Studies from Court and Cloister: being essays, historical and literary dealing mainly with subjects relating to the XVIth and XVIIth centuries eBook

Studies from Court and Cloister: being essays, historical and literary dealing mainly with subjects relating to the XVIth and XVIIth centuries

Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Page 1

I. MARGARET TUDOR

Notwithstanding the spy-system which was brought to so great a perfection under the Tudors, the study of human nature was in their days yet in its infancy. The world had long ceased to be ingenuous, but nations had not yet learned civilised methods of guarding themselves against their enemies. At a time when distrust was general, it was easier, like Machiavelli, to erect deceit and fraud into a science, and to teach the vile utility of lying, than to scrutinise character and weigh motives. It was then generally understood that opponents might legitimately be hoodwinked to the limits of their gullibility; but it was reserved for Lord Chesterfield, two centuries later, to show how a man's passions must be studied with microscopic intensity in order to discover his prevailing passion, and how, that passion once discovered, he should never be trusted where it was concerned. The study of men's characters and motives as we understand it, formed no part of the policy of sixteenth-century statecraft, or Wolsey would not have been disgraced, or Thomas Cromwell's head have fallen on the block. Wolsey and Cromwell were the subtlest statesmen of their age; indeed, in them statecraft may be said to have had its dawn; yet Henry VIII., by the sheer force of his tyranny and despotic will, baffled them both. While Cromwell, the greatest genius in Europe, thought he held all the threads of intrigue in his own hands, his royal master by the dogged pursuit of one end overthrew the minister's entire scheme. Saturated though he was with Machiavellian theories, a man of one book, and that book The Prince, Cromwell lost all by his inability to read the bent of Henry's mind and purpose.

Henry VIII. and his elder sister, Margaret, were strikingly alike in character. Both proved themselves to be cruel, vindictive, unscrupulous, sensual, and vain. Both were extraordinarily clever, but Henry being far better educated than his sister, contrived to cut a much more imposing, if not a more dignified, figure. In the matter of intrigue, there was nothing to choose between them. That Henry succeeded where Margaret failed, was owing to the fact that circumstances were in his favour and not in hers. Given two such characters, the only parts that were possible to them were dominating ones. Henry was master of the situation all through the piece; Margaret was not, but she could play no other part. Had she been differently constituted, had she been barely honest, true, constant, and pure, there is no limit to the love and loyalty she would certainly have inspired.

But, for want of insight into Margaret Tudor's disposition, the Scottish people were repeatedly betrayed by one whose interests they fondly hoped had become, by marriage with their king, identical with their own. She had come among them at an age when new impressions are quickly taken and experiences of every kind have necessarily been very limited, but to the end of her days she remained an alien in their midst.

Page 2

From the moment that she set foot in Scotland, as a bride of thirteen, she began to sow discord; but although it was soon apparent that she would seize every occasion to turn public events to her own profit, James *iv*. had so mistaken a belief in her one day becoming a good Scotswoman, that when he went to his death on Flodden Field, he left the whole welfare of his country in her hands. Not only did he confide the treasure of the realm to her custody, but by his will he appointed her to the Regency, with the sole guardianship of his infant son.

Such a thing was unprecedented in Scotland, and it needed all the fidelity of the Scottish lords to their chivalrous sovereign, as well as their enthusiasm for his young and beautiful widow, to induce them to tolerate an arrangement so distasteful to them all. Had Margaret cared to fit herself for the duties that lay before her, her lot might have been a brilliant one. Instead of the wretched wars which made a perpetual wilderness of the Borders, keeping the nation in a constant state of ferment, an advantageous treaty would have secured prosperity to both England and Scotland, while the various disturbing factions, which rendered Scotland so difficult to govern by main force, would gradually have subsided under the gentle influence of a queen who united all parties through the loyalty she inspired. Fierce and rebellious as were so many of the elements which went to make up the Scottish people at that time, Margaret had a far easier task than her grand-daughter, Mary Stuart, for at least fanatical religious differences did not enter into the difficulties she had to encounter. But such a queen of Scotland as would have claimed the respect and won the lasting love of her subjects was by no means the Margaret Tudor of history, as she stands revealed in her correspondence.

While James *iv*. lived she had comparatively few opportunities of betraying State secrets, but from the disaster of Flodden to her death, her history is one long series of intrigues, the outcome of her ruling passions—vanity and greed. Her first short-sighted act of treachery after the death of James was to appropriate to her own use the treasure which he had entrusted to her for his successors, the queen thereby incurring life-long retribution in her ineffectual attempts to wring her jointure from an exchequer which she had herself wantonly impoverished. Hence the tiresome and ridiculous wrangling in connection with her “conjunct feoffment,” neither Margaret nor Henry being conscious, in the complete absence of all sense of humour on their part, that the situation was occasionally grotesque. Stolidly unmindful of the effect they produced on the minds of others in the pursuit of their own selfish ends, they pursued the tenor of their way with bucolic doggedness. The doggedness ended in the defeat of all Henry’s enemies; in Margaret’s case it ended in her own.

Page 3

The eleven months which elapsed between the 9th September 1513 to the 4th August 1514, were the most eventful of her whole life. The catastrophe of Flodden left her, perhaps not without cause, the least mournful woman in Scotland, for James *iv*., with all the heroism that attaches to his name, had little claim to be called a faithful husband. Unhindered, therefore, by any excess of grief, she was the better able to attend to the affairs of State, and to hasten the coronation of her little son, a baby of one year and five months. In December she convened the Parliament of Scotland to meet at Stirling Castle, and formally took up the dignity of regent with the consent of the assembled nobility of the realm. At this sitting the greatest unanimity prevailed. In the Acts of the Privy Council of Scotland, under date 12th January 1514, occurs the following entry: "To advise of the setting up of the Queen's household, and what persons and officers are necessary thereto, and to advise of the expenses for the supportation of the same, and by what ways it shall be gotten." All was peace for a short time, and the most friendly relations existed between the queen and her Council, till the first high-handed attempt of Henry VIII. to interfere through his sister in the government of Scotland, resulted in her temporary banishment, and the removal of the infant king from his mother's care.*

* P. Martyr, Ep. 535. For a detailed account of the state of Scotland for the first nine years after the disastrous defeat at Flodden, see vol. xiv. Of the Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, edited by George Burnett, LL.D., Lyon King-of-Arms, and A. Y. G. Mackay, M.A. (Oxon.), LL.D. (Edin.), *etc*., His Majesty's General Register House, Edinburgh.

On the 30th April Margaret gave birth to a posthumous son, who received the title of Duke of Rothesay; and scarcely had she reappeared in public after the birth of this child, when an envoy from the Emperor Maximilian brought overtures of marriage. About the same time, she received a like proposal from Louis XII. of France, who afterwards married her younger sister Mary. Dismissing both aspirants to her hand, before the first year of her widowhood had run its course, she married Archibald, Earl of Angus, Margaret being in her twenty-fifth, he in his nineteenth year. The union was equally unfortunate for the queen herself and for her wretched husband, who, when the first charm of novelty had passed, was disdainfully flung aside, and never restored to favour.

There was an ancient custom of the realm, which placed the executive power and the person of the king, should he be a minor at the death of the preceding sovereign, in the hands of the next male heir, and the appointment of James's widow to the regency and the guardianship of his son was made in distinct disregard of all recognised precedent. The consent of the Scottish lords to the innovation had been given entirely from a sense of loyalty to their beloved and unfortunate monarch James *iv*. But a proviso had been made in his will, that in the event of the queen's remarriage, the regency, as well as the guardianship of the king, should pass to John, Duke of Albany, the next heir to the throne.

Page 4

But Margaret, who had not scrupled to make away with the royal treasure, was scarcely likely to be very conscientious in regard to the duty of laying down a sceptre, the pleasantness of which she had only just begun to taste. She was already at variance with her Council, who, in despair of any order being established, had invited Albany, then in France, to come over and take up the reins of government. As early as April 1514, a Bill for his recall had been read in Parliament, and it was formally enacted that all the fortresses in Scotland should be given up, a blow aimed primarily at Stirling, the queen's chief stronghold.* Here she and Angus had shut themselves up, on hearing that Beaton, Archbishop of Glasgow, was marching on Edinburgh. They were captured, but escaped and returned to Stirling, where they were besieged by John Hepburn, Prior of St. Andrews.

* Brewer—Preface to Cal. 2, part i. (note).

Margaret, assuming a tone of injured innocence, wrote to Henry VIII., telling him that she and her party are in great trouble till they know what help he will give them; that her enemies continue to usurp the king's authority in Parliament, holding her and her friends to be rebels; and she entreats him to hasten his army against Scotland by sea and by land.* This was clearly as much an act of treason as if she had deliberately invited any other foreign enemy to come and take possession of the realm; for although her object was merely to regain the powers she had lost by her own acts, she could estimate the ruin which would have resulted to Scotland, if Henry had really been in a position to invade the country. His answer to her appeal was to send the most urgent instructions to his sister to prevent Albany's landing by every means at her disposal. In the meanwhile she waited impatiently, but in vain, for both troops and money from Henry, who did not think it necessary to inform her that the French king had agreed to detain Albany in France, on condition that his dear cousin should send his sister no help, but leave the various parties in Scotland to fight out their quarrels alone.

* Queen Margaret to Henry *vi ii*., 23rd November 1514; *Ms*. Cott., Calig. B 1, 164; Brit. Mus.

As a result of this policy, Margaret at last began to find her position intolerable, and she, no less than her enemies looked forward to the duke's arrival as a means of extricating herself from a labyrinth of difficulties. This was perhaps what Francis I. had foreseen; notwithstanding his promise to Henry, he had no intention of permanently preventing Albany, who was more than half a Frenchman, from assuming a dignity that would result in a strong bond of union between Scotland and France. Albany was therefore quietly allowed to escape at a given moment; and when, after running the gauntlet of Henry's ships, which were watching for him, he landed in Scotland, Margaret resolved, for once wisely, to be friends with him.*

Page 5

* Seb. Giustinian to the Doge, London, 5th August 1515; Venetian Archives.

But Henry instructed Lord Dacre, the formidable chief of the Marches, to stir up all the strife possible between his sister, the new regent, and the Scottish lords, and accordingly, whenever there was a sign of a better understanding between the three parties, Dacre was always careful to insinuate to the queen that her brother was her best friend. Finding that Albany had escaped the vigilance of his fleet, Henry wrote a high-handed letter to the Scottish Council requesting that he might be sent back to France forthwith. Their reply was as dignified as Albany's own conduct throughout, and in strong contrast to Margaret's attitude. They have, they say, received Henry's letter, dated 1st July 1516, desiring them to remove John, Duke of Albany, the regent from the person of their king, in order to promote the amity of the two realms. The duke was chosen Protector by the unanimous voice of the Three Estates, and was sent for by them from France; he left his master, his lady, his living; he has taken great pains in the king's service; he has given, and proposes to give, no cause for dissatisfaction, and if he would leave, they would not let him. Moreover, it is in exact conformity with their laws that the nearest in succession should have the governance; security has been taken by the queen and others to remove all cause of suspicion, and they will spend their lives if any attempt be made against his Highness.* This document was signed and sealed by twenty-eight spiritual and temporal lords, whose names are still legible. Ten other names are mutilated beyond recognition, although their seals remain.

* Scottish lords to Henry VIII., 4th July 1516; Record Office.

Albany had meanwhile written to Lord Dacre, denying that he had usurped the king's authority, and declaring that he had done nothing but by order of the Estates of the realm. But Henry was bent on picking a quarrel with him, and Dacre's letter to the King of England's Council shows the part which Dacre was instructed to play in the troubles of Scotland, fomenting feuds between Albany and every member of his government, in the hope of driving him out of the country.* Difficult, however, as Henry's policy made it, the regent was bent on maintaining peace, and would probably have succeeded but for Margaret.**

* Cotton *Ms*., Calig. B 2, 341; Brit. Mus.

** Albany to Dacre,10th August 1515; R.O.

The good understanding between the regent and the queen was first broken by his summons to her to deliver up the royal children into his custody, a cruel but necessary proceeding, since the regency was inseparable from the governorship of the king and the next heir.

Page 6

A true and tender chord is struck at last, when Margaret, appealing to Henry, exclaims, “God send I were such a woman as might go with my bairns in mine arms. I trow I should not be long fra you!” Nor is it possible to feel aught but sympathy for her, when she allows herself to be stormed in Stirling Castle before she suffers her children to be torn from her. Dacre professed to believe, and perhaps caused Margaret to fear, that they would be destroyed if they fell into the Duke of Albany’s power. But the very day on which Dacre wrote to Henry’s Council, advising that money should be sent to enable her to hold out, the regent prepared to bombard her, and it was not till her friends had forsaken her, flying for their lives and in terror of Albany’s proclamation, that placing the keys of the fortress in her little son’s hands, she desired him to give them to the regent, and to beg him to show favour to himself, to his brother, and to her husband. The regent answered that he would be good to the king, to his brother, and to their mother; but that as for Angus, he “would not dalye with no traitor.” *

* Cotton *Ms*. Calig. B 2, 369; B.M.

No sooner had Margaret given up her children, than she began to manoeuvre how to steal them back and spirit them over the Border. While pretending to be too ill to leave her palace at Linlithgow, where she gave out she had “taken to her chamber” in anticipation of her approaching confinement, she effected her escape into England, but her plan for capturing the king and his brother failed. Nothing could now exceed her desolate condition, as, wandering from place to place, alone, ill, and worse than friendless, she sought in vain a refuge in all that wild Border region where she might await her hour of peril. Angus, seeing the turn affairs had taken, had thought it prudent to abandon her to her fate, and, after helping her to escape, returned to Scotland in the hope of coming to terms with Albany. His wife was at last thankful to accept Lord Dacre’s rough hospitality in his gloomy castle of Harbottle. Here in the midst of a brutal soldiery, with no woman to render her the most needful service, she gave birth to a daughter, the Lady Margaret Douglas, on the 5th October 1515. On the 10th she wrote to Albany to announce her delivery “of a cristen sowle beying a young lady,” and miserably ill though she was, did not omit to demand “as tutrix of the young king and prince, her tender children, to have the whole rule and governance of Scotland.”

To this letter Margaret received an answer written by the Council, stating that the governance of the realm had expired with the death of her husband, and had devolved to the Estates; that with her consent they had appointed the Duke of Albany; that she had forfeited the tutelage of her children by her second marriage, and that in all temporal matters the realm of Scotland had been immediately subject to Almighty God, not recognising the Pope or any superior upon earth.

Page 7

Herewith the queen was forced to content herself; further words would have proved as unavailing as reeds against the tempest, and even words were soon beyond her power to write, for the birth of her daughter was succeeded by a long and painful illness which nearly proved fatal to the unhappy woman. To add to the bitterness of her trials, at the moment when she was beginning slowly to recover, came the news of the illness and death of the little Duke of Rothesay. Grief, anger, and anxiety for the safety of the king served naturally to increase the gravity of her condition, and for months she lay hovering between life and death, loudly accusing Albany of having murdered her child.

This accusation was reiterated to Albany himself as soon as her unsteady hand could grasp a pen; but the regent took no heed of her stinging words, continued to invite her to return to Scotland, in spite of her persistent refusal, and apparently succeeded at last in convincing her of his innocence.

On her recovery she wrote to him from Morpeth, to announce her departure for the south, Henry having invited her to his court, accompanying his invitation with presents of costly stuffs, and money, and clothing for the baby.

A letter from Margaret to the regent at this moment is significant of a sudden change in her demeanour towards him, and to judge by her subsequent behaviour, the change meant treachery. Instead of the fierce denunciations she had lately indulged in, she acknowledged that she had often received goodly and pleasant words as well as letters from him, and “though his conduct has not always corresponded to them, yet as matters are being accommodated” she hopes he will reform it. The meaning of this change of tactics became clear to all but the regent himself——who seems to have been of a singularly unsuspicious nature—as soon as Margaret reached London.

Albany was still hoping for a permanent peace with Henry, and more than once expressed a wish to pay him a friendly visit. This both Henry and Margaret encouraged him to do, and writing to Wolsey about this time, the Scottish queen expressed the most fervent hope that the regent would come, counterbalanced by the fears that he would not.* Had the matter rested entirely with himself, the visit would certainly have taken place, but his Council having some reason to doubt Henry’s fair and plausible words, were urgent in dissuading him. All things considered, it is probable that the duke would have repented of his temerity if he had placed his head within the lion’s jaws.

* Cotton *Ms*., Vesp. F 3, 36; B.M.

Page 8

Having failed to inveigle the regent into their power, the brother and sister instructed Dacre to “sow debate” between him and his Council, but this scheme failed also. Dacre wrote, however, to show that he was not wanting in zeal in this behalf, saying that, being unable to interfere with Scottish affairs in any other way, he had given rewards to four hundred outlaws for burnings in various parts of the kingdom.* No means proved too vile, no instrument unworthy, to be employed in the work of destroying the regent and advancing Tudor interests. The queen even condescended to use her truant husband, and the part played by Angus is scarcely less reprehensible than Margaret’s own, for while he pretended to be loyal to Albany and to Scotland, he possessed himself of every important State secret and transmitted it to his wife, in the hope of appeasing her for his desertion. She, of course, passed on all that she thus learned to Henry and Wolsey.

* Dacre to Wolsey; Calig. B 1, 150; B.M.

Margaret was entertained for a whole year in pomp and splendour at the English court, feasts and revels succeeding each other in bewildering magnificence— luxury in vivid contrast to the misery which she had undergone during the first months after her flight from Scotland. Pageants, tournaments, and banquets now took the place of privation and suffering; all that met the eye was changed, but the dark and treacherous under-currents known to but few of her contemporaries remained the same, and were the realities that shaped her course. In spite, however, of plots and intrigues, Margaret’s position was not improving. Her visit to England could not be prolonged indefinitely, and as the queen was evidently not to return to Scotland in triumph, it was desirable to make as good terms for herself as she possibly could.

The regent promised that her jointure should be paid, and that Angus should be allowed to join her if he were willing to do so—a somewhat doubtful alternative, as he had not availed himself of the leave that had already been given him. As for Albany himself, he declared that it had always been his desire to gratify the queen, and to advise the best for her and for her son.* Reluctantly, therefore, she at last prepared to turn her face northwards, having obtained permission to take with her a suite befitting her station, safe-conduct being granted, except in the case of any person among them plotting harm to the kingdom; and to these conditions Henry set his great seal.

* Calig. B 2, 262; B.M.

A letter from the Venetian envoy to the Doge, dated 13th April 1517, says: “The truce between England and Scotland has been arranged. The queen is to return, but is not to be admitted to the administration of the kingdom. She may take with her twenty-four Englishmen, and as many Scotch as she pleases, provided they be not rebels”; and he adds that he has been assured of these facts by Albany’s secretary.

Page 9

All was done to make her journey as easy as possible; but when Margaret arrived at Berwick, it needed all Dacre's powers of persuasion to induce her to enter Scotland. At Lamberton Kirk, contrary to the regent's expectation, she was met by Angus, accompanied by Morton and others of the Scottish nobility, with three hundred men, chiefly Borderers. Albany had left for France, taking with him as hostages the heirs or younger brothers of the principal men in the country, whom he had bound over to keep the peace during his absence, which he then did not intend to prolong beyond five months.

There was now an excellent opportunity for beginning a new and better life, had the queen been so minded; but events proved her to be in a more querulous, treacherous, and discontented mood than ever. "Her Grace considereth now, the honour of England, and the poverty and wretchedness of Scotland," wrote Magnus to Wolsey, "which she did not afore, but in her opinion esteemed Scotland equal with England,"* and her complaints to Henry were frequent and loud.

* June 19, 1517; Calig. B 2, 253; B.M.

She complained of her husband, of her poverty, of the bad faith of the Scottish nation who still left her jointure unpaid, of not being allowed free access to her son. She had, she said, been obliged to lay in wed (pawn) the plate given to her by Henry, and was likely to be driven to extreme want, as Wolsey would learn by her messenger. She would have been still worse off, she caused her friends to write, had not Magnus and Dacre drawn up a book at Berwick, the day before her entry into Scotland, by which Angus, signing it, renounced all claim to her "conjunct feoffment."*

* Dacre to Wolsey, Harbottle, 5th March, 1518; R.O.

But Margaret did not stop at complaints; Henry must begin the war again. He may, she declares, reasonably cause Scottish ships to be taken; for she has suffered long and forborne to do evil, although she knew she would never get good from Scotland by fair means.

When by dint of constant urging to renewed contests the Borders had become one vast battlefield in her quarrel, she wrote to the Marquis of Dorset to beg him to spare the convent of Coldstream, whose abbess had done her good service in times past.* The motive for this intercession was no mere charitable one, the abbess being "one of the best spies for England."

* Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, to Henry VIII.; Calig. B 3, 255.

And now, for the first time, Margaret ventures to express the wish that has for long been forming itself in her mind. She has been much troubled by Angus since her coming to Scotland, and is so more and more daily. They have not met this half year, and—after

some hovering of the word on her lips, she pronounces it boldly—she will part with him, if she may by God's law, and with honour to herself, for he loves her not. Unlike Henry, when seeking a pretext to divorce his first wife, Margaret was

Page 10

at no pains to disguise the motive which inspired her, and a possibility of a flaw in the marriage is openly but a pretext for getting rid of a husband of whom she was weary. We are at least spared the nausea caused by Henry's conscientious scruples. She first puts forward frankly her wish to be free from Angus, and then her determination to divorce him if she may lawfully. But it was the only piece of honesty in the whole business, for the suit itself was one long, dreary series of misrepresentation and falsehood, without which her cause could by no possibility have been gained.

The usual plea of pre-contracts was brought forward, but as these were of too flimsy a nature to bear investigation, Margaret declared that the late King of Scots, her husband, was still living three years after the battle of Flodden, and that consequently he was alive when she was married to the Earl of Angus.* As the king's body had never been found, this assertion could not be disproved, though there was no reasonable doubt as to James having fallen on that calamitous day.

* Magnus to Wolsey; State Papers, vol. iv., p. 385; R.O.

However, in spite of her bold swearing, Margaret was not so certain of success, but that she was anxious for Henry's support, and she not only entreated her brother to befriend her, but promised him that she would consult only his wishes in taking another husband, and that this time she would not part from him.* If she thought that a fellow-feeling would make him wondrous kind in this matter, she was disappointed. It was no part of Henry's policy that his sister should put Angus away, for although she had not consulted him in the choice of her second husband, Henry was very well satisfied with him. He could to a certain extent control him, and at all events, while married to him the queen could not contribute by any foreign alliance to the power and greatness of Scotland.

* Calig. B 1, 232; B.M.

But Angus was making himself obnoxious to his wife beyond her very limited capacity for endurance. Not only had he proved a faithless husband, but what was infinitely worse to her mind, he refused to give up the income of her Ettrick Forest estate, which she had made over to him in the days when his handsome face and figure had first struck her fancy, and when she thought nothing too costly to lavish upon him. She had made him great, to her own and the country's misfortune, and it was a difficult matter to make him small again; but all Scotland felt the evil effects of his power, of his ascendancy over the young king, and of the feuds which resulted therefrom. So great was the scourge felt to be, that the Council appealed to Margaret to recall the Regent Albany, that he might restore order.

Margaret was aware that Albany's return was the thing of all others that Henry wished to avoid, but it suited her for the nonce to act the part of a good Scotswoman, and she

wrote an imploring letter to the duke, begging him to come back and take pity on his unhappy country.* Notwithstanding this, her complaints to Henry through Lord Dacre of her bad treatment, and her supplications to be allowed to return to England, did not cease. She had “liever be dead than live among the Scots,” and she entreats that no peace may be renewed, unless “some good may be taken,” that she may live at ease.**

Page 11

* Calig. B 1, 232.

** Ibid. B 2, 195.

Wolsey was not sparing in his remarks on the queen's double-dealing, the facts of which had all been disclosed to him by spies. He has, he says, represented to the king her brother "the folly of Queen Margaret in leaning to her enemies, and departing from her husband," notwithstanding what Dacre has already written to her. Dacre, by the king's desire, is to tell her that if she persists in her dishonourable course she can expect no favour.*

* Ibid. B 3, 106

Meanwhile the Earl of Surrey had been dispatched with an army to the Borders, and threatened to invade Scotland, unless the Duke of Albany were abandoned, and Margaret reinstated as regent. On the 16th September 1523, he wrote two letters to the queen, one intended for her eyes alone, the other to be shown to her son's Council. In the first he says that the King of England would approve of her son's "coming forth," and shaking off all tutelage but his mother's, for Surrey is about to waste Scotland, and the young king's plea for emancipating himself should be that he cannot suffer his realm to be laid waste. Margaret is to summon the lords to take up arms in her son's defence, and she will then be in a position to command Surrey to retire. She will thus form a party for her son, and be enabled to send Albany and his Frenchmen back to France. Then Surrey will turn his arms against her enemies.

If Margaret keeps her promise, money will be forthcoming. In the event of her causing James V, to "come forth" to Edinburgh, he has no doubt that if the king will command his subjects on their allegiance to take his part, the most of them will do so, especially the Commons, who must be roused to drive the French to Dunbar. The Earl of Surrey will be ready to give assistance.*

* Calig. B 4, 196.

The second letter was to the same effect, though more cautiously worded. The King of England would be glad to hear of his nephew's prosperous estate, but would certainly be dissatisfied that his nobles suffered their monarch and themselves to be kept in subjection by Albany. Surrey was ready to help with men and money all who would come forward to protect their natural sovereign; but peace could never be between the two realms, if the Scots did not give up the duke. As for Margaret's hope that Henry would be a better friend to Scotland on her account, Surrey had been ordered to desist from doing any more hurt at her request. He had now waited along time, he wrote, hoping that the Scottish lords would have shown themselves more natural loving subjects than they now appeared, seeing that the day appointed for the Duke of Albany's arrival had passed, and that their king was in no greater safety than he was

before. All the world would see that the fault was not Henry's, but that of the Scots, who refused to put *him* out of the realm who meant to destroy the king and usurp the crown. Henry would never refrain from making war upon Scotland until they forsook. Albany, and sued to him for peace. On their doing this, Surrey had full authority to treat with them, and to assist them with money and troops.*

Page 12

* State Papers, iv. 21—“Copy of my letter to be showed to the lords of Scotland; in Surrey’s hand”; R.O.

This advice produced no effect whatever on the Scottish lords, whose loyalty to the regent remained unshaken. But Margaret did not consider herself hampered by any pledges given to Albany, and two days after the receipt of the letters, she urged Surrey to come to Edinburgh, or somewhere near it, at once, declaring that the lords would certainly do as she desired. As for the threatened laying waste, however, “they laughed at injuries done only to the poor people.” A thousand men with artillery would have Edinburgh at their mercy if they came suddenly. Surrey must go at it at once, or let it be. Failing this, she desired leave to come to England with her true servants, adding, “for I will come away and I should steal out of it."*

* Ibid. 26.

The truth was, that, far from being certain that the lords would agree to any part of the scheme, Margaret knew well that she had but a handful of friends in Scotland, and that her sole hope of regaining the regency lay in Henry’s power of coercion. Trusting that Surrey would really march on Edinburgh, she did all she could to persuade the Council to allow the young king to be brought to that place, and to appoint new guardians, friendly to her interests. In both these endeavours she failed, and James remained at Stirling.

“The lords are all fallen away from the queen, and adhere to the governor,” wrote the Abbess of Coldstream to Sir John Bulmer, and Surrey passed on the information to Wolsey, telling him that Margaret had no credit with the Scotch, and that they looked hourly for Albany’s arrival.

As for Lord Surrey, even if he had been willing to besiege Edinburgh, he would have been frustrated by the want of sufficient means of transport for his victuals. Had he not caused his soldiers to carry their food in wallets, and their drink in bottles, it would not have been possible for him to have reached the North, and a raid into the enemy’s country necessitated a far ampler stock of provisions than could be carried in this way. The queen’s desire that he should take Edinburgh, arose, he thought, from her anxiety to provide herself with a way of escape from her difficulties.*

* Surrey to Wolsey, Berwick, 21st Sept. 1523; R.O.

In England it was commonly believed that the Scottish lords were in so great a fear of Albany, who was hourly expected to arrive, that they would break their covenant with him even though they had each given him four of the best of their sons as hostages. But Surrey declared vehemently that although they might deceive Margaret, they should not deceive him.

Page 13

The suspense was ended at last, and Margaret wrote to inform him of the regent's arrival. Surrey replied at once, desiring to know further what number of horse and foot soldiers had come with him, and what countrymen they were. He could give her no advice about coming away, but would meet her in any given part of the Marches, and at whatever time she pleased. Margaret in return was to let him know when the Duke of Albany intended to invade England. In conclusion, hoping to prevent any rapprochement between her and the regent, he warned her that Albany would most certainly be king if the king were not well guarded, "for the Frenchmen can empoison one, and yet he shall not die for a year after."*

* Surrey's Letterbook; Tanner *Ms*. 90, f. 47; Bodleian Library.

The slippery nature of Margaret's friendship was well known to Surrey, and he kept up the fiction of Albany's nefarious intentions, in the hope of making her faithful to English interests. Unluckily for his schemes, he did not sufficiently study the springs of her actions, which would have taught him to be more lavish with his bribes. The end of her next letter ought to have opened his eyes to the necessity of striking a bargain with her if he would hope to draw her into the English net. After telling him that the duke has held a council at Glasgow, and that he means to march into England in a fortnight, she goes on to warn him that Scotland was never before made so strong, and says that it is still a secret whether Albany intends to attack the east or west Border, but she thinks both. She gives him a detailed account of the numbers and condition of his soldiers, and estimates his French contingent at 6000 men, adding that German reinforcements are expected by the first fair wind. They trust to win Berwick, and if they succeed, she and her son are undone. Then she begs to know how she is to get away, and have some money. If Henry will not help her, she must perforce ask help of Albany; and she declares significantly, "and he will cause me to do as he will, or else he will give me nothing." He has not yet come to her, but he writes "very good writings of his own hand, and as many fair words as can be devised," to which however she professes to give no credence.*

Calig. B 6, 379; State Papers, iv. 40.

Surrey was of the opinion that Margaret should remain in Scotland, as her coming to England would cause embarrassment and expense. Two thousand marks would hardly satisfy her in England, whereas she would be content with three or four hundred pounds a year in Scotland, to say nothing of the loss Henry would incur if she came away, in being deprived of the information she sent.

But it was just this haggling over bribes that prevented Margaret from being altogether on Henry's side, and threw her into the arms of the more generous Albany whenever there was the least hope of gain. Thus, a month later, after the somewhat hasty retreat from Wark, she told Surrey that she had been obliged to take what money the duke would give her; that she would do her best to keep her son, but that she could not

displease Albany without Henry's support. She implored Surrey to plead with the king for her, and in return for his help she would inform him of all she knew; but he must keep it secret.*

Page 14

* Calig. B 1, 281.

At the same time, she gave the duke to understand that she had incurred her brother's displeasure for his sake,* and the same legend was repeated to the lords of the Council. Complaining to them of the bad treatment she had received in Scotland, she begged them to bear in mind the loyalty she had always shown to her son, to the lord governor, and to the realm, incurring for the last three or four years her brother's displeasure, for Albany's sake, at whose desire she was always ready to write the best she could.** Immediately upon this remarkable statement came Henry's answer to her last appeal, in the guise of one hundred marks for information received, together with the refusal of the truce which Albany had repeatedly solicited.*** The smallness of the sum prompted Margaret to write a diplomatic letter to the Earl of Surrey, in which she declared that she had promised before the lords to be a good Scotswoman, and to agree to whatever was for the good of her son, with whom she was resolved to bide as long as she might, although the lords were bent on separating them. They cannot, they say, help her to her "conjunct feoffment" while her brother makes war on them, and she knows not where any other help may be got. If she is to live with her son, Henry must contribute to her support, as he has done to a certain extent already. She will do as he commands her, and have as few servants as possible. She had asked the governor and lords in Council why she was "holden suspect," and not allowed to be with her son; and the answer she received was that she was Henry's sister, and would perhaps take the king into England, and they knew well her brother would do more for her than any other. She had answered that her deeds had shown otherwise, and that she could prove the malice of such an accusation! *Thus Henry would see how she suffered for his sake*.****

* Ibid. 159.

** Ibid. B 2, 268.

*** State Papers, iv. 60, 26th Nov. 1523; R.O.

**** Queen Margaret to the Earl of Surrey, Dec. 1523; R.O.

The next scene in the comedy is Margaret's anger on hearing that Albany is treating with Henry for peace, without her intervention. "It is hard," she complains, "to be out with the governor here, and not to know what the king will do for me!" If she had flattered Albany, she asserts, she might have had "great profits," but she will not take them till she knows Henry's mind. She has not spoken with Albany since Surrey left, and would not do so as long as he remained in Scotland, so discontented were they with each other.* Upon this follows an astounding revelation. Surrey had received a dispatch from the queen containing another document, the seals of which had been broken and closed again. It was a copy of an agreement between Margaret and the Duke of Albany, but the manner in which it came to be enclosed in her letter never

transpired, though it was thought that the packet had been opened by a spy, and the paper inserted, in order to ruin her prospects with her brother.

Page 15

* Calig. B 1, 209, 21st April 1524.

The enclosed document ran thus:—

The queen promises that during the minority of her son, she will never suffer anything contrary to the duke's authority, and will inform him of it, and hinder as much as she can any wrong intended against him; she will not consent to a truce or peace with England without the comprehension of her son's allies; she will assist to keep him securely, according to the decree of the last Parliament; she will do all she can to hinder any practice against him of which she may hear, and will inform the governor of it if he be in the country, and if not, those who have charge of the king; she will not consent to anything contrary to the alliance with France, or to the treaty of Rouen, and will further a marriage between her son and one of the daughters of the King of France. The governor promises to do the like, and to obtain for her an honourable reception by the King of France, if she incurs the enmity of her brother, and is forced to quit the country in consequence of the assistance he may give to Angus, or other evil-disposed persons who may interfere with her goods and conjunct feoffment; he will if she requests, send some of his servants with her, and will maintain her against everyone except the king her son. Both parties swear to keep these promises upon the Holy Gospels.*

* Add. *Ms*. 24, 965, ff. 231 and 234; B.M.

Wolsey, upon receipt of this information, at once addressed instructions to Dacre, charging him to find out whether such an agreement had really been made, and if so, how the copy of it had found its way into the queen's letter.

Dacre therefore wrote to tell her of the discovery, and recapitulating the contents of the enclosed document, added that the king desired to know whether she had consented to it of her own free will, why it was done, whether she herself sent the copy, or if not who did send it, and with what intent.

Margaret replied by an indignant but weak denial. The instrument in question was one, she averred, which the duke had *desired* her to execute, but which she had declined at all costs to meddle with.

This explanation was too improbable for Wolsey to accept, the whole course of Margaret's actions tending to show that had Albany tried and failed to draw her into such a compact, she would unhesitatingly have disclosed the negotiation in order to make capital out of her refusal. The opportunity for demanding large sums as a reward for her fidelity to Henry's interests would have proved irresistible; while as a matter of fact the transaction had never been so much as hinted at in any of her letters. Vague allusions, to the effect that Albany was continually outbidding Henry, had been her refrain for years; but whereas she sent minute and circumstantial details of every other

secret likely to prejudice the country and the regent, she had been silent as to any definite overtures such as those contained in the document referred to.

Page 16

The alternative was to believe that, while pretending to be false, for once she was true to Scotland; and yet she stands so deeply “rooted in dishonour,” that her acquittal puts but little to her credit. Her only resource, when Dacre persisted in his accusation, was a feeble complaint of the bad treatment she was receiving at her brother’s hands, pleading that he neither regarded herself nor her writing; that she had not failed, and did not mean to fail, but that if others had been in her place they would have acted very differently.*

* Add. *Ms*. 24, 965, f. 223, 19th May 1524; B.M.

To this Dacre replied ruthlessly, that it was well known both in Scotland and in England, not only that she had assented to the bond found in her letter, but that it had passed her sign manual and seal, in return for which, the Duke of Albany had given her the wardship and marriage of the young Earl of Huntly and of others, together with other gifts and rewards——a proceeding which, declared Dacre, was a great dishonour to her brother, and would perhaps after all avail her but little. He marvelled also greatly at her pretended ignorance of the negotiations pending between Albany and himself, because in his last letter he had informed her of all the proceedings.*

* Ibid. 965, f. 244, 27th May 1524.

For some time, Margaret continued to deny feebly having formally allied herself with the regent, murmuring at Dacre’s “sharpness” towards her, notwithstanding which Dacre continued to bring fresh proofs of her duplicity before her, till Henry at last ordered him to let the matter drop, whereupon she was willing to do the same.*

* Add. *Ms*. 24, 965, f. 253; B.M.

Having failed in the past to secure Margaret’s undivided favour, Henry now took a more persuasive line, and sought to convince his sister how much good might in future accrue to her if she would but “go the fruitful way.” The unfortunate Angus, who had taken refuge in England, was now sent back, in the hope that a possible reconciliation with her husband might detach her from Albany. But this was far from succeeding. Margaret could with difficulty be induced to receive him, and all the money that Henry sent to her went to strengthen the hands of her husband’s enemies, so that Angus was obliged to entreat that no further supplies might be provided. Margaret then veered round, and said that Albany had sent to her with great offers if she would join his party, adding that perhaps the duke would marry her after getting her divorced. How this could be possible, considering that Albany had a wife already, might puzzle a mind more fettered by the logic of facts than was the queen’s.

Page 17

That she was seriously anxious to be agreeable to the duke is seen by the instructions which she delivered to John Cantely, who was to tell the regent of her goodwill towards him and the kingdom of France. And lest he should interpret unfavourably the circumstance of her having sent ambassadors to England, she assured him that she would do nothing without including France. Finally, she wished to know his intentions towards her and what he would give her. In the event of her taking his part against England, which she will certainly do if Henry continues to help Angus, Albany must secure for her the protection of the French king. If this king desires to have her and her son on his side, he must support them.

But Albany must keep the matter secret, and not allow her letters to be sent into England, as has been done formerly, and she will take his part against everyone except her son.*

* Double de la credence de la Royne et memoire de Mr. John Cantely; R.O.

This was written on the 22nd February 1525, but on the 31st March following, Margaret, in a stormy interview with Angus, angrily denied having negotiated with Albany at all. She swore that she had always sought to please Henry, and complained of his letters being “sore and sharp.” She had taken a great matter on hand at his request, and had had much trouble with the duke for his sake, yet now that she had plainly told the regent that she followed Henry’s pleasure, Henry would have no more to do with her. If he will not be kind to her, she hopes at least that he will not cause Angus to trouble her in her living. She has a plea against Angus before the Pope, and he cannot interfere with her by law.*

* Calig. B 7, 3.

It was clearly to Henry’s interest to persuade Margaret to take her husband back, for Angus belonged with the whole Douglas family to Albany’s bitterest enemies. The reconciliation between him and the regent had been but a short interlude brought about solely from self-interest on the part of Angus, and followed by a deep and lasting feud. Added to this claim on Henry’s friendship was the fact that he possessed a powerful influence over the young King James. But with the page of Henry’s own domestic history open before us, it is not possible to repress a smile at the arguments against her divorce which Henry put before Margaret, at the very moment when he was trying to force the Pope’s hand, in order to obtain from him a sentence against his own marriage. The following substance of a letter, written it is true by Wolsey, but dictated by his master, applies in every detail as well to Henry’s own case as to Margaret’s. If we change the pronoun, substitute London for Rome, king for queen, Katharine for Angus, all that he causes Wolsey to say becomes as applicable to himself as to his sister.

Page 18

After desiring her to accept favourably Henry's message, which, he says, much concerns the wealth of her son and her own repute, the cardinal urges her brother's hope that the "undeceivable spirit of God, which moved him to send to her, will effectually work." Amid the cares of his government he has never forgotten her, and he hopes she will turn to God's word, "the vyvely doctrine of Jesus Christ, the only ground of salvation" (1 Cor. 3). He reminds her of the divine ordinance of inseparable matrimony, first instituted in Paradise, and hopes her Grace will perceive how she was seduced by flatterers to an unlawful divorce from "the right noble Earl of Angus," *etc*., upon untrue and insufficient grounds. Furthermore, "the shameless sentence sent from Rome" plainly showed how unlawfully it was handled, judgment being given against a party neither present in person nor by proxy. He urges her further, for the weal of her soul, and to avoid the inevitable damnation threatened against "advoutrers," to reconcile herself with Angus as her true husband, or out of mere natural affection for her daughter, whose excellent beauty and pleasant behaviour, nothing less godly than goodly, furnished with virtuous and womanly demeanour, should soften her heart. That she should be reputed baseborn cannot be avoided, except the queen will relinquish the "advoutrous" company with him that is not, nor may not be, of right her husband.*

* Calig. B 6, 194.

The individual here mentioned was Harry Stuart, with whom Margaret had contracted a secret marriage, having by dint of perjury and a tissue of lies, obtained a declaration of invalidity against her union with Angus. She does not appear to have been in the least affected by Henry's hypocritical reasoning, but the manner in which her son received the news of her third marriage caused her some inconvenience. In his displeasure, James sent Lord Erskine to besiege his mother and her new husband in Stirling Castle; but what promised to be a tragedy had a somewhat ridiculous end, for Margaret, in terror of what might follow, at once gave up her husband, who after a short imprisonment was allowed to escape. He promptly rejoined the queen, and James subsequently forgave him, and created him Lord Methven.

But not even when her son had come to his own did Margaret cease to plot and intrigue. Henry's suspicious character imperatively demanded that all that was going on in Scotland should be known without delay at the English court, and his sister was the only possible agent for the purpose. It does not appear that her treachery, now doubly odious, ever cost her the least qualm. The climax was, however, reached, when after persuading James to confide to her his private instructions to the Scottish ambassador residing in London, she contrived that the information thus obtained should be in Henry's hands at the same moment that it reached its legitimate destination.

Fortunately for the affairs of Scotland, the treasonable correspondence was discovered; and Margaret narrowly escaped imprisonment. The immediate result was to put an end to the more friendly intercourse that had sprung up between the two countries, and to prevent a meeting between the two sovereigns, in process of negotiation.

Page 19

At this interview, which was to have taken place at York, Henry hoped to convert his nephew to his own views regarding the Pope; and in order to pave the way to, a good understanding between them, he sent Barlow and Holcroft to Scotland with a lengthy document containing, with much fulsome flattery of James, all Henry's choice vocabulary of epithets hurled against the "Bishop of Rome."*

* Hamilton Papers—Instructions to Barlow and Holcroft, 3rd Oct. 1535, fol. 27.

Margaret, ignorant that her son had discovered her treachery, continued to urge him to proceed to York; but her eagerness only roused his suspicions that worse treason lay behind.

"The Queen, your Grace's sister," wrote Lord William Howard to Henry, "because she hath so earnestly solicited in the cause of meeting, is in high displeasure with the King, her son, he bearing her in hand that she received gifts of your Highness to betray him, with many other unkind and suspicious words."*

State Papers, iv. 46; R.O.

Enough has been already seen of Margaret's methods to make it quite clear what her next step would be. Out of favour with James, she of course threw the whole brunt of her misfortune on Henry, for whose sake she had incurred so much danger and expense, having lived for the last six months at court for the sole purpose of advancing his affairs.* But Henry was beginning to weary of his sister's complaints and appeals for money. Besides, James would in future guard his secrets better, and Margaret almost cease to be useful as a spy. So she must not expect him to disburse notable sums, merely because she is his sister, and must henceforth learn to be content with the entirely sufficient provision made for her on her marriage with the King of Scots.**

* Add. *Ms*. 32, 616, f. 87; B.M.

** State Papers, v. 56; R.O.

This was all the consolation he could afford her for some time to come, for besides his other reasons for disregarding the letters which she, nothing daunted by his silence, continued to send him, Henry was too much occupied with his own concerns to bestow much thought on a sister whose power of helping him was now small. It was the moment of Anne Boleyn's fall, and he was engrossed with the list of crimes of which he was about to accuse the unhappy woman.

On the subject of Margaret's various marriages, her brother had ever failed to manifest that sympathy which a similarity of tastes would seem to justify. He had assumed the tone of a moralist on her separation from Angus, and had treated Lord Methven in his letters with scant respect, and when in the course of time she began to be weary of her

new spouse, and to complain of him with increasing bitterness, it was long before Henry could be roused to express any interest in the subject. At last, however, he found a convenient season for attending to her. She had written to inform him that whereas she did Lord Meffen (sic) the honour to take him as her husband, he had spent her lands and profits upon his own kin, and had brought her into debt, to the sum of 8000 marks Scots, and would give her no account of it. She trusted the king her son would treat her to his and her own honour; but if not, she had no refuge but in Henry, and she begged him not to suffer her to be wronged.

Page 20

To this, Henry deigned to reply that he should be sorry if his good brother and nephew treated her otherwise than a son should treat his mother. As it appeared from certain evidence, she was well-handled, and had grown to much wealth and quiet; but according to other reports, quite the contrary, so that he was in doubt which to believe. “Also,” he continues, “having heard at other times from you of your evil-treatment by your son and Lord Muffyn (sic), and as we are sending the bearer into those parts, on our business, we desire you to show him the points wherein you note yourself evil-handled, and whether you desire us to treat of them with your son, or only generally to recommend your condition.” *

* State Papers, v. 63, 65.

Margaret had remained faithful to Lord Methven for about ten years, and it was not till 1537 that she thought of formally applying for a divorce, her chief plea being that be wasted her money, although she said she had “forty famous proofs” against him.*

* Hamilton Papers, 13th Oct. 1537, f. 105.

James was furious, and ordered that the divorce, whether obtained at the cost of more false oaths, or whether Margaret’s so-called third husband really had a wife living when the union was contracted, should not be proclaimed in Scotland.

This constituted Margaret’s famous grievance against James, his objection to her divorce being, his mother declared, the fear lest she should pass into England and remarry the Earl of Angus. “And this Harry Stuart, Lord of Methven, causes him to believe this of *me*!” she exclaimed contemptuously.* One plea for getting rid of the now despised Harry Stuart is too amusing to be omitted. James was in France, whither he had gone to bring home his bride, the young and beautiful Magdalene, daughter of the French king, and Margaret thought to induce Henry to interest himself in her divorce through his jealousy of the French.

* State Papers, v. 119.

After begging him to send a special messenger to the king her son, to know his “utter mind,” she says: “For now, dearest brother, your Grace I trust will consider that now the queen his wife is to come into this realm soon after Easter, as he hath sent word here, to make ready for the same, and that being, it will be great dishonour to him that I, his mother, having a just cause to part, can nought get a final end; and I trust your Grace will consider I may do your Grace and my son more honour to be without him (Lord Methven) than to have him, considering that he is but a sober man, and if the Queen that is to come, see me not entreated as I should be, she will think it an evil example.” *

* Hamilton Papers, f. 109.

But all her efforts were fruitless; Henry could not be persuaded to take up her quarrel, and James was obdurate. His mother, however, then in her forty-ninth year, dispensed with legal formality altogether, and allied herself to a certain John Stuart, who, according to some, is identical with the adventurous Earl of Arran, so notorious in the reign of James *vi*.

Page 21

A few more miserable years of petty intrigues, it being no longer in her power to carry on important ones, and Margaret came to the close of her faithless, undignified life. But before the end, a ray of sorrow for her mis-spent days brightened the hitherto unrelieved gloom of her career. Henry's messenger, sent after her death to gather up the details of her last moments, and above all, to find out whether she had made a will, wrote to the king as follows:—

"When she did perceive that death did approach, she did desire the friars that was her confessors, that they should sit on their knees before the King, and to beseech him that he would be good and gracious unto the Earl of Angwische, and did extremely lament and ask God mercy that she had offended unto the said Earl as she had."

The friars were also to plead with her son for the Lady Margaret Douglas, the daughter whom she had so remorselessly abandoned, and to beg him that she might have some of her mother's goods. And thus, making what reparation she could, with penitent words on her lips, Margaret Tudor passed away.

II. NOR WIFE NOR WIDOW

The history of the first two marriages of Henry VIII. is of such vital importance, affecting as they did the whole course of religion in England, from the first whisperings of the divorce down to the present day, that it is not to be wondered at if the royal Bluebeard's subsequent matrimonial alliances have been considered negligible quantities. And yet, at least one of them was of extreme political, and even religious, importance, and was fraught with so much mystery that until the most recent investigations, the true inwardness of the matter has been totally misapprehended. The story of Anne of Cleves' portrait, and Henry's supposed disappointment when he saw the lady herself for the first time, is authentic in so far as it was exactly what the king chose to have circulated about his fourth marriage. But if it contained half the truth, it was the other half that really mattered.

After the fall of Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell had by his astute policy succeeded in bringing about a religious state of things in England that approached very nearly to Lutheranism. Taking advantage of Henry's pique and anger at the Pope's refusal to grant him a divorce from Katharine of Arragon, Cromwell set about widening the breach between England and Rome. After weakening the power of the bishops and lower clergy, he was able to force the oath of supremacy upon the nation, and having thus satisfied his master's pride and vanity, his next step was by the dissolution of the monasteries to pander to Henry's greed, while at the same time he filled his own pockets.

In pursuit of these ends he had covered the land with gibbets, and caused the noblest heads in England to fall upon the block. He had branded the king's own daughter with

the stigma of infamy, and to obtain her consent thereto had kept the axe suspended over her. He had been able to accomplish all this because thus far he had taken Henry's measure correctly, working upon his worst passions, and suggesting ever fresh means of satisfying them. Then came a point at which his interests and those of the king diverged.

Page 22

Cromwell was deeply pledged to the Lutheran cause, and his plan was to throw Henry into the arms of the Lutheran princes of Germany. He had already flooded the country with foreign heretics, using them as his tools to protestantise the Church in England.

Jane Seymour died in 1537, and Cromwell at once negotiated a marriage between Henry and Anne, daughter of the Duke of Cleves, Henry consenting for the reason that it behoved him to fortify himself by an alliance that would enable him to make a stand against a possible combination of forces between the Pope, the Emperor, and the French King. But at the very moment when Cromwell, believing himself to be at the point of realising all his desires, was pledging his master to marry Anne of Cleves, a reaction had set in which he so completely disregarded as to seem in utter ignorance of it.

Nothing annoyed Henry more than to be twitted with being a heretic, and whenever Henry was annoyed a blow might be expected. The loathed epithet was now very frequently used in reference to him by the emperor and others, and he was bent on showing Europe that he could be a very good Catholic without the Pope. It irritated him to think that Cromwell had laid him open to retort in this contention by a formal alliance with the Lutherans, who were undeniably heretics. It served his purpose very well to play them off against the emperor and even Francis I., but it was not his will to be bound irrevocably by any contract. When Cromwell thought to put the finishing touch to his triumphant scheme, he only effected his own doom. He boasted to the Lutherans that he would soon bring England over to their forms of faith, and on this promise the match between Henry and Anne was concluded; but he failed to rouse the German princes to a contest with the emperor, which was all that Henry, apart from his minister's policy, had aimed at from the beginning. With Henry the whole scheme was tentative, and the proposed marriage but a detail of that scheme. When it fell through, he desired to turn his back upon Cleves and the rest of the German princes; moreover, he had no further need of Cromwell himself, who was rather in the way of his new plans, unless the minister could find a means to disentangle the imbroglio he had created with regard to Anne.

Like a child with a new toy, Henry was now engrossed in the fun of being Pope in his own dominions; and as Head of the Church of England whom it behoved to reprobate heresy in every shape and form, he conducted a trial against one John Nicholson, who, refusing to recant his heretical opinions, was burned at Smithfield. After this he felt confident of being as Catholic as the real Pope, and safe from opprobrium. He proceeded to bring forward deliberations in Parliament on the subject of religion, with the result that the famous Act of the Six Articles was passed. This Act, nicknamed by the Lutherans "the whip with six cords," brought in a reaction in favour of the old religion, which lasted till Henry's death, but matters between England and Rome remained as they were.

Page 23

Meanwhile, the lady Anne of Cleves had made her unwelcome appearance. One of the most curious and indeed incomprehensible facts concerning Henry VIII., is the admiring awe and grovelling gratitude with which he was adored by most of the women whom he had the privilege of ill-treating. After the year 1527, when he first conceived the desire of raising Anne Boleyn to the throne, and of divorcing Katharine, except for the short period during which he was married to Jane Seymour, there were always two rival claimants for his hand. Not only was Katharine ever generously ready to forget past insults if he would graciously extend his clemency towards her, and send Anne away, but every other woman with whom he came in contact, addressed him in words more suited to a divinity than to an earthly king. His daughter Mary, after having been spurned as the most degraded and abject creature of the realm, longed for nothing more ardently than “to attain the fruition of his most desired presence.”

Although the personal appearance of Anne of Cleves did not bear out the exaggerated reports of the German agent Mont, who had told Henry that her beauty exceeded that of the Duchess of Milan “as the sun outshines the silver moon,” she was found on her arrival in England to be “tall, bright, and graceful,” her liveliness making amends for any defect as to regularity of feature. Comparing her claim to beauty with that of the other wives of Henry VIII., it does not appear that she contrasted unfavourably with any, not even with Katharine Howard, who was very generally admired. The king himself observed to Cromwell that Anne was “well and seemly, and had a queenly manner,” but that he found it difficult to converse with her as she knew no word of any language but German.

He had first met her privately at Rochester, and had dined with her, their public meeting taking place about half a mile from the foot of Shooter’s Hill, where she rested in a gorgeous pavilion prepared for the occasion. Henry came marching through Greenwich Park with a brilliant escort, and the bride and bridegroom met full merrily. The king embraced the lady ceremoniously, and the chronicler Hall, some time afterwards, in describing their entry into Greenwich, breaks out into one of his eulogistic periods:

“O what a sight was this, to see so goodly a Prince and so noble a King to ride with so fair a lady, of so goodly a stature, and so womanly a countenance, and in especial of so good qualities. I think no creature could see them but his heart rejoiced!”

Nevertheless, Henry’s moody question, “What remedy?” which obviously had its origin in no mere disappointment in the matter of Anne’s beauty or power to charm, was calculated to strike terror into Cromwell’s soul, the chancellor knowing full well that all this bravery was but an appearance, and that his great scheme of Lutheranising England to the greater glory of himself was irrevocably wrecked, and his own fate sealed. The king went on to say that if it were not that the lady had come so far, and for fear of making a ruffle in the world, and of driving her brother into the emperor’s arms and those of the French king, he would not go through with the marriage ceremony.

Page 24

As a forlorn hope of escape, the bride was asked to make a declaration that she was free from all precontracts, which she did without the least hesitation, and there was nothing to be done but for Henry “to put his head into the yoke,” and to make an insignificant political alliance, which would thenceforth serve no political end. As a Catholic king, Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith, there was no room in his plans for a Lutheran queen. However, he no longer regarded the marriage tie as a knot that could not be undone at a pinch. Cranmer could be counted on to be pliable in that matter, and if Cromwell made difficulties, a sword was hanging over him that could be made to fall at any moment, and Henry knew that the death of the man who had been the terror of England for ten years would be hailed with enthusiasm by the whole nation. Henry’s foreign policy had always been a non-committal one, and Cromwell’s daring intrigues had carried his master further than he intended to go. As the chancellor could find no means of getting him out of the mess, he lost his life, and Anne of Cleves her barely assumed dignity.

The disgusting letters which Cromwell wrote from the Tower, in the hope that his tardy playing into the king’s hands would obtain him a pardon, were of immense use to Henry in confusing the public mind as to the real reason for his repudiation of Anne, for he was anxious in breaking off from Protestant Germany not to turn the Duke of Cleves into an enemy. The want of decency and the unchivalrous sacrifice of Anne’s honour and dignity are perhaps not surprising between such men as Henry and Cromwell, but it is startling to find the lady’s brother swallowing the insult calmly. Nevertheless, Henry’s diplomatic insight had correctly gauged the coarsening effect of Luther’s moral code on a mind that could see less offence in a stain of this kind than in a frank rupture of the marriage-treaty before Anne had been allowed to set foot in England. There is this, however, to be said, that the possession of the lady gave Henry a decided advantage over her brother.

A few weeks after the marriage, or what passed for such, Anne was sent to Richmond on the pretext of being out of reach of the plague, but there was no talk at that time of any plague, and if there had been, Henry would certainly have gone away also, for no one feared the epidemic more than he. On her departure, a commission was appointed under the Great Seal to inquire into the validity of her marriage, and in an incredibly short space of time it was declared null, by reason of a pre-contract with the son of the Duke of Lorraine. Henry then endowed his ex-queen with lands to the value of 4000 pounds annually, with a house at Richmond, and another at Bletchingly.

Page 25

Whatever she may have felt, Anne expressed herself willing to be divorced—perhaps she was thankful to escape with her head—and desired the Duke of Cleves' messenger "to commend her to her brother, and say she was merry and well entreated." He reported of her that she said this "with such alacrity and pleasant gesture, that he might well testify that he found her not miscontented. After she had dined she sent the King the ring delivered unto her at their pretended marriage, desiring that it might be broken in pieces as a thing which she knew of no force or value." Henry sent her many gifts and tokens "as his sister and none otherwise," and told her that she was to be the first lady in the realm next after the queen and the king's children. He exhorted her to be "quiet and merry," and subscribed himself "your loving brother and friend." After his fifth marriage she was designated as "the old Queen, the King's sister."

The French ambassador, in a letter of the 6th August 1540, wrote:—

"The King being lately with a small party at Hampton Court, ten miles hence, supped at Richmond with the Queen that was so merrily that some thought he meant to reinstate her, but others think it was done to get her consent to the dissolution of the marriage, and make her subscribe what she had said thereupon, which is not only what they wanted, but also what she thinks they expected. The latter opinion is the more likely, as the King drew her apart, in company with the three first councillors he had, who are not commonly called in to such confidence."

Marillac goes on to say that he thinks it would be great inconsistency to take her back now, and that moreover she did not sup with him as she did when she was queen, but at another table adjoining his, as other ladies who are not of the blood do, when he eats in company.

On the 15th he wrote to the Duke de Montmorency:—

"As for her who is called Madame de Cleves, far from pretending to be distressed, she is as joyous as ever, and wears new dresses every day, which argues either prudent dissimulation or stupid forgetfulness of what should so closely touch her heart. Be it as it may, it has thrown the poor ambassador of Cleves into a fever, who sends every day to ask if I have no news of his master."

Even if Anne's first feeling had been one of relief that a worse fate had not befallen her, her gaiety was obviously forced, and no doubt the lady did "protest too much," but she had been ordered to be "quiet and merry," and if after such a mandate she had ventured to put on a sorrowful countenance, or to express a vain regret, her quondam husband would probably have been—such was his disposition—less flattered by the compliment than irritated by the command disobeyed. And so she prudently accepted her fate and "sate like patience on a monument smiling at grief," as it afterwards transpired, and in her efforts to please, imposed upon herself what must have been the most trying ordeals.

Page 26

Her marriage had taken place on the feast of the Epiphany, 1540, and in July of the same year Henry was united to Katharine Howard, grand-daughter of the Duke of Norfolk. This young woman's reputation was already so notoriously bad, that it is impossible to believe that the king could be in ignorance of the fact. Nevertheless, for the time being, he was deeply in love, and his scruples and righteous anger were wont to come—afterwards. Marillac describes the new queen "as rather graceful than beautiful, and of short stature." He says:—

"The King is so amorous of her that he cannot treat her well enough, and caresses her more than he did the others. She and all the Court ladies dress in the French style, and her device is Non autre volonte que la sienne. Madame de Cleves is as cheerful as ever, as her brother's ambassador says."

But others besides Anne of Cleves had reason to mourn, and Melancthon complained that atrocious crimes were reported from England, that the divorce with the lady of Juliers was already made, and another married, and that "good men of our opinion in religion are murdered."

On the 27th September, the papal nuncio wrote grimly to Cardinal Farnese, that "*So far*" the King of England was pleased with his new wife, and the other, "sister of Cleeves has retired and '*lives*.'" Rumours, however, were persistently current that Henry intended to take back Anne, until in November, Marillac informed his master that the new queen had "completely acquired the King's grace," and that the other was "no more thought of than if she were dead."

But Marillac had soon reason to see that in making this statement he had somewhat exaggerated. The Princess Mary seems to have been well informed of the loose character and behaviour of Katharine Howard, and contrived to find pretexts for a long time for absenting herself from court, so that the queen complained to Henry that his daughter did not treat her with the respect she had shown to the two former queens.

But Anne of Cleves had no scruples about associating with Katharine, and was perhaps keen to note every detail concerning her brilliant rival, who had been more successful than herself in capturing the king's roving fancy. She was probably as much in the dark as most people, as to the politico-religious embarrassment she constituted.

The French ambassador gives an amusing description of her New Year's visit to the court:—

"Sire, to omit nothing that may be written about this country, Madame Anne, sister of the Duke of Cleves, formerly Queen of England, passed the recent festivities at Richmond, four miles from Hampton Court, to which place the King and also the Queen sent her, on the first day of the year, rich presents of clothes, plate and jewels, valued at six or

seven thousand crowns. And on the second day she was summoned to appear at Hampton Court, where she was very honourably conducted

Page 27

by several of the nobility, and being arrived, the King received her very graciously, as did also the Queen, with whom she remained nearly the whole afternoon. They danced together, and seemed so happy that neither did the new Queen appear to be jealous or afraid that the other had come to raise the siege, as it was rumoured, nor did the said lady of Cleves show any sign of discontent at seeing her rival in her place. Moreover, Sire, if it please you to hear the end of this farce, that evening, and the next, the two ladies supped at the King's table together, although the lady of Cleves sat a little backward, in a corner, where the Princess of England, Madame Mary, is wont to be; and the following day, the said lady of Cleves returned with the same escort to Richmond, where she is visited by all the personages of the court, which makes people think she is about to be reinstated in her former position." *

* De Marillac, Correspondance Politique, p. 258.

Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, also wrote an account of this strange visit. He says:—

"On the 3rd [January 1541], the lady Anne of Cleves sent the King a New Year's present of two large horses, with violet velvet trappings, and presented herself at Hampton Court, with her suite, accompanied only by Lord William, the Duke of Norfolk's brother, who happened to meet her on the road to this city. She was received by the Duchess of Suffolk, the Countess of Hertford, and other ladies, who conducted her to her lodgings and then to the Queen's apartments. She insisted on addressing the Queen on her knees, for all the Queen could say, who showed her the utmost kindness. The King then entered, and after a low bow to Lady Anne, embraced and kissed her. She occupied a seat near the bottom of the table at supper, but after the King had retired, the Queen and Lady Anne danced together, and next day all three dined together. At this time the King sent his Queen a present of a ring and two small dogs, which she passed over to Lady Anne. That day Lady Anne returned to Richmond."*

* Chapuys to the Emperor; Gairdner, Cal. 16, No. 436.

The public rumour of the likelihood of Anne's restoration arose probably as much from the common talk of the queen's immoral conduct as from the circumstance of Anne's appearance at court. The reports at length reached Katharine's ears, and it was possibly her accusing conscience that betrayed itself in her visible depression of spirits.

"Some days ago [wrote Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary on 6th May 1541], this Queen being rather sad, the King wished to know the cause, and she said it was owing to a rumour that he was going to take back Anne of Cleves. The King told her that she was wrong to think such things, and [that] even if he were in a position to marry, he had no mind to take back Anne; which is very probable, as his love never returns for a

woman he has once abandoned. Yet many thought he would be reconciled to her for fear of the King of France making war on him at the solicitation of the Duke of Cleves and the King of Scotland."

Page 28

This was the first intimation of the storm that was soon to burst When it suited Henry to give ear to the scandals afloat about the queen, his grief and indignation, or what it pleased him should pass for such, knew no bounds.

The palace at Hampton Court where Katharine was imprisoned, was so strictly guarded that none but certain officers could enter or leave it. The Princess Mary, who had spent the last few months with her stepmother, presenting a strange contrast to her surroundings, was now sent to join Prince Edward, and her father announced that he was heartbroken at the queen's immorality and perfidy. Anne was thought by Chapuys to rejoice greatly at Katharine's fall, but her execution caused little comment throughout the country. Either the nation was indifferent or it had become accustomed to the disgrace of queen consorts.

Marillac, writing to Francis I. on the 11th November, says:—

"The way taken is the same as with Queen Anne who was beheaded. She has taken no kind of pastime, but kept in her chamber, whereas, before, she did nothing but dance and rejoice; and now when the musicians come, they are told that this is no more the time to dance . . . . As to whom the King will take, everyone thinks it will be the lady he has left, who has conducted herself wisely in her affliction, and is more beautiful than she was, and more regretted and commiserated than Queen Katharine (of Arragon) was in like case. Besides, the King shows no inclination to any other lady, and will have some remorse of conscience, and no man in England dare suggest one of such quality as the lady in question, for fear, if she were repudiated of falling en quelque gros inconvenient."

The imperial ambassador had, it is seen, estimated Henry's character more correctly than Marillac did, for as to "remorse of conscience," we do not find throughout the whole length of his life that the royal miscreant ever made an attempt to expiate any one of his crimes, or to make amends to a single individual for wrong done.

According to Marillac, the king was so shocked and grieved at Katharine's behaviour, that he proposed never to take another wife; but when it was suggested that in spite of her outrageous conduct the queen might possibly escape the punishment of death, on account of her beauty and her sweetness of disposition, the Duke of Norfolk said that she must of necessity die, because the king could not marry again while she lived.

Francis I. does not seem to have taken his envoy's account of Henry's grief very seriously (he had known the King of England longer than Marillac had), and replied with some apparent cheerfulness, that he was sorry for his cousin's misfortune, and would soon send a gentleman to condole with the king.

Chapuys, as usual, had with greater discernment, hit the more probable mean.

“This King has wonderfully felt the case of the Queen, his wife, and has certainly shown greater sorrow at her loss than at the fault, loss, or divorce of his preceding wives. It is like the case of the woman who cried more bitterly at the loss of her tenth husband than at the deaths of all the others together, though they had all been good men; but it was because she had never buried one of them before without being sure of the next, and as yet it does not seem that he has formed any new plan.”

Page 29

Katharine was beheaded on the 13th October 1542, on the same spot on the Tower Green where Anne Boleyn had been executed. Her end, and that of Lady Rochester who had encouraged her in her evil life, was penitent, and even edifying. After the execution it was remarked that the king was in better spirits, and during the last few days before Lent there was much feasting at Court.

Chapuys describes the state of affairs thus:—

"Sunday was given up to the Lords of his Council, and Court; Monday to the men of law; and Tuesday to the ladies, who all slept at the Court. He himself in the morning did nothing but go from room to room to order lodgings to be prepared for these ladies, and he made them great and hearty cheer, without showing particular affection to any one. Indeed, unless Parliament prays him to take another wife, he will not I think be in a hurry to marry; besides, few if any ladies now at Court would aspire to such an honour, for a law has just been passed, that should any King henceforth wish to marry a subject, the lady will be bound on, pain of death to declare if any charges of misconduct can be brought against her, and all who know or suspect anything of the kind against her, are bound to reveal it within twenty days, on pain of confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life."

