

FOUR CENTURIES
OF
NONCONFORMIST DISABILITIES
1509—1912

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DISABILITIES**

1509—1912

BY

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FOREWORD

IN this year of 1912 the Author was asked to write a little booklet on the Great Ejection of 1662, for the use of Sunday-school scholars and other young people, and for the purpose of an Examination. But, on reflection, he was led to enlarge the sphere of his vision and the field of review. It struck him that there is much ignorance, not only among our young people, but also among those that are older, of the disabilities, oppressions, and sufferings of Nonconformists since the Church of England became from centre to circumference a State-Church, when Henry VIII. made himself, with the consent of an obsequious Parliament, "Sole Head and Governor" of it, and that therefore it was highly desirable to give a brief account and connected view of the last *Four Centuries*. This he has attempted to do, and whilst he is conscious of the shortcomings of this short review, he believes that this simple *narrative of facts* will be sufficient to demonstrate the evil, the anomaly, and the absurdity of "State Religion," the unwarrantableness and even wickedness of interference by the State or by the

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secularised Church with the religious views and practices of the community, and the urgent necessity in the highest interests of political justice and freedom, of spiritual religion, and of the "Crown rights" of the Lord Jesus, that there should be a Free Church in a Free Country.

I hardly need add that the Author alone is responsible for the contents of this little handbook. He has exercised all care as to the facts contained therein: all his readers may not agree with his sentiments.

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Nonconformist Disabilities

1509-1912

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHEREVER and whenever there has been an established or State religion, there have been also sturdy and uncompromising Nonconformists.

It would be a most interesting and profitable study to trace the history of these Nonconformists throughout the centuries of the Christian Era, but space will not allow even of the barest outline. Still, we can clearly see the winding of the stream of their life through the ages, almost lost to sight, it is true, amid the thickening gloom of the "Dark Ages," running through Catacombs and subterranean passages, hidden away but never ceasing to flow amid the convulsions of nations and the bitterest storms of persecution, but ever and anon emerging into the light of day and

reflecting from its crystal bosom the sweet light of heaven. These—whether they dissented from the cruel laws of the State or from the oppressive edicts of a dominant Church—had on the whole a clear view of the nature of the kingdom of Christ. They believed that religion was a personal and spiritual matter with which no man, whether prince or priest, no State or Government had a right to interfere; that Cæsar's Empire and the kingdom of God did not run on the same but distinct lines, and therefore ought never to have come into collision; that Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church, that He is its "Chief Governor" whether in heaven or on earth, that the New Testament is its Statute Book, and that it is the supreme standard and authority in religious matters, and not the fiat of king or Act of Parliament or decree of any Church; that every man is directly accountable to God and has access directly to Him through the only Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; that there is no room for a mediating or sacrificing priest under the new economy, but that as such Christ's work was all-sufficient; that therefore, while each man performed his part and did his duty as a citizen, no one had the right of looking into conscience or of interfering with his religious convictions—to his God alone he standeth or falleth. It is true that some had but an imperfect knowledge or hazy notions as regards true religion in some of its bearings and relations; at the same time they held the central truth

with a firm grip and were prepared to live and die for it—and thousands of them did. They were called by various names, but they were one in their loyalty to Christ, whether they went under the designation of Paulicians, Novatians, Donatists, Waldenses, Albigenses, Wyclifites, Hussites, Mennonites, “Men of the Bible,” Huguenots, Anabaptists, Independents, or even the Stundists of the present day, who choose rather to face the dungeons of Russia and the cruelties of Siberia than deny their faith. Neither the flame nor the sword, neither the rack nor the gallows succeeded in getting them to retract or apostatise; but with regret we say that space fails us “to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthæ, of David also and Samuel, and the prophets . . . of whom the world was not worthy.” Many of the successors of these ancient Scripture heroes stood in God’s name in stern antagonism to the whole Church as well as to the whole world of their times; and even if for a moment we turn our attention to that which is outside the religious world as well as to that which is within it, we find that every great movement of progress and advance has originated in an *act of Nonconformity*—Nonconformity to the world as well as to the Church as established or dominant. This is true of almost every country and order; compare, rather contrast, Socrates with the Dikastes and Sophists of Athens; Paul with the Sanhedrin; Benedict with the sixth-century Episcopate; Bernard with Eugenius; Francis

with Innocent; Luther with Leo; Galileo with Urban; John Penry with Whitgift; Cromwell with Charles I.; Milton with Laud; Roger Williams with the persecuting Puritans; John Robinson with Bancroft; Vavasor Powel and the Fathers of Welsh Nonconformity with the bishops who utterly neglected the country committed to their charge; and to-day it is the Nonconformist spirit that mainly does battle for and initiates the great movements in society and in the State that have for their object the betterment of all classes, the securing of equal opportunities for all, the comfort of old age, and the abolition of unfair distinctions and privileges that have separated class from class, and which should not and could not exist in a truly free country. But it is our object in this little handbook to confine our attention to the Disabilities of Nonconformists in this country for the last four hundred years: that is, since Henry VIII. became king, and especially since the supremacy of the Pope was done away with, and Henry became, or rather made himself the Sole Head of the Church of England in these realms—not only its political but ecclesiastical head, its Pope as well as its King, and when by Royal decree and parliamentary enactment the Church became a State Church from centre to circumference, as “by law established,” and as such is bound hand and foot by restrictions which the State has imposed and which the State alone can remove; and hence the Nonconformist Churches, in contradistinction, are

truly designated "Free Churches," and so differ as widely as the poles are asunder from the Church which in its Book of Common Prayer, its Rubrics, its Articles, its Services, its final and full control, is an Act-of-Parliament Church.

Our simple aim is the recital of facts, which most convincingly show that a State Church is utterly wrong in principle, intolerant and persecuting in spirit, injurious to religion, oppressive to the members and especially to the ministers of the Church itself, and unjust to all other Christian communities and the public at large; for it is the function of the State to regard them in the light of citizens only, and not as belonging or not belonging to any particular form of religion with which, in fact, *the State as such* should have nothing to do.

The ancient British Church was essentially different from the Roman Catholic Church. Christianity was early introduced into Britain; who brought it here is uncertain, but in all probability there were many Christians in this country soon after the Apostolic Age. By the end of the second century there was a flourishing Church. When the Roman power ceased in Britain there was a large Christian community. In 597 Augustine and his monks came over, and founded his alien Church. He sought to bring the native clergy into subordination to the See of Canterbury and to Rome; but the British would have none of it. There was, in fact, great antipathy between

them. This was especially true of Wales. Augustine told the Welsh bishops "that if they would not have peace with them as brethren, they would have war with them as enemies," and he used threats with violence to compel them to accept him and his religion. In A.D. 607, the English killed 1,200 of the monks of the monastery of Bangor-Iscoed, and these were regarded for ages as martyrs by their Welsh compatriots. Till the twelfth century the Church *in* Wales was also the Church *of* Wales. After that the Normans filled the Welsh sees with strangers, as the late Dean of Bangor said: "Maintaining Harvey at Bangor by arms, subjecting St. David's to Canterbury, banishing Gruffydd, rejecting Giraldus Cambrensis, provoking the appeal of the Welsh Princes to the Pope, &c.—all this changed the Church *of* Wales into the Church *in* Wales." With regard to the two Churches, Professor Freeman says (and there is no greater authority than he): "We see a British Church and we see an English Church, but they stand to one another in no relation of identity, or even of parentage. The tale is a tale of conquest—of conquest which puts on a milder shape as it goes on, but which is still conquest from beginning to end. Between British and English Christianity there is absolutely no continuity. British Christianity is first displaced by English heathendom, and it is then conquered by the Christianity which England learnt direct from Rome." And throughout the centuries this spirit of conquest was ever present; the Church

never gained the affection of the people, they did not find it to be their spiritual home ; and even to-day it is the Church of England *for the English people in Wales.*

In time the Papal Church became supreme in this country, and it made full use of its power. It made kings bow to its decisions, and they issued decrees in its favour and for its support. The priests preyed on their credulity and superstition, and they voted lands and money "for the good of their souls." Still, we meet with great names—Bede, Dunstan, Anselm, and others.

When William the Conqueror became king he reorganised the Church, brought Lanfranc from Normandy and made him Archbishop of Canterbury. William was a kind of "forerunner" of Henry VIII., and repudiated the claims that were put forward by Rome. In these times the Church, on occasions, did much service to the State, and under Becket and others became more powerful. Still the Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) and other enactments circumscribed its authority ; but although it could boast of some able and liberal-minded men, yet the land was in gross spiritual darkness, and remained so until the "Morning Star" of the Reformation arose, John Wyclif, who was born 1324. In his time the Church had sunk to its lowest point of spiritual decay, but he set himself most energetically to promote reforms in it and to preach pure doctrine. He attacked the vices of the clergy and the mendicant friars. He was, in fact, the great

Reformer before the Reformation. He was a true Protestant and Nonconformist. He protested against penances and indulgences, and denied the supremacy of the Pope. He denounced Transubstantiation. Above all things, he translated the Bible into the language of the people, which was read with avidity, and "the common people" heard him gladly. He had a wonderfully clear insight into Divine Truth. The Pope ordered him to be tried as a heretic, and he was cited before the Archbishop, but he escaped punishment and continued his great work until his death in 1384. Thirty years later his writings were condemned, and his bones were ordered to be dug up and his ashes were thrown into the Swift, the Swift carried them to the Avon, the Avon to the Severn, the Severn into the Bristol Channel, the Channel into the circumambient ocean, and so were a parable of his doctrine, which has now reached every part of the world. It was the same Council (of Constance, 1414) that sentenced his disciples to the stake, John Huss and Jerome of Prague.

