

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Marian persecution.—Summary of the victims.—Commission to try preachers and heretics.—Hooper, and four others, condemned.—Martyrdom of Hooper.—Rowland Taylor.—His martyrdom at Hadleigh.—Married clergymen especially persecuted.—Thomas Hawkes and bishop Bonner.—Philpot.—Toleration not practised by Reformers.—The spy-system for discovery of heresy.—Martyrdom of Latimer and Ridley.—Cranmer's recantation.—His repentance, and last exhortation.—His martyrdom.

THE Act of 1555, for the renewing of the Statutes for the punishment of heretics,—which statutes had been repealed in 1547,—was not to sleep. Gardiner and Bonner were not to play the part of "fond fathers," who had "bound up the threatening twigs of birch," only to stick the rod "in their children's sight for terror, not to use." With exquisite candour we are told,—“One knows perfectly, and is tired of being told over and over again, that the law for burning heretics was a very bad law, and ought never to have existed. But, in fact, it did exist, and it was the law of the country.”\* On the 19th of January, 1555, that law was not in force. On the 20th of January it came into full operation. On the 4th of February, John Rogers was burnt in Smithfield under the Act for the renewal of the Statutes “concerning punishment and reformation of heretics and Lollards.” On the 8th of February, Laurence Saunders was burnt at Coventry. On the 9th, John Hooper was burnt at Gloucester. On the same day, Rowland Taylor was burnt at Hadleigh. Previous to the enactment which came into force on the 20th of January, the Ordinaries “had wanted authority to proceed” against those who were infected with “errors and heresies which of late have arisen, grown, and much increased within this realm;” † and thus these four of the first Protestant martyrs could not have been burnt until a new law was passed. The meaning of the law was made perfectly intelligible to all England from the 4th of February, 1555, to the 10th of November, 1558,—that crowning offering of five heretics at Canterbury, of whom two were women, having taken place one week before the

\* Dr. Maitland, “Essays,” p. 420.

† Philip and Mary, c. 6.

death of Queen Mary. These executions were not sharp and passionate outbursts of ecclesiastical power, exasperated by popular fury; or of regal tyranny, hurried into extremities by dread of rebellion. They were the calm and deliberate exposition of the principles by which England was to be governed under its Roman Catholic church and sovereigns. The appetite for blood was to be sustained in healthful energy, and not sickened by inordinate meals. In 1555, seventy-one heretics were executed; in 1556, eighty-three; \* in 1557, eighty-eight; in 1558, forty. There was also a nice adjustment of the number of victims to the local demand. We are accustomed to talk of the “fires of Smithfield,” as if London had a very undue proportion of the instruction of such sights. But in these four years, during which London and Middlesex saw fifty-eight executions, Kent had fifty-four, Essex fifty-one, Sussex forty-one, Suffolk and Norfolk thirty-one, Gloucester nine, Warwick six, whilst thirty-two were distributed over thirteen other districts. Nor was the lesson of the fagot confined to bishops and priests. Strype makes a total of the burnings to be 288; Speed, 277; and he classifies them as five bishops, twenty-one divines, eight gentlemen, eighty-four artificers, a hundred husbandmen, servants, and labourers, twenty-six wives, twenty widows, nine unmarried women, two boys, and two infants. No selection could have been more impartial.

On the 1st of January, 1555, the work was actively commenced that, in the end, was to make England thoroughly Protestant. Many of the leading divines were in prison; but smaller birds were to be taken in the fowler's net. On that day Thomas Rose, a man whose somewhat extravagant zeal had brought him into trouble in the days of king Henry, was arrested with thirty of his congregation, at a sheerman's house in Bow Church-yard. Driven from the use of the English service book which was banished from the churches; offended with the doctrines and ceremonial observances which had again become universal;—they prayed in secret, and often changed their places of meeting. They assembled in ships lying in the Thames; in empty lofts; in the fields. They held correspondence with those in exile; they made collections for those in prison. When men are oppressed for conscience sake no dread of imprisonment or death can prevent their combination. In the meetings of these impassioned men, the English spirit of

\* Strype gives the total for 1556 as eighty-nine; but in his local divisions of that year the aggregate is only eighty-three.