Perhaps it was this general indictment of the women of Henry's court, most certainly the echo of public opinion, that had caused the people to persist in the belief that Anne of Cleves would regain Katharine's strangely coveted place. Where the reputation of a whole class was so bad as to make the above kind of declaration impossible, virtue, such as that attributed to the Lady Anne, was at a premium, and as it was useless to think of a suitable foreign alliance in the state of Henry's religious opinions, justice and necessity had alike seemed to point to the reinstatement of the discarded queen. But Henry was exceedingly annoyed at these repeated suggestions which, forsooth, had almost appeared *to dictate to him*, and he determined to put a stop to the free wagging of tongues on the subject of his matrimonial affairs.

After the fall of Katharine Howard, and before her execution, a State Paper records that Jane Rattsay was "examined of her words to Elizabeth Bassett, *viz*., 'What if God worketh this work to make the Lady Anne of Cleves queen again?' She answered that it was an idle saying suggested by Bassett's 'Praising the Lady Anne, and dispraising the Queen that now is.' She declared that she never spoke at any other time of the Lady Anne, and she thought the King's divorce from her good." Examined as to her exclamation "What a man is the King! How many wives will he have?" she answered that she said it "upon the sudden tidings declared to her by Bassett, when she was sorry for the change and knew not so much as she knows now."

Page 30

But for all Anne's prudence, and the bold front the brave woman presented to her misfortunes, she had been secretly hoping that when the inevitable crash came, she would be restored to the rights which she had only renounced, because she had no alternative. Henry, however, made no sign, and in 1543 Katharine Parr appeared on the scene. The first mention of the king's sixth wife in the public records is a tailor's bill for numerous items of cotton, linen, buckram, *etc*., and the making of Italian gowns, pleats, and sleeves, kirtles, French, Dutch, and Venetian gowns, Venetian sleeves, French hoods, *etc*., of various materials, the total amount of the bill being 8 pounds, 9s. 5d. This bill was delivered "to my Lady Latymer," and was copied into the book of Skutt the tailor.

Katharine Parr had been first married as a mere child to the old Lord Borough of Gainsborough, and had been left a widow before she was seventeen. She then married Lord Latimer, who died in 1543, and was immediately sought in marriage by Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of the king's third wife, who became Lord High Admiral in Edward's reign. Katharine undoubtedly intended to become his wife, but as she afterwards wrote, her "will was over-ruled by a higher power."

On the 20th June of the same year, Lady Latimer and her sister Mrs. Herbert were at court "with my Lady Mary's Grace and my Lady Elizabeth," and the next mention of her is in a licence of Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, "authorised thereto by parliament to Henry VIII. (who has deigned to marry the Lady Katharine, late wife of Lord Latimer deceased) to have the marriage solemnised in any church, chapel, or oratory, without the issue of banns." It took place on the 12th July following, in an upper oratory called the Queen's Privy Closet, within the honour of Hampton Court, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, officiating.

"Anne of Cleves [wrote Chapuys to Charles V.], would like to be in her sherte [shroud] so to speak, with her mother, having especially taken great grief and despair at the king's espousal of this last wife, who is not nearly so beautiful as she, besides that there is no hope of issue, seeing that she had none with her two former husbands."

Others, besides the poor, discarded Lady Anne were also in tribulation, and a letter from one of the Lutherans in England to Henry Bullinger, the reformer, reports that "the king has within these two months burnt three godly men in one day. For in July he married the widow of a nobleman named Latimer, and he is always wont to celebrate his nuptials by some wickedness of this kind."

But Katharine herself was glad exceedingly, and told Lord Parr that "it having pleased God to incline the king to take her as his wife, which is the greatest joy and comfort that could happen to her, she informs her brother of it as the person who has most cause to rejoice thereat, and requires him to let her sometimes hear of his health, as friendly as if she had not been called to this honour."

Page 31

Wriothesley, in forwarding this letter from the queen, Lord Parr's "gracious lady and kind sister," doubts not but that he will thank God, and frame himself to be more and more an ornament to Her Majesty.

The marriage was in every way satisfactory. Katharine was twenty-six, about one year younger than the Lady Mary, and was by universal fame reported "a prudent, beautiful, and virtuous lady." The royal family had reason to be grateful for her influence over the king, whom she persuaded to restore both Mary and Elizabeth to their rank. To Edward she was a second mother, and Henry seems to have looked upon her with something akin to respect, appointing her regent when he crossed the Channel to invade France in 1544.

She offended him, however, on one occasion, by venturing to express a difference of opinion on a religious question, and it was said that articles of heresy were drawn up against her. "A good hearing it is," exclaimed Henry, "when women become such clerks; and a thing much to my comfort to come in mine old days to be taught by my wife! Her prudence and tact saved her life, if it was ever seriously in danger."

Henry's sordid tragedy was played out on the 28th January 1547, when the tyrant breathed his last, and left his two wives and two daughters to unravel the skein which he had so persistently entangled for them. Katharine Parr took her fate immediately into her own hands, and thirty-five days after Henry's death, secretly married her former admirer, Sir Thomas, now Lord Seymour, who was described by Hayward as "fierce in courage, courtly in fashion, in personage stately, in voice magnificent, but somewhat empty in matter." The union was not a happy one, owing mainly to Seymour's intrigues with the Princess Elizabeth, a circumstance that was thought to have shortened Katharine's life. The ci-devant queen died at Sudeley Castle, after having given birth to a daughter, in August 1548, aged thirty-six.

After the one tragic episode in her life, the course of Anne of Cleves ran smoothly enough. Mary befriended her always, and made her quondam stepmother a prominent figure at her coronation. She frequently paid her visits, and treated her with all the respect imaginable. Anne never left England after her ill-starred arrival, ending her days peacefully in 1557.

III. A NOTABLE ENGLISHMAN

While Edward's Council thought that they had effectually closed every issue through which news of the king's death might transpire, before their seditious plans were completed, the Princess Mary was already on her way into Norfolk, calling all loyal men and true to rally round her standard. Two Norfolk gentlemen were mainly instrumental in placing her on the throne. These were Sir Henry Jerningham and the subject of this

memoir, Sir Henry Bedingfeld of Oxburgh, who came in to her assistance at Framlingham, with 140 well-armed men.

Page 32

Bedingfeld proclaimed the queen at Norwich, and was afterwards rewarded for his loyalty with an annual pension of 100 pounds out of the forfeited estates of Sir Thomas Wyatt. Mary made him a Privy Councillor and Knight Marshal of her army, and subsequently Lieutenant of the Tower of London; and Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard, vice Sir Henry Jerningham. She appointed him custodian of Elizabeth, when that princess was confined in the Tower and at Woodstock, on suspicion of being concerned in Wyatt's rebellion; and so little did Elizabeth resent his severity during the time of her imprisonment, that after her accession, she addressed him as her "trusty and well-beloved," employed him in her service, and granted to him the manor of Caldecot in Norfolk, which still forms part of the Oxburgh estate at the present day.

He was undoubtedly one of the foremost Englishmen of his day, respected by two sovereigns, and occupying prominent and honourable positions, his loyalty being unimpeachable; yet Foxe, the martyrologist, with his wonted dishonesty, has without the slightest foundation, and so effectually, blackened his fame, that almost every subsequent writer on this period has reproduced the calumnies set forth with malice prepense in the Acts and Monuments.

Strype was the first unquestioning copyist of Foxe; Burnet was the second; and Sir Reginald Hennell is the most recent.*

* In his volume "The History of the King's Bodyguard of the Yeomen of the Guard."

Tennyson, in his dramatic poem Queen Mary, also went to Foxe for his historical data, with the result that, while discarding the more malicious interpretation of Bedingfeld's character, he has, nevertheless, passed on to posterity a coarse and grotesque caricature as though it were a portrait.

A fire broke out at Woodstock in May 1554, and Tennyson choosing to suppose that Elizabeth suspected foul play, invented the following absurd dialogue:—

Lady.
I woke Sir Henry—and he's true to you-
I read his honest horror in his eyes.

Elizabeth.
Or true to you?

Lady.
Sir Henry Bedingfeld!
I will have no man true to me, your Grace,
But one that pares his nails; to me? the clown!
For like his cloak, his manners want the nap
And gloss of court; but of this fire he says,

Nay swears, it was no wicked wilfulness,
Only a natural chance.

Elizabeth.
A chance-perchance
One of those wicked wilfuls that men make,
Nor shame to call it nature.

At the end of a long speech Elizabeth cries

God save the Queen. My jailor—

Bedingfeld.
One, whose bolts,
That jail you from free life, bar you from death.
There haunt some Papist ruffians hereabout
Would murder you.

Elizabeth.
I thank you heartily, sir,
But I am royal, tho' your prisoner,
And God hath blest or cursed me with a nose—
Your boots are from the horses.

Page 33

This libel did not, however, pass unchallenged, and the father of the present baronet wrote to the Poet Laureate the following protest:—

“Sir,—As a great admirer of your genius, I eagerly read your drama Queen Mary, but was so surprised and pained at the ignoble part which is allotted to Sir Henry Bedingfeld, that I cannot refrain from addressing you on the subject. I feel justified in doing so, as I am the direct descendant of Sir Henry, and date from the house which was his home.

“The millions who will read Mary Tudor, or witness the play on the stage, will carry away the impression that my ancestor was a vulgar yeoman, in some way connected with the stables, whereas he was a man of ancient lineage, a trusted friend and servant of the queen, who confided to him in time of danger the Lieutenancy of the Tower, and the custody of the Princess Elizabeth. This princess so respected Sir Henry, that although she complained of his severity during her captivity, she visited him at Oxburgh after her accession to the throne, and treated him with the greatest consideration. Numerous documents in my possession, including letters from the Sovereign, from the Privy Council, arid from the most eminent men of the time, would prove, were such proof required, the high position held by Sir Henry.

“I trust, therefore, to your feeling of justice that you will, if possible, either strike out Sir Henry’s name from future editions, or allot to him a more dignified part on the stage, and one which will convey a more correct view of his character and position.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“Henry Bedingfeld.”

Tennyson’s answer to the above, dated from the Isle of Wight, six months later, though courteous, left the matter almost where it was, so far as historical accuracy was secured:—

“Sir,—Your letter arrived when I was abroad, else would have been answered at once; and therefore I waited till the play should be announced for acting. I had made your ancestor an honest gentleman though a rough one, as I found him reported to be, whether true or no; and I regret that you should have been pained by my representation of him. Now, in deference to your wishes, his name is not once mentioned on the stage, and he is called in the play-bill merely ’Governor of Woodstock.’ Moreover, I have inserted a line in Elizabeth’s part: ’But, girl, you wrong a noble gentleman.’—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

“A. Tennyson.”

In spite, however, of the best intention on the part of the author, the American edition of the play, priding itself on being “the only unmutilated version,” preserves the exact

wording of the poem.* Thus has history ever been medicated to suit the prejudices of the uncritical and the ignorant.

* De Witt's acting plays, No. 181, Queen Mary; a drama. Edited by John M. Kingdom.

Page 34

Sir Henry Bedingfeld, who was born in the year 1509, was the grandson of Sir Edmund Bedingfeld, the favourite of three successive kings, Edward *iv*., Richard *iii*., and Henry *vii*. This same Sir Edmund had served in the Wars of the Roses, and Edward *iv*., by letters patent of the twenty-second year of his reign, granted to him, "for his faithful service, licence to build towers, walls, and such other fortifications as he pleased in his manors of Oxburgh, together with a market there weekly, and a court of pye-powder." He also bestowed on him his own royal badge the Falcon and Fetterlock. Richard *iii*. made him a Knight of the Bath, and Henry *vii*. visited him at Oxburgh. In the third year of his reign this king granted three manors in Yorkshire, Wold, Newton, and Gaynton to him and his heirs male for ever, in return for his help in crushing the rebellion in the north, which patent was renewed and confirmed by Henry VIII. Sir Edmund died in 1496, and was succeeded by his only son, another Edmund, who attended Henry VIII. in his foreign wars, and was knighted for valour by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, on the battle-field, after the taking of Montdidier in 1523. The king appointed him steward to Katharine of Arragon at Kimbolton. He married Grace, daughter of Henry, Lord Marny, and by her had four sons, Henry, Edmund, Anthony, and Humphrey. Henry, who succeeded him in 1533, was the famous Lieutenant of the Tower, and the "jailor" of the Princess Elizabeth. Henry's wife was Katharine, daughter of Sir Roger Townshend, one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas, and ancestor of the present Marquis Townshend. Sir Henry Bedingfeld kept up some state at Oxburgh, having twenty servants in livery, besides those employed in husbandry. When he was away on the queen's business, the management of his estate devolved on Dame Katharine, and a letter from this lady addressed "To the right worshipful, my very good husband," and dated Oxburgh, October 1554, is a compte rendu of all she had done for his property during his absence. This document which has had a chequered career, has lately, with some others, found its way back to the Oxburgh archives. Another, the draft of which has lately been discovered among the muniments of this venerable old house, strikes a more pathetic note, and testifies, to the affectionate dependence with which Lady Bedingfeld leaned on her lord.

"Lady Bedingfeld to the lords of the Council, praying to have her husband with her during her confinement:—

My Lords,—Being very near the time of my being brought to bed, and Sir Henry Bedingfeld in the country, who is very tender in giving any offence to the Queen's Majesty, this is humbly to beg your Lordships will be pleased to confirm the order as he may have leave to be with me till the time of my approaching danger be over, and I shall acknowledge it as a very great favour done to your Lordships' most humble servant."

Page 35

On the reverse side of this draft is a recipe for “Lime drinks against the King’s Evil, or any sharp humours.”

Although a man does not necessarily write himself down angel or devil, it is true of most people that their correspondence is a fair indication of their character, tastes, and habits. The letters written by and addressed to Sir Henry Bedingfeld reveal him as of the usual type of country gentlemen of the period, interested in sport and agriculture, but having also some experience of soldiering. He could be counted on to raise a troop of horse or foot in an emergency, provided it were in the service of the lawful sovereign. He made it his business to become acquainted with the condition of Marshland, in order to account to the queen for the fealty of those around him; and Elizabeth, no less than Mary, knew that she could rely on him to uphold her authority in the eastern Counties, His letters to Mary show that notwithstanding his frankness, and his freedom from diplomatic subtlety, his manners did not lack the polish of the courtier. In the fulfilment of his charge he was ever prudent, cautious, and almost timid in the matter of accepting responsibility; in no sense covetous of office, he was yet so scrupulous in the discharge of duty, that he scarcely ever acted on his own judgment if he could possibly wring instructions from the Privy Council. His loyalty, uprightness, courtesy, and modesty, stood him in lieu of more brilliant parts, and his severity was at all times tempered by that quality of mercy which “is not strained.” To all this must be added his fidelity to his religion in difficult and dangerous times.

His life after Mary’s accession, to which he had materially contributed, falls naturally into three parts: 1. The period during which he had the care of the Princess Elizabeth. 2. His term of office as Lieutenant of the Tower. 3. The twenty-five years after Mary’s death, which he spent for the most part in retirement in Norfolk.

On the 18th March 1554, this portentous missive was delivered to him:—

“My duty remembered, these shall be to advise you that on Friday my lady Elizabeth was sent to the Tower at 10 of the clock. The Parliament shall be holden at Westminster on the day aforesaid; and the Queen is in good health, thanks be to God, who preserve you in much worship. This Good Friday riding by the way.—Your servant to command,

“Thomas Waters.

“To the right worshipful Sir Henry Bedyngfeld give these, written in haste.”

The causes of Elizabeth’s arrest were far-reaching. Circumstantial evidence of her connection with Wyatt’s rebellion was not wanting, and if Mary had been willing to have her sister convicted on that evidence alone, her head would undoubtedly have fallen on the block. Elizabeth herself in numerous instances caused blood to flow on far less certain grounds. But her guilt could not otherwise be brought home, and in her first

Parliament Mary had restored the ancient, constitutional law of England, by which overt or spoken acts of treason must be proved, before any English person could be convicted as a traitor.

Page 36

The case against Elizabeth was this. The French Ambassador, de Noailles, whose instructions were that he should play upon the popular discontent in regard to the queen's proposed marriage to Philip of Spain, in the interest of France, encouraged Elizabeth to associate herself with the factious, and to become, as it were, the stalking-horse of the disaffected. She was far too clever to commit herself to any direct act of rebellion, but de Noailles was prodigal of her name in all the intrigues that he fostered, and the plot organised by means of Sir Peter Carew, in Devonshire and Cornwall, had for its declared object the marriage of Elizabeth to Courtenay, Earl of Devon, and the placing of these two on the throne. Sir Thomas Wyatt had meanwhile raised the standard of revolt in the home counties, but before leaving London for that purpose, he had written a letter to Elizabeth, urging her for greater safety to retire to her castle of Donnington. This letter fell into the hands of the Council, as did also three letters from de Noailles to the French king, directly implicating Elizabeth in the insurrection, and a copy of the letter which she had written to Mary, refusing on the plea of illness to obey the queen's summons to the Court. Lord Russell confessed to having carried communications between the princess and Wyatt, and that traitor, being brought to trial, owned that the object of his rising was to secure the crown for Elizabeth and Courtenay. He subsequently repeated the statement, adding that the French king had promised them men and money, and was to attack Calais and Guisnes the moment the rebels were in possession of London. Whether he really withdrew this accusation of Elizabeth on the scaffold must always remain doubtful, the testimony of the sheriffs being in direct contradiction to that of Lord Chandos, who was also present. It was not until Wyatt had formerly declared Elizabeth to be conspiring with Henry *ii*. of France, that Mary was at length convinced of the necessity of securing her person. She repeated her summons, but not, as Foxe would have us believe, with inconsiderate cruelty and rough haste. Elizabeth's uncle, Admiral Lord William Howard, Sir Edward Hastings, and Sir Thomas Cornwallis, were sent to escort her from Ashridge to Westminster, with two physicians who were to decide whether she were well enough to travel. She was treated with uniform courtesy and consideration, and the journey of thirty-three miles, originally intended to occupy five days, was actually made to cover a whole week. The imperial ambassador thus describes her arrival*:—

* State Papers (Domestic), 1554, vol. xxi.; R.O.

Page 37

“The lady Elizabeth arrived here yesterday, clad completely in white, surrounded by a great assemblage of servants of the Queen, besides her own people. Her countenance was pale, her look proud, lofty, and superbly disdainful, an expression which she assumed to disguise the mortification she felt. The Queen declined seeing her, and caused her to be accommodated in a quarter of her palace from which neither she nor her servants could go out without passing through the guards. Of her suite, only two gentlemen, six ladies, and four servants are permitted to wait on her, the rest of her train being lodged in the city of London. The queen is advised to send her to the Tower, since she is accused by Wyatt, named in the letters of the French ambassador, suspected by her own councillors, and it is certain that the enterprise was undertaken in her favour."*

* Record Office Transcripts (Belgian Archives), printed by Tytler in his England under the reins of Edward *vi*. and Mary.

When charged with complicity in the plot, Elizabeth replied that she knew nothing of it. The members of the Council were divided concerning her, some maintaining that the legal proof against her was insufficient to justify her being sent to the Tower, while others were for giving her short shrift. Mary availed herself of this loophole, and caused each lord of the Council in succession to be asked to undertake the custody of the princess in his own house. Not one was willing to accept the perilous office, and a warrant was therefore made out for her committal. There was a very general impression at the time, that her life would have been in danger, but for Mary’s determination that the law should not be infringed at her trial. Nothing could be adduced that was not already known, and in spite of the emperor’s reiterated demands for her execution, Mary would not have her convicted on the only evidence obtainable.

It was for Elizabeth’s greater safety that the queen appointed Sir Henry Bedingfeld to be her custodian, and Foxe’s absurd description of Bedingfeld’s arrival with his hundred soldiers in blue-coats, and Elizabeth’s terror at the sight, is manifestly a fabrication of the martyrologist’s brain. We have already had a glimpse of Sir Henry’s antecedent history. He had materially contributed to Mary’s triumph over her enemies, and may be said to have been one of the train instruments in placing the Queen on the throne; he was a distinguished member of her Privy Council, therefore a public personage, and it is inconceivable that Elizabeth should have asked who he was, as being “a man unknown to her Grace,” or that her attendants and friends should have answered that “they were ignorant what manner of man he was.” Foxe himself had betaken himself to foreign parts on Mary’s accession, and may perhaps be pardoned for not knowing, although we find it hard to forgive him for the baseless fabrication by which he sought to discredit the queen and all those who served her faithfully.

Page 38

“About that time,” romances Foxe, “it was spread abroad that her Grace should be carried from thence by this new jolly Captain and his soldiers; but whither it could not be learned, which was unto her a great grief, especially for that such a company was appointed to her guard, requesting rather to continue there still, than to be led thence with such a sort of rascals. At last plain answer was made by the Lord Chandos, that there was no remedy but from thence she must needs depart to the manor of Woodstock.”

He goes on to say that on 19th May she was removed from the Tower, “where Sir Henry Benifield [being appointed her jailor] did receive her with a company of rake-hells to guard her, besides the Lord Derby’s band, wafting in the country about for moonshine in the water. Unto whom at length came my Lord of Thame, joined in commission with the said Sir Henry for the safeguarding of her to prison, and they together conveyed her Grace to Woodstock, as hereafter followeth. The first day they conducted her to Richmond, where she continued all night, being restrained of her own men which were laid in out-chambers, and Sir Henry Benifield’s soldiers appointed in their rooms to give attendance on her person. Whereat she being marvellously dismayed, thinking verily some secret mischief to be a-working towards her, called her gentleman-usher, and desired him with the rest of his company to pray for her. ‘For this night,’ quoth she, ‘I think to die.’ Wherewith, he being stricken to the heart, said, ’God forbid that any such wickedness should be pretended against your Grace.’ So comforting her as well as he could, at last he burst out into tears, and went from her down into the court, where were talking the Lord Thame and Sir Henry Benifield.”

We may now dismiss Foxe and his egregious insinuations of foul play, together with his monstrous inventions of boorishness on the part of Elizabeth’s custodian. In spite of his calumnies, it remains perfectly clear that Elizabeth had every reason to be thankful that her “jailor” was faithful to his trust, and that firmness and caution, rather than weak indulgence, characterised all his conduct towards her. As for his alleged want of courtesy towards her, there is not a shadow of evidence to support it; he frequently knelt to address her, and even in speaking or writing of her, maintained the same deferential mode of expression as that which he used in her presence.

Each incident of the journey from the Tower to Woodstock is detailed in Sir Henry’s report to the Privy Council. Elizabeth apparently seized every opportunity of making his difficult task yet more difficult; but wayward and imperious as her temper often was, nothing in his demeanour towards her ever approached to disrespect or even impatience. Even she herself brought no other complaint against her custodian than that of “scrupulousness” in the discharge of his duty, a charge which is in itself a magnificent vindication, for the Elizabeth of history was not one to forgive a man who had failed in the smallest degree to pay her the homage due to her rank. Moreover, in regard to Sir Henry’s soldiers, no single instance is recorded on either side of misbehaviour or want of decorum on their part.

Page 39

In his first letter to the queen after their arrival at Woodstock, Sir Henry says:—

“My lady Elizabeth’s Grace did use [? peruse] the letter which your Highness sent her, wherein she was right weary, to my judgment, the occasion rising of the stark style of the same letter, being warpen and cast. This present day she hath not been very well at ease, as your Highness’s women did declare unto me, and yet at the afternoon she required to walk, and see another lodging in the house. In the which, and other her like requests, I am marvellously perplexed to grant her desire, or to say nay, seeing it hath been your Highness’s pleasure to remove her person from and out of the Tower of London where I was led to do upon more certainty by the precedent of my good Lord Chamberlain [Sir John Gage] and also by certain articles, by me exhibited unto my lords of the Council and by them ordered, which were to me a perfect rule at that time, and now is very hard to be observed in this place. Wherefore I most lowly and heartily do desire your Highness to give me authority and order in writing from your Majesty or your Council, how to demean myself in this your Highness’s service, whereby I shall be the more able to do the same, and also receive comfort and heart’s ease to be your Highness’s daily beadsman to God for persuasion of your most princely and sovereign estate long to endure to God’s honour.

“The 21 of May, 1554."*

* This and the next following letters are taken from the fourth volume of the publications of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, “State Papers relating to the custody of the Princess Elizabeth at Woodstock in 1554,” being letters between Queen Mary and her Privy Council and Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight, of Oxburgh, Norfolk, communicated by the Rev. C.R. Manning, M.A., Hon. Sec. The originals were formerly in Mr. Manning’s possession, but have now disappeared. The present writer has modernised the spelling.

In answer to this letter the Council wrote approving his doings, and thanking Sir Henry on the part of the queen. A number of instructions for his further conduct were also sent, the purport of which will be gathered from his reply:—

“My letter answering to the former, the Council’s letters.

“So it is, most honourable lords, that upon the return of my brother Humphrey, I received instructions signed with the Queen’s Majesty’s hand, and enclosed in a letter signed by your Lordships as a warrant to direct my service how to be used during the Queen’s Majesty’s pleasure, trusting only in God to make me able to do and accomplish the same. I travail and shall do to the best of my power till God and her Highness shall otherwise dispose for me, wishing that shortly it should come to pass, if it may so stand with her Highness’s good contention and your honour. As touching the fifth article, which purported this in effect that I should not suffer the lady Elizabeth’s Grace to have conference

Page 40

with any suspect person out of my hearing, that she do not by any means either receive or send any message, letter or token, to or from any manner of person, which, under your honourable corrections, must thus answer to that, as touching conference with suspected persons, if your Lordships mean strangers, and such as be not daily attending upon her person by your assents and privities, with the help above said, I dare take upon me that to do. But if you mean general conference with all persons, as well within her house as without, I shall beseech you of pardon, for that I dare not take upon me, nor yet for message, letter or token, which may be conveyed by any of the three women of her privy chamber, her two grooms of the same or the yeomen of the robes, all which persons and none others be with her Grace at her going to her lodging, and part of them all night, and until such time as her grace cometh to her dining-chamber, the grooms always after going abroad within the house, having full opportunity to do such matter as is prohibited. And hereunto I beseech your honours ask my Lord Chamberlain whether it will be within possibility for me to do it or no, whose order in all things I have and do, according to my poor wit and endeavour put in use; and upon his declaration to direct order possible. At the present writing hereof one Marbery, my lady Grace's servant, brought his wife, Elizabeth Marbery, to have been received to have wait upon her Grace, in the stead of Elizabeth Sands, and because I received no manner of warrant from you my Lords, to do it, I have required the said Marbery to stay himself and his wife hereabouts, till I might receive the same, which I pray you to do with all speed, for they been very poor folks, and unable to bear their own charge as I perceive.

"Her Grace, thanks be to God, continueth in reasonable health and quietness, as far as I can perceive; but she claimeth promise of the mouth of my Lords Treasurer and Chamberlain to have the liberty of walk within the whole park of Woodstock. This she hath caused to come to mine ear by my Lady Gray, but never spoke of it to me by express words . . . . Her Grace hath not hitherto made any request to walk in any other place than in the over and nether gardens with the orchard, which, if she happens to do, I must needs answer I neither dare nor will assent unto it, till by the Queen's Highness and your honours I be authorised that to do . . . . Cornwallis, the gentleman-usher, did move me to assent that the cloth of estate should be hanged up for her Grace, whereunto I directly said nay, till your Lordships' pleasures were known therein.

"Postscript.—There was some peril of fire within the house, which we have without any loss to be regarded, escaped. Thanks be to God."

In answer to the above the Council thanked and commended Sir Henry for all that he had hitherto done, adding:—

Page 41

“Where ye desire to be resolved of certain doubts which you gather upon your instructions, ye shall understand that although we well know ye cannot meet such inconvenience as may happen by those that attend upon the lady Elizabeth, in bringing unto her letters, messages or tokens, yet if ye shall use your diligence and wisdom there as ye shall see cause, it shall be your sufficient discharge. As for strangers, ye must foresee that no persons suspect have any conference with her at all, and yet to permit such strangers whom ye shall think honest and not suspicious, upon any reasonable cause to speak with her in your hearing only. As for placing Elizabeth Marbery in lieu of Sands, letters be already sent from the Queen’s Highness unto you therefore, which we pray you to see executed accordingly. Where she claimeth promise of the Lord Treasurer and me the Lord Chamberlain to walk in the park, as we have heard nothing before this time thereof, so do not I the Lord Chamberlain remember any such promise.”

The queen’s letter was as follows:—

“Marye The Quene. By the Quene

“Trusty and right well-beloved, we greet you well. And where we be informed that Sands, one of the women presently attending about our sister the Lady Elizabeth, is a person of an evil opinion, and not fit to remain about our said sister’s person, we let you wit, our will and pleasure is, you shall travail with our said sister, and by the best means ye can persuade her to be contented to have the said Sands removed from her, and to accept in her place, Elizabeth Marbery, another of her women, who shall be sent thither for that purpose: whom at her coming we require you to be placed there, and to give order that the said Sands may be removed from thence accordingly.

“Given under our signet, at our manor of St. James, the 26th day of May, the first year of our reign.”

It was soon found necessary to cancel the permission for strangers to have access to the captive princess, and the Council accordingly wrote to Sir Henry:—

“And forasmuch as it appeareth hereby that such private persons as be disposed to disquiet will not let to take occasion if they may, to convey messages or letters in and out by some secret practice, her Majesty’s further pleasure is for the avoiding hereof, that ye shall henceforth suffer no manner person other than such as are already appointed to, be about the Lady Elizabeth, to come unto her or have any manner, talk, or conference with her, any former instructions or letters heretofore sent you to the contrary notwithstanding.”

Page 42

Elizabeth made difficulties with regard to every detail of her custody, and the substitution of Marbery, although she was one of her own women, for Sands, was not effected without a struggle; but on the 5th June Sir Henry was able to report that: "The same was done this present day, about 2 of the clock in the afternoon, not without great mourning both of my Lady's Grace and Sands. And she was conveyed into the town by my brother Edmund, and by him delivered to Mr. Parry, who at my desire yesternight did prepare horse and men to be ready to convey her either to Clerkenwell beside London to her uncle there, or else into Kent, to her father, towards the which he promised she should go. This I do signify unto your lordships, because I think her a woman meet to be looked unto for her obstinate disposition."

In another very long letter he certifies that the princess has asked for an English Bible "of the smallest possible volume," desiring that he would send to her cofferer for one. But the cofferer replied that he had none at all, but sent a servant with three books, one of which contained the Psalms of David and the Canticles. Leave was given for her to have an English Bible, and for her to write to the Queen as she desired.

On the 12th June Sir Henry wrote to the Council a letter highly informative as to the difficulties of his position:—

"Pleaseth it your honourable lordships to be advertised, that the same day I last wrote unto you, my lady Elizabeth's Grace demanded of me whether I had provided her the book of the Bible in English of the smallest volume, or no. I answered, because there were divers Latin books in my hands ready to be delivered if it pleased her to have them, wherein as I thought she should have more delight, seeing she understandeth the same so well; therefore I had not provided the same, which answer I perceived she took not in good part, and within half-an-hour after that, in her walking in the nether garden, in the most unpleasant sort that ever I saw her since her coming from the Tower, she called me to her again, and said in these words: 'I have at divers times spoken to you to write to my lords of certain my requests, and you never make me answer to any of them. I think (quoth she) you make none of my lords privy to my suit, but only my Lord Chamberlain, who, although I know him to be a good gentleman, yet by age, and other his earnest business, I know he hath occasion to forget many things.' To this I answered that I did never write in her Grace's matter to any of you my lords privately, and said unto her Grace further, that I thought this was a time that your lordships had great business in,* and therefore her Grace could not look for direct answer upon the first suit. 'Well,' said she, 'once again I require you to do thus much for me, to write unto my said lords, on my behalf to be means unto the Queen's Majesty, to grant me leave to write unto her Highness with mine own hand, and in this I pray

Page 43

you let me have answer as soon as you can.' To this I answered: 'I shall do for your Grace that I am able to do, which is to write to my said Lords, and then it must needs rest in their honourable considerations whether I shall have answer or no,' since which time her Grace never spoke to me. Surely, I take it that the remembrance of Elizabeth Sands' departing, and the only placing Marbery in her room, clearly against her late desire, is some cause of her grief [grievance]."

* On account of the Queen's approaching marriage.

The effect produced by the princess's letter to Mary may be gathered from the following reply, written by the Queen to Sir Henry:—

"Marye The Quene. By the Quene.

"Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. And where our pleasure was of late signified unto you for the Lady Elizabeth to have licence to write unto us, we have now received her letters, containing only certain arguments devised for her declaration in such matters as she hath been charged withal by the voluntary confessions of divers others. In which arguments she would seem to persuade us, that the testimony of those who have opened matters against her, either were not such as they be, or being such should have no credit. But as we were most sorry at the beginning, to have any occasion of suspicion, so when it appeared unto us, that the copies of her secret letters unto us were found in the packet of the French ambassador, that divers of the most notable traitors made their chief account upon her, we can hardly be brought to think that they would have presumed to do so, except they had had more certain knowledge of her favour towards their unnatural conspiracy than is yet by her confessed. And therefore, though we have for our part, considering the matter brought to our knowledge against her, used more clemency and favour towards her than in the like matter hath been accustomed; yet cannot these fair words so much abuse [deceive] us, but we do well understand how these things have been wrought. Conspiracies be secretly practised, and things of that nature be many times judged by probable conjectures, and other suspicions and arguments, where the plain, direct proof may chance to fail; even as wise Solomon judged who was the true mother of the child by the woman's behaviour and words, when other proof failed and could not be had. By the argument and circumstances of her said letter with other articles declared on your behalf by your brother to our Privy Council, it may well appear her meaning and purpose to be far otherwise than her letters purported. Wherefore our pleasure is not to be hereafter any more molested with such her disguise and colourable letters, but wish for her that it may please our Lord to grant her His grace to be towards Him as she ought to be; then shall she the sooner be towards us as becometh her. This much have we thought good to write unto you, to the intent ye might understand the effect of those letters, and so continue your accustomed diligence in the charge by us committed to you.

Page 44

“Given under our signet at the Castle of Farnham, the 25th day of June, the first year of our reign.”

The gist of this letter was communicated to Elizabeth by Sir Henry in the manner he himself describes:—

“Yesterday I went to hear Mass in her Grace’s chamber; that being ended, in the time of doing my duty, thinking to have departed from her Grace, she called me, and asked whether I had heard of any answer that was or should be made by the Queen’s Majesty to her late letters. Upon which occasion, fitly as I took it, I made her Grace answer that I had to declare unto her an answer on the Queen’s Majesty’s behalf, whensoever she should command me. ‘Let it be even now,’ said her Grace. ‘If you will,’ I answered, ’because I was fearful to misreport; therefore I have scribbled it as well as I can with mine own hand, and if you will give me leave to fetch it,’ and, being ready to go in to her Grace with it, I received word from her Grace by one of the Queen’s Majesty’s women to stay till her Grace had dined, and then she would hear it. Within a mean pause after dinner she sent for me, and having Mr. Tomiou in my company, who going with me into the outer chamber, there staying, I went in to her Grace, and required her if it so stood with her pleasure that he might hear the doing of the message. She granted it, and I called him in, and kneeling by with me, I read unto her Grace my message according to the effect of the Queen’s Majesty’s letter. After once hearing of it she uttered certain words, bewailing her own chance in that her Grace’s letter, contrary to her expectations, took no better effect, and desired to hear it once again, which I did. And then her Grace said: ’I note especially to my great discomfort [which I shall, nevertheless, willingly obey] that the Queen’s Majesty is not pleased that I should molest her Highness with any more of my colourable letters, which, although they be termed colourable, yet not offending the Queen’s Majesty, I must say for myself that it was the plain truth, even as I desire to be saved afore God Almighty, and so let it pass. Yet, Mr. Bedyngfeld, if you think you may do so much for me, I would have you to receive an answer which I would make unto you touching your message, which I would at the least way, my Lords of the Council might understand, and that ye would conceive it upon my words, and put it in writing, and let me hear it again. And if it be according to my meaning, so to pass it to my lordships for my better comfort in mine adversity.’ To this I answered her Grace: ’I pray you, hold me excused that I do not grant your request in the same.’ Then she said: ’It is like that I shall be offered more than ever any prisoner was in the Tower, for the prisoners be suffered to open their mind to the Lieutenant, and he to declare the same unto the Council, and you refuse to do the like.’ To this I answered her Grace that there was a diversity where the Lieutenant did hear a prisoner declare matters touching his case, and should thereof give notice unto the Council, and where the prisoner should, as it were, command the Lieutenant to do his message to the Council. Therefore, I desired that her Grace would give me leave with patience not to agree to her desire herein, and so departed from her Grace.

Page 45

“Yesterday morning again, about x of the clock, in the time of her walk, she called me to her in the little garden, and said: ’I remember yesterday ye refused utterly to write on my behalf unto my Lords of the Council, and therefore, if you continue in that mind still, I shall be in worse case than the worst prisoner In Newgate, for they be never gainsaid in the time of their imprisonment by one friend or other to have their cause opened or sued for, and this is and shall be such a conclusion unto me, that I must needs continue this life without all hope worldly, wholly resting to the truth of my cause, and that before God to be opened, arming myself against whatsoever shall happen, to remain the Queen’s true subject as I have done during my life. It waxeth wet, and therefore I will depart to my lodging again;’ and so she did. Thus much concerning her Grace, I thought it my duty to give your lordships advertisement of, to be considered as it shall please your honours, clearly omitting any part of the message, and such which my lady’s Grace would have had me to have taken upon me, and shall do so, unless I have the Queen’s Majesty’s warrant for the same.”

This report had the desired effect, and the Council gave Sir Henry leave “to write those things that she shall desire you, and to signify the same to us of her Majesty’s Council, sending your letters touching that matter enclosed in some paper directed to her Highness, so as she may herself have the first sight thereof.”

Mary’s next letter was personal to Sir Henry himself:—

“Trusty and right well-beloved, we greet you well. And where we understand that by occasion of certain our instructions lately given unto you, ye do continually make your personal abode within that our house at Woodstock, without removing from thence at any time, which thing might, peradventure in continuance, be both some danger to your health, and be occasion also that ye shall not be so well able to understand the state of the country thereabouts, as otherwise ye might; we let you wit that in consideration thereof; we are pleased ye may at any time, when yourself shall think convenient, make your repair from out of our said house, leaving one of your brethren to look to your charge, and see to the good governance of that house in your absence, so as, nevertheless, ye return back again yourself at night, for the better looking to your said charge. And for your better ease and recreation, we are, in like manner pleased that ye and your brethren may, at your liberties, hawk for your pastime at the partridge, or hunt the hare within that our manor of Woodstock, or any of our grounds adjoining to the same, from time to time, when ye shall think most convenient; and that also ye may, if ye shall so think good, cause your wife to be sent for, and to remain there with you as long as yourself shall think meet.

“Given under our signet at our Castle of Farnham, ye 7th of July, ye second year of our reign.”

Page 46

Elizabeth was not slow to profit by the permission obtained for her to write to the Council through the intermediary allowed, and Sir Henry's letter-book contains the following transcript of his report written in his own hand.

"My lady Elizabeth's Grace's suit:—

"My lady Elizabeth, this present 30th of July, required me to make report of her Grace's mind as her suit to your honours to be means to the Queen's Majesty on her behalf to this effect. To beseech your lordships all to consider her woeful case, that being but once licensed to write as an humble suitress unto the Queen's Highness, and received thereby no such comfort as she hoped to have done, but to her further discomfort in a message by me opened, that it was the Queen's Highness's pleasure not to be any more molested with her Grace's letters, that it may please the same, and that upon very pity, considering her long imprisonment and restraint of liberty, either to charge her with special matter to be answered unto and tried, or to grant her liberty to come unto Her Highness's presence, which she saith she would not desire, were it not that she knoweth herself to be clear, even before God, of her allegiance. And if also by your good mediations she might not enjoy the Queen's Highness's most gracious favour without any scruples or suspicions of her truth, she had rather willingly suffer this that she doth, and much more, than her Majesty should in any case be troubled or disquieted, touching her whose honour surely and preservation she saith she doth desire above all things in this world. Requiring me further to move chiefly as many of you my lords as were a Council, parties, and privy to and for the execution of the will of the King's Majesty her father, to further this her Grace's suit above said. And if neither of these two her suits may be obtained by your lordships for her, that then it might please the Queen's Highness to grant that some of you my lords may have leave to repair hither unto her, and to receive her suit of her own mouth to be opened. Whereby she may take a release not to think herself utterly desolate of all refuge in this world."

To this the Council made reply on the 7th August that "the Queen's Highness" would "take a time to consider, and at convenient leisure make such answer thereunto as shall be` necessary"; but Elizabeth's imperious temper brooked no delay, and Sir Henry was soon prevailed on to jog their lordship's memories:—

"Upon Friday last," he wrote, "my lady Elizabeth's Grace, in the time of her walk in the over garden here, in the forenoon of the same day, said unto me, 'I have very slow speed in the answer of any of my suits, and I know it is ever so, when that there is not one appointed to give daily attendance in suit-making for answer. And therefore,' saith she, 'I pray you let me send a servant of mine own to whom I will do the message in your hearing that he shall do by my commandment; and this

Page 47

I think,' said she, 'is not against the order and service appointed unto you.' To which I answered requiring her Grace to be contented, for I neither could nor would assent to any such her request. 'Then,' said she, 'I am at a marvellous afterdeal [disadvantage], for I have known that the wife hath been received to sue for her husband, the kinsman, friend or servant for them that hath been in the case I now am, and never denied.' To that I answered: 'I myself am of small experience in such case; that notwithstanding, I trust ye shall not be long, or my lords of the Council will remember your suit, and answer the same.'" And so her Grace ended.

Harsh as this refusal may appear at first sight, it must be admitted that Sir Henry, in reporting his conversations with Elizabeth to the Council often obtained for her if not exactly what she had asked for, at least some concession, which, had she been entirely in good faith, would have served her purpose as well. But in spite of her jailor's "scrupulousness " she contrived to communicate pretty freely by means of Parry, her cofferer, and others, with the outside world. Bolts and bars were ineffectual so long as those who surrounded her were willing intermediaries between her and the enemies of the queen, and Sir Henry knew it well. He desired nothing more than to be rid of his onerous charge, as is seen by the following letter to Thirlby, Bishop of Ely:—

"After my hearty commendations to your good lordship, so it is that as you do know, I have continued this service by the space of fifteen weeks, in care of mind and some travail of body, which I would be glad to make suit to be relieved of, if I might know it should be taken in good part. And having no friend whom I believe myself to be so assured of as your lordship, even thereupon I am bold by these heartily to desire your travail in my behalf [if it so stand with your good opinion] to the Queen's Majesty, to grant me my discharge from the same. Wherein I trust my Lord Chancellor* will join with you, if it content you to move him thereunto, who, by words of marvellous effect comprising both the Queen's commandment that I should enter into it, and his earnest request at that time also, did cause me to take in hand the same. And lest my, said Lord should forget, I pray you put him in remembrance that he had this talk with me upon the causeway betwixt the house of Saint James and Charing Cross. And what it shall content you to do for me herein, I shall desire you to be ascertained by your letters, upon the return of the messenger. I made late a suit to you for your house at Blackfriars, and received answer that you had otherwise disposed the same; yet remembering that you had an house of my Lord of Bath in Holborn, which, as the case now standeth, I think your Lordship will have little pleasure to use, and if, by your good mean, I might obtain the same at my Lord of Bath's hands, you should do unto me a great good turn, which have no house of refuge in London, but the common inn, and would be glad to give large money to be avoided of that inconvenience. And thus remaining at the Queen's Majesty's house of Woodstock [out of which I was never, by the space of six hours, sith my coming into the same], I leave to trouble your Lordship with this my rude writing.

Page 48

“At the house aforesaid, the 16th day of August 1554.”

* Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester.

But nothing came of his efforts to get himself released, and the unequal contest between his “scrupulousness,” and Elizabeth’s astute, unfathomable diplomacy was still to be waged for many months. Her request to be allowed to send a verbal message to the Council by one of her servants was indeed declined, but she received permission to commit her petition to paper. On the 20th September, Sir Henry wrote to the Council:—

Upon the return of my brother Edmund with your honourable letters dated at Hampton Court the 15th of this present month, I did take knowledge that your lordships had obtained of the Queen’s Majesty that my lady Elizabeth’s Grace might write unto your lordships, delivering the same unto me to be addressed unto your honours, inclosed in my letter, by one of her grace’s extraordinary servants; whereupon the Monday, being the 17th day in the forenoon of the same, I declared that your lordships had granted her Grace’s late desire in form above said, which was glad tidings as I took it. Yet her Grace at that time did neither command me to prepare things for her Grace to write with nor named who should be her messenger, and so I departed. Her Grace never spake words of that matter more till the Sunday following, in the time of her Grace’s walk at the afternoon, at which time her Grace commanded to prepare her pen and ink and paper against the next day, which I did. Upon Monday in the morning her Grace sent Mistress Morton, the Queen’s Highness’s woman for the same, to whom I delivered a standsel [an inkstand] with five pens, two sheets of fine paper and one coarse sheet, enclosing the same with this request unto the said Mistress Morton, that she should make suit to my lady’s Grace on my behalf, that it would please her Grace not to use the same but in the sight of Mistress Tomio or her. And the same Mistress Morton did this, and brought me word that her Grace had consented to my said suit, and that I should also send word unto Francis Verney, her Grace’s ordinary servant lying in the town of Woodstock, with her cofferer to be messenger. Where I perceive they use as much privy conference to her Grace and from her as they list, even as I advertised your lordships long ago. The house also being a common inn wherein they do lie, and they so politic as they be, I can get no knowledge of their doings by any espyal; this only I am sure of they meet not together in person. At the afternoon, in her Grace’s going to walk, I heard her say she had such pain in her head that she could write no more that day. Tuesday in the morning, as I learned of Mistress Morton, she washed her head.”

On the 4th October he wrote to the queen:—

Page 49

“May it please your Highness to be advertised that this great lady, upon whose person ye have commanded mine attendance, is and hath been in quiet state for the health of her body this month or six weeks, and of her mind declareth nothing outwardly by word or deed that I can come to the knowledge of, but all tending to the hope she saith she hath of your clemency and mercy towards her. Marry, against my lords of your most honourable Council I have heard her speak, words that declare that she hath conceived great unkindness in them, if her meaning go with her words, whereof God only is judge.”

His task grew daily more complicated, and the next letter is a key to the situation:—

“My humble duty remembered unto your honourable Lordships, these shall be to advertise the same, that this present 21st day of October, my lady Elizabeth’s Grace commanded me to prepare things necessary for her to write unto your lordships, whereupon I took occasion to declare onto her Grace that the express words of your honourable Letters, dated at Hampton Court, the 15th of September, did trot bear that the Queen’s Majesty was pleased that her Grace, upon any occasion from time to time moving, and as often as it pleased her, might write unto you. And therefore I prayed her Grace to stay her determination therein until I might signify this my doubt unto your lordships, and receive your full and plain determination therein for my discharge; which my suit she took in so ill part that her Grace of displeasure therein did utter, with more words of reproach of this my service, about her by the Queen’s commandment than ever I heard her speak afore: too long to write. At afternoon her Grace sent for me by Mrs. Pomeyow, and then in a more quieter sort, required me to write unto your honours, and thereby to desire the same to be means for her unto the Queen’s Highness to grant that Drs. Wendy, Owen, and Huick, or two of them, may be licensed with convenient speed to repair hither, for to minister unto her physic, bringing of their own choice one expert surgeon to let her Grace’s blood, if the said doctors or two of them shall think it so good, upon the view of her suit upon their coming . . . . Most heartily desiring your honours to return with the same your absolute opinions to the first matter which shall be done accordingly, with our Lord’s leave and help, to understand your pleasures and commandments aright, which this great lady saith may have good meaning in me, but it lacketh knowledge, experience, and all other accidents in such a service requisite, which I must needs confess. The help only hereof resteth in God and the Queen’s Majesty, with your honourable advice; from whence to receive the discharge of this my service, without offence to the Queen’s Majesty or you my good lords, were the joyfullest tidings that ever came to me, as our Lord Almighty knoweth, to whom no secrets be hidden.”

The physicians were sent to Woodstock, and Elizabeth was “let blood,” Sir Henry testifying that “by her own commandment” he saw it done “by the bleeding of her army); and some hours later he saw her foot “stricken and bled, since which time, thanks be to God, as far as I see or hear she doeth reasonably well as that case requireth.”

Page 50

Some months later “the joyfullest tidings that ever came” were conveyed in a letter from the queen. It was the herald of his longed-for “discharge":—

“Marye The Quene. By the Quene.

“Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. And for as much as we have resolved to have the lady Elizabeth to repair nearer unto us, we do therefore pray and require you to declare unto her that our pleasure is she shall come to us to Hampton Court in your company with as much speed as you can have things in order for that purpose; wherein you shall not need to make any delay for calling of any other numbers than these, which be yourself and those now there attendant upon her. And of the time of your setting forwards from thence, and by what day you shall think you may be there, we require you to advertise us by your letters with speed.

“Given under our signet at our honour of Hampton Court, the 17th of April the 1st and 2nd of our reign.”

On their arrival at court Sir Henry Bedingfeld was relieved, Sir Thomas Pope being appointed to replace him. Elizabeth was soon afterwards allowed to retire to Hatfield, where she remained under supervision till her accession. In the meanwhile, Bedingfeld was appointed Lieutenant of the Tower, and the following selection of letters from the family archives at Oxburgh not only affords us a further insight into his character, but shows at the same time in what manner the State prisoners were treated by the Queen, the Council, and the Lieutenant.

The two first letters relate to Sir John Cheke who, together with Sir Peter Carew, had been arrested in Flanders, and brought to the Tower for implication in Wyatt’s rebellion. Carew was released in October 1555.

“Sir Robert Rochester to Sir Henry Bedingfeld.

“Mr. Lieutenant,—My Lord Cardinal his Grace* being gone to Lambeth of express purpose, there to have before him Mr. Cheke, hath required me to write unto you, and to require you that the said Mr. Cheke may be sent unto him unto Lambeth, in the company and with the Dean of Paul’s. Wherefore I pray you take order with the said Dean so as he may convey him thither accordingly. The meaning is that no officer of the Tower should be troubled with his conveyance thither, but only the Dean to be charged by you with his person to bring to my Lord Cardinal’s presence, and he to bring him again when it shall please my said Lord to command him, who hath the whole order and disposition of this case. This must be done when Mr. Dean he cometh to you for the man. And so bids you most heartily well to fare, from the Court this present morning, your assured friend, R. Rochester.”

Cardinal Pole.

“Sir John Feckenham, Priest,* to Sir John Cheke.

* Abbot of Westminster, who was appointed to examine Cheke in matters of religion.

Page 51

“Gentle Mr. Cheke,—It was this day somewhat past l0 of the clock before I could have any determinate answer of your coming unto the Court, which is now appointed to be at 2 of the clock in the afternoon. I shall send two of my servants to wait upon you from the Tower unto my house, at 1 of the clock, and from thence I will go with you unto the Court myself. I do think that Mr. Lieutenant is already put to knowledge thereof, but if it be forgotten give unto him this my letter, and he will not stay you. Your submission is very well liked, and the Queen’s Highness hath seen the same, with which her Majesty has found no fault, but only that you had forgotten to make mention in the latter end thereof of the King’s Majesty. And therefore you must write it all whole again, and in the latter end add these words which I have added touching the King’s Majesty, or else everything is as it was in your own copy save that I added in one place the real presence of Christ’s Body and Blood. I pray you leave not out these words, and at your coming I shall hear your cause, where notwithstanding your few lines which is wrote unto me thereof, be you of good comfort; all things are well, and imagined best for your furtherance. You have more friends than you be ware of. Thus fare you well, this present 5 of Sep. 1556, by your assured friend, John Fecknam, Priest.

“I pray you fail not to write it all again, and that as large and plain as you can, for I am commanded to request you that you duly so do.”

Dr. Cheke, having proved his innocence of conspiracy to the satisfaction of the Council, and having recanted his heresy, was released, and “through the efficacy of his language,” about thirty others followed his example, and saved their lives. He died the next year, the heretics said, of remorse for what he had done against the reformed religion.

Edward Lewkner, who according to Machyn’s Diary had been groom-porter to Edward *vi*. and Mary, “was cast to suffer death” in the third year of Mary’s reign for participation in the Dudley conspiracy. While in the Tower he fell so grievously ill as to excite the Lieutenant’s compassion, and Sir Henry appears to have interceded with the Queen on his behalf.

“To the Right Worshipful Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight, Lieutenant of the Queen’s Highness’s Tower of London. Francis Malet, Priest.

“Right Worshipful,—After my hearty commendations these shall be to certify your Mastership that where your charity was declared in that it pleased you to take pains to declare by your wise and discreet letters the piteous state of Lewkner, your prisoner, I was thereby the more ready and yet not wanting the counsel of a counseller to move the Queen’s goodness in the matter. And her Grace being content to take into her hands your letter, and going with it into her privy chamber, said she would consider the matter, and that I should learn what her Grace’s resolute mind will be therein. And therefore to

Page 52

tarry this messenger any longer at this time I thought but folly, for that I shall be ready sooner at night if it please her Highness to understand what answer she will make to my suit; or if it will not be known this night, as I doubt, for her Grace is as it were ever defatigate with her late business in dispatching the King of Bohemia's ambassadors, I shall know as soon as I may what her Grace's determination shall be; and that known, I shall with all expedition intimate the same unto you, that so the poor man may be certified of her Grace's pleasure. And in the meantime I shall most heartily beseech your Mastership to continue your favour towards the man; and divers of those that be most nigh unto her Grace's person desire the same at your hands, and saith plainly that the Queen's Grace will not be discontent that he may have all the commodity that may be showed him for the recovery of his health within the Tower. I pray God show His will mercifully upon him, and I trust the Queen's goodness shall be extended withal unto him to his great comfort, as knoweth Almighty Jesus, who send you with much worship long to live and well to live in both soul and body. Scribbled in haste with the running hand of yours to command, Francis Malet, Priest."

The above letter is undated, but the sequel to the story is related by the Lieutenant himself in the minutes of a letter to the Council.

"Please it your Grace and my Lords to be advertised that this present Sunday, the 6th September, Edward Lewkner, prisoner, attainted by long sickness, departed this transitory life to God, about the hour of eight of the clock of the night. Who was a willing man in the forenoon of this day to have received the blessed Sacrament, but the priest that did serve in the absence of the . . . * did think him so well that it was meet to be ministered to him but after he had heard his confession. He did minister unto him the Sacrament of Oiling, or Extreme Unction, at the which I was present. Tomorrow I intend by God's grace to see him buried in form appertaining to his condition in life, as I have learned of those that have seen the like order. Instead of a will he charged me with his service to the Queen's Majesty, that it might please her Highness, after forgiveness of his offences towards the same, to vouchsafe to have pity of his wife and ten poor children, which I promised to do upon my next waiting upon her Majesty, humbly beseeching your Lordships all in time most meet to be good lords to the same his petition. And so as your poor beadsman I take my leave of you.

"From the Queen's Majesty's Tower of London 1556, the night aforesaid, about 11 of the clock.

"Henry Bedyngfeld."

* Illegible in the manuscript.

Page 53

Many other letters among this collection give evidence of the kindness and pity bestowed by the Lieutenant on the prisoners in the Tower, and the consideration with which their friends were treated, these being admitted to see them whenever it was practicable. His relations with nearly all the members of the Privy Council were intimate and cordial, but perhaps his closest friend was Sir Henry Jerningham, who was not only a colleague, but the chosen companion of the rare occasions that were devoted to recreation and pleasure. Their two families had always been on terms of affectionate intimacy, although it was not until two generations later that they became allied by marriage, when Thomas Bedingfeld of Oxburgh, Sir Henry's grandson, married Frances, daughter and co-heir of John Jerningham of Somerleyton.

On the 16th February 1557, Sir Henry Jerningham, having occasion to write to the Lieutenant of the Tower on business, ended his letter thus:

"I do and will labour all that I can to have your company into Norfolk this Lent, to course the hare and hawk the heron. And thus I commit you to God, praying Him to send us our prosperity. Your assured friend, Henry Jerningham."

During the years 1553, 1554, and 1557, Sir Henry Bedingfeld sat in Parliament as one of the knights of the shire for Norfolk. In 1557 he succeeded Sir Henry Jerningham as Captain of the Yeoman of the Guard, at which time he was also made vice Chamberlain. But Mary's death in 1558 closed his public career, and he retired to Oxburgh, which, hemmed in on the south side by miles of fen country, was in those days for all practical purposes entirely cut off from the world. It was probably during a temporary absence, and when he was purposing to entertain guests in his beautiful Norfolk home, that the following letter was written to him presumably by his steward:—

To the right worshipful and my especial good friend Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight, be this delivered.

"Pleaseth it your Mastership that according to your Mastership's commandment, I did write to Mr. R and he was not at home. I shall go to him again, and you shall know by the next messenger; you shall understand what plate and bedding may be had at his hand. What number of capons and hens your Mastership would have me to provide I would desire to know by the next messenger. I doubt fat capons are hard to be gotten in these parts, therefore if you had any that were ready fed, or could get any that were fed in Suffolk they might be stayed till the time you should require them, and have them killed, and carried dead, and have again instead of them fine lean capons. Lean capons are at 8d. the piece, and 9d. and 10d. and 12d. Geese are at 6d. and 7d. a piece. Lean hens 4d. and 5d. Wild fowl was never so hard to be gotten. There is little taken; the fowlers do say the cause is the weather is so rainy, and there is as much wait laid for the getting of it as ever there was for my Lady's Grace and for divers others. I have done as much as I could to have gotten some for your Mastership, and for my masters your sons, and could get but six teals. Since Christmas there is sent you of your own

hawk's killing, eleven teals, two mallards, and eleven bitterns. And I humbly take my leave of your Mastership. From Oxburgh, 20 of December 1563, by your poor servant,

Page 54

“Wm. Deye.”

It would not have been surprising if Sir Henry Bedingfeld had fallen more or less into disgrace at this time, for Elizabeth might now, if she had wished, made him feel the effects of his “scrupulousness” during the period of her captivity. The following letter from the queen shows, however, that such was not the case:

“To our trusty and well-beloved Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight.

“Elizabeth R By the Quene.

“Trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well. Like as we doubt not, but by the common report of the world, it appeareth what great demonstrations of hostility the French make towards this realm, by transporting great powers into Scotland, upon the pretence only of their going about the conquest of the same, so have we thought meet upon more certainty to us of their purpose, to have good regard thereto in time. And being very jealous of our town of Berwick, the principal key of all our realm, we have determined to send with speed, succours both thitherward and to our frontier, as well horsemen as footmen, and do also send our right trusty and entirely beloved cousin, the Duke of Norfolk, to be our Lieutenant-General of all the North, from Trent forward. For which purpose we have addressed our letters to sundry our nobility and gentlemen in like manner as we do this unto you, willing and requiring you as you tender and respect the honour of us and surety of your country, to put in readiness, with all speed possible, one able man, furnished with a good strong horse or gelding, and armed with a corselet, and to send the same to Newcastle by such day, and with such further order for the furniture as shall be appointed to you by our trusty and well-beloved Sir Edward Wyndham, Knight, and Sir Christopher Heydon, Knight, whom we have advertised of our further pleasure in that behalf. And at the arriving of the said horseman at Newcastle, he shall not only receive money for his route and conduct, but also beside his wage shall be, by the discretion of our said cousin of Norfolk, so used and entreated as ye shall not need to doubt of the safe return of the same, if the casualty of death be not impeached. And herein we make such sure account of your forwardness as we thereupon have signified among others to our said cousin this our appointment and commandment. So shall we make account of you in that behalf, whereof we pray you fail not.

“Given under our signet at our Palace of Westminster, the 25th day of September, in the second year of our reign."*

* The original letter is at Oxburgh.

It was in consideration of this or of some other service rendered about this time that Elizabeth granted to Sir Henry Bedingfeld and to his heirs for ever, the manor of Caldecot, in Norfolk “with the impropriation thereof.”

Page 55

An undated manuscript, preserved at Oxburgh, containing a plan of an itinerary for the queen's progress into Norfolk, would seem to support the tradition that Elizabeth visited that place. Perhaps she intended to visit it, for immediately after Walsingham, which then belonged to the Sidneys, occurs the sentence: "Thence to Oxburgh, Sir Henry Bedingfelds."* This document is printed in Blomefield's History of Norfolk, and the date assigned to it is 1578, presumably because this was the only time at which Elizabeth visited Norfolk. There are, however, no details of any visit to Oxburgh, and Dr. Jessopp, considering that the place was quite out of the line of progress, is of the opinion that she never went there at all.**

* The so-called Queen's room, a large apartment above that in which Henry *vii*. undoubtedly slept may, it appears to the present writer, have been occupied by Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry *vii*., who, it is well known, accompanied him on, at least, one pilgrimage to Walsingham. As she also was Queen Elizabeth, this may account for the tradition,

** One Generation of a Norfolk House, p. 61.

But there are other and more weighty reasons than those of distance for arriving at this conclusion. From the year 1569, when the foremost English Catholics attempted to liberate Mary Queen of Scots, the penal laws against Papists were redoubled in severity, and those who still clung to the old religion fell into disfavour. Elizabeth did indeed visit Euston Hall, near Thetford, in 1578, and Mr. Rookwood presumed to kiss her hand. But the Lord Chamberlain severely reprimanded him for so doing, sternly bade him stand aside, and charged him with being a recusant, unfit to be in the presence, much less to touch the sacred person, of his sovereign. He was required to attend the Council, under surveillance, and when he reached Norwich, in the queen's train, was committed to jail.

Many other recusants were treated in 1578 as Rookwood was. Two of the Lovells, Humphrey Bedingfeld of Quidenham, Sir Henry's brother, one Parry, and two others, "not worth memory for badness of belyffe," were confined in Norwich Castle" for obstinate papystrie."*

* Mason, History of Norfolk, p. 150.

"At Norwich, the Queen lodged at the bishop's palace, and spent her time, as far as the bad weather would allow, in listening to absurd speeches and witnessing grotesque pageants, but on the 19th August, she suddenly resolved to go a-hunting in the park of Cossey, five miles from Norwich, which belonged to Mr. Henry Jerningham, ancestor of the present Lord Stafford. Once more her host was a recusant, but this time it would have been too shameless to proceed against him. Mr. Jerningham had made himself very conspicuous in opposing the abominable attempts to set aside Mary and Elizabeth

as heirs to the Crown at the death of Edward *vi*., and in return for his loyalty, had received this very

Page 56

domain of Cossey at Queen Mary's hands; but for him and his gallantry twenty years before, Elizabeth herself might never have been on the throne. So Mr. Jerningham was left unmolested at present, though his time was to come by-and-bye, and when three days after, the Council met and made order for the committal to jail of such of the Norfolk gentry as had not kept their church, and upon whom the hand of power had been so astutely laid, Mr. Jerningham's name was omitted, though his kinsman's, Mr. Bedingfeld's, name figures on the list, only to appear again and again hereafter."*

One Generation of a Norfolk House, p. 62. Dr. Jessopp is mistaken in identifying this Mr. Jerningham with the friend and ally of Sir Henry Bedingfeld, who was associated with him in placing Mary on the throne. Sir Henry Jerningham died in 1572, aged 63, and Elizabeth's host at Cossey was his son.

Among the Acts of the Privy Council for 1578, it is stated that:—"This day [August 24th], there appeared before their lordships, as warned by the Sheriff of Norfolk, amongst persons refusing to come to the church within that county, Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight, and Edmund Wyndham, Doctor of the Civil Law, who, standing in their obstinacy in refusing to come to the church in time of prayer, sermons, and other divine service, were ordered, as others of the same sort before, at Norwich: Sir Henry Bedingfeld to be bound in 500 pounds, and Mr. Wyndham in 200 pounds, with the like conditions as they that were bound to remain in their lodgings at Norwich, as by their obligations remaining in the Council Chest it may appear. And for that their lordships were informed that divers of the household servants of Sir Henry Bedingfeld did and do refuse likewise to come to the church, it was ordered that the Lord Bishop of Norwich, or some person appointed by him, should visit his household, and so many of his said servants as should refuse to conform themselves to come to the church should be discharged by the said Bishop or his visitors, in that case, from his service."

The Council then wrote to two justices of the peace in Norfolk, ordering them to discharge Sir Henry's servants "that will not come to church as is above said, and that they be not maintained by the said Sir Henry Bedingfeld nor any other of their friends with any exhibition or otherwise, wheresoever they shall bestow themselves, nor that there be not any other servants admitted to serve Sir Henry Bedingfeld in any place or office about him that shall be suspected to be of that disposition in religion." On receiving an order to present himself before the Privy Council, Sir Henry, although suffering from illness, set out for London. This letter, signed by five of the members, met him on the road:—

"To our loving friend, Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Knight.

"After our hearty commendations. Whereas we are given to understand that upon some letters heretofore written, you are on the way repairing hither, forasmuch as we are

informed by your son-in-law, Henry Seckford, that your sickness and infirmity is such as without danger you may not travel, we are very well contented if you shall not like to repair up, that you return again to the place where you were committed, there to remain until such time as further order shall be taken with you. And so fare you well.

Page 57

“From Richmond, the 1st Dec. 1578.”

Further relief was extended to him, as appears by another letter from the Council, allowing him to remain in his house till Lady Day, when he was to appear and answer to the charge of papistry, “unless in the meantime God shall turn his heart otherwise.”

Slight as were the penalties inflicted on Sir Henry when compared with those which his brothers were called upon to endure, troubles were not wanting to him in his old age He was not only a prisoner within five miles of his own house, subject to heavy fines for the privilege of absenting himself from the new service, but he was liable at any time to have his house searched* for priests and church-stuff, to have his household dismissed, and to be called on to endure religious conferences. He was, moreover, in feeble health, and to complete his misfortunes, his devoted wife was taken from him. On this occasion a letter from eight members of the Privy Council was delivered to him:—

* For “the search at Mr. Bedingfeld’s house,” and the anonymous letter which led to it, see Calendar of State Payers, Dom. Eliz. 1581-1590, p. 648, No. 76. A copy of a letter found directed to Cromwell accused Sir Henry of treasonable designs in conjunction with papists and recusants. “Diligent searches have been made at the house of Mr. Henry Bedingfelde, but nothing suspicious found.”

“To our loving friend, Sir Henry Bedingfeld.