Up to the reign of Henry VIII. there was a succession of noble men who kept the light of truth shining, and spiritual religion was never without its witnesses. These men were called by their enemies "*Lollards*," or "*Psalm-singers*." From time to time they were subjected to dire persecution. The bishops were empowered to arrest them on common rumour and to punish them with imprisonment. This was

followed by the Statute of Heretics ("Concerning the Burning of Heretics," 1401). This infamous Act enabled bishops not only to arrest and imprison all preachers of heresy and schoolmasters infected with heresy and writers of heretical books, but also to hand them over to the civil officers to be burnt before the people. *This was the first enactment of religious bloodshed which was placed on our Statute Book*, to be followed, alas! by a fearful, murderous brood. It was soon put into execution. William Sawtre, a Norfolk clergyman, became the first victim, and John Badbie was committed to the flames in the presence of the Prince of Wales for a denial of Transubstantiation. Out of their very ashes, as it were, arose others. The "Lollards" found a leader and protector in Sir John Oldcastle (afterwards Lord Cobham). Thirty-nine of them were put to death, and this was followed by the arrest of their leader. He was imprisoned in the Tower and suffered martyrdom. *He was the first in this country to maintain in a Court of Law* that neither king nor Pope had a right to interfere in religious matters. When he was brought before the Court he declared that he was prepared to obey the King in all political matters, but "to the Pope," he said, "and the spiritual dominion he claims I am not obligated for anything I know, and I shall not render to him anything, for as sure as the Word of God is true it is perfectly clear to me that he is the great Antichrist, the Son of

Perdition, the adversary of God, and the abomination in the holy place." This bold statement reminds us of John and Peter before the Sanhedrin and of Luther at the Diet of Worms. When he was brought to the place of execution he "warned the people not to be misled by the false teachers, but to follow the instruction that God had provided in the Holy Scriptures." He regarded religion as a personal matter between him and God from first to last. When he was urged to confess to priests he boldly declared, "If Peter and Paul were here I would not even confess to them, who are so immeasurably superior. But God Himself is here, and to Him have I, with all humility, confessed my sins. Of His mercy I am confidently hoping for forgiveness, and to no other will I confess." This noble man was hung alive in chains and a slow fire kindled beneath his feet.

But the bishops' persecution failed to kill "Lollardy." The spirit of Wyclif lived on in his writings. Groups met of a night to read certain chapters of the "Evangelists in English"—that is, from Wyclif's translation—and his tracts were widely scattered.

Then came William Tyndale, born in Gloucestershire, but who had to retire to Hamburg, and there he translated the Gospels and Epistles. Soon others joined him, and many portions of the Scriptures were given forth to the world. They were smuggled over to England, and "Christian Brethren" circulated them widely. Many of these "Brethren" were

thrown into prison and their books publicly burned in St. Paul's Churchyard, many of them being "St. Paul's Epistles." Tyndale had declared to an opponent, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." A new and cheaper edition of the New Testament appeared in 1534, and afterwards he co-operated with Miles Coverdale on the Old Testament. Henry VIII. and his Council employed a person to betray him, and at Augsburg he was tried, condemned, and strangled at the stake. He expired while uttering the prayer, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Tyndale was an inspired translator, and he still lives in the various English versions based on his translation.

We shall endeavour to present a "bird's-eye view" of the laws enacted against "Nonconformists," the disabilities which they suffered, and the oppression and sufferings they endured since the so-called Reformation under Henry VIII., now nearly four hundred years ago, when the Church *in* England became the Church *of* England, and was made from centre to circumference a State Church, when the King became its ecclesiastical as well as political head, its Pope as well as King, and from which time it has had no voice or power, but has been bound hand and foot, in earlier times by the whim or caprice of the Sovereign and in later times by Act of Parlia-

ment, as by law established ; and we shall see clearly the injustice and anomaly of the establishment of religion by a conglomerate body like the State, the untold misery and mischief of which the system has been the cruel instrument, and the undoubted necessity of bringing it to a speedy end in the interest of true spiritual religion and the brotherhood of man.

CHAPTER II

HENRY THE EIGHTH

HENRY VIII. succeeded his father, Henry VII., in the year 1509—just a little over four hundred years ago—in the nineteenth year of his age. For years he remained a loyal son of the Church of Rome, and even published a book in its defence against the attacks of Luther, and received from Pope Leo X. the title of “Defender of the Faith,” which by a most anomalous survival is still inscribed on the coins of the realm. (Is it not time to do away with such a hollow and misleading epithet?)

Henry married his brother's widow, Catherine of Arragon, but ere long he got tired of the union, as he had fallen in love with a lady of his Court, Anne Boleyn, and he desired Pope Clement to pronounce in favour of his divorce from Catherine. The Pope for long delayed his answer, and the King became impatient. The Pope's scruples as well as his interests prevented his gratifying Henry's wishes, and at last he even rebuked him for the indelicacy of his relations

with Anne Boleyn, and ordered him to restore Catherine to her lawful position as Queen till the cause was tried. This led to a rupture with Rome, and the King annihilated the judicial jurisdiction of the Papacy as far as England was concerned. *The Church in England became by an Act of the Royal will the Church of England.* In 1534 the Act of Supremacy was passed by which the English Sovereign became without limitation "The only Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England." It was decreed that the proceedings of Convocation had no validity without the King's permission. The bishops became simply his nominees, as they are the nominees of the Government to-day. Their election by the Chapters of the Cathedrals is the greatest fiasco of all time, as they are compelled to elect the person mentioned in the "Letters Missive" from the King. Authority in all matters, ecclesiastical as well as civil, was vested in the Crown, and it alone could repress or correct abuses. In fact, Parliament resigned all its religious liberty and proceeded to an entire surrender to the King of all its civil liberty. It simply registered the passing whims and decisions of Henry. None could preach but those to whom he granted licences, and each had to proclaim the King the Head of the Church. He became "Infallible Pope" as well as King. All the articles of religion were drawn up by him, and none durst utter a protest. But he was not a Protestant. His *Six Articles* promulgated in 1539 demanded

belief in Transubstantiation, communion in one kind, the perpetual obligations of vows of chastity, the celibacy of the clergy, the sacrifice of private masses, and auricular confession ; whoever denied these was liable to be burned or to other severe and cruel punishment. As soon as this Act was passed the Catholics were very vigilant in informing against offenders, and no less than five hundred persons were in a short time thrown into prison, and among them Bishops Latimer and Shaxton. A noted martyr was Anne Askew, a lady of the Court, who was tortured and burnt for her denial of Transubstantiation. Those who denied the other five Articles were also burned on a second offence. Thus Henry seemed to return to his old Catholic days, when in 1519 six men and a woman were burned in Coventry for teaching the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. John Frith, the friend of Tyndale, and also John Lambert, who had been minister of the English Church at Antwerp, to which Tyndale and Frith belonged, were burned at Smithfield. On the other hand, the block was the fate of the good man and conscientious Catholic, Sir Thomas More, and the learned Bishop Fisher. In fact Henry's one aim was power, and he allowed none to stand in his way. While he was exerting his violence against the Protestants, he also punished the Catholics who denied his supremacy. So those who were against the Pope were burned, and those who were for him were hanged

or beheaded; even Catholics and Protestants were carried on the same hurdle to execution. No barbarities seemed to be too cruel to a man who could execute a wife and marry another in two days!

Later, this impetuous man changed his mind. The Six Articles were repealed; the "heretics" who had been arrested were released; the bishops were set free; pictures and images were to be removed from churches; priests were permitted to marry; Communion took the place of the Mass, the Common Prayer the place of the Missal. The Forty-two Articles (afterwards reduced to thirty-nine) were introduced, to which and the Liturgy all the clergy and schoolmasters had to subscribe. Thus there was no room for a Nonconformist "with a conscience" in this tyrannical reign, and the block, the stake, or the prison awaited any one who dared to avow he had a mind of his own. This was the inauspicious beginning of the Established Church of England, which had its origin in personal pique and which was made the engine of unspeakable injustice, tyranny, and oppression. The Establishment had certainly an unholy origin, and the stream was befouled even at the very fountain-head. Conscience was fettered, hypocrisy was fostered, the lust of greed and power and position fed, the claims of the One Lord as the Head of His Church ostensibly ignored and practically denied, and a sinful and criminal attempt was made to thrust the Bride of Christ into the bondage of soul-destroying uniformity. A large

number of Acts were passed in this reign, indicative of the chaotic condition of things, and reflecting the restless state of the King's mind as well as his insatiable ambition. These required the complete submission of the clergy, the restraint of appeals, the election of bishops and "Letters Missive" Act, the forbidding of papal dispensations, an Act for the dissolution of the Lesser and also the Greater Monasteries (1536 and 1539), the proceeds of which Henry partly appropriated to himself and partly bestowed on his favourites. This was the foundation of many of the great families whose representatives to-day hold up their hands in horror when there is a proposal to restore public property to public uses.

CHAPTER III

EDWARD THE SIXTH

IN the short reign of Edward VI. (1547-53) the Reformation was further established. In fact, established Protestantism dates from the beginning of his reign. He was only ten years of age at his father's death.

In 1549 an Act of Uniformity was passed, in which the use of the Prayer Book was enjoined throughout the realm, and any not using it and other rites and ceremonies according to the use of the Church of England, *or using any other manner of prayer*, except an occasional psalm, should forfeit, for the first offence the profit of his benefice for one year; for the second, imprisonment for a whole year, and was deprived of all promotion; and for the third offence, imprisonment for life; and for speaking against the said book or any part of it, for the first offence, ten pounds; for the second offence twenty pounds; and for the third, the loss of all his goods and imprisonment for life. The Archbishop and bishops

were, at their pleasure, to sit on the cases that were brought before them.

