

CHAPTER XIX.

Birth of the Princess Elizabeth.—Preparations for throwing off the papal power.—Statute of Appeals.—Cranmer's judgment declared illegal by brief of the pope.—Statute for punishment of heresy.—Burning of Frith.—Act of Succession.—Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent.—Her execution with others.—Fisher and More implicated in her proceedings.—Oath to be taken according to the Act of Succession.—Fisher and More, declining to swear to the preamble, sent to the Tower.—Act of Supremacy.—First Fruits and Tenths given to the king.—New definitions of treason.—The monks of the Charterhouse refuse to acknowledge Henry the Head of the Church.—Their execution.—Burning of Hollanders for Heresy.—Fisher and More decline to make answer to questions as to the Supremacy.—Their condemnation.—Their deaths.

AT the beginning of September, 1533, queen Anne Boleyn is at Greenwich, awaiting the event which would determine the succession to the throne. In anticipation of this event, learned clerks had to prepare formal letters purporting to come from the queen herself; and a letter to lord Cobham, which has been preserved, was ready for the signet of the queen to be affixed. On the 7th of September, certain blanks are to be filled up: "Whereas it has pleased the goodness of Almighty God, of his infinite mercy and grace, to send unto us, at this time, good speed in the deliverance and bringing forth of a Prince." In two passages of this letter the final *s* has been added to the first written word "Prince."* The birth of a daughter was a disappointment to the king. It would probably have been more so, could he have looked into futurity, and have seen that under the reign of this princess, the religion of the country would be firmly placed upon a much broader basis than his own narrow views of ecclesiastical reform; and the honour of the country far more nobly sustained against foreign enemies than in his petty wars of personal ambition. The christening of Elizabeth was performed at Greenwich, with extraordinary magnificence. Cranmer was a prosaic godfather. Poetry has made him an eloquent prophet.†

It is unnecessary for us here to trace the political intrigues on the part of the pope, the emperor, and the king of France, through which the final separation of England from the control or interfer-

* State Papers, vol. i. p. 407. † Shakspeare, "Henry VIII." act v. scene 4.

ence of the Holy See was so long protracted. There had been various movements early in 1533, towards this end. The parliament had passed the Statute of Appeals,—the title of which sufficiently shows its general object: "An act that Appeals in such cases as have been used to be pursued to the See of Rome, shall not be from henceforth had nor used but within this realm."* The opening of this statute, setting forth the independence of the sovereignty of England, presents a fine example of the strength of the English language—its grand organ-swell—as it was written in Tyndale's bible, and some other works of this period: "Where, by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king, having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same; unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms and by names of Spirituality and Temporality, be bounded and owing to bear, next to God, a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God, with plenary, whole, and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative, and jurisdiction, to render and yield justice and final determination to all manner of folk, residents or subjects within this his realm, in all causes, matters, debates, and contentions happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint or provocation to any foreign prince or potentate of the world." This statute was a declaration of war, and the pope received it at as such. But he still hesitated. Strong influences were brought to bear upon him; but he still forbore to declare England out of the bosom of the church. In July, by a brief, Cranmer's judgment was declared illegal; and the king was held to have incurred the penalties of excommunication. But the final thunder-bolt was yet in the uplifted hand. Meanwhile the government proceeded boldly in preparing the people for the great impending change. There is a very curious Minute of Council of the 2nd of December, 1533, in which it is ordered, that such as shall preach at Paul's Cross, shall, from Sunday to Sunday, teach and declare to the people, that he that now calleth himself pope, is only bishop of Rome, "and hath no more authority and jurisdiction, by God's law, within this realm, than any other foreign bishop hath, which is nothing at all; and that such authority as he hath claimed here-

* 24 Hen. VIII. c. 2.

tofore, hath been only by usurpation."* The mode in which opinion was to be influenced, in a time before newspapers and reviews is curiously shown in a duplicate, with variations, of this Minute, by which a strict commandment was to be given to the mayor, aldermen, and common-council of London, "that every of them in their houses shall liberally speak at their boards, and also teach their servants to declare, that he that calleth himself the pope is but the bishop of Rome." The same principle was ordered to be declared to their families by the nobility of the realm; "and to command their said families to bruit the same in all places where they shall come." † It was little matter now whether the king were excommunicated and England placed under an interdict. There could be no effectual reconciliation now with Rome. Practically, the final separation was accomplished. The people were appealed to; and the appeal touched them in one of the most sensitive parts of their nationality. They forgot the origin of the contest, and looked only to its results as their deliverance from a thralldom.

