tious reformers to carry forward their opinions to their logical conclusions. They looked on, not with indifference, perhaps with horror, whilst papists and sacramentarians were imprisoned and burnt with a fearful impartiality. After the death of Cromwell the prevailing spirit of the king's council was a desire to terrify the humbler classes of the people by the punishment of those who avowed heterdox doctrines. One singular example of the avidity with which this object was pursued is exhibited in a letter to the council in 1542, from Wallop, the ambassador to France, in which he says, that, "as touching the heretic," he has given thanks for the genteel offer of the French authorities; and the said heretic has been "delivered unto those I sent; whom I have this day sent to Calais according to the king's commandment." * The wretched fugitive, an Englishman named Denis Tod, thus handed over to his unmerciful countrymen, was burnt at Calais a few weeks after the date of this letter. If the heretic could not escape even when he put the sea between himself and his persecutors, we may readily believe how keen would be the search, and how unrelenting the punishment, when men who dared to think for themselves were found within the very precincts of the king's palace. At the time of Henry's marriage with Catherine Parr, that is in July, 1543, there were four men of Windsor confined under charges of heresy—Anthony Peerson, a priest; Robert Testwood and John Marbeck, singing-men; and Henry Filmer, a townsman of Windsor. They were brought to trial at Windsor, on the 27th of July. Three were indicted that they had uttered words against the mass; and Marbeck that he had copied out an epistle by Calvin against it. The case of Marbeck shows how earnestly some men endeavoured to avail themselves of the knowledge which was opened to them by the reading of the Scriptures. This singing-man of Windsor College, when Matthew's Bible was published in 1537, borrowed a copy, and commenced transcribing it. But printed Bibles becoming more accessible, he was diverted from this labour, and employed himself in making a Concordance to the Scriptures, upon the plan of the Concordance to the Latin Vulgate. This unfinished manuscript was found when Marbeck's papers were seized. The four men were condemned. Three were burnt; but Marbeck was spared—at the request of Gardiner, according to some authorities, at the command of Henry, according to others; the king saying that Marbeck had employed his time better than those who exam-

* State Papers, vol. ix. p. 96.

ined him. It is added by Fox that when Henry heard of these executions, he said, "Alas, poor innocents."

Amongst the escapes of the suspected clergy, that of Cranmer is the most remarkable. It presents the almost solitary instance of the king interposing to save an old friend and servant from the intrigues of a powerful party. Cranmer triumphed over Gardiner in 1543, when Henry made him acquainted with the charges that were brought against him of being an encourager of heresy; and when Cranmer, discovering his secret enemies and pardoning them, earned the praise of the common voice—"Do my lord of Canterbury a shrewd turn, and he is your friend for ever." * Cranmer again triumphed in 1546; when the remarkable scene took place which Fox has described and Shakspere has dramatised—carefully following his authority as to the incidents, but disregarding their date. The Council preparing to send the obnoxious prelate to the Tower; the doomed man kept waiting at the door, as if his disgrace were already accomplished; the accusations and the threats; the king's signet produced; the conspirators covered with shame—these circumstances make up a vivid picture, coloured no doubt in the original relation, and heightened by the poet's art. But there is one point in the narrative of Fox which stands out in the oratorical discourses which he gives between the king and the archbishop. When Henry says that the council had requested him to commit Cranmer to the Tower, "or else no man dare come forth as witness in those matters, you being a counsellor,"—and Cranmer replies, that he is content to go thither, that he may come to his trial, the king thus answers: "Oh, Lord, what manner of man be you? What simplicity is in you? I had thought that you would rather have sued to us to have taken the pains to have heard you and your answers together for your trial, without any such indurance. Do you not know what state you be in with the whole world, and how many great enemies you have? Do you not consider what an easy thing it is to procure three or four false knaves to witness against you?" † It was not the practice in state-trials to bring the "false knaves" face to face with the prisoner. No one could have a more complete knowledge than Henry had of the mode in which convictions were procured during his reign. "Previously to the time of Edward VI. and queen Mary," says Mr. Jardine, "there is no instance of the admission of the *vivâ voce* examination of witnesses, either for the