A second Act of Uniformity was passed in 1552. The breach with Rome was widened. As in the reign of Elizabeth, very little preaching was allowed, and the clergy were prohibited to preach outside their own parishes. Twelve *Homilies* were published which were to be read to the people; also the Bible was introduced, and on every Sunday and holiday a chapter was to be read in English out of the New Testament at Matins, and out of the Old Testament at Evensong. Commissioners were appointed, who drew up the First Book of Common Prayer, but many elements of popery were left in it. In a second revision, which came into use in 1552, most of these were removed, but many glaring inconsistencies remained which made it compulsory on "every person and persons inhabiting within this realm or any other the King's Majesty's dominions, to resort to their Parish Church on Sundays and Holy Days" upon pain of punishment by the censures of the Church; and the bishops were charged with the execution of the Act and to punish those that offended, and the use of the Book of Common Prayer was enforced, and if any one attended any other form of service, he had to suffer imprisonment for six months, for the second offence twelve months, and for the third for life.

These are the first Acts of the so-called Protestant King and Protestant Church. The boy-King of fifteen had nothing to do with it, but was the instrument of the politicians and bishops around him.

CHAPTER IV

MARY

QUEEN MARY succeeded to the throne July 6, 1553. She published a proclamation August 18th in which she desired her subjects to revert to Roman Catholicism, and declared that irregular preaching and unlicensed printing would be prohibited under penalty. Her first Act of Repeal was passed in the autumn of 1553. It abolished nine Acts passed in the reign of Edward VI., and restored the condition of things as they were in the year 1547, and in her second Act of Repeal she fully restored the Papacy. In the same year, 1554, she restored the Heresy Acts, which were enacted for the suppression of the "Lollards" in 1401. According to these, bishops were allowed to arrest and imprison all preachers and schoolmasters suspected of heresy, all owners and writers of "heretical" books, and hand them over to the civil officers to be burned on a high place before the people. She had fitting instruments to carry out her nefarious purposes in Bishops

Bonner and Gardiner. The country was soon filled with scenes of horror. There was a carnival of bloodshed, a holocaust of the godliest men of the land, which won for the Queen the epithet of "Bloody Mary"—a term fully deserved, as she was as cruel, intolerant, and vindictive as Jezebel. Even to catalogue the barbarities that were perpetrated would be a sickening task. Bonner, the Bishop of London, was a man of like spirit, who seemed to take delight in the torments of his victims. The last three years of Mary's reign were the blackest years of English history. At least 277 persons were burned at the stake. She had her revenge on the "Protestant," now the Nonconformist bishops, who helped to bring in the Reformation. Hooper, the godly and evangelical Bishop of Gloucester, was about the first to suffer, and he was burned in his own cathedral city, because he, like many others, refused to acknowledge the Real Presence. Ferrars, the Bishop of St. David's, was burned at Carmarthen. The noble Bishop Latimer and conscientious Bishop Ridley were imprisoned at Oxford, and from their cells were led to the stake. Latimer's exultant words to Ridley have long since passed into one of the best-known utterances of the Christian world: "Master Ridley, play the man, we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

There was another, the most noted of all, Arch-

bishop Cranmer, on whom the Queen was about to pour out the vials of her vengeance. He had taken the most prominent part of all in annulling the marriage of Catherine of Arragon, Mary's mother, with Henry, and so making the Queen a bastard. He had some reason for believing that his life would be spared if he recanted, and in a weak hour he did. But this recantation was of no avail, and when he was led forth to the fiery furnace of death his courage returned, and in addressing the crowd around him, he said, "This was the hand that wrote it"—that is, his recantation—"therefore it shall be the first burnt," and holding it steadily in the flame, he never stirred nor cried till life was gone. Besides the bishops, among those who suffered were 21 clergymen, 8 lay gentlemen, 84 tradesmen, 100 husbandmen, servants and labourers, 55 women, and 4 children. Many were seized on mere suspicion, and even without trial were condemned to the flames. They were sent even in batches. In a single day thirteen victims, two of them women, were burnt at Stratford-le-Bow. Seventy-three Protestants of Colchester were dragged through the streets of London, tied to a single rope. The bodies of foreign teachers who had come to England and been buried here were raised from their graves and burnt to ashes. Mary representing the State, and Bonner representing the Church (unholy alliance!), filled the country with terror, and worse barbarism never stained the annals

of heathen lands. The people sickened at the work of death, and if the Queen had not died—broken-hearted, deserted by her husband, having lost Calais, the brightest jewel in her crown, hated by the nation—after a short reign of five years, the probability is that she would have been hurled from the Throne, as Jezebel was hurled from the window of the upper room. Thus, whilst Rome flashed her red danger-light, showing her persecuting spirit throughout the ages, making use of rack and sword and gallows and the flames, employing every engine of torment that hellish hate could devise, we see the constancy and courage, the heroism and the unfailing loyalty to conscience and to Christ of the “noble army of martyrs,” who had deeply drunk of the Spirit of the Cross.

“By the light of burning heretics, Christ’s bleeding feet I
 track,
 Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the Cross that turns
 not back;
 And these mounds of anguish number how each generation
 learned
 One new word of that grand Credo which in prophet-
 hearts hath burned,
 Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face to
 heaven upturned.”

CHAPTER V

ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH, the daughter of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn, succeeded her sister Mary when twenty-five years of age, and she reigned for the long period of forty-five years (1558-1603). She inherited many of her father's as well as her mother's qualities. She possessed her father's imperious will, dauntless courage, abounding self-confidence, and love of popularity, and very often she manifested strong outbursts of temper. She had received an excellent training, and possessed great capacities of mind and the instincts of statesmanship. She restored the prestige of England, and on land and sea her flag waved triumphantly. She was capable of much intrigue, and was a "past mistress" in playing one party against another. She was fond of splendour, and the magnificent pageants got up in her honour gave her great pleasure. She retained a good deal of the "drapery" of Rome in her worship, although she professed herself a Protestant. In the restora-

tion of Protestantism she proceeded at first cautiously. She recalled all the exiles and liberated the prisoners who were confined on account of their religion. She published a proclamation in which she inhibited all preaching without a licence; at the same time she forbade the Host to be any time elevated in her presence. The bishops refused to officiate at her coronation. But at last the Bishop of Carlisle consented to do so. Their refusal she did not forget. The monasteries lately erected were suppressed, and the tenths and first-fruits were restored to the Queen. In the first year of her reign the Act of Supremacy was restored. It revived ten Acts of Henry VIII., passed after his breaking away from Rome, and one of Edward VI., and repealed Acts passed in Mary's reign. In it ecclesiastical jurisdiction was annexed to the Crown. It provided that every archbishop, bishop, and every other ecclesiastical officer and minister, and every judge, justice, mayor, and other lay and temporal officer and minister, and every one receiving Her Highness's fee or wages, should take the oath that the Queen was the only Supreme Governor as well *in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things* as temporal; and those refusing were to be subjected to severe penalties.

This Act was immediately followed by Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity, characterised by the stringency of its provisions, which re-established Edward VI.'s Book of Common Prayer, with certain alterations.

For using any other form of prayer, a person would forfeit the profit of all his spiritual benefices for a whole year and suffer imprisonment for six months ; for the second offence, he was deprived of all his promotions and imprisoned for twelve months ; and for the third, he was to be imprisoned *for life*. What a strange application of Protestant principles ! And if any person spoke against the Book of Common Prayer, or caused any other form of service to be used, for the first offence he had to pay one hundred marks (a *mark* was thirteen shillings and fourpence, and was of a much higher value at that time than it would be now). For the second offence he had to forfeit four hundred marks, and for the third all his goods and chattels and suffer imprisonment during life ! Every person was to attend church regularly under pain of censure of the Church and a heavy fine. The bishops with others were enjoined to put the Act in execution, and they did it with all alacrity and delight.

All the bishops, with the exception of the Bishop of Llandaff, refused to take the Oath of Supremacy, and were accordingly removed from their sees by the Court of High Commission ; but of all the clergy who had served in the reign of Mary, to the number of nearly ten thousand, only about eighty parochial priests and one hundred priests of a higher rank refused. This was a wonderful instance of “turn-

about-face" and of the multiplication of "Vicars of Bray."

In 1570 Pope Pius V. issued a Bull of Excommunication against Elizabeth, depriving her of her title to the Crown and absolving her subjects from their oaths of allegiance. But this attempt of the Pope only rendered her throne more secure, and her people loyally rallied round her.

In 1571 the Subscription (Thirty-nine Articles) Act was passed. The Forty-two Articles of 1562 were reduced to thirty-nine. Every "person ecclesiastic," if he was not prepared to subscribe to all these and every particular in them, was to be immediately deprived of all his promotions. How he could reconcile the teaching of the Prayer Book in many of its parts and that of these Articles is a mystery which Nonconformists could never solve.

In 1585 a severe Act against Jesuits and Seminarists was passed, and legislation against Roman Catholics culminated in the Acts against Recusants in 1593.

Her legislation culminated against Puritans in her Act of 1593. Throughout her life she hated these. In this Act it was decreed that all persons above the age of sixteen refusing to go to church, or persuading others to deny Her Majesty's authority in ecclesiastical matters, or dissuading them from going to church, or being found present at any "unauthorised" or conventicle meeting, should be imprisoned until they were prepared to conform, and if they remained obstinate

for three months, they would have to quit the realm, and go into perpetual banishment; and if they did not depart within the time appointed, or returned without the Queen's licence, they were to be put to death without benefit of the clergy.

It was during Elizabeth's reign that the Puritans began to be a power in the State. They, in a great measure, inherited the principles of Wyclif, Lord Cobham, the "Men of the Bible," and Tyndale.