The time was come for renouncing the authority of the bishop of Rome; but true religious freedom appeared as distant as in the reign of Henry IV., when the Lollards were regarded as public enemies. The statute of the 25th of Henry VIII., "for punishment of heresy," declares that speaking against the pope or his decrees is not heresy; but that heretics, upon lawful conviction and refusal to abjure, or after abjuration shall relapse, "shall be committed to lay power to be burned in open places, for example of other, as hath been accustomed." In the same letter in which Cranmer describes the coronation of queen Anne, he relates, with an indifference which makes us shudder, the fate of two victims of persecution:—

"Other news have we none notable, but that one Fryth, which was in the Tower in prison, was appointed by the king's grace to be examined before me, my lord of London, my lord of Winchester, my lord of Suffolk, my lord-chancellor, and my lord of Wiltshire, whose opinion was so notably erroneous, that we could not despatch him, but was fain to leave him to the determination of his ordinary, which is the bishop of London. His said opinion is of such nature that he thought it not necessary to be believed as an article of our faith, that there is the very corporal presence of Christ within the host and sacrament of the altar; and holdeth of this point most after the opinion of Æcolampadius. And surely I myself sent for

* State Papers, vol. i. p. 411.

† *Ibid.*, p. 411.

him three or four times to persuade him to leave that his imagination, but for all that we could do therein he would not apply to any counsel; notwithstanding now he is at a final end with all examinations, for my lord of London hath given sentence and delivered him to the secular power, where he looketh every day to go unto the fire. And there is also condemned with him one Andrew, a tailor of London, for the said self-same opinion."*

If those who were thus groping their way in the dark morning of the Reformation did not hesitate to punish for opinions which they secretly cherished, we can comprehend how they would show little mercy to those who were inciters of opposition to the political and religious attitude of the government. The "Act for the establishment of the king's succession" † brought within the penalties of treason all the covert hostility of many of the people to the divorce and the second marriage. This statute declared the first marriage unlawful and void;—the second marriage "undoubtedly, true, sincere, and perfect." The king's issue by the lady Anne were pronounced to be the inheritors of the imperial crown, and every manifest deed by writing or printing, to the prejudice of this succession, was to be taken as high treason; and if by spoken words, as misprision of treason. The attainder and execution of Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, and of some who believed in her; and the charges against bishop Fisher and sir Thomas More, in connection with this delusion, furnish a remarkable illustration of the spirit that prevailed in this dangerous crisis.

In the parish of Aldington there dwelt a servant-girl, afterwards a nun of the priory of St. Sepulchre's in Canterbury, named Elizabeth Barton. In the words of the statute for her attainder, she "happened to be visited with sickness, and by occasion thereof brought in such debility and weakness of her brain, because she could not eat nor drink by a long space, that in the violence of her infirmity she seemed to be in trances, and spake and uttered many foolish and idle words." ‡ In this parish where Elizabeth Barton dwelt, there was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, called Court-a-Street; and it was pretended that there she was miraculously restored to health. At a season of less public excitement, her "foolish and idle words" would have taken some ordinary course. But the feeble mind of this woman was impressed by the talk of those around her; and her fantastic dreams took the perilous

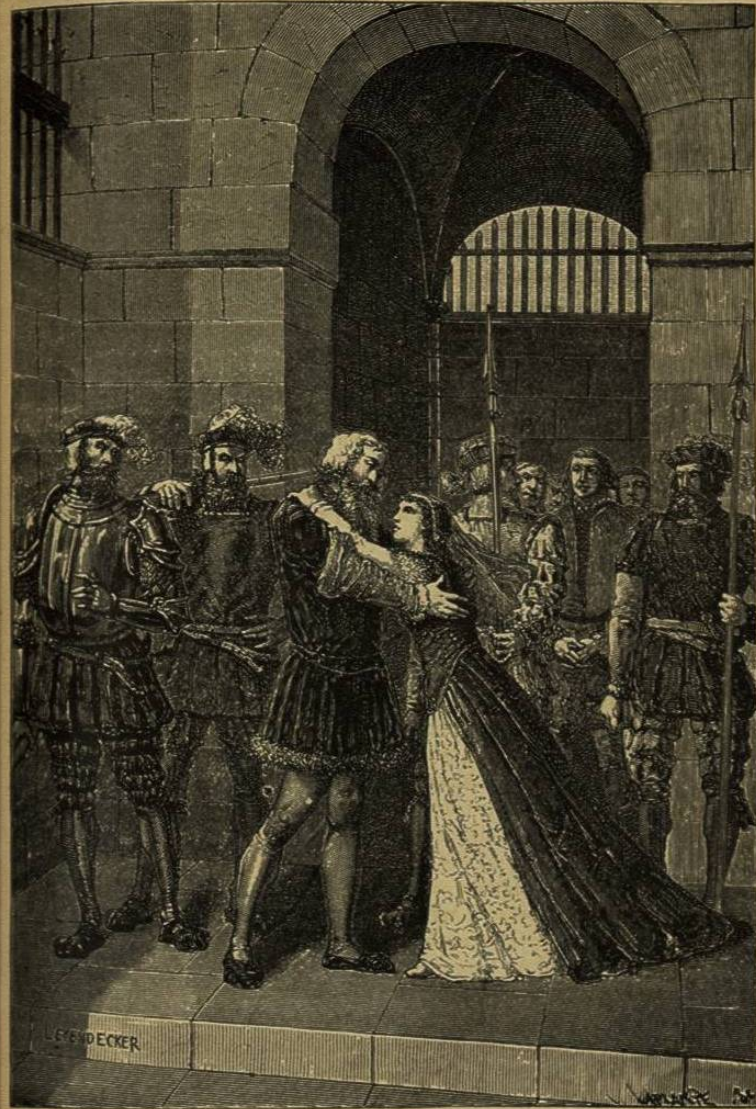
* Ellis, First Series, vol. ii. p. 40.