hatred of tyranny was probably as strong as the Christian spirit of patience; and thus it has been a reproach to the sufferers in the Marian persecution that, smitten on one cheek they did not invariably turn the other cheek to the smiter. In all this terrible history there is nothing more remarkable than the boldness with which the reproofs and scoffs of their judges were often met by defiance and contempt from learned and ignorant. These men knew that they were set upon a stage, to fight or to yield. There was only one of two courses open to them,—to apostatise or to die. When they made up their minds to die, they were not likely to show any especial reverence to the persons, or the offices, of the chancellor or the bishop whom they knew to be the instigators of their persecution. The men of the conventicle in Bow Church-yard went to join many of the same minds in the Marshalsea, the Fleet, and the Clink; and Hooper, the deprived bishop of Gloucester, wrote to them from his own prison a letter of consolation, in which he says, "Dear brethren and sisters, continually fight the fight of the Lord. Your cause is most just and godly. . . . The adversaries' weapons against you be nothing but flesh, blood, and tyranny. . . . Boldly withstand them, though it cost you the price of your life."\* On the 22nd of January, the preachers who were in prison were brought up before Gardiner, the bishop of Winchester, and others, at the bishop's house in Southwark, and to the question whether they would become convert, having replied that they would stand to what they had taught, were committed to stricter confinement. Rogers, who had been a prebendary of St. Paul's, was one of these. Cardinal Pole, on the 23rd, exhorted the members of Convocation to repair to their cures, and there to win the people with gentleness, and not endeavour to overcome them by rigour. On the 25th, St. Paul's day, there was a solemn procession of bishops and priests to St. Paul's to offer thanksgiving for their conversion to the catholic church; and the king was there, and the cardinal; and that day was ever afterwards to be celebrated as The Feast of the Reconciliation. But though Pole was probably sincere when he exhorted to gentleness instead of rigour, he left a little instrument in the hands of the bishop of Winchester, under which, as he might easily have anticipated, some rough work would be accomplished. On the 28th a commission, under the authority of the cardinal legate, held its first sitting in the church of St. Mary Overies, to order, according to the laws, all such preachers and

\* Strype, vol. iii. part ii. pp. 275, 276.

heretics as were in prison. Including Gardiner and Bonner, there were present thirteen bishops, and several noblemen and other lay commissioners.

They sat again on the 29th and 30th. On these occasions, there were no long scholastic disputations, as in the cases of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley at Oxford. The mode of proceeding with Dr. Rowland Taylor, which he has himself recorded, was probably nearly the same with all. "First, my lord chancellor said, 'You among others are at this present time sent for, to enjoy the king's and queen's majesties' favour and mercy, if you will now rise again with us from the fall which we, generally, have received in this realm; from the which God be thanked, we are now clearly delivered miraculously. If you will not rise with us now, and receive mercy now offered, you shall have judgment according to your demerit.' To this I answered, that so to rise should be the greatest fall that ever I could receive; for I should so fall from my dear Saviour Christ to Antichrist." There were then exhortations to submit, assuming various forms of reproach or solicitation, which were refused in no very measured terms. The colloquy between Gardiner and Rogers offers a characteristic example. "Gardiner said, it was vain-glory in him to stand out against the whole church. He protested it was his conscience, and not vain-glory, that swayed him; for his part, he would have nothing to do with the anti-christian church of Rome. Gardiner said, by that he condemned the queen, and the whole realm, to be of the church of Antichrist. Rogers said, the queen would have done well enough if it had not been for his counsel. Gardiner said, the queen went before them in those counsels, which proceeded of her own motion. Rogers said, he would never believe that. The bishop of Carlisle said, they could all bear him witness to it. Rogers said, they would all witness for one another."\* On the first day of these scenes at St. Mary Overies, the proceedings were public, and a great crowd filled the church. On the other days the doors were shut. The boldness of such resolved men was a dangerous example. The commissioners abruptly terminated their immediate work, in the condemnation of Hooper, Rogers, Taylor, Saunders, and Bradford, who at the same time were excommunicated. The sentence upon Bradford was not executed till July. The fate of the other four was more quickly decided.

It has been truly observed by a judicious writer, that in the

\* Burnet, part ii. book ii. p. 301, abridged from Rogers' own narrative, in Fox.

limited historical reading of young persons, "the horrors of this period have been suffered to hold too prominent a place." \* Minute details of physical suffering, even when they are associated with the heroic fortitude of the sufferers, had better be imagined than related. Yet it is impossible to pass over this momentous period of English history with any vague notice of the great battle that was then fought between Romanism and Protestantism. We must look upon the combatants in this unequal fight of conscience against power, as they present themselves in their individual actions and characters, to be enabled properly to appreciate their spiritual victory in their deepest degradation. Beautifully has it been said, "The firm endurance of sufferings by the martyrs of conscience, if it be rightly contemplated, is the most consolatory spectacle in the clouded life of man; far more ennobling and sublime than the outward victories of virtue, which must be partly won by weapons not her own, and are often the lot of her foulest foes. Magnanimity in enduring pain for the sake of conscience is not, indeed, an unerring mark of rectitude; but it is, of all other destinies, that which most exalts the sect or party whom it visits, and bestows on their story an undying command over the hearts of their fellow-men." †

