

as a foreigner. The doubtful Plantagenet was executed at Tyburn, —his old friend John Water, of Cork, suffering with him,—on the 23rd of November. The earl was beheaded within the Tower on the 28th of the same month. "One fierce and strong wave," says the old chronicler, with a touch of pity, "devoured and swallowed both their lives." \* Hall, p. 488.

CHAPTER XII.

Edmund de la Pole, duke of Suffolk.—Marriage of Prince Arthur to Catherine of Arragon. —The Court of Henry VII.—Henry's passion for wealth.—Treaty with Scotland.—Death of Prince Arthur.—Contract of Prince Henry with Arthur's widow.—Death of Henry VII.—Extortions through Empson and Dudley.—Tendency towards absolute monarchy.—Few parliaments during this reign.—State of the Clergy.—Monastic establishments.—Population.—Agriculture.—Maritime Discovery.—Commerce.—Regulations of internal trade.—Wages.—Vagrancy.—Criminal Laws.—Public Health.—Feasts.—National Pride.—Pageants.—Sports.

AFTER fifteen years of a reign in which "the times were rough, and full of mutations and strange accidents," \* Henry VII. sits steadily on his throne. There is only one Plantagenet connexion left to give him more trouble, Edmund de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, the brother of the earl of Lincoln, whom Richard III. declared his heir. He had manifestly wronged this nobleman, by withholding from him his property, and his true title of duke, pretending that the attainer of the elder brother cancelled his right. After the oppressed man, who appears to have been rash and ill-conducted, had fled abroad, and several persons had been executed upon a charge of conspiracy with him, the king contrived to get hold of him upon a promise to spare his life, and he shut him up in the Tower, leaving to his successor his pious command to put the prisoner to death. From the commencement of the sixteenth century to the end of Henry VII.'s reign, we have neither revolts nor wars. But the policy of the king has brought about two events, which will have a powerful influence on the future destinies of this country—the marriage of his son, Arthur, prince of Wales, to Catherine of Arragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella; and the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to James IV. of Scotland.

In 1485 queen Isabella gave birth to Catalina, her youngest child. Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII. and of Elizabeth of York, was born in 1486. Their second son, Henry, was born in 1491. Catalina, or Catherine, was educated with religious strictness; and she, as well as her sisters, acquired, under the most

\* Bacon, "Dedication of History of Henry VII. to Prince Charles."

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competent masters, a complete knowledge of Latin. "She is remarkably learned," wrote Erasmus; and he adds, "not merely with reference to her sex." The young princes of England were educated with the same attention to the studies of ancient learning, never held in higher esteem than in that age of its revival. It is recorded by André, the preceptor of prince Arthur, that he had read Homer and Thucydides; Virgil, Lucan, and Ovid; Cicero and Quintilian; Cæsar, Tacitus, and other Roman historians. The younger brother was equally remarkable for his acquirements. There is a Latin letter from Henry to Erasmus, written in 1507, which the great scholar commends for its elegance. When prince Arthur was not four years old, and the Spanish princess not five, the two politic kings arranged a treaty for the union of these children. - This agreement of 1489 was confirmed by one more precise in 1490; by which Catherine's portion was to be two hundred thousand gold crowns; and one-third of the revenues of the principality of Wales, the duchy of Cornwall, and the earldom of Chester, were to be settled upon her. In subsequent years the projected union was kept in view by new conventions; and in 1499, when Arthur had reached his twelfth year, the marriage ceremony was performed; the Spanish princess being represented by proxy. In 1501 Catherine arrived; and the ceremonials were again gone through at St. Paul's on the 6th of November. There were then banquets and tournaments and pageants; and "all the nobility were set on pleasure and solace, and the king himself was principally given to joy and rejoicing."\* Before this period the annual expenses of the royal household were set at 13,059*l*.† With the avaricious habits of the king, the court was not an extravagant one; though there were occasional splendours and entertainments of a costly nature. Francesco Capello, the Venetian ambassador, was at this court in 1502; and in a very curious "Relation of the Island of England," ‡ probably written by his secretary, it is said of the king, "Though frugal to excess in his own person, he does not change any of the ancient usages of England at his court, keeping a sumptuous table; as I had the opportunity of witnessing twice that your Magnificence dined there, when I judged that there might be from six hundred to seven hundred persons at dinner."§ In the "Privy Purse Expenses" of this king, we have an insight into

\* Hall, p. 495. † Stat. 11 Hen. VII. c. 63.