† 25 Hen. VIII. c. 22.

‡ *Ibid.*, c. 12.

shape of revelations about the divorce then impending. The pretensions of this "holy maid of Kent," as she was called, were not suddenly developed under the popular irritation about the king's marriage. In a letter written in 1533, to Cromwell, by the prior of Christ's Church in Canterbury, it is shown that "trances and revelations" of Elizabeth Barton commenced seven or eight years before that time—that is, four years before the fall of Wolsey; and that archbishop Warham took an interest in these matters, and appointed Docteur Bockyng, the cellarer of Christ's Church, to be her "holy father." The prior, who writes this letter, had known her only about two years; and she showed him, at such times, that she had revelations and special knowledge, "concerning my lord of Canterbury that was (my lord cardinal), and also the king's highness, concerning his marriage; so that she said if he did marry another woman his grace should not reign king past one month afterward; and also she said that she had been with the king's grace, and showed him thereof two times at the least; and also she said then she had showed the same unto my lord of Canterbury, that was my lord Warham."* Out of the ravings of this poor servant-girl, who afterwards, at the instance of Warham, became a professed nun, was got up a mighty charge of conspiracy, in which bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More were implicated. The ravings of this woman were of the most extravagant nature. She saw the king, Anne Boleyn, and the earl of Wiltshire, walking in a garden; and a little devil whispering in the lady's ear to send her father with a great bribe to the emperor. She saw evil spirits struggling for Wolsey's soul after his decease. She saw persons whom the angel of God had appointed to be at her death, when she should receive the crown of martyrdom. † The Act of Attainder of Elizabeth Barton, and others, enters into a most minute history of what are deemed their treasonable practices; and Richard Maister, the parson of Aldington, and Edward Bockyng, are stated to have written books to persuade the people that she was a holy person, and then to have suggested to her that she should have a revelation that if the king were divorced and married again he should no longer be king, "and that he should die a villain's death." † Of this alleged conspiracy, as principal traitors, the nun, the parson of Aldington, the cellarer of Christ's Church, and five other persons, were tried in the Star Chamber, and suffered the penalties of treason, on the 21st of April, 1534. One of these,

* "Suppression of the Monasteries," p. 20. † Letter to Cromwell, *ibid.*, p. 14.



LAST MEETING OF SIR THOMAS MORE AND HIS DAUGHTER. — Vol. ii. 364.

Henry Gould, is declared, in the Act of Attainder, to have related the pretended revelations "to the lady Catherine, the princess dowager, to animate her to make commotions in this realm against our said sovereign lord." He is accused of saying that she should prosper and do well, and that the lady Mary, the king's daughter, should prosper and reign. Of misprision of treason, others were arraigned; for that, believing in the revelation of the king's death, they had concealed it from him. Amongst these, the most eminent person was Fisher, bishop of Rochester. He was the only prelate who had the courage to refuse to sign a declaration, in 1627, that the king's marriage was unlawful. He stood alone in the Convocation in resisting the denial of the pope's supremacy. That he should have provoked the bitter hostility of Henry and his ministers was an inevitable result of this firmness. If we doubt his judgment we must admire his conscientiousness. In a very elaborate letter of Cromwell to the bishop, he is reproached for having "conceived a great opinion of the holiness of this woman;" but that he attempted no means for the discovery of her falsehood. Cromwell adds, with great severity, but with an intimate knowledge of human nature, "Here I appeal your conscience, and instantly desire you to answer, whether if she had shewed you as many revelations for the confirmation of the king's grace's marriage, which he now enjoyeth, as she did to the contrary, ye would have given as much credence to her as ye have done; and would have let the trial of her and of her revelations to overpass these many years, where ye dwelt not from her but twenty miles, in the same shire, where her trances, and disfigurances, and prophecies in her trances were surmised and counterfeited."* Cromwell entreats the bishop to make submission to the king for having kept these revelations from his grace's knowledge. Fisher's excuse was that the nun had declared that she had told them to the king himself. She said the same to the priest of Christ's Church. It is clear that no excuse would avail; and least of all, one which the bishop incautiously set up, as we learn from Cromwell's reply: "Ye lay unto the charge of our sovereign, that he hath unkindly entreated you with grievous words and terrible letters, for showing his grace truth in this great matter [the divorce], whereby ye were disaffected to show unto him the nun's revelations." The opportunity was come to punish the bishop with something beyond "grievous words and terrible letters." By the statute concerning Elizabeth

* Letter to Cromwell, "Suppression," &c., p. 30.