Fuller, in two of his suggestive sentences, has attempted to give the characteristics of the chief of the sufferers: "The same devotion had different looks in several martyrs; frowning in stern Hooper, weeping in meek Bradford, and smiling constantly in pleasant Taylor." ‡ Again: "Of all the Marian martyrs, Mr. Philpot was the best-born gentleman; bishop Ridley the profoundest scholar; Mr. Bradford the holiest and devoutest man; archbishop Cranmer, of the mildest and meekest temper; bishop Hooper, of the sternest and austere nature; Dr. Taylor had the merriest and pleasantest wit; Mr. Latimer had the plainest and simplest heart." § Let us first look at the stories of "stern Hooper" and "pleasant Taylor," to see how the same earnest convictions elevate the "austere" and the "merriest" natures into equal sublimity and beauty. They suffered on the same day.

After Hooper's condemnation he was visited by Bonner and his chaplains, in Newgate, to persuade him to recant. The rumour went forth that the fear of death had prevailed over his constancy

\* "Historical Parallels," vol. iii. p. 271.

† Mackintosh, History, vol. ii. p. 327.

‡ "Worthies of England," vol. ii. p. 328.

§ "Church History," book viii. part ii.

Fox says that the persecuting bishop and his emissaries spread these rumours, to bring discredit on Hooper and his devotion. "What motive could Bonner and his chaplains have for spreading such a report?" is confidently asked.\* Hooper wrote a letter to rebut the rumour. He conversed and argued, he says, with the bishop and his chaplains, that he might not be accused of want of learning, or of pride; but that he was more than ever confirmed in the truth which he had preached. He sums up his letter in these solemn words: "I have taught the truth with my tongue, and with my pen, heretofore; and hereafter shortly shall confirm the same, by God's grace, with my blood." Hooper, with his fellow-convict Rogers, underwent together the ceremony of degradation on the 4th of February. Rogers went to the stake at Smithfield. Hooper was sent to his former episcopal city of Gloucester, where he arrived after a ride of three days. The mayor and aldermen of Gloucester received their once-honoured bishop with kindness. They could not forget that he had been the friend of the poor, whom he fed and taught daily in his hall. He was to have been lodged in the common gaol; but the men who had guarded him from London entreated that he might remain in a private house, for that he had deported himself so patiently on his way that a child might keep him. On the morning of the 9th he went forth to his execution. It was the market-day, and round the stake, fixed near a great elm-tree in front of the cathedral, many thousand persons were assembled. As he walked through the crowd, leaning upon a staff, he looked cheerfully upon those whom he knew; and as he heard the bitter laments of the people he lifted his eyes up to heaven. A pardon was offered him if he would recant; but he exclaimed, "If you love my soul, take it away." Raising his voice in prayer, the crowd was commanded back. When he was fastened by hoops of iron to the stake, he said the trouble was needless, for God would give him strength to abide the extremity of the fire without bands. His sufferings were of the most lingering nature; but he remained calm and still to the last; and whilst flames were slowly consuming him, died as quietly as a child in his bed.

Of all the heroes of the Reformation, Rowland Taylor is, to our minds, the most interesting, because the most natural. Of a hearty, bluff English nature, full of kindness and pleasantry, he is perfectly unconscious of playing a great part in this terrible drama, and goes to his death as gaily as to a marriage-feast. Fuller says,

\* Dr. Maitland, "Essays," p. 450.

that those "who admire the temper of sir Thomas More jesting with the axe of the executioner, will excuse our Taylor making himself merry with the stake." He has been compared to Socrates in his simplicity and jocularity, his affection for his friends, and his resolution to shrink from no danger rather than compromise the goodness of his cause.\* The account which Fox has given of Rowland Taylor is held to be only inferior to the eloquence and dignity of the Phædon of Plato.† It is difficult to give the spirit of such a narrative without impairing its force; but we may select one or two of its more remarkable points. Taylor had been chaplain to archbishop Cranmer; but having been appointed rector of Hadleigh in Suffolk, he devoted himself most zealously to the duties of his parish. He was married, and had nine children. Soon after the accession of Mary some zealous papists took forcible possession of his church, and brought a priest to perform mass: Taylor remonstrated, with more wrath than worldly prudence, against what he called popish idolatry; and he was cited to appear in London before the chancellor. He was strongly urged to fly; and his faithful servant, John Hull, who rode with him to London, entreated him to shun the impending danger, and declared that he would follow him in all perils. He came before Gardiner, with whom his long conference ended by the overpowering argument, "Carry him to prison." He remained in confinement for about a year and three quarters; when he was brought before the commissioners and condemned as a heretic. His degradation was performed by Bonner; the usual mode being to put the garments of a Roman Catholic priest on the clerk-convict, and then to strip them off. Taylor refused to put them on: and was forcibly robed by another. "And when he was thoroughly furnished therewith, he set his hands to his sides, and said, 'How say you, my lord, am I not a goodly fool? How say you, my masters, if I were in Cheap, should I not have boys enough to laugh at these apish toys?' The final ceremony was for the bishop to give the heretic a blow on his breast with his crosier-staff. "The bishop's chaplain said, 'My lord, strike him not, for he will sure strike again.' 'Yes, by St. Peter, will I,' quoth Dr. Taylor, 'the cause is Christ's, and I were no good Christian if I would not fight in my Master's quarrel.' So the bishop laid his curse on him, and struck him not." When he went back to his fellow-prisoner Bradford, he told him the chaplain had