During Mary's reign many Protestants had to seek asylum abroad, and they settled mainly in Germany and Switzerland. A large body found an asylum at Frankfort, where they formed themselves into a Church, and had John Knox, afterwards the great Scotch reformer, as one of their pastors. Some of them subsequently removed to Geneva. Early in Elizabeth's reign many returned to England, hoping that they would be able to worship God according to their own conscience, but they found that there was to be no freedom for them. In fact, they found Elizabeth as bitterly opposed to them as Mary herself; and however eminent she was as Queen in many respects, Nonconformists as such can have no respect for her memory, as she was one of their most cruel persecutors. Such men even as Miles Coverdale, the eminent translator of the Bible, and John Fox, the martyrologist, found no favour in her sight. The Puritans, whilst they did not object to a State Church, were yet jealous for the honour of

Christ, as the only Head. On their return to this country they found many things in the Church of England which they abhorred, viz., the practice of many Popish rites and ceremonies, and especially the wearing of the Popish vestments. The Queen was anxious to propitiate the Papists, the parochial clergy at the commencement of her reign being nearly all the Mass-priests of Mary's reign. The whole engine of the High Commission Court was exerted to harass the Puritans. This Court, really altogether an unconstitutional institution, inflicted the most cruel punishments on all Nonconformists during the Tudor and Stuart periods. All preachers at first were silenced. Afterwards only those to whom new licences would be granted were allowed to preach. The best men were thus excluded, and the country was filled with the dense darkness of utter spiritual ignorance. In the Queen's estimation, two or three preachers in every diocese were quite sufficient. So the people perished, as there were none to preach to them the Word of God. Elizabeth had as willing an instrument to carry out her will in Archbishop Parker, as Mary had in Bonner. He severely punished by fines and deprivation all the Puritan clergy who would not conform rigidly in all things as by "law established."

A number of Christians met privately in London for Divine worship, but their meeting-place was discovered, and they were all arrested to the number of about one hundred, and were kept in prison for

more than a year. But this was not, after all, the way to destroy Puritanism. The world ought to have known by then that persecution only fans the flame and increases the light. A very learned and able man was Dr. Thomas Cartwright, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, who was really a true prototype of a sound modern Nonconformist, and who fully understood the nature of New Testament Christianity. He denounced the absurdities of Popery, and called for a return to primitive Christianity. He stated that—

(1) The names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons should be abolished ;

(2) That the work of bishops and deacons should be brought back to their apostolic institutions, the former to preach the gospel and the latter to care for the poor ;

(3) That every Church should be governed not by external authorities, but by its own ministers and presbyters ;

(4) That each minister should have the charge of one congregation ;

(5) That ministers ought not to be created by the sole authority of the bishop (much less, as in modern times, by the patron), but to be openly and fairly chosen by the people.

These propositions, with just one exception, are a fair New Testament pronouncement. Archbishop Parker died in 1575, and he was succeeded by Crindal, who had too much sympathy with the

Puritans, and so was soon unfrocked and imprisoned in his own house, and in 1583 Whitgift became Primate. He set at once to the work of putting down Puritanism. Cartwright was deprived of his professorship and was forbidden to preach. He had to leave his country and settled at Geneva. John Field and Thomas Wilcox, two ministers of the Puritan party, were committed to prison. Cartwright, after a term of peace, returned to England, but because he published an "Admonition" which offended the Queen, he had to flee to Heidelberg. Whitgift issued a manifesto which stated that—

(1) "All preaching, teaching, praying in any private house, where any are present besides the family, should not be allowed ;

(2) That all preachers and all in 'holy orders' do at all times wear the vestments prescribed ;

(3) That none be allowed to preach, but those ordained according to the manner of the Church of England ;

(4) That all that preach must subscribe to the following :—

(a) That the Queen hath complete sovereignty in civil and ecclesiastical matters ;

(b) That the Book of Common Prayer and the three orders of bishop, priest and deacon are in entire agreement with the Word of God, and that they will use no other Book ;

(c) That they approve of the Thirty-nine Articles

as in entire consonance with the Word of God."

Whitgift wielded his authority in a relentless manner for twenty years. Hundreds of good and godly ministers were suspended. He instituted a New Commission which could convict by means of witnesses alone, and if they could not procure witnesses they were to resort to other means and all ways they could devise, even by means of the rack, and the witness of the accused against himself or others, extorted under torture. Even Lord Burleigh described the action of Whitgift and his minions as worse than that of the Spanish Inquisition. Under his rigorous and malicious treatment, nearly a third of the beneficed clergy of the land were suspended. Fifty preachers were silenced in Essex alone—a county that had felt the full rigour of the persecutions, when batches from it were burned at Smithfield in one fire, and in various districts men were burned in the presence of their parents or their children, and even mothers were put to the flames. In fact, in many places, only men guilty of drunkenness, immorality, gambling, and almost every kind of sin were left by Whitgift in possession of the pulpit. His archiepiscopal life of cruelty culminated in the martyrdom of the three noble Separatist heroes, Henry Barrow, John Greenwood, and John Penry. Barrow and Greenwood were both Cambridge men; the former graduated in 1570, and the latter in 1581. Their study

of the Word of God carried them beyond the Puritan position of believing in a State Church. They conducted services in private houses. Both were arrested, and without any trial were shut up in Chirk Prison. Later they had to appear at Newgate before the Bishop of London, and were condemned and committed to the Fleet Prison. They shared their lot with scores of others at the time, whose names or miseries were never recorded. The horrors of those Elizabethan gaols, "dark, foul, foetid, fever-haunted, where those now incarcerated had to lie side by side with the sick and dying," were indescribable. Here Barrow lay in confinement for five years. Still the two men were busy, and were able to issue pamphlets and volumes which were widely distributed. They were finally tried and condemned to be hanged in 1593. Three times they were called upon to make preparation for death. They were carried to Tyburn twice to be executed, and each time a messenger arrived with a reprieve. This simply served to torture them further. The third time they were taken secretly, for the two men were very popular with the people, and they were executed like felons, of whom the world was not worthy. When the Queen asked Dr. Reynolds what he thought of them, he courageously answered "that he was persuaded if they had lived they would have been two as worthy instruments of the Church of God as have been raised in their age." Her Majesty sighed. Well she might! She and Whitgift were their "ecclesiastical murderers."

We must briefly refer to the young Welshman, John Penry. He was born at Cefnbrith, Llangamarch, Breconshire, in 1559. He had good education and took his M.A. at Oxford in 1586. He took orders, but his enlightened views, conscientiously held and preached, soon led him into trouble. He knew the condition of his native country and issued a plea for more gospel-preaching in Wales. For this he was cast into prison. He was examined, and for a time liberated. But if any one had the making of a martyr in him Penry had, for he was without fear and outspoken, and just the kind of man that Whitgift would send to the gallows. He was accused of being the author of most powerful tracts called the "Marprelate Tracts," written by one who called himself "Martin." They were full of biting sarcasm, attacking the bishops and others, especially Whitgift, Aylmer of London, and Cooper of Winchester. There was no proof that he had any connection with these, and he denied all authorship of them. In 1589 he fled to Scotland, but Elizabeth demanded his banishment from there. In 1592 he returned to London. When he came south he petitioned the Queen to be sent into Wales to preach the gospel. But he was a marked man, and after eluding his persecutors for a short time he was arrested. His last days were spent in writing letters to his young wife and little girls, which are among the most touching in any language. Whilst at dinner on May 29, 1593, he

was informed that he was to die that day at four. About the last words he wrote were: "Preparing myself, not so much for an unjust verdict and an undeserved doom in this life, as unto that blessed crown of glory which of the great mercy of my God is ready for me in Heaven." He was hurried to execution, and, "by order," no farewell words were to be spoken. He was only thirty-four years of age—just the age of Him whom another "National Church" put to a cruel death! His death-warrant was signed by Archbishop Whitgift. Wales will never forget her martyr-son and will ever be proud of his name. Her highest interests found in Elizabeth and her Archbishop the cruellest foes, when they put to death the noble hero who wanted to fill his loved Wales with gospel light. It is needless to add other instances of hardship, which could be done by the score. But the cruel winds of persecution scattered the seed. The sentiment for soul-liberty grew into a mighty passion in many a heart, and no sacrifice was too great to be made in order to defend it.

Wonderful is the story of the early "Separatists" who were drawn together from several counties and met at the Scrooby Manor House and Gainsborough, of whom William Brewster, William Bradford, John Smyth, Richard Clyfton, and, above all, John Robinson, were leaders. What a grasp they had of Scripture truth and of the spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom! Urged by the persecution they endured, the main body

emigrated to Amsterdam in 1606, and the remainder, in consequence of oppression at home, went to Holland in 1607 and 1608. They remained at Leyden for eleven years, when they turned their thoughts to America; and thither they resolved to go. In 1620 the first band of "Pilgrim Fathers" started. How affecting was the farewell, and what sufferings they endured, before the *Mayflower* reached the New World and they planted their feet on Plymouth Rock! They carried with them the precious seed of civil and religious liberty, and today the abundant harvest waves over the vast continent of North America. The "Pilgrim Fathers," as distinct from the later Puritans, were the true early Nonconformists.