Barton he was attainted, with five others, "of misprision and concealment of treason."* Sir Thomas More narrowly escaped. He had conversed with the nun of Kent in the convent of Sion. He was examined before the Council. It is said that his name was originally introduced into the bill of attainder. But if as brave as Fisher the ex-chancellor was more wary. He was released. When his daughter had obtained information that his name was put out of the bill he replied to her joyful congratulations—"In faith, Meg, *quod differtur non aufertur*—what is postponed is not abandoned." The whole story of the holy maid of Kent affords as much evidence of the delusions that, in all ages, have influenced the enthusiastic votaries of the Roman church, as of the systematic impostures which have been as frequently attributed to them. The act of attainder states that "the false, feigned, and dissimulated hypocrisy, cloaked sanctity, revelations, and feigned miracles of the said Elizabeth, are plainly confessed before the king's most honourable council by the said offenders"—the nun, Master Bockyng, and others. Of the mode of this trial we have no record. A contemporary foreigner, bitterly adverse to the old religion, states that the king "racked them with intolerable tortures, and brought to light the mummerly contrived by them."† This traveller relates that one of the modes in which the priests managed to spread abroad the report of Elizabeth Barton's miraculous knowledge, was to obtain the secrets of those who made their confessions to them, and then to reveal them to the nun, who astonished them by her knowledge of their most hidden acts and thoughts. That Warham and Fisher—perhaps even More—were amongst the deluded, may be attributed to that superstition from which the learned and the enlightened were not wholly free, in an age when the true and the false of religious belief were not clearly to be seen through the cloud of ceremonial observances; when the pretensions to miraculous powers, which still lingered round the shrines of a thousand saints and martyrs, imposed to some extent upon the clearest understandings. The concluding clause of the statute itself justifies us in attributing the widely-spread credence in this pretended revelation to a spirit of fanaticism rather than to a settled purpose of overthrowing the government. It states that a great multitude of the king's subjects, "inclined to newfangleness," have heard these false revelations, and have concealed the same, and not like true liegemen informed the king or his council; through which

* 25 Hen. VIII. c. 12. † "Travels of Nicander Nucius," Camden Society, p. 62.

they deserve to suffer the penalties of treason. But all persons not attainted by this act are acquitted and pardoned, of the king's most gracious benignity, "at the humble suit and contemplation of his most dear, entire, and well-beloved wife, queen Anne."

The "Act for the establishment of the king's succession" contained a final clause that all the nobles of the realm, spiritual and temporal, and all other subjects of full age, should take an oath to maintain and defend this act; and, upon their refusal so to do, should be held guilty of misprision of treason. The oath, which was taken by some lords and commoners in parliament before its prorogation on the last day of March, 1534, was to be taken by all who were called upon to appear before the commissioners appointed by the king. On the 13th of April, Sir Thomas More was summoned to attend before the archbishop of Canterbury and the other commissioners at Lambeth. As he left his house at Chelsea,—that house which Erasmus described as something more noble than the academy of Plato, "a school and exercise of the Christian religion,"—he had a presentiment that he should never return to it. He could not trust himself to kiss and bid farewell to those he loved, as he was wont to do when he entered his boat. He passed out of his garden to the river-side, suffering none of his household to follow, "but pulled the wicket after him, and shut them all from him." The strength of his love might have triumphed over his resolve to dare the worst rather than to affirm what he did not honestly believe. His soul triumphed in that hour of struggle; and he whispered to his son-in-law, "I thank our Lord, the field is won!" The result of his examinations at Lambeth was his committal to the Tower, after being kept in ward four days. The difficulty in which More and his friend, the aged bishop of Rochester, were placed, may be best understood through an extract of a letter from Cromwell to Cranmer. The archbishop, with that disposition to compromise which he was as ready to employ for the benefit of others as of himself, had expressed his opinion "that 't were good the bishop of Rochester and master More should be sworn to the Act of the king's succession and not to the preamble of the same." In that preamble was contained a declaration of the unlawfulness of the king's first marriage, and of the legality of his second; and a disclaimer of foreign authority in the realm, by which was meant the spiritual authority of the see of Rome. Henry was indignant at Cranmer's merciful suggestion; and desired Cromwell to say, that "the king's highness in no wise willeth but that

they shall be sworn as well to the preamble as to the act. Wherefore his grace specially trusteth that ye will in no wise attempt or move him to the contrary; for, as his grace supposeth, that manner of swearing, if it shall be suffered, may be an utter destruction of his whole cause, and also to the effect of the law made for the same.* More and Fisher would not swear to the preamble, although they would swear to defend the succession. They were committed to the Tower, under a despotic authority which was subsequently introduced into a statute, that the certificate of the commissioners setting forth a refusal to take the oath "should be taken as strong and as available in the law as an indictment of twelve men lawfully found of the same refusal."† In prison they remained till the summer of 1535, till the time was ripe for that final deliverance which has no terrors for the just. Meanwhile they were attainted by the parliament that assembled on the 3rd of November, 1534, of misprision of treason; and were convicted "to all intents and purposes" as if they had been "lawfully attainted by the order of the common law."‡