* Shakspere, "Henry VIII.," act v. sc. 2. † Fox, "Acts and Monuments."

prosecution or the defence, in cases of treason or other state offences." It was held "too dangerous to the prince" to produce witnesses who might be questioned by the accused. The evidence consisted almost entirely of written depositions and examinations, taken before the Privy Council or before commissioners. Interrogatories were previously prepared by the crown lawyers. These were submitted to the witnesses individually. If they were conformable in their answers it was well. If they were not so, the rack was introduced. The fear of torture was present to the mind of every witness. When the depositions had been shaped after the most approved fashion, the prisoner was subjected to the like tender interrogatories. The trial, so called, having come on, the counsel for the crown carefully noted what in the depositions was to be read and what omitted; and the officer of the court as carefully obeyed his directions. What chance a prisoner had of an acquittal may be readily conceived.* When king Henry interfered with the insane resolution of the archbishop to seek a trial, he truly said, "You will run headlong to your undoing if I would suffer you."

The searchers for heresy appear to have manifested great anxiety to fix their accusations upon persons of the royal court. During the persecution at Windsor false charges were made against sir Thomas Hoby and others. Dr. London, one of the least scrupulous of the commissioners appointed to ferret out the delinquencies of the religious houses, was now employed in an opposite direction. His charges against members of the king's household were held to be founded in perjury and conspiracy; and Dr. London and his associates were set in the pillory. The unscrupulous doctor did not survive the disgrace.† The queen, whose Lutheran tendencies were more than suspected, had influence enough to save her friends for some time. That influence perhaps saved Cranmer. But the blow at last fell upon one of the most interesting of victims. Anne Askew, a lady known at court, if not about the queen's person, was an avowed protestant. She had been married against her will, and had been discarded by her bigoted husband for the strength of her convictions. Anne Askew delivered her opinions on the Eucharist with some imprudence; and was subjected to an examination by the bishop of London. She escaped for a time; but was again examined before the Coun-

* See Jardine's "Criminal Trials." Introduction, vol. i. p. 25.
† Burnet, book iii. p. 327.

cil. Otwell Johnson, a merchant of London, writing to his brother at Calais, thus relates the issue, among other news: "Quondam bishop Saxon [Shaxton], Mistress Askew, Christopher White, one of Mistress Fayre's sons, and a tailor that came from Colchester or thereabout, were arraigned at the Guildhall, and received their judgments of my Lord Chancellor and the Council to be burned, and so were committed to Newgate again. But since that time the aforesaid Saxon and White have renounced their opinions; and the talk goeth that they shall chance to escape the fire for this viage. But the gentlewoman and the other men remain in steadfast mind; and yet she hath been racked since her condemnation, as men say; which is a strange thing in my understanding. The Lord be merciful to us all."* Burnet says that he had seen an original journal of the transactions in the Tower, which shows that "they caused her to be laid on the rack, and gave her a taste of it." But Burnet has doubts of the relation of Fox, that the chancellor Wriothesley, when the lieutenant of the Tower refused "to stretch her more," threw off his gown, and himself "drew the rack so severely, that he almost tore her body asunder." Lord Campbell gives this horrid story without noticing the doubt of Burnet; and adds that Griffin, the solicitor-general, assisted in the detestable crime. Wriothesley was a determined bigot; and when the passions of the zealot and the policy of the statesman were combined, there was no atrocity from which the men of this time would shrink. Let us hope that in this case human nature was not so utterly degraded as the somewhat credulous historian of the English martyrs has represented. There was a disgusting scene in Smithfield which soon followed the torture of the high-minded woman, who, amidst her sufferings, would not utter one word to implicate her friends. Upon a bench under St. Bartholomew's church, sit the Lord Chancellor, the duke of Norfolk, the earl of Bedford, the Lord Mayor, and other dignitaries. There are three martyrs, each tied to a stake. The apostate Shaxton is to preach the sermon. It is rumored that gunpowder has been placed about the condemned, to shorten their sufferings. The Chancellor and the other high functionaries have no compunction for their victims; but they are in terror for their own safety. Will not the exploding gunpowder drive the fire-wood where they sit? They hold a grave consultation, and are persuaded to sit out the scene. The gentlewoman and her fellow-sufferers die heroically—a noble contrast to