\* "Historical Parallels," vol. iii. p. 272.

† Heber, "Life of Jeremy Taylor."

said he would strike again; "and by my troth," said he, rubbing his hands, "I made him believe I would do so indeed." We give the scene as we find it, as an exhibition of character and of manners. What Heber calls "the coarse vigour of his pleasantry," may justly appear to some as foolish irreverence. But, under this rough contempt of an authority which he despised, there was in this parish priest a tenderness and love most truly Christian. At two o'clock on a February morning one of the sheriffs of London led Taylor out of his prison, to deliver him to the sheriff of Essex, in Aldgate. "Now when the sheriff and his company came against St. Botolph church, Elizabeth, his daughter, cried, saying, 'O my dear father! Mother, mother, here is my father led away.' Then cried his wife, 'Rowland, Rowland, where art thou?' for it was a very dark morning, that the one could not see the other. Dr. Taylor, answered, 'Dear wife, I am here,' and staid. The sheriff's men would have led him forth, but the sheriff said, 'Stay a little, masters, I pray you, and let him speak to his wife;' and so they staid. Then came she to him; and he took his daughter Mary in his arms, and he, his wife, and Elizabeth kneeled down and said the Lord's Prayer: at which sight the sheriff wept apace, and so did divers other of the company. After they had prayed, he rose up and kissed his wife, and shook her by the hand, and said, 'Farewell, my dear wife, be of good comfort, for I am quiet in my conscience. God shall stir up a father for my children.' And then he kissed his daughter Mary, and said, 'God bless thee, and make thee his servant;' and kissing Elizabeth, he said, 'God bless thee, I pray you all stand strong and stedfast unto Christ, and his words, and keep you from idolatry.' Then said his wife, 'God be with thee, dear Rowland. I will with God's grace meet thee at Hadleigh.' And so he was led forth to the Woolsack [an inn], and at his coming out, John Hull before spoken of stood at the rails, with Dr. Taylor's son. When Dr. Taylor saw them, he called them, saying, 'Come hither, my son Thomas;' and John Hull lifted up the child, and set him on the horse, before his father. Then lifted he up his eyes towards heaven, and prayed for his son; laid his hand on the child's head, and blessed him; and so delivered the child to John Hull, whom he took by the hand and said, 'Farewell, John Hull, the faithfulest servant that ever man had.' And so they rode forth; the sheriff of Essex, with four yeomen of the guard, and the sheriff's men leading him." The narrative of Fox conducts the condemned man by slow steps to his beloved Hadleigh. He is placid and even

merry to the last. He jests upon his burly and corpulent frame, and holds that the worms in Hadleigh church-yard will be deceived, for the carcase that should have been theirs will be burnt to ashes. He asks to be taken through Hadleigh. The streets are lined with his old parishioners. He could see them, but they could not look upon his face, which had been covered through his journey with a hood, having holes for the eyes and mouth. In Hadleigh there still stand some alms-houses, built by William Pykeham, the rector, at the end of the fifteenth century. Taylor, "stopping by the alms-houses, cast out of a glove to the inmates of them such money as remained of what charitable persons had given for his support in prison, his benefices being sequestered; and missing two of them he asked, 'Is the blind man, and the blind woman that dwelt here alive?' He was answered, 'Yea, they are there within.' Then threw he glove and all into the window, and so rode forth." When he came to Aldham Common, where he was to suffer, he said, "Thanked be God, I am even at home;" and lighting from his horse, he tore the hood from his head. "When the people saw his reverend and ancient face, and long white beard, they burst out with weeping tears, and cried, saying, 'God save thee good Dr. Taylor.'" He would have spoken to them; but a guard thrust a tip-staff into his mouth. As they were piling the fagots, a brutal man cast a fagot at him, which wounded him so that the blood ran down his face. "O friend," said he, "I have harm enough; what needed that?" Let us draw a veil over his sufferings; and see only the poor woman who knelt at the stake to join in his prayers, and would not be driven away.