The parliament thus assembled in November, 1534, had some root-and-branch work to perform, at the bidding of their imperious master. The first law which they passed was "an act concerning the king's highness to be Supreme Head of the Church of England, and to have authority to reform and redress all errors, heresies, and abuses in the same." This is a short statute; but of high significance. There was no power now to stand between the people of England and the exercise of unbridled despotism. The most arbitrary man that had ever wielded the large prerogatives of sovereignty had now united in his own person the temporal and spiritual supremacy. The ecclesiastical authority which had regulated the English church for eight hundred years was gone. The feudal organisation which had held the sovereign in some submission to ancient laws and usages of freedom was gone. The Crown had become all in all. The whole system of human intercourse in England was to be subordinated to one supreme head—King and Pope in one. The most enslaving terror was to uphold this system throughout the land. The sheriff in every county was to be a spy upon the clergy, and to report, if they truly spoke of the King as supreme head of the church, without any cloak or colour. No Amurath of the Turks could write more insolently to his provin-

* Letter in the Rolls' House, quoted by Mr. Froude, vol. ii. p. 227.

† 26 Hen. VIII. c. 2.

‡ *Ibid.*, cc. 22 & 23.

cial slaves than Henry of England wrote to his sheriffs, that if they failed in this service, "Be ye assured that we, like a prince of justice, will so extremely punish you for the same, that all the world beside shall take by you example, and beware, contrary to their allegiance to disobey the lawful commandment of their sovereign lord and prince."* The higher clergy were terrified into the most abject prostration before this spiritual lord. The bishop of Bath and Wells writes to Cromwell, on the 21st of February, 1535, informing him of a circumstance of which he thought it fit to advertise him, "by my fidelity to God and to the king." Doctor Carsley, a canon of Wells, in "bidding of the beads," called upon the congregation to pray for the king, "for the lady Catherine the queen, and also, by express name, for the lady Elizabeth their daughter." The poor old man of eighty was terrified when his mistake was shown him, and protested that he knew no queen but the lady Anne. "The word served him unawares," says the bishop. And yet such is the fear of the overpassing tyranny, that the bishop writes a long despatch to tell "the whole and plain truth," about so insignificant a matter as the "*lapsus linguæ*," as he calls it, of one who had mumbled a form of bidding prayer for a quarter of a century, and forgot that he was now, by statute, to banish such trivial fond records from the table of his memory.†

The new dignity of the king was to conduce as much to his profit as his honour. The lords and Commons crawl at his feet in this parliament of 1534-35, and humbly request that he will be pleased, as their "most gracious sovereign lord, upon whom and in whom dependeth all their joy and wealth," to receive the first fruits of all spiritual dignities and promotions; and also an annual pension of one tenth part of all the possessions of the church.‡ A subsidy granted in the same parliament followed the accustomed precedent. But the dangers of every man's position were multiplied in new definitions of treason. It was now enacted, not only that those who desired or practised any bodily harm to the king or queen should be deemed traitors,—but that whoever, by writing or words, published that the king was a heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel, or usurper of the crown, should be subject to the penalties of high-treason. There was one further little sentence in this statute which was far more dangerous than that which made it treason to call the king ill-names. Whoever sought to deprive

* Circular, printed in Fox.

† 26 Hen. VIII. c. 3.

‡ State Papers, vol. i. p. 427.

the king, the queen, or their heirs apparent "of the dignity, title, or name of their royal estates," was now declared to be a traitor. To deny the king the title of Supreme Head of the Church was, therefore, treason.* To refuse to swear to the succession was only misprision of treason. The Act for the supremacy had no such terrible penalty. This one line of the statute of new treasons, thus brought in so gently and covertly, would have brought half England to the block, if conscience had prevailed over panic-stricken lip-service. Strong as our convictions may be, at this day, that such rough and cruel handling of long-cherished opinions was to be ultimately productive of inestimable blessings, we cannot shut our eyes to the certainty that these enactments must have produced a temporary misery and political degradation, never equalled by any action of the government, from the days of the conquest. Had such measures been tried upon a less sturdy race, instead of a race that never, in the worst times, lost the instinct of freedom, and in this passing evil saw a great future good, the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of this stage of the Reformation might have driven us into that intellectual servitude, upon which the true liberty of the Book of Life might have beamed in vain, when that Book was at length permitted to be opened.

