cathedral. The martyrdoms which succeeded the Lollard assembly in St. Giles' Field, took place in January, 1414, and the archbishop died in the February following. "Yet died not," says Bale, "his prodigious tyranny with him, but succeeded with his office in Henry Chicheley."⁷

Before entering on any recital of the fortunes of English Protestantism under the new primate, let us pursue to a close the story of Sir John Oldcastle—the good Lord Cobham, as the people called him. When he escaped from the Tower, the king offered a reward of 1,000 marks to any one who should bring him to him, dead or alive. Such, however, was the general estimation in which he was held, that no one claimed or coveted the price of blood. During four years Cobham remained undisturbed in his concealment among the mountains of the Welsh Principality. At length Lord Powis, prompted by avarice, or hatred of Lollardism, discovering his hiding-place, betrayed him to his pursuers. The brave old man was not to be taken without resistance.⁸ In the scuffle his leg was broken, and, thus maimed, he was laid upon a horse-litter, carried to London, and consigned to his former abode in the Tower.⁹ The Parliament happened to be at that time sitting in London, and its records tell us the sequel. "On Tuesday, the 14th day of December (1417), and the 29th day of said Parliament, Sir John Oldcastle, of Cowling, in the county of Kent, knight [Lord

⁶ Collier, vol. i., p. 635.

⁷ Bale, p. 95.

⁸ Walsingham, p. 399.

⁹ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 645.

Cobham], being outlawed (as is before mentioned) in the King's Bench, and excommunicated before by the Archbishop of Canterbury for heresy, was brought before the Lords, and having heard his said convictions, answered not thereto in his excuse. Upon which record and process it was judged that he should be taken, as a traitor to the king and the realm; that he should be carried to the Tower of London, and from thence down through London, unto the new gallows in St. Giles without Temple Bar, and there be hanged, and burned hanging."¹⁰

When the day came for the execution of this sentence, Lord Cobham was brought out, his hands pinioned behind his back, but his face lighted up with an air of cheerfulness.¹¹ By this time Lollardism had been made treason by Parliament, and the usual marks of ignominy which accompany the death of the *traitor* were, in Lord Cobham's case, added to the punishment of which he was judged worthy as a *heretic*. He was placed on a hurdle, and drawn through the streets of London to St. Giles-in-the-Fields. On arriving at the place of execution he was assisted to alight, and, falling on his knees, he offered a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies. He then stood up, and turning to the multitude, he exhorted them earnestly to follow the laws of God as written in the Scriptures, and especially to beware of those teachers whose immoral lives showed that neither had they the spirit of Christ nor loved his doctrine. A new gallows had been erected, and now began the horrible tragedy. Iron chains were put round his waist, he was raised aloft, suspended over the fire, and subjected to the double torture of hanging and burning. He maintained his constancy and joy amid his cruel sufferings; "consuming alive in the fire," says Bale, "and praising the name of the Lord so long as his life lasted." The priests and friars stood by the while, forbidding the people to pray for one who, as he was departing "not in the obedience of their Pope," was about to be plunged into fiercer flames than those in which they beheld him consuming. The martyr, now near his end, lifting up his voice for the last time, commended his soul into the hands of God, and "so departed hence most Christianly."¹² "Thus," adds the chronicler, "rested this valiant Christian knight, Sir John Oldcastle, under the Altar of God, which is Jesus Christ; among that godly company which, in the kingdom of patience, suffered great tribulation, with the death of their bodies, for his faithful word and testimony; abiding there with them the fulfilling of their whole number, and the full restoration of his elect."¹³

¹⁰ Fox, bk. v., p. 323. Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 645. Walsingham (p. 399) says that he ran out into a long address on the duty of man to forgive, and leave the punishment of offences in the hands of the Almighty; and, on being stopped, and asked by the court to speak to the charge of outlawry, he began a second sermon on the same text. Walsingham has been followed in this by Collier, Cotton, and Lingard. "There is nothing more in the records," says the younger M'Crie, speaking from a personal examination of them, "than a simple appeal to mercy." (*Ann. Eng. Presb.*, p. 54.)

¹¹ Bale, p. 96.

¹² Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 94. Bale, pp. 96, 97.

¹³ Bale, pp. 98, 99. Fox, bk. v., p. 323. The monks and friars who wrote our early plays, and acted our dumb shows, did not let slip the opportunity this gave them of vilifying, lampooning, and caricaturing the first English peer who had died a Protestant martyr. Having burned him, they never could forgive him. He was handed down, "from fair to fair, and from inn-yard to inn-yard," as a braggart, a debauchee, and a poltroon. From them the martyr came to figure in the same character on Shakespeare's stage. But the great dramatist came to discover how the matter really stood, and then he struck out the name "Oldcastle," and inserted instead "Falstaff." Not only so; as if he wished to make yet greater reparation for the injustice

“Chains, gallows, and fire,” as Bale remarks, are no pleasant things, and death by their means is not precious in the eyes of men; and yet some of the noblest spirits that have ever lived have endured these things—have worn the chain, mounted the gallows, stood at the stake; and in that ignominious guise, arrayed in the garb and enduring the doom of felons, have achieved victories, than which there are none grander or so fruitful in the records of the world. What better are we at this hour that Henry V. won Agincourt? To what purpose was that sea of blood—English and French—poured out on the plains of France? To set the trumpet of idle fame a-sounding?—to furnish matter for a ballad?—to blazon a page in history? That is about all when we reckon it up. But the blood of Cobham is yielding its fruits at this day. Had Sawtre, Badby, and Cobham been careful of their name, their honour, their lives; had they blushed to stand before tribunals which they knew were prepared to condemn them as traitors; had they declined to become a gazing-stock to mobs, who waited to scoff at and insult them as heretics; had they shrunk from the cruel torture and the bitter death of the stake—where would have been the Protestantism of England? and, without its Protestantism, where would have been its liberty?—still unborn. It was not the valour of Henry V., it was the grander heroism of Lord Cobham and his fellow-martyrs that awoke the soul of England, when it was sleeping a dead sleep, and fired it to pluck the bandage of a seven-fold darkness from its eyes, and to break the yoke of a seven-fold slavery from its neck. These are the stars that illuminate England’s sky; the heroes whose exploits glorify her annals; the kings whose spirits rule from their thrones, which are their stakes, the hearts and souls of her noblest sons. The multitude lays its homage at the feet of those for whom the world has done much; whose path it has made smooth with riches; whose head it has lifted up with honour; and for whom, while living, it provided a stately palace; and when dead, a marble tomb. Let us go aside from the crowd: let us seek out, not the men for whom the world has done much, but the men who have done much for the world; and let us pay our homage, not indeed to them, but to Him who made them what they were. And where shall we find these men? In kings’ houses? in schools and camps?—not oft. In gaols, or at the bar of a tyrannical tribunal, or before a bench of Pharisees, or on a scaffold, around which mobs hoot, while the executioner stands by to do his office. These are not pleasant places; and yet it is precisely there that

he had unwittingly done him, he proclaimed that Lord Cobham “died a martyr.” This indicates that Shakespeare himself had undergone some great change. “The point is curious,” says Mr. Hepworth Dixon. “It is not the change of a name, but of a state of mind. For Shakespeare is not content with striking out the name of Oldcastle and writing down that of Falstaff. He does more—much more—something beyond example in his works: *he makes a confession of his faith*. In his own person, as a poet and as a man, he proclaims from the stage, ‘Oldcastle died a martyr.’ . . . Shakespeare changed his way of looking at the old heroes of English thought.” The play—*The First Part of the True and Honourable History of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, the Good Lord Cobham*—is a protest against the wrong which had been done to Oldcastle on the stage. The prologue said—

“It is no pampered glutton we present,
Nor aged councillor to youthful sin;
But one whose virtue shone above the rest,
A valiant martyr and a virtuous peer.”

“These lines,” says Mr. Dixon, “are thought to be Shakespeare’s own. They are in his vein, and they repeat the declaration which he had already made: ‘Oldcastle died a martyr!’ The man who wrote this confession in the days of Archbishop Whitgift was a Puritan in faith.” (*Her Majesty’s Tower*, pp. 100-102; Lond., 1869.)

those great examples have been exhibited which have instructed the world, and those mighty services rendered which have ennobled and blessed the race. It was amid such humiliations and sufferings that the Lollards sowed, all through the fifteenth century, the living seed, which the gracious spring-time of the sixteenth quickened into growth; which the following centuries, not unmingled with conflict and the blood of martyrdom, helped to ripen; and the fully matured harvest of which it remains for the generations to come to carry home.

Chapter VIII.

Lollardism Under Henry V. and Henry VI.

Thomas Arundel succeeded by Henry Chicheley—The New Primate pursues the Policy of his Predecessor—Parliament at Leicester—More Stringent Ordinances against the Lollards—Appropriation of Ecclesiastical Possessions—Archbishop Chicheley Staves off the Proposal—Diverts the King's Mind to a War with France—Speech of the Archbishop—Henry V. falls into the Snare—Prepares an Expedition—Invades France—Agincourt—Second Descent on France—Henry becomes Master of Normandy—Returns to England—Third Invasion of France—Henry's Death—Dying Protestation—His Magnificent Funeral—His Character—Lollardism—More Martyrs—Claydon—New Edict against the Lollards—Henry VI.—Martyrs in his Reign—William Taylor—William White—John Huss—Recantations.

The martyrdom of Lord Cobham has carried us a little way beyond the point to which we had come in tracing the footprints—faint and intermittent—of Protestantism in England during the fifteenth century. We saw Arundel carried from the halls of Lambeth to be laid in the sepulchral vaults of Canterbury. His master, Henry IV., had preceded him to the grave by only a few months. More lately Sir Roger Acton and others had expired at the stake which Arundel's policy had planted for them; and, last of all, he went to render his own account to God.