In the persecution of the Protestant divines, there was one distinct evidence of their secession from the principles of the Church of Rome, which marked them out as victims. The greater number of them were married. Rogers, when he requested that his wife might be with him after his condemnation, was told that she was not his wife; and Gardiner and Bonner refused him this consolation. As he went to the stake at Smithfield, the faithful woman met him on his way with her ten children. Laurence Saunders was allowed to see his infant, when his wife was denied admittance to him at the Marshalsea. Taking the child in his arms, he exclaimed, "Yea, if there were no other cause for which a man of my estate should lose his life, yet who would not give it, to avouch this child to be legitimate, and his marriage to be lawful and holy!" He wrote to that wife to prepare him a shirt, "which you know

whereunto it is consecrated. Let it be sewed down on both sides, and not open." When Hooper was brought before Gardiner, the crafty prelate asked him whether he was married? "Yea, my lord," was the answer; "and will not be unmarried till death unmarried me." Rowland Taylor, kneeling with his wife and daughters on the dark February morning in the porch of St. Botolph, is the crowning example of the holiness of the family affections. Of such men it has been touchingly said, that "during this persecution, the married clergy were observed to suffer with most alacrity. They were bearing testimony to the validity and sanctity of their marriage, against the foul and unchristian aspersions of the Romish persecutors. The honour of their wives and children was at stake. The desire of leaving them an unsullied name, and a virtuous example, combined with the sense of religious duty; and thus the heart derived strength from the very ties which, in other circumstances, might have weakened it."\*

Gardiner, according to our Protestant historians, "having broken the ice of burning heretics, and taken off the heads and captains," left the work to be carried on by Bonner. On the day on which Taylor and Hooper suffered, six persons were arraigned and condemned before the bishop of London, the lord mayor and sheriffs, and members of the council. They were of various callings,—a butcher, a barber, a weaver, a gentleman, a priest, and an apprentice to a silk-weaver. On the 10th, being Sunday, Alfonso de Castro, a Spanish friar, the confessor of king Philip, preached before the king; "and in his sermon inveighed against the bishops for burning of men; saying, that they learned it not in Scripture, to put any to death for conscience, but on the contrary, rather to let them live and be converted."† It was the desire of Philip to make himself acceptable to the English; and probably, at this time, the severe bigotry which led him four years later to be present at an *auto-da-fé* in Valladolid, might have been kept down by kindlier feelings. There was a suspension of these cruel exhibitions for about five weeks after this remarkable sermon. But on the 17th of March, Thomas Tomkins, the weaver, condemned on the 9th of February, was burnt at Smithfield; on the 26th, William Hunter, the silk-weaver's apprentice, was burnt at Braintree; on the 28th, William Pigot, the butcher, was also burnt at Braintree; and Stephen Knight the barber, at Maldon. John Laurence, the

\* Southey, "Book of the Church," vol. ii. p. 151.

† Strype, "Ecclesiastical Memorials," vol. iii. p. 331.

priest, was burnt at Colchester, on the 29th. Thomas Hawkes, the gentleman, was reserved to suffer at Coggeshall, on the 10th of June.

The story of Thomas Hawkes, as told by himself, affords a very fair illustration of the mode in which the lay "heretics" were dealt with in these times; and of the resolution with which they stood up for their opinions. It is held that this young man was "in his conduct and carriage very unlike a humble Christian;" and that "within the rough exterior of the bishop [Bonner], there must have been something more or less resembling that charity which is not easily provoked, nay, even suffereth long, and is kind. . . . It is not that the bishop let a forward young man say his say out, once or even twice, and then despatched him; but that after such a beginning, he had him on his hands for near a twelvemonth."\* The reason that the bishop had this "forward young man" so long on his hands is left to be inferred. The law by which Bonner could have effectually "despatched him," did not come into operation till nineteen days before its efficacy was tried on Thomas Hawkes and three other Essex Protestants. He was apprehended because he would not suffer his child to be baptised according to the Romish ceremonials; and was sent to Bonner, to be used according to his discretion. At their very first conference the bishop asked him if he knew Knight and Pigot, the barber and the butcher. He is also asked if he knew one Bagot; and Bagot is called. The man, "not easily provoked," wishes Bagot to give his opinion upon the refusal of Hawkes to have his child christened; upon which Bagot says that Hawkes is old enough to answer for himself. "Ah! sir knave," says the bishop, "are you at that point with me? Go call me the porter. Thou shalt sit in the stocks, and have nothing but bread and water." Having terrified Bagot into saying that baptism, as then practised in the church, was good, he sent Hawkes to dine at the steward's table. Conversation after conversation occur between the bishop and his prisoner; and the end of their contests is, that he who "suffereth long, and is kind," says, "Sir, it is time to be in with you. We will rid you away, and then we shall have one heretic less." On another occasion, the candid bishop says, "Ye think we are afraid to put one of you to death: yes, yes, there is a brotherhood of you, but I will break it, I warrant you." Bold enough, insolent enough, if you please, was this young Thomas Hawkes;