We learn from a letter of Audley, the lord-chancellor, to Cromwell, at what time the statute which so fearfully extended the definition of treason came into operation. In answer to a question touching a monk of Worcester, Audley gave his opinion that words spoken by the monk "had been treason, without doubt, if they had been spoken since the first day of February; but that words spoken of the king or the queen before that time were only misprision of treason. † The Act, no doubt, sealed up the lips of the people, and bitter thoughts were left to smoulder in their bosoms. But the clause which made it treason to deprive the king of any name or dignity was so administered as to render silence itself treasonable. If under examination a satisfactory answer was not given as to the king's title of Supreme Head of the Church, the gibbet or the block were ready for the offender. On the 3rd of May the first grand experiment was made of the working of this statute. Let us take the most literal record we can find of an event which must have struck terror throughout the land. "Also the same year, the 3rd day of May was Holyrood day, and then was drawn from the Tower unto

* 26 Hen. VIII. c. 13.

† State Papers, vol. i. p. 442.

Tyburn the three priors of the Charter-houses, and there hanged, beheaded, and quartered; and one of the prior's arms was set up at the gate into Aldersgate-street.* Within those quiet walls, where now exists one of the few retreats which our country provides for the reduced and deserving of the middle classes; where a sound and liberal education of the young now goes forward in peace and security,—there, some three centuries ago, a body of religious men set apart from the world, of exemplary conduct, of zealous piety, were suddenly startled, as if a falcon had come to flutter their dove-cot. Bedyll, the clerk of the council, wrote to Cromwell, in August, 1534, that some of these brethren "be minded to offer themselves in sacrifice to the great idol of Rome." He described them "as careless men, and willing to die." He thinks, "if it were not for the opinion which men had, and some yet have, in their apparent holiness, which is and was, for the most part, covert hypocrisy, it made no great matter what became of them, so their souls were saved." † This is the language of a worldly-minded man, who was incapable of understanding why men should prefer to die in an earnest belief than to live to make a profession which they abominated in their hearts. He cared nothing what became of them; yet he dreaded the odium that might fall upon those who hunted them to the death. He wishes "they were dead indeed, by God's hand, that no man should run wrongfully into obloquy for their just punishment." The prior of the London Charter-house, John Houghton, after a short imprisonment in 1534, had sworn to the Act of Succession, and so had his brethren. But they were with difficulty brought "to good conformity." It was not the policy of the government to let them alone. They were respected by the people of London. They were hospitable and charitable. The new statute of treasons was to be tested upon them. If they yielded and acknowledged the supremacy, their example would reconcile others of lower reputation. If they refused, their punishment would terrify the boldest into submission. They had committed no outward offence. They were to be slaughtered for an opinion. There were two houses connected with the London priory; and their priors came to Cromwell, and with Houghton entreated to be excused answering the questions which they expected to be addressed to them. They were sent to the Tower. They refused to accept the Act of Supremacy when brought before Cromwell and others. They were tried by a jury upon this refusal; of course found guilty; and con-

* "Grey Friars' Chronicle," p. 37.

† State Papers, vol. i. p. 42.

demned on the 29th of April. From the Tower to Tyburn was a wearisome and foul road for these poor men to travel on hurdles, in their ecclesiastical robes, on a May morning. It was the first time that clergymen had suffered in England without the previous ceremony of degradation. In that dreary procession through busy streets, and through highways by whose sides pitying and wondering multitudes stood to behold this strange and portentous sight, these earnest men quailed not. In the presence of the executioner they quailed not. To the last they refused to submit to a law of the king and the parliament which they held to be contrary to the superior law of their church. They were not the last of these Carthusians who fell in this conflict. Other monks were hanged and headed. But there were ways of killing, slower but as sure, not unknown to the agents of tyranny. Thirteen months after these executions, the loyal Thomas Bedyll writes to Cromwell, "that the monks of the Charterhouse here at London, which were committed to Newgate for their traitorous behaviour long time continued against the king's grace, be almost despatched by the hand of God, as it may appear to you by this bill inclosed, whereof, considering their behaviour and the whole matter, I am not sorry."* After the execution of Haughton and his brethren, the monks who had submitted remained in their desolated house. But there were supernatural terrors around them, in which we may see the prevailing thoughts of their lonely watchings. John Darley relates that father Raby, a very old man, had died in 1534; and that he had said to the dying monk, "good father Raby, if the dead man come to the quick I beseech you to come to me," and he answered "yea." The story thus continues: "And since that I never did think upon him till Saint John day, Baptist, last past. Item, the same day at five of the clock at afternoon, I being in contemplation in our entry in our cell, suddenly he appeared to me in a monk's habit, and said to me, 'why do ye not follow our father?' [the late prior] And I said, 'wherefore?' He said, 'for he is a martyr in heaven, next unto angels.' And I said, 'where be all our other fathers which died as well as he?' He answered and said, 'they be well, but not so well as he.'† Such were the imaginations that lingered round the cells and cloisters of the stricken house, more consolatory, in their tender glimpses of the world of spirits, than the thoughts of those scoffers and time

* "Suppression of the Monasteries," p. 162.