Arundel was succeeded in the primacy by Henry Chicheley. Chicheley continued in the chair of St. Anselm the same policy which his predecessor had pursued. His predecessor's influence at court he did not wield, at least to the same extent, for neither was Chicheley so astute as Arundel, nor was Henry V. so facile as his father; but he inherited Arundel's hatred of Lollardism, and resolved to use all the powers of his high office for its suppression. The persecution, therefore, still went on. The "Constitutions of Arundel," passed in the previous reign, had spread the net so wide that scarcely was it possible for any one who had imbibed the opinions of John Wicliffe to avoid being caught in its meshes. Besides, under the reign of Henry V., new and more stringent ordinances were framed to oppress the Lollards. In a Parliament held at Leicester (1414), it was enacted "that whoever should read the Scriptures in English, which was then called 'Wicliffe's Learning,' should forfeit land, cattle, goods, and life, and be condemned as heretics to God, enemies to the crown, and traitors to the kingdom; that they should not have the benefit of any sanctuary, though this was a privilege then granted to the most notorious malefactors; and that, if they continued obstinate, or relapsed after pardon, they should first be hanged for treason against the king, and then burned for heresy against God."¹

While the Parliament stretched out one hand to persecute the Lollards, it put forth the other to despoil the clergy. Their wealth was enormous; but only the smallest fraction of it was given for the public service. The complaints on this head were growing louder every year. At this same Parliament of Leicester a storm was like to have burst out, had not the wit and policy of Henry Chicheley arrested the danger. The Commons reminded the king of the demand which had twice before been made in Parliament—first in Richard II.'s time (1394), and next in Henry IV.'s (1410)—relative to converting the lands and possessions of the clergy to the service of the State. "This bill," says Hall, "made the fat abbots to

¹ Bale, pp. 91, 92. Cobbett, vol. i., pp. 323, 324.

sweat; the proud priors to frown; the poor priors to curse; the silly nuns to weep; and indeed all her merchants to fear that Babel would down.” Though Henry had lent the clergy his power to burn Lollards, they were far from sure that he might not be equally ready to lend the Parliament his authority to rob the Church. He was active, bold, fond of display, lavish in his habits; and the wealth of the hierarchy offered a ready and tempting means of maintaining his magnificence, which Henry might not have virtue to resist. They thought of binding the king to their interests by offering him a wealthy gift; but the wiser heads disapproved the policy: it would be accounted a bribe, and might be deemed scarce decent on the part of men in sacred office. The Archbishop of Canterbury hit on a more likely expedient, and one that fell in with the genius of the king, and the aspirations of the nation.

The most effectual course, said the archbishop, in a synod at London, of averting the impending storm, is to find the king some other business to employ his courage. We must turn his thoughts to war; we must rouse his ambition by reminding him of the crown of France, descended to him from Edward III. He must be urged to demand the French crown, as the undoubted heir; and if refused, he must attempt the recovery of it by arms. To cause these counsels to prevail, the clergy agreed to offer a great sum of money to defray the expenses of the war. They further resolved to give up all the alien priories² in the kingdom, to the number of 110, the lands of which would considerably increase the revenues of the crown.³

This policy, being approved by the synod at London, was vigorously advocated by the primate in the Parliament at Leicester. The archbishop, rising in the House, addressed the king as follows:—“You administer justice to your people with a noble equity; you are illustrious in the arts of a peaceful government: but the glory of a great king consists not so much in a reign of serenity and plenty, in great treasures, in magnificent palaces, in populous and fair cities, as in the enlargement of his dominions; especially when the assertion of his right calls him out to war, and justice, not ambition, authorises all his conquests. Your Highness ought to wear the crown of France, by right descended to you from Edward III., your illustrious predecessor.” The speaker went on, at great length, to trace the title, and to establish its validity, to the satisfaction, doubtless, of the audience which he addressed; and he wound up his oration by a reference to the unprecedentedly large sum which the liberality of the clergy had placed at the service of the king, to enable him to make good his title to the crown of France.

The primate added, “Since therefore your right to the realm of France is so clear and unquestionable; since ‘tis supported by the laws both of God and man; ‘tis now your Highness’ part to assert your title, to pull the crown from the heads of the French usurpers, and to pursue the revolt of that nation with fire and sword. ‘Tis your Highness’ interest to maintain the ancient honour of the English nation, and not, by a tame

² These alien priories were most of them cells to monasteries in France. “‘Twas argued,” says Collier, “that these monks, being foreigners, and depending upon superiors in another kingdom, could not be true to the interest of the English nation: that their being planted here gave them an opportunity of maintaining correspondence with the enemy, besides their transporting money and other commodities was no ordinary damage.” (Vol. i., p. 650.)

³ Bale, p. 91. Collier, vol. i., p. 636. Fox, vol. i., p. 775. Cobbett, vol. i., p. 324.

overlooking of injurious treatment, give your posterity an occasion to reproach your memory.”⁴ No one present whispered into the speaker’s ear the conjuration which our great national poet puts into the mouth of King Henry—

“God doth know how many, now in health,
 Shall drop their blood in approbation
 Of what your reverence shall incite us to:
 Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,
 How you awake the sleeping sword of war:
 We charge you, in the name of God, take heed;
 For never two such kingdoms did contend
 Without much fall of blood; whose guiltless drops
 Are every one a woe, a sore complaint,
 ‘Gainst him whose wrongs give edge unto the swords
 That make such waste in brief mortality.”⁵

The project met with the approval of the king. To place the fair realm of France under his sceptre; to unite it with England and Scotland—for the king’s uncle, the Duke of Exeter, suggested that he who would conquer Scotland must begin with France—in one monarchy; to transfer, in due time, the seat of government to Paris, and make his throne the first in Christendom, was an enterprise grand enough to fire the spirit of a monarch less ambitious and valorous than Henry V. Instantly the king set about making preparations on a vast scale. Soldiers were levied from all parts of England; ships were hired from Holland and Flanders for the transport of men and ammunition. Money, provisions, horses, carriages, tents, boats covered with skins for crossing rivers—everything, in fine, requisite for the success of such an enterprise was provided; and the expedition was now ready to be launched.

But before striking the blow a feint was made at negotiation with France. This was conducted by Archbishop Chicheley, the very man with whom war was a foregone conclusion; and, as might have been foreseen, the attempts at conciliation came to nothing, and hostilities were now commenced. The king, crossing the Channel with an army of 30,000 men, landed on the coast of France.⁶ Towns were besieged and taken; battles were fought; but sickness setting in among the soldiers, and winter coming on, the king deemed it advisable, in order to preserve the remnant of his army, to retreat to Calais for winter quarters. On his march he encountered the French host, which four times outnumbered his own, now reduced to 10,000. He had to fight the terrible battle of Agincourt. He conquered on this bloody field, on which, stretched out in death, lay the flower of the French nobility. Leaving the vultures to give them burial, Henry resumed his march, and held on his way to England,⁷ where, tidings of his victory having preceded him, he was welcomed with acclamations. Archbishop Chicheley had succeeded in diverting the mind of the king and Parliament from their projected attempt on the possessions of the clergy; but at what a price!

⁴ Collier, vol. i., p. 638.

⁵ Shakspeare, Henry V., act i.

⁶ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 68.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-83. Collier, vol. i., p. 641. Hume, chap. 20.

Neither England nor France had yet seen the end of this sad and very sanguinary affair. The English king, now on fire, was not the man to let the enterprise drop half achieved; and the policy of the primate was destined to develop into yet other tragedies, and yet more oceans of French and English blood. Henry made a second descent upon France (1417), the mutual hate and fierce contentions of the French factions opening the gates of the kingdom for his entrance. He passed on through the land, marking in blood the line of his march. Towns besieged, provinces wasted, and their inhabitants subjected to the horrors of famine, of rapine and slaughter, were the scenes which presented themselves around his steps. He made himself master of Normandy, married the king's youngest daughter, and after a time returned once more to his own land.⁸

Soon affairs called King Henry again to France. This time he made a public entry into Paris, accompanied by his queen, Catherine,⁹ on purpose to show the Parisians their future sovereign. France was no nearer recognising his alleged right to reign over it; and Henry began, as before, to besiege its towns and slaughter its children, in order to compel a submission which it was clear would not be voluntarily given. He was thus occupied when an event took place which put an end to his enterprise for ever; he felt that the hand of death was upon him, and he retired from Cosne, which he was besieging, to Vincennes, near Paris. The Dukes of Bedford and Gloucester, and the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, when his end approached, came to his bed-side to receive his instructions. He addressed them, protesting that "neither the ambitious desire of enlarging his dominions, nor of winning vain renown and worldly fame, had moved him to engage in these wars, but only the prosecution of his just title; that he might in the end attain to a perfect peace, and come to enjoy those parts of his inheritance which to him of right belonged; and that, before the beginning of the same wars, he was fully persuaded by men both wise and of great holiness of life, that upon such intent he might and ought both begin the same wars, and follow them till he had brought them to an end justly and rightly, and that without all danger of God's displeasure or peril of soul."¹⁰ After making a few necessary arrangements respecting the government of England and France, he recited the seven penitential psalms, received the Sacrament, and so he died, August 31st, 1422.

The magnificence of his funeral is thus described by the chronicler:—"His body, embalmed and enclosed in lead, was laid in a chariot royal, richly appareled with cloth of gold. Upon his coffin was laid a representation of his person, adorned with robes, diadem, sceptre, and ball, like a king; the which chariot six horses drew, richly trapped, with several appointments: the first with the arms of St. George, the second with the arms of Normandy, the third of King Arthur, the fourth of St. Edward, the fifth of France, and the sixth with the arms of England and France. On this same chariot gave attendance James, King of Scots, the principal mourner; King Henry's uncle, Thomas, Duke of Exeter; Richard, Earl of Warwick;" and nine other lords and knights. Other lords carried banners and standards. "The hatchments were carried only by captains, to the number of twelve;

⁸ Holinshed, vol. iii., pp. 90-114. Cobbett, vol. i., col. 338.

⁹ This is that Catherine who, after the death of her husband, Henry V., married Sir Owen Tudor, a Welsh gentleman, whose descendants afterwards mounted the throne of England.

¹⁰ Holinshed, vol. iii., pp. 132, 133.

and round about the chariot rode 500 men-at-arms, all in black armour, their horses barbed black, and they with the butt-ends of their spears upwards.