‡ Translated by Charlotte Augusta Sneyd. Camden Society.

§ "Italian Relation," p. 46.

the nature of his personal expenses, which the Italian notices as "frugal to excess." In one characteristic expenditure he was most extravagant. On the 25th of March, in the year of Arthur's marriage, we find the following entry:—"Delivered and paid by the king's commandment for divers and many jewels brought out of France, against the marriage of my lord prince, 14,000*l*."\* The editor of this record says, "his desire for the acquirement of jewels scarcely knew any bounds; and on them alone he spent 110,000*l*." It appears to us that this investment of money in jewels was a part of the habitual prudence of the king. Some of his wealth thus lay in a small compass; was of a generally received value; and was available in any evil turn of fortune. In architecture he disbursed large sums. His palace at Richmond, and his chapel at Westminster, were of the most costly of these works. Beyond these matters, he was frugal even when he meant to be generous. He saw the policy of encouraging navigation and discovery, if such encouragement should be without cost to himself; and in March, 1496, he granted letters-patent to John Cabot and his two sons, to sail at their own cost and charges, with five ships, for the discovery of new countries, upon condition that the king should have a fifth of the profits. In 1497 we have this entry of money drawn from the privy purse: "To him that found the new isle, 10*l*." The discoverer of Newfoundland had no mighty reward. In 1502, Henry gives "To men of Bristol that found the isle, 5*l*." He was more liberal to one from whose science he expected immediate results, than to the hardy navigators who were carrying the English flag to shores before unknown. He gives "to a multiplier in the Tower of London, 33*l*. 6*s*. 8*d*." The "multiplier" was an alchemist. The Christmas festivities of the court do not appear to have been very expensive. The king occasionally draws a few pounds to play at cards. He gives 1*l*. "to four players of Essex, in reward," and another 1*l*. "to the French players." On his own players he bestows 2*l*. 13*s*. 4*d*. in reward. The "players of the king's interludes" formed a regular part of the royal establishment, consisting of four performers, who each received five marks annually.† Noblemen had their players, who performed at court. The regular drama was not yet created. It is probable that these "interludes" were something different from the "miracle plays" which were enacted in Coventry and other towns by the inmates of

\* "Excerpta Historica," p. 125.

† See Mr. Collier's "Annals of the Stage," vol. i. p. 37.

religious houses. There is a curious account by Warton of "a moral interlude and a pithy, written by Maister Skelton, laureate," entitled "The Negramansir;" in which the characters are a necromancer, the devil, a notary, Simony and Avarice.\* This was "played before the king and other estates at Woodstock, on Palm Sunday." Out of such materials were the court entertainments composed, as well as those which were played in the palaces of noblemen and bishops; in which "Belzebug with a beard," as in Skelton's play, and the old contest between the "Vice" and the devil formed the chief subjects of amusement. In some of the lives of sir Thomas More this anecdote is related: "The cardinal [Morton] often would make trial of his pregnant wit, especially at Christmas merriments, when, having plays for recreation, this youth would suddenly step up amongst the players, and never studying before upon the matter, make often a part of his own invention; which was so witty and so full of jests, that he alone made more sport and laughter than all the players besides." † We must not linger amidst these outward shows of a courtly life, which, if we could look beneath the surface, was, in all likelihood, as dull and formal as the temper of the sovereign could render it. We find payments to minstrels, morrice-dancers mummings fools, tumblers, bear-wards; and higher artists were not disregarded, for "an Italian, a poet," "the Blind-poet," and "a Rymer of Scotland," come in for their rewards. But in that palace of Richmond, which Henry raised up out of the ashes of the older palace of Shene, abided that evil spirit, Avarice, which Skelton presumed to satirise, and to hand over to his principal personage to be tormented. The ridicule was somewhat bold, at a time when the king had discovered how his vast income could be largely increased without asking parliament for subsidies. The annual revenue from the royal estates, and the properties which had lapsed to the crown, were estimated at about one hundred and seventy thousand pounds, of which forty thousand were derived from customs ‡ Henry is, according to Bacon, reported to have died worth one million eight hundred thousand pounds. We shall presently have to show the course which was pursued by this most extortionate of capitalists. The ingrained covetousness and cunning of the man,—for "of

\* "History of Ancient Poetry," vol. iii. p. 185.

† Quoted from Hoddesdon's Life, in Dibdin's edit. of "Utopia," vol. i. p. 48.