\* Dr. Maitland, "Essays," p. 495.

but his "conduct and carriage" were those arising out of a conscientious resistance to a power which he knew would destroy him. The "conduct and carriage" of the proud man in authority were those which exhibit the impotence of tyranny even in its most sanguinary resolves. Hawkes refused to sign the petition which Bonner had drawn up.

"Then the bishop thrust me on the breast with great anger; and said he would be even with me, and with all such proud knaves in Essex.

"Hawkes. 'Ye shall do no more than God shall give you leave.'

"Bonner. 'This gear shall not be unpunished—trust to it.'

"Hawkes. 'As for your cursings, railings, and blasphemings, I care not for them; for I know the moths and worms shall eat you, as they eat cloth or wool.'

"Bonner. 'I will be even with you when time shall come.'"

The time did come; for on the 9th of February, Bonner read the sentence of death upon Thomas Hawkes.

In looking back upon the awful transactions of this time of persecution, let us not form too severe a judgment of the evil deeds of our erring forefathers. It was not a time when the rights of conscience, looking beyond the opinions of the alternately dominant creeds, could be adequately acknowledged by Roman Catholic or Protestant. The broad foundation upon which to establish those rights was undoubtedly laid in the principles of the Reformation. But it has required the struggles of three centuries to make these rights a living rule of charitable action, even in secular legislation. Other disturbing influences were to arise, out of which were to grow many a severe contest between the ruling powers in church and state, and the sacred claims of private judgment. At this worst period in England of triumphant persecution against those who were called heretics, the very heretics themselves were ready to become persecutors. Philpot, "the best-born gentleman" of Fuller, had declared that he would confound any six of his adversaries upon the question of transubstantiation, and if not, he said, "let me be burnt before the court gates with as many fagots as be in London." When examined before Bonner, he had told him, in the true spirit of toleration, using the words of St. Ambrose to Valentinian, "Take away the law, and I shall reason with you." There could be no equal reasoning, when the renewed statutes for punishing heretics with death were written over the judgment-seat of the examiner. But Philpot himself was ready to become a perse

cutor when the case lay between his own opinions, and those which Catholic and Protestant had agreed in condemning. Courageous, enthusiastic, in the assertion of his principles, the martyr Philpot had no respect for those who went further than he did in asserting what they held to be truth. He published a vindication of himself for an action which was scarcely compatible with the character even of the "best-born gentleman." He had spat upon an Arian. Does he apologise for an act of passion when his conscience was offended by what he considered the enunciation of a creed which he held was damnable and wicked? He says, with perfect honesty, but in a spirit which may induce us to judge not too harshly of those who asserted their convictions even with cruelty, "Should not the mouth declare the zeal for his Maker, by spittings on him that depraveth his Divine Majesty? . . . I tell thee plain, that I am nothing ashamed of that fact, but give God thanks that I bear evil for well-doing." He denounces as heretics, all "such as break the unity of Christ's church, neither abide in the same, neither submit their judgment to be tried in the causes which they brabble for, by the godly learned pastors thereof." \* Surely this self-reliance is an apology for those who also relied upon "the unity of Christ's church," as maintained by their own doctrines and ceremonies. Such was the temper of Calvin, when, in 1546, he thus declares his hatred of what he calls "the delirious fancies" of Servetus: "He takes it upon him to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety; for if he shall come, I shall never permit him to depart alive, provided my authority be of any avail." † Let us bear in mind how long a time of probation is required, before individual fidelity to a strong religious conviction can be united with respect for adverse opinions; how long before love shall prevail over zeal, and the essential agreements of the spiritual life be more regarded than the doctrinal differences. Let us bear this in mind, even when we view the conduct of a Bonner, "whom all generations shall call bloody," ‡ according to the judgment of an honest man in his generation; but who it would better become us in our day to pity than to vituperate, if we cannot forbear, as we ought not to forbear, to hate cruelty and oppression in whatever form they present themselves.

The wickedness of the Marian persecution, regarding it with

\* Strype, vol. iii. part ii. p. 372. † Letters of Calvin, by Bonnet, vol. ii.