Thus we have briefly reviewed the period under the Tudor Sovereigns, and from the standpoint of spiritual religion it is one of the darkest epochs in the history of any so-called Christian Community. Can the wildest imagination picture the many-wived, tyrannical, cruel, self-willed Henry, often subject to mad outbursts of temper, guilty of gross inhumanities, an utter stranger to spiritual religion, as the fitting and only Head of the Church of Jesus Christ in this land? The idea is an insult to reason and a scandal to religion. And what a base origin of the Establishment in our country! It was "shapen in iniquity" and "born in sin." The godly lad, Edward VI., died when seventeen years of age, but there were those in his short reign who carried on the work of relentless

persecution. The reign of "Bloody Mary" was too awful for contemplation. It was a merciful Providence that shortened her days and broke the power of her cruel instrument, the monster Bishop Bonner. And as to "Good Queen Bess," her record is exceedingly dark as far as Nonconformists are concerned. She allowed no one to stand in the way of her ambition, and she could be as cold and callous as the grave. Her efforts to strangle incipient Puritanism were seconded by archbishops and bishops, and they, in consequence, for the heinous deeds perpetrated, were equally responsible with the worldly, imperious Queen and the cringing, obsequious Parliament. On the other hand, the men and women who "obeyed God rather than men," whatever the consequences might be, shone with a holy splendour around their head, and whether in prison or at the burning stake or cruel gallows, they planted the seed of liberty, which in after-years grew into an abundant harvest. Does the narrative so far as we have gone, looked at from the standpoint of monarch or senate or priest, justify such a monstrosity as "State Religion"? Let history answer the question in the light of the enactments passed, the edicts promulgated, the fines imposed, the imprisonments endured, the gallows erected, yea, in the light of the fires of Smithfield which burned to ashes the tortured bodies of scores of God's heroes and Heaven's elect.

CHAPTER VI

JAMES THE FIRST

ON her deathbed Elizabeth signified that it was her will she should be succeeded by James, the son of Mary Queen of Scots, who had been King of Scotland for upwards of twenty years, under the title of James VI. He became James I. of England when thirty-six years of age. He had acquired a considerable stock of miscellaneous learning and an immeasurable amount of conceit. He never lost an opportunity of displaying his attainments and ability as a disputant. He was aptly described as the "most learned fool in Christendom." Although at first welcomed by the people, his personal appearance, his repulsive and ungainly manner, his want of personal dignity, his vulgar buffoonery, his pedantry and his cowardice, early lost him all favour with the people, although he endeavoured to gain popularity. It is said that he conferred seven hundred knighthoods in three months, but all his actions were characterised by vanity and self-display.

In Scotland, of course, he had been a "zealous

Presbyterian." He had described the service of the Church of England as "an evil-said Mass in English." He referred with apparent contempt to "Papistical and Anglican Bishops," and pledged himself to uphold the Church and Ministry of Scotland. He had twice solemnly subscribed the Scottish Covenant, and in the General Assembly at Edinburgh in 1590—"Standing with his bonnet off and his hands lifted to heaven . . . he praised God that he was born as to be King of such a Church, the sincerest Kirk in the world." But when he came to England, what a falling off was there! The man's insincerity was clear from the first. He wrote a book called *Doron Basilikon*—"a Royal Gift," in which he counsels his son thus:—

"Take heed," he says, "to the Puritans, very pests in Church and Commonwealth, who breathe nothing but seditious and calumnies. Ye shall never find with any highland or border thieves greater ingratitude, and more lies and vile perjuries, than with these fanatic spirits. Suffer not the principal of them to brook your land, if you like to rest in it." It is no wonder that Jesuit priests saw in him the making of a good Catholic. The Puritans, although now the backbone of the nation, felt that this new "importation" would bring to them evil times. Soon they presented to him the "Millenary Petition," supposed to have been signed by a *thousand* of the clergy. It presented a very moderate request, couched in loyal terms, in which they prayed for certain reforms in Ecclesiastical Courts and Church life and

discipline, for better training for and qualifications in preachers, for the better observance of the Sabbath, for leaving out the lessons from the Apocrypha in the services, that all clergymen should be resident in their cures, that the sign of the cross and the usual questions put to infants in the administration of baptism should be dispensed with, that no ministers should be obliged to wear the cap and surplice, &c. In about six months James issued a proclamation which prohibited all petitions to him for reforms "on pain of his displeasure." Afterwards the famous Hampton Court Conference was held, to which the bishops and the Puritan leaders were summoned. James spent the first day in private conclave with the bishops. The next day four Puritan ministers and twenty prelates met the King, in the presence of members of the Council and courtiers; and there his vanity revealed itself in the display of his much-vaunted erudition. The man who was a "most loyal member of the Kirk" in Scotland became a hot-headed advocate of Prelacy in England. He became from the first a partisan of the bishops, and of the Puritans he declared, "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land." This "true son of Scotch Presbytery" when in Scotland, declared in England, "If you aim at a Scotch Presbytery, it agrees as well with monarchy as with the devil." He saw that the bishops, the pliable instruments of Henry, Mary, and Elizabeth, would also be his best agents to thwart the progress of reformation towards its ultimate goal,

liberty of conscience and freedom of spiritual worship, and hence his saying, "No bishop, no King." He did all in his power to insult and degrade the pious and learned Puritan leaders, and they felt they were to be engaged in a severe conflict. James advanced as a theory what Henry and Elizabeth had carried out in practice, viz., the Divine Right of Kings. This pusillanimous, insincere, vain man, put forward the claim, which the bishops preached from the pulpit, that the King was above law, and that his will was even superior to any law that Parliament might frame ; that all authority was not derived from the people and "disordered multitude," but was the prerogative of birthright, and was vested in the King; and so he inculcated and the bishops preached the obligation of passive obedience to the Monarch. "The King, notwithstanding his oath, may alter and suspend any particular law that seemeth to him hurtful." He also proclaimed the Divine Right of Bishops as sacred and absolute as the Divine Right of Kings. Unbroken episcopal succession and hereditary regal succession were the two great pillars that supported the entire fabric of Church and State. No wonder that the bishops declared at the close of the Hampton Court Conference that James was a Solomon, and that the words he said were "dictated by the Holy Ghost." Archbishop Bancroft, a worthy successor to Bonner and Whitgift, exclaimed, "Almighty God has given us such a King, as since Christ has not been !"

No blasphemy was too gross to utter in flattery of the Monarch who was the vainest and the most insincere that sat on the throne of Britain. We have a specimen of it in the Preface that still befouls the first page of our Bible, "To the mighty Prince James" ! It is a wonder that Christians of all sections have not insisted on the expunging of this masterpiece of lying flattery from the Sacred Volume. It is matched by the title of "Defender of the Faith," bestowed by the Pope on Henry VIII. Why these worse than meaningless words should be still engraved on the coins of our country, must pass the comprehension of all thoughtful men.

James carried out his threat to deal severely with the Puritan ministers and their followers, and his efforts were strenuously supported by the bishops. They were hunted out of their churches, suspended, and deprived of their livings, persecuted on false and groundless accusations ; and in a short time over three hundred were turned out to beggary. No taunt was too cruel to hurl at them, or disability too severe to inflict on them.

The Canons enacted by the bishops in Convocation in 1604 bound the clergy to subscribe to the Three Articles, which Parliament had long before refused to render obligatory on them, and compelled all curates and lecturers to conform strictly to the Rubrics of the Prayer Book on pain of deprivation. Not only the ministers, but the gentry, a large number of whom

were imbued with Puritan principles, were degraded. Sir Francis Hastings, who drew up a petition on behalf of lecturers that had been silenced, was put from his lieutenancy and justiceship of the peace, and other gentlemen who sympathised with them were similarly treated. For seven years Bancroft prosecuted his congenial work to the detriment of the Church and loss to the country, which sank very low in morality and religion.

The King outraged the feelings of the Puritans by issuing the "Book of Sports," in which the people were directed to be engaged in all kinds of sport and play on the Lord's Day after the Church Service, such as dancing for men and women, archery, leaping, vaulting, with Whitsun ales or morris dances. The only sport not allowed was bear- or bull-baiting! Thus, by order of the King and bishops "of Divine Right," God's Holy Day was profaned, and the pious Puritans' most cherished sentiments flouted. The morals of the country were corrupted, and much of the infection came from the King and his minions in Church and State. The King's own life was far from being above reproach. He strove to obtain a divorce for Lady Essex, the most profligate woman of her time, and when he succeeded, her marriage to one of his favourites took place in his presence. Actors openly mocked him on the stage, and were seen rolling intoxicated in open court at his feet. He tampered with the judges, and only Chief Justice Coke withstood him,

and in consequence was deprived of his high office. By all this the best people in the nation were surfeited and disgusted. The House of Commons became powerful as a Puritan stronghold, and passed a courteous but firm remonstrance and declared its right to interpose with its counsels in all matters of Government, and to possess entire freedom of speech. James failed in his attempt to throttle Parliament, as he failed in rooting up Puritanism, and he went down to his grave "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