“The conduct of this dolorous funeral was committed to Sir William Philip, Treasurer of the King’s Household, and to Sir William Porter, his chief carver, and others. Besides this, on every side of his chariot went 300 persons, holding long torches, and lords bearing banners, bannerols, and pennons. With this funeral appointment was he conveyed from Bois de Vincennes to Paris, and so to Rouen, to Abbéville, to Calais, to Dover; from thence through London to Westminster, where he was interred with such solemn ceremonies, mourning of lords, prayer of priests, and such lamenting of commons, as never before then the like was seen in England.”¹¹ Tapers were kept burning day and night on his tomb, till the Reformation came to put them out.

Henry V. had not a few great qualities which, in other circumstances, would have enabled him to render services of great value and lasting benefit to his nation. His strength of character was attested by his conquest over his youthful passions and habits when he came to the throne. He was gentle in disposition, frank in manners, and courageous in spirit. He was a lover of justice, and showed a desire to have it purely administered. He ate temperately, passed but few hours in bed, and in field exercises displayed the strength of an *athlete*. His good sense made him valuable in council; but it was in marshalling an army for battle that his genius especially shone. Had these talents and energies been exercised at home, what blessings might they not have conferred upon his subjects? But the fatal counsel of the archbishop and the clergy diverted them all into a channel in which they were productive of terrible mischiefs to the country of which he was the rightful lord, and to that other which he aspired to rule, but the crown of which not all his valour and toil were able to place upon his head. He went down into the grave in the flower of his age, in the very prime of his manhood, after a reign of ten years, “and all his mighty projects vanished into smoke.”¹² He left his throne to his son, an infant only a few months old, bequeathing to him along with the crown a legacy of complications at home and wars abroad, for which a “hundred Agincourts” would not have compensated. This episode of Henry and his wars with France belongs to the history of Protestantism, springing as it does directly out of the policy which was framed for arresting it.

While these armaments and battles were going forward, how fared it, we return to ask, with the new opinions and their disciples in England? Did these great storms root out, or did they shelter, the seed which Wicliffe had sowed, and which the blood of the martyrs who came after him had watered and caused to spring up? They were a protection, we are disposed to think, on the whole, to the infant Protestantism of England. Its adherents were a humble, unorganised company of men, who shunned rather than courted observation. Still we trace their presence in the nation, as we light, in the ecclesiastical records of their age, at brief intervals of time, upon a stake, and a Lollard sealing his testimony thereat.

On August 17, 1415, John Claydon, a currier in London, was brought before Henry, Archbishop of Canterbury. In former years, Claydon had been in the prison of the Fleet on a charge of heresy. He was set free on abjuring his opinions. On this his second

¹¹ Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 134.

¹² Hume, chap. 19.

apprehension, he boldly confessed the faith he had denied aforetime. One of the main charges against him was his having in his house many books written in English, and in especial one book, called the *Lanthorn of Light*. This book was produced against him by the Mayor of London, who had taken possession of it, along with others, when he apprehended him. It was bound in red leather, written on parchment, in a good English hand, and Claydon confessed that it had been made at his own cost and charges, and that he often read in it, for he found it “good and healthful for his soul.” The mayor said that the books he found in the house of Claydon “were, in his judgment, the worst and most perverse he ever did read or see.” He was sentenced as a relapsed heretic, and delivered to the secular power. Committed to the fire at Smithfield, “he was there meekly” says Fox, “made a burnt-offering to the Lord.” He is said by some to have had a companion at the stake, George Gurmyn, with whom, as it came out on his examination, he had often communed about the matters of their common faith.¹³

The year after the martyrdom of Claydon, the growth of Lollardism was borne testimony to by Archbishop Chicheley, in a new edict which he issued, in addition to those that his predecessor, Arundel, had enacted. The archbishop’s edict had been preceded by the Act of Parliament, passed in 1414, soon after the midnight meeting at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, which made it one and the same thing to be a Lollard and to be a traitor. The preamble of the Act of Parliament set forth that “there had been great congregations and insurrections, as well by them of the sect of heresy commonly called Lollardy, as by others of their confederacy, to the intent to annul, destroy, and subvert the Christian faith, and also to destroy our Sovereign Lord the King, and all other manner of Estates of the Realm of England, as well spiritual as temporal, and also all manner of policy, and finally the laws of the land.” These simple men, who read the Scriptures, believed what they taught, and assembled in secret places to worship God, are painted in the Act as the most dangerous of conspirators—as men aiming at the destruction of society itself, and so are to be limited out and exterminated. Accordingly, the Act goes on to enjoin that all judges, justices, and magistrates shall take an oath to make inquisition for Lollards, and that they shall issue warrants for their apprehension, and delivery to the ecclesiastical judges, that they may “be acquit or convict by the laws of holy Church.”¹⁴

This paved the way for the edict of the primate, which enjoined on his suffragan bishops and their commissaries a similar pursuit of heretics and heresy. In pointing out whom he would have apprehended, the archbishop undesignedly gives us the true character of the men whom Parliament had branded as conspirators, busy plotting the destruction of the Christian religion, and the entire subversion and ruin of the commonwealth of England. And who are they? Men of immoral life, who prowl about with arms in their hands, and make themselves, by their lawless and violent courses, the terror of the neighbourhood in which they live? No. The men on whose track the primate sets his inquisitors are the men who “frequent conventicles, or else differ in life and manners from the common conversation of other Catholic men, or else that hold any either heresies or errors, or else that have any suspected books in the English tongue”—“Wicliffe’s learning” for example—in short, “those heretics who, like foxes, lurk and hide

¹³ Fox, bk. v., pp. 319, 320.

¹⁴ Collier, vol. i.. p. 639.

themselves in the Lord's vineyard." The personal search of the bishop and archdeacon, or their commissaries, was not, the archbishop judged, enough; they were to supplement their own diligence by calling to their aid certain of the "honestest men, to take their oath upon the holy evangelists, that if they shall know or understand any such" they should report them "to our suffragans, or archdeacons, or to their commissaries."¹⁵

These edicts raise the curtain, and show us how numerous were the followers of Wicliffe in England in the fifteenth century, and how deep his teaching had gone into the hearts of the English people. It is only the choice spirits of the party who come into view at the stake. The greater part hid their Lollardism under the veil of an outward conformity, or of an almost entire seclusion from the world; or, if apprehended on a charge of heresy, they quailed before the terrible alternative offered them, and preferred submission to the Church to burning. We may be permitted to draw a covering over their weakness, and to pass on to those whose stronger faith doomed them indeed to the fire, but won for them a place by the side of the ancient "worthies" on the great roll of renown.¹⁶

The first martyr under Henry VI. was William Taylor. He was a priest of the province of Canterbury. Accused of heresy before Archbishop Arundel, he abjured, and appeared at Lambeth to receive absolution at the hands of the primate. "Laying aside his cloak, his cap, and stripped to his doublet, he kneeled at the feet of the archbishop, who then, standing up, and having a rod in his hand, began the 'Miserere.'"¹⁷ The prescribed forms of penance having been duly gone through, Taylor received absolution. In 1419 he was again charged with heretical teaching, and brought before Archbishop Chicheley. On a profession of penitence, he was let free on bail. Little more than a year only elapsed when he was a third time arraigned. Twice had he fallen; but he will not be guilty of a third relapse. Refusing to abjure, he was delivered to the secular power, a form of words consigning him to burning in Smithfield.

Before being led to the stake he was degraded. He was deprived of priesthood by taking from him the chalice and paten; of deaconship, by taking from him the gospel-book and tunic; of subdeaconship, by taking from him the epistle-book and tunic; of acolyteship, by taking from him the cruet and candlestick; of the office of exorcist, by taking from him the book of exorcisms or gradual; of sextonship, by taking from him the church-door key and surplice. On the 1st of March, 1422, after long imprisonment, he was brought to Smithfield, and there, "with Christian constancy, consummated his martyrdom."¹⁸

Two years afterwards (1424), William White, a priest, whose many virtues and continual labours had won him the esteem of all good men in Norfolk, was burned at Norwich. He had previously renounced his priesthood, married, and become a Lollard evangelist. In 1424 he was attached at Canterbury for the following articles: 1. That men should seek for the forgiveness of their sins only at the hand of God. 2. That men ought not to worship images and other idolatrous paintings. 3. That men ought not to worship

¹⁵ Fox, bk. v., pp. 320, 321.

¹⁶ Hebrews xi.

¹⁷ Fox, bk. vi., p. 339.

¹⁸ Holinshed, iii., p. 135. Collier, vii., p. 650. Fox, p. 339.

the holy men who are dead. 4. That the Romish Church is the fig-tree which the Lord Jesus Christ hath accursed, seeing it hath brought forth no fruit of the true belief. 5. That such as wear cowls, or be anointed or shorn, are the lance-knights or soldiers of Lucifer, and that they all, because their lamps are not burning, shall be shut out when the Lord shall come.

At Canterbury he “lost courage and strength,” and abjured. But “afterwards,” says the martyrologist, “he became much stouter and stronger in Jesus Christ, and confessed his error and offence.” He exerted himself more zealously than ever in writing and preaching. At last he was apprehended, and, being convicted of thirty articles, he was condemned by the Bishop of Norwich to be burned.¹⁹ As he stood at the stake, he essayed to speak to the people, and to exhort them to steadfastness in the doctrine which he had taught them; but a servant of the bishop struck him on the mouth, and forced him to keep silence. The utterance of the tongue might be suppressed, but the eloquence of his death it was impossible to suppress. In 1430, William Hoveden, a wool-spinner and citizen of London, having imbibed the opinions of Wicliffe, “could by no means be plucked back,” says Fox, “and was burned hard by the Tower of London.” In 1431, Thomas Bagley, Vicar of Monenden, near Malden, “a valiant disciple and adherent of Wicliffe,” was condemned for heresy, and burned in Smithfield.

Only one other martyr of the fifteenth century shall we name—John Huss; “for England,” says Fox, “has also its John Huss as well as Bohemia.” Being condemned, he was delivered to one of the sheriffs to see him burned in the afternoon. The sheriff, being a merciful man, took him to his own house, and began to exhort him to renounce his errors. The confessor thanked him, but intimated that he was well assured of that for which he was about to die: one thing, however, would he beg of him—a little food, for he was hungry and faint. His wish was gladly complied with, and the martyr sat down and dined composedly, remarking to those that stood by that “he had made a good and competent meal, seeing he should pass through a sharp shower ere he went to supper.” Having given thanks, he rose from table, and requested that he might shortly be led to the place where he should yield up his spirit unto God.