‡ See "Italian Relation," in which there is a minute account, apparently derived from some official source.



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nature, assuredly, he coveted to accumulate treasure,"\* and "neither did he care how cunning they were that he did employ, for he thought himself to have the master-reach"†—these qualities made him, to use plain words, a royal swindler. He went far beyond his age as an exaggerated representative of the newly-born spirit of money-making, as opposed to the ancient spirit of violence. He carried it forward into that unscrupulous passion for wealth, which has rendered the grasping accumulator so detestable at all times, and in no times more to be despised than in our own, when he is too often regarded as the highest model of commercial wisdom.

In January, 1502, a treaty was concluded between England and Scotland, in which a perpetual peace was to be cemented by the marriage of James with the eldest daughter of Henry. There had been a long negotiation upon the subject of this union; and some doubts were expressed in the council of Henry that if the king's two sons were to die without issue, "the kingdom of England would fall to the king of Scotland, which might prejudice the monarchy of England. Whereunto the king replied, 'that if that should be, Scotland would be but an accession to England, and not England to Scotland, for that the greater would draw the less.' " Bacon related this when the oracular opinion of Henry had been realised in the union of the two crowns. The marriage of Margaret took place by proxy; but, on account of her youth, her departure to Scotland was deferred till July, 1503. Meanwhile, an event of great import had taken place. Arthur, prince of Wales, who kept his court at Ludlow, died in April, 1502, only four months after his marriage. The two kings, who were wonderfully matched in their ability at bargain-making, now negotiated for the marriage of young prince Henry with his brother's widow. A year passed in determining whether the princess Catherine should be returned to her father, with the hundred thousand crowns which had been paid as a moiety of her dowry,—than which nothing could be more disagreeable to Henry; or whether Ferdinand should advance another hundred thousand crowns, and the second marriage be legalised by a dispensation from the pope. The dispensation was obtained; and the marriage-contract was completed in 1503, with a solemn ceremonial. On this occasion a form was gone through, in which a person was appointed to object that the marriage was unlawful, and another to defend it as "good and effectual in the law of

\* Bacon, p. 236.

† *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Christ's church." \* Mr. Hallam suggests that "there seems to be something in this of the tortuous policy of Henry VII." From the same cause it might arise that, before Henry was fifteen, he protested, in legal form, against the contract which had been made during his nonage. This marriage, which was not solemnised during the life of Henry VII., probably excited some scruples beyond the circle of the court. It was a contract which had memorable results, "the secret providence of God ordaining that marriage to be the occasion of great events and changes." †

Elizabeth, the queen of Henry VII., died in February, 1503. In that year the king was busied in the stipulations of Prince Henry's marriage-contract, and the parade of his daughter Margaret's progress to Scotland. But the widower was afterwards seeking for an advantageous alliance for himself; and he tried his fortune in three quarters, in each of which there was a prospect of a large marriage-portion. The deceased king of Naples had bequeathed an immense sum to his queen. There was heavy disappointment; for the agents of Henry described her as perfect in all endowments, except that of the expected fortune, which the reigning king refused to pay. Isabella, queen of Castile, in her own right, was now dead, and her daughter Juana, the wife of the archduke Philip, received the sceptre of Castile from her father, Ferdinand, now king of Arragon. Philip had a sister, Margaret; and the Castilian sovereigns having been thrown on the shores of England in a tempest, Henry seized his opportunity, and detained them, on various pretences, for three months, till Philip had agreed that his sister should marry the king of England, with a portion of three hundred thousand crowns. But while this negotiation was proceeding to completion, Philip died; and then king Henry thought that the widow, Juana, would give him a far nobler portion in the crown of Castile, than the Margaret who was promised to him. But Ferdinand of Arragon steadily refused to allow his daughter Juana, who was of deranged intellect, to come within the toils of the wily negotiator with whom he had fought so many battles of statecraft. Meanwhile the Spanish monarch withheld that part of the portion of Catherine which was promised to be paid upon her marriage with prince Henry; and the English king, to annoy her father, treated the widow of one son and the betrothed of another, with a harshness which indisposed her for the completion of her second marriage. A length two instalments of that

\* Hallam, "Constitutional History," vol. i. chap. ii., Note.