“We commend us unto you. Whereas about three years past, when you were sent for to have appeared before us, touching your disobedience in Religion, we were then moved in consideration of your sickness and infirmity, and the humble suit of Henry Seckford, your son, you being then in the way hitherward, to licence you to return back unto your own house, whither you were before committed, there to remain until further order should be taken with you. And whereas at this time your son has made like humble suit unto us that you may be suffered to remove from your said house unto St. Mary’s, Wignollen, in Marshland, a house of your daughter Seckford, there to remain for a season until you may pass over the grief and remembrance of the lady, your wife, lately deceased, these are in that respect to give you licence so to do. And therefore you may, at your liking remove to that place, continuing yourself in like degree of restraints as you did in your own house, and these shall be your warrant in that behalf. So fare you well.

“From the Court at Whitehall, 28 of Dec. 1581. Your loving friends."*

* Exactly the same treatment was endured by his descendant Sir Henry Arundell Bedingfeld in 1713. The following instance affords a proof of the extraordinary persistence with which the penal laws against Catholics were enforced 110 years after Elizabeth’s death.

“Licence from the justices, August 10, 1713, for Sir Henry Bedingfeld to go from home for a month.

Page 58

“Whereas Sir Henry Bedingfeld of Oxburgh, Bart., being a recusant, and confined to the usual place of his abode, or within the compass of five miles from the same, and whereas it has been represented to us on the part of the said Sir Henry Bedingfeld that he has very necessary and urgent business, which does require his attention at this time, and whereas the said Sir Henry Bedingfeld has made an oath before us of the truth of the same, and that he will not make any causeless stay from his said place of habitation, we therefore, four of his Majesty’s Justices of the Peace for the said county upon examination taken by us as of the premisses, do give this our licence to the said Sir Henry Bedingfeld to travel out of the precincts or compass of five miles from the place of his abode limited by the statute at all times, from the 13 of this instant August, until the thirteenth of September following, by which time he is to return again to his place of abode at the parish of Oxburgh, aforesaid. Given under our hand and seal this Loth of August 1713.” Signed in the margin, “E. Bacon, T. De Grey, Tho. Wright, Nath. Life, H. Partridge, Dep. Lieut. I do assent to this licence.”

Sir Henry Bedingfeld succumbed to his infirmities in 1583, and was buried in the Bedingfeld chapel in Oxburgh church, where an elaborate monument to his memory may still be seen. It is to be regretted that the loss of the Privy Council Registers for the year 1583 entails also the loss of any mention of the last days of this celebrated Englishman.

IV. THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION IN GERMANY

In spite of the valiant efforts of isolated Catholic reformers in Germany, to stem the tide of corruption which threatened to sweep the Church into a vortex of ruin, for a long time little impression was made on the vast sea of abuses, and but little permanent good was effected. It almost seemed as though the Poor Clares of Nuremburg, the brave Dominicanesses of Strassburg, Johannes Busch, Johannes Geiler, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, St. John Capistran, the Brethren of the Common Life, and the celebrated author of the Imitation of Christ had lived and fought, suffered and preached, in vain. They, and some few others were like brilliant meteors, only making the darkness of the night more apparent.

The nations were as little responsive to preachers of reform as were the princes of Europe to the appeals of the Pope for a crusade against the infidel Turk, who menaced, after his conquest of Constantinople, the very centre of Christendom. While the citadel was in danger, those who should have assembled vast cohorts in its defence were either suffering from the inertia that follows on some kinds of disease, or were actively employed in spreading the new heresies. Then at last struck the hour for the dawning of a new day. And here perhaps lies the solution to the problem why so much energy, self-denial, penance

Page 59

on the part of the preachers of reform, produced so little result; why such brave efforts failed to restore, renew and edify the Church. Was she then incapable of rising to a new life? The answer lies in the words of her Divine Founder: "My hour is not yet come." Until then, all reformers preached more or less in the wilderness; for few had ears to hear. God's hour was assuredly winging its flight, but it would not come till the Church was almost in extremis; till decay of faith following on decay of morals threatened her very existence. The catastrophe was hastened by the fatal pouring of the new wine of the later Renaissance into the old, now worn-out bottles of Mediaevalism, thereby paganising Rome and corrupting the College of Cardinals to so large an extent, that the election to the papacy of a Rodrigo Borgia was made possible.

Neither the fiery denunciations of Fra Girolamo Savonarola, nor the cold sarcasms of Erasmus of Rotterdam had a more lasting effect on the world than had Busch's missionary zeal or Geiler's ascetic discourses. Then arose Martin Luther, and centered in himself all those scandals and floating heresies, which for a hundred years had poisoned the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere. Insidious disease lurking in dark places was now become a stalking pestilence that braved the daylight unabashed. Faith was all but moribund. But the Church's extremity was God's opportunity; His hour had struck at last, and the spirit of the Lord brooded on the face of the waters.

Then the whole situation was changed. The enemy was not yet crushed, but formidable hosts were everywhere set in opposition to him. Instead of isolated efforts there was an almost universal movement towards reform. Begun in Italy, it spread into every country of Europe. Seminaries sprang up for the education of priests; St. Philip Neri became the Apostle of Rome, St. Charles Borromeo that of Milan. The Order of Theatines was founded, and the Barnabite Order, devoted to the education of youth was ready to send its members wherever the need was greatest. Above all, the long-deferred General Council, assembled at Trent in 1545, gave cohesion to all the various movements that were set on foot by defining disputed doctrines, and by drawing up a formula which declared the belief of the Catholic Church on all points attacked by the new sectaries. The Church was threatened with a dozen heresies, but so completely did she vindicate her doctrines at the Council of Trent, that for more than three hundred years no further General Council was needed. If Italy may boast of the victories achieved by her great Catholic reformers, France, though somewhat later in the field had her Bossuet, Bourdaloue, St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent of Paul, and many other Catholic champions. To Spain were given St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. John of the Cross, St. John of God, St. Joseph Calasanctius, St. Teresa, and others whose names have first added a splendour to their native land, and have then gone forth to illumine the uttermost ends of the earth.

Page 60

St Ignatius died in 1556, but the effect of the Society of Jesus on the Church was only just beginning. One of the earliest and most important tasks of his immediate disciples was the formation of the Carmelite nun Teresa, and her spiritual guidance in the unusual paths she was called to tread. Even in Catholic Spain hearts had grown cold and minds lax. The religious houses had long fallen from their first fervour. During the space of sixteen years St. Teresa founded seventeen convents, all following the original strict Carmelite rule. As early as 1474 Pope Eugenius *iv*. had formed the project of re-establishing the strict observance of the rule in all religious communities, but the times were not then favourable for carrying it out. He had therefore approved provisionally of a mitigated rule for all Carmelite houses, by means of which discipline was to be restored. The Carmelite general, John Soreth, made great efforts to enforce it, but his success was partial and short-lived.

In 1524, when Teresa de Ahumeda was still a child, Clement *vii*. addressed a brief to the General Chapter of the Carmelites, assembled at Venice, commanding them to reform their order. The brief was cordially received, and the Chapter passed many resolutions all aiming at the removal of abuses, such as the careless and hasty admission of members, so that thenceforth no person might be received into the order without the consent of the provincial, or before the age of fifteen. Another resolution passed in this Chapter referred to the private property of the friars; but lest more harm than good should be done by sudden and violent measures, it was decreed that in every province certain houses should be set apart for those members who had received the mitigated rule of Pope Eugenius, and who were therefore considered as reformed. But together with these houses others should be tolerated for a season, while the religious were gradually accustomed to a state of discipline. Those who had not accepted the mitigated rule were to be allowed temporarily to enjoy their patrimony, as also the emoluments accruing to them from teaching, preaching, and other services rendered. There was to be no difference in their treatment, and the religious habit was to be the same for the reformed and the unreformed brethren. Subsequent Chapters-General continued to pass similar wise regulations, but they were by no means promptly carried out; and at Vicenza, in 1539, it was decreed that provincials and friars must undertake the reform of their convents in the course of one year, in default of which their subjects were to be released from the obedience they owed them. Only reformed friars might be elected superiors.*

* Monsignanus, Bullarium, ii. 59 c, 47 b.

Page 61

At this assembly, the representatives of the Lower Rhine Province were Theodoric of Gouda, Martin Cuperus, and Eberhard Billick. They presented a petition praying that the Universities of Mainz and Trier might be included in the course open to Carmelite students, the reason being that in order to successfully combat the Lutheran heresies, great need was felt of men of wide knowledge, possessing degrees high enough to inspire respect in their opponents. Many students, by reason of the evil times, were not in a position to meet the expenses attendant upon a sojourn at Cologne and Louvain, and the living at Mainz and Trier was cheaper. To this petition the Carmelite general answered by ranking Cologne first, Louvain second, Mainz third, and Trier fourth, in the curriculum of studies.

But the progress made in Germany was the reverse of rapid; opposition was encountered at every step; nevertheless, the resolutions passed at the Chapter-General at Venice in 1524, had introduced the thin end of the wedge, and it is apparent from the decrees of the Provincial Chapter held at Mechlin in 1531, and presided over by the general himself, that nearly all the houses of the Lower Rhine Province had by that time accepted the mitigated rule. It was enforced in this Chapter that if a convent fell away from the reform, the provincial was to appoint a reformed prior, and to send thither reformed brethren. Friars who refused the reform were to be banished for ten years. Another accentuated point was the rule which forbade the possession of private property. One common purse only was allowed, and thenceforth, no Carmelite might, under pain of excommunication, keep money in his possession for more than twenty-four hours. Absolution for an infringement of this rule could only be obtained from the provincial or general. Those religious, who at their death were found to possess property were to be buried in unconsecrated ground. When, a year later, Theodoric of Gouda presented himself at the Chapter-General held at Padua, he was able to state that the Lower Rhine Province had joined the observance, and was entitled to the privileges belonging thereto.

But another and more insidious danger had arisen. In many of the Carmelite houses of Germany the new doctrines had been more than favourably received; and at Strassburg, the rector, Tilmann Lyn had been deprived of his office for having openly preached the Lutheran heresy. Three other friars of the same house who with him had gone astray were imprisoned. In vain the friars were forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to possess or to read books that had been condemned by the Holy See. Heretical writings continued to find entrance into many of the religious houses, and were even read aloud in refectories, and used as text-books by the professors. It must, however, be admitted that some of these books, including several works of Erasmus which were also prohibited, would now scarcely come into the category of heretical writings.

Page 62

Still, many of the diatribes which Erasmus permitted himself against the religious orders were not in any sense edifying, though there was much truth in his pungent satire; so that the papal legate Aleander did not hesitate to declare that the Dutch scholar had done more to undermine faith than even Luther, and he accused him of being the fomenter of all the troubles, of subverting the Netherlands, and all the Rhine district. This may indeed have been the truth indirectly in spite of the certainty that Erasmus had no intention of playing into the hands of the Lutherans, whom he hated. But he was a cynic, and a cynic's eyes are not the best through which to see things. The monks offended him, and he poured out upon them, not the vials of his wrath but the sharp vinegar of sarcasm. His favourite, oft-recurring themes, the ignorance, immorality, and greed to be found in monasteries, the quarrelsomeness and worldliness of the friars would lead the unwary to suppose that there was not a religious community left where the rule was kept and the religious led commonly respectable lives. But even a slight acquaintance with Erasmus shows us that he is incapable of justice towards monks and friars. They loved scholasticism, the enemy which he considered himself born to slay, and there was war to the knife between him and all upholders of Scotus and Aquinas. The monks of the Charterhouse, who died the death of martyrs rather than perjure themselves, win no meed of praise from Erasmus—they were, forsooth, schoolmen; and the noble Friars-Observants who, when threatened with a living tomb in the river Thames, for the same cause, calmly replied that the road to heaven was as near by water as by land, are nothing to him, for did they not learn their theology of Duns Scotus. Even Henry VIII. himself at one time begged the Pope's favour for the Observants, saying that he could not sufficiently express his admiration for their strict adherence to poverty, for their sincerity, their charity, their devotion;* but they were Scotists, and Erasmus could not therefore admire them.

* Henry VIII. to Leo X., Add. *Ms*. 15,387, f. 17; B.M. Printed by Ellis, 3, 1st series, 165.

From his own showing it appears that the Canons Regular of St. Augustine at Emmaus in Holland led a good life, but he makes no honourable exception of them when he denounces other houses. He complains of all monks that they are gluttons and wine-bibbers, utterly careless of their rule; yet his own plea for returning to the world after taking his vows is that his health would not stand the fasts and vigils, the long prayers and the fish diet, things which accord ill with a reputation for laxity. In a letter to his former prior, he says: "I left my profession, not because I had any fault to find with it, but because I would not be a scandal to the order." And again, "My constitution was too weak to bear your rule."* These are either empty phrases, or they mean that the life was a strict one.

Page 63

* Life and Letters of Erasmus, lectures delivered at Oxford by J. A. Froude, pp. 24, 162.

Nevertheless it would be idle to say that there was not or had not been a great falling-off in the fervour of monks and friars generally at this period. As the new doctrines spread, so did also the distaste for the religious life, and the number of those who renounced their vows increased yearly. But many, from various causes, soon repented, and desired to return to the cloister, and it became necessary to legislate for such contingencies also. Moreover, it was made obligatory on every prior to arrest notorious apostates, and all those who, without letters of obedience, or who, abusing them, were found wandering about the country. They were to be punished conformably to the rule, and if necessary were to be imprisoned.

One good effect at least resulted from Erasmus's attacks on the ignorance of monks, and this was the revival of learning in most of the religious orders. Every inducement was offered by the Carmelite superiors in the Lower Rhine Province to cultivate a taste for study. Those who had gone through a three or four years' course of theology creditably had a distinct right to a post of some dignity, and took rank immediately after those priests of the order who had celebrated their jubilee, and before all conventuals who had an inferior record as to studies. The faithful discharge of offices for a prolonged period was also rewarded by honourable recognition. The sentiments thus appealed to may not have been of the loftiest, but it must be remembered that the reform was to be gradual, and higher motives could be suggested when the subject was ready for them. The superiors of this province were supported in all their efforts by the general, who was bent on a thorough renewal of the religious spirit throughout the Order; but in the midst of all these righteous aspirations it is a little startling to find that a decree of the Chapter-General was needed to put down drinking-bouts in sundry houses of the Rhine Province.*

* Dr. Alois Postina, Der Karmelit Eberhard Billick. Ein Lebensbild aus dem 16, Jahrhundert, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1901, p. 25.

In 1541, Eberhard Billick was appointed provincial, and almost immediately began to visit the houses in his jurisdiction. At Cologne he found a condition of things sufficient to make the boldest reformer quail. The Lutherans had entirely gained the upper hand, and a certain Count William of Neuenar and Mors, who had been for some tine a follower of the new doctrines, was bent on introducing them by force into Mors. He first forbade the practise of the Catholic religion among his tenants, and then tried to seduce the religious. They were forbidden to say Mass except on Sundays, and then even none outside the convent were to be admitted to it. Their church was given over to the Lutherans, and the friars were forced into being present at the Protestant sermons. Not content

Page 64

with this, Count William inflicted seven Lutheran beneficiaries upon them, obliging them to lodge and feed them gratis. Lutheran preachers and school teachers were salaried out of the convent revenues, which the Count managed by fraud and cunning to confiscate. That portion of the convent buildings which bordered on his property he turned into stables for his own horses, so that entrance to the friar's quarters was open to his servants, while the Carmelites were themselves forbidden to go in and out on that side.

The new Provincial succeeded in time by dint of courage and firmness, in getting back all that the Count had seized by force; but other houses were in as deplorable a condition, and little could be done to improve matters. Billick appealed to the Emperor, who had taken all the Carmelite convents in Lower Germany under his protection; but the Emperor's goodwill surpassed his power to help, the whole of his money and energy being needed to oppose the Turks, the French, and the Duke of Cleves.

The greatest danger and difficulty lay in the behaviour of Count Hermann of Wied, Archbishop and Elector of Cologne. From the outset his rule had been detrimental to the Church. The best that could be said of him in his youth was that he was "kind and peace-loving, fond of hunting, but not particularly learned." Charles V., in a letter to the landgrave Philip of Hessen, who had joined the Lutherans, says: "How should the good man be able to reform his diocese? He has no Latin, and has never said more than three Masses in his life. He does not even know the Confiteor." Philip replied: "I can assure your Majesty that he reads German industriously, and interests himself in religious questions."

Unfortunately, these "religious questions" threw the archbishop into the arms of the Lutherans, and already in 1536, Aleander considered him as much lost to the Church as Philip of Hessen himself, who made no secret of his apostasy. Melancthon was his dear friend already when he made the acquaintance of Martin Bucer at the Diet of Hagenau in 1540.

Two years later, Archbishop Hermann invited this violent and notorious heretic to preach in the minster at Bonn. Immediately, Cologne rose up in protest, and the Cathedral Chapter, the clergy and the Magistrate presented the archbishop with a remonstrance. Hermann replied by sending Melancthon to support Bucer at Bonn, and thus, by entrusting the work of reform to men whose sole aim was to subvert Catholic doctrine and to disorganise Christian society, proved himself faithless to the solemn promise he had made neither to introduce religious novelties into his diocese, nor to abolish customs founded on Catholic tradition.

Page 65

The Chapter, fully alive to the critical nature of the situation, drew up a memorandum, dated 5th February 1543, in which they showed good reasons why Bucer could not be tolerated as a minister of religion in the diocese. His broken vows, his marriage, his open profession of Luther's doctrines, proved sufficiently that he was no longer a member of the Catholic Church. Further, his preaching at Strassburg had resulted directly in the wholesale destruction of images and altars, and ultimately in the abolition of the Mass in that place. The memorandum went on to affirm that, in patronising such a man the Archbishop was acting in direct disobedience to the Pope and to the Emperor.

Bucer's answer to these objections was devised in such a manner as to cause his opponents some embarrassment. It was written in the Swiss dialect, an unknown tongue to the clergy of Cologne, as well as to the university. Nevertheless, before long, an epitome of its purport was furnished to the Chapter, and the refutation of the doctrines therein set forth was entrusted to the Carmelite provincial, Billick.

The two champions were personally not unknown to each other, as they had met at the Diets of Worms and Regensburg, where Billick had made a point of studying the Strassburg heresiarch carefully. The Carmelite now skilfully exposed the weakness of Bucer's arguments, together with his frequent misinterpretation of Scripture and the Fathers, Billick showing himself to be an experienced polemical writer; but the taste and tone of his book are repugnant to modern ideas, and betray the same acrimony which characterises the writings of Luther against Erasmus, and vice versa. Accusations of hatred, cunning, lying, slandering, and double-dealing, are cast like a hail of bullets, with no especial aim at any of Bucer's arguments in particular. Interspersed with much able criticism are choice epithets of abuse and reflections on Bucer's personal character, which, although perfectly in accordance with sixteenth century methods of controversy, are quite beside the mark, and certainly not such as to promote peace in any age.

What the Church in Germany needed at this juncture, was not so much a fiery defender of the faith, or a scholar to taunt the heretics in finely-pointed sarcasm with their want of learning, as a saint, demonstrating in his own life the beauty of holiness, while laying aside polemics, he expounded the philosophy of Catholic doctrine. The need for reform was patent to all; many, like the zealous Carmelite provincial, were already putting their hands to the plough. The movement had been set on foot, but it lacked an apostle to lead and govern it. Such a man was at that moment being formed at the University of Cologne-the second apostle of Germany, as St. Boniface had been the first-Blessed Peter Canisius.

Page 66

Canisius was a native of Nymwegen in the Low Countries, and was born on 8th May 1521. Having studied at Paris and Orleans, he became tutor to the sons of Rene Duke of Lorraine, whose wife was Philippine of Guelderland. From an early age Peter had desired to consecrate himself to God in the priesthood, and his father having given his consent, the young man proceeded to Cologne for his course of theology and civil and canon law. No sooner did he appear in the lecture rooms than he attracted universal attention. It was not merely the clearness and conciseness of his reasoning, nor altogether the humility of his bearing, but perhaps the mingled charm of each that roused the interest of professors and students alike. That interest led them to watch him closely, and they not only noticed that he seemed altogether unconscious of the plaudits which he excited, but they discovered that he was in the habit of imposing privations on himself, in order to have money to give to poor students, that these might be better fed and clothed, and more amply furnished with books. It was soon related of him that he frequently went out of his way to instruct, counsel, and rescue those (and there were many of them at Cologne) who had fallen upon evil ways. Broad-minded, large-hearted, enlightened beyond his companions, and possessing a strong and well balanced character, it needed no great gift of prophecy to foresee that Peter Canisius would do great things in the future.

In the meanwhile, Father Peter Faber, the first associate of St. Ignatius, was at Mainz, whither he had been sent by Pope Paul *iii*. to counteract the spread of the new doctrines by all the means in his power. His reputation for holiness Was so great in the Society of Jesus, that St. Francis Xavier invoked him when in danger from a storm at sea, and inserted his name in the Litany of the Saints while he was yet living. At Mainz Father Faber gave the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and obtained many wonderful conversions.

His fame soon reached Cologne, where Canisius, yet uncertain as to his future, was praying, studying, and exercising himself in all good works. Suddenly, it became clear to him that his vocation would be made known to him through Father Peter Faber. He hastened to Mainz, and at their first interview Canisius was convinced that he was called to join the new Society. He made the Spiritual Exercises, and on the fourth day bound himself by a vow to do so. He returned to Cologne as a novice, and continued to live much as before, pursuing his theological studies and making a deep impression on all those with whom he came in contact. Associated with two other novices, also university students-the Spaniards Alfonsus Alvarez and John of Arragon—he received a common rule of life from Faber, and in their zeal they soon exceeded it. They preached, instructed children in Christian doctrine, begged alms for the poor from door to door, nursed the sick in the hospitals, and, in short, seized every opportunity of self-denial and humiliation.

Page 67

When Faber heard of all this he wrote to Canisius, commending the charity of the trio, but reminding them at the same time that study was their paramount duty, and would lead to more valuable work in the future than anything they could then do for souls.

“As obedience requires you to finish your course of theology,” he wrote, “you must not neglect it, thinking to do more by succouring your neighbour in his temporal necessities.”

Soon Faber came himself to Cologne, and lodged with the Carthusians, those valiant sons of St. Bruno, whose boast it is never to have quite departed from the spirit of their founder.

On the 8th May 1545, his twenty-fourth birthday, Peter Canisius made the three simple vows of the Society and the same year was ordained priest. By this time his reputation as a Catholic reformer was as great as his reputation for learning. His capacity for work was prodigious. He lectured twice daily; every Sunday he preached in one of the churches, great crowds flocking to hear him. At home, every hour was occupied either in teaching or in receiving those who came to him for advice and help in their doubts. He answered them all with so much insight, wisdom, gentleness, and humility, that even Lutherans dropped the usual epithets, and spoke of him with respect. Every free moment was devoted to literary work, which also obtained a certain celebrity.

But to all these strenuous efforts the Archbishop Elector Hermann von Wied persistently remained a stranger. Relations between himself and his Chapter were strained to the utmost. A deputation of his clergy had waited upon him and solemnly entreated him to retrace his steps, and to cancel the novelties he had introduced. On his refusal, they declared that they would with a clear conscience, and for fear of incurring the divine wrath if they further delayed, proceed by all legitimate means to remove so grievous a scandal. Then the Chapter, including representatives of the lower ranks of the clergy and the university, made a public protest, and drew up appeals to the Pope and the Emperor. They at once informed the archbishop of these measures, and again attempted before taking irrevocable steps to bring about a peaceful solution. But all was useless; and, forced to extremities, they solicited for their appeal the support of other dioceses and learned academies, in order to obtain more speedy relief. The best and most distinguished of the bishops and clergy, as well as the universities of the whole province, joined in the appeal, and the University of Ingolstadt also signified its intention of seconding them.

The archbishop on his part was also careful to procure himself allies. As Elector of Cologne he summoned the Landtag, and its members declared themselves in his favour. The landgrave, Philip of Hessen, to whom Luther had given licence to commit bigamy, and other Protestant princes naturally promised him their support, and the Schmalkaldian League did likewise.

Page 68

The Catholics of Cologne agitated that the case might be brought before the Reichstag at Worms, to which they had sent their representative, the Dominican, Johann Pessel.

But the archbishop appealed to a General Council, or rather to a National Synod, to be held in Germany and to be entirely independent of the Pope.

At this juncture Eberhard Billick wrote one of his most violent letters to Pessel, attacking the counter appeal of the archbishop which would shortly be presented to the Reichstag, and which was calculated by its affectation of piety to deceive even the elect. But let them be on their guard. It would be seen that Hermann despised the Pope, the Emperor, and the Oecumenical Council already assembled at Trent. He set his own authority above all councils, although they had been instituted by the common consent of Christendom, and he appealed to a lawless, headless council which might only meet at Bonn or at Schmalkald, in order that it might be unrestrained by any authority whatever. There was, continued the Carmelite, no end to the archbishop's innovations. In defiance of all justice and precedent he had transferred the Chapter to Bonn, where people and preachers were split up into parties, and persecuted each other with persistent malice. This he had done, not because there was any greater safety at Bonn than at Cologne, where senate, clergy, and people lived in peace and unity as before, and where his friends in the Chapter might act with all freedom,* but because at Bonn he was sure of a majority in his favour, for loyal Catholics, in spite of his safe-conduct, would not go there. By this stratagem it would appear as if all ranks in the diocese had consented to his measures.

* Others maintained, however, that some of the canons known to be inclined towards Lutheranism had been threatened with death.

Billick went on to complain bitterly that the sentence against the archbishop announced by the papal nuncio, Verallo, as imminent, had not yet been passed. "Every postponement of the imperial mandate," he wrote, "means a weakening of our cause and a strengthening of that of our opponents. At Worms they speak fair, and assume a supplicating attitude; but at Cologne they go about their business boldly. Paintings are scratched off the walls of the churches, statues are hurled from their pedestals, heretical preachers are multiplied and forced upon the Catholics against their will. Four days ago, the archbishop attacked the parish priest of Bruhl, because he still said Mass, and forbade him to do so in future. And much more is done in this enormous diocese which entirely escapes our notice." In conclusion, Billick implored the Dominican to do his utmost with the Emperor, the Cardinal of Augsburg, the Apostolic Nuncio, and the other Catholic authorities in order that the mandate might be issued without further delay, adding, "Gropper, the indefatigable champion of our cause, is ill, otherwise he would have sent a learned and luminous disquisition on this subject."

Page 69

At last, the Emperor was moved to abandon the passive and procrastinating attitude he had hitherto assumed; and towards the close of the Reichstag he answered the Cologne appellants by citing the archbishop to appear within thirty days, and answer the charges of innovation brought against him. In the meanwhile he was to cancel all the novelties he had introduced into the diocese.

Charles V. on his way to the Netherlands stopped at Cologne, and in a personal interview with Hermann, represented to him the terrible consequences that would ensue if he persisted in his disobedience.

The archbishop demanded a short time to consider and to consult with his advisers. His answer, written on 19th August, after the Emperor's departure, was to the effect that he could not change his opinions. He was then cited to appear at Brussels within the space of thirty days. At the same time Paul *iii*. sent him a brief, commanding him and his adherents to justify their conduct at Rome within sixty days.

Hermann paid no attention to either of these citations, but with renewed zeal continued to advance the Protestant reformation. On the 8th January 1546, Verallo suspended him, and confiscated the revenues of the diocese. The archbishop made a solemn protest, but showed no sign of yielding, and on the 16th April, the Pope proceeded to his ex-communication, at the same time depriving him of all his ecclesiastical dignities, offices and benefices.

By a special brief of 3rd July, Hermann's coadjutor, Adolf von Schauenburg, was made administrator of the archdiocese, and Gropper and Billick were appointed to examine the deposed archbishop with regard to his attitude towards the Catholic religion. The result was unsatisfactory, but the Emperor could not be induced to take any immediate steps against Hermann, his whole attention being directed towards crushing the Schmalkaldian League. It was not till November that the archbishop was officially informed of his excommunication, when he made a further protest, declared the Pope incompetent to judge him, and again appealed to a German Council. The time now seemed ripe for putting pressure on Charles V. to carry out the Pope's sentence. The imperial arms had been victorious over the league, and the Catholics of Cologne commissioned Billick to proceed to the camp, and to petition the emperor to formally depose the archbishop.

The biographers of Blessed Peter Canisius for the most part claim him as the hero of this expedition, which was in fact entrusted to several delegates, of whom the principals were the veteran Carmelite provincial, and Johann von Isenburg. Canisius was deputed to go first to Liege, and to beg that its bishop, George of Austria, son of Maximilian I., and uncle to the Emperor, would facilitate their journey, the country through which they would have to pass being invested with the enemy's troops. During the time which he spent at Liege, Canisius completely

Page 70

won the heart of the prince-bishop, who ordered him to preach in his cathedral and in his private chapel, expressing himself greatly edified with what he had heard. His visit being unavoidably prolonged, Canisius gave the Spiritual Exercises, took part in theological conferences with the Lutherans, visited the sick in the hospitals, and catechised the children. Crowds followed him wherever he went, and there was but one opinion of his learning, eloquence, and charity.

It is probable that on his return to Cologne, having given an account of his mission, he started with the other delegates for Worms.

Writing to the coadjutor Adolf, on 6th December, Billick says that at Mainz they heard that all the roads were occupied by the enemy. In order to avoid all appearance of an embassy they left their baggage behind them at Mainz, and being advised by the vicar-general, Scholl, the Carmelite separated from his companions, and hastened on alone to Worms to present his letters to the Dean of St. Andrew's. Here he lay hidden for four days, in the greatest anxiety and doubt as to his further progress. Neither he nor his advisers could hit on a safe mode of continuing the journey, as it was known that separate parties of defeated Schmalkaldians were making their retreat good by various roads back to the Rhine. To add to his alarm and embarrassment Billick discovered that his horse had been rendered useless by a mysterious wound, so that he had reason to think he had been betrayed. Just then, however, he received information that the imperialists were in hot pursuit of the Schmalkaldians, and having bought another horse from a Jew, he set out for Speyer. At Speyer he fell in with a nobleman belonging to the imperial army on his way back to the camp, and Billick joined him, without however revealing his name or his mission, so necessary was it to regard every stranger as a possible enemy.

At last the road to the Emperor was open, and the delegates, who all arrived simultaneously at Krailsheim on the 5th December, were received by Cardinal Granvelle. The object of their embassy was then speedily attained. Charles V. issued a mandate, ordering the Landtag to assemble at Cologne on the 24th January following; and at the date fixed two imperial commissioners appeared to conduct the proceedings.

On the same day the coadjutor Adolf was inducted as archbishop, in spite of the opposition of a large number of the representatives of the Landtag, who, however, gave in their adhesion by the end of the month. Hermann still offered a futile resistance, but on 28th February 1547 was at last forced from a position that had become untenable. He died on the 15th August 1552.

Page 71

During these proceedings Peter Canisius had attracted the attention of Cardinal Otto Truchsess, who desired to have him as his second theologian at the Council of Trent, Father Le Jay having already been sent there as first theologian to that prelate. The cardinal, in a letter to St. Ignatius, laid stress on the circumstance of Peter's intimate acquaintance with the state of religion in Germany, and on his being able therefore to suggest to the Council the best means of meeting the prevalent evils. These reasons had great weight with St. Ignatius, and scarcely had the young Jesuit returned to Cologne, when he received orders to set out for Trent. Great was the lamentation among the burghers of Cologne. All whom he met in the streets greeted him with tears and supplications not to depart out of their midst. His leaving, they declared, would mean triumph to the enemies of the Church. The university conferred on him unanimously the title of doctor of divinity as a proof of their gratitude, esteem, and regret at his loss. The clergy and senate presented him with two precious relics—the heads of two of the martyred companions of St. Ursula.

At Trent Canisius found four of his religious brethren, and joined them at their lodgings in the hospital. Here the five Jesuits followed the special rule of life which St. Ignatius had sent to them. "Three things I wish you to bear in mind," he wrote:—

"(1) at the sessions of the Council the greatest glory of God, and the general good of the Church; (2) outside the Council your fundamental principle to labour for the salvation of souls, a matter that lies especially near my heart in this your journey; (3) when at home not to neglect yourselves." He recommended them to behave as prudently as possible at the Council, not to speak hastily, and to be ever on the side of peace. Every evening they were to confer with each other on the day's proceedings, and to make resolutions for the morrow. "Moreover," he continued, "you will allow no opportunity to escape you of acquiring merit in the service of your neighbour. You must always be on the watch to hear confessions, to preach to the people, to instruct the little ones, to visit the sick." In their sermons they were to avoid controverted dogmas, and to lay stress on all that appertained to the reform of morals, and obedience to the Church.

The meetings of the Council being adjourned till 1550, Canisius was called to Rome, where he remained for five months, under the personal guidance of St. Ignatius himself, who submitted him to the most humiliating trials in order to prove his virtue. He sent him to beg and to preach in the most frequented parts of the city, and to nurse the sick in the hospitals, where he was day and night at the beck and call of exacting officials, who set him to perform the most loathsome tasks, and often curtailed his sleep and food. St. Ignatius would then cause inquiries to be made at the hospitals concerning the behaviour of his novice under this kind of treatment.

Page 72

In the spring of 1548, Canisius was sent with eleven companions to Messina, where the Viceroy, Don Juan de Vega, had founded a college. On the eve of their departure St. Ignatius put to them four questions in writing. Canisius answered the questions thus:—

1. "I am ready, with the help of God's grace, to remain here or to go to Sicily, to India, or wherever it may be that obedience requires me.

2. "If I am sent to Sicily I affirm that I will accept with joy whatever office is conferred on me, even should it be that of porter, cook, or gardener.

3. "I am ready to learn or to teach in any department of science, although hitherto I may have been quite unskilled in it.

4. "I will regard as best for me whatever my superiors may decide to do with me, whether they entrust me with any office or with none. I promise this day, the 5th February, for my whole life never to demand anything for myself concerning my lodging, office or any other similar thing, but once for all I leave the guidance of my soul, and every care for my body in the complete submission of my judgment and will, to my father in God, the Rev. Father General, 1548. Peter Canisius of Nymwegen."

Hereupon St. Ignatius appointed him professor of rhetoric at Messina, and Canisius wrote to his friends at Cologne: "As I am useless for any spiritual office I am entrusted with the insipid department of belles lettres. I teach rhetoric for which I have little aptitude, but I take pains to form these good youths, and am always ready, with God's help, to do all that obedience requires of me."

After a fruitful year, during which he had learned Italian, and having preached in that language, had obtained some wonderful conversions from sin, he was recalled to Rome, where he laid his four solemn vows* in the hands of St. Ignatius. Immediately afterwards he was told to prepare for his apostolate in Germany.

* The first three of the solemn vows taken by the Jesuits are those of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The fourth vow is the promise to go wherever the Pope may send them.

William *iv*., Duke of Bavaria, surnamed the valiant, on account of his faithful adherence to the Catholic Church, at a time when so many of the reigning princes of Germany fell away, saw, with distress and alarm, the daily increasing dangers to which his beloved fatherland was a prey. Even in the college which he had himself founded at Ingolstadt, heresies were steadily gaining the upper hand, and he besought St. Ignatius to send him learned men, imbued with the apostolic spirit, to stay the progress of error.

Page 73

The Church was not wanting at this time in men of learning and piety. Theologians, such as Cardinal Cajetan, Gropper of Cologne, Eck of Ingolstadt, Cochlaeus, and others, had a European reputation. The first members of the Society of Jesus were all saints and scholars. Lainez, Salmeron, Lefevre, Faber, Le Jay, Bobadilla, were formed for the exigencies of the time; but for the special work required of him, Canisius effaces them all, or rather, gathers up in his own character each of the great qualities which they possessed. His strength, moreover, was equal to his enormous task. Westphalia, Bavaria, Saxony, Bohemia, Austria, Franconia, Suabia, Moravia, Tirol, Switzerland, from the falls of the Rhine to its source in the Alps, both banks of the Danube, from Freiburgim-Breisgau to Pressburg, the banks of the Main and of the Vistula—all this was the scene of his labours during a period of fifty-four years; and within these limits, it is an incontrovertible fact that there is no city or district still remaining Catholic but owes its faith to him.

St Ignatius answered the demand of the Duke of Bavaria by sending Fathers Le Jay, Salmeron, and Peter Canisius, the three most distinguished men of his Society. On the way to Germany they stopped at Bologna, in order that the two first might receive the degree of doctor, Canisius, as we know, being already a graduate of Cologne. The German heretics prided themselves so much on the few individuals in their ranks who had attained to it, that it was important to provide them with opponents whom they might meet in controversy on equal grounds. At Munich Duke William welcomed them, assuring them that nothing lay nearer to his heart than the maintenance of the Catholic religion in his states, but that heresy had already taken possession of many of his towns and villages, and had even ventured to lift its head in the University of Ingolstadt. The three missionaries proceeded at once to that place, where they were received by the principal dignitaries of the University.

A few days later they began their lectures: Salmeron, with a commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans; Canisius, with a dissertation on the Sentences of Peter Lombard; Le Jay, with an exposition of the Psalms. From the beginning their success was assured, but in a few months the whole work devolved on Canisius, Le Jay being sent to the Diet of Augsburg, Salmeron going to support Lainez, at the re-opened Council of Trent, as the Pope's theologian.

So great was the confidence which Canisius inspired, that already, in 1550, the University, by unanimous consent, elected him its rector. Humility prompted him to refuse the office, but St. Ignatius bade him accept it. The need for drastic changes in various departments was only too apparent; Canisius not only secured the good he aimed at, but by his tact escaped the odium which so frequently attaches to the crusader against time-honoured abuses. As he accepted none of the emoluments belonging to his offices, he was the more free to insist on the perfect probity with which the administration of the funds of all offices should be conducted.

Page 74

He next tools away from the students all heretical books, and obtained from Duke William a mandate, forbidding the booksellers to sell such. He abolished gambling, to which the students had been much addicted. He settled disputes between them and their professors, and the ancient rules and regulations concerning studies ceased to be a dead letter. His words animated his hearers with a love of work, creating a stimulus and a desire to excel. He re-established the unjustly discredited syllogistic form of argument, and reverted to the learning of the Schools in its primitive purity, deprived of the excrescences with which would-be scholars had disfigured it. Lastly, he succeeded in freeing the University from every reproach of immorality and license, and this was, perhaps, his most signal victory at Ingolstadt. The annals of the University abundantly testify to the greatness of the work accomplished.

At the end of his six months' rectorship, Canisius gave an account of his administration, and declined the chancellorship then offered to him. Ingolstadt, in that short space of time, had been transformed, and in order to perpetuate the benefits conferred on it, the Duke resolved to found a college to be handed over to the sons of St. Ignatius.

Next to Bavaria, Austria was to share in the blessings which the very presence of Canisius seemed to draw down from Heaven, but the whole German-speaking world clamoured for his possession. The Bishop of Saxony entreated him to come and change the deplorable state of his diocese. Duke Albert, son and successor of William *iv*., stoutly maintained that he was needed at Ingolstadt, and that he could not suffer him to leave it; while St. Ignatius was besieged with demands for the services of his most learned disciple. The Prince-Bishop of Freising and the Bishop of Eichstadt each claimed him as his theologian at the Council of Trent. Ferdinand, King of the Romans, urged that "the Light of Germany" should be instantly sent to the capital of the Austrian dominions, then plunged in the darkness of heresy. Pope Julius *iii*. solved the difficulty by desiring that he should proceed at once to Vienna, and St. Ignatius softened the blow to Duke Albert in these words: "The formal demand of his Holiness obliges me to send Father Canisius to Vienna, but without taking him absolutely from your Highness; I am merely lending him to the King of the Romans for a time, after which he shall return to Ingolstadt."

The capital of Austria had fallen a complete prey to heresy. For twenty years not a single priest had been ordained there; religious vocations were no longer heard of. Scarcely the twentieth part of the population had remained Catholic. Three hundred country parishes near the city were entirely without priests. The University, instead of providing a remedy, aggravated the existing evils by a teaching that was more or less heterodox. Society, moreover, was rotten to the core, and needed to be entirely reconstructed. Such was the condition of things when, at the call of the feeble but devout Ferdinand I., Blessed Peter Canisius arrived at Vienna in March 1552. Thirteen of his religious brethren had preceded him by nearly a year, and had opened a college which already promised well.

Page 75

Canisius began by preaching sermons at court, and to the people, by catechising children, and by seizing every possible opportunity of doing good. Then the plague broke out, and he devoted himself to the stricken. The Pope proclaimed a jubilee, and Canisius profited by the occasion to vindicate the honour of indulgences. His method everywhere seems to have been to do the next, the obvious thing, whatever it might be, and to throw himself heart and soul into it. Not content with his work in the city, he evangelised the country places. The poorest hamlets attracted him most, and as he went on his way, he instructed, consoled, heard the confessions of a life-time, gave the sacraments to the living and the dying, and brought back many hundreds of lost sheep to the fold. He continued to work thus without a break during the winter months, among people who were Christian but in name, intemperance, ignorance, and long neglect, having brutalised them almost beyond human reach. But where he passed, every village changed its aspect; conversions little short of miraculous marked his progress everywhere. Words that from the mouth of another might have returned unto him void, uttered by Canisius carried compunction into the hardest hearts. It was his sanctity, his entire abnegation of self and whole-hearted dependence on the Divine Will, far more than his learning, vigour, or energy that gave his words wings, and worked wonders among this forsaken and degraded country folk; and his charity was such that he would have been well content to have laboured among them for the rest of his life.

But meanwhile Vienna was suffering from his absence, and all sorts and conditions of men clamoured for his return. The episcopal see having become vacant, the king besought the Pope and St. Ignatius that it might be conferred on Father Canisius. But the utmost he could obtain after long importunity was that Canisius should administer the affairs of the diocese for one year, pending the election of a bishop, with the proviso that he should not touch a single farthing of the rich revenues belonging to the see, which he was to govern as a simple religious.

The arrangement was one admirably adapted to the restoration of order in the existing state of chaos, while no sacrifice of its discipline was forced on the Society by the promotion of one of its members to rank and dignity.

Canisius was afterwards made Dean of the University, in the hope that he would do for it what he had already done for Ingolstadt, and he set about the work in the same masterly fashion that distinguished all his schemes of reform. His first act was to obtain a royal decree, limiting the admission of professors to those who had submitted themselves to a rigorous examination in religious doctrine, and had given irrefragable proofs of orthodoxy. The same conditions were in future to be exacted of all who presented themselves for degrees. The university teemed with Lutheran literature; it was swept away by the same inexorable root-and-branch measures that had been so successfully employed at Ingolstadt.

Page 76

The next care of the reformer was to petition the king for a seminary wherein the ranks of the clergy, thinned almost to extinction, might be reinforced by men carefully trained to a due appreciation of their high calling. The result was the foundation of the seminary of priests of noble family, recruited mainly from the college which the Jesuits had opened at Vienna, and to which had flocked students from all the great families of Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, *etc*. In conjunction with this seminary, St. Ignatius, about the same tune, founded the celebrated German College in Rome, for the regeneration of Germany by means of a clergy that should be as learned as it was morally irreproachable.

In the midst of his multifarious occupations, Canisius continued his sermons at court, in the Cathedral, and in the principal churches of Vienna. Lutherans frequented them largely, and some, touched by the power of his doctrine and eloquence, asked him for conferences, which he gladly accorded them. Among these were two preachers of some celebrity, pillars of Protestantism, who defied him to answer their arguments in a public disputation. He accepted the challenge, and the day, place, and hour were fixed. A great concourse of people, composed largely of the new sectaries, were assembled, prepared to swell the expected triumph of their champions. The two heretical doctors held their dissertations, one after the other, and sat down amid the applause of their sympathisers. Then Canisius stood up with religious modesty and humility, his bearing expressive of the calmness and benevolence of one who has the whole Catholic Church, past and present, on his side. His prodigious memory and profound knowledge enabled him to refute easily every charge brought by his adversaries, whom he completely crushed with the overwhelming consistency of his logic. They both acknowledged themselves defeated; one returned to the Catholic Church, and a few months later entered the Society of Jesus, of which he remained an edifying member till his death; the other became a more determined advocate of heresy than before, and swore to avenge his defeat by a persistent persecution of the Jesuits.

Nor were enemies wanting on any side; the more converts the Jesuits made, the greater was the hatred they inspired. Calumnies were sown broadcast, and the life of Father Canisius was in constant danger. Ferdinand, warned of a plot to murder the holy man, obliged him, greatly to his discomfiture, to accept a bodyguard whenever he went out. But the work of reform and conversion went on steadily, and from all parts of Germany, bishops, princes, and governors sought to obtain the presence of the illustrious apostle. “I am ready,” he wrote in this regard to St. Ignatius, “to go wherever obedience calls me, and to work for the salvation of souls however abandoned they may be, whether in Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Tartary, or China, wherever I am sent.”

Page 77

He was sent to Prague, perhaps the most God-forsaken spot in the whole empire. Every imaginable sect had accumulated in Bohemia during the preceding twenty years. Scarcely a vestige of Catholicism remained, and Hussites, Wicklifites, Vaudois, Lutherans, Zwinglians, and various other offshoots of the principal sects, were busy relegating each other in eloquent terms to eternal damnation, when the arrival of Catholic missionaries gave the signal for a coalition against the common enemy of them all. At Prague itself, where Canisius was charged to found a college with the injunction not to leave Bohemia until it should be solidly established and in a flourishing condition, the Hussites outnumbered the others. Scarcely had he arrived and set to work, when the Duke of Bavaria, reminding St. Ignatius that Canisius had only been lent to Austria, claimed him, at least temporarily, for the foundation of the college which the Society was to establish at Ingolstadt. The claim was admitted to be just, and accordingly the affairs of Prague could only be proceeded with four months later, when Canisius returned from Germany, having been made provincial.

It was the beginning of Lent 1555, and on the 21st April twelve priests sent to him from Rome by St. Ignatius, arrived to second him in his perilous undertaking. The first time the Jesuits appeared in the streets they were saluted with handfuls of mud cast at them by the city urchins, who had been bribed to insult them. The cry “Dogs of Jesuits” (a play upon the word Canisius) followed them wherever they went. Father Peter was himself assailed with a large stone hurled through the window of the church as he stood at the altar saying Mass. A plot was formed to throw the whole community one by one into the Moldau, as they passed over the bridge that connected the old and the new town; and ruffians, who had received a part of their reward in advance, were stationed in the middle of the bridge to waylay them. But a timely edict issued by the Archduke of Bohemia threatened with the most severe penalties whoever should raise a hand against any member of the Society, or even treat any one of them disrespectfully. He went still further, and sent a detachment of guards to the college daily, with orders to accompany each of the priests wherever he went, and in sufficient numbers to prevent any attack.

Added to the open enmity and fierce hatred which they inspired, the Jesuits had to encounter the jealousy of the University professors, who would have been willing enough that they should preach, but who, on the opening of their college, did all they could to hamper them and prejudice people against them.

Page 78

The reputation of the Society for teaching was great all over Germany. Wherever a college was established by them, it immediately attracted students from all parts, and it was perhaps natural that other educational institutions should fear for their own existence. But the pettiness and meanness with which this fear was expressed at Prague resulted for the Jesuits in a penury so abject, that for many months they had nothing to eat but bread and cheese, and nothing to drink but water from their own well. For several days they were even prevented from going out for want of suitable garments. Nevertheless, however much they might have to suffer in any one place, struggling through a painful existence to the end in view, the work of reform went steadily forward.

About this time, the cathedral at Regensburg was in need of a preacher; the Diet was about to assemble in that city, all the princes and electors of the empire were to take part in it, and the new sectaries were expected in great numbers, in order to wrench, if it might be, such concessions from the authorities as they had not yet been able to obtain. The chapter therefore appealed to Father Canisius, and besought him to throw himself into this important breach. Realising all that was at stake, he started at once for Regensburg.

His first appearance in the cathedral pulpit was a splendid testimony to the opinion in which he was held. The vast building was filled with a brilliant throng, on the fringe of which the people hung in dense crowds overflowing into the streets. In a letter to Father Lainez (who had succeeded St. Ignatius as General of the Society) in September 1556, Canisius describes his efforts as successful in supporting and strengthening the persecuted Catholics, but he goes on to say that the Lutheran representatives at the Diet let loose a string of calumnies against him, and did all they could to poison the minds of the weak and simple. But for the States of the Empire they would have cast him out of the city as one so dangerous to the Protestant cause that they declared it would be wrecked altogether if Canisius continued to preach there.

However, continue he did during the whole of the sessions, save for a short interval of absence. In this interval he visited Innsbruck, in which town a college of the Society was nearing completion; and Augsburg, whose bishop, his old friend the celebrated Otto Truchsess, desired to consult him on the affairs of his diocese. There, overwhelmed with his almost superhuman labours, Canisius fell ill. He desired to be taken to the college at Ingolstadt, and Cardinal Truchsess accompanied him thither, while the Duke of Bavaria sent him his physicians. Thanks to their skill and to the enforced rest of his mental and physical powers, he soon recovered, and was able on the 1st December to return to his post at Regensburg. On all the Sundays of Advent he preached at the cathedral, but as it could not contain the vast concourse of

Page 79

people who crowded to hear him, he was obliged to preach three times in the week also. From the pulpit he went to the confessional, and when he returned to his lodging he was besieged by those who came to seek his advice-princes, concerning the interests of religion in their dominions, prelates, in regard to the reform of their dioceses, or to their own spiritual needs. The King of the Romans, and the Duke of Bavaria often sent for him to confer with him, and all admired the humility, simplicity, and patience with which he listened, no less than the frankness and freedom from human respect with which he proffered his advice. But time was wanting for all the demands made upon him; and that all might be satisfied he drew up for the use of bishops a short treatise on the means of reforming the clergy, and of introducing good morals among their flocks.

The Diet of Regensburg ended in nothing but resolutions to continue the controversy at Worms, and fearing the objections of Canisius, who was known to feel great repugnance towards these public conferences with heretics which never came to any practical conclusion, Ferdinand sought to anticipate his refusal by obtaining a promise from Father Lainez that so able a defender of Catholic doctrine should also be present.

Canisius had already written to the general thus:—

“Knowing as I do my poverty of intellect, my great want of aptitude, and my incapacity, I confess that I should like to run away from this place, and would rather go and beg in India than involve myself in those dangerous disputes, out of which nothing can come but perpetual disgrace to religion, and great harm to the rights of the Church. But the Lord God will make known to me His will by His servant my Superior, and when I know it I shall have no further fear, but shall appear with boldness in the enemy’s camp; for all my confidence and all my strength are in obedience. I can be nothing else but a beast of burden in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”

Father Lainez shared to the full the opinion of Canisius as to the uselessness of these conferences, which were exacted by the Lutherans in the hope of wresting something to their own temporal advantage, and the Pope differed from neither in his estimation of the small amount of good to be hoped from them. But as the Emperor was not to be restrained from granting concessions which all Catholics agreed were futile, it was extremely important that the interests of religion and the rights of the Holy See should be ably defended; and Father Lainez therefore insisted that Canisius should not only remain at the Diet of Regensburg to the bitter end, but that he should hold himself in readiness to reopen the campaign at Worms.

Page 80

In the interval Canisius went to Rome to pay his respects to the new General, and on his return to Germany visited Munich. The capital of Bavaria was also a hot-bed of heresy, and after a brief sojourn there he wrote to Father Lainez, entreating that he would send some Fathers capable of attracting people by their sermons and of edifying them by the holiness of their lives. He then went to Ingolstadt, and was greatly consoled by the results that had been obtained by the newly founded college. Heresy no longer ventured to raise its head where formerly it had flaunted its colours unabashed, and in every respect the university was worthy of the care that had been bestowed upon it. The place was naturally dear to his heart, as the magnificent first-fruits of his labours for Germany, but tearing himself reluctantly from the piety and peace which he had so successfully planted there, he proceeded to confront the enemy at Worms.

The greater number of the Lutheran disputants had already arrived, but of the six Catholic theologians deputed to enter the lists against them, the most celebrated, Johann Gropper, Archdeacon of Cologne, was conspicuous by his absence. Canisius wrote to entreat him to come, but Gropper was so thoroughly convinced of the uselessness of the disputations, that he persistently refused to take part in them. The organisation of the whole matter therefore devolved on Canisius, who prepared the plan of defence, and appointed to each Catholic theologian the subject of which he was to treat. Besides this, he continued to preach, to hear confessions and to take counsel with his colleagues daily. At night he allowed himself but a brief interval of sleep, the rest of the time being spent in prayer and study.

He had stipulated before the opening of the conferences that none but those Protestants who belonged to the Confession of Augsburg, and who were the only regular, and to some extent, disciplined body among them should take part in the disputations. This condition had been accepted, but from the very beginning, Anabaptists, Sacramentarians, and heretics of every imaginable sect appeared, and claimed the right of speech. Those of the Augsburg Confession were furious, and refused to make common cause with the new arrivals. Recriminations, invectives, and threats were hurled about the Protestant camp till a formidable tumult ensued. The Augsburg Lutherans at last succeeded in turning out the other sects, but ashamed of the spectacle they had presented to the eyes of the Catholics who were all united, they left Worms secretly, and contented themselves with attacking each other in the usual vituperative terms.

“It was,” wrote Canisius, “as if the giants of old were seeking to rebuild the Tower of Babel. God visited them with the same spirit of confusion which prevented their understanding one another, so that Melancthon was punished by the work of his own hands, like those who are devoured by the wild beasts which they have themselves bred up with great pains and difficulty.”

Page 81

Cologne, Strassburg, and his own native Nymwegen next came in for a share in the apostles' labours. The Bishop of Trent begged him to come and found a college in his diocese; the Duke of Bavaria called upon him to organise the one he had already set on foot at Munich, and to establish another at Landshut. But Straubing, by reason of its extreme need, detained him longer than any of these places.

Charles V. had himself been mainly responsible for the worst of the difficulties and complications that existed at Straubing, on account of his famous interim, which granted to all, on his own personal authority, permission to communicate under both kinds, pending the decision of the Council of Trent on this point. Straubing had availed itself without exception of the permission, and even after the decision of the Council persisted in retaining the custom. A few priests had attempted resistance, but numberless apostasies and half an insurrection had followed on their action, and now the position had come to be regarded as impregnable.

Canisius made no attempt to storm the fortress; he arrived, and was gentleness itself. He had scarcely passed a week in the town when he was regarded as the friend and adviser of all its principal citizens. His sermons drew crowds as usual, and his instructions on the subject of Holy Communion, of which his hearers proved to be strangely ignorant, were continued in the confessional, and on every possible occasion. At Easter nearly the whole population approached the sacraments, and communicated without making the least difficulty, under one kind. The apostle, broken with fatigue, for he had preached throughout Lent, three times a week, besides catechising, visiting the sick, hearing confessions, and answering the objections of all who came to him, was yet beaming with joy, so markedly had his labours been blessed.

It would be superfluous to follow Canisius in his journey to Poland, in his fruitful sojourn at Augsburg, in his campaign against the ignorance of the clergy at Wurzburg, against the Calvinism of the Swiss Protestants. Everywhere the story is the same: ignorance, vice, and heresy fled before the bright light of his presence, and his wisdom provided, that where he had planted the good seed, others should follow him, to keep it watered, so that there should be no return to the former errors. Long after his death, the colleges of the Society which he had founded continued his work, and formed an efficient barrier against the modern spirit of revolt from authority and order.

If in a sense the old ages of faith were dead, the new age witnessed a wonderful resurrection, the effect of which is still going on in our own day. And the scourge of heresy wherewith the Church in Germany was scourged to its ultimate salvation in the sixteenth century, lies now a thing of nought, effete and all but lifeless, while the Bride of Christ has renewed her youth like the eagle.

Page 82

V. JESUITS AT COURT

Lacordaire once wrote in a letter to Madame Swetchine these remarkable words concerning the disciples of St. Ignatius:

“Tout ce qui m’a tombe sous la main m’a toujours revolte par l’emphase ridicule de l’eloge, ou par l’impudeur du blame. II semble que cette nature d’hommes ait toujours ote la raison a ses amis et a ses ennemis. Je voudrais leur consacrer dix annees d’etudes, ne fut ce que pour mon plaisir propre; mais Dieu nous donne et nous prepare une bien autre besogne, et il faut dire avec l’auteur de l’Imitation, ’relinque curiosa.’ Les Jesuites continueront a faire du bien, et a le faire mal quelquefois; ils auront des amis frenetiques et des ennemis furieux, en attendant le jour du jugement dernier, qui sera pour bien des raisons un tres-interessant et tres-curieux jour.”

At no time has the world been more occupied with the Jesuits than at the present moment, and the prophecy of the celebrated Dominican above quoted seems more than ever likely to be fulfilled. If their friends are indeed still as extravagant in their praise as Lacordaire found them, perhaps on the other hand criticism is even louder, hatred more profound, accusation more wild and general. Most of the governments of Europe have banished them, on the ground that they are the enemies to progress, to liberal ideas, that they have meddled in politics, and constitute a danger to the State, by seeking to grasp the helm of public affairs, secretly stirring up the nations against their rulers.

The subject appears to be of perennial and universal application, since even in this twentieth century, and in so tolerant a country as England, people have been moved to some apprehension lest we should be incurring a danger in suffering the Jesuit to live unmolested in our midst. But it is not our present ambition to settle so burning a question as the right of members of the Society of Jesus to exist anywhere; rather would we make an excursion into the domain of history, and inquire what have been the rules and regulations, and what has been the practice of the Society concerning politics in the past, what has been the attitude of its members, prescribed and actual towards kings, potentates, and dynasties.

Certain facts have recently come to light, bearing on the history of the Jesuits at the various German courts in the sixteenth century, and the scattered remains of the private correspondence belonging to the archives of the old Society before its suppression have been gathered together. What was done more or less in secret is now proclaimed on the housetops, and the result, as might be expected, is in many ways interesting and instructive.*

* Die Jesuiten an den deutschen Furstenhofen des 16ten Jahrhunderts. Auf Grund ungedruckter Quellen. Von Bernhard Duhr, S. J., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1901.

This correspondence consists of communications between the rank and file, and the superiors at Rome, and vice versa, and includes the letters which passed between the General and the kings, archdukes and other reigning princes, who were ostensibly friends of the Society, but who did their best to put frequent spokes in the wheels of the Constitutions.

Page 83

The great dearth of learned preachers and confessors that prevailed about the middle of the sixteenth century appealed strongly to the Jesuits to throw themselves into the breach, and thus against the original intention of their founder, they became the spiritual guides of those who made the history of Europe for the next hundred years and more. It was a delicate and an onerous task, fraught with temptations from without and from within.

Ignatius of Loyola, being a man of the world as well as a saint, was well aware of the perils to which he exposed his sons, in sending them forth into the midst of vanities, while at the same time, having had some experience of courts, he knew that princes love not contradiction. But he decided after mature deliberation that after all his "least Society" was created to do a certain work in the Church and in the world, the need of which work was only too apparent in the decayed state of faith and morals. It was not by turning his back on courts that he could hope to regenerate them; but it would be interesting could we discover whether by a contrary decision he would have averted some of the odium which the name Jesuit has accumulated in the course of ages.

John *iii*. of Portugal was the first king to demand a Jesuit confessor, and to him Ignatius sent Father Luis Gonzalez de Comara, much against the desire of the said individual. To his entreaties and objections the first General of the Society made answer, on the 9th August 1552, that he was indeed edified by the humility which caused Father de Comara to shrink from a position which many envied; nevertheless, he was of the opinion that he should obey his Highness in this, as in other things, "for the honour of God our Lord." St. Ignatius went on to say that he need not occupy himself with any but good and pious objects, neither had he reason to fear that the king would, against the will of the Society, confer upon him those honours and dignities with which it was the custom to distinguish other confessors. If moreover, his remaining at court was a cross to him, he must bear it with patience as he would all else that obedience required of him.

At the second General Congregation held in 1565, the question arose whether Cardinal Otto of Augsburg might have a member of the Society attached to his court, as theologian. The Congregation decided not to allow any member to reside permanently at the court of any prince, spiritual or secular, or to consent to his following the said court on its travels, either in the capacity of preacher, theologian or confessor, and that no appointment of such a kind should be permissible for longer than one month or double that period at the most.

Ten years later, the Provincial Congregation of North Germany was reminded of this decree in drawing up propositions to be placed before the third General Congregation, and it was expressly stated that none but the General of the Society himself should have the power to make such appointments, that they should be made as rarely as possible, experience having proved that more harm was done to the confessor by his

residing at court than good to the penitent by his ministrations. The reply to this proposition was to the effect that with the General alone should rest the appointment.

Page 84

By degrees, further legislation became imperative, and the fifth General Congregation, held in 1593, forbade in the most solemn form every member of the Society to interfere in politics or any public affairs whatever. The decree was so absolute that not only did it ensure the imprudent from taking part in the questions of the day, but timid confessors were thereby prevented by their scruples from giving counsel, when appealed to on matters that could scarcely be supposed to border on politics.

In order therefore, to correct all misapprehension, the General, Father Aquaviva, issued an Instruction for the confessors of princes, which was formally approved by the General Congregation of 16o8. This was considered so important a document that it was incorporated into the Institute, a sort of code, containing the Constitutions which St. Ignatius drew up, as well as the decrees of General Congregations. The Instruction was in fact a summary of all previous experience on the subject. It provided, first of all, that in cases where the Society could not avoid compliance with the demand for a confessor at court, great care should be taken in the choice of the individual member to fill the office, so that he might conduce to the welfare of the prince, the edification of the people, and the avoidance of all injury to the Order. The last clause bore reference to the fact that not infrequently the Society was called upon to suffer in one place for wounds inflicted on it in another. Rules for the said confessor were then laid down, to fit every possible emergency, and in minute detail.

For instance, the king's confessor, although attached to the royal chapel, must not only lodge exclusively in a college of his Order, but he must remain subject to the rule, like any other member of the Society. Even when travelling with the court he was obliged to sleep in a house of his Order, or if passing through a town where no such house existed, he must beg hospitality of any other religious community, preferably to passing the night at court.

It was again solemnly impressed upon him not to allow himself to be drawn into any secular concerns, which rule the king was humbly petitioned to enforce.

Neither must the confessor undertake to be an emissary between the prince, his penitent, and any of his ministers, or other officials.

As regarded the prince himself, he was bound to listen to his confessor, not merely when he exhorted him on the subject-matter of his confessions, but also in matters relating to the prevention of injustice, oppression, or other scandals such as often came about through the fault of officials, and which were unknown to the sovereign.

None might undertake the office of permanent confessor at court without the consent of his provincial. It was, moreover, the duty of the provincial before according such permission, to hand this Instruction to the prince in order that he might thoroughly understand what the Society was willing to bestow upon him. The prince was further to be reminded in modest but decided terms, that superiors retained the right to the

obedience of the individual who became his confessor, as absolutely as to that of any other member of the Society.

Page 85

At first there seemed no great need for these precautions. The emperor, Charles V., chose Dominicans for his confessors, and his successor, Ferdinand, followed his example. But Ferdinand held the Society in great esteem, and at his death Father Lainez, who was then General, ordered that each priest in the college at Dillingen should offer twelve Masses for the repose of his soul, and the lay-brothers were to say certain prayers with the same intention. The Society was not only indebted to him for his unvarying friendship, but owed to his munificence the foundation of four colleges, *viz*., those of Vienna, Prague, Innsbruck, and Tyrnau.

Ferdinand's son and successor, Maximilian, having Protestant leanings, dispensed with a confessor altogether, but his wife, Doha Maria, sister of Philip *ii*. of Spain, was provided with a Spanish Franciscan, who was chosen for her by her brother. Maximilian's sons all chose Jesuit confessors, as did also his daughter, the Queen of Bohemia.

At that time the Lutherans thought that Catholicism was at its last gasp, and they eagerly anticipated the banishment of the Jesuits. But Maximilian, in spite of his Protestant tendencies, was well disposed towards them, and their college at Vienna received many marks of his favour, to the great disgust of his Lutheran subjects. The Protestant nobles assembled at the Landtag held in Vienna, attached three conditions to their votes of supplies for his war against the Turks:—The abolition of the procession of Corpus Christi, the confirmation of the Confession of Augsburg, and the banishment of the Jesuits. They declared that if the emperor refused to grant these requests, they would not furnish him with the required subsidy for the war. Maximilian replied that it was his business to repulse the Turks; the other things did not concern him, but the Pope.*

* Orig. G. Epist., 6, 48 seq.

Disappointed in their hopes, the Lutherans, allying themselves with the enemies of the Jesuits within the Church, began to circulate false reports against the Society. At one moment they accused Father Peter Canisius of prejudicing the Pope against the emperor, at another, the whole community at Vienna were declared guilty of openly insulting the Protestants. Reiterated complaints poured into the emperor's ears ended by alienating Maximilian from his former friends, and it was difficult, almost impossible for them to obtain a hearing. But the empress remained loyal to them, and would perhaps have been termed by Lacordaire frenetique.

Father Maggio, who was then court preacher, seems to have been a man of great prudence and mildness, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of religion. By degrees he not only convinced Maximilian of the injustice of the attacks made upon the Society, but the two became fast friends, so that when he was made Provincial of Austria in 1566, the appointment gave much satisfaction at court. He was frequently summoned to private audiences, and the emperor treated him with so much confidence that Father Maggio

would sometimes venture to address to him written words of exhortation, words which Maximilian invariably took in good part. The empress, observing the affection of her husband for the Jesuit would consult Father Maggio as to the best means of confirming him in the Catholic religion.

Page 86

When Father Maggio was made provincial, Father Antonio, a Portuguese Jesuit, became court preacher, but so little to his own satisfaction that he repeatedly appealed to the empress and to the General for his release. He bewailed his unfitness for a post requiring so much exceptional virtue, and expressed his desire to be sent to foreign missions. If such were not the will of his superiors, he entreated that he might have some humble office in a house of novices, where he might live unnoticed by the world, and labour for his soul's health.

The General, Father Mercurian, replied, on the 18th March 1576, that he had no one to replace him at court, and that he must perforce remain where he was. Previously to this, Father Antonio had besought the empress to dismiss him, but she had answered that she counted on his ministrations at the hour of death. A month after Father Mercurian's refusal to remove him, he again wrote to the General, begging that he might apply to the empress for, at least, a year's leave of absence, during which time a locum tenens might be dispensed with. Two days later, he followed up this letter with another, giving the General his opinion why it was inexpedient for any member of the Society to remain at court for more than a short term, such as a month or two. There was, he said, no bishop, ambassador, or person of consequence who did not desire to have several of the Fathers about him; the door which, at their profession, they had shut on the world, seemed in a certain sense to be reopened by a residence at court; unfortunately, men were not wanting who aspired to such offices, and great inconveniences ensued thereby. Some grew accustomed to a certain independence, little in accordance with the rules of the Society, some were altogether spoiled, and brought disgrace on the Order. It was, perhaps, not astonishing that after this letter the General showed even less inclination than before to remove Father Antonio. One who thus appreciated the dangers of the world would be less likely than another to fall a prey to them, and was as safe at court as in fulfilling the humblest duties of the noviceship.