* Ellis, Second Series, vol. ii. p. 177.

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the cowardice that quakes in the extremity of its selfishness upon the bench under St. Bartholomew's church.

Such were the scenes that marked the closing days of the life of Henry. He is a pitiable spectacle of human infirmity. Moved about by mechanical aid from chamber to chamber—a vast mass of obesity—there is one patient nurse forever about him, soothing the paroxysms of his temper by endeavours to alleviate his bodily sufferings. But the belief in his own infallibility is as strong as ever; and he listens to the whispers of those who tell him that his queen, that faithful nurse is a heretic. She is sincere in her opinions; and endeavours to influence him to go on with the work of Reformation. "A good hearing it is," he exclaims, "when women become such clerks; and a thing much to my comfort to come in mine old age to be taught by my wife." * Gardiner and Wriothesley seize the right moment when the old pride of the polemical despot is in the ascendant; and have his authority to prepare articles for Catherine Parr's impeachment. But the king passed out of life without a third queen's head falling on the scaffold in the Tower. His wrath was appeased; and, according to Fox, his anger fell on the bishop of Winchester, the scheming Gardiner. The story says that the queen diverted his fury by an adroit appeal to his self love. "Kate, you are a doctor," said the king. "No, sir," she replied, "I only wish to divert you from your pain by an argument, in which you so much shine." Kate was again his friend and "sweetheart;" and when Wriothesley came with a warrant for the queen's arrest, he was driven away with the royal salute of "knave, arrant knave, beast, fool." We can scarcely receive these details amongst the authentic matters of history; though we may readily believe that in the fierce contest of parties, at a time when the despot could be more readily than ever moved to sudden hatreds, the protestant tendencies of Catherine Parr might have been easily perverted into the means of her destruction.

But as the king was necessarily becoming a more passive instrument in the hands of others, the party of the Reformation was gaining strength. The earl of Hertford, afterwards famous as the Protector Somerset,—the uncle of the heir to the crown—was undoubtedly in the ascendant. How far may be imputed to his counsels the last iniquitous acts of Henry's reign must be a matter of conjecture rather than of proof. Hertford was a decided reformer.

* Fox.

The duke of Norfolk, and his son the earl of Surrey, were as firm opponents of further changes. The Howards were of the ancient nobility—the Seymours were "new men." There were political hatreds between them, as well as theological differences. Surrey had been superseded by Hertford in the lieutenancy of Boulogne. Norfolk acknowledged that he had been "quick against such as have been accused for sacramentaries." There was one point in which the jealousy of Henry could be easily aroused against the Howards. They were of the blood royal by descent. They might aspire to the throne during the minority of the young prince Edward. Surrey had something of the wilfulness which mankind are too ready to ascribe to the poetical temperament. He who was the first and the most successful in familiarising English verse to a new accentuation—he who led the way in the use of blank verse, the noblest instrument of our noble language—the most accomplished scholar, the bravest gentleman—was punished at one time for eating flesh in Lent; and at another time for the coarse frolic of walking the streets at night, and breaking windows with a cross-bow. It was his impulsive and incautious nature which precipitated his fall. In 1546 he was imprisoned for using bitter language to the earl of Hertford. A few months later, he and his father, the aged duke of Norfolk, were committed to the Tower upon a charge of treason. This was in the beginning of December. The king was dangerously ill. There is an official paper, in the handwriting of Wriothesley, which contains the ground-work of the charges against Norfolk and Surrey. These are in the form of questions; and the two first questions, which contain interlineations by Henry himself in a tremulous hand, have reference to the principal charge upon which the father and son were condemned. It was high treason "to do any thing by word, writing, or deed, to the scandal or peril of the established succession to the crown." The first question in the state paper is as follows:—"If a man, coming of the collateral line to the heir of the crown, who ought not to bear the arms of England but on the second quarter, do presume to change his right place, and bear them in the first quarter, leaving out the true difference of the ancestry; and, in the lieu thereof, use the very place only of the heir-male apparent; how this man's intent is to be judged; and whether this import any danger, peril, or slander, to the title of the prince or very heir-apparent; and how it weigheth in our laws?" The same inference is made in the second question,—"if a man presume to take