“It is to be noted,” says Fox, “that since the time of King Richard II., there is no reign of any king in which some good man or other has not suffered the pains of fire for the religion and true testimony of Christ Jesus.”²⁰

It were truly tedious to relate the number of apprehensions and trials for heresy that took place in those days. No spectacle was then more common than that of men and women, at church doors and market crosses, in a garb meant to humiliate and degrade them, their feet and limbs naked, their head bare, with tapers in their hands, making abjuration of their Protestantism. “Within the space of three or four years” says Fox, “that is from 1428 to 1431, about the number of 120 men and women were cast into prison, and sustained great vexation for the profession of the Christian faith, in the dioceses of Norfolk and Suffolk.”²¹ These were the proofs at once of their numbers and their

¹⁹ Fox, bk. vi., p. 341.

²⁰ Fox, bk. vi., p. 361.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

weakness; and for the latter the martyrologist thus finely pleads their excuse: "These soldiers of Christ," says he, "being much beaten with the cares and troubles of those days, were constrained to protest otherwise with their tongues than their hearts did think, partly through correction and partly through infirmity, being as yet but new-trained soldiers in God's field."²² These confessors attained not the first rank, yet were they soldiers in the army of the Reformed faith, and contributed their moiety of help towards that great victory which ultimately crowned their cause, and the fruits of which we are reaping at this day.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Chapter IX.

Rome's Attempt to Regain Dominancy in England.

Henry VI.—His Infancy—Distractions of the Nation—The Romish Church becomes more Intolerant—New Festival—St. Dunstan's and St. George's Days—Indulgences at the Shrine of St. Edmund, &c.—Fresh Attempts by Rome to Regain Dominancy in England—What Led to these—Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire Denounced—Archbishop Chicheley Reprimanded for Permitting these Statutes to Exist—The Pope's Letter.

Henry V., overtaken by death in the midst of his wars in a foreign land, left his throne, as we have seen, to his son, then only a few months old. England now experienced, in amplest measure, the woe predicted of the land whose king is a child. During the long minority, many evil fruits grew out of the counsel tendered to the king by the clergy. If ever country needed a firm will and a strong hand, it was England at the era that saw this infant placed on its throne. There were factions to be repressed; turbulent nobles to be curbed; conspirators, though the Lollards were not of the number, to be hunted out and punished; and, above all, there was the rising spirit of reform to be guided into the channel of peaceful progress, that so it might rectify institutions without destroying them. But the power, the enlightenment, and the patriotism necessary for this were lacking, and all these elements of conflict, unregulated and uncontrolled, broke out, and strove together in the now distracted and miserable country.

The natural tendency of corruptions, when first approached by the pruning-knife, is to strengthen themselves—to shoot up in new and ranker luxuriance—the better to resist the attacking forces. So was it with the Church of Rome at this era in England. On the one side Lollardism had begun to question the truth of its doctrines, on the other the lay power was assailing the utility of its vast possessions, and the Roman hierarchy, which had not made up its mind to yield to the call for reformation now addressed to it, had no alternative but to fortify itself against both the Lollards without and the cry for reform within. It became instantly more exacting in its homage and more stringent in its beliefs. Aforetime a very considerable measure of freedom had been allowed to friend and foe on both points. If one was disposed to be witty, or satirical, or humorous at the expense of the Church or her servants, he might be so without running any great risk of being branded as a heretic. Witness the stinging diatribes and biting satires of Petrarch, written, we may say, under the very roof of the Popes at Avignon. But now the wind set in from another quarter, and if one spoke irreverently of saint, or indulged in a quiet laugh at monk, or hinted a doubt of any miracle or mystery of "Holy Church," he drew upon himself the suspicion of heresy, and was fortunate indeed if he escaped the penalties thereto annexed. Some there were who aimed only at being wits, who found to their dismay that they were near becoming martyrs.

Protestantism, which has only one object of worship, has only one great Festival—that DAY which stands in majesty unapproachable among the other days. But the fêtes and festivals of Rome crowded the calendar, and if more should be added to the list, it would be almost necessary that more days should be added to the year. Yet now there came a great addition to these days of unholy idleness. The previous century had enriched the

Romish ceremonial with "All Souls," the "Conception of the Blessed Virgin," and "Corpus Christi." To these Boniface IX. had added the Salutation of Mary and Elizabeth, "cram-full of indulgences," as Walsingham says, for those who should duly honour the feast. Treading in the footsteps of the Pontiff, although at a becoming distance, Archbishop Arundel contributed his share to this department of the nation's piety by raising, *cum permissio*, St. Dunstan's and St. George's days to the rank of the greater festivals. Next came the monks of Bury in this pious work of enriching England with sacred days and holy places. They procured special indulgences for the shrine of St. Edmund. Nor were the monks of Ely and Norwich behind their brethren of Bury. They were enabled to offer full absolution to all who should come and confess themselves in their churches in Trinity week. Even the bloody field of Agincourt was made to do its part in augmenting the nation's spiritual wealth: from October 25th, this day began to be observed as a greater festival. And, not to multiply instances, the canons of St. Bartholomew, hard by Smithfield, where the fires of martyrdom were blazing, were diligently exercising their new privilege of pardoning all sorts of persons all manner of sins, one sin only excepted, the unpardonable one of heresy. The staple of the trade now being so industriously driven was pardon; the material cost nothing, the demand was extensive, the price was good, and the profits were correspondingly large. This multiplication of festivals was Rome's remedy for the growing irreverence of the age. It was the only means she knew of heightening the spirit of devotion among her members, and strengthening the national religion.

It was at this time that Pope Martin V., of the haughty house of Colonna, who was elevated to the Papal chair by the Council of Constance, which place he soon thereafter left for Rome in a blaze of magnificence,¹ turned his eyes on England, thinking to put it as completely under his feet as it had been under those of Innocent III., in the days of King John. The statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, passed in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., were heavy blows to the Papal power in England. The Popes had never acquiesced in this state of matters, nor relinquished the hope of being able to compel Parliament to cancel these "execrable statutes." But the calamities of the Popedom, and more especially the schism, which lasted forty years, delayed the prosecution of the fixed determination of the Papal See. Now, however, the schism was healed, a prince, immature in years and weak in mind, occupied the throne of England, the nation had a war with France upon its hands, factions and conspiracies were weakening the country at home, and success was ceasing to gild its arms abroad, and so the Pope thought the time ripe for advancing anew his claim for supremacy over England. His demand was, in short, that the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, which had shut out his briefs and bulls, his bishops and legates, and had cut off the outflow of English gold, so much prized at Rome, should be repealed.

This request Pope Martin did not send directly to the king or the regent. The Vatican in such cases commonly acts through its spiritual machinery. In the first place, the Pontiff is too exalted above other monarchs to make suit in person to them; and in the second place, he is too politic to do so. It lessens the humiliation of a rebuff that it be given to the servant and not the master. Pope Martin wrote to Archbishop Chicheley, frowning right

¹ See *ante*, bk. iii., chap. 13.

pontifically upon him for a state of things which Chicheley could no more prevent than Martin himself could.²

“Martin, Bishop, servant of the servants of God,” began the Pontiff—it is the usual Papal phraseology, especially when some arrogant demand is to follow—“to his reverend brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, greeting, and apostolic benediction.” So far well, but the sweetness exhales in the first sentence; the brotherly kindness of Papal benediction is soon exhausted, and then comes the Papal displeasure. Pope Martin goes on to accuse his “reverend brother” of forgetting what “a strict account he had to give to Almighty God of the flock committed to his care.” He upbraids him as “sleepy and negligent,” otherwise he would have opposed to the utmost of his power “those who had made a sacrilegious invasion upon the privileges settled by our Saviour upon the Roman Church”—the statutes of Provisors and Praemunire, to wit. While Archbishop Chicheley was slumbering, “his flock, alas!” the Pope tells him, “were running down a precipice before his face.” The flock in the act of hurling themselves over a precipice are seen, in the next sentence, feeding quietly beside their shepherd; for the Pope immediately continues, “You suffer them to feed upon dangerous plants, without warning; and, which is horribly surprising, you seem to put poison in their mouths with your own hands.” He had forgotten that Archbishop Chicheley’s hands were at that moment folded in sleep, and that he was now uttering a cry to awaken him. But again the scene suddenly shifts, and the Papal pencil displays a new picture to our bewildered sight; for, adds the writer, “you can look on and

² We may here quote the statute of Praemunire, as passed in the 16th of Richard II. After a preambulatory remonstrance against the encroachments of the Pope in the way of translating English prelates to other sees in England, or in foreign countries, in appointing foreigners to English sees, and in sending his bulls of excommunication against bishops refusing to carry into effect his appointments, and in withdrawing persons, causes, and revenues from the jurisdiction of the king, and after the engagement of the Three Estates to stand by the crown against these assumptions of the Pope, the enacting part of the statute follows:—

“Whereupon our said Lord the King, by the assent aforesaid, and at the request of his said Commons, hath ordained and established, that if any purchase or pursue, or cause to be purchased or pursued, in the court of Rome or elsewhere [the Papal court was at times at Avignon], any such translations, processes, or sentences of excommunication, bulls, instruments, or any other things whatsoever, which touch the King, against him, his crown, or his regalty, or his realm as is aforesaid; and they which bring within the realm, or them receive, or make thereof notification, or any other execution whatsoever within the same realm, or without, that they, their notaries, procurators, maintainers, abettors, fautors, and counsellors, shall be put out of the King’s protection, and their lands and tenements, goods and chattels, forfeit to our Lord the King. And that they be attached by their bodies, and if they may be found, and brought before the King and his Council, there to answer to the cases aforesaid, or that processes be made against them by *Praemunire facias*, in manner as it is ordained in other statutes of Provisors. And other which do sue in any other court in derogation of the regalty of our Lord the King.”