But when all was said and done, the influence of the Jesuits at the Court of Vienna was not very great. Their El Dorado was the Archducal Court at Gratz, where reigned Ferdinand's son, Charles *ii*. Here their power was at least supposed to be so great that their enemies declared that they possessed the master-key of all the doors in the palace, and could pass through all the rooms composing the apartments of the Archduchess at will. This, however, with other things, she declared solemnly to be nothing but lies—nur lautere Lugen—and an attack on her honour.*

* Hurter, Ferdinand *ii*, 3, 578.

Page 87

Apart from these unpleasant calumnies, the Society flourished at Gratz as hardly anywhere else, and was able to train its novices, give the Spiritual Exercises, and administer the sacraments undisturbed. The only difficulties that arose were in connection with the right of the provincial to move his men about as he chose, the archduke, like the emperor, being inclined to regard his confessors as his own property. This was notably the case with the celebrated Father Blyssem, who received marching orders in 1578. The Archduke at once wrote to the General, declaring that Father Blyssem's removal would be extremely inconvenient, and was not to be contemplated. If the General were on the spot he would be of the archduke's opinion. First, Father Blyssem was his and the archduchess's confessor, and they both wished above all things to keep him. Secondly, he was not only a vigilant rector of the college under him, and an experienced confessor, but he was also an excellent preacher. And finally, he was beloved by all, was well acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of the country, enjoyed a good reputation and inspired respect even in the opponents of the Catholic religion. His sudden departure could not therefore but be injurious to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the college, and detrimental to the general good.

Not alone the archduke, the papal legate, Bishop Ringuarda, also appealed to the General of the Jesuits in the same interest, saying that he had already sought the intervention of the Pope and the Cardinal of Como, to prevent the removal of Father Blyssem. As he now heard that, in spite of his efforts, Father Blyssem was to go to Rome, at least for three months, Bishop Ringuarda begged most urgently that this order might be cancelled, the Father's absence for even a week, to say nothing of a month, being likely to entail serious harm to the Church in Austria. His daily presence was so necessary, that if he were not already at Gratz, he must be sent there without delay. The legate then went on to enumerate all the wonderful qualities possessed by the rector, and ended his letter with the solemn entreaty that the General would on no account remove him.*

* Orig. G. Epist., 3, 298.

Pressure such as this being frequently brought to bear on superiors, they could scarcely be said to exercise undivided control over their own subjects.

Driven into a corner, Aquaviva was obliged to leave the archduke's confessor where he was, accommodating matters by making him Provincial of Austria, in place of Father Maggio, Father Emerich Torsler replacing Father Blyssem as rector of the college at Gratz. The archduke expressed himself content with the arrangement, provided that Father Blyssem did not absent himself on the business of the province when he required him at his side.

Page 88

The new provincial had occasion, in January 1582, to write to the General about the sermons of a certain Father John Reinel, which were, he complained, too lengthy and too violent. In regard to the first fault he had improved somewhat, but no admonition had succeeded in causing him to desist from his biting attacks on the heretics. His Paternity was, therefore, requested to command him to observe more moderation and gentleness, and instead of handling the heretics angrily and roughly, to teach and exhort them with Christian charity. In this manner he would convert a far greater number, as every one maintained. But if he continued as heretofore, Father Blyssem would be obliged to send him to another college, where he would have to adopt a different style or give over preaching altogether, and take up another occupation.

But the removal of Father Reinel was not so simple a matter as it at first appeared. Towards the end of the year, Father Blyssem again wrote to Aquaviva on the same subject. It had been decided during the preceding summer to send the unmanageable preacher to another sphere of activity, he having been already so long a time at Gratz, where he was too much engrossed in the court, which he had recently, against the wishes of his superiors, accompanied in its journey of several months through Bavaria and Suabia, to the neglect of the pulpit at Gratz. Moreover, his harsh and aggressive manner of preaching was as repulsive to the Catholics as to the Lutherans, but when, according to his instructions, he was on the point of starting for Vienna, the archduchess, whose confessions he sometimes heard in Father Blyssem's temporary absence, was so much aggrieved at the change, that she entreated her husband with many arguments and tears to prevent his departure. Accordingly, the archduke begged the provincial to defer Father Reinel's removal on account of his consort's distress, and this he apparently did, but he wrote to the General asking him to insist on the order being carried out, and to persuade the archduke to agree to it.

Sometimes varying reports were sent to the General concerning the behaviour of certain Fathers at court. Thus, the rector of the college at Gratz wrote somewhat severely of Father Saxo, who also was a favourite in the most exalted circle.

But Father Blyssem in a letter to Aquaviva, dated gist December 1585, defended him, saying:—

"Your Paternity appears to be incorrectly informed as to Father Saxo. In my judgment, and in that of other Fathers of consideration, he has very greatly improved in his manner and conduct towards others. When I was at Gratz last year he was in possession of a costly little alarum, which he had received as a present from a nobleman. He was well pleased that the clock should be taken from him, and sold for the benefit of the noviceship. The seal which he used at missions, and which he would willingly have kept afterwards, he gave up at once at the instance of his superior. He had received a great many books as presents in the course of his missions, to assist him in preaching, and these he delivered up for the common use, after very little delay.

The Fathers whom I questioned answered that they had noticed nothing in Father Saxo that might give scandal, nor had they ever heard anything of the kind about him."

Page 89

The complaints against Father Viller were less easily answered. He had filled the office of Austrian Provincial between the years 1589 and 1595, and in the latter year was appointed rector of the college at Gratz. During this time the Archduke Ferdinand chose him as his confessor. Not long afterwards he was accused to the General of being a courtier, an imputation so vague as to need a discursive reply. But his long letter of self justification addressed to Father Aquaviva is interesting on account of the vivid scenes it lays before us. Its main contents are these:—

“Already fifteen or sixteen years ago, when Father Maggio had left the province, certain Fathers in Vienna complained bitterly to the new provincial, Father Blyssem, that I had a courtier-like mind, because people about the court came to me, and I associated with them. I was, it is true, in favour with the imperial council, with the bishops and the Hungarian nobles, also with the apostolic nuntios Delphin and Portia, and I laboured to the extent of my power in the interests of religion. Father Provincial removed me from my office, and I became his secretary and admonitor. Two years later, when a visitor, Father Oliver came, he reinstated me as Master of the alumni, discipline among them having become relaxed. When I had been another two years in this office, I was again accused to the provincial. I was deposed, but in the meantime, the baselessness of the charges brought against me having been proved, I was appointed rector at Olmutz, and Father Provincial assured me with tears that I had been unjustly treated. Five years afterwards I was elected provincial, and the Father Visitor was able to testify that I suffered much, even to the danger of losing my life, in discharging the duties of this office in Bohemia and Hungary. The next provincial (Father Ferdinand Alber) evinced dislike of me immediately on his taking up office, the reason of which was, I believe, merely that we do not share the same opinions. He, like Fathers Bader, Reinel, and Scherer, is for public penitential exercises in the refectory daily; I, on the contrary, am for a milder proceeding, such as I have learned of Fathers Maggio, Everard (Mercurian) Goudan, Canisius, and Lanoy. Therefore, I am called a courtier, even when I am not at court. The whole college will bear witness that I go there less often than Father Reinel, who at least went once a day, whereas I go on an average but once a week.

“If it be objected that I suffer the princes to come frequently to the college, I reply, as I replied to the Father Provincial, that I will undertake they shall come no more, but the responsibility for this must rest with others.

“I am further reproached with having invited the princes to dinner at the vineyard, and also at the college, and that I even played with them at the vineyard. As for the invitation, the princes themselves asked to be invited, and the Apostolic Nuntio, and the Bishop of Laibach, were present at the games, which were, in my judgment, honourable and modest.

Page 90

“I have begged to be removed from both my offices, in order to remove suspicion, and to obtain peace, for I see that I am not agreeable to my provincial, he having forbidden me to hear the confessions of the archduke and those of the dowager archduchess, who with her daughters insists on confessing to me.

“If any one has told the provincial that the college is in a bad state, ocular demonstration will prove the contrary; everything goes on in an orderly way. The archduke receives Holy Communion every Sunday. He is burning with desire to reinstate the Catholic religion, and he labours for the conversion of the nobility. Only yesterday a man in a very high position was received into the Church. As for your Paternity’s exhortation to guard against the spirit of the world, I thank you, but I do not see how I am to do it, unless I flee from the court and from those about it. I will take pains to satisfy my conscience and obedience, but I fear that I shall not content those who look on the dark side. If your Paternity thinks that I seek the favour of princes more for my own sake than that of the Society, it is a bitter reproach, for I would rather die than be guilty of such a fault. The archdukes will bear me out how often I have spoken to them on this subject, and how I have begged them to write nothing on my behalf to the General or to the provincial; but they insist that if I lay down the rectorate I must retain the confessorship."*

* Orig. G. Epist., 35, 479.

In the end, this suggested compromise was effected. Father Viller was no longer rector of Gratz, but remained confessor to the archducal family. Nevertheless, complaints of him did not cease, and he had to defend himself against the charge of clinging inordinately to the worldy advantages of his position. In a confidential letter to the German Resident in Rome he wrote:—

“I call God to witness that I do not value the court and my present office more than any other service which my superiors may call upon me to render to the Society. I am cheerfully ready to leave the court at any moment, and at the risk of losing the prince’s favour, whenever my superior expresses a wish that I should do so, to say nothing of receiving a decided order. I have not so high an opinion of my person that I seek consideration on account of the favour and affection of the prince.”

Still the attacks on Father Viller did not cease. Those who were for unmitigated austerity looked on his broad views with horror. Father Scherer, one of the most rigid, called him “the synagogue of Libertines.” The provincial, and the Spaniard, Father Ximenes, were among those who judged him most severely. He was, moreover, involved—and this is perhaps less to his credit than any supposed laxness with which he was charged—in the squabbles between the Hapsburg and Wittelsbach royal families, concerning the bishopric of Passau. This had for long been an apple of contention between

Page 91

Austria and Bavaria, and the new rector of the college at Gratz, Father Haller, in describing the situation to the General, wrote: "Outsiders on either side naturally throw oil on the flames, and as regards Ours, I doubt whether they do their best to extinguish them, exercising the necessary charity and prudence. Father Viller does the reverse, blaming and condemning everything Bavarian, while he praises and defends the Austrians indiscriminately. Both parties have their adherents, who publish everything from their own point of view. As this one-sided material is all that is laid before Ours, the danger is that the advice given is not in favour of investigation. It is taken for granted that all that comes before their eyes is true, and the other side is condemned unheard. But as it is clear that the Christian cause in Germany would be greatly benefited by a union of the two parties, it would be well worth the trouble, seeing the immense influence which the Society has over the princes and their advisers, for the members of the Order to labour with more zeal than heretofore, to bring about this reconciliation, particularly at Prague, Vienna, Munich, and Gratz." He concludes with the wish that not alone the Society, but the rulers of the Church also, might advance the cause of union.

In a postscript Father Haller returns to his charge against Father Viller, who, he declares, has disregarded the rules of the fifth General Congregation. At Ferrara, for instance, he engaged in a violent controversy with the Bavarian agent, Sper, about the Passau question, as well as that of the bishopric of Salzburg, which the Bavarians were supposed to covet. Besides this, Father Viller, blinded by prejudice, disapproved of the contemplated marriage between the Austrian Archduke and the Princess Maria Anna of Bavaria, "which he would prevent if he could. In short," wrote the provincial, "the good Father has extravagant and dangerous notions, and gives no good example to the college."

In his own defence Father Viller wrote that he was by no means averse from the alliance, that he had himself secretly applied for, and obtained, the necessary dispensation at Rome, and had frequently expressed his earnest desire that the marriage might take place, considering that a union between the two princely houses would conduce to the honour of both, and to the protection and defence of the Catholic religion in Germany.

Only, the health of the bride must be considered no less than her great and remarkable piety, as it was important to provide for the continuation of the line of the august house, into which it was proposed she should enter. He had thought that as marriage was so delicate an affair, foresight was needful, in order that no want of physical health and beauty might in course of time change affection into aversion, such as was to be daily observed in the marriages of so many illustrious persons. This, Father Viller declared, was his whole mind on the subject, and such

Page 92

as he had in all humility expressed it to the prince. With his whole heart he wished both exalted personages the tenderest love, firm union, and continuous happiness. He believed that the Archduke Ferdinand could not form a more suitable alliance with any other family in Europe, but at the same time, no one should quarrel with him, Father Viller, for wishing that the bride might possess sufficient corporal health and beauty to ensure the well-being of their issue, and the continuance of conjugal affection. For this reason he trusted in the great piety and noble character of the duke and duchess that they would not endanger the future of their daughter, and that of her children, as well as the happiness of their prospective son-in-law, by concealing a want of health on the part of their most devout and admirable daughter.*

* The reports as to the condition of the Princess Maria Anna's health appear not to have been without foundation. Hurter mentions her delicacy, and Koch says that she was unhealthy. She died on the 8th March 1616.

But Duke William of Bavaria was deeply offended with the Archduke Ferdinand's confessor, and even after the marriage which took place on the 23rd April 1600, at Gratz, Father Viller having indiscreetly reopened the subject of the bride's want of health, complaints of him reached the General. But, in spite of all this, he did not lose the archduke's favour, retaining his entire confidence to the end.

An incident connected with the jealousy with which the Society guarded its rule of non-interference in politics, is furnished by the same Father Viller, who, in 1599, was appointed to go to Rome on a mission from the Austrian archduke. On this occasion the General, Father Aquaviva, wrote to Father Viller as follows:—

"As at the present time general suspicion is aroused, especially in Venice, by any semblance even of politics, it will be difficult to avoid remarks, when it is seen that your reverence is charged with an embassy from the archduke to the Pope. And as the good prince has deserved so well of the Church and of the Society, and especially as your reverence has resisted so long, excusing yourself in prudent and religious fashion, it appears to me that a via media is possible, and an exception may be made. That is to say, that if the mission has nothing whatever to do with politics, but has merely regard to matters of faith, concerning heretics or the Turks, your reverence is at liberty to undertake it, and may set out as soon as is desired. But if the business is a political one, you must entreat the archduke, appealing to his love for the Society, to send some one more suitable in your place. This will be better for the archduke himself, and will confer a benefit on the Society."*

Ad. Austr., 1573-1600.

It cannot be denied that during the reigns of the Archdukes Ferdinand, Charles, and Rudolph, the Court of Gratz was a model of purity, uprightness, and activity. As the Jesuits were all-powerful there during the whole of this period, it is obvious that this satisfactory condition must, in a large measure, be attributed to their influence.

Page 93

The introduction of the Society into Innsbruck was the work of the Emperor Ferdinand, and the first Jesuit to labour in the new field was the Tyrolese, Father Charles Grim. At Innsbruck, in 1561, lived the five so-called queens, daughters of the emperor, who lived a semi-religious life, and who desired to be confessed, directed, and preached to by members of the Society. In 1563 the emperor paid a visit to his daughters, and inspected the new college at Innsbruck. He expressed his satisfaction with it, and presented the community with a garden.

The five “queens,” Magdalen, Margaret, Barbara, Helena, Joanna, had a great reputation for piety and charity. A young girl, who had received severe injuries from a fire, was received into their palace and nursed with the most loving care. Certain persons were charged by them to inform them of cases of need as they arose. Father Edmund Hay told the General that three of the “queens” had dedicated themselves to God by a vow, and had resolved to remove as soon as possible from the turmoil and luxury of the court into greater solitude. One of them was especially pious, frequented the sacraments once a month and oftener, and would practise very great austerities if her confessor would allow her. In 1565 people already declared that the court of these archduchesses was like a convent; every sign of pomp and splendour had disappeared, and humility and modesty reigned in their stead.

On the 11th January 1566, Father Dirsius wrote to the General, St. Francis Borgia, in behalf of the “queens” Margaret, Magdalen, and Helena, telling him that their brothers, the emperor, and the Archdukes Ferdinand and Charles, fully concurred in their making the above-mentioned vow. They had wished, he said, to remove to Munich, with their attendants, and to live there in a convent of Poor Clares, apart from the world. But this plan their brothers opposed, and desired them to remain in Austria. The emperor had even offered them deserted convents in Corinthia, but in those parts there were too many heretics to please the princesses. Everyone advised them to remain at Innsbruck, where they already edified the faithful by their virtuous example, and prevented apostasy. They themselves were willing to remain; at least they wished to be in a place where there was a college of the Society, and were thinking of taking the newly-built Franciscan convent, the Italian Franciscans for whom it had been constructed being unlikely to remain on account of the climate and the difficulties they experienced in mastering the German language. In case the archduchesses did not get possession of this convent they had also in view a house in the neighbourhood of Innsbruck. In this event they humbly begged for fathers to direct them spiritually, and to undertake the care of other souls in the place.

Page 94

In answering this letter St. Francis Borgia said that the Society was ready to help the archduchesses spiritually, if only out of gratitude to their father and brother, but that it was contrary to the Institute for the members of the Society to live for any length of time apart from their colleges or houses, and it would in any case be displeasing to the Fathers themselves to forego the company and edifying example of their religious brethren. It seemed, therefore, advisable that the three princesses should take up their abode where there was a college or house of the Society, and preferably at Innsbruck, where they might inhabit the house built by their father, or some other of the same description, where they might observe the rule of life they had adopted, and keep the vow they had taken before God. The Fathers might hear the confessions of the princesses and preach to them. A proviso was afterwards made that, in the event of the "queens" founding a convent, the Jesuits should no longer be their confessors, as this would be directly contrary to the intention of St. Ignatius, as expressed in the Institute.

The General then sent Father Canisius to Innsbruck to arrange matters, and the holy apostle of Germany formulated the opinion that "Ours should not easily receive permission to direct women, even the most exalted in position, for we have experienced to our detriment and the detriment of this college in particular, that Ours are liable in such matters to suffer in their vocation, and as a consequence to become unbearable."*

* Kroess, p. 177.

The next year (16th August 1567), Father Peter Canisius reiterated his apprehension: "I consider it extremely difficult to keep Fathers to their obedience and religious discipline when they are in any way bound to the court," he said.

Meanwhile, the "queens" had chosen Hall, a little town near Innsbruck, as their residence, and Father Dirsius announced the circumstance to the General in these terms:—

"The Queens have purposed for years to withdraw from the world. Now, with the consent of their brothers, they have decided to reside at Hall, and there with some of their ladies and attendants who wish to imitate them, to lead a religious life in common, but without adopting a habit or the rule of any religious order. They need priests, however, and wish for Fathers of the Society. They beg, therefore, that the church to be built at Hall with all its treasures may be taken over by the Society, for which they also wish to found a novitiate there."

But Father Borgia again objected, foreseeing nearly all the difficulties which arose later on. The Society might not undertake the direction of a community of women, even though these were not leading a thoroughly conventual life. It was not advisable for the Fathers to accept the church offered to them at Hall, because the college they were to establish in that place would have its own church connected with it,

Page 95

which would suffice. Further, it was not convenient that a church, communicating with the house where the archduchesses lived with their suite, should be handed over to them, and lastly, it was not the custom of the Fathers to go daily from their own to another church at a distance, to conduct divine service there. The General concluded his letter with the remark that, as the project of the "queens" was directly opposed to the Institute, nothing further need be said about such a foundation.

In a second letter he instructed Blessed Peter Canisius to impress upon the archduchesses that they should be content with the confessor chosen by the Society as the one best suited to them. Canisius was then to name Father Lanoy, whom the General was sending to Innsbruck from Vienna, the empress having been very well contented with him. If they demurred, it was to be represented to them that it was not becoming for "Ours" to frequent palaces much. The less frequently they were seen there the better, and the less people testified their affection for them by sending them food and clothes, the better would they be enabled to live a community life, and observe the Institute. The better also would they be able to render spiritual service.

Father Borgia communicated this instruction to the rector of Innsbruck College also, and added that he feared the Fathers were too much spoiled by presents from the "queens," who were in the habit of sending meals daily from their palace to them. In answer to the rector's question as to what was to be done with the food thus sent, the General replied that it was to be given to the sick, or to those in need. It was to be desired that the "queens" might be persuaded to send no more things of the sort. If they wished to bestow an alms on the college, they should do so in a more useful way. On no consideration should their confessor be allowed to take his meals in his own room; sickness being the only exception to this rule.

It was some time before the princesses could be induced to give up sending delicacies to their confessors, two lackeys being daily told off to carry the various dishes from the palace to the college. At last, however, the unwelcome favours were stopped by the rector declaring that the dinners thus sent did not reach the destination intended, but were distributed to the sick members of the community and others, the "queens" confessors partaking of the ordinary fare.

Nevertheless, the archduchesses gained their point as regarded the other matter, for in the end, the General gave an unwilling consent to their choosing their own confessors, but he told Canisius that this arrangement only held good during the lifetime of the "queens," and was to form no precedent. After their death the Society would not continue to direct the community of ladies which they had founded, such work not being in accordance with the rules of the Institute, which, in this particular as in others, had been approved by the Holy See.

Page 96

In order to secure the Jesuits permanently as their directors, the pious archduchesses determined to found a novitiate at Hall, and to offer it to the General of the Society. St. Francis Borgia accepted the offer, but on condition that no responsibility was to accrue to the Society respecting the future of the community, and he wished it to be impressed on the princesses how much he had condescended in allowing their confessors to associate with their court, such frequent intercourse with seculars, especially with ladies, being undesirable for religious, and giving occasion to idle and frivolous remarks.

In the meanwhile, the Archduchess Magdalen had given notice that the whole machinery of her court would be broken up in six months. Those of her ladies, ladies' maids, and attendants who desired to do so might follow her and her two sisters into their spiritual solitude at Hall, no longer as servants, but as companions in the service of God. Accordingly, by the end of October 1569, all was in readiness, and the three princesses, accompanied by six of their suite who had resolved to share their penance, removed to Hall, where they themselves performed nearly the whole of the housework, two servants only being engaged for the roughest portion of the labour. Hereupon, a storm of abuse broke over the heads of the Innsbruck Jesuits, who had, of course, originated the whole affair, seeking their own advantage. It was they who had persuaded Magdalen to found a novitiate, and it was their fault that the "queens" washed the clothes, plates, and dishes of the new community with their own imperial hands, cooking also the meals of which they partook. Rumours were afloat to the effect that the emperor and the archdukes were furious.* All this was, however, but the malicious invention of enemies, and the facts communicated to the General by the Fathers at Innsbruck reveal nothing but satisfaction on all sides. The archduke concurred in all that was done, and the princesses were brought to acquiesce in the arrangement by which the Fathers were to live at some distance from their house, and the Jesuits rejoiced, inasmuch as they were left free to use the building handed over to them as a school or a novitiate, or to put it to any use they thought fit. Father Hoffaus wrote that the archduke had accorded him a long and very gracious audience, and had assured him of his affection and esteem for the Society. On the 5th December, High Mass had been sung in their church at Innsbruck, and on the preceding day he had announced a plenary Indulgence to all who should assist at it, on account of the departure of the "queens." The archduke, the "queens," and the whole of the nobility had been present. The archduke had shown himself extremely gracious and kind, and had paid a visit to Father George Scharich, who was sick, and had sent him costly waters. By his kindness he had consoled the whole community. The same day he had conducted the "queens," his sisters, solemnly to their retreat at Hall, and on the next had left for Prague, upon which Father Hoffaus had taken possession of the new college.

Page 97

* Orig. G. Epist., 9, 133.

On the 31st January 1570, the same Father wrote from Innsbruck:—

“The college at Hall is going on quietly. The queen scarcely worries us at all; she has not yet entered our house since we went there, and she seldom sends for us. In short, she leaves us in peace, and if this continues, no one can complain of her, except that she generally detains her confessor for nearly two hours after Mass. But this can be borne, as there is no danger, and as I have often called her attention to it and have blamed her for it, she is now rather more considerate.”

The following extracts from “Queen” Magdalen’s statutebook for her community show somewhat amusingly that the continual exhortations of the superiors of the Society had made some impression:—

“Jesuits are to be chosen as confessors. Out of confession none must speak with her confessor without the permission of her superioress, who shall not give leave unless there be sufficient reason for it. For although one may have a scruple or a temptation, this can be deferred to the next confession. An exception must be made for the superioress herself, for it is needful that she speak often with him, but not always necessary for her to take him up to the house; sometimes she can confer with him in the lodge or in the lower corridor. They must not make acquaintance with any other of the Fathers, or invite them to the house, neither must they send food to any sick Father, except in cases of great need, and only for a short time, say for a week, but not longer. Neither must they give them money daily to buy milk, butter, and such like things, but now and again, if necessary, they may give them the wherewithal to procure cheese and lard.”

Notwithstanding these regulations, none must suppose that the archduchess is devoid of confidence or regard for the Fathers or for priests in general. All her life she has “loved them in God, and will continue to do so to the end; but there are many things good in themselves, and agreeable to God, which must nevertheless be avoided for the sake of a better thing still.” If her spiritual daughters are careful to avoid exaggeration, and observe her precepts faithfully, they will find the Society better disposed towards them, will help them to save their souls, and will be less likely to change their confessors.

But in spite of her naivete, and of the excellent advice she gave to others, there were, for several years, innumerable difficulties with regard to the Archduchess Magdalen’s confessor, Father Hezcovaus. He was infirm in health, and needed much waiting upon, day and night. Moreover, he observed the rule as little as possible, and his august penitent unwisely took his part against his superior far more than was desirable. It was at last decided that he should be dispensed altogether from keeping the rule, that he need only obey the General, and his confessor, and that he might receive from the

Archduchess Magdalen all that he needed for his support. But even this was not enough, and sometimes it was debated whether Father Hezcovaus should still be included in the list of those belonging to the college.

Page 98

On the 12th October 1584, the provincial, Father Bader, ordered that the servants of this Father should not come and go, and run in and out, as he and they pleased. If he required anything in the night, the other Fathers should be ready to assist him charitably and patiently.

But there were still other difficulties at Hall, in connection with the quasi-religious community, such as St. Francis Borgia had predicted, and these rose to such a pitch, that in 1596, Father Hoffaus expressed his opinion to the General, that it would be better to give up their college there, and so once for all get rid of the burden imposed on the Society by "Queen Magdalen."

The whole trend of this correspondence shows the tremendous obstacles which the Jesuits encountered, not merely at Innsbruck but throughout Austria and Bavaria, in their efforts to abstain from all that was alien to their vocation. It is curious in these days to note how much the old Society suffered from a superabundance of favour on the part of princes. And far from being stereotyped reproductions of one unvarying pattern or spiritual automata turned out of one mould, the Jesuits, as represented in their own private correspondence, which was never intended for the public eye, reveal a considerable amount of individuality. The interpretation of the rule was elastic enough to give scope to much diversity of opinion, and if superiors were jealous guardians of the Institute, they encountered sufficient idiosyncrasy among their subjects to prevent any rigidity in applying it.

It seems more than likely that if Lacordaire had had his wish, and had been able to dedicate ten years of his life to the study of the Jesuit character, he would have found on the whole that he had, after all, set himself the very ordinary task of watching a perpetual conflict between a high ideal and that frailty which is inseparable from human nature.

VI. GIORDANO BRUNO IN ENGLAND

The revolt from Scholasticism in the sixteenth century, led by Erasmus of Rotterdam, John Colet, and other apostles of the new learning, reached farther, and was productive of other results than these had intended or anticipated.

Erasmus was called an infidel by the friars, but he always stoutly protested his adherence to the Church of which the Pope was the head; and Colet has been considered by many as a herald of the Reformation, although he died a Catholic. Erasmus, by his own showing, was no infidel, and there are sufficient indications that Colet, even had his life been prolonged, would never have gone over to the enemy; but both had given cause for apprehension by opening doors to a profound dissatisfaction, to novel theories and extravagant systems, which many friends of Erasmus carried on to a denial of all revealed religion.

In throwing discredit on the schoolmen, Erasmus had prepared the way for a contempt of Aristotle himself, and when the ex-friar Giordano Bruno of Nola appeared as a leader of revolt, distinct from Luther and Calvin, he found in Italy and France a small band of intellectual revolutionists clamouring for a philosophy that should emancipate them from the thraldrom of Christianity, and yet save them from the dishonourable name of atheists.

Page 99

They wished to be called deists; not because they favoured any particular form or system of religion, but as a sign that they acknowledged, in some vague and undefined sense, a Supreme Being, and were content to follow the light and law of nature, rejecting revelation, and placing themselves in opposition to Christianity.

Bruno gave them a philosophical system that was neither platonic nor peripatetic, nor was it mystic, but a confused jumble of all three systems, and, according to Bayle, “the most monstrous that could be devised, and directly opposed to all the most evident ideas of our intelligence.” He goes on to say that Bruno, in his war against Aristotle, invented doctrines a thousand times more obscure than the most incomprehensible things written by the disciples of Aquinas or Scotus.*

* Bayle, Dictionnaire, Historique et Critique, article “Bruno,” vol. i. Doc. XII.

The new philosopher was accused among other heresies of teaching that there is no such thing as punishment for sin; that the soul of man is a product of nature differing in no sense from the soul of a brute, and that God is not its author. In his deposition at his trial, Bruno begged the question of the immortality of the soul in these words: “I have held and do hold that souls are immortal, and that they are subsisting substances (that is the intellectual souls), and that speaking in a Catholic manner, they do not pass from one body to another, but they go either to Paradise, to Purgatory, or to Hell. Nevertheless, in philosophy I have reasoned that the soul subsisting without the body, and non-existent in the body, may in the same way that it is in one body be in another; the which, if it be not true, at least appears to be the opinion of Pythagoras."*

* Bayle, Dictionnaire, Historique et Critique, article “Bruno,” vol. i. Doc. XII.

His disciples aver that, although Bruno did not enforce the doctrine of metempsychosis, he held it to be very well worthy of consideration. There is perhaps a distinction without a difference between the terms “immortality of the soul,” and the “indestructibility of the monad,” an expression dear to Bruno’s followers, and frequently to be met with in his writings; but we are accustomed to associate the latter term with the worship of nature according to the pantheistic gospel which recognises a soul in every leaf that stirs; and (this brings us to the very essence of Bruno’s philosophy, in so far as it is possible to arrive at any definite conclusion, amid the obscure maze of words with which he surrounded his ideas.

None of his disciples repudiate for him the title of pantheist, but Mrs. Besant,* an ardent defender of the Nolan philosopher, went a step further, and declared pantheism itself to be “veiled atheism.” Moreover, she says, “So thoroughly does pantheism strike at the root of all idea of God, as taught by theists, that we can scarce think that Bruno was unfairly judged when called atheist by his contemporaries; the conception of the pantheist cannot be called a God in the commonly accepted sense of that term.”

Page 100

* In her Giordano Bruno, p. 5. London, 1877.

Having arrived thus far, the panegyrist breaks out into eulogy of “the grandest hero of free-thought,” and claims for Bruno the proud distinction of materialist.

Others of his admirers, and notably his English biographer, Frith, declare that the aim of the Nolan philosophy is to overcome the fear of death, and to fill the soul with noble aspirations, while they maintain that its author forestalled Darwin and Herbert Spencer in their theory of evolution. “Nobody is to-day the same as yesterday. All things, even the smallest, have their share in the universal intelligence, or universal thinking power. For without a certain degree of sense or cognition, the drop of water could not assume the spherical shape which is essential to the preservation of its forces. All things participate in the universal intelligence, and hence come attraction and repulsion, love and hate. Nature shows forth each species before it enters into life. Thus each species is the starting-point for the next.” These are some of the ideas, the conception of which is supposed to shadow forth Bruno’s anticipation of modern thought.

Landseck, his principal German biographer, makes him the link between antiquity and the celebrated thinkers of the nineteenth century. He considers the doctrine of the indestructibility of the monad to be that belief in the immortality of the soul which was professed by the Druids, the Egyptians, the Brahmins, and the Buddhists, the belief of Pythagoras and Plato, of Plotinus, of Lessing, and of Goethe, in unison with the evolution of Darwin and Haeckel.*

* Landseck, Bruno der Martyrer der neuen Weltanschauung, p. 37.

It is not our purpose to consider here all Bruno’s articles of faith or unfaith, but rather to show the general tendency of his teaching, in order to trace its effect upon his contemporaries in England. His philosophy, itself a travesty of various systems, was in its turn caricatured and vulgarised in a manner which would, perhaps, had he lived to see it, have gone far to persuade him of the risk to popular order and morality which he incurred, in taking from people their belief in a personal God, and fear of the consequences of sin.

Some years ago a statue was raised to his honour on the Campo dei Fiori in Rome, on the alleged spot of his execution, as a vindication of those principles for which he chose to die. In his own day they were held to be dangerous to the State, and subversive of public morality, and he was forced to fly before the opposition they aroused from almost every place in which he attempted to propagate them. The enmity of the Calvinists drove him from Geneva; at Toulouse the Huguenots made his life unbearable; the Oxford of Elizabeth, as intolerant as Rome, proved no agreeable sojourn, but he left traces of his passage through England, which Elizabeth, however much she favoured him at the time of his visit, was afterwards at great pains to efface.

Page 101

The period of his stay in this country extended over two years, from 1583 to 1585, and although in general he met with little encouragement from the learned, he succeeded in making some proselytes. In London, he lodged at the house of the French ambassador, and went frequently to court, where he maintained his footing by pretending to be smitten by the mature charms of the queen. Among his English friends were Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Fulke Greville, Dyer, Spenser, and Temple, and it has even been asserted that his system to a certain degree influenced Bacon, and may be traced in the Novum Organon.* This is, however, an erroneous view, for Bacon's term "form" means no more than law, for the form of a substance is its very essence, whereas with Bruno, form and matter are expressions which stand for forces.** According to St. Thomas Aquinas, who followed Aristotle, form is the *determining principle* in the constitution of bodies.

* Book ii., Aphors. 1, 4, 13, 15, 17.

** Frith, Life of Giordano Bruno, p. 107. London, 1887.

Sidney's biographer,* while jealous lest any taint of error should be supposed to infect his hero, nevertheless admits unwillingly that Giordano Bruno, Sir Fulke Greville, and Sir Philip Sidney, were wont to discuss philosophical and metaphysical subjects "of a nice and delicate nature with closed doors."

* Zouch, Memoirs of Sir Philip Sidney, p, 337, note.

Dr. Joseph Warton, editor of Pope's works, says that, among many things related of the life of Sir Philip Sidney, it does not seem to be much known that he was the intimate friend and patron of the famous atheist, Giordano Bruno, who was in a secret club with him and Sir Fulke Greville in 1587. The date is incorrect, but the intimacy is confirmed by Bruno's dedication to the English poet of two of his works, the one being entitled Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfaute, a book which is admittedly blasphemous and obscene, where it is not so obscure as to be unintelligible, the other the no less notorious Heroici Furori.

Soon after Bruno's departure from England, the result of his teaching began to appear in many places throughout the country. Elizabeth's Council became alarmed. State indifferentism to religion was as yet unknown, and the new sectarianism appealing strongly to the ignorant and the profane, politicians were not slow to take cognisance that questions of the highest moment were being introduced into tavern brawls and gutter oratory. Others besides Catholics began to absent themselves from the new English Church service and sermons; and fragments of conversation that savoured of "atheism" were frequently reported to the local magistrates. An investigation into the causes and authors of the disturbances was set on foot, and it was felt that a scapegoat was needed to create a wholesome fear of the long arm of the law in the minds of would-be atheists among the people.*

* Bruno's latest biographer, Mr. L. McIntyre (Giordano Bruno, London, 1903), entirely ignores the effect of his hero's teaching in England.

Page 102

Sir Philip Sidney was too much the world's darling, too elegant a figure in the Elizabethan pageant, too ethereal a poet, to be burdened with the brunt of so serious an accusation, and he was passed by for one who, with all his brilliant gifts and attainments, had ever been the child of misfortune.

Perhaps no one ever excited more jealousy and ill-will among his contemporaries than Sir Walter Raleigh. His life at court alternated between magnificent success and the most crushing defeat. He was successively the friend, the rival, the enemy of Essex, and when that favourite's star was in the ascendant, his waned, until a change in the queen's fickle fancy made him again, for a short period, an object of admiration and envy. A soldier of fortune, a planter of colonies, an admiral, a courtier, a statesman, a wit, a scholar, a chemist, an agriculturist, he was eminent as each of these, and his exploits in Guiana read like some fantastic tale of fictitious adventure. His History of the World, although but a fragment of what he intended it to be, is nevertheless a monument of prodigious learning, sobriety, and patience.

Edwards, in his Life of Sir Walter Raleigh, says that in his graver hours he had strong theological convictions which agreed in many points with those of the leading Puritans. Such was probably in all sincerity his frame of mind towards the end of his strange career; but up to the time of his trial in 1603, he seems to have been active in disseminating the doctrines which had become popular since the baneful sojourn of Bruno in this country. Raleigh's biographer admits that his attempt on his own life in the Tower, subsequent to his trial, is in favour of the unhappy prisoner's atheism at that time.*

* "Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have declared that his design to kill himself arose from no feeling of fear, but was formed in order that his fate might not serve as a triumph to his enemies whose power to put him to death, despite his innocency, he well knows" (The Count of Beaumont to Henry *iv*., 13th August 1603, Copy in Hardwick *Ms*., p. 18).

The first apparently to accuse Raleigh of atheism in a formal manner was the Jesuit provincial, Robert Parsons, who, in a book published in 1592 and now very rare, mentions "Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism . . . and of the diligence used to get young gentlemen to this school, wherein both Moses and our Saviour, the Old and New Testament, are jested at, and the scholars taught among other things to spell God backwards.* Cayley treats this accusation as a calumny,** and Birch describes its author as the "virulent but learned and ingenious Father Parsons";*** but Osborn, in the preface to his Miscellany of Sundry Essays, Paradoxes, *etc*., in speaking of Raleigh, says that Queen Elizabeth "chid him who was ever after branded with the title of an atheist, though a known asserter of God and Providence."

* An advertisement concerning the Responsio ad Elizabethae edictum, 1592.

Page 103

** Life of Sir Walter Raleigh, i. 140.

*** Life of Sir Walter Raleigh, i. 140.

The year after the appearance of Father Parsons' little book, steps were taken for proving the truth of the reports which had now become common, and it is remarkable that none of Sir Walter Raleigh's biographers seem to have been aware of an elaborate interrogatory that was drawn up and administered for the purpose of eliciting from sworn witnesses evidence concerning his religious opinions, and those of his family, dependents, and friends. The original seems to have disappeared, but a contemporary copy of this document is to be found among the Harleian papers in the British Museum, together with the evidence obtained by means of the interrogatory. As it is extremely pertinent to the subject in question, and has hitherto escaped notice, the nine questions administered with a selection of the most interesting depositions of the witnesses are here given in detail. For a complete account of the examinations the reader is referred to the manuscript.*

* Harl. 6849, f. 183.

Dorset.

Interrogatory to be ministered unto such as are to be examined in her Majesty's name, by virtue of her Highness's commission for causes ecclesiastical.

1. Imprimis. Whom do you know or have heard to be suspected of atheism or apostasy? And in what manner do you know or have heard the same? And what other notice can you give thereof?

2. Whom do you know or have heard that have argued or spoken against, or as doubting the Being of any God, or what or where God is, or to swear by God, adding if there be a God or such like; and when and where was the same? And what other notice can you give of any such offender?

3. Whom do you know or have heard that hath spoken against God, His Providence over the world? or of the world's beginning or ending? or of predestination, or of Heaven or of Hell, or of the Resurrection, in doubtful or contentious manner? When and where was the same? and what other notice can you give of any such offender?

4. Whom do you know or have heard that hath spoken against the truth of God His holy Word, revealed to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, or of some places thereof? or have said those Scriptures are not to be believed and defended by her Majesty for doctrine, and faith, and salvation, but only of policy or civil government, and when and where was the same? And what other notice can you give of any such offender?

5. Whom do you know or have heard hath blasphemously cursed God; as in saying one time (as it rained when he was ahawking), “if there be a God, a pox on that God which sendeth such weather to mar our sport,” or such like? or do you know or have heard of any that hath broken forth into any other words of blasphemy, and where was the same?

6. Whom do you know or have heard to have said that when he was dead, his soul should be hanged on the top of a pole and “run God, run Devil, and fetch it that would have it,” or to like effect, or that hath otherwise spoken against the being or immortality of the soul of men, or that a man’s soul should die and become like the soul of a beast, or such like, and when and where was the same?

Page 104

7. Whom do you know or have heard hath counselled, procured, aided, comforted, or conferred with any such offender? When, where, and in what manner was the same?

8. Do you know or have heard of any of those offenders to affirm all such that were not of their opinions touching the premises, to be schismatics and in error. And whom do you know hath so affirmed? And when and where was it spoken?

9. What can you say more of any of the premises, or whom have you known or heard can give any notice of the same? And speak all your knowledge therein.

Hereupon follows the report of the Royal Commissioners on the depositions of witnesses examined by them with the above formulary:—

“Examinations taken at Cearne, co. Dorset, 21 March, 36 Eliz., before us, Tho. Lord Howard, Viscount Howard of Bindon, Sir Ralph Horsey, knt., Francis James, Chancellor, John Williams, and Francis Hawley, esquires, by virtue of a commission to us and others, directed from some of her Majesty’s High Commissioners in causes ecclesiastical."*

* On the last page is written: “These examinations are the trew copies taken at Cearne, 21 March 1593.”

From the two first witnesses examined, John Hancock, parson of South Parrot, and Richard Bagage, churchwarden of Lo, no information was obtained. The third witness, John Jesopp, minister, of Gillingham, “said nothing of his own knowledge, but had heard that one Herryott, of Sir Walter Rawleigh his house, had brought the Godhead in question, and the whole course of the Scriptures, but of whom he so heard it he did not remember. (Thomas Harriot was an acknowledged deist, and Raleigh had taken him into his house to study mathematics with him.] He heard his brother, Dr. Jesopp, say that Mr. Carew Rawleigh, reasoning with Mr. Parry and Mr. Archdeacon about the Godhead [as he conjectureth], his said brother, thinking that Mr. Archdeacon and Mr. Parry would take offence at that argument, desired the Lord Bishop of Worcester [then being there] that he might argue with the said Mr. Rawleigh, for, said he, your Lordship shall hear him argue as like a pagan as ever you heard any. But the matter was so shut up, as this examinate heard his brother say, and proceeded not to argument, and further he saith that he hath heard one Allen, now of Portland Castle, suspected of atheism, but of whom he heard it he remembereth not.”

William Hussey, churchwarden of Gillingham, corroborated the report of Sir Walter Raleigh’s suspected atheism.

John Davis, curate of Motcomb, “to the first interrogatory saith that he knoweth of no such person directly, but he hath heard Sir Walter Raleigh, by general report, hath had some reasoning against the deity of God and His omnipotence; and hath heard the like

of Mr. Carew Raleigh, but not so directly. Also he saith he heard the like report of one, Mr. Thinn, of Wiltshire, which he heard from a barber in Warminster, dwelling in a by-lane there, who told this deponent he did marvel that a gentleman of his condition should deliver words to so mean a man as himself, tending to this sense, as though God's Providence did not reach over all creatures, or to like effect.

Page 105

“To the second, third, fourth, and fifth interrogatory he saith he hath heard that Sir Walter Raleigh hath argued with one Mr. Ironside, at Sir George Trenchard’s, touching the being or immortality of the soul, or such like; but the certainty thereof he cannot say further, saving asking the same of Mr. Ironside upon the report aforesaid; he hath answered that the matter was not as the voice of the country reported thereof, or to the like effect.”

The next witness, Nicholas Jefferies, declared that he did not know personally any atheist in the county of Dorset, but testified to the report of many “that Sir Walter Raleigh and his retinue are generally suspected of atheism,” and he quoted the above-mentioned Allen, Lieutenant of Portland Castle, as “a great blasphemer and light esteemer of religion, and thereabout cometh not to divine service or sermons.” He also mentioned the circumstance that “Herryott, attendant on Sir Walter Raleigh, hath been convened before the Lords of the Council for denying the resurrection of the body.”

This witness also gave a circumstantial account of the conversation between Sir Walter, his brother Carew, and Mr. Ironside at Sir George Trenchard’s table, but as Mr. Ironside was himself subsequently sworn and examined, it is better to quote his own words. It is significant of the credibility of these witnesses, that the evidence of Jefferies, although he merely reported what Mr. Ironside had told him of the conversation, and could not remember all that had been said, tallies completely with the evidence of the other witnesses.

Ironside’s examination comes last in the manuscript, but it is more convenient to insert it here:—

“Ralph Ironside, minister of Winterbor, sworn and examined. To the first interrogatory, he saith that for his own knowledge he will answer, but for that he hath heard and knoweth no author to justify the same, he is persuaded by counsel that he is in danger to be punished, and therefore refuseth to say anything upon uncertain report, unless he could bring in his author in particular.

“The relation of the disputation had at Sir George Trenchard’s table, between Sir Walter Raleigh, Mr. Carew Raleigh, and Mr. Ironside, hereafter followeth, written by himself and delivered to the commissioners upon his oath.

“Wednesday, sevennight before the Assizes, summer last, I came to Sir George Trenchard’s in the afternoon, accompanied with a fellow-minister and friend of mine, Mr. Whittle, vicar of Forthington. There were then with the knight Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Ralph Horsey, Mr. Carew Raleigh, Mr. John Fitzjames, *etc*. Towards the end of supper, some loose speeches of Mr. Carew Raleigh’s being gently reproved by Sir Ralph Horsey with the words Colloquia prava corrumpunt bonos mores, Mr. Raleigh demanded of me what danger he might incur by such speeches, whereunto I answered —’The wages of sin is death’—and he, making light of death as being common to all,

sinner and righteous, I inferred further that as that life which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ is life eternal, so that death which is properly the wages of sin is death eternal both of the body and of the soul also.

Page 106

"'Soul,' quoth Mr. Carew Raleigh, 'what is that?' Better it were, said I, that we would be careful how the soul might be saved, than to be curious in finding out the essence.

"And so, keeping silence, Sir Walter requested me that for their instruction, I would answer to the question that before by his brother was proposed unto me. 'I have been,' saith he, 'a scholar sometime in Oxford; I gave answer under a bachelor of arts, and had talk with divers; yet hitherunto in this point (to wit, what the reasonable soul of man is) have I not by any been resolved. They tell me it is primus motor, the first mover in a man, *etc*.' Unto this, after I had replied that howsoever the soul were fons et principium, the fountain, beginning and cause of motion in us, yet the first mover was the brain or heart, I was again urged to show my opinion, and hearing Sir Walter Raleigh tell of his dispute and scholarship some time in Oxford, I cited the general definition of Anima out of Aristotle (De Anima, cap. 2), and thence a subjecto proprio, deduced the special definition of the soul reasonable, that it was Actus Primus corporis organici agentis humanam vitam.

"It was misliked of Sir Walter as obscure and intricate. And I withal, that though it could not unto him, as being learned, yet it might seem obscure to the most present, and therefore had rather say with divines plainly, that the reasonable soul is a spiritual and immortal substance, breathed into man by God, whereby he lives and moves and understandeth, and so is distinguished from other creatures. 'Yea, but what is that spiritual and immortal substance breathed into man?' saith Sir Walter. The soul, quoth I. 'Nay then,' said he, 'you answer not like a scholar.' Hereupon I endeavoured to prove that it was scholarlike, nay, in such disputes as this, usual and necessary to run in circulum, partly because definitio rei was primum et immediatum principium, and seeing primo non est Prius, a man must of necessity come backward, and partly because definitio and definitum be naturae reciprocae, the one convertible, answering unto the question made upon the other. As for example, if one asked: 'What is a man?' you will say: 'He is a creature reasonable and mortal'; but if you ask again: 'What is a creature reasonable and mortal?' you must of force come backward and answer: 'It is a man,' et sic de caeteris. 'But we have principles in our mathematics,' saith Sir Walter, 'as totum est majus qua libet sua parte; and ask me of it, and I can show it in the table, in the window, in a man, the whole being bigger than the parts of it.'

"I replied first that he showed quod est, not quid est, that it was, but not what it was; secondly, that such demonstration was against the nature of a man's soul, being a spirit; for as a thing, being sensible, was subject to the sense, so man's soul, being insensible, was to be discerned by the spirit. Nothing more certain in the world than that there is a God, yet being a spirit, to subject him to the sense otherwise than perfectum. It is impossible.

Page 107

"'Marry!' quoth Sir Walter, 'these two be like, for neither could I learn hitherto what God is.'

"Mr. Fitzjames answering that Aristotle should say he was Ens Entium, I answered, that whether Aristotle, dying in a fever, should cry: Ens Entium, miserere mei; or drowning himself in Euripum, should say: Quia ego to non capio, to me capies, it was uncertain, but that God was Ens Entium, a thing of things, having being of Himself, and giving being to all creatures, it was most certain, and confirmed by God Himself unto Moses.

"'Yea, but what is this Ens Entium?' saith Sir Walter.

"I answered it is God, and being disliked as before, Sir Walter wished that grace might be said, 'for that,' quoth he, is better than his disputation.' Thus supper ended and grace said, I departed to Dorchester with my fellowminister, and this is to my remembrance the substance of that speech with Sir Walter Raleigh I had at Wolverton."

"Ralph Ironside."

Turning to the remaining depositions, we find that Francis Scarlett, minister of Sherborne, sworn and examined, relates how that "a little before Christmas, one Robert Hyde, of Sherborne, shoemaker, seeing this deponent passing by his door, called him, and desired to have some conversation with him, and after some speeches, he entered into these speeches. "Mr. Scarlett, you have preached unto us that there is a God, a Heaven, a Hell, and a resurrection after this life, and that we shall give an account of our works, and that the soul is immortal; but now, saith he, here is a company about this town that say that Hell is no other but poverty and penury in this world, and Heaven is no other but to be rich and enjoy pleasures; and that we die like beasts, and when we are gone there is no more remembrance of us, and such like.

But this examinate did neither then demand who they were, neither did he deliver any particulars unto him, and further saith that it is generally reported in Sherborne, that the said Allen and his men are atheists. And also he saith there is one Lodge, a shoemaker in Sherborne, accounted an atheist."

John Deuch, churchwarden of Weeke Regis: "To the sixth interrogatory this deponent saith that he hath heard one Allen, Lieutenant of Portland Castle, when he was like to die, being persuaded to make himself ready to God for his soul, to answer that he would carry his soul to the top of an hill, and run God, run devil, fetch it that will have it, or to that effect. But, who told this deponent of it, he remembereth not. To the rest of the interrogatory he can say nothing."

What punishment followed on these examinations does not appear. A fine was probably imposed on all those convicted of speaking and propagating atheism; but in spite of the investigations and the discredit thrown on the sect, it did not by any means die out.

Essex was accounted at that time the only nobleman who cared for religion. His manner was to censure all men as “cold professors, neuters, or atheists.” In the declaration of W. Masham before the Lord Treasurer Buckhurst, he said that Essex told the people when he incited them to rise, that he acted “for the good of the Queen, city, and crown which certain atheists, meaning Raleigh, had betrayed to the Infante of Spain.” At his execution he thanked God that he was never atheist nor papist."*

Page 108

* Dom. Eliz., February 1601, Vol. 278; R.O.

On the accession of James I. the Catholics presented a petition to parliament, begging to be allowed to practise their religion, at least in secret, and they went on to say that there were “four classes of religionists in England Protestant who domineered all the late reign: Puritans who have crept up amongst them, atheists, who live on brawls; and Catholics."*

* Dom. James I., vol. i., 1603; R.O.

The stigma of atheist clung to Raleigh long after he had ceased to deserve it. In his trial for high treason in 1603, it considerably damaged his cause, and gave another handle to his many enemies. The king’s attorney, in addressing him, exclaimed: “O damnable atheist!” and the Lord Chief Justice Coke, in his address to the prisoner after his condemnation, harangued him in these words:—

“Your case being thus, let it not grieve you if I speak a little out of zeal and love to your good. You have been taxed by the world with the defence of the most heathenish and blasphemous opinions, which I list not to repeat, because Christian ears cannot endure to hear them, nor the authors and maintainers of them be suffered to live in any Christian commonwealth. You know what men said of Harpool.* You shall do well before you go out of the world to give satisfaction therein, and not to die with these imputations upon you. Let not any devil persuade you (the Harleian version adds, ‘Hariot or any such doctor’) to think there is no eternity in Heaven; for if you think thus, you shall find eternity in hell-fire."**

* A mistake probably for Harriot. The name is variously spelt. Edwards, in his Life of Raleigh, corrects it and says, “Either he applied to the illustrious mathematician Thomas Harriot, the epithet ‘devil,’ or he said that Harriot’s opinions were devilish” (p. 436). The judge’s words are variously reported, but their purport is always the same. Stebbing, in his monograph Sir Walter Raleigh, says that Harriot was accused by zealots of atheism, because his cosmogony was not orthodox, and that his ill-repute for free-thinking was reflected on Raleigh, who hired him to teach mathematics (probably in what Father Parsons termed his school of atheism) and engaged him in his colonising projects. Harriot was the friend whose society he chiefly craved when he was in the Tower, and is doubtless the “Herryott” of the examinations.

** Dom. James I., vol. 4, f. 83.

Between Raleigh’s sentence and its execution fifteen years were allowed to elapse, during which time the prisoner in the Tower occupied himself with the compilation of his famous History of the World, and with chemical experiments. And as if all should be exceptional in the life of this remarkable man, he was allowed an interval during this

period in which to flash once more upon the world in another expedition to Guiana, in search of the gold mine which he had declared to be there. After the ill-fated

Page 109

voyage he returned into durance vile, and when at last the time came for the axe which had so long hung over him, to fall, his words showed that at least in adversity he had learned, like the great Arian chieftain Clovis, to burn what he had adored, and to adore what he had burned. His device, Ubi dolor ibi amor is significant of the change that suffering had wrought in him. His last words on the scaffold were these: "I have many sins for which to beseech God's pardon. Of a long time my course was a course of vanity. I have been a seafearing man, a soldier, and a courtier, and in the temptations of the least of these there is enough to overthrow a good mind and a good man." Presently he added, "I die in the faith professed by the Church of England. I hope to be saved and to have my sins washed away by the Precious Blood and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Then, says his biographer,* he asked to be shown the axe, and kissing the blade, he said: "This gives me no fear. It is a sharp and fair medicine to cure me of all my disease."

* Edwards, Life of Sir Walter Raleigh, i. 704.

After Raleigh's death, the Archbishop of Canterbury, writing to Sir Thomas Roe, ambassador of Great Britain with the Great Mogul, 10th February 1618, said: "Sir Walter Raleigh amongst us did question God's being and omnipotence, which that just judge made good upon himself in overtumbling his estate, but last of all in bringing him to an execution by law, where he died a religious and Christian death, God testifying his power in this, that he raised up of a stone a child unto Abraham."

His doom had been from the first a foregone conclusion. James having been fatally prejudiced against him before that royal pedant ever set foot in England, to which fact the secret correspondence of Sir Robert Cecil with James *vi*. of Scotland amply testifies.

But curiously enough Sir Walter's brother Carew, although more deeply dyed in atheism, never ceased to be a Persona grata with the government. He was knighted in 1601, on the occasion of the visit to England of the French Marshal de Biron.* He held several honourable and lucrative public offices under James I., and was Lieutenant of the Isle of Portland in 1608. During his brother's long imprisonment in the Tower, Sir Carew Raleigh was living in prosperity at Dounton.**

* Stebbing, Sir Walter Raleigh, p. 157.

* Ibid, p. 248.

Atheists did not as a sect entirely disappear from England after the execution of their scapegoat, but they do not seem to have been further molested for their opinions. The

persecution of the Catholics was at its height, and at no time did professed atheism provoke the fierce hatred that Catholicism inspired. For obvious reasons many Catholics at this period were but indifferently instructed in their religion. Some to escape attendance at the English Church service unlawfully feigned infidelity. One man having written a seditious book, called Balaam's Ass, against the king, for which he was condemned to death, was accused at his execution of having professed atheism. He denied being an infidel, expressed contrition for his "saucy meddling in the king's matter," and declared himself a Catholic.*

Page 110

* Dom. James I., vol. 109, May 1619; R.0.

The Bishop of Exeter reported that “John Lugge, organist, retains none of his popish tendencies, though his religion is as the market goes,” and he added that there were very few papists in his diocese, but an infinity of sectaries and atheists.

Many of these latter may have been secret Catholics, either extremely ignorant, or too timid to suffer for their faith. A book published in 1602, entitled The Unmasking of the Politique Atheist is a violent attack upon Catholicism. Another, called A Perfect Cure for Atheists, Papists, Arminians, *etc*., published in 1649, is of a like nature. It is a far cry from Aristotle to atheism, but no sooner did the votaries of the new learning discard a system of philosophy which, however exaggerated by pedants, was still a guarantee of exact reasoning, than their disciples and followers fell a prey to the vagaries of their own bewildered intellects.

It was the reductio ad absurdum of the reformed religion, when weak-kneed Catholics sheltered themselves from its pains and penalties under the fairly secure roof-tree of atheism.

VII. CHARLES THE FIRST AND THE POPISH PLOT

“A fine rare show arrives from Rome, and it is all a present for the Queen, and the news of it reaches London, and the King is impatient to see it; and the Queen is lying in, and Mr. Panzani brings all the fine things to the Queen’s bedchamber; and all the ladies of quality crowd in to see them; and the King with all his nobles hastens to the Queen’s palace; and the boxes are opened, and the pieces are viewed one by one; and Mr. Conn comes in (though still without a red hat) to satisfy the Queen’s curiosity, and Mr. Conn brings more fine pictures . . . and sees the King, and the Queen of France; and Mr. Panzani takes leave of the Queen of England (for how could he omit it?) and the Queen begs a red hat for Mr. Conn, and Mr. Conn must first do some signal service to the Church; and the King talks about Mr. Conn’s red hat; and the Queen gives Mr. Panzani a fine diamond ring; and Mr. Panzani takes leave of all the ministers; and he pays his respects to all the ladies of the court; and the ladies send their compliments to the Pope, and they all beg Mr. Panzani’s blessing. It was the end of the year 1636.”

This Sevigne-like description was written in 179-, by the Rev. Charles Plowden, in his “Remarks on a Book entitled Memoirs of Gregorio Panzani.” Panzani, a priest of the Roman Oratory, had been about two years in England, with a secret mission to report to Cardinal Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII., on the condition of the Catholics, the condition of the court, and on the prospects regarding an ultimate reunion of the Anglican Church with Rome. He was to pave the way for an openly accredited envoy to the queen, was to conciliate the ministers, disarm the Puritans, and to do what he could for the Catholics,

Page 111

who were still smarting severely under the penal laws. Executions, it is true, had become less frequent, but the royal coffers were still replenished with the fines imposed on Catholics for their pertinacity in assembling to hear Mass by stealth. If a priest were caught, he was thrown into prison, tried, and punished with death. In dealing with the Catholic laity, Charles I. was never in favour of enforcing the extreme rigour of the law, but he was so often in want of money that he found it useful to be very severe in the matter of fines.

Panzani's mission to England falls about midway between the domestic storms which had troubled the early days of the royal marriage, and the Revolution which finally cost the most shifty of monarchs his throne and his life. Henrietta Maria had ceased to resent the expulsion of her French favourites, had consented at last to learn English and to tolerate the English people. She had thrown herself heart and soul into her husband's interests, and since the death of Buckingham was in possession of his entire confidence. If, later on, any cloud arose over their mutual relationship, it was the king's half expressed suspicion that she thought little of his powers of governing, and that however much she loved her husband, she did not admire his policy or trust his royal word as implicitly as he could wish. This is evident from one or two affectionate but querulous letters which he wrote to her when he was in the hands of the Parliamentarians.

Of the court, as well as of the private life of the king and queen, Panzani could report but favourably. The Catholics were to-be helped by the queen's influence, and as to reunion with Rome, he thought he had some reason to be sanguine. A letter from Panzani to Cardinal Barberini, of which the following is a translation, is to be found among the Stevenson and Bliss transcripts of Vatican documents in the Record Office. It is dated June 10/25, 1635:

"According to your Eminence's instructions, I have had a long talk with Father Philip (an English Capuchin and the Queen's confessor), regarding the reconciliation of this kingdom with Rome, and the means of bringing it about. He told me that there were unmistakeable signs of a desire for such a reconciliation, not only in the King, but among the clergy and laity as well, and the question is mooted almost daily. It is well, however, to be slow in drawing inferences, because those who are most in favour of a reunion do not venture to manifest their desire, but rather dissemble it under the appearance of a contrary way of thinking, on account of the severity of the law against Catholics. This same fear possesses the King also, he being of a timid nature; hence the great misfortune of not being able to count on his prudence and judgment, seeing how changeable and uncertain he and his advisers are. Moreover, if by ill-luck the present rumours of war oblige the King to arm himself, we may expect some persecution of the Catholics,

Page 112

for money being required, before he can go to war, it will be necessary to assemble Parliament, and the Lower House, composed mainly of Puritans, will grant no supplies unless the King makes some show of cruelty towards Catholics. For the same reason all the bishops and ministers of moderate views, and favourable to a reunion, begin to be harsh and intolerant when the time approaches for the meeting of Parliament, and do nothing but inveigh against the Pope in their sermons, solely from fear of losing their lives or their places. Father Philip says that there is no need to be alarmed at the difficulties we may encounter; but that we should be determined to overcome them, and that after God, the envoys may greatly facilitate the business, if they study with all their might how to make themselves agreeable to the King and the State.

“He who comes here should be all things to all men, in order to win all, and should take everything he can in good part, and find excuses for the King and his officers, if sometimes they do not grant the Catholics all the favours they ask. He should throw the blame on the poursuivants and the informers, and should adroitly petition for redress. He should keep Windebank (Secretary of State), considered by the Puritans to be ‘Popishly affected,’ and others, well informed of all that passes in Rome, and should manage to keep up communication with the papal legates, in order to have news, and at the same time to make himself agreeable to them, for they like above all things to receive marks of confidence. He must be careful, however, in publishing, the facts he thus learns, to give no offence to any of the crowned heads, nor bring our religion into bad odour.

“The envoy should distribute some gifts, and in fine, use every means to make himself beloved. He ought to be about thirty-five years old, and to have attained a certain solidity rarely met with before that age. He should also be noble and rich, and of a good presence, furnished with all qualities proper to a gentleman; and, above all, his life should be exemplary, without affectation or hypocrisy . . . . On the arrival of such an agent in London, speaking French well, which language is understood by the whole court, he should first of all contrive to please the Queen, who, being young, delights in perfumes and fine clothes, and likes people to be lively and merry. His next object should be to ingratiate himself with the court ladies and others, as much is done here by the influence of women; but he should on no account allow familiarity with the Queen and other ladies to degenerate into lightness or worse, for that would involve the ruin of the whole undertaking. It is customary to say here, ’if a man’s life is good, his religion must be a good one’; but the English are shocked at every little thing. The King is extremely modest, and the Queen such, that Father Philip told me her conscience has never lost its baptismal innocence.

Page 113

“Having gained the good opinion of the Queen and her ladies, the agent may aspire to greater things. The court is very accessible to bribes; it is therefore quite possible to purchase its goodwill; and to this end it will be well to send the Queen jewels of some value, ostensibly as presents to her, but in reality that she may distribute them among those ministers from whom the greatest help may be expected. The envoy should not make very valuable presents himself, but only through the Queen, lest he be suspected of ulterior views, or cause danger to the recipients of them.

“When the ministers have been won over, the Queen, instructed by the envoy how great a reputation she may acquire by the conversion of this kingdom, must try to persuade the King to abolish poursuivants and informers. This he may not be able to effect immediately, being powerless to repeal parliamentary laws, but he may be able to procure that the poursuivants and informers shall do nothing without an express and written order from the Privy Council, and only then in a manner conformable to the instructions of the same. In this way, Catholics would have nothing more to fear, because as soon as the Council resolved to proceed against any individual, the Queen would bring her influence to bear on any one of its members already on her side, and the threatened Catholic would be helped, either to fly or to elude the officials.

“This point gained, an almost tacit liberty of conscience would follow; the Catholics would take courage, and the moderate Protestants would no longer fear to declare themselves openly their protectors. Then would be the time to treat with the King, through the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the concession of religious liberty, as far as possible. This once conceded, Father Philip believes that in less than three years the whole country would become Catholic. Parliament might then safely be assembled to repeal the laws against Catholics, and reunion with the Holy See would soon follow.

“But how to obtain liberty of conscience it is not easy to say at present; neither does it yet concern us, not having arrived so far.

“This is all that Father Philip said, and whatever else he may tell me I will write to your Eminence, having nothing further to add now, except that the envoy should be guided in all things by Father Philip, who has a great reputation for prudence, and is respected by the whole court.”

Nevertheless, Father Philip’s ingenious structure soon proved to be only a house of cards. He understood the Queen, and was not far wrong in his estimation of Charles, but he was mistaken in thinking the king’s party to be in earnest about Catholicism, and was as wide of the mark in grasping the archbishop’s bent as any Puritan in the realm.

Laud was in some respects wiser than Buckingham had been; he was content to govern through the King, throwing what power he could into the hands of the prelates. All the great offices of State were filled by churchmen. Far from contemplating any submission

to the Pope, he aimed at being a species of independent Pope on his own account. Both he and Juxon, the Lord Treasurer, refused to see Panzani.

Page 114

Laud's greatest passion was ambition, if anything in a nature so contracted could be said to assume the proportions of a fullblown passion. He had a marvellous capacity for dealing with small things, and all that came under his ken he studied to the minutest detail. He was a believer in dreams, and owned to being greatly troubled by them. "Thursday, I came to London," he once wrote in his diary; "the night following, I dreamed that I was reconciled to the Church of Rome. This troubled me much, and I wondered exceedingly how it should happen. Now was I aggrieved with myself (not only by reason of the errors of that Church, but also) upon account of the scandal which from that my fall would be cast upon many eminent and learned men in the Church of England. Going with this resolution, a certain priest met me, and would have stopped me. But moved with indignation I went on my way. And while I wearied myself with these troublesome thoughts I awoke. Herein I felt such strong impressions that I could scarce believe it to be a dream."

To a becoming gravity the archbishop failed to unite a saving sense of humour. His temper was hasty, but also vindictive, and he never forgot an injury, to which fact the notorious Puritan, William Prynne, was well able to testify. Laud first incurred the enmity of this man and his friends by his attempts to introduce some measure of ceremonial into the churches under him. When he began his reform, the places of public worship were nothing but buildings where discourses and diatribes against Popery were to be heard in luxuriously upholstered seats. "There wants nothing but beds to hear the Word of God on," said Bishop Corbet. The notion of a priesthood had died out of people's minds. They looked upon their clergy as preachers merely—the cure of souls was an obsolete term.