† Bacon, p. 207.

marriage-portion were extracted from Ferdinand, according to an agreement that they should be paid half-yearly. Henry the Seventh died before the third and fourth became due.\* That event took place at Richmond Palace on the 21st of April, 1509. He had been in weak health for several years; and the prospect of his danger induced him to do some acts of mercy, such as satisfying the creditors of small debtors, and forgiving offences against the crown, with the exception of murder and felony. But the latter years of his life were disgraced by the extortions of his officers, who wrested the law to do the same work of plunder as had been accomplished by the sword and the fetter in the days of baronial tyranny. "He was touched," says Bacon, "with remorse for the same;" but the extortions "went on with as great rage as ever." In his will he declared "that his mind was, that restitution should be made of those sums which had been unjustly taken by his officers." His historian thinks that he happily died in his prosperity, "to withdraw him from any future blow of fortune; which, certainly, in regard of the great hatred of the people, had not been impossible to have come upon him." He was buried at Westminster, in the magnificent chapel which he built beside the abbey.

The chief extortions which this king practised, through two lawyers, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley, were carried on by prosecutions against persons of substance, especially the rich merchants of London, under obsolete laws, in which false witnesses, called promoters, were systematically employed. There can be no stronger testimony against these enormities than an eloquent and fearless passage in the "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More; in which he describes what might happen if "some king and his counsel were together, whetting their wits and devising what subtle craft they might invent to enrich the king with great treasures of money." These worthies suggest—The alteration of the standard of money; a pretence of war to raise taxes, and then make peace with great solemnity and holy ceremonies; a revival of old and moth-eaten laws, to exact fines for their transgression; prohibitions of many things under penalties, to be remitted by dispensations for money, and by selling privileges and licences; and, lastly, to corrupt and overawe the judges "that they may, in every matter, dispute and reason for the king's rights." No one can

\* Dr. Lingard has given this account of the circumstances which delayed the marriage of Henry and Catherine, as derived by him from Spanish documents. The receipt for the second instalment, in 1508, was signed by the two Henries.

doubt that More,—who at the time when this book was published, 1516, was a privy-counsellor of Henry VIII.,—distinctly pointed at the political system of Henry VII., unexampled for its combination of tyranny and meanness. He sums up with this bitter satire against that system: "To conclude, all the counsellors agree and consent together, with the rich Crassus, that no abundance of gold can be sufficient for a prince, which must keep and maintain an army: furthermore that a king, though he would, can do nothing unjustly. For all that men have, yea, also the men themselves, be all his. And that every man hath so much of his own as the king's gentleness hath not taken from him. And that it shall be most for the king's advantage, that his subjects have very little or nothing in their possession, as whose safeguard doth herein consist that his people do not wax wanton and wealthy through riches and liberty; because where these things be, there men be not wont patiently to obey hard, unjust, and unlawful commandments. Whereas, on the other part, need and poverty doth hold down and keep under stout courages, and maketh them patient perforce, taking from them bold and rebelling stomachs."\*

It is the opinion of the historian of our "Constitutional History," that "there had evidently been a retrograde tendency towards absolute monarchy between the reigns of Henry VI. and Henry VIII."† An Italian historian, Biondi, who wrote in the time of James I., describes our mixed constitution as "a well-constituted aristocratic-democratic monarchy"—(aristodemocratic monarchy). It was the policy of the first Tudor to impair, if not to destroy, the aristocratic branch, before the democratic had acquired any great political force. The Venetian secretary says, "of these lords, who are called *milites*, there are very few left, and these diminish daily;" and he adds that the king, Henry VII., had "appointed certain military services to be performed by his own attendants and familiars, who he knows can be trusted upon any urgent occasion."‡ These were the yeomen of the guard, a body first instituted by this king, but solely for domestic security and parade. They were, according to a record, "proved archers, strong, bold, and valiant men." But with their damask jackets, embroidered with vine branches and the red rose, they were more fitted to "stand in passages upon a row, when the king's highness moved from chamber to chamber," than to bring their bright halberds into

\* "Utopia," Introductory Discourse.

† Hallam, "Constitutional Hist.," chap. I.