Sir Edward Coke observes that this statute is more comprehensive and strict than that of 27th Edward III. Thus provision was made, as is expressed in the preamble, against the throne and nation of England being reduced to servitude to the Papal chair. “The crown of England, which has always been so free and independent as not to have any earthly sovereign, but to be immediately subject to God in all things touching the prerogatives and royalty of the said crown, should be made subject to the Pope, and the laws and statutes of the realm defeated and set aside by him at pleasure, to the utter destruction of the sovereignty of our Lord the King, his crown, and royalty, and whole kingdom, which God forbid.” (Collier, vol. i., bk. vii, pp. 594-596.)

see the wolves scatter and pull them in pieces, and, like a *dumb dog*, not so much as *bark* upon the occasion.”

After the rhetoric comes a little business. “What abominable violence has been let loose upon your province, I leave it to yourself to consider. Pray peruse that royal law”—the Pope now comes to the point—“if there is anything that is either *law* or *royal* belonging to it. For how can that be called a *statute* which repeals the laws of God and the Church? I desire to know, reverend brother, whether you, who are a Catholic bishop, can think it reasonable such an *Act* as this should be in force in a Christian country?”

Not content with having exhibited the statute of Praemunire under the three similitudes of a “precipice,” “poison,” and “wolves,” Pope Martin goes on thus:—“Under colour of this execrable statute, the King of England reaches into the spiritual jurisdiction, and governs so fully in ecclesiastical matters, as if our Saviour had constituted him His Vicar. He makes laws for the Church, as if the keys of the kingdom of heaven were put into his hands.

“Besides this hideous encroachment, he has enacted,” continues the Pope, “several terrible penalties against the clergy.” This “rigour,” worse, the Pope calls it, than any to which “Jew” or “Turk” was subjected, was the exclusion from the kingdom of those Italians and others whom the Pope had nominated to English livings without the king’s consent, and in defiance of the statute. “Was ever,” asks the Pope, “such iniquity as this passed into a law? Can that be stiled a Catholic kingdom where such profane laws are made and practised? where St. Peter’s successor is not allowed to execute our Saviour’s commission? For this Act will not allow St. Peter’s See to proceed in the functions of government, nor make provisions suitable to the necessities of the Church.”

“Is this,” asks the Pope, in fine, “a Catholic statute, or can it be endured without dishonour to our Saviour, without a breach upon the laws of the Gospel, and the ruin of people’s souls? Why, therefore, did you not cry aloud? why did you not lift up your voice like a trumpet? Show your people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, that their blood may not be required at your hands.”³

Such were the terms in which Pope Martin deemed it becoming to speak of the Act by which the Parliament prohibited foreigners—many of whom did not know our tongue, and some of whom, too lazy to come in person, sent their cooks or butlers to do duty for them—holding livings in England. He rates the Senate of a great nation as if it was a chapter of friars or a corps of Papal pensioners, who dared not meet till he had given them leave, nor transact the least piece of business till they had first ascertained whether it was agreeable to his Pontifical pleasure. And the primate, the very man who at that moment was enacting new edicts against heresy, deeming the old not severe enough, and was burning Lollards for the “greater glory” of the Church, he indecently scolds as grossly and traitorously negligent of the interests of the Papal See. This sharp reprimand was followed by an order to the archbishop, under pain of excommunication, instantly to repair to the Privy Council, and exert his utmost influence to have the statute repealed; and he was further enjoined, as soon as Parliament should sit, to apply to it for the same purpose, and

³ Collier, vol. i., pp. 653, 654.

to tell the Lords and Commons of England from the Pope, “that all who obeyed that statute were under excommunication.” The primate was further required to charge “the clergy to preach the same doctrine. And, lastly, he was ordered to take two grave personages with him to attest his diligence, and to certify the Pope of the result of the matter.”⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 654.

Chapter X.

Resistance to Papal Encroachments.

Embroidment of the Papacy—Why Angry with Archbishop Chicheley—A Former Offence—Advises the King not to Receive a Legate-a-Latere—Powers of the Legate—Promise exacted of Legate Beaufort—Pope's Displeasure—Holds the Statutes Void—Commands the Archbishop to Disobey them—Pope's Letter to Duke of Bedford—Chicheley advises Parliament to Repeal the Act—Parliament Refuses—The Pope resumes his Encroachments—Two Currents in England in the Fifteenth Century—Both Radically Protestant—The Evangelic Principle the Master-spring of all Activities then beginning in Society.

Why this explosion of Papal wrath against the Primate of England? Why this torrent of abusive epithets and violent accusations? Even granting the Act of Praemunire to have been the atrociously wicked thing the Pope held it to be—the very acme of rebellion against God, against St. Peter, and against one whom the Pope seemed to think greater than either—himself—could Archbishop Chicheley have prevented the passing of it? It was passed before his time. And why, we may ask, was this tempest reserved for the head of Archbishop Chicheley? Why was not the See of Canterbury taxed with cowardice and prevarication before now? Why were not Courtney and Arundel reprimanded upon the same score? Why had the Pope held his peace till this time? The flock in England for half a century had been suffering the treble scourge of being driven over a precipice, of being poisoned, and of being torn by wolves, and yet the Pontiff had not broken silence or uttered a cry of warning all that time. The chief shepherd had been slumbering as well as the under-shepherd, and ought first to have made confession of his own faults before so sharply calling others to a reckoning for theirs. Why was this?

We have already hinted at the reasons. The affairs of the Papal See were in great confusion. The schism was in its vigour. There were at times three claimants of St. Peter's chair. While matters were so embroiled, it would have been the height of imprudence to have ruffled the English bishops; it might have sent them over to a rival interest. But now Martin had borne down all competitors, he had climbed to the sole occupancy of the Papal throne, and he will let both the English Parliament and the English Primate know that he is Pope.

But Chicheley had offended in another point, and though the Pope does not mention it, it is possible that it wounded his pride just as deeply as the other. The archbishop, in his first Convocation, had moved the annulling of Papal exemptions in favour of those under age. "This he did," says Walsingham, "to show his spirit."¹ This was an act of boldness which the court of Rome was not likely to pardon. But, further, the archbishop brought himself into yet deeper disfavour by counselling Henry V. to refuse admission to the Bishop of Winchester² as legate-a-latere. The Pope could not but deem this a special

¹ "Ut manifestaret bilem suam"—his bile or choler. The word chosen shows that the chronicler did not quite approve of such a display of independence. (Walsingham, p. 387.)

² This was the same Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester—a son of John of Gaunt—to whom the Pope gave a commission to raise a new crusade against the Bohemians. In this way the Pope hoped, doubtless, to draw in the English to take part in those expeditions which had already cost the German nations so much treasure and blood. In fact the legate came empowered by the Pope to levy a tax of a tenth upon the

affront. Chicheley showed the king that “this commission of legate-a-latere might prove of dangerous consequence to the realm; that it appeared from history and ancient records that no legates-a-latere had been sent into England unless upon very great occasions; that before they were admitted they were brought under articles, and limited in the exercise of their character. Their commission likewise determined within a year at farthest, whereas the Bishop of Winchester’s was granted for life.”³

Still further to convince the king of the danger of freely admitting such a functionary, he showed him from canon law the vast jurisdiction in which he was vested; that from the moment the legate entered, he, Henry, would be but half a king; that the legate-a-latere was the Pope in all but the name; that he would bring with him the Pope’s power in all but its plenitude; that the chair of the legate would eclipse the throne of the king; that the courts of the legate would override the courts of Westminster Hall; that the legate would assume the administration of all the Church property in the kingdom; that he would claim the right of adjudicating upon all causes in which, by any pretext, it could be made appear that the Church had interest; in short, that the legate-a-latere would divide the allegiance of the subjects between the English crown and the Roman tiara, reserving the lion’s share to his master.

Henry V. was not the man to fill the place of lieutenant while another was master in his kingdom. Winchester had to give way; as the representative of Rome’s majesty—the Pope’s other self—he must not tread the English soil while Henry lived. But in the next reign, after a visit to Rome, the bishop returned in the fall investiture of the legatine power (1428). He intimated his commission to the young king and the Duke of Gloucester, who was regent, but he did not find the way so smooth as he hoped. Richard Caudray, being named the king’s deputy, met him with a protest in form, that no legate from the Pope could enter the realm without the king’s consent, that the king of England had long enjoyed this privilege, and that if Winchester intended to stretch his legatine authority to the breach of this ancient custom, and enter of his own right, it was at his peril. The cardinal, finding the king firm, gave his solemn promise that he would do nothing to the prejudice of the prerogatives of the crown, and the rights and privileges of the kingdom.⁴ The spirited and patriotic conduct of Archbishop Chicheley, in advising that the legate-a-latere should not be recognised, was the more honourable to him inasmuch as the man who in this case bore the legatine commission was an English man, and of the blood royal. It was rare indeed that any but an Italian was appointed to an office that came so near equality, in its influence and dignity, with the Papal chair itself.⁵

English clergy for the war in Bohemia. This, however, was refused. (Collier, vol. i., p. 658.) See *ante*, bk. iii., chap. 17.

³ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 655.

⁴ Duck, *in Vit. Chichely*, p. 37; *apud* Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 657.