Archbishop Grindal had caused the altars to be destroyed, and the places where they had stood whitewashed, so that no trace of them might remain.* Laud had the communion tables removed from the middle of the churches into the place formerly occupied by the altar, railed in, and distinguished by altar-like adornments. Finally, it became customary to designate them by the ancient name of altar, while the officiating minister resumed the name of priest. The people, now become thoroughly Protestantised, murmured, and thought they saw indications of a return to Rome.** Some protested that all this superabundant care for externals was eating the life out of Protestantism; the bugbear of others was the appeal, now becoming customary, to the Fathers of the Church, rather than to the Protestant divines of the continent.*** St. Augustine was suspect, Calvin they knew to be orthodox.

* Articles to be inquired of in the Archdiocese of York—"Whether in your churches and chapels, all altars be utterly taken down and clean removed even unto the foundation; and the place where they stood paved, and the wall whereunto they joined whited over, and made uniform with the rest, so as no breach or rupture appear." In case any altars remained, the churchwardens were "to remove them and certify."

Page 115

** Calendar of State Papers, 1635-36; Dom. Charles I.

*** Gardiner, Fall of the Monarchy of Charles.

The sequel proved that a very real source of danger lay among Laud's own familiar friends. The archbishop could not restrain the lengths to which they would go, in following up the track which he himself had laid open. Burning questions were discussed in the pulpits. Thus, Panzani, in a letter to Cardinal Barberini, dated March 13/23, 1636, says:—

"Last Sunday, one of the bishops preached before the King, on the necessity of Sacramental Confession, saying that the Church has never been in a good state wherever it was not practised."

Panzani, continuing, went on to say that reconciliation with Rome was an event anticipated by all, and that many people thought the clergy refrained from marrying, in order that they might still hold their parishes in case of reunion. "This," he adds, "is what I hear, but whether it is true or not, God only knows, who sees the hearts of men."

In the same letter he mentioned another sermon, which had lately been preached before the king and the court "touching confession, and the preacher said that its origin could be traced to the Gospel better than that of any other doctrine; wherefore he exhorted his hearers to practise it. All the court are now talking of this sermon," he continued, "and the King himself at supper afterwards spoke highly of the practise of confession, saying that one ought to mention all the circumstances of a sin. Someone who was present said he could not think it right to take away another person's reputation by naming him, if he were concerned in a sin. The King at once replied that it was not permitted to name accomplices, and turning to Father Philip, who is always present at supper, he asked him if he were not right. Father Philip answered that he was. The Earl of Carlisle, a Puritan, who was also there, assured Father Philip that he agreed with us in everything, except that the Pope had power to depose kings. 'We do not believe that either,' replied Father Philip, 'we only say that the Pope may do it in extraordinary cases, such as heresy for instance.' The Earl of Carlisle replied

'You are not all of the same opinion, because I know that some among you maintain that he has.'

"Here the subject dropped. A lady conversing with Father Philip on the same occasion said that if confession were to be practised, Protestant ministers ought to be like ours. 'Why?' asked Father Philip. 'Because,' answered the lady, 'if they have wives, no one will confess to them for fear of their repeating to their wives, straight off, the sins confided to them.'"

In a former letter, Panzani had written: “A preacher said lately that the Pope was the true Vicar of Christ, successor of St. Peter, and Chief Patriarch, and he proceeded to enlarge on Papal jurisdiction, when a tumult arose among the congregation, and afterwards the preacher was censured.”

Page 116

And again, “On the first day, and also the first Sunday in Lent, the Bishop of London, preaching before the King, took for his subject the preparation for our Lord’s Passion, and said that it was not only needful to mortify the spirit, but also the flesh, teaching which is opposed to the doctrine of the greater number of Protestants.”

Thus, the Puritans had some ground for murmuring, and it was not altogether unnatural, that they and the Catholics also should imagine that the Church of England had set its face Romewards. The above were not doctrines such as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper would have owned, nor would they recognise the churches in which such language was held.

Greater still would have been the wrath of such men as Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton, had they known that the Bishop of Gloucester had applied to Panzani for permission to have a Catholic priest in his house secretly, to say Mass daily for him; and that he was strongly in favour of re-union.

William Prynne, barrister-at-law by profession, by reputation a vituperative pamphleteer, was always ready to denounce, cavil, and rail. The list of his philippics fills nearly a whole folio volume of the British Museum Library Catalogue. He had what Wharton, more graphically than politely, describes as “the eternal itch of scribbling.” The subject of Sabbath-breaking to which he attributed the fresh outbreak of the plague in 1636, was to him as a red rag to a bull. Encouraged by his example a whole mass of literature appeared on the observance of the Sabbath—not the modern Sunday which was decried as an invention of Rome, but of the old Jewish Sabbath, considered by the Puritans to have a far better claim to be observed.

Prynne had no perception of the relative value of things. Sabbath-breaking, predestination, and the supreme wickedness of curls, or love-locks as they were then called, were of equal importance in his mind. Laud’s innovations put him into a state of frenzy, and he declared that the Church of England was now “as full of ceremonies” as a dog was “full of fleas.”

Giles Widdowes, entering the lists for the archbishop, argued that “men should take off their hats on entering a church, because it was the place of God’s presence, the chiefest place of his honour amongst us, where His ambassadors deliver His embassage, where His priests sacrifice their own and the militant Church’s prayers, and the Lord’s Supper, to reconcile us to God, offended with our daily sins.” “Ergo,” answered Prynne, “the priests of the Church of England are sacrificing priests, and the Lord’s Supper a propitiatory sacrifice, sacrificed by those priests for men’s daily sins!”

Widdowes also wrote in defence of the practice of bowing at the name of Jesus; and considering doubtless that men should be fought with their own weapons, took a leaf out of Prynne’s book and belaboured soundly “the lawless, kneeless, schismatical Puritan.”

Page 117

Prynne retorted promptly, entitling his reply, “Lame Giles his Haltings.” Soon afterwards, being cited to appear and defend himself for having used intemperate language in a book against plays and players, he was sentenced to have his ears shorn off. As many copies of his book as were forthcoming were burned by his side as he sat in the pillory. He was degraded and prevented from pleading as a lawyer. He only wrote the more. The titles of his book are ingenious, and would ensure their sale at any time. As for their contents, odious as was the language he used, Prynne always hit the nail he intended, and was very good at a blow. In Rome’s Masterpiece, he declared that the archbishop was a “middle-man, between an absolute Papist and a real Protestant, who will far sooner hug a Popish priest in his bosom than take a Puritan by the little finger.”

Prynne’s fellow pamphleteers, Bastwick and Burton, were not far behind him in the violence of their invectives, but the lawyer must be admitted to bear the palm for sharp sayings.

In John Bastwick’s Litany, instead of “from plague, pestilence, and famine,” we have “from bishops, priests, and deacons, good Lord, deliver us.”

In 1637, Laud summoned the three men before the Star Chamber, to answer to a charge of libel. Bastwick’s crime was for writing against the “Pope of Canterbury.” They were all three found guilty, fined 5000 pounds each, condemned to lose their ears, and to be imprisoned for life, an astoundingly heavy sentence. But in addition Prynne was to be branded on both cheeks with the letters S L for slanderous libeller. Chief Justice Finch ordered the scars left by his former punishment to be laid bare. “I had thought,” said he, “that Mr. Prynne had no ears but methinks he hath ears.” Three years before, the executioner had only clipped off the outer rims; but now Prynne was to suffer the full rigour of the sentence. A contemporary thus describes the process:—

“Having burnt one cheek with a letter the wrong way, the hangman burnt that again, and presently a surgeon clapped on a plaster to take out the fire. The hangman hewed off Prynne’s ears very scurvily, which put him to much pain, and after, he stood long in the pillory before his head could be got out, but that was a chance.” *

* Documents relating to Prynne, Camden Papers.

He seems to have borne this martyrdom with great coolness, for on his way back to prison, he composed a Latin distich on the letters S L, which he interpreted “Stigmata Laudis”—the scars of Laud.

Although the sentence had been imprisonment for life, Prynne and Burton entered London in triumph three years later; and if revenge is sweet, Prynne was yet to swim in a sea of sweetness. When by a strange irony of fate he was hired to search the imprisoned archbishop for papers, he carried off Laud’s diary.

If Panzani could have seen this strange record of the archbishop's dreams, desires, and impressions, he would doubtless have ceased to look upon Laud as an important factor in his scheme of the corporate re-union of the nation with Rome.

Page 118

Under date 14th August 1634, Prynne read and gloated over those remarkable entries:

“That very morning at Greenwich there came one to me seriously, and that avowed ability to perform it, and offered me to be a cardinal,” and two days later—

“I had a serious offer made me to be a cardinal. I was then from court, but so soon as I came hither (21st August) I acquainted His Majesty with it. But my answer again was that somewhat dwelt within me, which would not suffer that, till Rome were other than it is.”

No doubt, in declining the cardinalate, if indeed the offer were not a figment of his own brain, Laud would have been diplomatic enough not to allow his reasons to transpire, and probably the Pope never knew them. The importance of the statement lies for posterity entirely in the anti-Roman tendency which he expressed in his diary. For the archbishop himself, to have committed the matter to writing, whether it were true or imaginary, proved fatal, the entries serving his enemies as the text of one of the chief indictments against him, when he was brought to trial. Nothing he could plead made any impression on the minds of his accusers. His refusal of the purple ought to have vindicated him; but they maintained that for the offer to have been made to him at all, he must have been friends with the Pope. Moreover, had he not objected to the term “Idol of Rome”? and had he not expressed doubt if not denial of the Pope’s being anti-Christ? These things were more than enough for fanatics whose piety consisted chiefly in denunciations and impolite epithets. It was as clear as daylight to their minds that the archbishop had “a damnable plot to reconcile the Church of England with the Church of Rome.”

Presumably, Mr. Prynne’s ears were for something in the overwhelming potency of the argument. But another and scarcely less important article of the indictment related to some pictures of the Life and Passion of our Lord, which Laud had once had bound up in Bibles. He had been so greatly pleased with the result that he ordered them to be called the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Bibles. The Puritans thought they saw in this strong proof of his “popish and idolatrous affection,” their ignorance of human nature actually leading them to imagine that on seeing an image or picture of a divine person men would be forthwith moved to prostrate themselves in adoration of the material of which it was composed, no other explanation of the word “idolatrous” being possible in this connection.

But we must now return to the year 1636, when popular passion ran so high that the opinion of an onlooker is our only means of arriving at a fairly accurate appreciation of events. Panzani, who although wrong in his inferences was correct as to facts, describes the archbishop and his works with great moderation. In his letters to Cardinal Barberini, he tells him that Laud is “short in stature, aged about sixty,

Page 119

is unmarried, and is first in the privy council. His views are moderate, and he is not unfriendly to the Catholic religion. He has the King's interests thoroughly at heart; he studies to increase the revenue, and perhaps for this reason is preferred by the King to all his other advisers. He is ready for any amount of work, and all ecclesiastical affairs receive his personal attention. He is reputed an Arminian, and in nearly all dogmas approaches nearly to the Roman Church. With the King's permission he has made innovations in the Scotch as well as in the English churches, has erected altars, and put sacred pictures in many places. He has the honour and glory of the clergy extremely at heart. Many think his aim is to reconcile this Church with Rome, others hold quite opposite views, and both extremes have some show and reason, for on the one hand, one sees in him great ambition to imitate Catholic rites, and on the other, what looks almost like a positive hatred of Catholics and their religion. Sometimes he persecutes them, but this is interpreted by many to mean only prudence, and a way of escape from the murmurs and quarrels of the Puritans."

The Queen and Panzani were on excellent terms. Cardinal Barberini had sent Henrietta Maria some very costly presents, and she was anxious to show him a similar attention. Father Philip considered that English horses would form a most suitable gift, but the Queen asked him to consult Panzani. "If her Majesty wants to send a really acceptable present to Rome, let her send the heart of the King," said the envoy, smiling. Father Philip replied that this treasure she wished to keep entirely for her own.

"I make no doubt," answered Panzani, "that in sending the King's heart to Rome, the Queen would only possess it the more entirely, and without danger of rivalry from conflicting religious sects."

Father Philip then told her that if it pleased the Father of Mercy, she should send this truly precious gift, and that his Eminence cared for no horses.

Soon after this, Panzani returned home, and was made Bishop of Miletus. Meanwhile George Conn, a Scotchman, had been chosen to replace him, the papal court considering that he possessed the rare qualities described by Panzani as necessary for the delicate position of papal envoy to the Catholic queen of a non-Catholic country.

Panzani being an Italian, and possessing no language but his own, could only communicate with the Queen and the secretaries of State through an interpreter. As he was a priest, he was liable to cause irritation to such of the court and nation who were not "popishly inclined."

Conn had passed twenty-four years in Italy, had courtierlike manners and bearing. He was a layman, although a canon of one of the great Roman basilicas, and as we have already seen, was a candidate for a red hat. With his brilliant parts, great capacity,

urbanity, and zeal, it is not surprising to learn that he was declared to be a Jesuit, a generic term not only in his own days, but down to our own, for all who have laboured diligently to restore the old religion.

Page 120

We find it quite gravely asserted in the records of the reign of Charles I., that Jesuits were of three degrees, and were to be found among politicians, merchants, and the professed Fathers living in religious houses. It would be obviously superfluous to refute this ridiculous statement which seems destined to crop up at intervals to the end of time, quite regardless of the fact that it has been repeatedly shown to affirm an impossibility.

Conn had no sooner arrived in England than the report was spread that he was a disguised Jesuit, come to receive the King into the Catholic Church. Charles, in terror of the Puritans, declared that it was a purely malicious invention, but none the less he continued to temporise, and the court to regulate its conscience according to his vacillating example. Some of the nobility were received into the Church, and among them Lord Boteler and Lady Newport. Mass was again said in the houses of the Catholic gentry.

In a letter to the Cardinal, written soon after his arrival, Conn gave an account of along conversation he had had with Charles, in the course of which he “remarked to his Majesty that the other powers of Christendom were extremely jealous of the relations which had begun to exist between the Apostolic See and Great Britain. They know,” he continued, “that a perfect union between the two must necessarily tend to check their extravagances, and restore to Christ His lost patrimony in the west.”

To this the King replied with some emotion, saying:

“May God pardon the first authors of the rupture.”

“Sire,” I answered, “the greater will be your Majesty’s glory, when by your means so great an evil is remedied.” To which the King made no further response. Not long afterwards, Charles asked Conn whether he considered it an easy thing for a man to change his religion.

“I told him,” said Conn, “that when a man applied himself without passion or prejudice to find out the truth, God never failed to enlighten him.” To which the King took in good part.

“I am obliged to proceed very cautiously,” he added, “that they may not think the rumour of my coming here to receive the King into the Church had its origin in my presumption. It was a truly diabolical invention, and calculated to spoil everything.”

If the Puritans were angry before, Conn’s sojourn in England lashed them into fury. Rome’s Masterpiece was written when his service had come to an end, and in the first flush of Puritan triumph. On its title-page it styles the mission “The Grand Conspiracy of the Pope and his Jesuited instruments to extirpate the Protestant religion, re-establish Popery, subvert laws, liberties, peace, parliaments—by kindling a civil war in Scotland

and all his Majesty's realms; and to poison the King himself, in case he comply not with them in these their execrable designs."

This is how the "conspiracy" is said to have been discovered:—

Page 121

“Revealed out of conscience to Andreas ab Habernfeld by an agent sent from Rome into England by Cardinal Barberini, as an assistant to Conn, the Pope’s late Nuncio, to prosecute this most execrable plot (in which he persisted a principal actor several years), who discovered it to Sir William Boswell, his Majesty’s agent at the Hague, 6th September 1640. He, under an oath of secrecy to the Archbishop of Canterbury, among whose papers it was casually found by Mr. Prynne, May 31, 1643, who communicated it to the king, as the greatest business that ever was put to him.”

Events had succeeded each other with alarming significance. Nothing was too wild for the Puritans to invent or to believe, and it had been found impossible to uphold Conn in the position of papal envoy to the Queen. After nearly three years’ service, he had consequently been withdrawn, and in August 1639, Count Carlo Rosetti was sent to lead the forlorn hope of the English Catholics. His first impression of the state of the country and of the future of Catholicism in England was hopeful. “I have found,” he wrote to Cardinal Barberini, “in all persons a better disposition and a readiness towards the affairs of religion in general, and an obedience full of reverence towards the particular person of his Holiness our Sovereign, and of your Eminence.” Windebank was fairly amenable, but Laud had pinned his faith to the Church of England, and was no more favourable to the Catholics than to the Puritans. He opposed Rosetti in every possible way, burned Catholic books publicly, and threw all his weight and influence in Parliament on the side that favoured the enforcing of the penal statutes. Meanwhile, the Queen was not idle, and had pleaded successfully with the King for her persecuted coreligionists, so that Rosetti was able to report, “Through the grace of God, all the priests and Catholics are at last released from prison, to their extreme consolation.”

Nevertheless, there was scarcely any further talk of the nation’s return to the bosom of the Church; all that was now hoped for was, that if the King could be got to act with some degree of firmness and consistency, the cause of the unhappy Catholics might not yet be altogether lost. Rosetti drew, as far as it went, a life-like portrait of Charles in one of his letters:

“The King,” he says, “is very high-minded; but having no sincere, experienced, and capable persons to assist him, he is often either agitated or changeable, and undecided in the administration of affairs. He has great parts, and much benevolence, is by nature gentle and moderate, and with regard to morals, is singular among princes. It is not possible to exaggerate his love of justice; in the exercise of this virtue he is little accessible to compassion, but at the same time, he is no friend of capital punishment. Honesty is one of the strongest points in his character, but not being surrounded with trustworthy ministers, it often happens that he neglects the interests of the State, and gives himself up to hunting, which is his favourite occupation and amusement.”

Page 122

But the Puritans were fast gaining the upper hand; Parliament haggled with the King over the supplies, and frightful scenes were enacted in the churches.

“Last Sunday morning,” wrote Rosetti, “many Protestants and Puritans being assembled at church to celebrate their sacrament, it came to a great contest between them; some were determined to communicate sitting, others kneeling. From words they passed to blows, causing much disturbance.”

The other day, a large number of Puritans went into a Protestant Church, and upset the altars which stood against the wall with rails in front of them, where people were going to Communion in the Catholic manner. They took possession of twelve statues representing the twelve apostles, and carried them with cries and tumult into the Parliament.”

On another occasion he wrote:—

“The Archbishop of Canterbury persecutes the Catholics more than ever. On the vigil of Pentecost, I am told by a trustworthy person, he threw himself at the King’s feet, beseeching him to proceed against the Catholic religion, at least from political interests, if not from conscientious motives.”

Laud was terrified. All that he had done to imitate Catholicism he now undid, as far as he was able, in order, if possible, to pacify the Puritans. The order to bow at the holy Name was revoked, the communion-tables were replaced in the middle of the churches, and from being called altars were renamed tables. The altar rails were abolished, and the people communicated after the Calvinist manner. A quantity of Catholic books were ostentatiously burned in a public square, and the state of affairs looked less like reunion with Rome than ever.

But all that Laud did availed him nothing; the disturbances continued in the churches, and scarcely a service was held without a quarrel arising as to the manner of conducting it, some fighting for one posture, some for another.

Neither did the Archbishop become more popular with the multitude. A courageous stand against the Puritans might have inspired them with some respect for their enemy; yielding to them from fear only made them more formidable. Sometimes the High Church party would still score a victory here and there. A Puritan holding forth one day in Westminster Abbey, with the usual flow of epithets, on the difference between the Catholic religion and that of the Puritans, the Bishop of Lincoln rose, and declared that his language was unbecoming in a pulpit, put an end to the sermon, and forced the preacher to come down.

But these triumphs were rare; few of the king’s men were as bold as the Bishop of Lincoln. All seemed to be painfully busy in saving their skins, while the

Parliamentarians complained loudly and efficaciously that Charles had allowed the primate to foist a new religion upon them. Through the primate they proceeded to attack the King. Placards began to appear all over London, with declarations to the effect that the people were determined to enjoy the liberty with which they were born, and to maintain the integrity of their religious worship. One of these placards was discovered one morning nailed to the gate of the royal palace at Whitehall. On it were these words: “Charles and Maria, doubt not but that the archbishop must die!”

Page 123

Charles's authority had disappeared with his dignity, and the parsimony of successive Parliaments had impoverished the royal family to so great an extent that the want of money was not the least of their troubles. At one time they were reduced to such straits that hunger would have stared them in the face but for the alternative of pawning their jewels. In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that Charles should have turned to the Pope for help.

The following letter from Rosetti to the Cardinal, if somewhat discursive, is interesting as the record of a kind of sommation respectueuse which he now made to the King:—

"Oatlands, August 10/25, 1640.

"Your Eminence's letters of the 30th June and the 7th July having reached me, I did not omit to speak to Mr. Windebank on the subject of his Majesty's conversion, and of the succour in the shape of men and money that will be sent to him from Rome in the event of its taking place. After some talk about the present state of the King's affairs, Mr. Windebank asked me whether I had received letters from Rome relating to the proposal he had already made me. I replied that I had, and that your Eminence was extremely well-disposed towards this country, sympathising deeply with his Majesty in his troubles, caused by the disobedience and faithlessness of the Puritans. This led to my saying that a State could not possibly be either happy or secure unless united, and that unity was impossible without one uniform religion. I then put forward the indisputable fact, that a prince whose subjects profess one faith alone is beyond compare more powerful than a sovereign whose people are split up into various religions, and that the many sects in this realm, opposed to every form of political government, ought to make his Majesty pause, and reflect on the remedy.

"I added that in reality there was no other remedy than for the King, with all his Protestants, to embrace our holy religion, when forming one body with the Catholic party, they would be strong enough to keep the Puritans in check.

"On the other hand, it was, I said, only too evident, that if measures were not taken to repress them, they would grow so powerful as to imperil one day the very existence of monarchy in England. Every hour it became, I held, more apparent how little they were in touch with the King, and how determined they were never to rest till they had introduced popular government in some form or other.

"Here I digressed, in order to point out how often King James, his Majesty's father, had found himself in danger of losing his life by the machinations of the Puritans, having been menaced by them even before he saw the light of day. I then went on to point out that King Charles was placed in the very same danger, and his kingdom reduced to such a state of discord and weakness, that he must fear daily to find himself and his crown the prey of his worst enemies.

Page 124

“The Puritans have always been, and ever will be, intent on upsetting all kingly authority. Such is the rebellious spirit of their Calvinism, that it aims at nothing less than the total destruction of the King and of the Catholic religion.

“I then spoke of the greatness which would accrue to England if the King’s conversion were brought about, dwelling not only on the advantageous relationships he might form, in disposing of the Prince and Princess in marriage, but also on the disputes perpetually taking place between France and Spain, in which his Majesty would be the recognised arbitrator and peacemaker. Neither country would have the temerity to offend him, on account of the power he would possess to harm them, having the supreme Pontiff on his side.”

Rosetti here proceeds to define, somewhat lengthily, the exact position of a Catholic King of England in European politics, and the kind of prestige he would acquire if he embraced a religion to which he was already partially inclined. Then, speaking of the King more personally, he went on:—

“If, having considered all these things, his Majesty comes to a decided resolution, he should not delay putting it into effect from fear of the consequences. Henry VIII. risked more in his unholy determination to destroy the Catholic religion, which had flourished in this country with such pious results for so many centuries. I insisted that it was time his Majesty made an end of his ambiguousness and hesitation, and that he should once for all fix his mind, there being nothing more injurious than leisurely deliberation when a man has need of prompt decision and action. I told Mr. Windebank further, that the King’s procrastination was simply putting the sceptre into the hands of the Puritans, was ruining the State, his children, and himself, and that a really wise prince not only provides for the safety of his kingdom during his own life-time, but orders things in such a manner that at his death he secures his inheritance to his posterity.

“His Majesty, I declared, could take no step more just and more pleasing to God than by restoring to this country its ancient religion, professed by his ancestors, and I believed that this King, so good, so just, and so virtuous in many ways, was appointed by divine Providence for the great work.

“The King was, I said, already armed; help might confidently be expected to flow in from Ireland, through the devotion and loyalty of that people, and his Holiness would moreover assist him with men and money.

“Finally, I showed the necessity of this union, for the salvation of souls, a point which I ought to have begun with, it being certain that none can be saved out of the bosom of the Catholic Church. Of this the Nicaean Council speaks in the great creed, in unam sanctam Catholicam Ecclesiam et Apostolicam, in which Protestants believe as we do, and yet it is not said that there are two or more churches.

Page 125

“Confessing as they do that ours is the Catholic Church, they contradict their own belief in the said creed; and not only this, but the ancient Fathers, and the Holy Scriptures agree that the Church of God is one.

“Having added many other things to this proposition, I said that if one examined the reasons which induced Henry VIII. to give up the Church, one would find that they had no other origin than in sensuality and spleen—false and unworthy pretexts.

“I ended by declaring that whoever considers a matter so important as is the salvation of souls, ought to have his eyes well open, and not consent to the errors of that king, whose actions are condemned and abhorred by all.

“Mr. Windebank replied that he had listened to me with pleasure, and had weighed all my reasons, finding them very true; but that for the accomplishment of an undertaking so momentous, a large heart and a strong will were indispensable, and these he could not at present promise me. He told me in confidence that never until now had negotiations of such importance passed through his hands, to be followed by so few results. One day the King would have recourse to an expedient, and the next would stultify it, with the greatest inconstancy imaginable. Nevertheless, he assured me that he would not fail to repeat all I had said, to his Majesty at the first opportunity.

“. . . The matter is indeed so grave, that one rather hopes in the sovereign power of God than in any human help. Still, we must be ready, for His Divine Majesty often makes use of us creatures to bring forth works which shall redound to His service.

“I observed both with Father Philip and Mr. Windebank all the caution that such an important undertaking demands. May God who gives and who takes away realms, who changes and governs them as He pleases, enlighten the King’s mind, that he may know what he should do for the salvation of his own soul and the souls of all his people.”

In 1641 many letters were written and received by Count Rosetti, relating to the freedom of conscience to be granted to Catholics, in return for a sum of 600 scudi. But freedom of conscience was still one of the unfulfilled conditions of the king’s marriage settlement, and the Pope, it was objected, could not treat with an heretical sovereign.

“Only in the event of the King’s conversion,” wrote Cardinal Barberini, 21st February 1641, “would it be possible for me to entreat His Holiness to send a considerable sum of money.”

On the 19th July of the same year, Rosetti wrote:—

“I told him (Father Philip) that the only way to obtain help from the Holy See was by His Majesty’s return to the Catholic Church. He answered that such a step would be extremely difficult at present, not because the King had any dislike to Catholicism,

neither did he wish to prevent Catholics from saving their souls; but that it was evident if he changed his religion just now, he would run great risk of losing his crown and his life. But if he were enabled to recover his power and authority, the Catholic cause would be strengthened by supporting him, and his conversion might then be confidently looked forward to.

Page 126

“The Queen Mother told me that in speaking of certain miracles performed by the saint in whose honour the processions are being made just now at Antwerp, she observed the King listening attentively, seeming to have a decided taste for the Catholic religion. She however admitted, that although he appears to have great natural capacity, and to understand the critical state of his affairs, he is, as they say, timid, slow, and irresolute.”

Charles I. never went any further than the cultivation of “a decided taste for the Catholic religion,” and what would have happened had he really thrown himself into the arms of the Pope must remain one of those curious and unsolvable historical problems with which the world is full.

Would the Papacy, still a great force in Europe, have been able to save him from the terrible fate that awaited him?

Obliged to act from definite, logical principles in the place of his mischievous theory of the royal prerogative, would he have gained in moral weight as well as in the material advantages held out to him?

It may be answered that the Puritans were as little inclined to tolerate an infallible Pope whom they hated and feared, as an infallible king whom they could drive into a corner; and possibly the King would only have died in another cause.

Under a portrait of Charles I., painted in the fortieth year of his age, in which he is represented as grave, troubled, and with a scared and hunted look in his eyes, Prynne wrote these lines:—

“All flesh is grass, the best men vanity,
This, but a shadow, here before thine eye,
Of him whose wondrous changes clearly show
That God, not man, sways all things here below.”

PART II

I. THE RUNIC CROSSES OF NORTHUMBRIA

There is at the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington a remarkable plaster cast, the facsimile of one of the two beautiful obelisks of Anglo-Saxon workmanship, which like far-reaching voices speak to us across the gulf of at least nine centuries.

The interest which surrounds these ancient crosses is of a twofold nature. There is the marvellous art expressed in the sculptured stones themselves, and there is the mysterious charm of the runes with which the stones are inscribed. The art is of a very high order, and in the opinion of archaeologists such as Haigh, Kemble, Professor

Stephens, and others, better than anything of the kind produced in mediaeval times, before the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Page 127

The kingdom of Northumbria extended at its most flourishing period as far north as Edinburgh, so named after the great Northumbrian King, Edwin, its southern limit being, as its name implied, the river Humber. Thus, the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire, and the Bewcastle Cross in Cumberland, belonged alike to Anglia; for although Dumfries formed part of the kingdom of Strathclyde, the territory to the east of Nithsdale was generally reckoned a part of Northumbria, and if we were less hampered by our modern geographical limits and boundaries, we should better realise that the land north and south of the Tweed was one and the same country, without distinction of race or language. And as if in solemn protest of the political barriers, which were set up in the course of ages, these two obelisks, the one now in Scotland, the other in England, continue to point heavenwards, each bearing upon their faces the same grand old Northumbrian language, which is the mother-tongue of all English speaking people.

Both crosses have been, down to the present day, the subject of much diversity of opinion among antiquaries, first with regard to their respective ages, and secondly as to the authorship of the inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross. The celebrated Danish antiquary, Dr. Muller, considered that the Ruthwell Cross could not be older than the year 1000, and he arrived at this conclusion by a study of the ornamentation, which he placed as late as the Carlovingian period, the style having been imported from France into England. Muller, however, though a good archaeologist, was not a runic scholar, and Professor George Stephens maintained* that not ornamentation merely, but a variety of other things must also be taken into consideration, and that these are often absolute and final, so that sometimes the object itself must date the ornamentation. Then Dr. Haigh, who had passed his life in the study of the oldest sculptured and inscribed stones of Great Britain and Ireland, stepped in and pronounced “this monument (the Ruthwell Cross) and that of Bewcastle to be of the same age and the work of the same hand; and the latter must have been erected A.D. 664-5."*

* Old Northern Runic Monuments, Afterwrit, p. 431,

He was led to this conclusion not by the ornamentation, but rather in spite of it; and in consideration of the runic inscriptions, which he declared had not only passed out of date on funeral monuments as late as the year 1000, but as he read the name of Alcfrid on the Bewcastle Cross, he inferred both that and the Ruthwell Cross to be productions of the latter half of the seventh century. The inscription, of which we will treat more particularly later on, is to the effect that the obelisk was raised to the memory of Alcfrid, son of that King of Northumbria, who decided to celebrate Easter according to the Roman precept. Alcfrid died about the year 664, and thus when we consider the similarity of the ornamentation, and the character of the runes on both obelisks, there seemed good reason for the above inference.

Page 128

Dr. Haigh further remarked that the scroll-work on the east side of the Bewcastle monument, and on the two sides of that at Ruthwell was identical in design, and differed very much from that which he found on other Saxon crosses. In fact, he knew of nothing like it, except small portions on a fragment of a cross in the York museum, on another fragment preserved in Yarrow Church, and on a cross at Hexham. There are, however, several other such stones which were unknown to Dr. Haigh, and engravings of them may be seen in Dr. John Stuart's magnificent work on The Sculptured Stones of Scotland.

At Carew, in Pembrokeshire, runic crosses of the Saxon period without figures may be seen, and there is a runic cross at Lancaster with incised lines and a pattern in relief, supposed to be of the fifth or sixth century. The sculptured stones of Meigle in Scotland have no runes. Runes were, as it is well known, the characters used by the Teutonic tribes of northwest Europe before they received the Latin alphabet. They are divided into three principal classes, the Anglo-Saxon, the Germanic, and the Scandinavian, bearing the same relation to each other as do the different Greek alphabets. Their likeness to each other is so great that a common origin may be ascribed to all. They date from the dim twilight of paganism, but were for a time employed in the service of Christianity, when after being imported into this country where they were first used in pagan inscriptions cut into the surface of rocks, or on sticks for casting lots, or for divination, they were at last made to express Christian ideas on grave crosses or sacred vessels.

"In times," says Kemble,* "when there was neither pen, ink, nor parchment the bark of trees and smooth surfaces of wood or soft stone were the usual depositaries of these symbols or runes—hence the name run-stafas, mysterious staves answering to the Buchstaben of the Germans.

* Archaeologia, vol. xxviii. On Anglo-Saxon Runes.

We may observe in passing, that the word Buchstaben, beech-staves, is a direct descendant of these wooden runes.

As early as 1695 antiquaries were busy with the Ruthwell Cross, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century profound ignorance still reigned in regard even to the language which the runes were intended to convey. Bishop Gibson, in his additions to Camden's Britannia, described the cross vaguely as "a pillar curiously engraven with some inscription upon it." In a second edition this reads, "with a Danish inscription." Later it was thought to be Icelandic, and it was Haigh who first thought that Caedmon and no other was the author of the runic verses which he deciphered, considering that there was no one living at the period to which he assigned the monument, who could have composed such a poem but the first of all the English nation to express in verse the beginning of created things.

In 1840, Kemble published his Runes of the Anglo-Saxons, showing that the Ruthwell Cross was a Christian monument, and that the inscription was nothing less than twenty lines of a poem in Old Northumbrian or North English.

Page 129

Meanwhile, in 1822, a German scholar, Dr. Friedrich Blume, had discovered in the cathedral library at Vercelli in the Milanese six Anglo-Saxon poems of the early part of the eleventh century, which discovery aroused great interest both in Germany and in England. Blume copied the manuscript, and Mr. Benjamin Thorpe printed and published it. The learned philologist Grimm again printed the longest of the poems in 1840, but it was Kemble who identified the fourth poem of the series The Dream of the Rood with the runic inscription on the Ruthwell Cross, and it was he who first suggested that all the poems in the Vercelli Codex, consisting of 135 leaves, were by Cynewulf, who like Caedmon was a Northumbrian, and lived in the second half of the eighth century. It was Kemble also who first gave The Dream of the Rood a modern English rendering.*

* A translation of the fragment in Old Northumbrian had indeed been attempted at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Mr. Repp and also by a disciple of the great Fin Magnusen, Mr. J. M. M'Caul, but the least said about these versions the better, both being wide of the mark. Being imperfectly acquainted with Old English they made the most absurd statements regarding the purpose the monument was supposed to have served.

So far steady progress had been made, except one step which is now stated by modern Anglo-Saxon scholars to have been a false one. Professor Stephens following Haigh thought he could decipher on the top stone of the cross the words Cadmon Mae Fawed, and inferred therefrom that the Cross Lay of which fragments were inscribed on the Ruthwell monument was the work of Caedmon, "the Milton of North England in the seventh century." But according to the evidence of the latest expert who has examined the cross, Caedmon's name has never been on it, and both linguistic and archaeological considerations assign the inscription to the tenth century, and probably to the latter half of it. This critic declares that there is "no shadow of proof or probability that the inscription represents a poem written by Caedmon."

Sweet, on the other hand* describes The Dream of the Rood, in the Vercelli Book, as an introduction to the Elene or Finding of the Cross which is unmistakably claimed as Cynewulf's own by an acrostic introduced into the runic letters which form his name, and goes on to assert that the Ruthwell Cross gives a fragment of the poem in the Old Northern dialect of the seventh or eighth century, "of which the *Ms*. text is evidently a late West Saxon transcription differing in many respects from the older one." He considers that The Dream belongs to the age of Caedmon, and that the poetry of Cynewulf was an adaptation of older compositions.

* Anglo-Saxon Reader, p. 154, 7th edition.

Page 130

There can be now no possible doubt but that the poems in the Vercelli Codex are by Cynewulf, the controversy henceforth being as to whether The Dream of the Rood or the inscription on the cross is the older. Cynewulf, being a Northumbrian, presumably wrote in the old Northumbrian language such as is inscribed on the cross, but all his poems as they have come down to us have passed into the West Saxon tongue, and if the fragment on the Ruthwell Cross is, as modern archxologists aver, later than the Dream in the Vercelli Codex it must be a re-translation into the dialect in which it was first written. A further difficulty lies in the fact stated by Haigh that runes had passed out of date on funeral monuments as late as the year 1000, and we can indeed scarcely conceive of their use at the very eve of the Norman Conquest when the written language had long become general.

Nevertheless, as far back as 1890, Mr. A. S. Cook, professor of the English language and literature in Yale University, suggested that the inscription on the Ruthwell Cross must be as late as the tenth century and subsequent to the Lindisfarne Gospels. “A comparison of the inscription with the Dream of the Rood shows that the former is not an extract from an earlier poem written in the long Caedmonian line which is postulated by Vigfusson and Powell, and by Mr. Stopford Brooke, since the earliest dated verse is in short lines only, and since four of the lines in the cross inscription represent short lines in the Dream of the Rood, it shows that the latter is more self-consistent, more artistic, and therefore more likely to be or to represent the original; and it shows that certain of the forms of the latter seem to have been inadvertently retained by the adapter, who selected and re-arranged the lines for engraving on the cross."*

* The Dream of the Rood, by A. S. Cook, p. xv., Oxford, 1905.

The theme both of the Dream and of the Elene, another of the poems in the Vercelli Book, is the Cross, and Cynewulf, says Mr. Cook, is the first old English author, of whom we have any knowledge, to lay emphasis upon the Invention of the Cross, and Constantine’s premonitory dream. “If,” he continues, “we consider Bede’s account of Caedmon, we are struck by one analogy at least: in each case a command is imparted to the poet to celebrate a particular theme—in the first, the creation of the world; in the second, the redemption of mankind by the death of the cross. As the one stands at the beginning of the Old Testament, the other epitomises the New. The later poet may have had the earlier in mind, and may not have been unwilling to enter into generous rivalry with him; but there is this notable difference, Caedmon does not relate his own dream, while Cynewulf, if it be Cynewulf, does."*

* Ibid., p. lvii.

Elsewhere he says The Dream of the Rood, apart from its present conclusion, represents Cynewulf (as we believe) in the fullest vigour of his invention and taste, probably after all his other extant poems had been composed. Admirable in itself and a precious document of our early literary history, it gains still further lustre from being

indissolubly associated with that monument which Kemble has called the most beautiful as well as the most interesting relic of Teutonic antiquity."

Page 131

And again, “So far from the Cross-inscription representing an earlier form of the Dream of the Rood, it seems rather to have been derived from the latter, and to have been corrupted in the process.” *

* Ibid., p. xvi.

Thus the controversy remains in 1905. and until some further light is shed upon the difficult question—for it is impossible to regard Mr. Cook’s solution as in all points satisfying—we must be content with the results obtained.

Let us now consider the poem itself by the help of Professor Stephens’ admirable translation. Essentially a Christian composition, it preserves all the Gothic strength and virile beauty of the old pagan forms. The modern words, Saviour, Passion, Apostles, *etc*., do not once appear. Christ is the “Youthful Hero,” He is the “Peace-God,” the “Atheling,” the “Frea of mankind.” He is even identified with the white god, Balder the Beautiful. His friends are “Hilde-rinks” or “barons.” In His crucifixion He is less crucified than shot to death with “streals,” *i.e*., all manner of missiles which the “foemen” hurl at Him. The Rood speaks and laments; it tells the story of the last dread scene of Christ’s suffering, His entombment in the “mould-house,” the triumph of the Cross in His resurrection, and the entry of the “Lord of Benison” into his “old home-halls.”

The doctrine is as sober as an orthodox, theological treatise, though the poem is essentially a work of the most fertile imagination, a drama with all the rich accessories that tradition offered in the matter of colouring and effect. And it is withal exquisitely simple, devout, and noble, breathing a spirituality strangely at variance with the semi-barbaric people with whom the poetry had originated.

Stephens’ translation is full of poetry, the translator having retained the lilt of the original, together with many of the old English words which, if they need a glossary, is only because we have gradually lost the meaning in the substitution of weaker terms.

It is interesting to compare the fragments still legible on the Ruthwell Cross with the South Saxon rendering in the Vercelli Codex. Where the lines are worn away or mutilated the *Ms*. may supplement them:—

Northumbrian version----------South Saxon version according to the
on the Cross.----------Vercelli Codex.

Girded Him then---------- For the grapple then girded him youthful hero—

God Almighty----------lo! the man was God Almighty.
When He would----------Strong of heart and steady-minded
Step on the gallows----------stept he on the lofty gallows;
Fore all Mankind----------fearless spite that crowd of faces;
Mindfast, fearless----------free and save man's tribes he would there.
Bow me durst I not----------Bever'd I and shook when that baron claspt me

Page 132

. . . . . ---------- but dar'd I not to bow me earthward
. . . . . ----------Rood was I reared now.
Rich King heaving----------Rich king heaving
The Lord of Light-realms----------The Lord of Light-realms
Lean me I durst not----------Lean me I durst not.
Us both they basely mockt and handled-----Us both they basely mockt and handled
Was I there with blood bedabbled---------all with blood was I bedabbled
Gushing grievous from . . . --------gushing grievous from his dear side,
. . . . . ----------when his ghost he had uprendered.
. . . . . ----------How on that hill
. . . . . ----------have I throwed
. . . . . ----------dole the direst.
. . . . . ----------All day viewed I hanging
. . . . . ----------the God of hosts
. . . . . ----------Gloomy and swarthy
. . . . . ----------clouds had cover'd
. . . . . ----------the corse of the Waldend.*
. . . . . ----------O'er the sheer shine-path
. . . . . ----------shadows fell heavy
. . . . . ----------wan 'neath the nelkin
. . . . . ----------wept all creation
. . . . . ----------wail'd the fall of their king.
Christ was on Rood-tree----------Christ was on Rood-tree
But fast from afar----------But fast from afar
His friends hurried----------his friends hurried
Athel to the Sufferer.----------To aid their Atheling
Everything I saw.----------Everything I saw.
Sorely was I----------Sorely was I
With sorrows harrow'd----------with sorrows harrow'd
. . . . . I inclin'd----------yet humbly I inclin'd
. . . . . ----------to the hands of his servants,
. . . . . ----------striving with might to aid them.
. . . . . ----------Straight the all-ruling God they've taken
. . . . . ----------heaving from that haried torment
. . . . . ----------Those Hilde-rinks** now left me
. . . . . ----------to stand there streaming with blood drops;
With streals all wounded-------with streals*** was I all wounded.
Down laid they Him limb-weary---------Down laid they him limb-weary,
O'er His lifeless Head then stood they—O'er his lifeless head then stood they,

Heavily gazing at Heaven's . . .--------heavily gazing at heaven's Chieftain.

* Wielder, Lord, Ruler, Monarch,

** Hero, from Hilde the war god. Battle brave, captain

*** Anything strown or cast-a missile of any kind.

Kemble's rendering of the poem, wonderfully correct and conscientious as a translation, is inferior in poetical merit to that of Stephens, who, as we see, instead of choosing modern words, is careful to retain many of the picturesque old rune equivalents. This we perceive at once if we compare Stephens' four lines, beginning "Christ was on Rood tree" with Kemble's:

"Christ was on the Cross but thither hastening men came from afar to the noble one." *

* Poetry of the Vercelli Codex.

Page 133

The runes are sharply and beautifully cut into the margin of two sides of the Cross, the inside spaces being filled with sculptured ornaments, representing a conventional, clambering vine, with leaves and fruit. Entwined among the leaves are curious birds and animals devouring the grapes. On the southeast and south-west sides are figures taken chiefly from the Bible, with Latin inscriptions instead of runes. In the middle compartment of each of these sides is the figure of our Lord with a cruciform halo. On the south-west side of the Cross He is represented as treading on the heads of two swine, His right arm upraised in blessing, a scroll being in His left hand. Around the margin is a legend in old Latin uncial letters, “Jesus Christ the judge of equity. Beasts and dragons knew in the desert the Saviour of the world.”

In the corresponding panel on the south side, St. Mary Magdalen washes the feet of our Lord, who is standing nearly in the same position. The remaining subjects are—a figure which has been sometimes described as that of the Eternal Father, and again as St. John the Baptist, with the Agnus Dei; St. Paul and St. Anthony breaking a loaf in the desert; the Flight into Egypt; two figures unexplained; a man seated on the ground with a bow, taking aim; the Visitation; our Lord healing the man born blind; the Annunciation; and traces almost obliterated, of the Crucifixion, on the bottom panel of the south-west side.

On the top stone is a bird, probably meant for a dove, resting on a branch with the rune which Stephens took to be Cadmon Mae Fawed. On the reverse side of this stone are St. John and his eagle, with a partly destroyed Latin inscription, In principio erat verbum. All the subjects are explained by a legend running round the margin, but which is in parts scarcely legible.

Sir John Sinclair, in his account of the parish of Ruthwell, mentions a tradition, according to which, this column having been set up in remote times at a place called Priestwoodside (now Priestside), near the sea, it was drawn from thence by a team of oxen belonging to a widow. During the transit inland the chain broke, which accident was supposed to denote that heaven willed it to be set up in that place. This was done, and a church was built over the Cross.

But opposed to this story is the fact that the obelisk is composed of the same red and grey sandstone which abounds in that part of Dumfriesshire, and it seems far more likely that the Cross was here hewn and sculptured than that it should have been brought from a distance after having been adorned in so costly a manner and with a definite purpose. It was held in great veneration till the middle of the sixteenth century, and being specially protected by the powerful family of Murray of Cockpool, the patrons and chief proprietors of the parish, it escaped the blind fury of the iconoclasts till 1644. Then, however, it was broken into three pieces as “an object of superstition among the vulgar.”

Page 134

For more than a century the column apparently lay where it fell, on the site of what had once been the altar of the church, and was made to serve as a bench for members of the congregation to sit upon.

In 1722, Pennant saw it still lying inside the church, but soon after this, better accommodation being required for the congregation, it was turned out into the churchyard to make room for modern improvements! Here it suffered greatly from repeated mutilations, the churchyard being then nearly unenclosed.

In 1802, the weather-cock of opinion having again veered round, the then incumbent, Dr. Duncan, desiring to preserve this “object of superstition,” now become a precious relic, had the main shaft removed to his newly-enclosed manse garden where it remained till 1887, when an apse being added to the church, the Cross was again enclosed within the building. Meanwhile two other fragments had entirely disappeared. The cross-beam has never been recovered,* but the top-stone suddenly reappeared in the following curious manner:

* Transverse arms were supplied in 1823. A. S. Cook, The Dream of the Rood.

A poor man and his wife having died within a few days of each other, it was decided to bury them both in one grave. For this it was necessary to dig deeper than usual, and in doing so, the grave-digger came upon an obstacle which proved to be a block of red sandstone with sculptured figures upon it. This block was found to be the missing top-stone of the Cross.

One point still needs explanation. When Pennant saw the Cross in the early part of the eighteenth century, before the buried fragment had been excavated, it measured 2o feet in height. At the present day, although the top has been replaced, the height of the column does not exceed 17 feet 6 inches, a circumstance that can only be accounted for by the supposition that the obelisk may have sunk several feet into the ground in the interval.

The spirit that breathes in The Dream of the Rood is strongly imbued with national elements. The doctrine and sentiments are strictly Catholic, but the poem is at the same time an epitome of what St. Cuthbert and the monks of Lindisfarne, the royal Abbess Hilda, Caedmon, and now it appears Cynewulf also had been long doing for Northumbria, in taking what was grand and heroic in the old heathen traditions, and leading up through them to Christianity. But if this influence can be distinctly traced in the runes on the Ruthwell Cross, yet another element is seen in its ornamentation, which carries us back to the Christian tombs in the Roman catacombs where its prototypes are to be found.

Page 135

On the Bewcastle Cross there is less of the national element and more of the Roman, fewer runes and more of this kind of sculpture. A few feet from the parish church, and within the precincts of a large Roman station, guarded by a double vallum, stands the shaft of what was formerly an Anglo-Saxon funeral cross of most graceful shape and design. This column, 14 feet in height, is quadrangular, and formed of one entire block of grey freestone, inserted in a broader base of blue stone. The side facing westward has suffered most from storm and rain. It bears on its surface two sculptured figures, and the principal runic inscription. The lower figure, that representing our Lord, has been much mutilated by accident or design. He stands as He is seen on the Ruthwell Cross, with His feet on the heads of swine, as trampling down all unclean things. His right hand is uplifted in blessing, in His left hand is a scroll,

Above is St. John the Baptist holding the Agnus Dei, and near the top are the remains of the Latin word Christus.

The runic inscription has been translated thus:

“This slender sign-beacon
set was by Hwoetred,
Wothgar, Olufwolth,
after Alcfrith
Once King
eke son of Oswin
Bid (pray) for the high sin of his soul.”

Beneath these runes is the figure of a man in a long robe with a hood over his head, and a bird, probably a falcon, on his left wrist. This figure is supposed to represent Alcfrid himself. Immediately below the falcon is an upright piece of wood with a transverse bar at the top, possibly meant for the bird’s perch. On the east side there are no runes, but a vine is sculptured in low relief within a border. Dr. Haigh observed that the design on this side was the same as on the two sides of the Ruthwell Cross.* The north and the south sides are in a state of good preservation, and are covered with a beautiful design in knotwork, and alternate lines of foliage, flowers, and fruit. On the north side there is a long panel fitted with chequers, which have given rise to a good deal of controversy among antiquaries. Camden thought them to be the arms of the De Vaux family, and when this theory was exploded, Mr. Howard of Corby Castle reversed it, and suggested that the chequers on the De Vaux arms were taken from this monument. But the Rev. John Maughan, B.A., rector of Bewcastle, in a note to his tract on this place, cites instances of chequers or diaper-work in Scythian, Egyptian, Gallic, and Roman art, and proves from the Book of Kings that there were “nets of chequered work” in the Temple of Solomon. After remarking that this is a natural form of ornamentation he calls attention to the frequent use made of it in mediaeval illuminations.**

* Archaologia Aeliana, p. 169.

** Archaeological Journal, vol. xi.

Above this panel are the words “Myrcna Kung,” and over the next piece of knot-work is seen the name “Wulfhere” (King of the Mercians). Then follows another vine, and above all are three crosses and the holy name “Jesus.” On the south side runs a runic inscription thus:

Page 136

In the first year of the King of ric (realm) this Ecgfrith."

The last line of the inscription is so broken that it can only be guessed at.*

* Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Bewcastle and its Cross, by W. Nanson, p. 215.

Fine as this obelisk is, we should be at a loss to make out that it was ever a cross, but for a slip of paper which was found in Camden's own copy of his Britannia (ed. 1607 now in the Bodleian Library. On the slip of paper was written this memorandum: "I received this morning a ston from my lord of Arundel, sent him from my lord William. It was the head of a cross at Bucastle: and the letters legable are these on one line, and I have sett to them such as I can gather out of my alphabetts: that like an A I can find in non. But wither this may be only letters or words I somewhat doubt."

Neither Camden nor any one else got much further than this for many years; and the general ignorance of runes is the more to be deplored since it led to a carelessness and want of interest in the preservation of priceless relics, even among antiquaries. The stone which thus came into Camden's possession has utterly disappeared, and the inscription which he tried in vain to decipher, and which might have thrown light on a mysterious subject, is thus lost to us.

In conclusion, we may, for the sake of clearness, recapitulate, first: that although there can no longer be any reasonable doubt that the runes on the Ruthwell obelisk are by the Northumbrian poet, Cynewulf, it has by no means been satisfactorily proved that these runes are of a subsequent date to the West-Saxon version of the poem in the Vercelli Codex, but that probability seems rather to point to an earlier date than the second half of the tenth century; and secondly, that so close a resemblance between the two Crosses does not necessarily imply that they date from absolutely the same period. The royal obelisk at Bewcastle must have been a famous monument in its day, known and celebrated far and wide, and it would not be unlikely that even a hundred years later it might be called upon to serve, to some extent, as a model for that Cross which was to immortalise the Dream of which Northumbrians were naturally proud. If, however, the runes on the Bewcastle Cross fix its date as the latter part of the seventh century, those on the Ruthwell Cross cannot be earlier than the eighth century.

Had the zeal, directed nearly four hundred years ago against our national treasures, been bestowed on their preservation, we should have reason indeed to congratulate ourselves on the beauty of many of our public monuments. Instead of mutilated remains, we should have works of art which, but for the gentle hand of time, would be as perfect as when they left the master's hand.

But there has never been a period when the intelligent study of the past, whether in palaeography, philology, or history, has been so highly cultivated as in the present day.

If we have lost the inspiration that creates, we have, at least, learned to venerate and cherish the noble works of our progenitors.

Page 137

II. A MISSING PAGE FROM THE IDYLLS OF THE KING

Although the Norte d'Arthur was one of the first books printed in the English language, the great semihistorical figure of Arthur, together with his Knights of the Round Table, and all their romantic exploits, had wellnigh died out of the memory of the English people when Tennyson published his Idylls of the King

The Morte d'Arthur was translated, according to Caxton, by Sir Thomas Malory, who took it "out of certain books of French and reduced it into English." But it is no mere translation of the older romances, which Malory rather adopted as the basis of his work, moulding them to suit his more refined taste and fancy, much as Chaucer used Boccaccio's tales, and Shakespeare a century after Malory adopted the plots and outlines of inferior playwrights.

Placed midway between the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, the book, which has been aptly described as a prose-poem, is one of the happiest illustrations possible of the language, manners, modes of thought and expression prevalent in England in the fifteenth century. Chivalry was not yet dead, ideals were still cherished, the feudal system still obtained, Gothic architecture had not yet said its last word, Englishmen were papal to the backbone, and religion was a potent factor in their live, in spite of much that was harsh, crude, and violent. "Herein," said Caxton, "may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, sin. Do after the good, and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee."

The Norte d'Arthur was finished in the ninth year of Edward *iv*., that is in 1470, and Caxton printed the first edition of the book in black letter, in 1485. Of this edition, now almost priceless, only two copies are known to exist, both of which are in private collections. One of these is in the United States, the other, slightly defective, is in the possession of Lord Spencer, who has also in his library at Althorp the only known copy of the second edition, printed in 1498 by Wynkyn de Worde, who took over Caxton's presses at his death. Of the third edition (1529), also printed by Wynkyn de Worde, a copy is in the British Museum. It is incomplete inasmuch as the title, preface, and part of the table of contents are wanting.

The British Museum possesses two other copies, one printed by William Copland in 1557, the other a folio without date, published by East. All these editions are in black letter.

Page 138

Whether we agree with Caxton that “it might full well be aretted great folly and blindness to say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur,” or whether we are of those “divers men who hold opinion that all such books as be made of him be but fayne matters and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, nor remember him nothing, nor of his knights,” we must admit that at least incidentally, the Morte d’Arthur is a picture of British faith and pious practices. Its composition is mediaeval, and represents the tone of thought common in the world as distinct from the cloister, in the Middle Ages; but it is also a true exponent of an earlier period still, when Lucius, the British chief, sent messengers to home to beg Pope Eleutherius to admit him into the Fold of Christ, and to send missionaries to instruct his people in the Faith. Comparing the Idylls of the King with Malory’s book, we are irresistibly reminded of certain Catholic books of devotion “expurgated” or “adapted” for members of the Church of England. All that savours too much of popery is left out. There is, no doubt, a strong Protestant prejudice in Tennyson, struggling with his sense of artistic beauty, and repeatedly Protestantism wins the day. We cannot always quarrel with him for his selection, because, although the modern mind is not a whit cleaner than the mediaeval mind, there is an unwritten convention, that at all events a spade shall not now be called a spade, at least in polite society, and Tennyson wrote exclusively for the polite. In the Middle Ages evil was spoken of plainly as in Scripture; there was no blinking of facts, no dressing-up of vice to make it look like virtue, and consequently much “bowdlerising” was necessary before Malory’s outspoken language should be sufficiently veiled to suit the susceptibilities, to which we have a perfect and legitimate right in so far as they are genuine, and no cloak for an hypocrisy that delights in the loathsome indecencies and disgusting suggestiveness of the modern problem novel.

But what we do regret is that apart from the coarseness, and even from a mere dramatic point of view, much that Tennyson rejected is finer than anything he took. His Lancelot is a grand conception, as mournfully, but with noble self-abasement, he says:

“. . . . in me there dwells No greatness, save it be some far-off touch Of greatness to know well I am not great.”

He is the very knight of courtesy, in chivalry above all other knights save Arthur—so strong that “whom he smote he overthrew”; he is brave, noble, scornful, and “falsely true,” but he is not the Lancelot of the Morte d’Arthur.

The story of Lancelot is incomplete in the Idylls, and by incompleteness we do not mean only that it is deprived of its denouement, of the climax up to which it has been working from the beginning, but that there is also to be noted the conspicuous absence of a refrain that should be there throughout. It is true that at the end of “Lancelot and Elaine,” one single line hints vaguely at the penance that was to atone for his sad and sin-stained life, where he is described as

Page 139

“Not knowing he should die a holy man.”

And in another place the long account of his confession, absolution, contrition, and the exhortation of the priest is slurred over in these words relating to the poisonous weeds that twined and clung round the wholesome flowers of his life:

“Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said
That save they could be plucked asunder all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vowed
That I would work according as he willed.”

If we compare this with what Malory said, we shall see the total inadequacy of Tennyson’s treatment of the episode which left out the whole root of the matter:—

How Sir Lancelot was shriven, and what sorrow he made, and of the good examples that were showed him.

Then Sir Lancelot wept with heavy cheer and said, “Now I know well ye say me sooth.” “Sir,” said the good man, “hide none old sin from me.” “Truly,” said Sir Lancelot, “that were me full loth to discover. For this fourteen years I never discovered one thing that I have used and to that may I now blame my shame and my misadventure.” And then he told there, that good man, all his life, and how he had loved a queen unmeasurably, and out of measure long;—“and all my great deeds of arms that I have done I did the most part for the queen’s sake, and for her sake would I do battle, were it right or wrong, and never did I battle all only for God’s sake, but for to win worship and to cause me to be the better beloved, and little or nought I thanked God of it.” Then Sir Lancelot said, “I pray you counsel me.” “I will counsel you,” said the hermit, “if ye will ensure me that ye will never come in that queen’s fellowship, as much as ye may forbare.” And then Sir Lancelot promised him he would not, by the faith of his body. “Look that your heart and your mouth accord,” said the good man, “and I shall ensure you ye shall have more worship than ever ye had.” . . . Then the good man enjoined Sir Lancelot such penance as he might do, and to sue knighthood, and so he assoiled him, and prayed Sir Lancelot to abide with him all that day. “I will well,” said Sir Lancelot, “for I have neither helm, nor horse, nor sword.” “As for that,” said the good man, “I shall help you to-morn at even of an horse and all that longeth unto you.” And then Sir Lancelot repented him greatly.

After this he meets with another hermit who gives him a hair shirt to wear as a penance, and riding on in pursuit of his quest, the Holy Grail, Lancelot next comes to a Cross, “and took that for his host as for that night. And so he put his horse to pasture, and did off his helm and his shield, and made his prayers unto the Cross that he never fall in deadly sin again. And so he laid him down to sleep.” Further on, we are told, as a sign of his sincerity and perseverance that “the hair pricked so Sir Lancelot’s skin that it grieved him full sore, but he took it meekly and suffered the pain.”

Page 140

Tennyson records no fights with conscience, no turning towards the light, no sorrowful confessions at all. He has given us a great deal, but it is not too much to say that what he rejected, a Catholic poet would have seized with delight as the purplest patches of his epic, and the climax to which the whole story led.

The same remarks do not altogether apply to Tennyson's conception of Arthur's character. Although there is much that is fine and beautiful in him, as he is portrayed in the older legends, although, when pierced with many wounds, he fought on valiantly, because he was "so full of knighthood that knightly he endured the pain," it is Tennyson who has exalted him into "the blameless king," "the highest creature here," and if it had only been for what he has given us in King Arthur, the Idylls would have been worth writing. Still even here he leaves out all those Catholic touches which went to make up the life and soul of British Christianity, the custom of beginning each day with the hearing of Mass, the frequent allusions to the Pope as the Head of Christendom, the mention of prayers for the dead, of penance, and so on.

When Arthur had defied the Roman Emperor, who had sent to claim tribute, and had carried his victorious arms to the gates of the Eternal City, the legend says that senators and cardinals came out and sued for peace. They invited him in, and there he was crowned emperor "with all the solemnity that could be made, and by the Pope's own hands." King Mark of Cornwall, for reasons of his own, wanted to rid himself of Tristram, and set about it in this wily manner:

He let do counterfeit letters from the Pope, and made a strange clerk for to bear them unto King Mark, the which letters specified that King Mark should make him ready upon pain of cursing, with his host for to come to the Pope, to help to go to Jerusalem for to make war upon the Saracens.

Mark, pretending that he could not leave home, proposed that Sir Tristram should go in his place, since the command of the Pope must be obeyed. "But," said Sir Tristram, "sythen the apostle Pope hath sent for him, bid him go thither himself." "Well," said King Mark, "yet shall he be beguiled," and counterfeited other letters, and the letters specified that the Pope desired Sir Tristram to come himself to make war upon the Saracens. But Tristram began to suspect the King of Cornwall of treachery, and at last Mark was obliged to walk into the trap which he had set for his enemy, and to take an oath "that he would go himself unto the Pope of Rome for to war upon the Saracens."

Malory's book abounds in such illustrations and side lights as these, but enough has been said to show how entirely the modern poet has suppressed the part played by the Pope in the lives of Englishmen, at least, up to the time of Edward *iv*.

Page 141

One other instance of this pre-reformation doctrine belongs to the story of Lancelot, and will be given in its proper place. We may remark here that whatever the shortcomings of some of Arthur's knights, they one and all evinced a lively faith, profound veneration for holy things, and a truly Catholic desire for reconciliation with God, through the reception of the Sacraments, whenever they fell into sin. Thus, the knights who were convened to assist at Arthur's coronation "made them clean of their lives, that their prayers might be the more acceptable unto God." And when Balan fought with his brother, Balyn, by mistake, and both were mortally wounded, Balan entreated the lady of the Tower to send for a priest: "Yea," said the lady, "it shall be done," and so she sent for a priest to give them their rights. "Now," said Balyn, "when we are buried in one tomb, and the mention made over us how two brethren slew each other, there will never good knight nor good man see our tomb but they will pray for our souls."

Wherever the knights-errant slept, they never set out on their journey on the morrow without first hearing Mass; and if they had been riding all night and came to a chapel in the morning they "avoided their horses and heard Mass." There are many allusions to devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and on one occasion a tournament was proclaimed in honour of her Assumption.

In the poem "Lancelot and Elaine," Tennyson has followed closely on the lines of the original story, both as to general design and detail. The idyll "Geraint and Enid" does not, of course, belong to this history at all, but is taken from the "Mabinogian," a collection of Welsh legends translated into English by Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Guest.

The "Coming of Arthur," as related in the idyll, is throughout an invention of Tennyson's, or culled from other sources, and differs entirely from the story of Arthur's origin as told by Malory.

But the legend that has suffered the most from poetical license is that of the "Holy Grail."

When the young Galahad, Lancelot's son, had been brought to Arthur's court, had been dubbed knight, and had sat in the mystical "siege perilous," fashioned by the wizard Merlin, he drew the sword from the magic stone that hovered over the water, and which no other knight could take. Then the queen, hearing of these marvels, and of his great exploits and chivalry, desired greatly to see Sir Galahad, and as he was riding by, "the king, at the queen's request, made him to alight and to unlace his helm, that Queen Guinevere might see him in the visage. And when she beheld him she said: Sothely, I dare well say that Sir Lancelot begat him, for never two men resembled more in likeness. Therefore it is no marvel though he be of great prowess. So a lady that stood by the queen said, Madam, for God's sake, ought he of right to be so good a knight? Yea, forsooth, said the queen, for he is of all parties come of the best knights of the world, and of the highest lineage. For Sir Lancelot is comen of the eighth degree from

our Lord Jesu Christ, and Sir Galahad is of the ninth degree, therefore I dare well say that they ben the greatest gentlemen of all the world."

Page 142

After the meeting between Sir Galahad and the queen, the book goes on to say that the king and all the estates went home to Camelot, and that as they sat at Supper, the Holy Grail appeared.

Tennyson relates the vision almost in Malory's own words.

Sir Perceval, having retired from the world, tells the monk, Ambrosius, the history of the quest:

"And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
All over covered with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face.
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.
I sware a vow before them all that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawayn sware, and louder than the rest."

It was, in fact, Sir Gawayn who spoke first:

"Certainly [said he] "we ought greatly to thank our Lord Jesu Christ, for that he hath shewed us this day of what meats and drinks we thought on, but one thing beguiled us, we might not see the Holy Grail, it was so preciously covered. Wherefore I will make here a vow, that to-morrow, without any longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sancgreall, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonths and a day, and more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court, till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here." When they of the Round Table heard Sir Gawayn say so, they arose, the most part of them, and avowed the same.

As the knights rode out of Camelot to begin their quest there was weeping of the rich and of the poor at their departure. "The queen made great moan and wailing, and the

king might not speak for weeping." After some adventures Sir Perceval comes to a chapel to hear Mass, and there he sees a sick king lying on a couch behind the altar; and he was covered with wounds:

"Then he left his looking and heard his service, and when it came to the sacring, he that lay within the perclose dressed him up and uncovered his head. And then him beseemed a passing old man, and he had a crown of gold on his head, and ever he held up his hands and said on high: Fair, sweet father, Jesu Christ, forget not me. And so he laid him down. But always he was in his prayers and orisons. And when the Mass was done, the priest took our Lord's body and bare it unto the sick king. And when he had received it he did off his crown, and he commanded the crown to be set on the altar."

Page 143

This king's name was Evelake. He had been converted by Saint Joseph of Arimathwa, who was sent by our Lord "to preach and teach the Christian faith." "Evelake," says the legend, "followed Joseph of Arimathaea into England, to which country he brought the Holy Grail, the cup in which our Lord celebrated the institution of the Blessed Sacrament." This cup or chalice is said to have contained some drops of the Precious Blood.

And ever Evelake was busy to be there as the Sancgreall was. And upon a time he nighed it so nigh that our Lord was displeased with him. But ever he followed it more and more, till that God struck him almost blind. Then this king cried mercy, and said: "Fair Lord, let me never die till that the good knight of my blood of the ninth degree be comen, that I may see him openly, when he shall achieve the Sancgreall, that I may once kiss him."