† *Ibid.*, p. 114.

servers, who were as yet unprepared to give any safer anchorage for earnest minds than in the old havens which they were destroying—dilapidated and unsafe harbours of refuge, but better than the stormy seas upon which men were driven out, without compass or beacon.

This was not a time when the execution of men for denying the king's right to be head of the church implied that there would be any relaxation of the old system of persecution for doctrinal opinions. One of the spies who denounced the poor brethren of the Charterhouse, a certain Jasper Fyloll, writes to Cromwell, "It is no great marvel though many of these monks have heretofore offended God and the king by their foul errors, for I have found in the prior's and proctor's cells three or four sundry printed books from beyond the sea, of as foul heresies and errors as may be; and not one or two books be now printed alone, but hundreds of them." The Act "for the punishment of heresy," passed in 1534, is immediately followed in the statute-book by "An Act for Printers and Binders of Books."* By this act the statute of Richard III., which allowed the free importation of printed and written books, is repealed. There is nothing said about the suppression of dangerous opinions; but it is merely stated that, as there are enough of printers and binders in England, no foreign books are to be sold by retail. The Dutch printing-offices, then in full activity, were unpleasant neighbours to a government which undertook to regulate every man's opinion. It was a time of fear; for the Lutheran doctrines had been carried to an excess by religious and political fanatics; and the political tenets which bore any resemblance to those of the Anabaptists, might be spread to the danger of all civil society. Within three weeks of the execution of the Carthusians, nineteen men and six women, born in Holland, were examined in St. Paul's church as to their opinions. Stow, who records this in his Chronicle, speaks only of their confessions as to the more abstruse points of doctrine, especially of infant and adult baptism; nothing of those principles as to society and government which led to the excesses of 1532, when the baker of Haarlem and the tailor of Leyden made themselves masters of the city of Munster, and there preached and practised the wildest extravagances. Of the nineteen men and six women who were apprehended in London, fourteen were condemned and were burnt. Latimer, who had known what persecution for heresy was, when

* 25 Hen VIII. c. 15.

he was examined in 1532 before six bishops, and "heard a pen walking behind the arras"—the pen of one appointed to write his answers—even he dismisses the Hollanders with these words: "The Anabaptists that were burnt here in divers towns in England (as I heard of credible men, I saw them not myself) went to their death, even *intrepide*, as ye will say without any fear in the world, cheerfully. Well, let them go." He argues, and justly, that it was not to be inferred that he who so dies "dieth in a just cause."^{*} He omitted to say that such fortitude is a proof that the men believed their cause to be just; and that the stake was no test of its error.

The parliament is prorogued. The king is moving from palace to palace in that midsummer of 1535. There are two prisoners in the Tower under attainder for misprision of treason. John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, would have soon ceased from troubling the government; for he had seen eighty summers. It was mercy, however, to remove him from his hard fare and scant clothing—"only some old rags were left to cover him."† Under the roof of the same prison was Sir Thomas More. He was of a more vigorous age; but long confinement had bent his body and weakened his emaciated limbs. There came into the Tower, on the 14th of June, certain commissioners, deputed to interrogate these two prisoners; and to the question whether he had received or written any letters during his imprisonment, More gave one answer which sufficiently indicates the sympathy between these doomed men: "since he came to the Tower he wrote divers scrolls or letters to Mr. Doctor Fisher, and received from him some other again; whereof the most part contained nothing else but comforting words from either to other; and declaration of the state that they were in, in their bodies; and giving of thanks for such meat or drink that the one had sent to the other."‡ But More had been subjected to previous interrogatories, to which he alluded in another answer on the 14th of June: "Also saith that since the last examination of him, this examinant did send Mr. Fisher word, by a letter that Mr. Solicitor had shewed him, that it was all one not to answer, and to say against the statute what a man would, as all the learned men of England would justify, as he [Mr. Solicitor] said then. And therefore he said he could reckon upon nothing else but the uttermost."§ He had written, he said, to his daughter, Mr. Roper's

^{*} Sermons. Fourth Sermon before King Edward VI. † Burnet's "Reformation."

‡ State Papers, vol. i. p. 433.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

wife, that what the end should be, he could not tell; "but whatsoever it were, better or worse, he desired her to take it patiently, and take no thought therefore, but only pray for him." Margaret, the best beloved of his children, did not take it patiently, but "used great vehemence and obsecration, to persuade him to incline to the king's desire." And thus, More, upon hearing the interrogatories of the commissioners touching the king's supremacy, incurred the peril which Mr. Solicitor had pointed out—"he sayeth that he can make no answer."