⁵ In the petition given in to Henry VI. by the Duke of Gloucester (1441) against the Cardinal of Winchester, legate-a-latere, we find the duke saying, “My lord, your father would as leefe see him set his crown beside him as see him wear a cardinal’s hat. . . . His intent was never to do so great derogation to the Church of Canterbury, as to make them that were his suffragans sit above their ordinary and metropolitan. . . . Item, it is not unknown to you, how through your lands it is noised that the said cardinal and the Archbishop of York had and have the governance of you, and of all your land, the which none of your true liege men ought to usurp or take upon them.” (Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 199.) For this

The primate's conduct in the matter was, doubtless, reported at Rome. It must have been specially offensive to a court which held it as a maxim that to love one's country is to hate one's Church. But the Vatican could not show its displeasure or venture on resenting the indignity while the warlike Henry V. occupied the throne. Now, however, the silent aisles of Westminster had received him. The offence was remembered, and the kingdom from whom it had come must be taught how heinous it is to humiliate the See of Rome, or encroach upon the regalities of St. Peter. The affair of the legate-a-latere was but one in a long series of affronts. To avenge it was not enough; the Pope must go further back and deeper down, and get at the root of that spirit of rebellion which had actuated England from the days of Edward III., and which had come to a head in the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire.⁶

We have seen the primate commanded to go to the Privy Council, and also to Parliament, and demand the repeal of these statutes. Excommunication was to be the penalty of refusal. But the Pope went further. In virtue of his own *supremacy* he made void these laws. He wrote to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury—for the Pope names *York* before *Canterbury*, as if he meant to mortify the latter—commanding them to give no obedience to the Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire—that is, to offer no resistance to English causes being carried for adjudication to the courts of Rome, or to the appointment of foreigners to English livings, and the transport beyond sea of their revenues—and declaring that should they themselves, or any others, submit to these laws, they would *ipso facto* be excommunicated, and denied absolution, except at the point of death and from the Pope himself.⁷ About the same time the Pope pronounced a censure upon the archbishop, and it serves to illustrate the jealousy with which the encroachments of the Vatican were watched by the English sovereign and his council, to find the primate complaining to the Pope that he could not be informed of the sentence in the regular way, that he knew it only by report, “for he had not so much as opened the bulls that contained the censure, because he was commanded by the king to bring these instruments, with the seals whole, and lodge them in the paper-office till the Parliament sat.”⁸

honest advice the Duke of Gloucester had in after-years (1447) to pay the penalty of his life. Henry Beaufort, the rich cardinal as he was styled, died in 1448. “He was,” says Holinshed, “more noble in blood than notable in learning; haughty in stomach and high of countenance; rich above measure, but not very liberal; disdainful to his kin, and dreadful to his lovers; preferring money to friendship; many things beginning and few performing, save in malice and mischief.” (Vol. iii., p. 112.) He was succeeded in his bishopric by William Wainfleet, a prelate of wisdom and learning, who was made Chancellor of England, and was the founder of Magdalen College, Oxford.

⁶ It may be viewed, perhaps, as collateral evidence of the reviving power of Christianity in England, that about this time it was enacted that fairs and markets should not be held in cathedrals and churches, save twice in the year (Collier); that no commodities or victuals should be exposed for sale in London on Sabbath, and that artificers and handicraftsmen should not carry home their wares to their employers on the sacred day. “But this ordinance was too good,” says the author from whom Holinshed quotes, “for so bad an age, and therefore died within a short time after the magistrate had given it life.” (Vol. iii., p. 206.)

⁷ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 655. The letter is dated 8th December, the tenth year of his Popedom. Collier supposes that this is a mistake for the eleventh year of Martin's Pontificate, which would make the year 1427.

⁸ Burnet, *Hist. Reform.*, vol. i., p. 111. Collier, vol. i., p. 656.

The Pope did not rest with enjoining the clergy to hold the obnoxious statutes null and void; he took the extraordinary step of writing four letters—two to the king, one to the Parliament, and another to the Duke of Bedford, then Regent of France—urging and commanding them, as they valued the salvation of their souls, to repeal the Act of Praemunire.

The Pope's letter to the Duke of Bedford is a specimen of the spirit that animated the Popedom under Martin V. It is fair to state, however, that the Pope at that moment had received a special provocation which explains so far, if it does not excuse, the heat of his language. His nuncio had been lately imprisoned in England for delivering his briefs and letters. It may be supposed, although the bull does not acknowledge it, that they contained matter prejudicial to the crown. The Pope, in his letter to the Duke of Bedford appears to strike only at the Act of Praemunire, but he does so with all his might. He calls it "an execrable statute," that was contrary to all reason and religion; that in pursuance of this Act the law of nations and the privilege of ambassadors were violated, and his nuncios much more coarsely used in a Christian country than those of that character among Saracens and Turks; that it was a hideous reproach to the English to fall thus short of infidels in justice and humanity; and that, without speedy reformation, it was to be feared some heavy judgment would be drawn down upon them. He concludes by desiring the Duke of Bedford to use his interest to wipe off the imputation from the Government, to retrieve the honour of the Church, and "chain up the rigour of these persecuting statutes." It is an old trick of Rome to raise the cry of "persecution," and to demand "justice," whenever England has withstood her encroachments, and tried to bind up her hands from meddling with the gold or violating the laws of the nation.

When Parliament assembled, the two archbishops, Canterbury and York, accompanied by several bishops and abbots, presented themselves in the Refectory of the Abbey of Westminster, where the Commons were sitting, and, premising that they intended nothing to the prejudice of the king's prerogative or the integrity of the Constitution, they craved Parliament to satisfy the Pope by repealing the Act of Praemunire. Chicheley had begun to quail before the storm gathering at Rome. Happily the Commons were more jealous of the nation's honour and independence than the hierarchy. Rejecting the archbishops' advice to "serve two masters," they refused to repeal the Act.⁹

The Pope, notwithstanding that he had been balked in his attempts to bend the Parliament of England to his will, continued his aggressions upon the privileges of the English Church. He sustained himself its chief bishop, and conducted himself as if the Act of Praemunire did not exist. Paying no respect to the right of the chapters to elect, and the power of the king to grant his *congé d'élire*, he issued his provisors appointing to vacant livings, not on the ground of piety or learning, but of riches and interest. The highest price in the market of Rome commanded the benefice. Pope Martin V., on the termination of the Council of Constance, promoted not less than fourteen persons to various bishoprics in the province of Canterbury alone. The Pope empowered his favourites to hold sees *in commendam*—that is, to draw their temporalities, while another discharged or professed

⁹ Burnet, *Collection of Records*, vol. i., p. 100; *apud* Collier, vol. i., p. 656. In 1438, Charles VII. established the *Pragmatic Sanction* in his Parliament at Bourges. The *Pragmatic Sanction* was very much in France what the *Act of Praemunire* was in England.

to discharge the duty. Pope Eugene (1438) gave the bishopric of Ely *in commendam* to the Archbishop of Rouen, and after some resistance this Frenchman was allowed to enjoy the revenues.¹⁰ He ventured on other stretches of his supremacy in the matter of pluralities, of non-residence, and of exemptions in favour of minors, as the holders of ecclesiastical livings. We find the Pope, further, issuing bulls empowering his nuncios to impose taxes upon the clergy, and collect money. We trace, in short, in the ecclesiastical annals of the time, a steady and persistent effort on the one side to encroach, and a tolerably steady and continuous effort on the other to repel. The Ven. Henry Edward Manning, Archdeacon of Chichester,¹¹ with strict historical truth, says: "If any man will look down along the line of early English history, he will see a standing contest between the rulers of this land and the Bishops of Rome. The Crown and Church of England with a steady opposition resisted the entrance and encroachment of the secularised power of the Pope in England."¹² From the days of King John the shadow of the Vatican had begun to go back on England; it was still shortening in the fifteenth century, and its lessening line gave promise of a time, for the advent of which the good Lord Cobham had expressed an ardent wish, when that ominous penumbra, terminating at Calais, would no longer be projected across the sea to the English shore.

While the English monarchs were fighting against the Papal supremacy with the one hand, they were persecuting Lollardism with the other. At the very time that they were framing such Acts as those of Provisors and Praemunire, to defend the canons of the Church, and the constitution of the State, from the utter demolition with which both were threatened by a foreign tyranny, they were enacting edicts for the conviction of Lollards, and planting stakes to burn them. This does not surprise us. It is ever so in the earliest stage of a great reform. The good which has begun to stir in the quiet depths below, sends the evil to the surface in quickened activity. Hence such contradictions as that before us. To a casual eye, matters appear to be getting worse; whereas the very effervescence and violence of the old powers is a sign that the new are not far off, and that a reformation has already set in. The Jews have a proverb to this effect—"When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses will come," which saying, however, if it were more exactly to express the truth of the fact and the law of the Divine working, should run—The tale of bricks has been doubled, therefore Moses is come.

We trace in the England of the fifteenth century two powerful currents, and both are, in a sense, Protestant.

Lollardism, basing itself upon the Word of God and the rights of conscience, was essentially and wholly Protestant. The fight against the Roman supremacy, basing itself upon the canons of the Church and the laws of the kingdom, was also so far Protestant. It was a protest against a power that was lifting its seat above all law, and crushing every right. And what, we ask, engendered this spirit of opposition? Little did the party who were fighting against the supremacy dream whence their movement drew its existence. They would have been ashamed to own it, even if made aware of it. And yet it is true that the very Lollardism which they were seeking to trample out had originated the spirit that

¹⁰ Collier, vol. i., bk. vii., p. 666.

¹¹ Created a Cardinal of the Church of Rome, March, 1875.

¹² *The Unity of the Church*, p. 361; Lond., 1842.

was now shown in defence of national independence and against Papal encroachments. The Lollard, or Protestant, or Christian principle—for it matters not by which one of these three names we designate it—had all along through the Dark Ages been present in the bosom of European Christendom, preserving to the conscience some measure of action and power, to the intellect some degree of energy and expansion, and to the soul the desire and the hope of liberty. Ordinarily this principle attested its presence by the piety with which it nourished the heart, and the charity and purity with which it enriched the lives of individual men and women, scattered up and down in monasteries, or in cathedral chapters, or in rural vicarages, or in hidden places where history passed them by. At other times it forced itself to the surface, and revealed its power on a large scale, as in the Albigensian revival. But the powers of evil were then too strong, to permit of its keeping the footing it had momentarily obtained. Beaten down, it again became torpid. But in the great spring-time which came along with Wicliffe it was effectually roused never again to slumber. Taking now its place in the front, it found itself supported by a host of agencies, of which itself was the real although the indirect creator. For it was the Lollard or Christian spirit, never, amid all the barbarism and strifes and superstitions that overlaid Medieval society, eliminated or purged out, that hailed letters in that early morning, that tasted their sweetness, that prompted to the cultivation of them, that panted for a wider sphere, for a greater liberty, for a purer state of society, and never rested till it had achieved it. This despised principle—for in the fifteenth century it is seen at the bar of tribunals, in prisons, at stakes, in the guise of a felon—was in truth the originator of these activities; it communicated to them the first impulse. Without it they never would have been: night, not morning, would have succeeded the Dark Ages. It was the day-spring to Christendom. And this is certified to us when, tracing the course of the two contemporary currents which we find flowing in England in the century under review, we see them, at a point a little way only in advance of that at which we are now arrived, uniting their streams, and forming one combined movement, known as the English Reformation.