This "good knight" was, of course, Sir Galahad. Meanwhile, "Sir Lancelot rode overthwart and endlong in a wild forest, and held no path but as wild adventure led him. And at the last he came to a stony Cross which departed two ways in waste land, and by the Cross was a stone that was of marble, but it was so dark that Sir Lancelot might not wit what it was. Then Sir Lancelot looked by him, and saw an old chapel, and there he wend to have found people. And Sir Lancelot tied his horse till a tree, and there he did off his shield and hung it upon a tree. And then he went to the chapel door, and found it waste and broken. And within he found a fair altar full richly arrayed with cloth of clean silk, and there stood a fair clean candlestick which bare six great candles, and the candlestick was of silver. And when Sir Lancelot saw this light he had great will for to enter into the chapel, but he could find no place where he might enter; then was he passing heavy and dismayed. Then he returned and came to his horse, and did off his saddle and bridle, and let him pasture; and unlaced his helm, and ungirded his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield tofore the Cross. And so he fell on sleep, and half waking and half sleeping he saw, come by him, two palfreys all fair and white, the which bare a litter, therein lying a sick knight. And when he was nigh the Cross he there abode still. All this Sir Lancelot saw and beheld, for he slept not verily, and he heard him say: Oh sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me, and when shall the holy vessel come by me, wherethrough I shall be blessed, for I have endured thus long for little trespass. And thus a great while complained the knight, and always Sir Lancelot heard it. With that Sir Lancelot saw the candlestick with the six tapers come before the Cross, but he could see nobody that brought it. And then came a table of silver, and the holy vessel of the Sancgreall, the which Sir Lancelot had seen tofore. And there withal the sick knight set him upright and held up both his hands and said: Fair, sweet Lord, which is here within this holy vessel,

Page 144

take heed to me that I may be whole of this great malady. And therewith, upon his hands and upon his knees, he went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it. And anon he was whole, and then he said:—Lord God, I thank thee for I am healed of this malady. So when the holy vessel had been there a great while, it went unto the chapel again with the candlestick and the light, so that Sir Lancelot wist not where it became, for he was overtaken with sin that he had no power to arise against the holy vessel. Wherefore afterwards many men said of him shame. But he took repentance afterwards.

“Then the sick knight dressed him upright and kissed the Cross. Then anon his squire brought his arms, and asked his lord how he did. Certes, said he, I thank God right well through the holy vessel I am healed. But I have great marvel of this sleeping knight which hath neither had grace nor power to awake during the time that this holy vessel hath been here present. I dare it right well say, said the squire, that this knight is defouled with some manner of deadly sin, whereof he was never confessed. By my faith, said the knight, whatsoever he be, he is unhappy, for, as I deem, he is of the noble fellowship of the Round Table, the which is entered into the quest of the Sancgreall. Sir, said the squire, here I have brought you all your arms save your helm and your sword, and therefore, by mine assent now may ye take this knight’s helm and his sword, and so he did. And when he was clean armed he took Sir Lancelot’s horse, for he was better than his own, and so they departed from the Cross.

“Then anon Sir Lancelot awaked and sat himself upright, and bethought him what he had there seen, and whether it were dreams or not. Right so heard he a voice that said, Sir Lancelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked and barer than is the leaf of the fig-tree, therefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place. And when Sir Lancelot heard this he was passing heavy and wist not what to do, and so departed sore weeping, and cursed the time that he was born. For then he deemed never to have had worship more. For those words went to his heart till that he knew wherefore he was called so.

“Then Sir Lancelot went to the Cross, and found his helm, his sword, and his horse taken away. And then he called himself a very wretch, and most unhappy of all knights. And there he said, My sin and my wickedness have brought me unto great dishonour. For when I sought worldly adventures for worldly desires I ever achieved them, and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfited in no quarrel, were it right or wrong. And now I take upon me the adventure of holy things, and now I see and understand that mine old sin hindreth me and shameth me, so that I had no power to stir nor to speak when the holy blood appeared afore me. So thus he sorrowed till it was day, and heard the fowls of the air sing.

Page 145

Then was he somewhat comforted, and departed from the Cross on foot in a wild forest, and there he found a hermitage, and a hermit therein that was going to Mass. And then Sir Lancelot kneeled down on both his knees, and cried our Lord mercy for his wicked works that he had done. When Mass was done, Sir Lancelot called the hermit to him and prayed him for charity to hear his life. With a good will, said the good man. Sir, said he, be ye of King Arthur's court, and of the fellowship of the Round Table? Yea, forsooth, and my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake that hath been right well said of, and now my good fortune is changed, for I am the most wretched and caitiff of the world.

"Then the hermit beheld him, and had great marvel how he was so sore abashed. Sir, said the good man, ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for He hath caused you to have more worldly worship than any, and for your presumption to take upon you in deadly sin for to be in His presence where His flesh and His blood was, that caused you ye might not see it with your worldly eyes. For He will not appear where such sinners be, but it be unto their great hurt and shame. And there is no knight living now that ought to give unto God so great thank as ye. For He hath given to you beauty, seemliness, and great strength above all other knights, and, therefore, ye are the more beholden to God than any man, to love Him and to dread Him; for your strength and manhood will little avail you, and God be against you."

Then Lancelot makes his confession to the hermit as we have already related, is assoiled, and repents him greatly. He remained three days with the hermit, and being then newly provided with a horse, helmet, and sword, he took his leave and rode away. After this occurs the episode at the Cross, and his receiving the hair shirt. On the morrow he jousted with many knights, and for the first time was thrown and overcome, all which he endured patiently as penance for his sins. That night he laid himself down to sleep under an apple-tree and dreamed a strange dream. At dawn he arose, armed himself and went on his way. He next came to a chapel "where was a recluse which had a window that she might look up to the altar, and all aloud she called Sir Lancelot, and asked him whence he came, what he was, and what he went to seek." He told her all his dreams and visions, which she expounded, and gave him pious counsel, but told him that he was " of evil faith and poor belief."

About this time he met Sir Galahad, and knew that he was his son. Then, after various adventures, he came as near the Holy Grail as it was given to him to come. As he was kneeling before a closed door in a castle "he heard a voice which sang sweetly, that it seemed none earthly thing. And him thought that the voice said, joy and Honour be to the Father of Heaven. Then Sir Lancelot wist well that there was the Sancgreall in that chamber." Then he prayed.

Page 146

“And with that the chamber door opened, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was so bright as though all the torches of the world had been there. And anon he would have entered, but a voice said, Flee, Sir Lancelot, and enter not, for and if thou enter thou shalt forethink it. Then he withdrew him aback, and was right heavy in his mind. Then looked he up in the midst of the room and saw a table of silver, and the holy vessel covered with red samite, and so many angels about it, whereof one of them held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a Cross and the ornaments of the altar. And before the holy vessel he saw a good man, clothed like a priest, and it seemed that he was at the sacring of the Mass.

“And it seemed unto Sir Lancelot that, above the priest’s hands, there were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeliness between the priest’s hands, and so he lift it upright high, and it seemed to show unto the people. And then Sir Lancelot marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that him seemed he should have fallen to the ground; and when he saw none about him, he came to the door a great pace, and said:—

“Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, me take it for no sin, though I help the good man, which hath great need of help. Right so he entered into the chamber, and came toward the table of silver. And when he came nigh he felt a breath that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it all to brent his visage.”

This is the culminating point of Lancelot’s quest; he swooned away, and lay as one dead for twenty-four days. Nearer he might not come to the Holy Grail, and the sequel shows why, for after a time he returned to the court and fell into sin again, and forgot his good resolutions:—

“For, as the French book saith, had not Sir Lancelot been in his privy thoughts and in his mind set inwardly to the queen, as he was in seeming outward unto God, there had no knight passed him in the quest of the Sancgreall; but ever his thoughts were privily upon the queen.”

But soon there arose a bitter quarrel between Lancelot and Guinevere, and she banished him from her sight. During his absence from the court she made a dinner, at which one of the guests, Sir Modor, was poisoned, and the queen accused of the crime. Guinevere was therefore impeached, and so truly did all the Round Table believe in her guilt, that at first no knight would come forward to defend her.

Ultimately, however, the “good Sir Bors,” Lancelot’s kinsman, was prevailed on to be her champion, provided that at the moment of the contest a better knight did not appear, to answer for her. Of course, when Sir Bors is about to enter the lists in the meadow before Winchester, where there is a great fire and an iron stake, at which Guinevere is

to be burned if her champion is overcome, a strange knight appears in unknown armour, and turns out to be Lancelot, fights for the queen, and overthrows her accuser.

Page 147

Here comes in the exquisite story of Elaine, to which Tennyson has done ample justice.

Soon after the death of the “lily maid of Astolat,” Sir Agravaine, moved by jealousy of Arthur’s greatest knight, discloses the story of Lancelot’s treacherous love for the queen, and extracts from the king a reluctant permission to take the miscreant. But Sir Modred is the real instigator of the plot, working upon Agravaine’s weakness, and Tennyson has altered little in the dramatic situation which immediately follows. His description of the parting scene between Lancelot and Guinevere is fine:—

“And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there) to meet
And part for ever. Passion pale they met
And greeted: hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring; it was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice,
‘Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,’ aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lion-like
Leapt on him, and hurled him headlong, and he fell
Stunned, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still; then she, ’The end is come,
And I am shamed forever;’ and he said,
`Mine be the shame; mine was the sin; but rise,
And fly to my strong castle over seas
There will I hide thee till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world.’
She answered, ’Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou coulds’t hide me from myself!”

Lancelot will not yield himself up lightly to his enemies; Sir Agravaine and another knight fall in the struggle with him; but it is not now that Guinevere betakes herself to Almesbury, and the whole beautiful scene between her and Arthur, and his most touching farewell to her are weavings of the modern poet’s imagination. Beautiful the scene surely is, although wanting in one supreme touch, which a more Catholic-minded poet would have given to it. Guinevere’s sin, according to Tennyson, is merely her sin against her husband; according to Malory it is her sin against God, and this is the very essence of the true Guinevere’s repentance.

What really happens is this: Lancelot takes counsel with Sir Bors and his other friends, as to how he may save the queen, and it is decided that if on the morrow she is brought to the fire to be burned, Lancelot and all his kinsmen shall rescue her.

Accordingly, Arthur's nephews, Gawayn, Gahers, and Gareth, lead Guinevere forth "without Caerleyell, and there she was despoiled unto her smock, and so then her ghostly father was brought to her to be shriven of her misdeeds." But Lancelot's messenger gives the alarm duly, and Lancelot appears with all his friends. There is much fighting and bloodshed, and Sir Gahers and Sir Gareth are slain.

Page 148

“Then Sir Lancelot rode straight unto the queen, and made a kirtle and a gown to be cast upon her, and then he made her to be set behind him, and rode with her unto his castle of joyous Garde, and there he kept her as a noble knight should, and many lords and kings send Sir Lancelot many good knights. When it was known openly that King Arthur and Sir Lancelot were at debate, many knights were glad of their debate, and many knights were sorry. But King Arthur sorrowed for pure sorrow, and said, Alas, that ever I bare any crown upon my head.”

Gawayn, mourning the death of his brothers, incites the king to besiege Lancelot in Joyous Garde, and at length, reluctantly, Arthur consents to make war.

“Of this war was noise throughout all Christendom. And at last it was noised before the Pope, and he, considering the great goodness of King Arthur and Sir Lancelot, which was called the most noble knight of the world, wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time there was present the French book saith it was the Bishop of Rochester. And the Pope gave him Bulls under lead, unto King Arthur of England, charging him upon pain of interdiction of all England, that he take his queen, Dame Guinevere, to him again, and accord with Sir Lancelot.”

Arthur would have made peace at once, but at first Gawayn prevented him. Then the bishop went to Lancelot and charged him to bring back the queen:—

“And the bishop had of the king his great seal and assurance, as he was a true anointed king, that Sir Lancelot should go safe and come safe, and that the queen should not be reproved of the king nor of none other, for nothing done before time past.”

To Lancelot the bishop ended his exhortation in these words:—

“Wit ye well, the Pope must be obeyed.”

And Lancelot answered that it was never in his thoughts to withhold the queen from his lord, King Arthur, “but in so much as she should have been dead for my sake, me seemeth it was my part to save her life, and put her from that danger till better recover might come. And now I thank God that the Pope hath made her peace, for God knoweth I would be a thousandfold more gladder to bring her again than I was of her taking away.”

So he brought Guinevere to the king, and when they had both knelt before him, he said:—

“My most redoubted lord ye shall understand that, by the Pope’s commandment and by yours, I have brought unto you my lady the queen, as right requireth.” Then King Arthur and all the other kings kneeled down and gave thankings and louings (praises) to God and to his Blessed Mother.

But Gawayn would not be reconciled to Lancelot, who in vain offered to do penance for the death of Gahers and Gareth. In vain he said:—

Page 149

“This much shall I offer you if it may please the king’s good grace, and you my lord Sir Gawayn. And first I shall begin at Sandwich, and there I shall go in my shirt and barefoot, and at every ten miles’ end I will found and cause to make a house of religion, of what order ye will assign me, with a whole convent, to sing and to read day and night, in especial for Sir Gareth’s sake and Sir Gahers; and this shall I perform from Sandwich unto Caerleyell. And this, Sir Gawayn, me thinketh, were more fairer and better unto their souls than that my most noble lord Arthur and you should war on me, for thereby ye shall get none avail.”

But Gawayn answered him with hard words ending thus:—

“And if it were not for the Pope’s commandment I should do battle with my body against thy body, and prove it unto thee that thou hast been false unto mine uncle, King Arthur, and to me both, and that shall I prove upon thy body, when thou art departed from hence, wheresoever I find thee. Then all the knights and ladies that were there wept as they had been mad, and the tears fell upon King Arthur’s cheeks. Then Sir Lancelot kissed the queen before them all, took his leave, and departed with all the knights of his kin.”

He went to his estates over the sea; but Gawayn gave Arthur no rest till he had made ready an army and crossed the sea to make war on him. Modred, in Arthur’s absence, seized the kingdom, and would have wedded the queen by force, had not the Archbishop of Canterbury threatened to curse him with bell, book, and candle. When Modred defied him, the archbishop departed, and “did the curse in the most orgulous wise that might be done.”

But Arthur, receiving tidings of Modred’s conduct, returned to Dover, where the usurper met him, and “there was much slaughter of gentle knights.” Here Sir Gawayn was mortally wounded, and Arthur " made great sorrow and moan.” Two hours before his death, Gawayn wrote a letter to Lancelot, telling him of Modred’s crime and beseeching him, “the most noblest knight,” to come back to the realm:—

“And so at the hour of None, Sir Gawayn betook himself into the hands of our Lord God, after that he had received his Saviour. And then the king let bury him within a chapel within the castle of Dover, and there, yet to this day, all men may see the skull of Sir Gawayn, and the same wound is seen that Sir Lancelot gave him in battle.”

In the “Passing of Arthur” Tennyson has kept mainly to the original, though he omits Arthur’s command to Sir Bedevere to pray for his soul.

The king, overcome by his enemies, receives his deadly wound, and sails away in the barge, with the three queens, to the island valley of Avilion. But, according to Malory, Sir Bedevere finds him on the morrow, lying dead in a little chapel on a rock:—

Page 150

“And when Queen Guinevere understood that her lord King Arthur was slain, and all the noble knights, Sir Modred and all the remnant, she stole away, and five ladies with her, and so she went to Almesbury, and there she let make herself a nun, and wore white clothes and black, and great penance she took as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry, but lived in fastings, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed. Now leave we Queen Guinevere in Almesbury, a nun in white clothes and black, and there she was abbess and ruler as reason would, and turn me from her and speak me of Sir Lancelot du Lake.”

Meanwhile, Sir Lancelot had returned to England to avenge King Arthur’s death:—

“Then the people told him how that he was slain, and Sir Modred and a hundred thousand died on a day, and how Sir Modred gave King Arthur there the first battle at his landing, and there was good Sir Gawayn slain, and on the morn Sir Modred fought with the king upon Barham Down, and there the king put Sir Modred to the worse. Alas, said Sir Lancelot, this is the heaviest tidings that ever came to me. Now fair Sirs, said Sir Lancelot, shew me the tomb of Sir Gawayn. And then certain people of the town brought him into the castle of Dover and showed him the tomb. Then Sir Lancelot kneeled down and wept and prayed heartily for his soul. And that night he made a dole, and all they that would come had as much flesh, fish, wine, and ale as they would, and every man and woman had twelve pence come who would. Thus with his own hand dealt he his money in a mourning gown; and ever he wept, and prayed them to pray for the soul of Sir Gawayn. And on the morn all the priests and clerks that might be gotten in the country were there and sung Mass of Requiem. And there offered first Sir Lancelot, and he offered an hundred pound, and then the seven kings offered forty pound apiece, and also there was a thousand knights, and each of them offered a pound, and the offering dured from morn till night. And Sir Lancelot lay two nights on his tomb in prayers and in weeping. Then on the third day Sir Lancelot called the kings, dukes, earls, barons, and knights, and said thus:—

My fair lords, I thank you all of your coming into this country with me: but we come too late, and that shall repent me while I live, but against death may no man rebel. But sithen it is so, said Sir Lancelot, I will myself ride and seek my lady Queen Guinevere, for as I hear say she hath great pain and much disease, and I heard say that she is fled into the west country, therefore ye all abide me here, and but if I come not again within fifteen days, then take your ships and your fellowship, and depart into your country.

Page 151

“Then came Sir Bors de Ganis, and said, My lord Sir Lancelot, what think ye for to do, now to ride in this realm? wit thou well ye shall find few friends. Be as it may, said Sir Lancelot, keep you still here, for I will forth on my journey, and no man nor child shall go with me. So it was no boot to strive, but he departed and rode westerly and sought seven or eight days, and at the last he came to a nunnery. And then was Queen Guinevere ware of Sir Lancelot as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him there she swooned thrice, that all the ladies and gentlewomen had work enough to hold the Queen up. So when she might speak she called the ladies and gentlewomen to her and said, Ye marvel, fair ladies, why I make this cheer. Truly, she said, it is for the sight of yonder knight which yonder standeth, wherefore I pray you all call him to me. And when Sir Lancelot was brought unto her she said, through this knight and me all these wars been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world. For through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, wit ye well, Sir Lancelot, I am set in such a plight to get my soul health; and yet I trust through God’s grace after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at the dreadful day of doom to sit on His right side, for as sinful creatures as ever was I are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Lancelot, I require and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage. And furthermore I command thee on God’s behalf right straightly that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack. For as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee; for both through me and thee is the flower of kings and knights destroyed. Therefore, Sir Lancelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her in joy and bliss, and I pray thee heartily pray for me to our Lord, that I may amend my mis-living.

“Now, sweet madam, said Sir Lancelot, would ye that I should return again unto my country, and there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well, that shall I never do: for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised, but the same destiny that ye have taken you unto, I will take me unto, for to please God and specially to pray for you.

“If thou wilt do so, said the Queen, hold thy promise. But I may not believe but that thou wilt turn to the world again.

“Ye say well, said he, yet wish ye me never false of my promise, and God defend but that I should forsake the world like as ye have done. For in the quest of the Sancgreall I had forsaken the vanities of the world had not your lord been. And if I had done so at that time, with my heart, will, and thought, I had passed all the knights that were in the Sancgreall, except Sir Galahad, my son. And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection,

Page 152

I must needs take me unto perfection of right. For I take record of God, in you have I had mine earthly joy, and if I had found you so disposed, I had cast me for to have had you into mine own realm. But sithen I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully that I will take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if that I may find any hermit, either grey or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me once and never more.

"Nay, said the Queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works. And they departed. But there was never so hard a hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made. For there was lamentation as though they had been stung with spears, and many times they swooned. And the ladies bare the Queen to her chamber. And Sir Lancelot awoke, and went, and took his horse, and rode all that day and all that night in a forest, weeping. And at the last he was ware of an hermitage, and a chapel stood betwixt two cliffs; and then he heard a little bell ring to Mass, and thither he rode and alighted, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard Mass. So he that sang the Mass was the Bishop of Canterbury. There was also Sir Bedevere, and both the bishop and Sir Bedevere knew Sir Lancelot, and they spoke together after Mass. But when Sir Bedevere had told his tale all whole, Sir Lancelot's heart almost braste for sorrow, and Sir Lancelot threw his arms abroad and said, Alas, who may trust this world! And then he kneeled down on his knees, and prayed the bishop to shrive him and assoil him. And then he besought the bishop that he might be his brother. Then the bishop said, I will gladly, and there he put an habit upon Sir Lancelot, and there he served God day and night with prayers and fastings."

Bedevere followed Lancelot's example, and within half a year seven other knights joined themselves to these two and endured in great penance six year, and then Sir Lancelot took the habit of priesthood, and in twelve months he sang Mass. And there was none of these other knights but they read in books and holp to sing Mass, and rang bells, and did lowly all manner of service. And so their horses went where they would for they took no regard of no worldly riches. For when they saw Sir Lancelot endure such penance, in prayers and fasting, they took no force what pain they endured, for to see the noblest knight of the world take such abstinence that he waxed full lean. And thus upon a night there came a vision to Sir Lancelot, and charged him in remission of his sins, to haste him unto Almesbury—and by then thou come there, thou shalt find Queen Guinevere dead, and therefore take thy fellows with thee, and purvey thee of an horse-bier, and fetch thou the corpse of her, and bury her by her husband, the noble King Arthur. So this vision came to Lancelot thrice in one night.

"Then Sir Lancelot rose upon day and told the hermit. It were well done, said the hermit, that ye make you ready, and that ye disobey not the vision. Then Sir Lancelot took his seven fellows with him, and on foot they went from Glastonbury to Almesbury,

the which is little more than thirty miles. And thither they came within two days, for they were weak and feeble to go.

Page 153

“And when Sir Lancelot was come to Almesbury, within the nunnery, Queen Guinevere died but half an hour before. And the ladies told Sir Lancelot that Queen Guinevere told them all ere she passed, that Sir Lancelot had been priest near a twelvemonth. And hither he cometh as fast as he may to fetch my corpse, and beside my lord King Arthur he shall bury me. Wherefore the Queen said, in hearing of them all, I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Lancelot with my worldly eyes. And this, said all the ladies was ever her prayer these two days till she was dead. Then Sir Lancelot saw her visage, but he wept not greatly, but sighed. And so he did all the observance of the service himself, both the Dirige, and on the morn he sang Mass. And there was ordained an horse-bier, and so with an hundred torches ever burning about the corpse of the Queen, and ever Sir Lancelot with his eight fellows went about the horse-bier singing and reading many an holy orison, and frankincense upon the corpse incensed. Thus Sir Lancelot and his eight fellows went on foot from Almesbury unto Glastonbury, and when they were come to the chapel and the hermitage, there she had a Dirige with great devotion. And on the morn the hermit that was sometime Bishop of Canterbury, sang the Mass of Requiem with great devotion; and Sir Lancelot was the first that offered, and then all his eight fellows. And then she was wrapped in cered cloth of Raines, from the top to the toe in thirty-fold, and after she was put in a web of lead, and then in a coffin of marble. And when she was put in the earth, Sir Lancelot swooned, and lay long still, while the hermit came out, and awaked him and said, Ye be to blame, for ye displease God with such manner of sorrow-making. Truly, said Sir Lancelot, I trust I do not displease God, for He knoweth mine intent, for my sorrow was not, nor is not, for any rejoicing of sin, but my sorrow may never end. For when I remember of her beauty and of her noblesse that was both with her king and with her, so when I saw his corpse and her corpse so lie together, truly mine heart would not serve to sustain my careful body. Also when I remember me, how by my default, mine orgule, my pride, that they were both laid full low that were peerless that ever was living of Christian people, wit you well, said Sir Lancelot, this remembered of their kindness and mine unkindness, sank so to my heart that I might not sustain myself.”

Not long after the death of Guinevere, Lancelot “began to wax sick, and for evermore, day and night he prayed; but needfully, as nature required, sometimes he slumbered a broken sleep. And within six weeks he lay in his bed and called the bishop and said, Sir Bishop, I pray you that ye will give me all my rights that belongeth unto a Christian man.” Then Malory goes on to say that “when he was houseled and eneled, and had all that a Christian man ought to have, he prayed the bishop that his fellows might bear his body unto joyous Garde.”

Page 154

That night the bishop dreamed he saw Sir Lancelot with two angels, “and he saw the angels heave up Sir Lancelot towards heaven, and the gates of heaven opened against him. And then they went to Sir Lancelot’s bed, and there they found him dead, and he lay as he had smiled; and the sweetest savour about him that ever they felt.”

III. FOXE’S BOOK OF ERRORS

To take the Acts and Monuments, and as far as it might be possible after upwards of three hundred years, test the accuracy of each circumstance which Foxe proposes for the edification of his readers, would necessitate a work as voluminous as his own immense undertaking. To sift the chaff from the wheat, and to bind up the latter into one acceptable whole would perhaps result in a book not larger than one of his own eight thick octavo and closely printed volumes. All that can be done here is to indicate some of the most flagrant instances of the unfair and uncritical spirit in which he has written, of the carelessness, wilful misrepresentation, and neglect to rectify errors pointed out to him, by which the martyrologist has exposed his book to everlasting reproach. On the death of Foxe’s last descendant the greater part of his MSS. were either given to the annalist, Strype, or were allowed to remain in his hands till his death in 1737, when many of them were purchased by Lord Oxford for the Harleian collection now in the British Museum. A few of them found a refuge in the Lansdowne Library, and these also are now in the possession of the nation. They include a mass of heterogeneous documents of the most unequal value and interest—such as the stories, often palpably coloured, of persons who profess to have been eye-witnesses of the scenes depicted, minutes of the examinations of prisoners, apparently taken down on the spot, wild statements written with the obvious purpose of pandering to Puritan intolerance and prejudice, and fantastic tales of the martyrologist’s supposed judgments of God upon those who persecuted the followers of the reformed doctrines. They include also several counter-statements sent to Foxe for the express purpose of giving him an opportunity to correct portions of his work, but of which, although he preserved them, he never made any use. Some of these latter have been utilised by Gough in his Narratives of the Days of the Reformation.

In his preface to this book, Gough admits,* as indeed he was obliged to admit that, “as a general history of the Church in its earlier ages, Foxes work has been shown to be partial and prejudiced in spirit, imperfect and inaccurate in execution,” and Leach** asserts that, while its compiler had recourse to some early documents, even here he depended largely on printed works, such as Crespin’s Actiones et Monuments Martyrum, which was published at Geneva in 1560. He notes, moreover, that Foxes chapter on the Waldenses is nothing but a translation of the

Page 155

untrustworthy Catalogus Testium Veritatis, published at Basle by Illyricus in 1556, although Foxe himself does not acknowledge Illyricus as his authority, but claims to have consulted “parchment documents,” which he only knew from the transcriptions in that book. “It has been conclusively shown,” says Mr. Sidney Lee in the Dictionary of National Biography, “that his chapter on the Waldenses is directly translated from the Catalogus of Illyricus, although Illyricus is not mentioned by Foxe among the authorities whom he acknowledges to have consulted . . . . This indicates a loose notion of literary morality which justifies some of the harshest judgments passed on Foxe.”

* P. 23, edited by the Camden Society.

** Sir George Croke’s Reports, edited by Thomas Leach, ii. 91. London, 1790-92.

Matthias Flach-Franconitz, better known as Flacius Illyricus, from the place of his birth (in Istria, a part of Illyria) was a voluminous writer on most of the controverted doctrines in the sixteenth century. Having become a disciple of Luther he was for ever raising fresh disputes on religious subjects, and was noted for the violence and exaggeration he brought into their discussion, so that, according to a German historian, “he seemed to have been created for an ecclesiastical Procurator General.” On his death in 1575, Jacques Andreas, one of his friends, admitted that, taken altogether, his Illyricus was the devil’s Illyricus, and that, in the opinion of Andreas, he was then “supping with devils."*

* Hoefer, Nouvelle Biogaphie Generale, Art, Flach-Franconitz Matthias.

Such then being Foxe’s authority, although unacknowledged, for his Waldensian chapter, we can scarcely expect him to be more conscientious in his evidence concerning matters closely connected with the passions, prejudices, and burning questions of his own day.

Nearly, if not quite all the material for that part of the Acts and Monuments which deals with the reign of Mary was collected by others for Foxe and Grindal during their absence from England. Grindal handed over to Foxe the accounts of the various prosecutions for heresy sent to him by his correspondents at home, taking care, however, at the same time to warn the martyrologist against placing too much confidence in them, he himself suspending his judgment “till more satisfactory evidence came from good hands.” He advised him for the present, only to print separately the acts of particular persons of whom they had authentic accounts and to wait for a larger and more complete history until they had trustworthy information concerning the “martyrs."* The letters, which Grindal wrote to Foxe on this subject in 1557, were published by the Parker Society, in Grindal’s Remains, and show that the future archbishop believed not

too implicitly in the truth of all the stories which he passed on to his friend. He constantly urged him to delay writing in order to gain “more certain intelligence.”

Page 156

But the careful investigation which he recommended did not fall in with the particular genius and uncritical methods of Foxe, who, perhaps on account of his necessitous condition, worked away with a will on the unsifted tales and reports as they came to hand, so that the book in its Latin form was completed, almost to the end of the reign of Mary, and was published at Basle, before his return to England in 1559. He afterwards made an English translation of the work, but without seeing fit to revise his material. It bore the title Acts and Monuments, but it was at once popularly styled the Book of Martyrs. When he was attacked by Alan Cope (Nicholas Harpsfield) for his inaccuracy, Foxe replied: “I hear what you will say: I should have taken more leisure and done it better. I grant and confess my fault, such is my vice, I cannot sit all the day (Moister Cope) fining and mincing my letters, and combing my head, and smoothing myself all the day at the glass of Cicero. Yet, notwithstanding, doing what I can, and doing my good will, methinks I should not be reprehended, at least not so much be railed of at M. Copes hand."**

* Strype, Life of Archbishop Grindal, p. 25.

** Acts and Monuments, i. 69 1. Edited 1570.

But it is not for his want of scholarly writing that Foxe has been blamed. Father Robert Persons, in his Three Conversions of England,* begins one of his chapters with “a note of more than a hundred and twenty lies uttered by John Foxe, in less than three leaves of his Acts and Monuments,” and he proceeds to point them out, beginning with the misstatement concerning John Merbeck and some others, whom Foxe counts among the martyrs, although they were never burned at all. As, in consequence of Father Persons’ remarks concerning John Merbeck, Foxe acknowledged the error in his second edition, we may hold him excused thus far, but his delinquencies in this respect were by no means unfrequent, and gave rise to the saying that “many who were burnt in the reign of Queen Mary, drank sack in the reign of Queen Elizabeth."**

* Quoted in Fuller’s Worthies, under “Berkshire,” p. 92.

Part iii., p. 412.”

Two similar misstatements, which he was in a position to correct and did not, relate to the supposed death by the vengeance of God, of Henry Morgan, Bishop of St. David’s, and of one Grimwood, another “notorious Papist.”

Anthony a Wood, the famous antiquary and historian, who wrote his History of the Antiquities of Oxford about a hundred years after Foxe had become celebrated as a martyrologist, and who in his youth spoke with people who remembered the days of persecution under Mary, tells us that:—

Page 157

“Henry Morgan was esteemed a most admirable civilian and canonist; he was for several years the constant Moderator of all those that performed exercise for their degrees in the civil law in the scholar schools, hall and church pertaining to that faculty, situated also in the same parish . . . . He was elected Bishop of St. David’s, upon the deprivation of Robert Ferrar . . . . In that see he sate till after Queen Elizabeth came to the Crown, and then being deprived . . . retired among his friends, and died a devoted son to the Church of Rome, on the 23rd of December following (1559) of whose death, hear I pray what John Foxe saith in this manner: Morgan, bishop of St. David’s, who sate upon the condemnation of the blessed Martyr and Bishop Ferrar, and unjustly usurped his room, was not long after stricken by God’s hand, but after such a strange sort, that his meat would not go down, but rise and pick up again, sometimes at his mouth, sometimes blown out of his nose, most horrible to behold, and so he continued till his death. Thus Foxe, followed by Thomas Beard in his Theatre of God’s Judgments. But where or when his death happened, they tell us not, nor any author hitherto, only when, which Bishop Godwin mentions. Now, therefore, be pleased to know that the said Bishop Morgan, retiring after his deprivation to and near Oxen, where he had several relations and acquaintance living, particularly the Owens of Godstow, in the parish of Wolvercote, near to the said city, did spend the little remainder of his life in great devotion at Godstow, but that he died in the condition which Foxe mentions there is no tradition among the inhabitants of Wolvercote. True it is that I have heard some discourse, many years ago, from some of the ancients of that place, that a certain bishop did live for some time, and exercised his charity and religious counsel among them, and there died; but I could never learn anything of them of the manner of his death, which being very miserable, as John Foxe saith, methinks that they should have a tradition of it, as well as of the man himself; but I say there is now none, nor was there any thirty years ago, among the most aged persons then living at that place, and therefore, whether there be anything of truth in it may justly be doubted.”

The evidence of this negative tradition is certainly more convincing, than Foxes unsupported allegation of a circumstance, as unlikely to have occurred, as it was likely to be concocted by a man of his propensity and unscrupulousness. If, however, there should be any doubt of Foxes ability to concoct such a story, it will perhaps be removed by the history of the drastic refutation, which befell the similar story of the end of Grimwood. This, Anthony a Wood proceeds to record in a passage immediately after the one above quoted.

Page 158

“In the very same chapter and leaf concerning the severe punishment upon persecutors of God’s People, he hath committed a most egregious falsity in reporting that one Grimwood, of Higham, in Suffolk, died in a miserable manner, for swearing and bearing false witness against one John Cooper, a carpenter of Watsam in the same county, for which he lost his life. The miserable death of the said Grimwood was, as John Foxe saith thus: That *when he was in his labour*, *staking up* A *Gosse of Corn*, *having his health*, *and fearing no peril*, *suddenly his Bowels fell out of his body*, *and immediately most miserably he died*. Now it so fell out that in the reign of Elizabeth, one Prit* became parson of the parish where the said Grimwood dwelt, and preaching against perjury, being not acquainted with his parishioners, cited the said story of Foxe, and it happened that Grimwood being alive, and in the said church, he brought an action upon the case, against the parson, but Judge Anderson, who sate at the Assizes in the county of Suffolk, did adjudge it not maintainable, because it was not spoken maliciously."**

* Or Prick.

** Anthony d Wood, Athenae Oxoniensis, vol. i., p. 691.

That the action was not maintainable on the ground of malice, as against the parson, may have been true, but Foxe cannot reasonably be acquitted, for although he went into Suffolk professedly to investigate the matter, he never made any alteration in his story in subsequent editions, and the very latest impression of the Acts and Monuments perpetuates the lie and slander.

Thirty years after the death of Sir Thomas More, Foxe undertook to collect all the traditional gossip afloat concerning the Chancellor’s alleged treatment of John Tewkesbury and James Bainham, for heresy. Tewkesbury was a leather-seller of London, and Foxe says that he was sent to Sir Thomas Mores house at Chelsea to be examined, and that “there he lay in the porter’s lodge, hand, foot, and head in the stocks, six days without release. Then was he carried to Jesus’ Tree in his privy garden, where he was whipped, and also twisted in his brows with a small rope, that the blood started out of his eyes, and yet would not accuse no man. Then was he let loose for a day, and his friends thought to have him at liberty the next day. After this he was sent to be racked in the Tower, till he was almost lame, and there promised to recant.*

* Acts and Monuments, vol. iv., p. 689; Pratt’s ed.

The truth of the matter was, however, that as Tewkesbury was examined for the first time on the 8th May 1529, and immediately afterwards recanted, the event occurred several months before Sir Thomas More became Lord Chancellor; and therewith falls to the ground the story of Tewkesbury’s being tortured in Mores garden, the punishment of heretics being part of the Lord Chancellor’s office.

Page 159

James Bainham was a lawyer, and Foxe declares that he was whipped at the Tree of Truth in Mores garden, and was then sent to the Tower to be racked, “and so he was, Sir Thomas More being present himself, till in a manner he had lamed him.” Bainham, like Tewkesbury, recanted, and both of them bewailed and retracted their recantations, first before their friends in a Protestant gathering in Bow Lane, and afterwards in a Catholic Church, in consequence of which, according to Foxe, both were burned. But a part of what Foxe wrote about Tewkesbury in one edition of the Acts and Monuments he omitted in another, patching it on to Bainham’s story, thus stultifying himself as regards both stories,* and affording us another signal illustration of the irresponsible and unscrupulous way in which he could deal with evidence.

* Vol. iv., p. 702; and Appendix, p. 769; Pratt’s ed.

He further attributed to More the death of John Frith, who suffered death in 1533, a year after Sir Thomas had laid down his office, although in his Apology, the exchancellor referred to Frith as being then in the Tower, not committed by him but by “the King’s Grace and his Council."*

* Apology, p. 887.

Foxe might easily, had he been so inclined, have verified these things by reference to the thirty-sixth chapter of the above-mentioned Apology, in which More answered the lies “neither few nor small that many of the blessed brethren have made and daily yet make by me.” He goes on to say:—

“Divers of them have said that of such as were in my house while I was chancellor, I used to examine them with torments, causing them to be bound to a tree in my garden, and there piteously beaten. And this tale had some of those brethren so caused to be blown about, that a right worshipful friend of mine did of late, within less than this fortnight, tell unto another near friend of mine that he had of late heard much speaking thereof. What cannot these brethren say that can be so shameless to say thus? For of very truth, albeit that for a great robbery, or a heinous murder, or sacrilege in a church, with carrying away the pix with the Blessed Sacrament, or villainously casting it out, I caused sometimes such things to be done by some officers of the Marshalsea, or of some other prisons, with which ordering of them, and without any great hurt that afterwards should stick by them, I found out and repressed many such desperate wretches, as else had not failed to have gone farther; yet saving the sure keeping of heretics, I never did cause any such thing to be done to any of them in all my life except only twain.”

Page 160

Of these two instances he first records one relating to a child who was a servant in his house. The boy's father had taught him "his ungracious heresy against the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar," which heresy the boy began to teach another child in Mores house. Thereupon, More caused a servant of his "to stripe him like a child" before the whole household, "for amendment of himself and example of such others." The other case was that of a man who, "after that he had fallen into that frantic heresy, fell soon after into plain open frenzy besides." The man was confined in Bedlam, and when discharged went about disturbing public service in churches, and committing acts of great indecency. Devout, religious folk besought the Chancellor to restrain him, and accordingly, one day when he came wandering by Mores door, he caused him to be taken by the constables, bound to a tree in the street before the whole town, "and there they striped him with rods till he waxed weary, and somewhat longer." More ends by saying, "And verily, God be thanked, I hear none harm of him now. And of all that ever came in my hands for heresy, as help me God, saving [as I said] the sure keeping of them, had never any of them stripe or stroke given them, so much as a fillip on the forehead."

He then goes on to disprove the truth of a story spread about by Tindal, concerning the beating in his garden of a man named Segar. This story Foxe evidently confused with the fable of Tewkesbury, which thus completely crumbles to pieces; for as Sir James Mackintosh in his Life of More says:

"This statement [More's Apology] so minute, so easily contradicted if in any part false, was made public after his fall from power, when he was surrounded by enemies, and could have no friends but the generous. He relates circumstances of public notoriety, or at least so known to all his household, which it would have been rather a proof of insanity than of imprudence to have alleged in his defence if they had not been indisputably and confessedly true . . . Defenceless and obnoxious as More then was, no man was hardy enough to dispute his truth. Foxe was the first, who, thirty years afterwards, ventured to oppose it in a vague statement, which we know to be in some respects inaccurate." *

* Pp. 101, 105.

The story of the death of Robert Packington, mercer, of London, has also provided Foxe with fertile soil for raising his usual crop of calumny. The man was shot dead one very misty morning, in Cheapside, according to most chroniclers in 1556, Foxe says in 1558, as he was crossing the road from his house to a church on the opposite side, where he intended to hear Mass. Many persons were suspected of the murder, but none were found guilty. Hall, Grafton, and Bale all tell the story, but the martyrologist added thereto an accusation against an innocent person, which, although satisfactorily refuted by Holinshed, remains in the pages of the Acts and Monuments to this day. Foxe says:—

Page 161

“The murtherer so covertly was concealed, till at length by the confession of Doctor Incent, Dean of St. Paul’s, in his deathbed it was known, and by him confessed that he was the author thereof, by hiring an Italian for sixty crowns or thereabouts to do the feat. For the testimony whereof, and also of the repentant words of the said Incent, the names, both of them which heard him confess it, and of them which heard the witnesses report it, remains yet in memory to be produced if need required."*

* P. 525, edited 1563.

But Holinshed, a far more credible witness tells us that:—

“At length the murtherer indeed was condemned at Banbury, in Oxfordshire, to die for a felony which he afterwards committed; and when he came to the gallows in which he suffered, he confessed that he did this murther [that of Robert Packington], and till that time he was never had in any suspicion thereof."*

* Chronicle, fol. ed., 1586, p. 944. Answer to Foxes assertion. Also Appendix to Gough’s Narratives, pp. 296, 297.

There is another class of anecdote in the Acts and Monuments, the errors of which do not lie so much in the facts of the story as in the oblique vision of Foxe himself, in regarding the dramatis personae, as heroes. Thus, a madman named Collins, who, entering a church during Mass, seized his dog at the Elevation, and held it over his head, showing it to the people in derision, is accounted “as one belonging to the holy company of saints."*

* Acts and Monuments, vol. v., p. 25; Pratt’s ed.

Cowbridge, who was burned at Oxford, was one who would in these days be called a criminal lunatic, but Foxe regarded him as a holy martyr. The horrible story of the " martyrdom " of three women of Guernsey rests entirely on Foxes authority. It was immediately contradicted. Foxe replied, and Father Persons refuted his reply. It transpired on investigation that all three women were hanged as thieves, their bodies being afterwards burned; one of them had led an openly immoral life.

Machyn and Wriothesley chronicle an outbreak of fanaticism on Easter Sunday 1555. An ex-monk named Flower rushed into St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster, while the priest, Sir John Sleuther, was administering Communion to his parishioners. Foxe tells the tale succinctly:—

“The said Flower, upon Easter Day last past, drew his wood knife, and strake the priest upon the head, hand, and arm, who being wounded therewith, and having a chalice with consecrated hosts therein in his hand, they were sprinkled with the said priest’s blood."*

* Ibid. vol. vii., p. 75.

The only mistake which Foxe here makes is in saying that the priest was Sir John Cheltham. The would-be assassin harangued his victim before dealing the blow, and then struck home so forcibly that the priest fell as if dead. A tumult arose, the multitude thinking that the Spaniards were attacking them. Flower was apprehended, tried, and burned for heresy and sedition, on the spot now called the Broad Sanctuary. His claim to swell Foxe's calendar of "martyrs" rests solely on the motive of his murderous assault, namely, outrage of the Blessed Sacrament.

Page 162

Another martyr of Flower's kidney was William Gardiner, who was living at Lisbon in 1552 as agent of an English mercantile house.

Foxe describes his exploits and the consequences thereof as "The history, no less lamentable than notable, of William Gardiner, an Englishman suffering most constantly in Portugal for the testimony of Gods truth." Gardiner's admiring biographer relates that his hero twice entered a church (probably Lisbon Cathedral) with intent to do some notable thing in the king's sight and presence. The first time was on the occasion of a royal marriage, but the throng was so great that he could not get near the altar. However, on the following Sunday, "the said William was present early in the morning, very cleanly apparelled, even of purpose, that he might stand near the altar without repulse. Within a while cometh the king with all his nobles. Then Gardiner setteth himself as near the altar as he might, having a Testament in his hand, which he diligently read upon and prayed, until the time was come that he had appointed to work his feat." This time was just before the Communion of the priest, who was the Cardinal Archbishop of Lisbon. Gardiner sprang forward, snatched the consecrated Host from his hand, trod it underfoot, and overturned the chalice. The first effect of this outrage was to strike the clergy and congregation dumb with amazement, horror, and consternation. In Foxe's words, "this matter at first made them all abashed." But on recovering their senses, the people gave vent to their indignation in shouts and cries of vengeance. A dagger was drawn, and Gardiner was wounded in the shoulder. The man who struck him was about to deal another blow, when he was prevented by the king himself. Gardiner thereupon, being in the hands of the guards, impudently harangued the people, and told them that "if he had done anything which were displeasant unto them, they ought to impute it unto no man but unto themselves, who so irreverently used the Holy Supper of the Lord unto so great idolatry, not without great ignominy unto the church, violation of the sacrament, and the peril of their own souls, except they repented."

The Portuguese, entirely inexperienced in this kind of fanaticism, thought that Gardiner must be a political agent, with designs on the safety of the realm. As he would confess nothing of this sort, they put him on the rack, in order to extract from him secrets of a seditious nature. At length, as it was clear that heresy and sacrilege were the crimes in which he exulted, they burned him as a heretic, he maintaining, according to Foxe, his "godly mind" to the end, declaring even in the flames that "he had done nothing whereof he did repent him."*

Acts and Monuments, vi. 277; Cattley's ed.

Foxe incidently bears witness to the edifying manner in which the Portuguese assisted at Mass, the people standing "with great devotion and silence, praying, looking, kneeling, and knocking [beating their breasts in token of compunction], their minds being fully bent and set, as it is the manner, upon the external sacrament."*

Page 163

* Ibid.

The story of Bertrand Le Blas, the silk-weaver of Dornick who signalised himself in the same riotous manner in 1555, is said to have ended in the same way, Le Blas declaring “that if it were a thousand times to be done he would do it; and if he had a thousand lives he would give them all in that quarrel."*

* Acts and Monuments, vi. 393.

But these are all ex pane statements of Foxe. He is thinking of nothing but of pointing his own particular moral and of adorning his own tale. Historically, his evidence is valueless unless supported by more careful witnesses. He professes to chronicle the martyrdom at Newent, on the 25th September 1556, of “John Horne and a woman”; but Deighton, a friendly critic, pointed out that this story was nothing more or less than an amplification of the burning of Edward Horne, which Foxe had already recorded as having taken place on the 25th September 1558, and that no woman suffered at either of these times. Such instances might be pointed out ad infinitum.

The detestation in which most Englishmen hold the names of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and of Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, is entirely owing to Foxe’s calumnies.

Although Gardiner had been deprived of his see for his belief in Transubstantiation in Edward’s reign, and had been sent to the Tower by a court presided over by Cranmer, it is certain that he bore the archbishop no ill-will, but even did his best to save Cranmer’s life and that of the other reformers who refused to conform to the old religion which Mary had brought back. It was his duty as chancellor to enforce the law of the land, in the matter of exterminating heresy, as in all else, but he only once sat on a commission, gave Cranmer ample opportunity to escape if he had so minded, furnished Peter Martyr with funds to take him abroad, shielded Thomas Smith, King Edward’s secretary, from persecution on account of his heretical opinions, and even allowed him a yearly pension of 100 pounds for his support.* Of Gardiner’s kindness to Roger Ascham, the latter said, “Stephen, Bishop of Winchester, High Chancellor of England, treated me with the utmost humanity and favour, so that I cannot easily decide whether Paget was more ready to commend me or Winchester to protect and benefit me; there were not wanting some, who, on the ground of religion, attempted to stop the flow of his benevolence towards me, but to no purpose. I owe very much to the humanity of Winchester, and not only I, but many others also have experienced his kindness."**

* Dictionary of National Biography, article, “Stephen Gardiner.”

** Epis. p. 51; Oxford ed., 1703.

One of the “many others” was John Frith, whom Gardiner did his best to save from a painful death;* and even Northumberland would have escaped had Gardiner’s voice prevailed in the council. Again, Gardiner’s patriotism prompted him to oppose boldly the project of the queen’s marriage with Philip of Spain, seeing that it was distasteful to the bulk of the nation; yet, when he recognised that it was inevitable, he did his best to make it more popular.

Page 164

* Grenville, *Ms*. 11,990; Letters and papers, 6,600.

For some reason known doubtless to himself, but quite unknown to history, the martyrologist represents Gardiner as keenly desirous to hear that the sentence passed on Latimer and Ridley had been carried out. He says:—

"The same day, when Bishop Ridley and Master Latimer suffered at Oxford [being about the 19 day of October], there came into the house of Stephen Gardiner the old Duke of Norfolk, with the foresaid Master Munday, his secretary, above named reporter hereof. The old aged duke, there waiting and tarrying for his dinner, the bishop being not yet disposed to dine, deferred the time to three or four o'clock at afternoon. At length about four of the clock cometh his servant, posting in all possible speed from Oxford, bringing intelligence to the bishop what he had heard and seen; of whom the said bishop, inquiring the truth of the matter, and learning by his man that fire most certainly was set unto them, cometh out rejoicing to the duke. "Now," saith he, "let us go to dinner." Whereupon they being set down, meat immediately was brought, and the bishop began merrily to eat. But what followed? The bloody tyrant had not eaten a few bits, but the sudden stroke of God's terrible hand fell upon him in such sort, as immediately he was taken from the table, and so brought to his bed in such intolerable anguish and torments, that . . . whereby his body being miserably inflamed within (who had inflamed so many good martyrs before) was brought to a miserable end."

Foxe relates this story at third hand, as was his wont, but it fitted in so admirably with his favourite theory in regard to the temporal judgments of God on miscreants—and Gardiner to his way of thinking was certainly a miscreant of the first rank—that he could not afford to be fastidious as to its veracity. For he must surely have known that "the old Duke of Norfolk could not have dined with Gardiner on or about the 19th October 1555, having been in his grave since August 1553; and as for "the sudden stroke of God's terrible hand," by which the Bishop of Winchester was "brought to a miserable end," the following extract from a letter of the Venetian ambassador, resident in England, to the Doge and Senate, written on the 16th September 1555, gives a totally different account of the illness from which Gardiner died on the 12th November:—

"After the chancellor's return from the conference at Calais," writes the Venetian chronicler of current events, "he fell into such a state of appilation [sic] that besides having become [as the physicians say] jaundiced, he by degrees got confirmed dropsy, and had it not been for his robust constitution, a variety of remedies prescribed for him by the English physicians having been of no use, he would by this time be in a bad way, his physiognomy being so changed as to astound all who see him. The Emperor had sent him the remedy he used when first troubled with dropsical symptoms, on his return from the war of Metz, which remedy cured him, and should God grant that it take the same effect on the Bishop of Winchester, it will be very advantageous for England, he being considered one of the most consummate chancellors who have filled the post for

many years, and should he die, he would leave few or none so well suited to the charge as himself."*

Page 165

* Giovanni Michiel to the Doge and Senate, Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, vol. vi., part. i., 215; edited by Rawdon Brown.

On the 21st October, the queen opened Parliament in person, and Gardiner mortally ill, rose from the bed to which he had been for weeks confined, in order to introduce a Bill for the granting of much needed supplies to the Crown. Michiel, the Venetian envoy, continuing his letter says:—

“After the Mass of the Holy Ghost, sung by the Bishop of Ely, and the sermon preached by the Bishop of Lincoln, her Majesty proceeded into the great hall, where, in the presence of all those officially summoned, the Lord Chancellor, having rallied a little, choosing at anyrate to be there, in order not to fail performing his office on this occasion, made the usual proposal, stating the cause for assembling Parliament, which was in short solely for the purpose of obtaining pecuniary supply.”

Mary had succeeded to a treasury rich only in debt, and her need of money to carry on the government was urgent. Gardiner made a long and effective speech, the result of which was, that Parliament at once voted a million of gold to be levied in two years from the laity, in four from the clergy. But exhausted by his effort, and so weak that he was unable to return to his own house, the dying chancellor was accommodated at Whitehall where he met his end peacefully three weeks later. He desired during his last days that the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ might be read to him, and when the reader came to the contrition of St. Peter, Gardiner exclaimed, “Negavi cum Petro, exivi cum Petro, sed nondum flevi amare cum Petro!” alluding to his weakness and fall in Henry VIII’s reign.*

* Wardword, 43; Lingard, History of Fn,-land, vol. v., p. 243, note, 6th ed.

The view which Foxe presents of Bonner, Bishop of London, in the administration of his office, is as distorted and malicious as his libellous picture of Gardiner. The pages of the Acts and Monuments, which describe Bonner’s examination of those brought before him on charges of heresy, teem with such picturesque epithets as “this bloody wolf,” the “Bishop was in a marvellous rage” or “in a great fury,” but when we read what Bonner really said, we find nothing to justify these exaggerated expressions.

On one occasion, when Bonner was supposed by the martyrologist to be in such “a raging heat” that he appeared “as one clean void of humanity,” we read on, expecting to find some brutal and heartless words whereby he crushed the meek spirit of the martyr before him. The scene was Cranmer’s degradation at Oxford, with which solemn and painful act Bonner was charged; but the strongest words used by the bishop in answer to Cranmer’s continued protests and recriminations were, according to Foxe himself, merely that " for his inordinate contumacy, he denied him to speak any more, saying that he had used himself very disobediently."*

Page 166

* Acts and Monuments vol v., p 765; Cattley's ed.

By Foxe's own showing, when brought before the bishops, the "marytrs" frequently twitted their judges, gave them homethrusts and "privy nips," and behaved themselves generally in a very provocative and irritating manner. It is surprising, nevertheless, to find how very seldom the examiners lost their tempers, bearing with a considerable amount of insolence in a singularly good-humoured spirit, doing their best to give the accused a chance of escape. Of the six who came under Bonner's examination on the 8th February 1555, Foxe affirms that the Bishop of London sentenced them the day after they were charged, and killed them out of hand without mercy, "such quick speed these men could make in dispatching their business at once"—a terrible indictment if there were a shadow of truth in it. But Bonner not only knew all about the six heretics long before the 8th February, three of them having been in prison for months, where he had again and again reasoned with them; but after sentence had been passed, an interval of five weeks was the shortest respite granted to them for reflection before any one of them was executed. The others suffered consecutively on the 26th, 28th, and 29th March, the last of the six on the 10th June.

With as little regard for truth did Foxe pen the remarkable distich, which well served his purpose of villifying Bonner in the minds of his confiding and credulous readers:—

This cannibal in three years' space three hundred martyrs slew, They were his food, he loved so blood, he spared none he knew."

Lingard estimates that about two hundred persons suffered for their religious opinions during the reign of Mary. The fact is no doubt an appalling one, and horrifies us with a sense of the barbarism that prevailed so recently as three and a half centuries ago in England. But when we consider the outrages of which numbers of them were guilty, the danger which they constituted to the realm, we cannot help agreeing with Cobbett when he says that "the real truth about these martyrs is that they were generally a set of most wicked wretches who sought to destroy the queen and her government, and under the pretence of conscience and superior piety, to obtain the means of again preying upon the people."*

* History of the Reformation, edited by Abbot Gasquet, p. 207.

Moreover, portentous as the numbers appear to us, they are small compared with those which represented Henry's ruthless severity after the Northern Rising, when the whole country was covered with gibbets, and with those of Elizabeth's victims who were hanged, cut down alive, drawn and quartered, for practising the religion that had been taught in England since it was a Christian country. Nor did the persecution of Catholics cease at the death of Elizabeth, and the reigns of the Stuart kings, the Commonwealth, and even the Hanoverian regime testify to the cruel insistance with which Catholic

priests were hunted to death, and the Catholic laity imprisoned and impoverished for their loyalty to the oldest faith of Christendom.

Page 167

Bonner had had nothing whatever to do with the revival of the statute De Heresia, but good or bad, it was the law of the land, and he could no more help sitting on the bench in his own diocese to examine offences against it, than could any other judge refuse to sit in any court over which he had jurisdiction. Of the two hundred who were condemned on this statute during Mary's reign, about one hundred and twenty were sent to Bonner's court for judgment, the city of London being the centre and hot-bed of the new, revolutionary doctrines. Thus, Foxe's assertion that "this cannibal three hundred martyrs slew," must be reduced to nearly onethird of that number. His supposed thirst for blood was also as much a lie as that other figment of the martyrologist's brain which represented both Gardiner and Bonner as having a violent personal grudge against those who were brought before them for examination. Bonner, as well as Gardiner, laboured, and not unsuccessfully in many instances, in causing heretics to recant, upon which they were restored to liberty.

A striking yet dispassionate portrait of Edmund Bonner, from the pen of the late Dr. S. R. Maitland, one of the most scholarly and painstaking historians of the last century, forms a vivid contrast to Foxe's caricature of the Bishop of London.

"Setting aside *declamation*, and looking at the *details of facts* left by those who may be called, if people please, Bonner's victims and their friends, we find very consistently maintained the character of a man, straightforward and hearty, familiar and humorous, sometimes rough, perhaps coarse, naturally hot-tempered, but obviously [by the testimony of his enemies] placable and easily entreated, capable of bearing most patiently intemperate and violent language, much reviling and low abuse directed against himself personally, against his order, and against those peculiar doctrines and practices of his church, for maintaining which he had himself suffered the loss of all things, and borne long imprisonment. At the same time, not incapable of being provoked into saying harsh and passionate things, but much more frequently meaning nothing by the threatenings and slaughter which he breathed out, than to intimidate those on whose ignorance and simplicity, argument seemed to be thrown away; in short, we can scarcely read with attention any one of the cases detailed by those who were no friends of Bonner, without seeing in him a judge who [even if we grant that he was dispensing bad laws badly] was obviously desirous to save the prisoner's life."*

* Essays on Subjects connected with the Reformation, by S. R. Maitland, D.D., F.R.S., F.S.A., sometime librarian and keeper of the MSS. at Lambeth, p. 423.

Page 168

We have disposed at some length elsewhere of Foxe's shameless calumny of Sir Henry Bedingfeld, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, and custodian of the Princess Elizabeth at Woodstock when she was suspected of connivance in Wyatt's rebellion. In espousing Elizabeth's cause, and in casting aspersions on one who was responsible for her safe custody, Foxe was but following his general plan of campaign, the not very subtle plan of representing all those of his own party to be saints and martyrs, the enemy deserving every abusive term that came to his facile pen. This simple method attained its object probably beyond the wildest dreams of its author. All along the ages the Protestant world has believed implicitly in the fables invented by Foxe, and even in these days of critical analysis, although innumerable experts have given him the lie, the effect of his calumnies remain in the deeply rooted prejudice of the nation.* Moreover, like every other succes de scandale, the book brought a rich harvest to its author. He was almost penniless when he returned to England in 1559, but the English version of his work, first published in 1563, made his fortune. The Catholics called it derisively Foxe's Golden Legend. In 1570 a second edition was printed in two volumes folio, and Convocation decreed that the book, designated by the canon as Monumenta Martyrum, should be placed in cathedral churches, and in the houses of the great ecclesiastical dignitaries. This decree, although never confirmed by parliament, was so much in accordance with the Puritan tone of the whole Church of England at that time, that even parish churches far and wide were furnished with copies of the work, chained side by side with the Bible. In the vestry minutes of St. Michael's Church, Cornhill, of 11th January 1571-72, it is ordered "that the booke of Martyrs of Mr. Foxe, and the paraphrases [of the gospel] of Erasmus [pace Erasmus] shalbe bowght for the church and tyed with a chain to the Egle bras." A few years ago, mutilated copies of the Acts and Monuments might still be seen chained in the parish churches of Apethorpe (Northamptonshire), Arreton (Isle of Wight), Chelsea, Eustone (Oxfordshire), Kniver (Staffordshire), Lussingham (Norfolk), Stratford-on-Avon, (Warwickshire) Waltham, St. Cuthbert (Wells);** also in that of Lutterworth and many other places. At Cheddar not very long ago was a great black-letter copy of the Acts and Monuments chained to the reading desk, and it is stated in the Life of Lord Macaulay that as a child, the sight of it used to fascinate him as he sat on Sunday afternoons in the family pew, longing to get at the bewitching pages.

* The late Dr. Littledale lecturing at Liverpool on Innovations in 1868 said: "Two mendacious partizans, the infamous Foxe and the not much more respectable Burnet have so overlaid all the history of the Reformation with falsehood, that it has been well-nigh impossible for readers to get at the facts," p. 16. And later on he refers to the Book of Martyrs as "that magazine of lying bigotry," p. 21.

Page 169

** Dictionary of National Biography, article “John Foxe,”

No more potent means could have been devised for saturating the national mind with the principles of the Reformation than the diffusion of the Book of Martyrs on this gigantic scale. In a few years there was scarcely a parish church in England that did not possess a chained copy of the work. The illiterate might frequently be seen standing in a group round the lectern, while one among them better instructed than the rest read to them aloud its graphic and lying legends. Added to this, in many churches a chapter was read to the assembled congregations every Sunday evening along with the Bible, and the clergy constantly made its dubious martyrdoms the subject of their sermons. No wonder that it assumed an importance equal to that of the Scriptures themselves. One of the indictments against Archbishop Laud at his trial was the fact that he had ordered it to be removed from some churches in his diocese.*

* Dictionary of National Biography, article “John Foxe.”

The secret of its charm for Puritan England did not altogether lie in its Anti-Marian character, or in the partisanship of its garbled facts and fictitious heroisms. The simplicity of its vigorous English, the picturesque though minute circumstances which it detailed, the very boldness with which it lied, in league with the primary passions to which it appealed, made it one of the most powerful engines in the revolution that gradually changed the face of the whole country. Its deadly work of destruction has been effectually accomplished, and it is almost useless to attempt to convince a people into whose frame and tissue its stories have been woven, that the Protestant Reformation in which they so implicitly believe is but a fairytale for the invention of which John Foxe is mainly responsible. Gairdner, in his History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century, a book of the very first importance for any serious study of the period, has again and again expressed his opinion of the worthlessness of the Acts and Monuments as history; and the Rev. John Gerard* has been at the pains of collecting the learned historian’s remarks on Foxes compilation. He says:

* In his pamphlet, John Fare and his Book of Martyrs, Catholic Truth Society.

“But more damaging than any other is the criticism which Foxe receives at the hands of Mr. James Gairdner, the fullness of whose knowledge is matched only by the calm judicial manner in which he deals with the martyrologist’s stories as he encounters them in his own history. Discussing each case on its merits, and giving full weight to the evidence on either side, Mr. Gairdner finds charges of untruthfulness and dishonesty established at every turn. Foxe, he declares, ignores or misrepresents evidence that tells against him [p. 38]; he manipulates it to suit his purpose [56]; he counts as martyrs offenders of all kinds [129n]; he ‘was above all things credulous’

Page 170

[131]; he tells stories, the falsehood of which may be gathered from his own relation [ibid]; he suppresses facts furnished by the authorities upon whom he draws [133]; he insinuates what is utterly false [135]; he evidently wishes his readers to understand what he does not venture openly to say [220-21]; he prejudices readers by irrelevant gibes [271]; he has made people believe what is untrue [333]; he was quite as prejudiced and unfair as the notorious Bishop Bale [342]; his narrative has been exposed as untrustworthy by reason of its bias, but has not even yet been subjected to complete and thorough criticism [352]. In consequence of all this, says Mr. Gairdner, Foxe has given a false colour to the history of the times, and especially to the sentiments and motives of the persecutors. ' It is quite untrue, as Foxe and his school have made the world believe, that the authorities were savage or ferocious . . . The burning of heretics was a barbarous old-fashioned remedy, but it is not true that either the bishops or the government adopted it without reluctance' [349, 355]. And again, a royal commission, issued on 8th February 1557, is printed by Foxe with the title, `A bloody commission given forth by K. Philip and Q. Mary to persecute the poor members of Christ.' If we read the preamble, however, we find that it was provoked by the assiduous propagation of a number of slanderous and seditious rumours, along with which the sowing of heresies and heretical opinions was merely a concurrent' [387]."

Nevertheless, that the influence of Foxe is not by any means extinct in our own day, is proved by the successive republications of his book during the nineteenth century. In 1836 the plea for a new edition was put forward in a letter to the editor of the Record in these astounding terms:—

"When we consider the high character of the work for accuracy of detail; its full exhibition of the Gospel in all its holy and triumphant efficacy; the bulwark it has proved to our Protestant faith; its peculiar seasonableness to meet all the fresh dangers from Popery in the present times; and its intrinsic value, as forming a sound standard of Reformation divinity, we find it an exercise of Christian charity to call the public attention to it. We might further adduce the imprimatur of our own Church, by her act of Convocation appending it to all the ecclesiastical establishments in the land, as giving to Foxe's work, an additional claim of regard."

Between the years 1836-41, therefore, a new edition was published by the Rev. S. R. Cattley, with a Life and Vindication of John Foxe, by Prebendary Townsend of Durham.

The Rev. Josiah Pratt reprinted it in 1846-49; another edition, purporting to be corrected by the Rev. Josiah Pratt, the younger, appearing in 1853. But the Life and Vindication had been so greatly discredited in the attack made upon it by Dr. S. R. Maitland, that when the Religious Tract Society published an edition of the Acts and Monuments in 1877, mainly from the stereotype plates of that of 1853, they thought it prudent to omit that part altogether, Dr. Stoughton, one of the honorary secretaries of the Society,

substituting an Introduction, a work which is, however, as much open to criticism as Townsend's.

Page 171

A cheap edition had already appeared in 1868 with a preface by the Bishop of Carlisle in which his lordship said that:—

“The Convocation of the English clergy did wisely, when in the days of Elizabeth, they enacted that every parish Church [sic] in this land should be furnished with a copy of Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.”

There is also an illustrated edition published by Messrs Cassell; and the Religious Tract Society still continues to make the Acts and Monuments the subject of a quiet but active propaganda in evangelical interests, offering the book at a reduced price to students, teachers, and public libraries, sometimes even presenting it as a free gift.

IV. THE SPOILS OF THE MONASTERIES

The great, perhaps the sole repositories of the early historical and topographical records of England, Scotland, and Ireland, from the introduction of Christianity until the introduction of printing, were the monasteries. Throughout the middle ages these libraries were the homes, in many instances the birthplaces of treasures which would have been hopelessly lost or destroyed in those rough times but for the shelter thus afforded them. The monks were constantly employed in writing, copying, and ornamenting manuscripts, while State papers and parliamentary rolls were deposited in their archives for safety. Moreover, as they were known to be rich, and to care for such things, books were brought to them from time to time for sale by those in need of money. There was scarcely any religious house but had a library, and many of them were very good ones. Some data have come down to us by which we can form an estimate of their bulk and value.

The books which St. Augustine brought with him from Rome, together with those of Theodore, formed the nucleus of the well-known monastic library at Canterbury. In the library at Peterborough there were no fewer than 1700 MSS. That of the Grey Friars in London was 129 feet long by 31 feet broad, and was well filled with books. That the Abbey of Leicester and the Priory of Dover had no mean libraries appears from the catalogues of their books yet remaining in the Bodleian. Ingulf tells us that when the library at Croyland was burned in 1091, the monks lost 700 books. The great library at Wells had twenty-five windows on each side, a fact which gives us some notion of the space required to contain all the volumes possessed by this monastery.*

* Tanner, Nolitia Monastica, preface, p. xl., edited 1744.

In the English preface to Dugdale’s Monasticon mention is made of the “incredible number of books written by the monks,” and it would be easy to multiply illustrations of this kind, and to collect notes of the indiscriminate destruction that took place at the

dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII., when the contents of these libraries were sold as waste paper.