‡ Fuller, "Church History," vol. ii. p. 343.

every allowance for the errors of those engaged in it, can only be exceeded by its folly. If the martyrdoms had been confined to the great leaders and teachers of the Reformation,—to those who exulted in its principles, and welcomed suffering and death as the crowning glory of their labours,—we may understand how the spirit of revenge might have obliterated the quality of mercy. Bonner said to Hawkes, "We will show such mercy unto you as ye showed unto us; for my benefice or bishopric was taken away from me, so that I had not one penny to live upon." We see the vulgarity and meanness of Bonner's mind in this avowal; and his ferocity is therefore intelligible when he has to deal with Ridley, who supplanted him in his bishopric. So of Gardiner, when he has to influence the fate of his old opponent Cranmer. But that a government, knowing well that the elements of public hatred were surrounding it on every side—that a thousand martyrdoms could not change the secret opinions which had been the growth of nearly two centuries,—that a government politically and religiously obnoxious to many, should have chosen to hunt out the heretics from the most obscure recesses, is an example of that judicial blindness which precedes destruction. When we read in the sad history of these times, that the humblest of the people were called into the ecclesiastical courts, and, being required to make answers to certain questions, were condemned if judged heretical, we may ask what possible feeling could have been produced, other than the most intense hatred and disgust by such sacrifices of artificers and labourers and fishermen—when even the lowly housewife was dragged out of her cottage, upon the information of some spiteful neighbour? Those who would extenuate the practices of these times, as the fashion now is, would do well to study the public acts of the government of Mary, rather than prove that she was kind to her dependants; that she loved her husband; that she was conscientiously pious and charitable; that she had a sincerer nature than her sister Elizabeth. It is as a queen that she must be judged; and as a queen she went further to degrade and enslave England than any sovereign who ever sat upon England's throne. There is such a document in existence as "An Order prescribed by the King and Queen to the Justices of the Peace," dated March 26th, 1555, in which, after enjoining that "they must lay special weight upon those which be preachers and teachers of heresy, or procurers of secret meetings for that purpose," we have this memorable direction: "They shall procure to have in every parish, or part

of the shire, as near as may be, some one or more honest men secretly instructed, to give information of the behaviour of the inhabitants amongst or about them."\* The justices of the peace, in some districts, were ready enough to bring such as "do lean to erroneous and heretical opinions" before the Ordinaries. But, as we learn by a royal letter dated the 24th of May, the bishops either refused to receive such persons, or dealt with them mercifully. Then the pious king and queen wrote to each bishop to admonish him that "when any such offenders shall be by the said justices of the peace brought unto you, ye do use your good wisdom and discretion, in procuring to remove them from their errors, if it may be, or else in proceeding against them, if they shall continue obstinate, according to the order of the laws."† Honour be to those justices and bishops in whose districts the old English spirit of honesty and freedom made the attempts to introduce the spy-system into every household recoil with hatred and contempt upon their originators. Many dioceses, especially the large ones of Lincoln, York, and Durham, were almost wholly exempt from these disgraces. The merciful and, we may say, politic dispositions of many bishops stood between those who read their English Bibles in secret, and the bigotry that would have dragged them to sign articles against their consciences, or to burn. One more expedient was tried, to remedy the supineness of justices and ordinaries. In 1557, a commission was issued to the bishops of London and Ely, with other ecclesiastics and many laymen, by which any three were empowered to search after all heresies, and the sellers and readers of heretical books; to examine and punish all misbehaviour and negligences in church or chapel; to try all priests that did not preach of the sacrament of the altar, and all persons that did not hear mass, or did not go in procession, or did not take holy bread or holy water. They were to call before them what witnesses they pleased, and compel them to swear, so as to discover the heresies and offences thus to be hunted out.‡ "So now," says Burnet, "all was done that could be devised for the extirpation of heresy, except Courts of Inquisition had been set up; to which, whether this was not a previous step to dispose the nation to it, the reader may judge."§

We have endeavoured, without dwelling too minutely upon the

\* Burnet, "Records," No. 19.

† *Ibid.*, No. 20.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 32.

§ "History of the Reformation," part ii. book ii. p. 347.

horrors of this frightful time, to lead the reader to understand how that temper was roused in the English nation, which produced an abhorrence to the Roman Catholic religion, "to be derived down from father to son"—"an aversion so deeply rooted, and raised upon such grounds, as does upon every new provocation or jealousy of returning to it, break out in most violent and convulsive symptoms." So wrote Burnet in the time of Charles II. So may we still write, when the "jealousy of returning to it" is excited by indiscretions which proceed from a singular ignorance of the character of the English nation. Let us conclude this painful narrative with a brief view of the final triumphs of the three most eminent of the sufferers.