‡ Italian Relation," p. 10.

the battle-field. The Tudor king did not establish his partial despotism by the military arm. His great instrument for reducing the pride and power of the nobles was by fine and forfeiture. The earl of Northumberland might keep his solemn state at Warkworth and Prudhow; have his council, his chamberlain, his treasurer, his constables, his chaplains, with a hundred and sixty-six persons in his regular household.\* The third duke of Buckingham might entertain four hundred and fifty-nine guests at Thornbury Castle in 1507.† But if either of these great lords, or any other, gathered round them a body of habitual retainers, the Statutes of Liveries, which were disregarded in the preceding reigns, were now to be strictly enforced. All retainers were held unlawful, but those who received wages as household servants; and for each retainer a fine of 5*l.* per month was enforced.‡ Bacon has an amusing anecdote which is highly characteristic of Henry VII. and his times: "There remaineth to this day a report, that the king was on a time entertained by the earl of Oxford,—that was his principal servant, both for war and peace,—nobly and sumptuously, at his castle at Henningham. And at the king's going away, the earl's servants stood, in a seemly manner, in their livery coats, with cognisances, ranged on both sides, and made the king a lane. The king called the earl to him, and said: 'My lord, I have heard much of your hospitality, but I see it is greater than the speech. These handsome gentlemen and yeomen, which I see on both sides of me, are sure your menial servants.' The earl smiled, and said, 'It may please your grace, that were not for mine ease. They are most of them my retainers, that are come to do me service at such a time as this, and chiefly to see your grace.' The king started a little, and said: 'By my faith, my lord, I thank you for your good cheer, but I may not endure to have my laws broken in my sight. My attorney must speak with you.' And it is part of the report, that the earl compounded for no less than fifteen thousand marks." How the nobles were ground in what Bacon calls "Empson's and Dudley's mills," may be seen in the following entry in one of the accounts of sums received by Dudley, which still exists: § "Delivered three exemplifications, under the seal of King's Bench, of the condemnation of the lord Bergavenny, for such retainers as he was indicted of in

\* See the Northumberland Household Book.

† "Archæological Journal," No. xxxi. p. 278.

‡ Statute 19 Hen. VII. c. 14.

§ Harleian MS. in the British Museum.

Kent, amounting unto, for his part only, after the rate of the months, 69,000*l*.\*

One of the early statutes of this reign,—“An Act giving the Court of Star-Chamber authority to punnyshe divers mysdemours,”—has been occasionally represented as the origin of that oppressive court, which, growing more and more arbitrary under the Tudors and Stuarts, was at last finally abolished by statute in the 16th year of Charles I. In that statute it was said that “the judges of the Star-Chamber had not kept themselves within the points limited by the statute 3rd Henry VII.” These points were offences by maintenance, liveries, and retainers; untrue returns of sheriffs; taking money by juries; and great riots and unlawful assemblies. This court was probably useful and necessary in many respects; although it was open to the charge of being such an instrument of arbitrary power as was exercised by the council of the earlier kings, who met in what was called the Star-Chamber. The members of the Court of Star-Chamber of Henry VII. were limited, as well as its objects; consisting of the chancellor, treasurer, and keeper of the privy seal, with a bishop and temporal lord of the council, and the chief justices of the King’s Bench and Common Pleas, or two other justices in their absence. But even with these limitations, both of the objects and ministers of the court, it is easy to see that its formal establishment by statute, thus sanctioning encroachments such as those of the council which many previous statutes had endeavoured to suppress, was a step towards depriving the subject of the right of being tried by his peers. That Henry wielded this instrument for oppressive purposes we may readily believe. During this reign, there was little opportunity afforded to parliament to demand remedy of grievances. There were only seven parliaments called under this king, who was twenty-four years on the throne. From the first to the twelfth year there were six parliaments. There was then an interval of seven years, during which no parliament was held. That of the 19th year was the last. In dispensing with subsidies, Henry got rid of the privilege which was the sole check upon prerogative. The Lords and Commons appear to have surrendered the Constitution into his keeping, when it was enacted that, as the king was not minded, for the good and ease of his subjects, to call another parliament for a long time, he should have power to reverse

\* This account is given at length in Mr. Turner’s “History of England,” vol. iv. p. 156.

and annul all attainders, and pardon all forfeitures, and that his letters-patent should be as valid as acts of parliament.