Page 172

“I know a merchant man,” wrote Bale, Bishop of Ossory as quoted by Leland, “which at this time shall be nameless, that bought the contents of two noble libraries for forty shillings apiece. A shame it is to be spoken. This stuff hath he occupied, instead of grey paper, by the space of more than these ten years, and yet he hath store enough for as many years to come. A prodigious example is this, and to be abhorred of all men which love their nation as they should do. Yea, what may bring our realm to more shame and rebuke than to have it noised abroad that we are despisers of learning? I judge this to be true, and utter it with heaviness, that neither the Britons under the Romans, nor yet the English people under the Danes and Normans had ever such damage of their learned monuments as we have seen in our time. Our posterity may well curse this wicked fact of our age, this unreasonable spoil of England’s most noble antiquities.”

Centuries had been spent in collecting that which a few short months had sufficed to scatter abroad, and Bishop Tanner also mentions with sorrow the loss of a great number of excellent books, to the unspeakable detriment of the learned world.

For a time, this havoc of the monastic libraries went on unchecked, but during the reign of Elizabeth a reaction set in, and there arose a little knot of men who had the good sense to recognise the value of these memorials of the past, and to treasure up what still remained; and the next generation produced such men as Thomas Bodley, and Robert Cotton. These were followed by others of kindred tastes, to whom more golden opportunities of acquiring valuable treasure-trove were afforded.

We shall confine ourselves here to the most illustrious of these collectors, Sir Robert Cotton, whose library now forms the basis of the national collection in the British Museum.

The era of English libraries began with Matthew Parker’s gift to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a collection of books which has preserved from destruction more materials relating to the civil and ecclesiastical history of this country than had ever before been gathered into one library. Fuller styled this munificent bequest “the Sun of English antiquity, before it was eclipsed by that of Sir Robert Cotton.”

Sir Thomas Bodley was one of the first men in Europe to conceive the notion of a great public library, and the rich collection of books which he made at Oxford on the ruins of Duke Humphrey’s library, and which he bequeathed to the University, is not merely of European, but of world-wide celebrity. Living as he did at Oxford in a learned atmosphere, he naturally turned his chief attention to Latin manuscripts, while Cotton made English history his special study, and was ever on the alert for material to throw fresh light upon its annals. Hence the numerous Anglo-Saxon MSS. in his library, and the splendid collection of State papers, relating to England, Scotland, and France, contained in the dress marked Caligula, and in many other places.

Page 173

Cotton and Bodley were good friends, and not only shared the same tastes, but sympathised actively with each other's work. In 1595 Bodley wrote to Cotton, asking him whether he held to his "old intention for helping to furnish the Universitie librarie," and in 1601 he acknowledges having received from Cotton a contribution of manuscripts for that purpose. These manuscripts were eleven in number, the titles of which may be seen in Smith's manuscript notes to his catalogue in the Bodleian library.

Bodley on his part was no less generous. A folio volume on vellum, containing the four Gospels, the four Dialogues of St. Gregory, and some other articles, the whole in Saxon, and consisting of 290 leaves, was a part of his contribution to the Cottonian collection.* The contents of this volume, as described by Wanley, show it to have been of exceeding great value, but since his time twenty-five folios have been lost. When Planta compiled his catalogue he affixed a note to the effect that the manuscript was so burnt and contracted as to render the binding of it impracticable, and that it was preserved in a case. Later on it passed through the restoring hands of Sir Frederick Madden.

* Otho, C. i. The notes furnished by Smith also prove the identity of the Cotton *Ms*. Otho, C. ix. with Bodley's gift.

Cotton was neither a great scholar, nor did he produce any original work of special value, but he seems to have possessed the tact and the taste to divine, and also encourage talents superior to his own, thereby deserving no less well of his country than those who served her with higher gifts. His friend Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, once called him an "engrosser of antiquities." If we add that he did not merely "engross," but that he liberally shared his acquisitions with others, we shall perhaps best describe his special place and work in the world of letters. To judge by his correspondence it would seem that all the learned men in the kingdom applied to him for the loan of some rare manuscript or other, and that hardly a scientific, political, historical, or heraldic work was produced in the early part of the seventeenth century, but owed something to his labours as an antiquary.

Selden asks for a sight of his Peterborough books, his Book of Monies his Historic Jorwallensis. Camden writes for a treatise on Heraldry, and for a ledger of the Abbey of Meaux. George Carew, afterwards Earl of Totness, needs his Chronicle of Peter the Cruel. Crashaw, the poet, sends for volumes treating of the Council of Florence, and of the excommunication of the emperor at the Council of Lyons. Sir John Dodderidge, judge and antiquary, asks leave to keep Cotton's maps (perhaps for his work "Of the Dimensions of the Land of England"). Speed requires a note of all the monasteries in the realm, as well as the Book of Henry *iv*., and craves help in his Life of Henry V., signing himself "Your loving friend, troublesome and troubled."

Page 174

All these demands on Cotton's library and Cotton's liberality, together with many more, may be seen in the collection of letters contained in the volume, the press-mark of which is Julius C 3.

The fame of the Cottonian library was great among the learned at the beginning of the seventeenth century; in 1612 it was spoken of with enthusiasm. The following letter from Edmund Bolton, poet and antiquary, is, despite its somewhat florid and inflated style, a proof of the high estimation in which the collection was held.

"Sir,—The world sees that worthy monument of witt and learning* come forth, but with honourable acknowledgements of special' helps from you. But we that are somewhat privie to the truth of things, do also knowe that without your assistance, it is in vain to pretende to weightie works in the antiquities of this kingdom. For your studie, if we respect the glories of saints there carefully preserved in authentic registers, it is a Pantheon and all Hallowes. If the memorials of the honourable deceased, it is a mausolae. If the tables and written instruments of Empire, it is a Capitol. If the whole furniture of Cyclopxdia, it is a mart. If matters marine, it is an arsenal—if martial, a camp and magazine. Briefly it is the Arck, where all noble things which the deluges of impious vastitic and sacriligious furie have not devoured, are kept to bee the seminaries of better plantations."

* Probably a reference to Bacon's History of Great Britain under the Conquests of the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, published in 1611.

He goes on to compare Cotton's library with that of Paulus Jovius, the pride and glory of Italy, which, he declares, "will seem perhaps little better than a beauteous charnel-house, filled with skeletons, and the rotten timbers of clay-built tenements dissolved into dust, by the side of this exquisitely instructed studie."

Exaggerated as this praise may seem, the fact remains that the Cottonian collection was unique, and that scholars owed more to it than to any other sources of information. There is no account of any visit of Cotton's to the Continent, although in one of his early pamphlets mention is made of his having visited Italy; but people were busy in different parts of Europe seeking for what was valuable in the shape of parchments and old coins, to add to his treasures.

England was, however, at that time the best hunting-ground for manuscripts, so short a time having elapsed since our great monastic libraries had been scattered to the winds. Chronicles, chartularies, State Papers, treaties, family pedigrees, documents of every kind were floating about the country, often in the possession of strange owners, almost always to be had for gold. To acquire these was Cotton's chief delight from the age of eighteen; and as a natural consequence, this taste surrounded him with learned friends. At his house at Westminster the literati of the day were wont to meet.

Josceline, Camden, Noel, Speed, Sir John Davis, and others formed, together with himself, the then Society of Antiquaries, which Matthew Parker had founded.

Page 175

But James I., although so great an amateur of antiquities, did not regard the society with a favourable eye. He was eminently cautious, and fancied that these meetings might lead to a political association, and he accordingly suppressed them.

In recognition, however, of Cotton's merit the king knighted him at his coronation honours; he called him "cousin," and acknowledged his claim to be descended from the Scottish family of Bruce. From that time Cotton quartered the royal arms of Scotland with his own, and adopted the name of Bruce, "not," says Collins in his Baronetage, "in arrogance and ostentation, but in distinction to those of the name of Cotton of other families . . . and in a grateful sense of the divine favour for that extraction, and to excite an emulation in his issue to follow the virtues of such glorious ancestors." His descent is clearly traced in the history of Connington Castle in Huntingdonshire, which had been the home of his family for centuries. The house had been rebuilt at various times. When it came into Sir Robert Cotton's hands he completely restored it, embellishing the north front with richly moulded arches which he had purchased and brought from Fotheringhay Castle, together with the room in which Queen Mary had been executed.*

* Neale. Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen, vol. ii, for Cotton's pedigree, see Julius F 8, f. 58b.

Cotton's friendship with Camden began at Westminster School, where Cotton was educated—Camden being at that time second master. In the last year of the century, the two friends made an antiquarian journey into the North, where they explored the old Roman wall, built to keep out the marauding Picts, and returned to Connington laden with trophies. These were afterwards presented to Trinity College, Cambridge, where they are still preserved. Camden's Britannia contains more than one allusion to this journey. His History of Queen Elizabeth was long supposed to be their joint work; and it is probable that, although he only acknowledged the loan of autograph letters, the part relating to Mary Queen of Scots was at least inspired by Cotton. It is certain that Camden obtained nearly all his materials from his friend's library. In one of his letters he speaks of Cotton as "the dearest of all my friends"; and in this profession he was constant till his death, directing in his will that Sir Robert should have the first view of his books and manuscripts; "that he may take such as I borrowed of him;" and then he goes on to bequeath to him his entire collection, except his heraldic and ancient seals, which he left to the Herald's College.

About the year 1614 it began to be whispered that Sir Robert Cotton had unlawfully come by some of the State Papers in his library, and the low murmurs soon grew into a loud argument to the effect that the Public Record Office was injured " by his having such things as he hath cunningly scraped together."* The general feeling of jealousy and suspicion is expressed in the following extract from a contemporary letter which was prompted by the fact that Arthur Agard, keeper of the Public Records, had left his private collection to Cotton:

Page 176

* J. Wilson to Ambrose; Randolph State Papers, Dom. James I., 1615; R.O.

“The late Mr. Agard has left some manuscripts, the labour of most of his life, including a book on the exemption of the Kings of England from the power of the Pope, abstracts of treaties, and other State matters, which Sir Robert Cotton claims, on pretext that they were left to him by will; but he eras at the making of the will. It is important that such things be kept in possession of the King’s officers, as otherwise they may be suppressed when most wanted."*

* Dom. James I., vol. lxxxiii., 69; R.O,

After this, charge after charge was brought against Cotton, till the life, that had so usefully been spent in the service of learning, closed in sadness and gloom. James, however, whether he gave credence to the accusations of enemies or not, never quite abandoned him. He made him a member of the " new order of hereditary knights called baronets,” which Cotton had himself advised the king to create, as a means of replenishing the State coffers, without burdening his subjects with taxes. (The fee was fixed at 1000 pounds.)

Disraeli, in his Curiosities of Literature, quoting from a Lansdowne *Ms*., says that it appeared, “by the manuscript book of Sir Nicholas Hyde, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, from the second to the third year of Charles I., that Sir Robert Cotton had, in his library, records, evidences, ledger-books, original letters, and other State papers belonging to the King; for the Attorney-General of that time, to prove this, showed a copy of the pardon which Sir Robert had obtained from King James for embezzling records, *etc*.”

James had the greatest regard for Cotton’s historical acumen, and in the last year of his reign he ordered that no more copies of the life of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, should be published till Sir Robert Cotton had enlarged it, and made it more authentic by the aid of two ample histories which had lately come out.* The similarity of their tastes always ensured a certain sympathy between the antiquary who was also in some sense a Scotchman, being descended from the Bruces, and the first Stuart King of England. But James’s successor never took him into favour, and henceforth there was little in his worldly prosperity to divert him from his beloved library—a perennial source of joy to him-till his enemies turned it into a weapon for his destruction. He never ceased to add to it while he lived, and casual contributions continued to flow in from various sources.

* Secretary Conway to the Wardens, *etc*., of the Stationer’s Company, 25th June 1624, Dom. James 1.; R.O.

Thus, in 1627, Sir James Ware sent a manuscript register of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin; and the year after Archbishop Ussher presented a Samaritan Pentateuch (Claudius, B 8). Already in 1625 he had mentioned this book in a letter to Cotton:

"Touching the Samaritan Pentateuch, the copye which I have is (as I guess) about three hundred years old, but the work itself commeth very short of the tyme of Esdras and Malachy. I have compared the testymonyes cited out of it by the ancient Fathers, Eusebius, Jerome, Cyrill, and others, and find them precisely to agree with my booke, which makes me highly to esteeme of it."

Page 177

In 1628 he writes apologetically for his long silence and his delay in returning books lent to him by Cotton:

“A farre longer time than good manners would well permitt, for which fault yett I hope to make some kinde of expiation by sending you shortlye, together with your own my ancient copye of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which I have long since destinated unto that librarye of yours, to which I have been beholden for so many good things no where else to be found. I shall [God willing] ere long finish my collation of it with the Hebrew text, and then hang it up ut votivam Tabulam at that Sacrarium of yours.”

A correspondent, signing his letter Jo Scudamore, gave him a whole edition of Chaucer “in a fair ancient written hand.” This manuscript has unfortunately disappeared from the collection.

Nicholas Saunder sent a history by Helinandus, a Cistercian monk, written in the time of William the Conqueror,* and many other donations are recorded.

* Claudius, B 9. The donor of this *Ms*. was not the Nicholas Saunders so well-known in Elizabeth’s reign.

Of the constant activity going on in the formation of this wonderful library, and of the great generosity with which the books were lent the following letters are eloquent. Archbishop Ussher writes thus:

“Worthy Sir,—I have received from you the history of the Bishops of Durham, together with your ancient copies of the Psalmes, whereof that which hath the Saxon interlineary translation inserted is the old Romanum Psalterium, the other three are the same with that which is called Gallicum Psalterium. But I have not yet received that which I stand most in need of, to wit the Psalter in 8vo which is distinguished with obeliskes and asteriskes. I pray you, therefore, send it unto me by my servant, this bearer, as also the life of Wilfrid, written in prose by a nameless author that lived about the time of Bede; the other written in verse by Fredegodus I received from Mr. Burnett; together, with William Malmsburiensis de vitis Pontificum Anglia et S. Aldhelmus. Before you leave London I pray you do your best to get master Crashaw’s *Ms*. Psalter conveyed unto me. I doubt not but before this time you have dealt with Sir Peter Vanlore for obtaining Erpenius his Hebrew, Syriach, Arabick, and Persian books, and the matrices of the letters of the Oriental languages. If he interpose himself seriously herein, it is not to be doubted, but he will prevayle before any other. But what he doth he must do very speedilye, because the Jesuites of Antwerp are already dealing for the Oriental presse, and others for the Arabick, Syriac, Hebrew, and Persian bookes. It were good you took some order before you went, how Sir Peter may signify unto you, when you are in the countrye, what is done in this businesse. If he send to Mr. Burnett at any time [who dwellith at the signe of the three swannes in Lombard Streets he will finde some means or other to communicate what he pleaseth unto me. I thank you very hartilye for the

care which you have taken in causing my Samaritan Bible to be so faire bound. I have given order to Mr. Burnett to content the workman for his paynes, and so with remembrance of my best affections unto yourself and the kinde ladye your wife,* I committ both of you to God's blessed protection, and rest your own most assured,

Page 178

“Ja Armachanus.”

* Sir Robert Cotton had married Elizabeth, daughter and co-heiress of William Brocas of Thedingworth, Leicestershire, by whom he had several sons, the eldest Thomas, alone surviving him.

Sir Edward Dering writes in 1630:

“Sir; I received your very welcome letter, whereby I find you abundant in courtesies of all natures. I am a great debtor to you, and those obligations likely still to be multiplied. As I confess so much to you, so I hope to witnesse it to posterity. I have sent up two of your bookes which have much pleasured me. I have here the charter of King John, dated at Running Meade.* By the first safe and sure messenger it is yours, so are the Saxon charters, as fast as I can copy them, but in the meantime I will enclose King John in a boxe and send him. I shall much long to see you at this place, where you shall command the heart of your affectionate friend and servant,

“E. Dering.”
Dover Castle, May 10, 1630.

* There are two original drafts of Magna Charta in the Cottonian Library.

It would be extremely interesting were Cotton’s own letters extant, to have some account from his pen of the manner in which he came by many manuscripts, the history of which is a blank to us from the time of the dissolution of the monasteries till they found a safe haven in his library. But his letters are very rare; two only have been preserved in the Record Office. They are addressed to his brother, Thomas, in the years 1623 and 1624, and they begin “Loving David,” and end “Thy Jonathon.” One is much stained, and difficult to read; both treat of political matters.

In 1629 the origin of a seditious pamphlet, entitled, “How to bridle the impertinency of Parliaments,” which was handed about in London, causing some commotion, was traced to the Cottonian library. In spite of all that Cotton could put forward to exculpate himself, an order was issued by the Privy Council for the sequestration of his books, on the ground that they were not of a nature to be exposed for public inspection. And this was not all. Once before he had been deprived of access to them for a time, and now again he was himself debarred from entering his own library, a privation which affected him so seriously, that from the moment of sequestration his health visibly declined, and he declared to his friends that they had broken his heart, who had locked up his books from him.

Disraeli, in his Amenities of Literature, says that, “Tormented by the fate of a collection which had consumed forty years, at every personal sacrifice to form it for ‘the use and services of posterity,’ he sank at the sudden stroke. In the course of a few weeks he

was so worn by injured feelings that, from a ruddy-complexioned man, his face was wholly changed into a grim blackish paleness, near to the resemblance and hue of a dead visage."

Page 179

Cotton made two separate petitions to have his rights over his own property restored. In the first he signified to the Privy Council that their detaining his books without rendering any reason for the same had been the cause of the mortal malady from which he suffered. In the second, in which his son joined, he merely complained that the documents were perishing for lack of airing, and that no one was allowed to consult them. The Lord Privy Seal was at last sent to him with a tardy message from the king, but too late to avail him anything. Within half an hour of his death the Earl of Dorset came to condole with his son, now Sir Thomas Cotton, bearing the somewhat ambiguous assurance that, “as his Majesty loved his father, so he would continue his love to him.” Sir Robert Cotton died on the 6th May 1631, and was buried at Connington. Long afterwards it was discovered that the author of the fatal pamphlet, that had done so much to kill him, was Sir Robert Dudley, who had written it when in exile at Florence.

Before tracing the subsequent history of the Cottonian library we will pause and consider some of the most important manuscripts which it contained at the death of its famous originator.

It has been said that he turned his attention largely towards collecting materials for every period of English history. Those materials are particularly rich as regards the Anglo-Saxon period.

Beginning chronologically we find here (in Vitellius, A 15) the story of Beowulf, the oldest monument of AngloSaxon literature, reaching back into the ages of heathendom. It is a pagan war-song which, in being handed down from minstrel to minstrel, has lost nothing of its wild, exultant beauty, while it has received many Christian inflexions from the bards of a better religion than that in which it was originally conceived, through whose minds it passed before being committed to parchment. When the Saxons had embraced Christianity they carefully weeded out from their national poetry all allusion to personages of pagan mythology, so that, in an antiquarian sense, their literature suffered. But the forcible and picturesque imagery of half-barbaric tribes still remained. The coarseness of the beer-hall is, however, subdued by the gold and silken embroideries with which it is adorned. In a vivid description of a battle, in the midst of lurid flames, of blood and carnage, the enemy is “put to sleep with the sword.” When a hero dies in peace, “he goes on his way.”

The poem of Beowulf has been variously edited. It was first noticed by Wanley, in his catalogue of Saxon MSS. in 1705. It was printed with a Latin translation by Thorkelin, at Copenhagen, in 1815. Conybeare, in his Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, points out several errors into which the Dane, Thorkelin, and the Englishman, Turner fell; and Thorpe, in his Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, differs from all preceding editors, who considered the heroes as mythical beings of a divine order, he suggesting that they were kings and chieftains of the North, within the pale of authentic history.* This opinion had been shared by Kemble, but under the influence of Grimmperhaps the greatest

authority on these matters—he ended by regarding the poem as mythic. Later critics have, however, considered that it deals with historical persons.

Page 180

* Preface, p. xvii.

Only secondary to the romance of Beowulf must once have been the fragment of a poem on the death of Beorhtnoth.* It was printed by Hearne in the appendix to his edition of Johannis Glastoniensis Chronicon, but without a translation.

* Formerly Otho A 12, in the Cottonian Library; the original perished in the fire of 1731.

“It constitutes,” says Conybeare, “a battle-piece of spirited execution, mixed with short speeches from the principal warriors, conceived with much force, variety, and character; the death of the hero is also very graphically described. The whole approximates much more nearly than could have been expected to the war-scenes of Homer.”

Of the poem of Judith, one of the finest specimens of Anglo-Saxon songs, a fragment is preserved in the same volume which contains the story of Beowulf.

The type of the Anglo-Saxon poets in Christian times is Caedmon, whom Professor George Stephens called “the Milton of North England in the seventh century,” and who, according to the legend told by Bede, being singularly unblessed with the power of song, received the gift miraculously in sleep. He is represented in the Cottonian library only by a few prayers in Anglo-Saxon (Julius, A 2) which Junius printed from this *Ms*. at the end of his edition of Caedmon’s paraphrase. The interesting collection, which goes by Caedmon’s name in the Bodleian library, is a series of pieces on Scriptural subjects, with beautifully painted illustrations.

A manuscript of the tenth century (Cleopatra, B 13) contains a short hymn on the conversion of the AngloSaxons; and in the same volume is a life of St. Dunstan.

Two important volumes (Tiberius, B 5, and Titus, D 27), one of which appears to have been written for the use of nuns, formed part of the material for a history of mathematics in England, during the Middle Ages.*

* Rara Mathematica from inedited MSS., by J. O. Halliwell.

Alcuin and Aldhelm were the chief Anglo-Latin poets. Some of Alcuin’s letters are to be found in this collection. St. Aldhelm, Abbot, afterwards Bishop of Malmesbury, was regarded by King Alfred as the prince of Anglo-Latin poets. His chief work, The Praises of Virginity, is at Cambridge, but his metrical treatise on the monastic life and one of his letters are here preserved.

Alfred is well represented in his Laws, and in his Saxon versions of Augustine’s soliloquies.

Of the works of the venerable Bede we have the Ecclesiastical History, the Life and Miracles of St. Cuthbert, and nine other manuscripts.

Page 181

It was probably between 1615 and 1621 that Sir Robert Cotton became possessed of the celebrated manuscript known as the Utrecht Psalter. Its early history is obscure, and experts have differed widely as to its probable date and origin. Sir Thomas Hardy, who summarised its contents, and drew up a report upon the intrinsic arguments in favour of its remote antiquity, called attention to the fact that it could not have been written in England, because it contains certain liturgical pieces which were not in use in this country, at the time assigned for its age by other internal evidence. He suggested that it was brought into England by the Christian princess, Bertha, daughter of Charibert the Frankish king, who became the queen of Ethelbert. He based this supposition on the costliness of the manuscript which would point to its having belonged to a royal personage. He next considered the probability that this Psalter was presented by Queen Bertha to the monastery of Reculver, in Kent, where the king had built a new palace, and where Bertha attended the services of her religion, Hardy drew this inference from the coincidence that at the time when the volume came into Cotton's hands there was bound up with it a charter, recording the gift of certain lands by Lothair, King of Kent, to Bercwald, Abbot of Reculver, and to his monastery. The charter is dated Reculver, May 7, 679, and it seems to have been the custom in smaller monasteries to place royal and other charters inside valuable books for preservation, in default of any more suitable depository. This charter, which Cotton took to be an original document, he separated from the Utrecht Psalter, preserving it in another part of his library. It is still to be found where he placed it (in Augustus, B 2).

Mr. Birch, however, disposed summarily of Sir Thomas Hardy's ingenious theory, and pronounced Cotton's opinion that the charter was an original document, as not worth much. After giving all the evidence for and against the probability of Queen Bertha, having presented the Psalter to Reculver Abbey, he showed reasons for the charter being a copy of the original, and for its having been made at Christ Church, Canterbury, a religious house very closely allied to Reculver, which was secularised centuries before the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

But the most recent authority on illuminated manuscripts, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, considers that the actual date of the Utrecht Psalter may be placed about the year 800, and he maintains with Sir Thomas Hardy, judging by internal palaeographical evidence, that without doubt, the manuscript is of Frankish workmanship, and he assigns its origin to the north, or north-east of France.* This carries us back to Queen Bertha and Cotton's suggestion that she brought the book over with her.

* See a Paper on English Illuminated Manuscripts, A.D. 700-1066, by Mr., now Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, Bibliographica, part ii., London Kegan & Co.

Page 182

Shortly after the suppression of Christ Church, which, in all probability, inherited the treasures of Reculver, the Utrecht Psalter, together with its incorporated charter, fell into the hands of the Talbot family; and in Mr. Bond's report on the manuscript he said that the name Mary Talbot could, with some difficulty, be deciphered on the lower margin of folio 60b, in a sixteenth century hand. Various suggestions have been made in regard to this name, but in Mr. Birch's opinion—and here there is good reason for following him—it belonged to the wife or daughter of "Master Talbot of Norwich, a most ingenious and industrious antiquary." He made a collection of rare manuscripts, most of which are now in Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, and it was from this collection that the Utrecht Psalter passed into Sir Robert Cotton's possession, but whether by gift or purchase is not recorded.

The manuscript is entered in the catalogue of the library written by Cotton himself in 1621, under the press-mark Claudius C 7, but it is not to be found in any subsequent catalogue. An entry occurs among the Notes of such books as haze been lent out by Sir Robert Cotton to divers persons, and are abroad in their hands att this daye, the 15th of January 1630, which entry is to the effect that the Psalter was lent "to my lord the Earle of Arundel." Birch gave it up as lost to the Cotton library from the time that it passed into Lord Arundel's hands; but he must have been unaware of the existence of Smith's own copy of his printed catalogue, which contains his manuscript notes of books borrowed from the Cotton collection, and in which these words are written "Borrowed by Mr. Ashmole, on the 17th February 1673, Claudius, C. 7." Smith's folio catalogue, published in 1696, has the word Deest, marking its absence from the library. Nothing further can be discovered till 1718, when the book appears to have become the property of Monsieur de Ridder, a Dutchman, who presented it to the University of Utrecht where it still remains.* Sir Robert Cotton's signature is on the first page.

The History, Art, and Paleography of the Utrecht Psalter, by W. de Gray Birch, F.R.S.L., Keeper of the Manuscripts in the British Museum.

The great charm of this manuscript, a facsimile of which is to be seen in the Cottonian library, lies in its pen-and-ink illustrations, as forcible and appealing as are the scenes of the Last judgment on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa. Among the Harleian MSS., moreover (No. 603), there is an illuminated Psalter so like it, that it seems impossible that the artist should not have had the Utrecht Psalter before him as he drew; unless, as Sir Edward Thompson supposes, the older manuscript is itself a copy of a still more ancient one, which leads him to infer that other versions of this Psalter were in existence in England at an early date. This would account also for the Eadwine Psalter at Cambridge, a twelfth-century imitation of the Harleian manuscript. Neither of these Psalters can be described as an absolute copy of the Utrecht Psalter.

Page 183

We are here led to deplore the loss of another valuable manuscript of a totally different kind, which, although not in the collection at the time of Sir Robert's death, once belonged to this library, and was lost in the same way. We refer to to the "Enconium Emmae" an eleventh century *Ms*. which Cotton sent to Duchesne, and which the latter used in writing his Historiae Normanorum, but never returned. It has entirely disappeared.

We now come to what is perhaps the noblest monument of Anglo-Saxon times in the Cottonian library—namely, the famous Lindisfarne Gospels also known as the Durham Book, a marvel of palaeographic art. It is indisputably the finest production of the school of Lindisfarne. The Latin text, written in double columns, was transcribed by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, while still a simple monk, in honour, some say for the use, of St. Cuthbert. It was finished after the saint's death, at the end of the seventh, or beginning of the eighth century. This we learn from intrinsic evidence, in the form of a brief note in Anglo-Saxon at the end of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and a longer one at the end of the volume. These notes have thus been translated by Mr. Waring:—*

* Prolegomena, Lindisfarne, and Rushworth Gospels, part iv.

"Thou, O living God, bear in mind Eadfrith and Aethelwald, and Billfrith and Aldred, the sinner. These four with God's help were employed upon (or busied about) this book."

And—

"Eadfrith, Bishop over the Church of Lindisfarne, first wrote this book in (honour of) God and St. Cuthbert, and all the company of saints in the Island; and Aethelwald, Bishop of Lindisfarne, made an outer cover, and adorned it as he was well able; and Billfrith, the anchorite, he wrought the metal-work of the ornaments on the outside thereof, and decked it with gold, and with gems, overlaid also with silver and unalloyed metal; and Aldred, an unworthy and most miserable priest, by the help of God and St. Cuthbert, over-glossed the same in English, and domiciled himself with the three parts. Matthew, this part for God and St. Cuthbert; Mark, this part for the bishop; and Luke, this part for the brotherhood; with eight ora of silver (as an offering) on entrance; and St. John's part for himself—i.e., for his soul; and (depositing) four silver ora with God and St. Cuthbert, that he may find acceptance in heaven through the mercy of God; good fortune and peace on earth, promotion and dignity, wisdom and prudence through the merits of St. Cuthbert.

"Eadfrith, Ethelwald, Billfrith, and Aldred have wrought and adorned this Book of the Gospels for (love of) God and St. Cuthbert."

Old as it is, neither vellum nor illumination shows the least sign of decay. The writing is exquisitely beautiful, and points to a degree of refinement and cultivation which we do not usually associate with a rough life, such as was led by the monks of sea-girt

Lindisfarne. There are to be seen wonderful initial letters, geometrical and tesselated designs, like the most delicate and intricate mosaics, and above all, beautifully devout representations of the four evangelists, all evidently drawn by the same loving and reverent hand, and the whole colouring as fresh now as if it had been painted yesterday.

Page 184

The evangelists, each accompanied by the symbolic animal, usually assigned to him, occupy nearly the whole of their respective pages. They are taken from Byzantine models, of which, as Westwood points out, nothing remains but the attitudes, the fashion of the dress and the form of the seats. There can be little doubt that these illuminations were copied from a *Ms*. brought into England by the missionaries sent from Rome by St. Gregory in the seventh century.

* Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts. P. 35.

Sir Edward Thompson, following Dom Germain Morin,* shows that the Capitula, or tables of sections which accompany each gospel are according to the Neapolitan use, and that Adrian, the companion of the Greek, Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury in his mission to Britain in 668, was abbot of a monastery in the Island of Nisita, near Naples.

* See his articles in the Revue Benedictine line, Nov. and Dec. 1891, pp. 481 and 529.

Bede tells us that these missionaries were both at Lindisfarne, and Sir Edward Thompson gives it as his opinion that the Neapolitan *Ms*. from which the Durham Book or Lindisfarne Gospel derived its text, had been brought a few years previously from Naples by the Abbot Adrian.*

* English Illuminated Manuscripts," Bibliographica," part ii.

The interlineary Saxon gloss was a later addition by the monk, Aldred, and Billfrith, as we have seen, made the sumptuous metal cover. This binding, needless to say, has long since disappeared, and for many years a shabby morocco covering replaced the gorgeous shrine in which the monks of Holy Island had deposited their treasure. About sixty years ago, Bishop Maltby of Durham, at the suggestion of Mr. John Holmes, provided a worthy substitute, the design for which was copied from one of the ornamented pages in the book itself.

This magnificent manuscript has been published by the Surtees Society, together with the very inferior Rushworth Gospels, but only one illumination has been reproduced.*

* The Lindisfarne Gospels or Durham Book is described in Planta's Catalogue (Nero, D 4), as "Liber praeclarissimus, elegantissimis characteribus et curiosissimus pro istius seculi arte picturis et delineationibus ornatus." See also Wanley's Catalogue, Codd. *Ms*. (Anglo-Sax.) p. 250.

Of absolutely authentic history there is little to relate concerning this celebrated manuscript, but Simeon of Durham, or rather Turgot, whose account he copied (and both men lived in the neighbourhood), is responsible for a story which says that it remained at Holy Island till the ravages of the Danes forced the monks to fly, carrying

with them their two greatest treasures, the body of St. Cuthbert, and this volume. But in their flight across the narrow strip of sea which divides the Island from the coast of Northumbria, their boat was thrown so much on one side that the

Page 185

book fell overboard. They arrived safely on the opposite shore, but could not make up their minds to continue their journey till they had done what they could to recover the precious relic. So they waited at the peril of their lives till the tide went out, leaving, as it does to this day, a stretch of bare sand between the Island and the mainland. To the inexpressible joy of the monks, they then found the book lying unharmed on the sand.

Archbishop Eyre, in his Life of St. Cuthbert, following the story as it is contained in the Rites of Durham,* places this incident in the sixth or seventh year of their wanderings.

* Surtees Society.

“And so, the bishop, the abbot, and the rest, being weary of travelling, thought to have stolen away, and carried St. Cuthbert’s body into Ireland, for his better safety. And being upon the sea in a ship, by a marvellous miracle three waves of water were turned into blood. The ship that they were in was driven back by the tempest and by the mighty power of God as it would seem, upon the shore or land. And also the said ship that they were in, by the great storm and strong raging walls of the sea as is aforesaid, was turned on the one side, and the Book of the Holy Evangelists fell out of the ship into the bottom of the sea.”

This account says that the monks found the volume about three miles from the shore, and that their landing-place was Whithorn in Galloway, opposite Belfast.

When Lindisfarne became a priory cell to Durham, this famous manuscript still remained in the city of St. Cuthbert, and in the History of North Durham by Raine, it is mentioned in the year 1637, as “the Book of St. Cuthbert which had fallen into the sea.” We, indeed, notice a brown stain on several of its leaves, which might be accounted for by their having been saturated with salt water, did we but know what would be the effect of a sea-water mark after so long a period. At the time of the dissolution it was still at Durham, and no record of what then befel it has been preserved.*

* Brayley’s Graphic and Historical Illustrator, 1834; article “The Durham Book,” by the Rev. Joseph Stevenson.

Sir Robert Cotton discovered it in the possession of Robert Bowyer, clerk of Parliament under James I.

The resemblance between the artistic and palaeographic peculiarities of the Book of Kells and the Durham Book is accounted for by the fact that Lindisfarne was founded from Iona, which had been given to St. Columba and his Irish companions in the sixth century. The monks, who settled at Holy Island, continued the Scoto-Irish traditions which they had brought with them, and perpetuated them in their manuscripts.

Page 186

A brief notice of one other remarkable *Ms*. may be made. It is to be found in the press Claudius, B 4, and a careful description of it is given by Westwood in his Palaeographia Sacra Pictoria, and in his Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS. An early tradition declares it to be one of the volumes sent to St. Augustine by Pope Gregory. However that may be, it is known as the Augustine Psalter, and the style of its ornamentation is of Roman origin. This ornamentation consists of initial letters in the Celtic manner; but gold, which was hardly ever used in the Lindisfarne school, and never in Irish MSS., is here seen in profusion, and this detail betrays a foreign influence. It belonged to the Abbey of St. Augustine at Canterbury, and may be a copy executed in that house of one of the books sent from Rome.

The Paraphrase of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, by Elfric, the grammarian, in this collection, is the finest known copy of the work. It is ornamented with 397 drawings, illustrating the text of the early books of the Bible. The largest miniature represents the building of the Tower of Babel.

The Psychomachia of Prudentius is very beautifully written in red and black ink. There are 83 drawings. A replica of this manuscript, which belonged to the monks of Malmesbury, is now at Cambridge.

Scarcely less interesting historically, than the Lindisfarne Gospels is the Book of the Benefactors of Durham Cathedral. Their names are written in alternate lines of bold and silver, the binding being also originally of gold and silver, to which fact a Latin couplet in verse testifies. As time went on it was carelessly kept by the monks of Durham, but entries were made up to the eve of the dissolution of the monastery. The book has been published by the Surtees Society under its name of Liber Vitae, and edited by the Rev. Joseph Stevenson who also wrote a preface. The meaning of Liber Vitae was that the fact of the benefactor's name being inscribed in this book was coupled with the hope and the prayer that the same name might at last find a place in the Book of Life, in which those are enrolled, who shall be faithful unto death.* Later on it became a sort of memorandum-book, in which together with the names of benefactors, was entered a brief account of the nature of their donations. Copies of charters were also inserted, and other matters of an historical character.

* Preface to the published volume, p. 8.

As far as folio 42, it is written in a beautiful ninth century hand, but from this point onwards, the gold and silver lines are omitted, and it is continued in varied and less elegant writing. This manuscript remained at Durham till the dissolution, and it is not known what then became of it, nor in what manner it passed finally into the Cottonian library. It is thus quaintly described:

Page 187

“There did lie on the High Altar an excellent fine book, very richly covered with gold and silver, containing the names of all the benefactors towards St. Cuthbert’s Church, from the very original foundation thereof, the very letters of the book being for the most part all gilt, as is apparent in the said book till this day. The laying that book on the High Altar did show how highly they esteemed their founders and benefactors; and the quotidian remembrance they had of them in the time of Mass and divine service. And this did argue not only their gratitude, but also a most divine and charitable affection to the souls of their benefactors as well dead as living, which book is yet extant, declaring the said use in the inscription thereof.” *

* The Ancient Rites and Monuments of the Monastical and Cathedral Church of Durham, collected out of ancient manuscripts about the time of the Suppression.

These examples may suffice as a glimpse into the nature of this treasure-house, but where so much is rare and costly, it is not easy to make a selection that shall be fairly representative.

With regard to the peculiar designation of the places occupied by the books, Sir Robert Cotton arranged them in fourteen presses, each press being surmounted by a bust of one of the twelve Roman emperors, the two last supporting those of Cleopatra and Faustina. The contents of each press were placed in boxes or portfolios, or were bound up in volumes, each box, portfolio, or volume being designated by a letter of the alphabet, each document having a special number.

After the death of its founder the library remained for some time in sequestration, to the great annoyance of the new baronet, Sir Thomas Cotton, who complained bitterly that he was shut out from his study, the best room in his house. A schedule was at length drawn up, consisting of a large vellum roll still extant in the collection, showing that it contained nothing that did not belong to him, and ultimately he gained admission.

Sir Symond D’Ewes made no secret of his opinion that Sir Thomas was “wholly addicted to the tenacious increasing of his worldly wealth, and altogether unworthy to be master of so inestimable a library.” We cannot altogether agree with this verdict, since Sir Thomas avenged himself by lending D’Ewes his father’s collection of coins; and it is but fair to add that he appears in general to have been no less liberal, one might almost say careless, in lending than his father. Rancour may, however, have set in later on, for Dugdale, writing to D’Ewes in 1639 says, “I am in despair to obtain the books of Sir Thomas Cotton which you desire.” Richard James, librarian, fell under the same condemnation as his master, for D’Ewes describes him as “a wretched mercenary fellow.”

Sir Thomas Cotton died in 1662, and was succeeded by his eldest son, John, who was somewhat of a scholar. Some respectable Latin verses written by him occur among Smith’s MSS. at Oxford. He married Dorothy, daughter and coheiress of Edmund

Anderson, of Stratton in Bedfordshire, and it appears that during the civil war the library was removed to that place for greater safety. This was the beginning of its wanderings and vicissitudes, which lasted nearly a hundred years.

Page 188

The first regular catalogue of the Cottonian library was made and printed at Oxford by Dr. Thomas Smith in 1696. This catalogue is defective in many ways, especially as regards State Papers and detached tracts, of which there are no fewer than 170 volumes, which are here severally entered under one head only, although they each contain on an average as many as a hundred separate documents on different subjects. Dugdale, who was allowed to make what use he liked of the library, discovered 80 of these volumes in loose bundles, and had them bound. But they were still practically useless for want of proper descriptions and indices, till Planta, keeper of the MSS. in the British Museum, published his descriptive catalogue in 1802. Although not without faults, it has never been superseded.

It is to the third baronet that we are mainly indebted for the magnificent project of bequeathing the Cottonian library to the nation. He died in 1702, before the final steps had been taken in this direction; but his grandson and immediate successor carried out his wishes which had also been those of his father and grandfather.

The statute, drawn up in the year 1700 (12 and 13 William *iii*.) is entitled, “An Act for the better settling and preserving the library kept in the house at Westminster, called Cotton House, in the name and family of the Cottons for the benefit of the public.”

The next step was to have the books carefully inspected, and compared with Smith’s catalogue, now found to be inadequate. Many of the manuscripts were reported to be in a state of decay, the place where they were kept not being suitable. In 1706, Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to fit up the study for public use, but he declared that Cotton House was in a ruinous condition; and in consequence of his report, in the following year, another Act of Parliament decreed that to increase the public utility of the library, Cotton House should be purchased of Sir John Cotton for 4500 pounds, and a new building erected for the collection of books. Still, nothing was done, till the house, actually threatening to tumble down, the books were removed to Essex House, in the Strand, where they remained for twenty-eight years. In 1730, Ashburnham House, Westminster, was purchased by the nation for the reception of the Cottonian, together with the Royal library. It was here, in 1731, that the terrible fire broke out in which so many valuable manuscripts were destroyed.

At about 2 o’clock in the morning of the 23rd October, Dr. Bentley, the librarian, and his family, who lived at Ashburnham House, were roused from sleep by a suffocating smoke which soon afterwards burst into flames. The outbreak was caused by a wooden mantelpiece taking fire, in the room immediately under the two libraries. It was at first hoped that the flames might be extinguished by throwing water upon the woodwork of the room actually on fire, so that they did not begin to remove the books as soon

Page 189

as they should have done. But seeing that this was useless, Mr. Casley, deputy librarian, hastened to rescue the famous Alexandrian *Ms*. in the Royal library, and the books in the Cottonian press named Augustus, as being considered the most valuable. These are principally charts, maps, grants, and papal bulls, all relating to early English history. Several of the presses were then removed bodily, but as the fire spread with alarming rapidity, and there was a delay in the arrival of the engines, it was discovered none too soon, that the backs of some of the presses were on fire. Then the books were seized and thrown out of windows, after which they were carried into Westminster School and the Little Cloisters. By permission of the Dean and Chapter they subsequently found a temporary home in a new building that had been erected as a dormitory for the school.

A committee was at once appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the amount of injury sustained. It was found that a great number of manuscripts had suffered from the engine-water, as well as from fire, and the report of the commissioners stated, that out of 958 volumes of MSS. 746 were unharmed, and 98 partially injured.

The press named Otho had suffered the most. In the table drawn up by Casley in his appendix to the Royal library, not one volume in Otho is seen to be intact; 16 are marked defective, 55 as lost, burnt, or defaced so as not to be distinguishable. Vitellius was the next greatest sufferer, 46 volumes being preserved, 28 defective, and 34 seriously damaged. Vespasian, with its fine collection of historical materials for the history of England and Scotland, its dramas in Old English verse, and the famous Coventry Mystery Plays and others happily escaped altogether.* Casley's figures differ slightly from those of the commissioners: out of a total of 958 volumes, he notes 748 as uninjured, 99 as defective, and 111 as lost, burnt, or defaced.

* Narrative of the Fire which happened at Ashburnham House, 23rd October 1731. Report of the committee appointed by the House of Commons.

On the 1st November the work of restoration began, and was carried out by Bentley, Casley, three clerks from the Record Office, a bookbinder, and others. The Speaker of the House of Commons was frequently present. Some of the MSS. inclined to mildew were dried before a fire. Some would have rotted if they had not been taken out of their bindings, so thoroughly had the water permeated. The paper books which had received stains were taken to pieces and plunged into the softest cold water that could be procured, and when the stains disappeared they were put into alum and water, and then hung upon lines to dry.

Page 190

The best means of stretching vellum to its original dimensions, after it has been shrivelled and contracted, had not at that time been discovered, but the restorers did what they could. It was first softened in cold water, then those leaves, which had become glued together by the heat melting all kinds of extraneous matter, were separated by means of an ivory cutter, and the glutinous substances carefully removed with the fingers, the parchments smoothed with the palm of the hand, and their backs pressed with a clean flannel. Fragments were also carefully cleaned and preserved, and upon many of these with which the original restorers could do nothing, Sir Frederick Madden afterwards worked wonders. By his method, 100 volumes were repaired on vellum, and 97 on paper.

Among these mutilated fragments was the priceless fourth century manuscript of Genesis, Otho, B 6, which was thought to have been taken abroad as it could not be found after the fire. For a while it was given up as irrevocably lost, but Sir Frederick Madden discovered the much burnt remains and pieced them together. This Book of Genesis was at one time thought to be the oldest Greek *Ms*. in England. It is now known that the four leaves of the gospel in Greek, Titus, C 15, are as old or even older. The Oxford librarian, Thomas James, wrote in the beginning of the volume that it was brought into this country by two Greek bishops as a present to Henry VIII. They told him that according to an old tradition it had belonged to Origen, and there was nothing in the text to make the supposition incredible. This, if true, would carry the manuscript back 1500 years at least, with a possibility of its being much more ancient. It had been the subject of a dispute in the time of the first Sir John Cotton, when it was supposed to have been lost. All at once it was discovered in the possession of Lady Stafford, who stoutly maintained that it had belonged to the late earl, her husband, who had lent it to Sir Thomas Cotton; and that while it was in his hands he caused it to be newly bound, and his coat of arms fixed upon it. She said, however, that Sir John might have it for 40 pounds, but that she would not take a farthing less, adding that he had already offered her 30 pounds in her own house, but that she had refused the sum. Mr. Gilbert Crouch, who was negotiating for Sir John, in explaining the matter to Dugdale, said that if Sir John Cotton had “so great a mind to the book, he were better give this other 10 pounds than run the charge and hazard of a suit."*

* Life, Diary, and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale.

All that now remains of this uniquely beautiful *Ms*., painted on every page, are eighteen melancholy scraps of no use but as a monument of the ingenuity with which they have been pieced together, mended, and preserved.

The Chronicle of Wendover, which was also believed to have perished, was found and repaired in the time of Sir Frederick Madden.

Page 191

A fragment of another *Ms*., marked as missing in Planta's catalogue, has found its way to the Bodleian library. It consists of ten folios of the Life of St. Basil, and a note by Hearne says that it came from a Cottonian *Ms*.

Grand and imposing as the Cottonian library still is, it is painful to consider how incomparably finer it must have been during the life of its founder, before it suffered from the ravages of the fire, and from the carelessness or dishonesty of so many borrowers. Sir John Cotton avowed that many books lent to Selden were never returned; the Duke of Buckingham was also guilty in the same respect. A manuscript now in the Bodleian library (Barlow 49) was borrowed from the Cottonian by Dr. Prideaux, and never returned. It was afterwards exposed for sale at Worcester, and bought by Dr. Barlow, who presented it to the Bodleian. Parliamentary rolls often suffered a like fate, and instances of similar losses could be largely multiplied. The loss of the Utrecht Psalter is, however, perhaps the most grievous that the library has sustained from borrowers.

Some of the manuscripts, injured by the fire at Ashburnham House, were further mutilated by another fire which occurred on the premises of a bookbinder on the 10th July 1865.

In 1753 the government purchased the large Natural History and Art Collection of Sir Hans Sloane, together with a library of 50,000 volumes, which were deposited in Montague House, Bloomsbury, on the site of the present British Museum Buildings. Hither the Cottonian and Royal libraries were brought, forming, together with the Sloane manuscripts, the nucleus of the great national collections of which we are justly proud, and which, under their present efficient and courteous management, are rendered so useful to students.

The British Museum was formally opened to the public at Montague House in 1759. But it grew so rapidly that soon more space was needed, and in 1823 the eastern wing of the present building was erected to receive the library of George *iii*. presented to the museum by George *iv*. The whole building was completed in 1847.

V. THE ROYAL LIBRARY

The Royal library is in many ways the most splendid of our national manuscript collections. Had it been fortunate enough, like the Harleian library, to number a Wanley among its custodians and biographers, the history of its formation would read like a fairy-tale. But, unhappily, we have to depend for our chief data on what Casley, the "dry as dust" pay excellence of librarians could tell us, and though his knowledge of the age of MSS. was admirable, he was remarkably uncommunicative regarding their pedigree, meagre in his descriptions, and apparently insensible to paleographic beauty. There is scarcely, in the whole British Museum, a less satisfactory book than his catalogue of the Royal library. Thus, the student is hampered by the want of a guide, and must hew

paths for himself through the luxuriant growth and accumulations of many centuries. In point of mere size, the Royal library ranks third among the four great collections acquired by the British Museum at the time of its foundation—the Harleian numbering 7639 MSS.; the Sloane, 4001; the Royal, 1950; the Cottonian, 900.

Page 192

Of the three others we have ample details; their hoards have been thoroughly ransacked, and there are scarcely any surprises for the student. We can, without much trouble lay our hands on any fact, beauty, or excellence to be found in them, for there are hardly any hidden gems. But with the Royal library it is different. Each student is his own pioneer, and must make voyages of discovery if he would know something of the riches which it contains.

Its history is scarcely more complete than its catalogue; although the nucleus of the collection must be almost coeval with the monarchy. Before the reign of James I., however, there were no records except the strangely anomalous ones contained in the Privy Purse Expenses, and in the Wardrobe and Household Accounts of the various English kings who have added to the library. It is curious to light, among the sums disbursed for such items as feather-beds and four-post bedsteads, on the price paid for a rare manuscript, or for the binding of a choice codex. Queen Elizabeth's "Keeper of the Books" was also "Court Distiller of Odoriferous Herbs," and received a better salary as perfumer than as librarian. But in times when books were more costly, the office of custodian was considered an honourable one, and a Close Roll of the year 1252 makes mention of the Custos librorum Regis.

Impossible though it be to fix the exact date or even reign when the English kings began to collect books, we shall not be wrong if we infer that the Royal library had already a very real existence in the reign of Henry *ii*., when a great literary revival took place. Although the movement originated in the cloister, the court followed in its wake, and William of Malmesbury had his secular counterpart in Alfred of Beverley. A favourite of the king's, Walter de Map, who had been a student in Paris, and Gerald de Barri (Giraldus Cambrensis) divided the honours between courtly and popular themes, while a number of poets and romanticists sprang up and wove fantastic myths and legends out of such material as the Crusades, the Arthurian traditions, and the feats of Charlemagne. King John, with scarcely a quality which men cared to praise, was, strangely enough, fond of books and of scholars. A taste for learning was gradually leavening the barbarous Normanic lump, spreading downwards from monarch to people. Two years before John's death Roger Bacon was born, whose opus Majus embraced every branch of science, and whose life is the whole intellectual life of the thirteenth century. Matthew Paris, the last of the great monastic historians, was the intimate friend of Henry *iii*., who delighted in his scholarship, and loved to visit him in the scriptorium at St. Alban's where he himself contributed to the famous chronicle, which would alone have sufficed to make the reputation of the learned Benedictine. Thus, indirectly, we are led to the Royal library.

In 1250, a French book is mentioned in a State Paper as belonging to the king, but being actually in the keeping of the Knights Templars, who are commanded to hand it over to an officer of the Wardrobe, with the apparent object that the king's painters might copy from it when painting a room called the Antioch Chamber.

Page 193

In the reign of Edward I. a part of the Royal library was kept in the Treasury of the Exchequer, and a few of the books are mentioned in the Wardrobe Accounts of the year 1302. These included Latin service books, treatises on devotional subjects, and romances. One book is described as “Textus, in a case of leather on which magnates are wont to be sworn.”

All through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there are occasional allusions to the king’s books in the Wardrobe Accounts, and the Exchequer Inventory of Edward *ii*. enumerates “a book bound in red leather, De regimine Regum; a small book on the rule of the Knights Templars, De regula Templariorum; a stitched book, De Vita sancti Patricii; and a stitched book in a tongue unknown to the English which begins thus: Edmygaw dorit doyrmyd dinas,” and other books and rolls “very foreign to the English tongue,” the scribe, not knowing Welsh even by sight, whereas, although he might not be able to read them, he would probably know the look of Greek or Hebrew manuscripts. The list closes with the Chronicle of Roderick de Ximenez, Archbishop of Toledo, “bound in green leather."*

* Stapleton’s exchequer Inventory, Edward *ii*.

A document, belonging to the year 1419, and printed by Sir Francis Palgrave, relates to the delivery into the King’s Treasury of five volumes, consisting of a Bible, a copy of the Book of Chronicles, a treatise, De conceptione Beatae Mariae, a compendium of theology, and a volume entitled Libellus de emendatione vitae. But in the following year these manuscripts were given to the monastery at Sheen. In 1426 a book described as Egesippus, another as Liber de observantia Papa, were borrowed from the library in the Treasury by Cardinal Beaufort, and there are subsequent notices of the return and re-loan of the same volumes to the same borrower. It is interesting to note that a manuscript called Hegesippus De Bello Judaico, *etc*., still in the Royal library, is ascribed by Casley to the eleventh century, and may be identified with the former of these two books.

In the following years entries occur of works on Civil Law, and of some others being lent to the Master of King’s College, Cambridge, and of their subsequent presentation to that house, with the assent of the Lords of the Council.

In the Wardrobe accounts of Edward *iv*. (Royal *Ms*. 14, C 8), there are entries relating to “the coveryng and garnyshing of the bookes of oure saide Souverain Lorde the Kinge,” which mark his possession in 1480 of certain choice MSS., and the same document shows that these were bound by Piers Bauduyn for the king. Among them were a Froissart, the binding, gilding, and dressing of which cost 20S., and a Biblia Historians (now marked 19 D 2 in the Royal library), bound and ornamented for the same sum. On a fly-leaf is an inscription recording its purchase for 100 marks by William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, after the battle of Poitiers. It had been taken as loot among the

baggage of the French king. On his death in 1397, the Earl of Salisbury bequeathed it to his wife, who, in her will, ordered that it should be sold for forty livres.

Page 194

When the king went from London to Eltham his books went with him, and some were put into “divers cofyns of fyrre,” and others into his carriage. They were bound in “figured cramoisie velvet, with rich laces and tassels, with buttons of silk and gold, and with clasps bearing the king’s arms.” The only reference to books in the will of Edward *iv*. is in regard to such as appertained “to oure chapell,” which he bequeathed to his queen, such only being excepted “as we shall hereafter dispose to goo to oure saide Collage of Wyndesore."*

* Add. *Ms*., Transcript by Rymer, No. 4615.

Henry *vii*. stands between the Middle Ages and modern times, but his additions to the Royal library consisted chiefly of Renaissance literature. Notwithstanding his parsimony in most matters, his Privy Purse Expenses contain a remarkable series of entries of payments for books, for copying manuscripts, and for binding them. On one occasion the sum of 23 pounds was spent on a single book, and there is an item of 2 pounds paid to a clerk for copying The Amity of Flanders. He bought a great number of romances in French as well as the grand series of volumes printed on vellum by the famous Antoine Verard. Bacon describes Henry *vii*. as “a prince, sad, serious, and full of thoughts and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand . . . rather studious than learned, reading most books that were of any worth, in the French tongue. Yet he understood the Latin."*

* Life and Rein of Henry *vii*, i., 637.

He had also a taste for finely illuminated books of devotion, and presented a beautiful Missal to his daughter Margaret, Queen of Scots, in which he inscribed his own name in enormous letters several times. This book is now in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire. In the Royal collection is another Missal which belonged to the same king, written in a late Gothic hand.

Henry *vii*. was careful to have his children well instructed, and his second son, being intended for the Church, received an education fitting him for an ecclesiastical career. In his youth Henry VIII. displayed considerable literary talent, posed as a patron of scholars, and smiled benignly on such geniuses as Erasmus, More, Linacre, and Grocyn; but in after years he was more keen to destroy other peoples’ libraries than to build up his own. The accounts of his Privy Purse Expenses contain few entries of disbursements for books, and to take one short period as a specimen, we find that the whole sum spent on his library between 1530 and 1532, including not merely all moneys paid for binding, but also an indefinite amount “to the taylour and skynner for certeyn stuff, and workmanship for my lady Anne,” was only 124 pounds, 16s. 3d. These figures become still more insignificant if we compare them with those representing the money spent during the same period for jewels alone, exclusive of plate, which amounted to the prodigious sum of 10,800 pounds.

Page 195

But although Henry VIII. did not buy books extensively, he sometimes borrowed them, and several entries chronicle the lending of books to him by monastic and other libraries, when he was pestering Christendom for arguments in favour of his divorce from Katharine of Arragon.

Nevertheless, in spite of adverse circumstances, the Royal library had been steadily growing in the course of ages, and had by this time assumed notable proportions. Henry VIII. found himself the possessor of a collection of books at Windsor, comprising 109 volumes in bindings of velvet and leather, with silver and jewelled clasps; of another at Westminster, consisting of Latin primers, some richly ornamented, of a few Greek authors, Latin classics, and English chronicles, “bokes written in tholde Saxon tongue.” He had another library at Beaulieu (now New Hall) in Essex, with about 60 volumes of Latin authors, besides works of the Fathers, dictionaries, and histories. At Beddington in Surrey he had many chronicles and romances, and “a greate boke of parchment written and lymned with gold of graver’s work—De Confessione Amantis, which may be identified as the *Ms*., now marked 18 C 22, in the Royal library. At Richmond was a small collection made by his father, consisting chiefly of missals and romances. At St. James’s Palace were, among others, works described vaguely as “a boke of parchment containing divers patterns; a white boke written on parchment; one boke covered with green velvet contained in a wooden case; a little boke covered with crimson velvet,” and so on, a curious method of cataloguing and utterly useless for the purpose of identification after so long an interval. Here and there a distinctive title occurs, such as the Foundation Book of Henry VIIth’s Chapel.

All these different small collections together represented the Royal library in the early part of the sixteenth century. Henry VIII. had the greater number of the books removed to Greenwich, where there were already some printed volumes and a few manuscripts. That part which remained at Westminster was enriched with some of the spoils of the monasteries, placed there perhaps by Leland to save them from destruction.* Among these was a Latin Evangelia of the eleventh century (1 D 3), which belonged to the monks of Rochester, and which had been given to them by a certain Countess Goda, according to an inscription in the book itself. From Christ Church, Canterbury, came a fine copy of the gospels (1 A 1 8), presented to that monastery by King Athelstan, and from St. Alban’s several choice historical and theological works from the pen of Matthew Paris.

* Edward’s Memoirs of Libraries, i., 364 et seq.

Page 196

It is a question whether the attention bestowed on the Royal library during the reign of Edward *vi*. was an advantage to it or the reverse. It is true that the energy of Sir John Cheke, and Roger Ascham, King's librarian, secured for it the manuscripts that had belonged to Martin Bucer; but on the other hand, the rabid intolerance of Edward's Council deprived it of many of its valuable contents. On the 25th January 1550, a so-called king's letter, sent from the Council Board, authorised certain commissioners to make a descent upon all public and private libraries, and to "cull out all superstitious books, as missals, legends, and such like, and to deliver the garniture of the books, being either gold or silver, to Sir Anthony Aucher.* The havoc thus wrought was irremediable, and not even the king's own library was spared the terrible perquisitions. But at the same time we cannot but marvel that still so many of the condemned books should have escaped the notice of the commissioners. In the same year the libraries at Oxford were also "purged of a great part of Fathers and Schoolmen," and great heaps of books set on fire in the market-place were watched with delight by the younger members of the university, who named the conflagration "Scotus's funeral."

* Council Book of Edward *vi*.

The short and troubled reign of Mary afforded no scope for literary activity, and Elizabeth was far too busy outwitting her enemies abroad, and controlling the factious tendencies of her friends at home, to be able to cultivate her taste for books. Nevertheless, although in the course of a hundred years the Royal library had suffered as much as it had gained, it was even then a goodly sight. Paul Hentzner, the German literary tourist, who visited it in 1598, says that it was "well stored with Greek, Latin, and French books, bound in velvet of different colours, although chiefly red, with clasps of gold and silver, the corners of some being otherwise adorned with gold and precious stones."* Perhaps the custodians vouchsafed him but a glance at these outer splendours, for he tells us nothing of the treasures within, of which all this magnificence was only the antechamber.

* P. Hentzner, Itnerarium Germaniae, Angliae, *etc*., p. 188.

But the golden age of the Royal library was in the reign of James I., and its greatest benefactor a youth who died at the age of eighteen. It were idle to speculate on what might have been the future of Henry, Prince of Wales, had he lived to fulfil the bright promise of his boyhood. To a singularly well-balanced mind, he appears to have joined an amiability of character that endeared him to all save the crotchety doctrinaire who sat upon the throne. He loved hunting and hawking and all healthy open-air pursuits no less than he loved books, and the society of men, who were the history-makers of his day. He would visit Sir Walter Raleigh in his prison in the Tower, and listen to his brilliant projects for the future greatness of England in the development of her colonies, and the annexation of still barbarous lands, the fabulous wealth of which was the life-long dream of the veteran explorer.

Page 197

But Raleigh was not a mere dreamer, as his History of the World shows—a work which, written during his long years of captivity, became the text-book and standard authority for the next two hundred years. Whatever his faults, and he had perhaps grave ones, it was his misfortune to be in some ways in advance of the age in which he lived, in consequence of which his finer qualities were misunderstood by most of his contemporaries. Prince Henry was not, however, among their number; he lent a fascinated ear to Raleigh's grand, patriotic schemes, and had they both lived, the one to reign, the other to counsel and guide, England might not only have been spared the most disgraceful blot on her escutcheon, but have anticipated by more than two hundred years her subsequent achievements. It was without doubt Sir Walter Raleigh who inspired the young prince to take the Royal library under his protection, and his pupil threw himself heart and soul into the work, so that rightly or wrongly he has been considered its real founder.

On the death of John, Lord Lumley, Prince Henry secured his fine collection of MSS., by which means he more than made up for the loss which the Royal library had sustained by his father's incomprehensible warrant to Sir Thomas Bodley to choose any of the books in any of his houses or libraries.*

* Reliquiae Bodleiana, p. 205.

Lord Lumley had not only been a diligent collector himself, but had inherited a valuable library from his wife's father, Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, who had begun to collect at the most propitious moment for acquiring rare MSS., and had obtained a portion of Archbishop Cranmer's library. The prince's Privy Purse Expenses have unfortunately been destroyed, but one single entry of the year 16og, bearing reference to his books, has survived: "To Mr. Holcock, for writing a catalogue of the library which his Highness hade of my Lord Lumley, 68 pounds, 13s. 0d." This catalogue has unfortunately disappeared.

Edward Wright, the mathematician, and the learned Patrick Young were both candidates for the post of librarian, and Wright was appointed with a salary of 30 pounds a year.

Besides purchasing Lord Lumley's books, the young prince acquired the entire collection of the erudite Welshman, William Morice, and an unprecedented stir and activity began to animate the affairs of the Royal library. Scholars saw in the Prince of Wales their future stay and protector, and looked forward to his reign as to that of the first English king in modern times, who would not merely patronise, but also extend learning by his inherent love of, and zeal for, letters. But this fair prospect was doomed to fade, even as they were contemplating it, and the hope of England died in the very midst of all his literary labours. The books which he had collected were mainly incorporated into the Royal library, but many were dispersed after his death. Scattered up and down the country may still be seen volumes in private collections bearing the tell-tale conjoined names, "Tho. Cantuariensis—Arundel—Lumley."

Page 198

James I., aptly styled by Henry *iv*. of France “the wisest fool in Christendom,” dabbled in books as in most other things, but does not appear to have succeeded in doing much harm to his library beyond the suicidal carte blanche to Sir Thomas Bodley. He appointed Patrick Young to be custodian of the different sections of it distributed throughout the various royal palaces, and this really great scholar retained the post till the Revolution.

That part of the collection which was lodged at Richmond went by the name of Henry VIIth’s library, and was shown to Johann Zingerling, a German scholar who came to England while Patrick Young was librarian. The only *Ms*. which he singled out for mention was the Genealogia Regum Anglia, ab Adamo, a roll of the fifteenth century (t4 B 8). The Richmond collection was removed to Whitehall by Charles I., and the Genealogia appears in a catalogue made after the Restoration.

The reign of Charles I. is almost barren of events in the Royal library, save at the very, beginning, for the acquisition of one *Ms*., which may, however, be regarded as the piece de resistance of the whole collection. This was the famous Codex Alexandrinus, one of the three oldest MSS. of the whole Bible in Greek. Before describing this venerable codex, it will be well to relate what little is known of its history. In 1624, Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Constantinople, formally presented it to James I., through his ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe. Writing to Lord Arundel, in December of that year, Roe says: “One book he (the Patriarch) hath given me to present his Majestie, but not yet delivered, being the Bible intire, written by the hand of Tecla, the protomartyr of the Greeks, that lived with St. Paul, which he doth aver it to be authentical, and the greatest relique of the Greek Church.” In 1626, he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury: “The Patriarch also, this New Year’s tide, sent me the old Bible formerly presented to his late Majesty, which he now dedicates to the king, and will send it with an epistle. What estimation it may be of is above my skill, but he values it as the greatest antiquity of the Greek Church. The letter is very fair, a character I have never seen. It is entire, except the beginning of St. Matthew. He doth testify under his hand that it was written by the virgin Tecla, daughter of a famous Greek, called Stella Hatutina, who founded the monastery in Egypt, upon Pharaoh’s Tower, a devout and learned maid, who was persecuted in Asia, and to whom Gregory Nazianzen hath written many epistles. At the end whereof, under the same hand, are the epistles of Clement. She died not long after the Council of Nice. The book is very great, and hath antiquity enough at sight; I doubt not his Majesty will esteem it for the hand by whom it is presented."*

* Negotiations of Sir Thomas Roe, London, 1740.

Sir Thomas Roe certainly did not overestimate the value of the manuscript, and it would be extremely interesting could we trace the evidence by which it came to be believed that it was written by the hand of St. Tecla. A note in Arabic at the foot of the first page of Genesis says that it was “made an inalienable gift to the patriarchal cell of

Alexandria. Whoever shall remove it thence shall be accursed and cut off. Written by Athanasius the humble."

Page 199

* “Probably,” says Sir Edward Maunde Thomson, “Athanasius, the Melchite Patriarch, who was still living in 1308.” Description of Ancient Manuscripts in the British Museum.

Before his translation to Constantinople, Cyril Lucar had been Patriarch of Alexandria, and possibly he himself risked the threatened curse and excommunication in taking the Bible away with him, though his deacon asserted that he had obtained it from Mount Athos.

But besides the above-mentioned note there is another also in Arabic, with a Latin translation at the back of the table of books. This note says: “Remember that this book was written by the hand of Tecla the martyr.” The tradition is recalled by Cyril Lucar at the beginning of the manuscript. He states that the name of Tecla was originally to be found inscribed at the end of the volume, but that when Christianity practically became extinct in Egypt, the few remaining Christians and their books were doomed, and for this reason the name was erased, Tecla’s memory and the legend being perpetuated notwithstanding.

Tregelles accounts for the tradition that St. Tecla was the writer of the *Ms*. by the supposition that the Arabic note was ignorantly added by some scribe who had observed the name of Tecla written in the now mutilated margin of the first leaf of the New Testament, which contains the lesson appointed by the Greek Church for the feast of St. Tecla. Sir Edward Thompson points out, however, that this would infer that in the fourteenth century the Gospel of St. Matthew was in its present mutilated state, and that then as now, the New Testament formed a separate volume apart from the Old; and he shows that the Arabic numeration of the leaves, which is of about the same age as the inscription, is carried continuously through both Testaments, and by a calculation of the numbers which have not been cut away in trimming the edges, it appears that the twenty-five leaves which contained the greater portion of St. Matthew were lost at a later period, the last leaf of the Old Testament bearing the number 641, and the present first leaf of the New Testament 667.