into his arms an old coat of the crown, which his ancestor never bare, nor he of right ought to bear, and use it with a difference; whether it may be to the peril or slander of the very heir of the crown?" * The sister of Surrey, the widow of the duke of Richmond, who spoke of her brother as "a rash man," and Mrs. Holland, a mistress of the duke of Norfolk, were witnesses against the Howards; but they only testified to their dislike of the Seymours and "the new nobility," with something about the royal arms. The "old coat,"—that of Edward the Confessor,—and the lions of England "in the first quarter," were the evidence for their condemnation. Wotton, the ambassador to Francis I., told that king, on the 22nd of December, that the matter was sufficiently proved, by the confession of Surrey, "both against himself and his father too." † What Surrey confessed is not recorded. He was tried by a jury, after the fashion of those times; and though he showed that he had borne the same arms for many years by a decision of the heralds, he was condemned; and on the 19th of January he went to the block. Norfolk was attainted, upon his confession of having borne the obnoxious arms; and the royal assent to the bill was given by commission. His execution was to have taken place on the 28th of January. Before that day dawned, Henry lay dead. His last moments were not soothed by an act of mercy to his aged servant. But Norfolk escaped, if escape it were, to linger in prison, while the Reformation, which he opposed, held on its inevitable course.

Henry the Eighth died at two o'clock in the morning of the 28th of January, in his palace at Westminster. He death was concealed for three days. On the 31st of January, the Commons were summoned to the House of Lords, and Wriothesley wept while he announced the event. The Will of the king, by which the succession was defined, and the government of the realm during the minority of his son was regulated, was then read in part. Hertford and Paget had employed the three days of secresy in determining the course to be pursued under the will, which was in their private keeping. ‡ Some suspicions have arisen that the will was forged. The nation did not, in all likelihood, feel the loss of the most arbitrary monarch that had ever filled the English throne as a great calamity. On the 5th of February, the bishop of Winchester wrote to Sir W. Paget, secretary of state, "To-morrow, the parishioners of

* State Papers, vol. i. p. 891. † "Despatch to the King," *ibid.*, vol. xi. p. 388.
‡ Tytler, "Original Letters," vol. i. p. 18.

this parish and I have agreed to have a solemn dirige for our late sovereign lord and master, in earnest, as becometh us; and, to-morrow, certain players of my lord of Oxford's, as they say, intend, on the other side, within this burgh of Southwark, to have a solemn play, to try who shall have most resort, they in game or I in earnest." * The sorrow could not have been very violent when the players thought that a diversion would be welcome, even before the king's body was conveyed to earth at Windsor. Though Henry is said to have wrung Cranmer's hand on his death-bed, his last religious exercises were in accordance with the practice of the Romish church. In the same spirit were his funeral solemnities conducted: "The body lay in state in the chapel of Whitehall for twelve days, with masses and dirge sung and said every day; Norroy standing at the choir door, and beginning with these words, pronounced aloud, 'Of your charity, pray for the soul of the high and mighty prince our late sovereign lord, King Henry the Eighth.'" †

* Tytler, "Original Letter," vol. i. p. 21. † Hayward, "Life of Edward VI."