CHAPTER VII

CHARLES THE FIRST

WE come now to the period when the supposed Divine Right of Kings and of Bishops came into sharp and decisive conflict with the weal of the Commonwealth and the rapid growth of the great movement in favour of civil and spiritual freedom. Like his father, Charles received a great national welcome when he succeeded to the Throne, and like him he soon forfeited public confidence and regard. In this short sketch we cannot give even a bare outline of the great struggle between him and the people as represented by Parliament ; but throughout his reign there was revealed a strange mixture of obstinacy and weakness, incurable duplicity and insincerity, personal vanity and lust of absolute power, and even a claim to infallibility that brought nearly the whole country to ruin, and brought himself as the arch-traitor of the liberties of his country to the block of the executioner. He promoted worthless favourites to the highest posts of authority. He early showed favour to the Catholics,

and soon raised the narrowest of ecclesiastics and the founder of the extreme High Church party, William Laud, to be Bishop of London and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. He at first attempted to make Parliament as subservient to his Royal will as that of Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth had been to these powerful Tudor sovereigns. But he possessed none of their strong qualities, and the men of his time had been cast in a robuster mould. His maxim was that the King was above law, and therefore not responsible to it, and that he could do no wrong; but this claim would not be accepted by the stalwarts of the times. He found that the will of the Commons was as resolute as his own, as John Eliot, the people's leader, soon let him know. They would grant no subsidies before their grievances were listened to and redressed. Brave men were committed to the Tower, but the House would not proceed to business until they were liberated. The bishops as a body helped the King to trample on the liberties of the people. Two of them resisted his claims, and they were suspended and disgraced. John Hampden, one of the great figures in the history of the fight for the rights of the people, strongly opposed arbitrary exactions, and was cast into prison; but the House of Commons became strong in its Puritan element, and when the King asked for money they presented him with their Petition of Right, and demanded that no man be compelled to pay any loan or tax without common consent by Act

of Parliament, and afterwards they pressed this home by a strong Remonstrance. The King dissolved Parliament, Eliot and others were committed to prison, in which the intrepid leader soon died a martyr to his principles. No Parliament was called for eleven years, during which time the King resorted to all sorts of devices and unconstitutional means of raising money. At length the Long Parliament met in 1640, and soon proved its mettle under the leadership of the redoubtable John Pym. Prynne and his fellow-prisoners were liberated. Ship-money was declared illegal. Laud was cast into prison. The Earl of Strafford, "the King's right-hand man" and the servile instrument of his tyranny, was executed. The two Houses swore to defend the Protestant religion and the public liberties, and that Parliament should not be dissolved but by its own consent. Pym demanded the severance of the clergy from all State offices, and the exclusion of the bishops from the House of Lords, which latter was backed by the petition of seven hundred ministers of religion. Independency as distinct from Presbyterianism now made its power felt and pressed home its principles. All this precipitated the "great War of Rebellion," as the friends of the King called it, but he, in fact, was the great rebel against the rights of the people and the traitor of the liberties of his country. The events of that war we cannot describe, with its varying fortunes. One figure in it shines conspicuously, to whose genius, character, and principles the

success of the people's cause owes more than to any other—Oliver Cromwell, the hero of Marston Moor and Naseby. The King paid for his treachery, perfidy, and tyranny with his blood. Better that one man should perish than that the rights of a nation should be trampled under his iron heel. What we owe to the great leaders of the period no pen can describe. Surely they laid down the great foundation of the temple of our liberties, and although the superstructure was retarded and in a measure overthrown in the time of Charles II., yet the strong foundation itself was never destroyed.

Let us take a glance at the ecclesiastical side, and we shall find that Nonconformists suffered severely. Laud, as soon as he got into power, soon waged war on the Puritan party and especially on its clergy. His three great doctrines were (1) passive obedience to the will of the Sovereign, (2) the episcopate a necessity to the existence of the Church, and (3) regeneration by baptism as administered by the Episcopal Church. When Bishop of St. David's he clearly indicated his views and policy. He made all possible use of the Star Chamber and High Commission Courts. His one aim was to effect reconciliation between the Church of England and Rome. Romish vestments were forced on every minister. Preaching was discouraged, and gospel preachers were suspended. Lectures by Puritan ministers were suppressed. The gentry who were suspected of Puritan proclivities were forbidden to

engage chaplains. The duty of passive obedience to the will of the Sovereign was declared to be the will of God. One of his followers, Dr. Mainwaring, taught that the duty of obeying the King was "the ordinance of God, on pain of eternal damnation." All that savoured of Calvinism was denounced, and all that came from Geneva was barred, because Laud knew that Calvinism and his kind of prelacy were irreconcilable. So relentless was the persecution that a large number of the Puritan ministers emigrated to America.

Neal, the historian, reckoned that sixty-seven of them left this country in the course of a few years, and thousands of men belonging to almost every class of the community sought shelter in the New World. The Sabbath was desecrated, and, according to Laud's fresh command, the "Book of Sports" held full sway. Ministers at home gave up their charges and quitted their homes rather than submit to the new Popery thrust on them. The greatest man of his time, John Milton, declared that he who would take orders "must subscribe himself slave, and perjure or split his faith," and that he preferred a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing. What a scathing attack the great poet made on Laudism in his great masque "Comus" !

Charles was in great need of money, and Laud did much to fill his coffers. All sorts of offences were made

punishable and exorbitant fines were enacted. A fine of £1,000 was imposed for speaking or preaching against Arminianism or Popery. One nobleman was fined £12,000 for marrying his niece. Laud's method was as barbarous as that of a Central African chief. Nothing was too cruel for his victims. His own creatures were both prosecutors and judges on the High Commission Court and of the Star Chamber, of which the bishops were the principal members. They resorted to suspensions, deprivations, the pillory, whipping and scourging, branding of cheeks with hot irons, hacking of ears, slitting of noses, &c. Take two instances. Prynne, Bastwick, and Burton were committed to prison. Prynne was condemned to have his two ears cut off, pay a fine of £5,000, and be imprisoned for life. Bastwick and Burton, the first a physician and the second a minister, also had their ears cut off and were sent to solitary confinement. Bastwick's ears were sent to his wife, who lovingly kissed them. Prynne was afterwards condemned to have even the stumps of his ears cut off. Dr. Leighton, father of the saintly Archbishop Leighton, author of the *Commentary on Peter's Epistles* and several devotional books, was severely punished for publishing a book called "Zion's Plea against Prelacy." He had to pay a fine of £10,000, was put in the pillory, whipped, sent to prison for life, had one ear cut off, his nose slit, and his cheeks branded. After this terrible sentence was pronounced, "Laud took

off his cap and gave thanks to God !” “Oh Religion, what horrible barbarities have been perpetrated in thy name, from the Crucifixion of Thy Founder until this day !”

Laud, through Charles, endeavoured to impose his prelacy on Scotland. A Royal Warrant was issued which directed all ministers to wear the surplice. A book of Canons was issued by the authority of the King, which practically abolished Presbyterianism. A new Liturgy was drawn up based on the Book of Common Prayer. Thus John Knox was dethroned and the Church of Scotland was utterly ignored. But Charles and Laud had not taken sufficiently into account the resistibility of Scotch Presbyterian backbone. No sooner had the Dean of Edinburgh begun to read the Prayer Book than there were evident signs of deep hostility and even of open rebellion, and it was not long before Jenny Geddes hurled her stool at the sacred head of the man who in her estimation desecrated John Knox's pulpit. The King's demand for immediate submission repeated again and again was not yielded to for an hour, and the Scottish people, with unspeakable enthusiasm and inflexible determination, renewed their oath to the Covenant they made when their Protestantism was threatened in the dark days of Queen Mary : “ We swear by the great Name of our God to continue in the profession and obedience of our religion, and that we shall defend the same, and resent all contrary errors and corrup-

tions according to the utmost of that power which God has put into our hands all the days of our life." Tens of thousands signed the Covenant with tears in their eyes, and with unconquerable earnestness they swore to defend their liberties and religion which were so threatened by king and prelate; and complete victory waited on the banner they had set up. Now the people had been fully aroused, the Commons grew in power, and the Puritan party was in the ascendancy. The man who had wrought so much ill was arrested and put into prison. He lay there for some time before his trial came on, and he was impeached. He had shown no mercy during his prelatical reign, and stern measures would be meted out to him. He was beheaded in 1645, and the whole country breathed more freely after his death.

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMONWEALTH

THE clock of progress had for a long time been stopped or even set back ; but all the time there was leaven working, which in time would make it manifest that the cause of truth and liberty was not dead. The spirit of Wyclif was still alive, and many a spiritual hero since his time had appeared. It is true that they were but solitary ones, crying in the wilderness ; yet their voice carried further and was heard by more than we might at first imagine. Most good people had but a very hazy and imperfect idea of what true and full liberty was. It took centuries for any considerable number to apprehend and act on the principle in its entirety ; yet some prophetic souls gave forth a clear and distinct sound. Leonard Busher, a Baptist, was the forerunner of the great cause. In 1614 he published his book "Religious Peace, or a Plea for Liberty of Conscience." In this he declared : "It is not only unmerciful but unscriptural and abominable, yea, monstrous, for one Christian to

vex and destroy another for difference and question of religion. King and Parliament should permit all sorts of Christians, yea, Jews, Turks, and Pagans so long as they are peaceable and no malefactors."

The Long Parliament was far in advance of any of its predecessors; still it had a long way to travel. Episcopalianism, the mighty engine of oppression, was powerless, but Presbyterianism was ready to take its place; and in Milton's language, "New Presbyter is but old priest writ large." Much of the best blood of the kingdom had been drained into America; but as the Civil War developed, and Cromwell gathered together his godly band of Ironsides, the friends of liberty of conscience rapidly grew in number and power. The Independents, the forerunners of modern Nonconformists, whose principles found favour with the bulk of the Army, saved the situation, and their views were moulded by their great leader—Oliver Cromwell. His army conquered by reason of its piety, its strength of conviction, and unflinching trust in God. What a contrast between them and Charles's Cavaliers! The latter spent much of their time in "riotous living," but Cromwell's men in prayer and Christian song. The Royalist Clarendon had to confess that the King's Army was "a dissolute, undisciplined, wicked, beaten army, while that of the Parliament was an army whose sobriety and manner, courage, and success made it famous and terrible all over the world."