At this crisis of their fate an incident occurred which hurried Fisher to the scaffold, and, as a natural consequence, More followed. Clement VII. died on the 25th of September, 1534. He was no more to be troubled with the threats of Charles or Francis; no more to hesitate about excommunicating Henry, and placing England under interdict. His successor, Paul III., probably thought that the government of the stubborn islanders might be won back by courtesy; and in this desire, as he protested, he sent a cardinal's hat to bishop Fisher. "He shall have no head to wear it," exclaimed the indignant king. Fisher declared that he would not accept the honour which he had never sought. On the 17th of June he was taken before a special commission at Westminster Hall. The official record of this trial is a brief one: "Pleads not guilty. Verdict awarded. Verdict, guilty. Judgment as usual in cases of treason." He died, by simple beheading, on the 22nd of June. On the 1st of July, the special commission again sat. More tottered into the hall, leaning upon his staff—into that hall which he had often entered, in the pomp of chancellor, with mace and seal borne before him. The axe now marshalled him on his certain road. His robes of office were now exchanged for a coarse woollen gown. He stood at the bar before his successor, Audley, as his judge. He was charged not only with refusing to acknowledge the king's supremacy, but that he had positively denied it. We have seen that "Mr. Solicitor" had been with him in the Tower. By "Mr. Solicitor" was the charge to be proved, in the betrayal of a confidential communication, and the distortion of the prisoner's words into a meaning beyond his intention. That man, Robert Rich, had played the same infamous part in the trial of Fisher. One who fills the office of Chief Justice of England, with the honesty that is an attribute of the judges of our time, speaks of Rich as "one who has brought a greater stain upon the bar of England than any member of the profession to which I am proud to belong."*

* Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Chancellors," vol. i. p. 570.

inquisitor of the Holy Office ever abused the frankness of a prisoner more than this base fellow, Rich, who was afterwards lord chancellor. He went to the Tower with another person to remove More's books. The great scholar, seeing his daily solace thus taken from him, preserves his equanimity while the cherished volumes are being packed up. Rich, with the apparent friendliness that has always marked the intercourse of lawyers, however different their opinions, begins to talk about the great cause of dispute for which More was a prisoner. "Suppose there were an act of parliament that all men should take me for king," said Rich, "would not you take me for king?" More, who knew something of the history of the English monarchy, replied, "Yes, sir, that I would. A parliament may make a king and depose him." * Rich then said, "suppose there were an act of parliament that all the realm should take me for pope, would not you then take me for pope?" More answered, "your first question applied to temporal government—but suppose the parliament should make a law that God should not be God, would you then, Mr. Rich, say so?" It was this conversation that "Mr. Solicitor" betrayed and exaggerated. More was moved to anger against this treachery, and told Rich, in the course of his defence, that he "always lay under the odium of a lying tongue;" and that he had trusted no secret of his conscience respecting the king's supremacy to one of whom he had so mean an opinion. The verdict of guilty was pronounced. He returned in a boat to the Tower; and there, when he landed, his daughter Margaret fell upon his neck, and lovingly kissed him, again and again. On the 6th of July he was beheaded. His composure and his harmless pleasantries, even when his head was on the block, have been held by some as indicating a levity incompatible with true piety. One who himself knew how a Christian should die, has thus spoken of More's demeanour. "That innocent mirth which had been so conspicuous in his life, did not forsake him to the last. He maintained the same cheerfulness of heart upon the scaffold which he used to show at his table. His death was of a piece with his life. There was nothing in it new, forced or affected. He did not look upon the severing of his head from his body as a circumstance that ought to produce any change in the disposition of his mind; and as he died under a fixed and settled hope of

* Mr. Froude says, "If this was the constitutional theory, divine right was a Stuart fiction." It was. In another place he holds, from this, that More had "republican opinions." That does not follow.

immortality, he thought any unusual degree of sorrow or concern improper on such an occasion as had nothing in it which could deject or terrify him." * That Henry would show any mercy to Fisher, the friend of his infancy, or to More, his able minister in many high offices, was not to be expected from his nature. He felt towards his ex-chancellor as he felt towards the old soldier whom the earl of Sussex desired to spare, after his condemnation for having been engaged in the Lancashire insurrection. Thus Henry decided in 1537: "Concerning the old man, whom you wrote to have respited, upon the lamentation he made at the bar, and the allegation of his service, thrice heretofore against the Scots, and otherwise, done unto Us: Albeit we cannot but take your stay [respite] of him in good part, yet considering he hath so often received our wages, and would nevertheless at the last be corrupted against Us, we think him for an example more worthy to suffer than the rest, that before had none experience of our princely puissance, nor had received any benefit of Us; and so remit him unto you to be executed, according to his judgment given for his offences committed against Us." † We desire no truer illustration of the character of this king. We must seek for its parallel in Dante's "stream of blood."

"Where tyrants their appointed doom receive." ‡

* Addison, "Spectator," No. 349.

† State Papers, vol. i. p. 544.

‡ "Inferno," canto xii. Wright's translation.