From the 28th of April, 1554, when Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, had been condemned as obstinate heretics, they had remained in prison in Oxford. In September, 1555, a court was held under the papal authority at Oxford, for what was called their trial. Ridley and Latimer were brought before the commissioners, the bishops of Lincoln, Gloucester, and Bristol, to answer to certain articles. The next day, a solemn session was held at St. Mary's church—solemn as far as thrones and cloth of tissue could impart solemnity to a proceeding which was a mockery of justice, in refusing to hear the accused. They had only to hear the sentence pronounced; to be degraded; to be burnt. The place of their execution is now distinguished by what is called "the Martyrs' Memorial." No monument is necessary to commemorate an event which will be remembered, through the power of a few thrilling words, as long as the English language shall endure. Stripped of his prison dress, the aged Latimer—the bent old man, "stood bolt upright, as comely a father as one might lightly behold." He stands, bolt upright, in his shroud. Ridley and he "stand coupled for a common flight;" and he says, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as shall never be put out."

When Cranmer came before the commissioners, he was cited to appear at Rome within eighty days, there to answer the charges against him. This was one of the mockeries of the papal rule in England. There were prison-walls between the archbishop and Rome, and at the end of the time he was declared contumacious. Bonner and Thirlby were appointed to degrade him. Bonner was brutal; Thirlby wept. The courage of Cranmer was never very strong. He had made too many compromises in life not to be



tempted into one more compliance with firmer wills, when a hope was offered to him that he might quietly descend into the grave, at the natural expiration of his allotted years. He signed papers of recantation, under these false promises. The hateful betrayers thought by this cruel policy, to make the great leader of the Reformation die a cowardly apostate. They were deceived. A better spirit—an inspiration—came over the fallen man—to make his final glory even greater from his temporary abasement. There can be no question of the authenticity of the narrative of his last end, for it was drawn up by a Romanist; and the original document is amongst the Harleian Manuscripts, headed, “Archbishop Cranmer’s death, related by a by-stander.” On the 21st of March, the morning being rainy, the sermon, which was appointed to be preached at the stake, was preached in St. Mary’s church. Cranmer having heard the sermon, in which he was reminded of his wretched estate—“of a counsellor to be a caitiff,” knelt down and prayed—the men of the university praying with him; “for they that hated him before, now loved him for his conversion.” After that he prayed aloud; and then addressed an exhortation, to care not over much for the world; to obey the king and queen; to love one another; to be good to the poor. He then declared that he believed in God; in every article of the Catholic faith; and every word and sentence taught by our Saviour, his apostles, and prophets, in the Old and New Testament. The conclusion of his exhortation was a startling one:

“And now I come to the great thing that troubleth my conscience more than any other thing that ever I said or did in my life: and that is, the setting abroad of writings contrary to the truth. Which here now I renounce and refuse, as things written with my hand, contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be: and that is, all such bills which I have written or signed with mine own hand, since my degradation: wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished therefore: for if I may come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ’s enemy and anti-christ, with all his false doctrine.”

“And here being admonished of his recantation and dissembing, he said ‘Alas, my lord, I have been a man that all my life loved plainness, and never dissembled till now against the truth;

which I am most sorry for.’ He added hereunto, that, for the sacrament, he believed as he had taught in his book against the bishop of Winchester. And here he was suffered to speak no more.”

“He so far deceived all men’s expectations, that, at the hearing thereof they were much amazed.” He was led away, “great numbers exhorting him, while time was, to remember him’elf.” He did remember himself; and thus vindicated his character, for the love and pity of all after-time:

“Coming to the stake with a cheerful countenance and willing mind, he put off his garments with haste, and stood upright in his shirt: and a bachelor of divinity, named Elye, of Brazenose College, laboured to convert him to his former recantation, with the two Spanish friars. And when the friars saw his constancy, they said in Latin one to another, Let us go from him; we ought not to be nigh him, for the devil is with him. But the bachelor in divinity was more earnest with him; unto whom he answered, that, as concerning his recantation, he repented it right sore, because he knew it was against the truth; with other words more. Whereby the lord Williams cried, ‘Make short, make short.’ Then the bishop took certain of his friends by the hand. But the bachelor of divinity refused to take him by the hand, and blamed all others that so did, and said, he was sorry that ever he came in his company. And yet, again, he required him to agree to his former recantation. And the bishop answered, showing his hand, ‘This was the hand that wrote, and therefore shall it suffer first punishment.’

“Fire being now put to him, he stretched out his right hand, and thrust it into the flame, and held it there a good space, before the fire came to any other part of his body; where his hand was seen of every man sensibly burning, crying with a loud voice, ‘This hand hath offended.’ As soon as the fire got up, he was very soon dead, never stirring or crying all the while.”