The men who had suffered most under Charles and Laud's tyranny were naturally the first to enlist under the banner of the Parliament, and they were grim, determined, unyielding men. The iron had gone into their souls. These men acted like leaven throughout the Army, and in debate as well as in warfare they proved their superiority. They had suffered in their homes, not only from the magistrates but also from the godless rabble, and even for the sake of protection and safety they became soldiers. These men presented to Cromwell just the material out of which he fashioned an invincible band. Very few Presbyterian chaplains followed the Army, and so preaching fell to the part of the Independents, who belonged to various sects, Brownists, Baptists, &c.; and their influence was widely felt. They rejected all ecclesiastical establishments, and would admit of no spiritual courts, no interposition of the magistrates in religious matters, no premium or privilege annexed to any doctrines or opinions; each congregation was united voluntarily by spiritual ties only, composed within itself a separate Church, and exercised jurisdiction, but one destitute of temporal sanctions, over its own pastor and members. This was the great party of toleration. They hated and vigorously opposed Popery and Prelacy as the sworn enemies of the liberty of conscience. The Presbyterians showed their intolerance in the Westminster Assembly of Divines, summoned by Parliament to settle the

doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, consisting of 150 members, of whom the large majority consisted of Presbyterians, who aimed at the full establishment of their own system, and in their view there should be no toleration for the Independents and suchlike. Their ideal was as hostile to the existence of Free Churches as the Episcopal had been. Parliament was on their side, but they had to reckon with the Army and its Ironsides and great leader, whose aim was a Free Commonwealth and a Free Church; and Marston Moor and Naseby decided that liberty of conscience must become the corner-stone in the new Constitution. Parliament resolved to disband the Army, but the Army itself had a say in that matter. It had been enacted that a person holding certain views was to suffer the pains of death, while imprisonment was to be the lot of those who held minor errors, among which was the notion that Church government by Presbytery was anti-Christian or unlawful! "We detest and abhor," wrote the London clergy in 1645, "the much endeavoured Toleration." The Corporation of London petitioned Parliament to suppress "all sects without toleration." But Cromwell wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons from the field after the battle of Naseby: "Honest men served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty: I beseech you in the name of God not to discourage them. He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of

his conscience." On another occasion he wrote : " For brethren in the things of the mind we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason."

" Little did the Presbyterian Divines imagine," say Neal, the historian of the Puritans, " that in less than twenty years all their artillery will be turned against themselves, that they should be precluded the establishment by an act of prelatical uniformity."

As to Oliver Cromwell, no man has been so maligne and misrepresented, especially by the admirers and worshippers of " Saint Charles," the pious martyr—who, we fear, would have trod in the footsteps of Laud if they had the power. But the ugly veil of infamy woven around his person, has been removed, and he stands forth as one of the noblest heroes in the whole history of Christendom, thanks to many an enlightened and impartial historian, and especially to Carlyle, who gave his *Letters and Speeches* to the world. Cromwell's theory of liberty was in advance of his practice, as he had to consider the national condition of things, and what was practicable in those troublous times. But how strongly he pleaded for it against the intolerant men of his age! He said " How proper is it to labour for liberty, that we should not be trampled on for their conscience. Have we not lately laboured under the weight of persecution, and is it fitting, then, to sit heavy upon others? Is it ungenerous to ask liberty and not give it? What greater hypocrisy than for those who were

oppressed by the bishops to become the greatest of oppressors themselves so soon as their yoke is removed?" He also said: "If the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian, shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you—I say, if any shall desire but to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected." He was the protector of the oppressed not only in his own country, but in foreign lands. How he succoured the persecuted Christians in the Valleys of Piedmont! His word was enough to strike terror into the heart of the oppressor.

"Under no English Government," says Macaulay, "had there been so little religious persecution." "The great shot of Cromwell," said the Presbyterian Baillie, "is to have a liberty for all religions." It was only when men plotted for the overthrow of the Government that he dealt out severe measures. Even Dr. Bates, an Episcopalian, said: "The Protector indulged the use of the Common Prayer in families and conventicles, and the Church had a great deal more favour under him than under Parliament." We cannot omit two great names, that were noble advocates of liberty. John Milton, who became Cromwell's Latin secretary, wrote his great pamphlet "*Areopagitica*, a Plea for Unlicensed Printing," and a large number of other works which most eloquently and powerfully advocated untrammelled freedom. The other was Roger Williams, the Welshman, who when young emigrated to America. Just when the battle of

Marston Moor was fought he published his noted book, "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience." In fact, we believe that Milton, Williams, and Cromwell were the noble trio that understood the question best in all its far-reaching ramifications. Occasionally Milton and Williams must have met. It is also said that the latter was a relative of Cromwell's, whose original name was *Williams*. When the Puritans who fled from England became cruel persecutors in America, and banished Williams from their territory, he planted the banner afresh at Providence, Rhode Island, and gathered around him a small but noble band.

"O call it holy ground, the place where first they trod,
They left unstained what there they found, freedom to
worship God."

There he demanded obedience to the Government of the majority in *political matters* only, and one Act of religious intolerance has never been a blot on the character of that State from that day to this. Its motto was, "No person will be disturbed, or punished, or called to account in this colony because of difference of opinion in matters of religion, provided he does not disturb the peace." Roger Williams's principles have been the foundation of the Constitution of the United States, and his spirit to this day breathes throughout the great and free country from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coasts,

It is true that many suffered imprisonment under the Commonwealth, especially the Quakers, but that was due not to their religion, but to their refusal to take the oath that had been prescribed. Their leader, George Fox, had a prophetic soul, was characterised by deep conviction and great earnestness, but at the same time he was carried away by passion even into violence, bursting out at times with volcanic eruptions, exalting trifles into great principles. The Friends of our day can hardly be recognised as the successors, in some respects, of George Fox.

In 1653 a body of Commissioners was appointed called "Triers," to test the fitness of those ministers presented to livings. One-fourth of this Board were laymen—a full Board being about forty. Also a Board was set up in every county to supervise ecclesiastical affairs and to remove scandalous or incompetent preachers. Before a person nominated to a living could be admitted, it was necessary he should be approved as "being able and fit to preach the gospel, for the grace of God in him, for his holy and unblameable conduct, and also for his knowledge and utterance." Baxter, who was no friend of Cromwell, bore testimony to the fairness with which the work was done. He stated that it furnished the country with "able, serious preachers, who lived a godly life, of what tolerable opinion soever they were."

Cromwell remained true throughout to the great

cause of religious liberty. Even the Quakers, when the hands of so many were against them, found a friend and protector in him ; and when the Jews, who had been expelled from England since the time of Edward I., petitioning for a return, were refused by the Commission of Merchants and Divines to whom Cromwell referred the matter, yet that refusal was quietly passed over by Cromwell, and a colony was allowed to settle in London.

No doubt there had been cases of hardship, which in those troublous times might seem to be inevitable, but which could not be traced to the Protector at all. Still what progress could be reported on every hand ! What vigorous Government ! What impartial administration ! How Cromwell restored and enhanced the power of Britain abroad and at home, and began and even consolidated a work, which although in a measure apparently destroyed in the next tyrannous reign of Charles II., yet laid down the firm foundation of the greatness of our country, which made her the home of freedom, the emporium of commerce, and in a great measure the coloniser of the world.

Much has been said of the sufferings of the Royalist clergy during the Commonwealth ; that thousands of them were turned out of their livings, were left to beggary, and were much persecuted, and that the conduct of Cromwell and his Government towards these in a great measure justified if it did not necessitate the treatment of the Puritan clergy under

Charles II. First of all, hundreds of clergymen were deprived during the reigns of James I. and Charles I., for refusing to read the "Book of Sports," or for non-compliance with the superstitions of Laud; and even during the Civil War the sufferings of the Puritan clergy were far greater than those of the Royalist clergy. To be called a "Puritan" was a sure sign of persecution, if not death, at the hands of the Royalists. In 1640, the Long Parliament formed itself into a Commission to inquire into the character of the clergy, and it was decided that a fair and just investigation should be made. It was to inquire into the cause of the deficiency of preaching ministers, to provide for its adequate supply, and to remove those of scandalous life. They found an awful condition of things. There were but few who could preach at all. Preaching had been discouraged under the Tudors and their followers. There was a large number of pluralists, and it was declared in Parliament that there were eight thousand clergymen who deserved expulsion as unworthy and scandalous. This statement was probably an exaggeration, but it did undoubtedly reflect a grave condition of things. Petitions poured in from almost every parish in England for the removal of incumbents, and Macaulay's account of the clergy, at the accession of James II., is simply a statement of facts. From Wales a petition was presented in 1641 declaring that there were not so many preachers as there were counties, and that

those were either silenced or much persecuted. It is well to remember that the Long Parliament was made up chiefly of Anglicans, and that on the Sub-Commissions appointed most of the members belonged to the same class. More than one-fourth were Anglican ministers. Their clergymen were ejected for various reasons: many for their Royalist proclivities, who could not swear allegiance to the Commonwealth; many because they were really Papists; most because of their scandalous life.

In 1643 all the altars, crosses, pictures of saints, images of the Virgin, tapers, and other relics of Popery, were removed from the churches; and this gave umbrage to many of the clergy, but *no man was rejected because of his theology*. Neal says that "not a single instance can be produced of rejection for insufficiency, without having been first convicted of immorality or obnoxious sentiments, such as atheism, Socinianism, or Pelagianism. Further it was ordered that *one-fifth of the income of their benefices* should be allotted to the deprived ministers; and there is not a *single instance* of persecution because of their religious views. What a contrast with the ejection of the Two Thousand in 1662, who were turned out of Church and home, penniless, without even receiving the emolument that was their due, but were persecuted and harassed even to death! What a farrago and tissue of falsehoods are therefore contained in Walker's "Sufferings of the Clergy," who declared that seven thousand of

them suffered under the Commonwealth. That virulent book has been subjected to careful criticism, and it is found that the author himself could not find more than about fourteen hundred cases. Hallam and Neal put the number at sixteen hundred at most. In fact, those of the same party as Walker contradicted him. Mountfield said : " The jails were not crowded with Churchmen during the Rebellion as they had been by Puritans, nor do I know of one instance of a Churchman being branded, or having his ears cut off, or his nose slit " ; and a Mr. Lewis, a clerical friend of Walker, said, " that many that he had almost canonised, were more deserving to have their names blotted out than their memory preserved." His book was published more than fifty years after the event, and no records, contemporary with the Commonwealth, could be produced to substantiate his statements. In fact, under the Protectorate a greater amount of religious liberty prevailed than had been enjoyed in any preceding age.