At the commencement of the reign of Henry VII., the long immunity of the clergy from any interference of the legislature with their course of life, however criminal, was in a slight degree interrupted by a statute, which recognises the existence in the commonwealth of “priests, clerks, and religious men openly noised of incontinent living.” The “Act for bishops to punish priests and other religious men for dishonest life,” provides that they may be committed to ward and prison, upon examination and other lawful proof, and that no action of wrongful imprisonment shall arise out of such commitment.\* But by a statute of three years later we learn how frightful were the exemptions from the course of justice which persons in holy orders obtained. The “benefit of clergy,” which remained partially in force till abolished in the reform of the criminal law in 1828, was originally devised to exempt all those who could plead their clerkship (*privilegium clericale*) from temporal jurisdiction; and in an age of very general ignorance all those were held to be clerks who could read. The statute of Henry VII. recites that “persons lettered” have been the more bold to commit murder, robbery, and other mischievous deeds, because they have been continually admitted to the benefit of the clergy upon trust of the privilege of the church.” The Act, therefore, provides that if a person not in orders shall have once been admitted to such benefit he shall not be again so admitted; but be marked with M. upon the brawn of the left thumb, if convicted of murder, and with T. if for any other felony; and be then delivered to the ordinary. Persons in orders, if asking their clergy a second time, are required to produce letters of orders, or a certificate from the ordinary.† The offender, so handed over to the ordinary, almost invariably escaped with total impunity, or with some slight punishment. Another enormous abuse was that of Sanctuary, which was not abolished by law till the reign of James I.‡ This privilege of sanctuary was often connected with what is styled in the law-books “Abjuration of the realm.” In the “Relation of the Island of England,” there is a curious and amusing description of the custom of sanctuary and of abjuration, which is essentially confirmed by other authorities: “The clergy are they who have the supreme sway over the country, both in peace and

\* Statute, 1 Henry VII. c. 4.

† 4 Henry VII. c. 13.

‡ The Sanctuary at Westminster, of which we have made repeated mention, was pulled down in the reign of George I.

war. Amongst other things, they have provided that a number of sacred places in the kingdom should serve for the refuge and escapes of all delinquents; and no one, were he a traitor to the crown, or had he practised against the king's own person, can be taken out of these by force. And a villain of this kind, who, for some great excess that he has committed, has been obliged to take refuge in one of these sacred places, often goes out of it to brawl in the public streets, and then, returning to it, escapes with impunity for every fresh offence he may have been guilty of. This is no detriment to the purses of the priests, nor to the other perpetual sanctuaries; but every church is a sanctuary for forty days; and, if a thief or murderer, who has taken refuge in one, cannot leave it in safety during those forty days, he gives notice that he wishes to leave England. In which case, being stripped to the shirt by the chief magistrate of the place, and a crucifix placed in his hand, he is conducted along the road to the sea, where, if he finds a passage, he may go with a 'God speed you.' But if he should not find one, he walks into the sea up to the throat, and three times asks for a passage; and this is repeated till a ship appears, which comes for him, and so he departs in safety. It is not unamusing to hear how the women and children lament over the misfortune of these exiles, asking 'how they can live so destitute out of England;' adding, moreover, that 'they had better have died than go out of the world,' as if England were the whole world.\* Henry VII., however, procured a bull from pope Innocent VII. to enable the civil power to remove from sanctuary those who went out to commit crimes and return again: with other limitations of the privilege, especially as to matters of treason.

At the end of the reign of Henry VII. the monastic establishments were at the culminating point of their wealth and luxury. Some of the gross profligacy which gave the appearance, if not the reality, of justice to their violent suppression was the subject of papal admonitions in 1490. But in their hospitality and their magnificence they commanded much popular support; and nothing seemed so unlikely as that in thirty years they should be swept away. There was scarcely a cloud, "no bigger than a man's hand," to give sign of the coming storm. It is only when we have evidence of the real contempt which the higher order of minds, even amongst churchmen, felt for the impostures which contributed so mainly to the riches of the monastic shrines, that

we discover how doubtful was that tenure of popularity which rested more upon vain delusions than upon the real benefit which the people derived from the teachings of religion. Henry VII. went in pilgrimage to Walsingham in 1487, and "visited our Lady's Church, famous for miracles." We have seen how other great persons went this pilgrimage in the times of Edward IV., and how zealous they were for "Our Lady's House of Walsingham."\* But amongst the visitors of this shrine at the beginning of the sixteenth century was one who has recorded what he saw with a sly gravity, which shows how the wonders had come to be regarded by the thoughtful and the learned. Hundreds of pilgrims might still travel many a weary mile, believing that God had set the galaxy in the heavens to be their guide by night, that they might find