Cobet and other experts fixed the date of the two codices, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus, as not earlier than the fifth or sixth century, the principal reason for assigning to them so late a date being the generally accepted theory that uncials were not in use until vellum had entirely superseded papyrus as the medium for precious manuscripts. But the latest authority in this department, Mr. F. G. Kenyon, has thrown light on the whole question of early Christian Greek MSS., by the discovery of a large uncial round hand on a papyrus dated Anno Domini 88.* Thus it is quite possible, palaeographically, that the Codex Vaticanus, which has been hitherto supposed to date from the fourth century, may be much older, and there is now no conclusive evidence to prove that the Alexandrinus was not written by St. Tecla, whatever the probabilities may be to the contrary.

Page 200

* The Paleography of Greek Papyri, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1899.

The three above-named codices, the Vaticanus, the Sinaiticus, and the Alexandrinus have certain points in common, but the *Ms*. in the Royal library is written in double columns, that of the Vatican in triple columns, and the Codex Sinaiticus, some leaves of which are in the public library at Leipzig, the main body of the work being in the imperial library at St. Petersburg, in quadruple columns.

Besides being numerically imperfect, the leaves of the Codex Alexandrinus have suffered from the clipping of the outer edges by the binder, and several of its priceless pages have been otherwise spoiled and mutilated.

The *Ms*. is austere in its simplicity, being totally unadorned, save for the red ink used in the opening lines of each book, and occasionally in superscriptions and colophons. The letters are uncials (or capitals) without break, their form proving that the book was written in Egypt.

Patrick Young was librarian when this celebrated codex was added to the Royal library, and duly conscious of its value, he did his utmost to get a facsimile of it printed. But the king could not be induced to take up the matter. In 1644 Young prevailed on the assembly of divines to present a petition to the House of Commons, praying “that the said Bible may be printed, for the benefit of the Church, the advancement of God’s glory, and the honour of the kingdom.” A committee was found to confer with him on the subject, but nothing was done, owing to the troubled state of the country.

During the Revolution and under the commonwealth the Royal library was in extreme peril. Hugh Peters, successor to Young, although he belonged to the iconoclastic faction, practically saved the books, but was unable to protect the unique collection of medals and coins. After a few months the custodianship was transferred to Ireton, and ultimately a permanent librarian was appointed in the person of Bulstrode Whitelocke, first commissioner of the Great Seal. He accepted the office from patriotism and reverence for the antiquities which were in such imminent danger, but he wrote deprecatingly:

“I knew the greatness of the charge, . . . yet being informed of a design to have some of them (the books) sold, and transferred beyond sea (which 1 thought would be a disgrace and damage to our nation, and to all scholars therein), and fearing that in other hands they might be more subject to embezzling . . . I did accept the trouble of being library-keeper at St. James’s, and therein was much persuaded by Mr. Selden, who swore that if I did not undertake the charge of them, all those rare monuments of antiquity, those choice books and MSS. would be lost, and there were not the like of them except only in the Vatican, in any other library in Christendom.”

Page 201

At the Restoration, Thomas Rosse was made royal librarian, but his offices were already so numerous that he was unable to bestow much attention on the books. Nevertheless, he revived the project of printing the Alexandrian *Ms*., and urged the king to interest himself in bringing it about, saying that, although it would cost 200 pounds, it would "appear glorious in history after your Majesty's death." "Pish," replied Charles *ii*., characteristically, "I care not what they say of me in history when I am dead," and there was an end of the matter till our own day.

The year 1678 is noteworthy in the annals of the Royal library as the period at which it acquired the series of valuable MSS. known as the Theyer collection. They had been bought from Theyer's executors by Robert Scott, a famous bookseller, who offered them to the king for 6841. He subsequently got them for 560 pounds. Next to the Alexandrian Codex this is the most important addition to the library in comparatively modern times. It consisted of 336 volumes, including l00 rare treatises, a whole series of Roger Bacon's works, and the celebrated autograph collection formerly belonging to Cranmer, and long mourned as lost. Many of these manuscripts could be traced back to the library of Llanthony Abbey, having passed into Theyer's possession by the marriage of one- of his ancestors with a sister of the last prior of Llanthony. Nearly the whole of the Theyer collection is described in the Catalogi Librorum Manuscriptorum of 1697, but without the least hint that it then formed part of the Royal library. The great Richard Bentley was at that time librarian, and was responsible for the amazing omission, having prohibited any mention of the Royal library in that work, his reason perhaps being the disgraceful condition into which the books had fallen. Bentley was by far the most distinguished of the royal librarians during any part of its history, and he would, no doubt, have accomplished wonders if he had not been so outrageous a pluralist, so busy a scholar, and so pugnacious a litigant. Not only was he Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Regius Professor of Divinity, Rector of Haddington, Rector of Wilburn, and Archdeacon of Ely, but he was immersed in numberless lawsuits, and in classical studies which would alone have sufficed to fill the whole life of an ordinary man. What he, in spite of these multifarous occupations, attempted to do for the Royal library at least testifies to the grandeur of his conceptions and the boldness of his schemes. His failure to place the library within the reach of students was as much due to the stultifying effects of red-tapeism as to the disorganised condition of the library itself.

Page 202

Bentley's first care on taking office was to enforce the Copyright Act, which, although passed in 1663, had been carelessly ignored. By this means about 1000 printed books were added to the collection, but no bindings were provided, or shelves on which to put them. In a famous controversy with Charles Boyle, who complained that difficulties were placed in the way of his access to one of the royal manuscripts, Bentley answered: "I will own that I have often said and lamented that the library was not fit to be seen," and proceeding to exulpate himself, he added: "If the room be too mean, and too little for the books; if it be much out of repair; if the situation be inconvenient; if the access to it be dishonourable, is the library- keeper to answer for it?"

A proposal was made, during Bentley's tenure of office, to erect a suitable building for the books, establishing it by Act of Parliament. But nothing was done, and in the course of nineteen years the collection was four times removed. In 1712 it migrated from the much abused quarters at St. James's to Cotton House, and from thence to Essex House in 1722. It was next lodged, together with the Cottonian library at Ashburnham House, and after the disastrous fire in 1731, from which the Cotton MSS. suffered so severely, it gained with them a temporary refuge in the old Westminster dormitory.

Bentley resigned his office of librarian in 1724, in favour of his son, another Richard Bentley; but Casley, who, as deputy custodian, had been for many years the only working librarian, continued to fill that post.

In 1757, George *ii*. presented the Royal library to the nation, handing it over by Letters Patent to the custody of the trustees of the British Museum, and thus its hitherto chequered career was turned into prosperous channels. All that is henceforth left to desire is a descriptive catalogue worthy of its unique contents.*

* The Royal Library must not be confused with the King's Library belonging to George *iii*., and presented to the British Museum by George *iv*. The King's Library included, however, a few important MSS. which had been retained by George *ii*. when he made over the Royal collection to the nation.

The Greek MSS. in the British Museum are not very numerous, but are widely renowned. Of those in the Royal library the Codex Alexandrinus is by far the most interesting, not only as being the one Greek *Ms*. of the whole Bible in the library, but also as surpassing all the other existing Greek fragments of the Scriptures in point of antiquity. The next earliest *Ms*., containing the Books of Ruth, Kings, Esdras, Esther, and the Maccabees (1 D 2), is of the thirteenth century. The Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon (1 A 15), are of the fifteenth century. Nearest in antiquity to the Alexandrian Bible in the British Museum is the Cotton *Ms*. (Titus, C 15), the Codex Clarmontanus, a purple-dyed fragment of the sixth century, written on vellum of so subtle and delicate a texture that even experts have sometimes mistaken it for Egyptian papyrus.

Page 203

A few words will not be out of place here respecting the writing materials of the ancients, and their custom of staining leaves of vellum. Skins of animals were probably one of the most ancient mediums, as being the most durable. There exists in the British Museum a ritual, written on white leather, which dates from about the year 2000 B.C. But the custom of writing on leather is known to have been much older still. The commonest mode of keeping records in Assyria and Babylonia was on prepared bricks, tiles, or cylinders of clay, baked after the inscription had been impressed on them. But a wood-cut of an ancient sculpture from Konyungik* illustrates scribes in the act of writing down the number of heads and the amount of spoil taken in battle, on rolls of leather, which the Egyptians used as early as the eighteenth dynasty. At the close of the commercial intercourse between Assyria and Egypt, rolls of leather may have been the only material employed for writing on. Parchment, so prepared that both sides could be used, was doubtless the development of this custom, but was a much later invention. Together with the use of the rough skins, and of the more or less carefully prepared surfaces of the leather, papyrus became one of the most frequent vehicles for written words, and was used for some time after the beginning of the Christian era. Leaves of palm or mallow led up to the first forms of papyrus used—hence, perhaps, the word leaf of a book. Bark was next pressed into the service of literature and, it has often been suggested, possibly gave rise to the word book, although it seems more likely that book was of runic origin and derived from the beech-staves—Buch-staben, on which the runes were expressed.

* Nineveh and its Remains, by Sir Henry Layard, ii., 185.

Eventually vellum entirely took the place of papyrus, but papyrus was used not only in Egypt, but in imperial Rome before vellum became common, and even biblical manuscripts were written on rolls of this material. It was, however, too fragile and perishable to remain the receptacle of writing and illumination intended to last for all time, and therefore, by the middle of the tenth century A.D. it was altogether discarded. Only a few tattered fragments of the New Testament written on papyrus are still extant.

The oldest manuscripts belonging to the Christian era were written on the thinnest and whitest vellum. The parchment of later times is more coarsely grained, and less well finished, manuscripts a thousand and more years old showing no signs of decay or discoloration, unlike many which date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Scrivener, basing his authority on Tischendorf, observes that the Codex Sinaiticus is made of the finest skins of antelopes, the leaves being so large that a single animal could furnish but two of them. The Codex Vaticanus is greatly admired for the beauty of the vellum; and the whiteness of the Codex Alexandrinus can be seen by all who visit the British Museum, although the exquisite thinness, softness, and delicacy of the texture can only be appreciated by touching it. The beautiful fabric of the Codex Clarmontanus has already been mentioned.

Page 204

But not only was the vellum finer and more durable in the earliest days of our era than at a comparatively recent date, but the ink was better, and the colours used in illuminating were far more beautiful. The ancients laid on the gold very thickly, and the ink which they prepared is still black, so that the text can be easily read, while the ink used in the Middle Ages is now generally of a greyish brown. Red ink is very ancient, and often seen in early Egyptian papyri. The instrument for writing on papyrus was the reed growing in the marshes formed by the Tigris and the Euphrates, and on the banks of the Nile. It was also used for writing on vellum, but quills, admirably adapted for this kind of material, came gradually into use with parchment. By degrees the roll form was abandoned for the codex or book form, as being more convenient, the leaves being stitched into gatherings or quires; but for a long time both forms were used together.

It is uncertain when the custom of staining the most precious MSS. purple came into vogue, but it did not obtain after the tenth century. St. Jerome and his contemporaries practised it, using letters stamped rather than written, in silver and gold. Writing in gold ceased to be common in the thirteenth century, and in silver when the fashion of staining the vellum died out. The value of a manuscript does not depend on its purple colour, but this is chiefly interesting as serving to show one phase of the reverence paid to the Scriptures. It may also help to fix the date of a *Ms*.*

* Scrivener, A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, p. 23.

One of the most beautiful specimens of early paleographic art in the Royal library is the Latin *Ms*. of the gospels, known as the Evangelia of King Canute (1 D 9). Westwood indeed considers that it will not bear comparison with the Gospels of Trinity College, Cambridge, though he admits that it exceeds them in interest owing to the Anglo-Saxon entries relating to Canute at the beginning of St. Mark's Gospel.* Wanley has described these entries as a certificate or testimonial of Canute's reception into the family or society of the Church of Christ at Canterbury. One leaf bears this inscription: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is written Canute the King's name. He is our beloved Lord worldwards, and our spiritual brother Godwards; and Harold, this King's brother; Thorth, our brother; Kartoca, our brother; Thuri, our brother." On the next leaf is a charter by the same king, confirming the privileges of Christ Church, Canterbury. The book was probably the gift of Canute to the monks of that house. There are no miniatures, but an illuminated page with a grand border, heavily gilt, contains small figures of the evangelists in medallions. Written in ink at the bottom of the illuminated page is the name Lumley, showing that the *Ms*. formed part of that collection acquired by Prince Henry.

Page 205

* Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish MSS.

The Gospels of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury (1 E 6), written in England in the eighth century, are probably the remains of the so-called Biblia Gregoriana. But if this codex was really among the books sent by Pope Gregory to St. Augustine, it must first have been sent to Rome from England, but internal evidence points to a much later date. It contains four very dark-purple or rather rose-coloured stained leaves, with inscriptions in letters of gold and silver an inch long, the silver being oxidised by age. It is one of the most precious examples of Anglo-Saxon caligraphy and illumination now existing. The half-uncial letters of English type are by different hands, and the miniatures are of different dates, that of the Lion of St. Mark being probably of the tenth century. It is also supposed that the missing verses at the beginning of the gospels were all written on purple-stained vellum, and that there may have been a miniature of the evangelist before each gospel. An inscription on the fly-leaf states that it belonged to the monastery of St. Augustine at Canterbury, and that it formed part of that library in the fourteenth century.

The fine manuscript, designated 2A 20, is a book of prayers and lessons on vellum, of the eighth century. It belonged to the Theyer collection, and several notes are inserted in the handwriting of John Theyer. It is very much stained and spoiled, the binder, as was so often the piteous case, having barbarously cut off some of the edges, and with them a portion of the marginal writing, to the great detriment of the book.

2 A 22 is a magnificent Latin Psalter of the twelfth century, the best period of penmanship. Sir Edward Thompson draws attention to the fact that this volume originated at Westminster, as may be inferred by the prominence given in the calendars and prayers to St. Peter and St. Edward, even without its identification with an entry in the Abbey Inventory.* A further proof of this is furnished by the miniatures of the two saints, one of which begins the series; the other leads up to the beautiful Salvator Mundi. Between are St. George and St. Christopher. Instead of being dispersed throughout the book, the illustrations are all at the beginning and end, indicating by the colourless faces, and by what for want of a better word may be styled their Gothic outlines, that they are of English origin. Some of the capital letters are very interesting. One of these quaintly represents the Saviour of the world enthroned in glory, on a gold background. His hand is raised in blessing, while a Benedictine monk, floating on the wings of prayer, clasps a scroll, one end of which disappears under the rainbow-hued throne. On the scroll are the words Domine, exandi orationem mean. At the end of the Psalter are Litanies and other prayers.

* English Illuminated MSS., pp. 34, 35.

Page 206

The broad manner in which these illuminations are treated, with foliage boldly designed, and animals of various kinds disporting themselves among the branches, is indicative of the period. There is a striking contrast between this large, bold treatment and the minute style of the next century, although the period of transition occupied but a few years. The change began with the development of the initial letter, which was the starting-point of the border and of the miniature.

The Royal *Ms*. 1 D 1, a Latin Bible of the middle of the thirteenth century, forms an excellent example of this development. It is written on fine vellum, and in a perfect style of calligraphy. The paintings are few if we except those connected with the initial letter, which serves admirably to illustrate the growth of the border from its pendants, cusps, and graceful finials, showing how the initial and miniature came to be combined. Writing about this same *Ms*. Sir Edward Thompson says: "In the large initial we see the combination of the miniature with the initial and partial border, a combination which is typical of book decoration of the thirteenth century. In MSS. of earlier periods the miniature was a painting which usually occupied a page, independently of the text . . . or if inserted in the text it was not connected with the decoration of the page. It was, in fact, an illustration and nothing more. But now, while the miniature is still employed in this manner, independently of the text, the miniature initial also comes into common use, the miniature therein., however, continuing to hold for some time a subordinate place, as a decoration rather than as an illustrative feature. In course of time, with the growth of the border, the two-fold function of the miniature, as a means of illustration and also of decoration, is satisfied by allowing it to occupy part or even the whole of a page as an independent picture, but at the same time, set in the border, which has developed from the pendent of the initial. This development of the border it is extremely interesting to follow, and so regular is its growth, and so remarkable are the national characteristics which it assumes, that the period and place of origin of an illuminated *Ms*. may often be accurately determined from the details of its border alone." *

* English Illuminated MSS., p. 37.

The distinguished writer goes on to show that in tracing this development one sees how the initials first terminate in simple buds or cusps, and how, in the next stage, characteristic of the thirteenth century, they put out little branches, the buds growing into leaves and flowers, and how thus gradually the border comes to surround the whole page.

Page 207

The Royal *Ms*. 2 B 3, commonly known as Queen Mary's Psalter, is a good specimen of fourteenth century art. This is a large octavo volume of 320 leaves of vellum, almost everyone being magnificently illuminated on both sides, with daintily executed drawings, lightly sketched, and slightly tinted in green, brown, and violet. One richly-decorated page represents the Last Judgement. At the top, a miniature within the border shows forth the judge of all mankind. Angels with green-tipped wings hover on either side. Before the Saviour as judge kneel the Blessed Virgin and St. John, and on the other side is a group of monks. The background is of pure gold. Underneath, enclosed in a blue and white border, the dead rise to judgment. Angels blow long trumpets and the graves open. Below this again is a lovely initial, with more figures on a gold background. The letter begins the words of the Litany Kyrie eleison. A drawing at the bottom of the page represents Saul receiving the letter to Damascus for the persecution of the Christians. This page, as elaborate and glowing with colour as it is rich in design and fine in execution, is, however, not more striking than many others in the same manuscript, which may, without too much praise, be described as a gem of palaeographic art. A note on the last leaf explains that the *Ms*. was on the point of being carried beyond seas, when a customs officer, one Baldwin Smith, in the port of London seized and presented it to the Queen, in October 1553, the first year of her reign.

The writer does not record whether the hapless owner was indemnified for his loss. It was probably Queen Mary herself who caused the book to be bound as we now see it, in the worn crimson velvet binding, with the remains of large pomegranates embroidered at each corner, pomegranates being her own badge.

The *Ms*. 2 B 7 is an extremely beautiful piece of workmanship of the fourteenth century. Its delicate outline drawings, mostly in mauve and green, are reminiscent of the Guthlac roll. They represent mainly an illustrated Martyrology of Saints, popular in England. 1 A 18 is the copy of the Latin Gospels presented to Christ Church, Canterbury, by King Athelstan, with the name Lumley on the first page of the Eusebian canons, and Umfridus me fecit on a fly-leaf.

The beautiful French version of the Apocalypse, written in England about 1330 (19 B R5), contains drawings of great refinement, though scarcely to be compared with those which adorn Queen Mary's Psalter.

The very large Bible of the end of the fourteenth century measuring twenty-four by Leventeen inches, is splendidly illuminated and profusely adorned with miniatures.

But choice and variety are infinite, and to the devout lover of these things, the Royal library resembles a goldmine with nuggets of immense value lying in profusion wherever his adventurous footsteps lead him. If his object be delight he will find that every step leads him there.

Page 208

VI. THE HARLEIAN COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPTS

When Robert Harley laid the foundation of his magnificent library in t 7o5, so many collectors were already in the field that the prospect of getting together any large number of choice manuscripts did not seem promising. But contrary to expectation, this very fact proved fortunate, for whereas Cotton had built up his library, book by book, laboriously, Harley had the advantage of forming his, to a great extent, by the purchase of other well-known collections, either at the death of their original owners, or after the manuscripts had passed through successive hands. Of these larger acquisitions may be mentioned the library which had belonged to the famous antiquary, Sir Symonds D'Ewes, Cotton's friend; the greater number of the Graevius MSS.; the 23 bulky volumes of the Baker collection; many of the papers originally belonging to Nicholas Charles, Lancaster Herald, which, at his death, Camden had purchased for 690 pounds, and the collection of Stow, the historian of London.

Charles's library consisted chiefly of epitaphs, drawings of monuments and arms, and an historical catalogue of the officers of the College of Arms. Some of these are now at the Herald's College, one of the manuscripts is in the Lansdowne collection, and the others were bought by Harley.

On Strype's death in 1737, the majority of the papers, collected by Foxe the martyrologist, which had been in the annalist's possession, also passed with others into Harley's hands; they form vols. 416 to 428, and vol. 590 of this collection. Some of Foxe's papers are in the Lansdowne library.

By means of great exertion and a lavish expenditure, Harley became within ten years the possessor of about 2500 old MSS., and in 1721 had collected 6000 volumes, 1400 charters, and 500 rolls, besides about 350,000 pamphlets. His entire library afterwards numbered over 20,000 volumes.

Robert Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, was descended from an ancient family, existing, it is pretended, in Shropshire at the time of the Norman Conquest, and closely allied to the French family of de Harlai. He was the eldest son of Sir Edward Harley, member for the county of Hereford, in the Parliament which restored Charles I I.; was born in 1661, rose to a high position in public affairs, and was created, by Queen Anne, a peer of the realm by the style and title of Baron Wigmore, in the county of Hereford, Earl of Oxford, and Mortimer.* Soon afterwards he was made Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, and Prime Minister. He was twice married—first to Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Foley of Whitley Court, Worcestershire, by whom he had three children—a son, Edward, who succeeded him, and two daughters. His second wife was Sarah, daughter of Simon Middleton, of Hurst Hill, Edmonton, who survived him some years.

* The Earldom of Mortimer was added, because, although Aubrey de Vere, twentieth Earl of Oxford had died without leaving male issue in 1702, it was necessary to guard against possible claimants among remote descendants of the de Veres.

Page 209

Swift drew attention to the circumstance that Robert Harley was educated at Shilton, a private school in Oxfordshire, remarkable for having produced at the same time a Lord High Treasurer (the Earl of Oxford), a Lord High Chancellor (Lord Harcourt), a Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (Lord Trevor), and ten members of the House of Commons, who were all contemporaries as well at school as in Parliament. From both his father and grandfather he had inherited a taste for books, and as Speaker of the House of Commons, had taken considerable part in organising the Cottonian library when it was bequeathed to the nation. It was on this occasion that his notice was first drawn to Humphrey Wanley, who offered some valuable hints in regard to the arrangement of the Cotton manuscripts, and subsequently proved himself to be the model of librarians.

Humphrey Wanley was the son of a country parson; he had received a university education, and had already achieved success and some fame as a scholar by his catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon MSS., preserved in the principal libraries of Great Britain. He would gladly have undertaken the custody of the Cotton library vice Dr. Smith, and wrote to Robert Nelson, a learned writer and philanthrophist, who apparently possessed some influence with the government, to solicit his good offices in procuring him that post. Nelson's answer, interpolated by a remark in Wanley's beautiful, scholarly hand, is interesting as an illustration of the rivalry that existed between the two foremost librarians of the day.

"Were I as able to advise Mr. Wanley as I am desirous to offer what might be most advantageous for his interest," wrote Nelson, "I should immediately have answered your last letter which requires some queries to be resolved before I can well determine how you ought to proceed. For if there is any friendship between you and the Dr. [Smith] it will give a different aspect to your endeavours to supplant him."

Here there is a mark in the original letter referring to a note written across the margin by Wanley as follows:

"This is about the Cottonian Library, the custody whereof I did then, and many years after, most ardently desire. As to friendship between Dr. Thomas Smith [here meant] and me there was but little, his conversation being not suitable to mine, by reason of his jealousies and peevishness extreme. I always allowed the Doctor's pretensions to be much better grounded than mine; but if he, being a non-juror, could not swear to the Queen's government, or being much in years should happen to decease, as he did after some time, I desired that employment when the trustees should please to regulate that noble collection.

Page 210

“Otherwise,” continues Nelson, “I can see no reason why a man that is qualified for an employment may not fairly offer himself as a candidate for it, without injury to others that may pretend to it, and if you should want success, it no way diminishes those qualifications you were endowed with, for the discharge of the employment. If the Sir Robert Cotton you mention be of the Post Office, I believe I can find a way of applying to him,—I am your faithful friend and servant, Wanley’s ardent desire was not destined to be satisfied, but a still more honourable position was in store for the distinguished scholar and man of letters, for he not only became ultimately custodian of the Harleian manuscripts, but as we shall presently see, he deserved by his zeal, learning, and discrimination to be considered together with Lord Oxford, the joint-founder of the Harleian library.

“Nelson.

“2nd October 1702.”

Thus, it was entirely owing to Wanley that the D’Ewes collection, purchased for 6000 pounds, was secured by Sir Robert Harley, and it formed the basis of what is now one of our greatest national collections of manuscripts. The acquisition of this celebrated library was the determining point in Wanley’s career and in that of the Harleian library itself.

Sir Symonds D’Ewes, the antiquary, had by his will left all his books and manuscripts to his grandson, another Sir Symonds, but without antiquarian or literary tastes. Wanley, having discovered that although, according to the antiquary’s will, his collection might not be dispersed, it might still possibly be bought, wrote to Harley and suggested that he should be the purchaser:

“Sir Symonds D’Ewes, being pleased to honour me with a peculiar kindness of esteem, I have taken the liberty of inquiring of him whether he will part with his library; and I find that he is not unwilling to do so, and that at a much easier rate than I could think for. I dare say that it would be a noble addition to the Cotton Library; perhaps the best that could be had anywhere at present . . . . If your Honour should judge it impracticable to persuade Her Majesty to buy them for the Cotton Library—in whose coffers such a sum as will buy them is scarcely conceivable—then Sir, if you have a mind of them yourself, I will take care that you shall have them cheaper than any other person whatsoever. I know that many have their eyes on this collection. I am desirous to have this collection in town for the public good, and rather in a public place than in private hands, but of all private gentlemen’s studies first in yours. I have not spoken to anybody as yet, nor will not till I have your answer, that you may not be forestalled.”

The D’Ewes collection was a curiously miscellaneous one, containing much trivial matter side by side with learned treatises, transcripts of important cartularies, monastic registers, public and private muniments of the most varied description. A list of them is

to be found in the Harleian *Ms*. 775. No subject seems to have been void of interest for the great antiquary: he treasured up his school exercises as carefully as he did any ancient Greek or Roman charter, or mediaeval paleographic gem.

Page 211

With the purchase of this rich medley of books begins Wanley's term of office as librarian to Lord Oxford, which continued till his death in 1726. By his knowledge and literary acumen the librarian supplied what was lacking in his patron, for like Sir Robert Cotton, Harley, despite his love of books, was by no means a scholar or man of letters. Even the insignificant pamphlets, once ascribed to his pen, have since been proved to be the work of others. His verses, some of which were printed in the sixteenth volume of Swift's works, were condemned by Macaulay as being "more execrable than the bellman's." But with Wanley at his side he surpassed even Cotton as a collector, for the librarian possessed an intimate acquaintanceship with the contents of every foreign library of note, and Harley was always ready to spend in princely fashion whenever Wanley considered that a manuscript was worth buying. On the sumptuous bindings with which he adorned these acquisitions he expended as much as 18,000 pounds. His principal binders were Thomas Elliott and Christopher Chapman, of Duck Lane, who called forth some severe remarks in Wanley's Diary, on the subject of their negligence and extravagant prices. On inspecting Mr. Elliott's bill he finds him "exceeding dear in all the works of Morocco, Turkey, and Russia leather, besides those of velvet," and he is constantly reprimanding both book-binders for their "negligence in executing my Lord's work."

Perhaps the best-merited praise that has ever been bestowed on the founder of this celebrated library is Macaulay's tribute to his "sincere kindness for men of genius." And, however much the first Earl of Oxford may have transgressed politically (he is accused of having been unscrupulous, weak, and incapable as a minister), his services to literature in the protection which he accorded to the learned, have won for him a high place in the estimation of his countrymen. Even as a politician he acquired some literary fame, as being the first minister who employed the Press for ministerial purposes; and it redounds to his honour that, amid the cares and passions of public life, and aims more or less worthy of a statesman, he occupied his scanty leisure with the altogether laudable endeavour to gather together under his own roof for the benefit of students and scholars as much as possible of the lore and erudition of past ages.

The correspondence between Harley and Defoe, preserved at Welbeck Abbey, and now published by the Historical MSS. Commission, reveals the intimate relations which existed for public purposes between these two remarkable men.

Page 212

Of Edward, second Earl of Oxford, much praise and very little blame have been recorded. He has been quaintly described as " indeed rich but thankful, charitable without ostentation, and that in so good-natured a way as never to give pain to the person whom he obliged in that respect." He was, in truth, indolent and extravagant, faults which did not, however, detract from his popularity. He was the prey of adventurers, and the providence of impecunious poets such as Pope and Swift. All the literati of the day were allowed access to his library. Oldys drew therefrom the materials for his Life of Sir Walter Raleigh; Joseph Ames and Samuel Palmer had recourse to it in their black-letter studies. Pope was his adored friend and kept up a lively correspondence with him; Swift was always welcome at his table. He had many tastes, of which book-collecting was not the least expensive, and of the fortune of 500,000 pounds which his wife brought him, the greater part is said to have been sacrificed to "indolence, good-nature, and want of worldly wisdom."

In 1740 he was obliged to sell his estate of Wimpole, in order to clear off a debt of 100,000 pounds, a sacrifice which failed to appease his creditors, and a prey to carking care, he found the downward path from conviviality to inebriety a rapid one.

It was during the lifetime of the second Lord Oxford that the Rev. Thomas Baker bequeathed his works in manuscript to the Harleian library. A memorandum prefixed to these papers states that, in consideration of one guinea (to satisfy an original copy of Baston's verses on the battle of Bannockburn; a fine one of the Chronicle of Mailros; the Life of King David, written by the Abbot of Rievaulx; copies of charters between Scottish and French kings; and transcripts overlooked by Rymer and John Harding touching the lordship of England over Scotland. A contemporaneous document relates to the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to the Dauphin, and there are various letters from the same queen. We also notice Papal Bulls, enjoining the Scottish bishops to render obedience to the Archbishop of York as their metropolitan, and the king's recognition of that archbishop's rights; besides many other important papers too numerous to mention. Wales and Ireland are also well represented.

But like the Cottonian, the Harleian library spread its borders far beyond the limits of British history. As early as 1697 it had been Wanley's opinion that it would conduce very much to the welfare of learning in this country if some fit person or persons were sent abroad to make it their business to visit the libraries of France, Italy, and Germany, and to give a good account of the most valued manuscripts in them. "The Papists," he adds in his memorandum to this effect, "are communicative enough, for love or money, of any book that does not immediately concern their controversies with Protestants,"* a somewhat cryptic utterance which Wanley does not concern himself to explain, controversy not being one of the sciences to which his attention was turned. But his letter of instructions to Mr. Andrew Hay, who was commissioned by Lord Oxford 1720 to proceed to France and Italy in order to purchase MSS. for him, shows such an intimate knowledge of the contents of the great continental libraries, that long as it is we cannot forbear transcribing the whole:—

Page 213

“Mr. Andrew Hay, you being upon your departure towards France and Italy by my noble Lord’s order, I give you this commission, not now expecting that you can execute every part of it in this journey, but yet hoping that you will dispatch those articles which are of the greatest importance, and put the others into a proper posture against the time of your next return thither.

Marl. MS., Harl. M.S., vol. 5911, f. 2.

“In Paris Fr. Bernard Montfaucon has some Coptic, Syriac, and other MSS. worth the buying. Among them is an old leaf of the Greek Septuagint, written in uncial or capital letters. Buy these and the leaden book he gave to Cardinal Bouillon if he can procure it for you or direct you to it. In the archives of the Cistercian monastery of Clervaulx, I am told there are some original letters or epistles written by the hand of St. Hierome upon phylira or bark. One or more of these will be acceptable if not too outrageously valued. The Duke of Savoy has many Greek MSS., as also the Egyptian board or table of Isis, adorned with hieroglyphics, being those which have been explained by Pignorius, Richerus, *etc*. Let me have some account of these.

“At Venice buy a set of the Greek liturgical books printed there—I mean a set of the first edition if they may be had; if not let us have the other. Buy also Thomassini Bibliothecae Venetae in 40. Get a catalogue of Mr. Smith’s MSS. there, and inquire how matters go about Giustiniani’s Greek MSS. In the bookseller’s shops, *etc*., you may frequently pick up Greek MSS., which the Greeks bring from the Morea and other parts of the Levant. Remember to get the fragments of Greek MSS. you left with the bookseller who bought Maffeo’s library. The family of Moscardi at Verona have many valuable antiquities, and among the rest four instruments of the Emperor Theodosius, junior [now imperfect] written upon phylira. These must be bought, and especial care taken of them, *etc*. The first begins ‘dem relectis’; the second ‘ius vir in ast’; the third ‘ius vir in’; the fourth ‘ni Siciliensis.’ At Florence, the Dominicans or Franciscans have a large collection of Greek MSS. You may see them and get a catalogue of them if you can. Buy Ernstius or some other catalogue of the Grand Duke’s MSS.

“At Milan in the Ambrosian Library is a very ancient Catullus, part of Josephus in Latin, written upon bark; a Samaritan Pentateuch in octavo, part of the Syriac Bible in the ancient or Estrangele characters; divers Greek MSS. in capital letters, being parts of the Bible, with other books of great antiquity, both Greek and Latin. You may look upon them and send me some account.

“At Monza [about ten miles from Milan] is an imperfect Antiphonarium Gregorii Papae. It is all written upon purplecoloured parchment, with capital letters of gold. Buy this if you can.

“The family of Septata at Milan have a Latin writing upon bark. Buy this if it will be parted with.

Page 214

“In the archives of the Church of Ravenna are divers instruments written upon bark. You may see them.

“At Rome the Greek monks of St. Basil have very many old Greek MSS. written in capitals, particularly a book of the four Gospels, and some pieces of St. Gregory Nazianzen upon St. Paul’s Epistles. Buy as many as you can, for I hear they are poor, and therefore, they may sell the cheaper. They have likewise a Greek charter of Roger, King of Sicily, in five pieces, with some other instruments in Greek, written upon bark or vellum. Buy these also if you can.

“The Fathers of the Oratory at Rome have many very ancient MSS., both Greek and Latin. See them at least, even supposing that they will not sell. In the Cathedral library at Pisa are many ancient MSS. Let me have some account of these also.

“The monks of Bovio, near, if not in Pavia, have many very ancient MSS., and among the rest a book of the Gospels in Latin, wherein St. Luke is written Lucanus. They have many old deeds in their archives. Buy what you can.

“At Cava [about a day’s journey from Naples], is a Benedictine monastery. In the archives or treasury is a Greek deed of Roger, King of Sicily, with his golden seal appendant. Buy this if you can. In the library are some old MSS.; see these at least, if you cannot buy.

“At Naples, in the library of the Augustin Friars of St. John de Carbonara is a Greek *Ms*. of the Gospels [or of homilies upon the Gospels] all written in capitals, with letters of gold upon purple parchment. This must be bought. There is also a Dioscorides in Greek capitals, being a large work with figures of the planets, *etc*. This must also be bought. There is also a good number of other ancient MSS., both Greek and Latin. Among the latter is an Hieronimus de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis, in Saxon letters, and the Gospels in Latin, where St. Luke is called Lucanus. Buy of these what you can.

“If the Greek MSS. of the monastery of St. Saviour, near Messina in Sicily, or any of them do remain there yet, or in that neighbourhood, as it is probable they may, they will doubtless come exceeding cheap. You will inquire, however, how this matter stands.

“Pray Sir, all along in your journey endeavour to secure what Greek MSS. and Latin classical MSS. you can, provided they come at reasonable prices, and let me be favoured with an account of your proceedings as often as may be convenient.”

And he adds:

“Mr. Hay, in executing this commission, my noble Lord cannot give you positive directions how to bid upon every occasion, by reason of this his great distance from those parts, and must therefore rely upon your fidelity, your prudence, your usual

dexterity in business, and your personal affection to him. You will be sure always to buy as cheap as you can, for I foresee that some of the things his Lordship chiefly wants or is desirous of, will not come for a small matter. In most of the monasteries you will be able to buy for ready money; but it may be at a cheaper rate with the Greek monks at St. Basil's monastery at Rome, whose MSS. are good, and themselves in want.

Page 215

“I beseech God to bless and prosper you all along in this so long a journey, and to bring you back again with safety and good success; and you may be sure that you will be more welcome to but very few than to, good Sir, your very hearty well-wisher and most humble servant,

“Humphrey Wanly.

“26th April 1720."*

* Printed in the Preface to the Catalogue of the Harleian MSS.

Mr. Hay’s expedition was not entirely successful. Some of the manuscripts mentioned in the above letter, which Wanley insisted “must be bought,” are clearly not in the Harleian collection, and notably the Greek and Latin MSS. written in letters of gold upon purple parchment. For this library contains among its choicest treasures no manuscript entirely written upon purple vellum, the Codex Aureus being only partially thus stained. As we have already seen, during the early ages of Christianity, the Greeks and Romans were in the habit of writing their most precious books in letters of gold and silver on purple-stained vellum, that colour being the distinguishing sign of royalty and greatness. Purple was only worn by princes, and in this manner of distinguishing the Scriptures was shown the high degree of reverence in which they were held. The practice was continued during the fifth and three following centuries, although it was so little known in England that when, towards the end of the seventh century, St. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, gave a copy of the Gospels ornamented in this manner to York Minster, his biographer described the book as a thing almost miraculous. Manuscripts entirely composed of leaves of purple vellum are of the greatest rarity, and many are described by palaeographers as purple-stained when they are only partially so. The age of a manuscript may sometimes be determined among other characteristics by the fineness and whiteness of the vellum, and sometimes by its purple colour. The MSS. numbered 2788, 2820, and 2821 in the Harleian library are described by Astle as purple-stained, whereas they are only thus painted in places intended to receive the golden letters. Frequently, only the most important parts, such as the title-pages, prefaces, or a few pages at the beginning of each gospel or the Canon of the Mass, were written on vellum which had been prepared in this manner.

Wanley, as may be seen from the foregoing letter, added to his knowledge of manuscripts a certain fondness for driving a bargain. He was extremely desirous of obtaining the treasures which he describes so accurately, but he was almost as much bent on getting them cheap as on getting them at all. This may have been the result of solicitude for his patron’s pocket, for Lord Oxford was ruining himself to enrich his library; but at all events in this matter nature and grace seem to have gone amicably hand in hand. Wanley’s only comment on the death of the Earl of Sunderland in 1722 is to the effect that it will make rare old books more accessible from the fact of their being

less in demand, " so that any gentleman may be permitted to buy an uncommon old book for less than forty or fifty pounds.”

Page 216

Number 2788 is the wonderful Codex Aureus or Golden Gospels. Its acquisition by Lord Oxford is chronicled in Wanley's Diary in the year 1720. On the 14th May he wrote:

"Yesterday Mr. Vaillant (a bookseller) brought me a specimen of the characters of that Latin *Ms*. of the Gospels, which is to be sold at the approaching auction of Menare's books at the Hague. These characters are all uncials, gilded over with gold, and appear to be formed in very elegant manner. Among them I observe A, G, V, M and E so shaped, which is not commonly seen in the body or text of old MSS., although frequent in the title or Rubrics. In my opinion this most ancient and valuable book should be purchased at any rate."

Lord Oxford gave orders for the Golden Manuscript to be secured, and commissioned Mr. Vaillant to buy it with all secrecy and prudence. There are several entries in Wanley's Diary concerning the negotiations for this purchase, and on the 27th June all was brought to a happy conclusion.

"This day the Codex Aureus Latinus was cleared out of the king's warehouse, and delivered into my custody." On the 29th its solemn entry into the Harleian library is recorded, and on the 13th July of the following year, we find that "Mr. Elliot, having clothed the Codex Aureus in my Lord's morocco leather, took the same home this day, in order to work upon it with his best tools, which he can do with much more conveniency at his own house than here." Wanley makes a note of this circumstance because of his "speedy journey to Oxford in case any ill accident should happen."

This celebrated *Ms*. is written throughout in gold letters upon vellum, with the exception of the first lines of chapters in the Gospels and the first lines of the subsidiary articles, which are in red ink. The paintings of the four evangelists are extremely interesting, and the title-pages are stained purple. This codex is described by Sir Edward Maunde Thompson as French, of the time of Charlemagne, and we may add that its position in the Harleian may be compared to that of the Durham or Lindisfarne Gospels in the Cottonian library.

The manuscripts numbered 2820 and 2821 are further examples of partially purple-stained vellum, in imitation of earlier work. They are of German workmanship of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The execution of the miniatures is condemned by Sir Edward Thompson as "very rude" and "hard," but with all deference to so great an authority we must put in a plea for them, on the score of their extreme naivete and candour.

Page 217

A mediaeval roll of immense interest, one of the greatest treasures of this collection, consists of a series of beautiful outline drawings, known as the Guthlac Roll, representing scenes from the life of St. Guthlac. These drawings, which are of the twelfth century, are contained in eighteen rondeaux, intended, perhaps, as a design for a stained-glass window in honour of the saint at Croyland. They quaintly describe, in exquisite delicacy of form and colour, how the young Guthlac, after taking leave of his parents, renounces the profession of arms, and receives the tonsure at the hands of Bishop Hedda. Then, sailing away in a boat to Croyland, he builds an oratory with the help of two companions, Becelin and Tatwin, and an angel converses with him. No sooner is he launched on his new career of prayer, good works, and bodily mortification, than demons assail him, carry him to the roof of his oratory, and scourge him with knotted cords. But he scares them away with the white scourge given to him by St. Bartholomew. He is then ordained priest, instructs Ethelbald in the Christian religion, and prophecies that he will be king. The last six rondeaux show forth the death of Guthlac, the burial of his body by his sister Pega, his appearing to Ethelbald and his attendants who are weeping round his tomb, and his blissful state in heaven among the benefactors of Croyland Abbey.

Reference has already been made to Wanley's Diary,* a chronicle of the purchases made by Lord Oxford during the greater part of Wanley's custodianship, and of the principal events which happened in the library. It begins on the 2nd March 1714, when Wanley had been librarian for about six years. Many of the entries are exceedingly curious, as demonstrating the energy with which old manuscripts were traced, discovered, and purchased, and the tact and discretion employed, in order to induce their owners to part with them. A fine manuscript of part of Bede's Ecclesiastical History in Saxon, and two other valuable Saxon MSS. — King Alfred's translation of Ossian and a copy of Aelfrick's Grammar—were discovered in private hands, besides the Psalterium Gallicanum of St. Jerome "with the * and ./., written about the time of the last King Ethelred, with the Litany and some prayers, being one of the most beautiful books that can be seen."

* Lansdowne MSS., 771, 772.

There was, moreover, a constant movement in the library itself. All those who had any kind of manuscript for sale came to Wanley, and he notifies in his diary the arrival of books in Chinese, Armenian, Samaritan, Hebrew, Chaldee, Aethiopic and Arabic (both in Asiatic and African letters), in Persian, Turkish, Russian, Greek (ancient and modern), Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Provencal, High German, Low German, Flemish, Anglo-Saxon, English, Welsh, and Irish, in all about 940 manuscripts,

Page 218

“Which is,” he remarks, “a great parcel, besides which my Lord hath got many other MSS. remaining at Wimpole . . . . My Lord hath not only other MSS. in this room, written in almost all those [languages] above enumerated, but also in those that follow, which I call to mind on the sudden-viz., Chinese, Japanese, Sanscrit or Hanscrit, Malabaric, Syriac, in the Nestorian, as well as in the common characters (some few specimens of Coptic letters), Slavonian, Wallachian, Hungarian, Courlandish, Francic or old Teutonic, Biscayan, Portuguese.” On another occasion, a person who had some books for sale, which he was anxious that Lord Oxford should buy, offered Wanley a douceur, in the hope that the librarian would press their purchase, “not knowing,” he says simply, “the kind of man I am.” Wanley refused the bribe, but advised his patron to buy the books, which he did.

At another time—

“A French sort of droll came to my lodging, saying he was sent to me by Mr. Bu-Pis, of Long Acre. He pulled out a 40 paper *Ms*., dedicated to Maximilian, Duke of Bavaria, treating of Geomancy, and other like nonsense, being written mostly in German. Monsieur stumped up the value of it, and often swore it was the finest thing in the world. I asked him the price of it, and looked grum and gravely, which he saw with satisfaction; but as soon as his answer of fifty guineas was out, I replied that was the book mine he should have it for the hundredth part of a quart d’ecu. The droll would, however, have made remonstrances, but I would hear none; il ne vaut rien being my word. So I waited on him downstairs, which he took as a piece of ceremony; but indeed it was to see him out of the house without stealing something.”

One of the most important negotiations chronicled by Wanley relates to the purchase of the Graevius MSS. in 1724-25. Johann Graevius was a German classical scholar, born in 1632, and chiefly known by his Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanorum, and his Antiquitatum et Historianum Italia, in 45 volumes. His library, one of the most remarkable in Europe, was sold at his death in 1703 to the elector, Johann Wilhelm, for 6000 Reichsthaler. The elector presented all the printed books in this collection to the University of Heidelberg, but kept the manuscripts, 110 in number, in his own library at Dusseldorf They were accounted such treasures, that travellers, interested in antiquities, were taken to see them. The German scholar Uffenbach, who visited the elector’s library in *vi* I, says of them:

“Among the few MSS. that were shown to me, the most remarkable was a beautiful old quarto codex of Horace, which Graevius once lent to Mr. Bentley, who could not be prevailed on to restore it till forced into it by the threat that the elector would appeal to the Queen. There were several volumes of autograph letters from learned men, collected by Graevius, and several very beautiful breviaries, among which was one in duodecimo, bound in silver, and containing as many beautiful figures as I have ever seen in such books. Mr. Le Roy also showed me the ’Officia Ciceronis,’ printed by Scheffer in 1466—namely the books De Amicitia et Senectute.”

Page 219

The above books, together with others not mentioned by Uffenbach, subsequently found their way into the Harleian library, and have been identified by Mr. A. C. Clark, who has made a careful study of them aided by the dates written in Wanley's hand on the first page.*

* See his interesting paper in the "Classical Review," October 1891, The Library of J. G. Gravius.

The manner of their disappearance from the elector's library illustrates the more than questionable dealings to which book-collectors were often subjected at the hands of their librarians. There is a curious correspondence preserved in the Bodleian library, consisting of autograph letters which passed between Buchels, the elector's librarian at Dusseldorf, and Zamboni, the resident at the court of Great Britain for the Landgraf of Hessen Darmstadt. In appearance the correspondence is innocent enough: Zamboni has manuscripts for sale on behalf of persons abroad. But there is far more than meets the eye, and the letters contain almost beyond doubt the disguised and detailed account of how the elector was robbed of his manuscripts, and how Zamboni defrauded the fraudulent librarian Buchels. Indeed the whole history of the Graevius manuscripts seems to be one of peculation, until they came into Lord Oxford's possession. Graevius himself was by no means irreproachable in the matter of restoring borrowed books; Buchels, a Latin scholar and bibliograph of some merit, had a suspicious tendency to appropriate his master's goods; and Zamboni, had he lived in these days, would certainly have been prosecuted for criminal bankruptcy, if, indeed, the greater part of the transaction were not considered too dishonest to risk exposure.

Buchels, in writing to Zamboni, 13th August 1717, maintains an air of mystery about the books which he offers to him for sale, professing to get them from various monasteries, and describing the difficulties which he has in obtaining them. There are English dealers about, too, who raise the price of everything. By degrees he sends lists of what he has to dispose of, and shelters himself behind a mysterious friend, who is obliged to sell such and such a manuscript. Sometimes this friend is travelling about, sometimes he is in the country, but he is always the source of difficulties. But Zamboni is not deceived to the extent to which Buchels wishes to deceive him, and he knows full well that the manuscripts offered to him all formed part of the Codices Graeviani, and he tells Wanley so, but does not of course mention Buchels. Meanwhile there is much bargaining between Buchels and Zamboni; but it is certain, from the correspondence in the Bodleian library, that Zamboni never paid for the MSS. which he sold to Lord Oxford in anything but promises. The bills which he gave were never met, and if the elector was the loser, his librarian cannot be said to have profited by the fraud which he undoubtedly committed.

Wanley's part in the transaction, a strictly honourable one, is fully recorded in the Diary. On the 26th December 1724, he wrote:—

Page 220

“The last night Mr. Mattaire came to me and said that he had seen Signor Zamboni, and nine MSS. which are lately come to him from Italy—that they will soon be sent to his house without being shown to any other, and that then I shall see them forthwith. And further, that this Signor expects a little parcel of Greek MSS., not yet arrived.” Three weeks later he again wrote:—

“This morning I went to Mr. Mattaire, with whom I saw fifteen old Latin MSS., or fragments of MSS., belonging now to Signor Zamboni, but formerly to the Dutch Professor Graevius.

He opened a negotiation, and after some months wrote thus:—

“Signor Zamboni, sending a very kind letter to me, desiring to visit me, either here or at my lodgings, I desired he would please to call here, my lodgings being out of order, by reason of my maid’s being married yesterday. Signor Zamboni came hither about 2, and I showed him many more of my Lord’s MSS. to his great satisfaction. At length he desired that I would go along with him to an ordinary, where he was to dine with some foreign persons of distinction. I complied with his request, as thinking I might do my Lord some service; and after dinner was over, and the rest of the company gone, he assured me that as to the price of the MSS. which he hath sent hither, he will leave it entirely to my regulation, and accept of whatever I shall think an equitable price for them; only, he desires a dispatch as speedy as may be, lest the owner should send for them back. He further said that the owner chiefly values the two volumes of learned men’s Letters, the Saxon Spieghel, and the Prayerbook of Solyman the Magnificent.”

Three days later, 27 September 1725, the Diary further records:—

“Yesterday Signor Zamboni came to me, and was entertained to his own content and satisfaction. He conferred with me about the MSS. here in my custody, and will stand to my award, between my Lord and him. He says that as to the things my Lord formerly had of him, that he was no gainer, but that in one of the parcels, he of himself lowered the price twenty pounds less than his commission ran for. I hope I shall be able to separate the two volumes of Letters, the Saxon Spieghel and Solyman’s Prayer-book, although they are very curious and valuable things, and so my Lord may have the others very cheap. This done, I believe that the same Letters and two MSS. may in time fall into my Lord’s hands at a price far lower than they are now held up at. Signor Zamboni, who proves to be a good-natured and is [I believe] an honest gentleman, mentioned 4000 more original Letters in the possession of his correspondent, which may soon be brought over into England.”

On the 2nd October he added:—

“I waited on Signor Zamboni yesterday, who is daily teased by his Dutch correspondent about the chest of MSS. lying here.”

Page 221

There was a further delay of nearly a fortnight, and then Wanley wrote to the rogue Zamboni to the effect that Lord Oxford had at last seen many of his manuscripts, which he was not unwilling to buy at a reasonable price, and that he would willingly forego the two volumes of letters, the Saxon Spieghel and Sultan Solyman's Prayerbook, "if held up too dear." He asked for the Greek *Ms*. of Hesiod which he formerly saw among them, but which had since been withdrawn. Ultimately he sent back some of the books for which "this most greedy Signor" asked "the most horrible price." Wanley's hope that they might subsequently come to the library for less money was fulfilled as far as the letters were concerned; these are now to be found in volumes 4933 4934 4935 and 4936. Among them are a few other letters which were already in the Harleian library when the Dusseldorf manuscripts were purchased. Wanley had them all bound up together.

The manuscripts bought by Wanley from Zamboni number eighty-four, and comprise nearly all the important books mentioned in the Graevius catalogue. The Hesiod is the only valuable Greek *Ms*. missing, and the principal Latin *Ms*. of this collection, which did not pass into the Harleian library, is a Terence. It is also to be regretted that Wanley did not secure the prayers of Solyman and the celebrated Saxon Spieghel. Of the eighty-four other MSS., two have a special historical interest: the Cicero (2682) and the Quintilian (2664), both of which can be traced to the Cathedral library at Cologne.

Graevius borrowed the Cicero in 1663 from the authorities, but never returned it. The elector, Johann Wilhelm, bought it among other books which were sold at his death. It consists of a folio of 192 leaves of coarse vellum written in a German hand of the latter part of the eleventh century, and has been the subject of much learned criticism. It was collated by Mr. A. C. Clark, but until he identified it as one of the books that had formed part of the Graevius collection, very little attention had been paid to it. There is no trace of it before the sixteenth century, beyond the fact that its first collator was Modius of Cologne, who was allowed to use the Cathedral library, to which the Cicero then belonged. The acquisition of these manuscripts was the last important purchase made by Wanley; he died a few months later, aged fifty-three.

Besides the above-mentioned treasures from the Dusseldorf library the Harleian possesses, among other Greek classical manuscripts, some that are unique in character. Sir Edward Thompson, in his "Catalogue of Ancient Greek MSS. in the British Museum," calls attention to three in the Harleian collection which appear to him to be of superior merit. These are: (1) The Greek-Latin glossary of the seventh century. This manuscript is of singular interest both for language and palaeography, and consists of 277 leaves of vellum varying in thickness, some of it being very coarse.

Page 222

At the end, on a fly-leaf is some scribbling in what is described as “a Merovingian hand.” (2) The Greek *Ms*. of the ninth or tenth century, imperfect in the beginning, and in several other places, described by Wanley as the Codex Prusensis. The initial letters, some of which are ornamented, are generally red. (3) A volume numbered 5694 in the catalogue, and containing a part of Lucian’s works, on 134 leaves of fine vellum of the tenth century. On the second fly-leaf are these words in an Italian fifteenth-century hand: “Libro de Jo. Chalceopylus, Constantinopolitanus,” and at the bottom of the page, “Antonii Seripandi ex Henrici Casolle amici optimi munere.” Wanley says that this *Ms*. was supposed to have been carried from the old imperial library at Constantinople to the monastery of Bobi near Naples. He considered it “the finest old Greek classical *Ms*. now in England.” The library of Seripandus was preserved in the Augustinian monastery of St. John of Carbonara at Naples, but a part of it was sold to Jan de Witt, who took it to Holland, and this manuscript was among the number, and was included in the sale catalogue of De Witt’s library in 1701. It was bought by Jan van der Mark of Utrecht, and on this account it is described in the Amsterdam edition of the work as the Codex Marcianus. Later on it came into the possession of John Bridges of Northamptonshire, who sold it to the second Lord Oxford.

The earliest Latin *Ms*. in the Harleian library is a copy of the four Gospels of the sixth or seventh century—No. 1775. It was bought by the founder of the library from Jean Aymon, who stole it, together with eight other manuscripts, from the Bibliothique Royale in Paris, in 1707. It still bears on folio 2 its original press-mark. Another *Ms*. in Lord Oxford’s possession having been identified as one of these, was restored to its rightful owners in 1729. This relic of early Christian times consists of 35 leaves of the Epistles of St. Paul, the canonical Epistle, and the Apocalypse, written in gold letters on vellum. The adventure through which it found itself in the Harleian library together with the precious No. 1775, may be thus briefly related:

Jean Aymon was a renegade French priest who had retired to the Hague, married, and become a Lutheran pastor. He enjoyed a considerable reputation for learning and piety among the Dutch; but wearying of his monotonous, uneventful life, he resolved on returning to France under pretext of offering to Monsieur Clement, the king’s sub-librarian, a certain book which he had discovered. He accordingly wrote to Clement asking him to procure him a passport, in order that he might present the book in question, and reveal some important matters to the king. Clement obtained the passport, and Aymon returned to France, where, in order to ingratiate himself with the librarian, he declared that he wished to be restored in religion. He was advised to retire for a time to the seminary

Page 223

of Foreign Missions, in order to study his position and to prepare for his rehabilitation as a priest. But he complained bitterly of the treatment which he received at the seminary, and paid frequent visits to Clement, who, with astounding simplicity, allowed him to remain for hours, often quite alone, in the Royal library. Here he employed himself in making selections from priceless manuscripts, sometimes cutting out pages from the middle of a volume where the theft would be less easily detected. When he had gathered in a considerable harvest, he cleverly obtained another passport, and escaped back to the Hague with his ill-gotten gains. He accounted for his absence by saying that he had been to seek documents, important for the defence of religion, and made no secret of having brought back rich trophies. It was thus through public rumour that Clement first became aware that the king's library had been robbed. But Aymon's method of pilfering had so far succeeded that it was some time before it could be ascertained what number of manuscripts he had carried off. By degrees, however, the list was completed and sent to Holland. The Abbe Bignon was the king's librarian at the time when it was discovered that one at least of the stolen treasures was in the Harleian library. As soon as Edward, Lord Oxford became aware of the fact, he hastened to restore it, and received in exchange a very polite acknowledgement of his courtesy from Cardinal Fleury on behalf of the king.*

* L. V. Delisle, Le Cabinet des Manuscrits de la Bibliotheque Imperiale.

In 1725 Wanley enumerated the Greek MSS. in the Harleian collection as 173. Among the illuminated ones, that which bears the number 1810 demands special attention. It is an Evangelia executed in Greece in the twelfth century, and written in black and red characters on the finest vellum. Some of the miniatures have suffered woefully, the paint having cracked in parts, but the faces are still full of beauty and life. One of the least damaged represents the death of the Blessed Virgin. The apostles surround the bed on which she lies extended; the aged St. Peter lifts up his hands in an attitude of grief; St. John is leaning over her left side; another bends forward and embraces her feet. In a lozenge-shaped medallion on a gold background our Lord holds her soul in His arms, in the form of a little child. A crowd of people form the background, and a figure at the head of the bed swings a censer. Three women contemplate the scene from a small window.

Another remarkable miniature, the last in the volume, is a good deal cracked, but still extremely interesting for the force and delicacy of touch which it displays. Our Lord appears to the apostles after His Resurrection. St. Thomas is in the act of placing his finger in the wounded side. The print of the nails is seen in the hands and feet. Sir Edward Thompson distinguishes this manuscript with his by no means frequent encomium, "very good."

Page 224

The Greek Evangelium of the ninth or tenth century (5787), with its ornamental initials and borders, and St. Jerome's Latin version of the Psalter (2793), with a preface addressed to Sophronius, and written in a tenth-century hand, should not be passed over.

Another Psalter (2904), executed in England at the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, has a fine drawing of the Crucifixion, and grand initial letters. Westwood, in his Facsimiles and Miniatures, considers this drawing to be the finest of the kind, and the initial B (Beatus vir qui non abiit in consilio impiorum), the noblest with which he is acquainted. This manuscript has most of the characteristics of the later Anglo-Saxon school-the hunched-up shoulders to express grief, the attenuated lower limbs, and the manner in which prominence is given to the central figure by drawing the others much smaller. On a scroll which St. John holds are the words, "Hic est discipulis qui testimonii perhibet." The arrangement of Pilate's superscription—"Hic est Nazaren IHC rex judaeor"—is unusual but not without precedent.

The Harleian library contains no fewer than 300 MSS. of the Bible or parts of the Bible, written and illuminated between the seventh and the fourteenth centuries. Of the later copies we may note one of the whole Bible, written in the thirteenth century, and described in the "Catalogue of Ancient MSS. in the British Museum," as remarkable; and a Psalter, written before 1339, splendidly illuminated, and further interesting as having belonged to Philippa of Hainault, and as bearing the arms of England without those of France.

There is also a fine series of Talmudical and Rabbinical books; nearly 200 volumes of Fathers of the Church, as well as liturgical books of the different Latin and Greek rites.

The polite literature of the Middle Ages is admirably represented, among other examples by the famous Roman de la Rose, with its brilliant fourteenth-century miniatures, its wonderful figures gorgeously dressed, its broad borders richly decorated with fruit, birds, insects, and flowers, of which the rose is the most salient feature. One fascinating miniature shows—

Comment Narcissus se mira
A la fontaine et souspira";

and after a long but delightful pilgrimage by flowery meads and limpid streams, amid curious mediaeval gardens

"La conclusion du rommant
Est que vous voiez ez lemant
Qui prent la rose a son plaisir
En qui estait tout son desir."

This glimpse of the treasures of the Harleian library will at least account for the great celebrity it attained within a comparatively short time of its foundation. Wanley was careful to enter into his Diary the names of visitors, and any interesting details connected with them, and their motives for an inspection. On the 15th January 1719/20 he observed:—

"Dr.Fiddes came, and communicated to me his intention of writing the life of Cardinal Wolsey at large; and desired me to transcribe for him all such materials in this library as I should find for his purpose. I showed him divers things here, and gave him notice of many others in the Cottonian library, *etc*., but as to transcribing for him, begged his excuse, *etc*."

Page 225

On the 22nd December 1721,

“Mr. Bowles, the Bodleian library-keeper, came, and I spent most of the time showing him some of the rarities here, to his great wonder and satisfaction.”

And on the 28th

“Mr. Bowles came and saw more of the rarities here.”

Two more visits from Mr. Bowles are chronicled, when he saw “yet more of the curious books, papers, and parchments here”; and shortly after Wanley wrote, “many come and tarry long.” A visit from David Casley, keeper of the Cottonian and Royal libraries, on the 4th November 1725, is suggestive of a certain amount of friction between the two rival librarians. It is nearly the last entry in Wanley’s record:—

“Mr. Casley came to collate my Lord’s MSS. of Titus Livius for Mr. D’Orville, by my Lord’s order. I am civil to him, but when just now he offered me a South Sea bond as security to let him carry one of the said MSS. home to collate it there, I would by no means hearken to such a proposal.”

Perhaps Wanley would have regarded him with still greater suspicion if he had known that Casley was to be his successor in cataloguing the MSS. which he kept with so jealous a care. The talents of the two men were very different, as the catalogue itself shows. That part of it for which Wanley was responsible contains a description and an abstract of each manuscript. Casley, whose knowledge of the age of manuscripts has never been surpassed, contented himself with fixing their dates without any reference to their contents.

The work of building up the library does not seem to have flagged or deteriorated after Wanley’s death. The search for precious MSS. was still actively carried on, and copies of a large collection of original, royal, and other letters and State Papers in the Lansdowne library furnish us with an example of Lord Oxford’s unabated zeal in the pursuit of books. Appended to these papers is a note written on the first leaf by Mr. J. West, and dated 2nd May 1742:—

“Mem. I went with Edward, Earl of Oxford, to view these MSS. at a barber’s shop next door to the Bull Head Tavern, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, when we were carried up two pair of stairs, and an old woman asked 300 pounds for the MSS., which was thought exorbitant, but which would have been given, if she would have declared any lawful title to us as owner of them.”

After Casley, Hocker, deputy-keeper of the records in the Tower, undertook to continue the catalogue, but only completed it as far as the number 7355. When the collection was brought to the British Museum, after the death of the second Lord Oxford, Dr.

Brown, Professor of Arabic at Oxford, and Dr. Kennicott, Fellow of Exeter College, added titles to such of the Arabic and Hebrew MSS. as needed them. Gomez, a learned Jew, was employed to do the same for the rabbinical books that were without titles. In 1800 the Rev. Robert Nares was appointed to continue and revise the catalogue. In a letter to Bishop Percy, dated British Museum, 19th January 1801, Nares wrote:—

Page 226

“I am just now deep in old MSS., correcting all that part of the Harleian catalogue which was left unfinished by Humphrey Wanley, and very imperfectly executed by Mr. Casley.”

The work done by Nares was supplemented by Stebbing Shaw, and Douce. The Rev. T. Hartwell Horne added a series of indexes, and published the catalogue in 1812.*

* Nichol’s Literary Illustrations, vol. vii., p. 591.

On the death of Edward, Earl of Oxford, in 1741, his widow,* who is described as a “dull, worthy woman,” cared to retain few of her husband’s treasures. His various curiosities were sold by auction; his printed books, pamphlets, and engravings were disposed of to Thomas Osborne, a bookseller of Gray’s Inn, for 13,000 pounds—several thousand pounds less than the cost of their bindings. A selection of scarce pamphlets found in the library was made by Oldys, and printed in 8 volumes, in 1746, under the title of the “Harleian Miscellany.” Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote a preface to this work. The best edition of the “Harleian Miscellany” is that of Thomas Park, in 10 volumes, published between 1808-13.

* She was Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles, only daughter of John, fourth Earl of Clare, created Duke of Newcastle.

There still remained the precious manuscripts, and it had been the wish of Lord Oxford that books so carefully collected might not be dispersed. In accordance with this wish, Lady Oxford sold them to the nation in 1753 for the inconsiderable sum of 10,000 pounds. They then consisted of 7639 volumes, besides 14,236 original rolls, charters, deeds, and other documents, and these were removed to the British Museum, where they found a safe and suitable resting-place.

But although fortunately the Harleian MSS. have been preserved from the fate of so many choice volumes in the Cottonian library, they have suffered to some extent from the carelessness or dishonesty of borrowers. The second Lord Oxford was generous to a fault in lending, with the inevitable result. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the only one of his literary friends whom Lady Oxford tolerated,* wrote the following letter to her husband from Avignon in 1745, at the time when probably, the MSS. having been removed to the British Museum, attention was directed to the fact that some were missing:—

“I perfectly remember carrying back the manuscript you mention, and delivering it to Lord Oxford. I never failed returning to himself all the books he lent me. It is true I showed it to the Duchess of Montague, but we read it together, and I did not even leave it with her. I am not surprised in that vast quantity of manuscripts, some should be lost or mislaid, particularly knowing Lord Oxford to be careless of them, easily lending and as easily forgetting he had done it. I remember I carried him once one very finely

illuminated that when I delivered he did not recollect he had lent it to me, though it was but a few days before. Wherever this is, I think you had need be in no pain about it."**

Page 227

* “It is a common remark that people of brilliant parts often have no objection to relax or *rest* their understandings in the society of those whose intellects are a little more obtuse. Here was an instance: the gods never made anybody less poetical than Lady Oxford; and yet Lady Mary Wortley, though in general not over tolerant to her inferior’s incapacity, appears upon the whole to have loved nobody so well. And there was an exception equally striking in her favour; for Lady Oxford, heartily detesting most of the wits who surrounded her husband, yet admired Lady Mary with all her might-pretty much as the parish clerk reverences the rector for his Greek and Hebrew. Lady Bute confessed that she sometimes got into sad disgrace by exclaiming, ’Dear mama! how can you be so fond of that stupid woman?’ which never failed to bring upon her a sharp reprimand and a lecture against rash judgments, ending with ’Lady Oxford is not shining, but she has much more in her than such giddy things as you and your companions can discern."*— The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, edited by her great-grandson, Lord Whamcliffe, 2nd ed., vol. i., p. 66. Introduction.

** Letters, vol. ii., p. 147.

Two years after the removal of the Harleian library to the British Museum, Lady Oxford died, leaving an only daughter, Margaret Cavendish, married to William Bentinck, second Duke of Portland. She was the “noble, lovely little Peggy” sung by Prior. As she had inherited none of her father’s and grandfather’s tastes, it was fitting that the grand collection of MSS., for the sake of which they had impoverished themselves, should enrich an innumerable multitude of scholars and students of all nations and for all time.