But before that point could be reached England had to pass through a terrible conflict.

Chapter XI.

Influence of the Wars of the Fifteenth Century on the Progress of Protestantism.

Convulsions of the Fifteenth Century—Fall of Constantinople—Wars in Bohemia—in Italy—in Spain—in Switzerland—Wars of the Papal Schism—Was it Peace or War which the Popes gave to Christendom—Wars originated by the Popes: the Crusades; the War of Investitures; the Albigensian and Waldensian Crusades; the Wars in Naples, Poland, &c.; the Feuds in Italy; the Hussite Campaigns, &c.—Wars of the Roses—Traced to the Council of Archbishop Chicheley—Providential End of the Wars of the Fifteenth Century—The Nobility Weakened—The Throne made Powerful—Why?—Hussitism and Lollardism.

The Day that was hastening towards the world sent terrible tempests before it as the heralds of its approach. Than the middle of the fifteenth century there is, perhaps, no point in modern history that presents a scene of more universal turmoil and calamity, if we except the period that witnessed the fall of the Western Empire. Nowhere is there stability or rest. All around, as far as the eye can reach, appears a sea whose waters, swollen into huge billows by the force of the mighty winds, are assailing the very foundations of the earth. The Christian of that day, when he cast his eyes around on a world rocked and tossed by these great tempests, must have despaired, had he not remembered that there is One who “sits King upon the floods.”

The armies of the Turk were gathering round Constantinople, and the Queen of the East was about to bow her head and sink in a tempest of pillage, of rapine, and of slaughter. The land of Bohemia, watered, as with a plenteous rain, once, again, and a third time, with German blood, was gloomy and silent. Germany had suffered far more than she had inflicted. From the Rhine to the Elbe, from the Black Forest to the Baltic, her nations were lamenting their youth slaughtered in the ill-fated campaigns into which Rome had drawn them against the Hussites. Italy, split up into principalities, was ceaselessly torn by the ambitions and feuds of its petty rulers, and if for a moment the din of these intestine strifes was hushed, it was in presence of some foreign invader whom the beauty of that land had drawn with his armies across the Alps. The magnificent cities of Spain, adorned by the art and enriched by the industry of the Moors, were being emptied of their inhabitants by the crusades of bigotry; the Moslem flag was being torn down on the walls of Grenada, and the race which had converted the Vega around the Moorish capital into a garden, watering it with the icy torrents of the Sierra Nevada, and clothing it with corn-fields and orange-groves, were fleeing across the Straits to form new seats on the northern shores of Africa. The Swiss, who had looked for centuries with almost uninterrupted indifference on the wars and convulsions that distracted the nations that dwelt at the feet of their mountains, finding in their great hills an impregnable fortress against invasion, now saw themselves menaced in their valleys with a foreign sword, and had to fight for their immemorial independence. They were assailed by the two powerful kingdoms on each side of them; for Austria and France, in their desire to enlarge their territories, had become forgetful that in levelling the Alps of the Swiss, they but effaced the barrier between themselves, which prevented the two nations mingling their blood on fierce and frequent battle-fields.

As if the antipathies of race, and the ambition of princes, were not enough to afflict an unhappy age, another element of contention was imported into the strife by the Papal schism. The rival Popes and their supporters brought their cause into the battle-field, and torrents of Christian blood were shed to determine the question which was the true Vicar. The arguments from piety, from wisdom, from learning, were but dust in the balance against the unanswerable argument of the sword, and the gospel of peace was converted into the tocsin of war. The evils flowing from the schism, and which for so many years afflicted Christendom, cannot but raise the question in every dispassionate mind how far the Popes have fulfilled the office assigned them as the “Fathers of Christendom” and the Peacemakers of the World? Leaving out of view their adulators on the one side, and their incriminators on the other, let us put to history the question, How many are the years of peace, and how many are the years of war, which have come out of the Papal chair, and what proportion does the one bear to the other?

To put, then, a few plain questions touching matters of fact, let us ask, from whom came the crusades which for two centuries continued to waste the treasure and the blood of both Europe and Asia? History answers, from the Popes. Monks preached the crusades, monks enlisted soldiers to fight them, and when the host was marshalled and all was ready, monks placed themselves at their head, and led them onward, their track marked by devastation, to the shores of Syria, where their furious fanaticism exploded in scenes of yet greater devastation and horror. In these expeditions the Popes were always the chiefs; the crossed emperors and kings were enlisted under their banner, and put under the command of their legates; at the Popes’ mandate it was that they went forth to slay and to be slain. In the absence of these princes the Popes took into their hands the government of their kingdoms; the persons and goods of all the crusaders were declared under their protection; in their behalf they caused every process, civil and criminal, to be suspended; they made a lavish distribution of indulgences and dispensations, to keep alive fanatical fervour and sanguinary zeal; they sometimes enjoined as a command, and sometimes as a penance, service in the crusades; their nuncios and legates received the alms and legacies bequeathed for maintaining these wars; and when, after two dismal centuries, they came to an end, it was found that none save the Popes were the gainers thereby. While the authority of the Papal See was vastly strengthened, the secular princes were in the same proportion weakened and impoverished; the sway of Rome was confirmed, for the nations, broken and bowed down, suffered a yoke to be rivetted upon their necks that could not be broken for ages.¹

We ask further, from whom came the contest between the mitre and the Empire—the war of investitures—which divided and ravaged Christendom for a full century and a half? History answers, from the Pope—Gregory VII. From whom came the Albigensian crusades, which swept in successive tempests of fire and blood across the south of France?

¹ In proof of this summary view of the origin and effects of the crusades, the author begs to refer his readers to Baron., *Ann.*, 1096; Gibbon, chap. 58, 59; Moreri, *Le Grand Dict. Hist.*, tom. iii.; Innet, *Origines Anglicanae*, vol. ii.; Sismondi, *Hist.*, &c. &c. The author speaks, of course, of the direct and immediate effects which flowed from the crusades; there were remote and indirect results of a beneficent kind evolved from them, but this was the doing of an overruling Providence, and was neither foreseen nor intended by their authors.

History answers, from the Pope—Innocent III. Whence came those armies of assassins, which times without number penetrated into the Waldensian valleys, carrying the torch into dwelling and sanctuary, and inflicting on the unoffending inhabitants barbarities and cruelties of so horrible a nature that they never can be known, because they never dare be told? History answers, from the Pope. Who made donations of kingdoms—Naples, Sicily, Aragon, Poland, and others—knowing that those to whom they had gifted them could possess them only by fighting for them? History answers, the Popes. Who deposed sovereigns, and sanctioned insurrection and war between them and their subjects? The Popes. Who so often tempted the Swiss from their mountains to shed their blood on the plains of Italy? The Bishop of Sion, acting as the legate of the Pope. Who was it that, the better to maintain the predominance of their own sway, kept Italy divided, at the cost of almost ceaseless intestine feuds and wars, and the leaving the gates of the country unguarded, or purposely open, for the entrance of foreign hordes? History answers, the Popes. Who was it that, having entered into war with France, threw aside the mitre for the helmet, and, passing over a bridge on the Tiber, is said to have thrown the keys of St. Peter into the river, seeing they had served him so ill, and called for the sword of St. Paul? Pope Julius II. Who organised the successive campaigns waged against the Hussites, and on two several occasions sent his legate-a-latere to lead the crusaders? History answers, the Pope.

We stop at the era of the Reformation. We put no questions to history touching the wars in Germany, the wars in France, the wars in the Low Countries, the wars in Hungary, and in other lands; in which, too, the blood of the scaffold was largely mingled with the blood of the battle-field. We restrict our examples to those ages when Rome was not only *a* power, but *the* power in Christendom. Kings were then her vassals, and she had only to speak to be obeyed. Why then did she not summon them to her bar, and command them to sheathe their swords? Why did she not bind them in the chain of her excommunications, and compel them to be at peace till she had arbitrated in their quarrels, and so prevent this great effusion of human blood? Here are the Pope's exploits on the field of war. Why has history forgotten to chronicle his labours and sacrifices in the blessed work of peace? True, we do find a few outstanding instances of the Popes enjoining peace among Christian princes. We find the Council of Lyons (1245) ordaining a general cessation of arms among the Western sovereigns, with power to prelates to proceed by censures against those who refused to acquiesce; but for what end? even that the crusade which had been projected might be carried out with greater unanimity and vigour.² We find Gregory X. sending his nuncio to compel observance of this decree of the Council on Philip III. of France and the King of Castile, knowing that these two sovereigns were about to decide a certain difference by arms, because he needed their swords to fight his own battles. We find, further, Boniface VIII. enjoining all sovereigns to terminate all wars and differences at home, that they might be in circumstances to prosecute more vigorously the holy wars of the Church. These, and a few similar instances, are all that we have on the one side to set over against the long roll of melancholy facts on the other. History's verdict is, that with the ascent of the Popes to supremacy came not peace but war to the nations of

² Hardouin, *Acta Concil.*, tom. vii., p. 395; Parisiis, 1714.

Christendom. The noon of the Papal power was illustrated, not by its calm splendours and its tranquil joys, but by tempest and battle and destruction.

We return from this digression to the picture of Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century. To the distractions that were rife in every quarter, in the east, in the south, and in the centre of Christendom, we have to add those that raged in the north. The King of England had proclaimed war against France. Mighty armaments were setting sail from

—“that pale, that white-faced shore
Whose foot spurns back the ocean’s roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders”³—

the man who led them being forgetful that nature had ordained the sea around England to be at once the limit of her seat and the rampart of her power, and that by extending he was imperilling his dominions. This ill-starred expedition, out of which came so many calamities to both countries, was planned, we have seen, by the Romish clergy, for the purpose of finding work for the active-minded Henry V., and especially of diverting his eye from their own possessions to a more tempting prize, the crown of France. The mischiefs and woes to which this advice opened the door did not exhaust themselves till the century was drawing to a close. The armies of England smote not merely the northern coasts of France, they penetrated to the centre of the kingdom, marking the line of their march by cities sacked and provinces devastated and partially depopulated. This calamity fell heavily on the upper ranks of French society. On the fatal field of Agincourt perished the flower of their nobility; moanings and lamentations rebounded in their châteaux and royal residences; for there were few indeed of the great families that had not cause to mourn the counsel of Archbishop Chicheley to Henry V., which had directed this destructive tempest against their country.