"Unto the town of Walsingham,  
Which is the right and ready way." †

But there were others who went there to smile at the extent of human credulity. When Erasmus had journeyed to Walsingham he saw strange sights which he has described in his "Colloquies." A guide attends him, like the modern cathedral-verger. "The joint of a man's finger is exhibited to us, the largest of three. I kiss it; and I then ask, Whose relics were these? He says, St. Peter's. The Apostle? He said, Yes. Then, observing the size of the joint, which might have been that of a giant, I remarked, Peter must have been a man of very large size. At this, one of my companions burst into a laugh; which I certainly took ill, for if he had been quiet the attendant would have shown us all the relics." To exhibit some of the more important objects to be worshipped a canon of the church came forward; and when the learned sceptic inquired, as civilly as he could, by what proofs he was assured that "what looked like ground chalk, mixed with white of egg," was the milk of the Virgin, "the canon as if possessed by a fury, looking aghast upon us, and apparently horrified at the blasphemous inquiry, replied 'What need to ask such questions, when you have the authenticated inscription?'" The question was asked through an interpreter, a friend of the great scholar of Rotterdam. This was Aldrich, afterwards provost of Eton, and bishop of Carlisle. To Canterbury Erasmus also went, with his admirable friend dean Colet; ‡ the founder of St. Paul's School; whom he, with his

\* See *anté*, p. 96.

† "Percy's Reliques," vol. ii. p. 79.

‡ Colet is called "Gratian," in the Colloquy; but there is no doubt of the identity of Gratian with the Dean of St. Paul's.



quaint humour calls "a somewhat unmanageable compaction—a learned and pious man, but not so well affected to this part of religion [the reverence for relics] as he could wish." They saw the amazing riches of the shrine of St. Thomas; and in the sacristy a box of black leather was produced, and when it was opened "immediately all knelt and worshipped." It contained "some torn fragments of linen, most of them retaining marks of dirt," which were affirmed to have belonged to the holy martyr. Colet, an Englishman "of no small consequence," was requested to accept one of these rags; but he "not sufficiently grateful, drew it together with his fingers, not without some intimation of disgust, and disdainfully replaced it." There is a little hospital still existing at Harbaldown, near Canterbury, which Erasmus and his friend passed in returning to London. It was "a hospital for a few old men, one of whom runs out as soon as they perceive any horsemen approaching. He sprinkles his holy water, and frequently offers the upper part of a shoe, bound with a brazen rim, in which is a piece of glass resembling a jewel. Those that kiss it give some small coin." When the shoe was stretched out, the friend of Erasmus "asked what the man wanted. He said, that it was the shoe of St. Thomas. On that my friend was irritable, and turning to me, he said,—What! do these brutes imagine that we must kiss every good man's shoe?"\* These relations are important, as showing how gross were the superstitions of England a few years only before the Reformation; and how, during more than a century, when it had been dangerous to evince any disrespect for the corruptions of the church, the spirit of the early Reformers had not died out. In answer to a question by his interlocutor in the Colloquy, whether Colet was a Wickliffite, Erasmus answers, "I do not think so, although he had read Wickliffe's books; where he got them I cannot say."

Although the material wealth of England had been decidedly increasing during the reign of Henry VII., we have abundant evidence that its natural resources were very imperfectly brought into operation. The population appeared to the Venetian traveller not to bear any proportion to the fertility of the land and the riches of the cities. In passing from Dover to London and from London to Oxford, the country appeared to him to be very thinly inhabited. He inquired, also, of those who rode to the north of the kingdom,

\* Those parts of the Colloquies which relate to Walsingham and Canterbury are translated by Mr. J. G. Nicholls, with excellent notes—1849.

and of those who went to Bristol and into Cornwall, and found there was no difference in their report upon this point. The population at the beginning of the sixteenth century has been estimated at four millions; but the data for this conclusion are scarcely to be relied on.

In an Act of 1488-9, "concerning the Isle of Wight," it is recited that the isle is "late decayed of people;"\* and in an Act of the same session, "against pulling down of towns," it is declared, that "where, in some towns, two hundred persons were occupied and lived by their lawful labours, now be there occupied two or three herdmen."† The grievance to which this decay of population is ascribed, is the conversion of tilled land into pasture; and the consolidation of farms and farmholds "into one man's hold and hands, that of old time were wont to be in many several persons' holds and hands, and many several households kept in them, and thereby much people multiplied." This is the process of which More so bitterly complains, but of which he judged with the half-knowledge of his time on all economical questions. "Forsooth, my lord, quoth I,"—he is addressing Morton,—"your sheep, that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities: for look, in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest and therefore dearest wool,—there, noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots, holy men, no doubt, not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands, nor being content that they live in rest and pleasure, nothing profiting, yea, much noying the weal public, leave no ground for tillage. They inclose all into pastures; they throw down houses; they pluck down towns, and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheep-house. And, as though you lost no small quantity of ground by forests, chases, lands, and parks, those good holy men turn all dwelling-places and all glebe land into desolation and wilderness." The houses thrown down, and the towns plucked down, were the wretched hovels,—"the houses made of sticks and dirt,"—of which the Spaniard took note in the time of queen Mary.‡ But it was not the wretchedness of the

\* 4 Hen. VII., cap. 16.

† 4 Hen. VII., cap. 19.

‡ Harrison, "Description of England," p. 187, in Holinshed's Chronicles.

buildings that caused them to be removed, but the absence of those means of life which were more abundantly found half a century later, when the same Spaniard said, "These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonly so well as the king." In the time in which Henry VII. legislated, and More declaimed against the decay of population through pasturage, the tillage of the land was so unprofitable that it afforded no return for the employment of capital. It yielded only a miserable subsistence to those who worked it, with imperfect instruments; with no knowledge of the rotation of crops; with no turnip husbandry to fatten sheep less wastefully than in the pastures; with no sufficient knowledge of the value of manures. The very process by which, upon a true application of commercial intercourse to agriculture, the land might be improved, was reprobated by the author of the "Utopia," in the enforcement of his mistaken benevolence. The rich men, he says, buy great cattle "abroad very cheap, and afterwards when they be fatted in their pastures, they sell them again exceeding dear." The difference between cheapness and dearness was a clear addition to the national wealth. The employment of capital in the feeding of sheep, being the more profitable mode of its use, speedily produced a greater demand for the labour of the whole country, than the ancient mode of cultivating small patches of land by the cottier-tenantry, who had succeeded the serfs of the earlier times. The pastures were furnishing employment to the manufacturers, the retailers, the merchants, of the great towns; and the profit of the pastures would, in course of time, bring about that larger system of tillage which would more perfectly unite the operations of the shepherd and the ploughman under the same tenancy. It is not to be imagined that, at the period of which we are speaking, pasturage had superseded tillage. The Venetian traveller, speaking of the general aspect of the country, says, "England is all diversified by pleasant undulating hills and beautiful valleys, nothing being to be seen but agreeable woods, or extensive meadows, or lands in cultivation."\* But he also says, "Agriculture is not practised in this island beyond what is required for the consumption of the people; because, were they to plough and sow all the land that was capable of cultivation, they might sell a quantity of grain to the surrounding countries."† It was more profitable to export wool and broad-cloth than to export grain; and

\* "Italian Relation," p. 20.

† *Ibid.*, p. 10.

no legislation and no philosophy could compel the application of capital to the growth of corn where it could be more advantageously applied to the growth of sheep. The indirect stimulus which a judicious investment of accumulated wealth in one branch of industry must produce upon all industries, was not then understood; nor was it understood during succeeding periods of growing prosperity. It is scarcely understood even in our own day. The belief that land and trade could not prosper together, was a fallacy which the more sagacious of the economists of the seventeenth century did not succeed in exploding; and which has scarcely yet ceased to haunt the imaginations of a few whom experience will not make wise.

The discovery of Newfoundland by Cabot, which was not followed up by any settlement upon the island at that time, arose out of the spirit of enterprise which was excited amongst the maritime nations of Europe by the great success of Bartholomew Dias, of Columbus, and of Vasco de Gama. The passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, partially effected by Dias in 1487, and completed by Vasco de Gama in 1498; and the discovery of the New World by the great Genoese whom Ferdinand and Isabella so tardily supported—these influenced but slowly the growth of English commerce. When the brother of Columbus, after being captured by pirates, obtained an audience of Henry VII., the king desired him to send for the man who had been labouring, for seven tedious years, to make his magnificent project comprehended by the courtiers and monks of the Spanish monarchy. At this juncture Queen Isabella had taken up the cause of the ardent navigator; and he had set out upon that expedition whose triumph was to give a new direction to the intercourse of the whole human race. That Henry would have offered his jewels for the cost of the great adventure, as Isabella did, is very doubtful. But gradually his subjects profited by these momentous discoveries; although the parsimony which forbade the king directly to support any adventurers gave little example to the English merchants to embark in the direct trade to the East or the West. The products of India and of the West Indian islands became branches of English commerce; and the people obtained a more extended enjoyment of foreign luxuries by their comparative cheapness in the marts of Portugal and Spain. The commercial enterprises of the country were necessarily restricted by its legislation, adapted to some imaginary necessity for accomplishing a good or preventing an