At last the cloud of calamity returned northward (1450), and discharged its last and heaviest contents on England itself. The long and melancholy train of events which now began to run their course at home took its rise in the war with France. The premature death of Henry V.;⁴ the factions and intrigues that strove around the throne of his infant son; the conspiracies that spread disquiet and distraction over the kingdom; and, finally, the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, which, like a fearful conflagration, consumed all the great families of the kingdom, the royal house included; all these tragedies and crimes connect themselves with, and can be traced up to, the fateful counsel of the clergy, so

³ Shakspeare, *King John*, act ii., scene 1.

⁴ “God suddenly touched him, unbodying his soul in the flower of his youth, and the glory of his conquest.”—*Speech of Duke of York to Parliament*, 1460. (Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 264.) While the duke was asserting his title to the crown in the Upper House, there happened, says the chronicler, “a strange chance in the very same instant among the Commons in the Nether House. A crown, which did hang in the middle of the same, to garnish a branch to set lights upon, without touch of man, or blast of wind, suddenly fell down. About the same time also fell down the crown which stood on the top of Dover Castle. Soon after the duke was slain on the battlefield, and with him 2,800, mostly young gentlemen, heirs of great families. His head, with a crown of paper, stuck on a pole, was presented to the queen. Some write,” says the chronicler, “that he was taken alive, made to stand on a molehill, with a garland of bulrushes instead of a crown, and his captors, kneeling before him in derision, said, ‘Hail, king without rule!—hail, king without heritage!—hail, duke and prince without people and possessions!’” and then struck off his head.

eagerly adopted and acted upon by the king. Nor was the blood spilt on the battle-field the only evil that darkened that unhappy period. In the wake of fierce civil war came a relaxation of law, and a suspension of industry. The consequence of the former was that the country was defiled by crime and outrage; and of the latter, that frequent famines and pestilences decimated the population.⁵

The contest which opened in 1452 between the White Rose of York and the Red Rose of Lancaster, it is the province of the civil historian to narrate. We notice it here only so far as it bears on the history of Protestantism. The war was not finished in less than thirty years; it was signalised by twelve pitched battles; it is computed to have cost the lives of eighty princes of the blood, and almost entirely annihilated the ancient nobility of England.⁶ The kingdom had seemed as a stricken land ever since the *De Hoeretico Comburendo* law was placed upon its statute-book, but the Wars of the Roses filled up its cup of misery.⁷

The rival hosts were inflamed with the rancorous hate peculiar to civil conflicts, and seldom have more sanguinary battles been fought than those which now deluged the soil of England with the blood of its own children. Sometimes the House of York was victorious, and then the Lancastrians were mercilessly slaughtered; at other times it was the House of Lancaster that triumphed, and then the adherents of York had to expiate in the hour of defeat the barbarities they had inflicted in the day of victory. The land mourned its many woes. The passage of armies to and fro over it was marked by castles, churches, and dwellings burned, and fields wasted.⁸ In these calamities passed the greater part of the second half of the fifteenth century. The reign of the Plantagenets, who had so long governed England, came to an end on the bloody field of Bosworth (1485), and the House of Tudor, in the person of Henry VII., mounted the throne.

If these troubles were so far a shield to the Wicliffites, by giving the King of England and his nobles other things to think of than hunting for Lollards, they rendered any revival

⁵ "This year, 1477," says Holinshed (vol. iii., p. 346), "happened so fierce and quick a pestilence that the previous fifteen years consumed not the third part of the people that only four months miserably and pitifully dispatched and brought to their graves."

⁶ Hume, *Hist. Eng.*, chap. 29.

⁷ Rumours of prodigies and portents helped to augment the prevalent foreboding and alarm of the people. Of these the following may be taken as a sample, the more that there is a touch of the dramatic about it:—"In November, 1457, in the isle of Portland, not far from the town of Weymouth, was seen a cock coming out of the sea, having a great crest upon his head, and a great red beard, and legs half a yard long. He stood on the water and crowed three times, and every time turned him about, and beckoned with his head, toward the north, the south, and the west, and was in colour like a pheasant, and when he had crowed three times he vanished away." (Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 244.) We read of "a rain of blood" in Bedfordshire, "which spotted clothes hung out to dry."

⁸ The Romish clergy were careful, in the midst of this general destruction of life and substance, that their possessions should not come by loss. The following award was made at Westminster, 23rd March, 1458—"That at the costs, charges, and expenses of the Duke of York, the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury, forty-five pounds of yearly rent should be assured by way of mortisement for ever, unto the monastery of St. Albans, for suffrages and obits to be kept, and alms to be employed for the souls of Edmund, late Duke of Somerset; Henry, late Earl of Northumberland; and Thomas, late Lord Clifford, lately slain in the battle of St. Albans, and buried in the Abbey church, and also for the souls of all others slain in the same battle." (Holinshed, vol. iii., p. 247.)

of their cause impossible. The work of doing to death those who professed and preached the Reformed faith, though hindered by the causes before alluded to, did not actually cease. From time to time during this period, some were called, to use the words of Fox, “to consummate their testimony in the fire.” “The intimidated Lollards,” says D’Aubigné, “were compelled to hide themselves in the humblest ranks of the people, and to hold their meetings in secret. The work of redemption was proceeding noiselessly among the elect of God. Of these Lollards there were many who had been redeemed by Jesus Christ, but in general they knew not, to the same extent as the Protestant Christians of the sixteenth century, the quickening and justifying power of faith. They were plain, meek, and often timid folks, attracted by the Word of God, affected by the condemnation it pronounces against the errors of Rome, and desirous of living according to its commandments. God had assigned them a part—and an important part too—in the great transformation of Christianity. Their humble piety, their passive resistance, the shameful treatment which they bore with resignation, the penitent’s robes with which they were covered, the tapers they were compelled to hold at the church door—all these things betrayed the pride of the priests, and filled the most generous mind with doubts and vague desires. By a baptism of suffering, God was then preparing the way to a glorious Reformation.”⁹

Looking only at the causes acting on the surface, surveying the condition and working of established institutions, especially the “Church,” which was every day mounting higher in power, and at the same time plunging deeper into error; which had laid its hand upon the throne and made its occupant simply its lieutenant—upon the statute-book, and had made it little better than the register of its intolerant edicts—upon the magistracy, and left it hardly any higher function than the humble one of executing its sentences—looking at all this, one would have expected nothing else than that the darkness would grow yet deeper, and that the storms now afflicting the world would rage with even greater fury. And yet the dawn had already come. There was light on the horizon. Nay, these furious blasts were bearing on their wings blessings to the nations. Constantinople was falling, that the treasures of ancient literature might be scattered over the Western world, and the human mind quickened. The nobility of France and England was being weakened on the battlefield, that the throne might rise into power, and be able to govern.

It was needful that an institution, the weakness of which had invited the lawlessness of the nobles, and the arrogance of the hierarchy, should be lifted up and made strong. This was one of the first steps towards the emancipation of society from the spiritual bondage into which it had fallen. Ever since the days of Gregory VII., monarchy had been in subordination to priesthood. The policy of the Popes, pursued through four centuries, was to centralise their power, and place it at the summit. One of the means adopted for this end was to make the nobles a poise to the kings, and by weakening both parties, to make the Pope the most powerful of the three. This policy had been successful. The Popes had grown to be more than a match for the petty sovereigns of the fifteenth century. Nothing but a system of strong monarchies could now cope with that chair of combined spiritual and temporal power which had established itself at Rome, and grown to be so strong that it made kings their tools, and through them scourged their subjects.

⁹ D’Aubigné. vol. v., p. 148.

Accordingly we see at last emerging from the tempests that raged all through the century under review, three powerful thrones—that of England, that of France, and that of Spain. The undivided power of Christendom was no longer in one hand, and that hand the holder of the tiara. The three powerful sovereigns who had risen up could keep their nobles in check, could spurn the dictation of the hierarchy, and so could meet on equal terms the sovereign of the Vatican. With that sovereign their interests were sometimes in accordance, and sometimes in opposition, and this poise between Popedom and monarchy constituted a shield for that great expansion of the Protestant movement which was about to take place.

Before leaving England in the fifteenth century, it is necessary to remember that during this century the great movement which had been originated by the instrumentality of Wicliffe in the previous one, was parted into two; the one branch having its seat in the west, and the other in the east of Christendom.

Further, that movement was known under two names—Hussitism in Bohemia, and Lollardism in England. When the famous Protest was given in by the German princes in 1529 it dropped both appellatives, and received henceforward that one designation by which it has been known these three centuries. The day will come when it will drop in turn the name it now bears—that of Protestantism—and will resume that more ancient, more catholic, and more venerable one, given it eighteen centuries ago in Antioch, where the disciples were first called CHRISTIANS.

Although there was one spirit in both branches of the movement, yet was there diversity of operations. The power of Protestantism was shown in Bohemia in converting a nation into heroes, in England it was shown in making martyrs. In the one country its history leads us to camps and battle-fields, in the other it conducts us to prisons and stakes. The latter reveals the nobler champions, and the more glorious conflict. Yet do we not blame the Hussites. Unlike the Lollards, they were a nation. Their country was invaded, their consciences were threatened; and they violated no principle of Christianity that we are acquainted with, when they girded on the sword in defence of their hearths and their altars. And surely we do not err when we say that Providence set the seal of its approval upon their patriotic resistance, in that marvellous success that crowned their arms, and which continued to flow in a tide that knew not a moment's ebb till that fatal day when they entered into compact with Rome. In the *Great Roll* we find the names of those who "waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" as well as that of those who "were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tortured, were slain with the sword, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Still, it must be confessed that the stake of the Lollard showed itself in the end a more powerful weapon for defending Protestantism than the sword of the Hussite. The arms of the Bohemians merely extinguished enemies, the stakes of the Lollard created disciples. In their deaths they sowed the seed of the Gospel; that seed remained in the soil, and while "the battle of the warrior, with its confused noise and garments rolled in blood," was swaying to and fro over the face of England, it continued to germinate in silence, awaiting the sixteenth century, with its mollient air, for the time of springing.