CHAPTER IX

CHARLES THE SECOND

FROM the great Oliver Cromwell to Charles II., what a falling off was there! It does not fall within our province to describe the various causes that brought about what is called the Restoration. Cromwell had died before he could really complete his great task and consolidate his work. His son Richard soon proved himself to be a weak and unambitious ruler. The Army and the Parliament were at variance, the former demanding the dissolution of the latter, and the Parliament calling for the disbandment of the soldiers. The nation was sick of military rule, and there were signs of division in the Army itself. General Monk, after much intrigue and deception, declared for Prince Charles. A new Parliament was summoned, called the "Convention" Parliament, which at once showed its Presbyterian proclivities by taking the oath of the Solemn League and Covenant, and began to consider terms on which the Restoration might be assented to; but after Monk's action all

terms were too late. The Presbyterians united with the Royalists to welcome the Prince. Whilst in Scotland he took with alacrity and glee the oath of the Covenant, and swore with an easy conscience to abolish Prelacy and establish Presbyterianism. In fact, he would swear and promise anything and everything to anybody and everybody! The Declaration which he sent from Breda promised a general amnesty, with very few exceptions, and also liberty to tender consciences, "that," as he said, "no man shall be disquieted, or called in question, for differences of opinion in matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the Kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to us, for the full granting of that indulgence." With that Declaration came letters to the Council of State, to the Army, to the Houses of Parliament, to the commanders of the Fleet, and to the citizens of London, all full of promises which awakened the brightest hopes and succeeded for the time being in deluding everybody!

What a welcome he received at Dover and on arriving in London! The British millennium had dawned! The Presbyterians were satisfied; about a dozen of them were made chaplains-in-ordinary to the King: Calamy, Baxter, Reynolds, and others. In an interview with him they stated their desires, which, he assured them, would be granted. A Conference

was suggested which would settle points of difference between Prelacy and Presbytery, and this met at Savoy (April 15–July 25, 1661). A new Parliament assembled, which was overwhelmingly Royalist and Episcopalian. The bishops were restored to their seats in the House of Lords; the Declaration that England was a “Commonwealth” was burned by the common hangman, and there was passed the *first* of the *many* oppressive measures which marked the reign of Charles II. as one of the blackest periods in the annals of ecclesiastical crime. The Presbyterians and others who had welcomed the King with such effusiveness had at last their eyes opened. The Conference in the Savoy, like that of Hampton Court forty years before, proved an utter failure, and the people found that their liberty went out when their King came in.

The first Act passed by the new Parliament was

THE CORPORATION ACT (1661).

In it a religious test was combined with a political test. All corporate officers were required to have taken the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, “according to the rites of the Church of England,” within one year before their election, and, upon being elected, to take the oath of Allegiance and Supremacy. This Act was an effectual means of *excluding all but Anglicans* from every office of mayor, alderman, common councilman, and every servant of a corporation.

The Presbyterians, who so heartily welcomed the new King, and who at his coming occupied many and important posts in the civic life of the community, were now effectually excluded from them all. Baxter relates that at Kidderminster, of thirteen aldermen and twenty-five burgesses, one man only consented to retain his office on such terms.

In fact, vindictiveness reigned supreme in Church and State. Many suffered all sorts of penalties short of death. The cruelties inflicted on the living and the indignities heaped on the dead filled thoughtful men with gloomy forebodings. About a hundred persons, some of them the noblest in the land, such as Sir Harry Vane, died as State offenders. The Court, headed by the King, was the home of lewdness, dissoluteness, and licentiousness, the most disgraceful in the annals of English history. As J. R. Green, the historian, says: "The one thing Charles seemed to be in earnest about was sensual pleasure, and he took it with a cynical shamelessness which roused the disgust even of his shameless courtiers. Mistress followed mistress, and the guilt of a troop of profligate women was blazoned to the world by the gifts of titles and estates. The Royal bastards were set among English nobles. The Ducal House of Grafton springs from the King's adultery with Barbara Palmer, whom he created Duchess of Cleveland. The Dukes of St. Albans [*saint* indeed!] owe their origin to his intrigue with Nell Gwynn,

a player and a courtesan. Louise de Quérouaille, a mistress sent by France to win him to its interests, became Duchess of Portsmouth, an ancestress of the House of Richmond. An earlier mistress, Lucy Walters, had made him father in younger days of the boy whom he raised to the Dukedom of Monmouth, and to whom the Dukes of Buccleuch trace their line. But Charles was far from being content with these recognised mistresses, or with a single form of indulgence. Gambling and drinking helped to fill up the vacant moments when he could no longer toy with his favourites or bet at Newmarket. No thought of remorse or of shame seems ever to have crossed his mind." And yet, according to the theory of a State Church, such a moral leper as this was a fit Head and Supreme Governor of the Church of Christ on earth, and who could be blazoned on the coin of the realm as the "Defender of the Faith"! One could imagine that the many souls he had led to perdition would cry out against the blasphemy. No wonder that at that time in every walk of life, whether we think of the Church or the judicial Bench or the Army, morality and righteousness were at their lowest ebb.

The first offspring of the poisonous brood that followed the Corporation Act excluded the conscientious and the worthy from the highest posts, and caused a premium to be placed on hypocrisy and incapacity. It was not only the Nonconformist

minister that was to suffer, but all Nonconformists in all spheres of life and activity. An

ACT AGAINST THE QUAKERS

followed. Any one refusing to take any oath, and any Quakers meeting for worship to the number of five or more, would be fined £5 for the first offence, £10 for the second, with imprisonment and hard labour. These two Acts were fitting preludes to the

ACT OF UNIFORMITY.

After many years, letters were issued directing Convocation to meet and to revise the Book of Common Prayer. Eight bishops were appointed as a committee, of whom Cosin, Bishop of Durham, and Sancroft, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, were the most prominent. They took great care not to meet any of the wishes of the Presbyterians whom they met in conference at Savoy. The Bill of Uniformity passed the House of Commons July 9, 1661, and the House of Lords May 8, 1662, receiving the Royal Assent May 19th. This was an Act which with one blow destroyed every mark of the *Church of England as a National Church*, constituted it the narrowest and most persecuting sect in the land, and cut it off from all the sister Reformed Churches in this country and on the Continent of Europe.

We need not give in full the provisions of this Act.

It would occupy twenty or twenty-five pages of this booklet. We give simply the contents of its main clauses which show clearly the drift of the whole.

1. Recites that by Act 1 Elizabeth one uniform order of Common Prayer was established, and that Charles had issued his Commission and also his Command to Convocation to review the Prayer Book.

3. To the end that uniformity in worship may be speedily effected, every minister, upon some Lord's Day before the Feast of St. Bartholomew (August 24, 1662), shall openly, publicly, and solemnly read the Morning and Evening Prayers in the Prayer Book, and shall "openly and publicly before the congregation declare his unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things in the said Book in these words and no other :

4. "I, A.B., do hereby declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book entitled 'The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments,' and other rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England; together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches; and the form or manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons.'"

5. Every minister who shall neglect or refuse to

do the above shall be deprived of all his spiritual promotions, and be treated as "dead."

6. Every minister hereafter to be presented to any benefice, shall declare his assent and consent to the Book of Common Prayer in the form above stipulated, upon pain of immediate deprivation.

7. Every incumbent keeping a curate shall read Common Prayer and administer sacraments once a month upon pain to forfeit £5.

8, 9, 10. That before the Feast of St. Bartholomew, 1662, all members of cathedral churches, all heads, tutors, &c., in colleges, all masters of hospitals, all professors, incumbents, curates, and lecturers, all persons in holy orders, and all schoolmasters, shall subscribe the declaration that it is not lawful to take up arms against the King, that they will conform to the Liturgy, and that the Solemn League and Covenant, being an unlawful oath, has no obligation—this declaration to be subscribed, in the universities before the Vice-Chancellor, and in every diocese before the Ordinary, upon pain of deprivation, *ipso facto*.

11. Any private schoolmaster teaching without licence and subscription, shall suffer, for the first offence, three months' imprisonment; for the second offence, three months' imprisonment and forfeit £5; and every incumbent shall procure a certificate of his subscription, and read it in his Church, with the Declaration, upon pain of deprivation, *ipso facto*.

12. The clause in the Declaration relating to the Solemn League and Covenant to be omitted after March 5, 1662.

13. No incumbent who shall not be in episcopal orders before St. Bartholomew's Day shall be capable of holding a benefice; but shall be deprived, *ipso facto*, and treated as "dead."

14. None but ordained priests to be instituted to a living, or to consecrate or administer the Sacrament, upon pain of forfeiting £100.

17. No Form of Prayer to be used in any church, chapel, or other public place, but the Form in the Book of Common Prayer, and all governors and heads of colleges to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, to declare their assent and consent to the Book of Common Prayer, to read it once every quarter, or be suspended for six months, and be utterly deprived if they do not obey the law within that period.

19. Every lecturer, before preaching, shall be licensed, read the Thirty-nine Articles and the Common Prayer with assent and consent, and read it afterwards on the first lecture-day of every month, or be disabled from preaching.

21. If lecturers preach during legal disability, they are to be "imprisoned in the common gaol without bail."

22, 23. No lecture to be preached without reading the Book of Common Prayer beforehand, at which reading the lecturer is to be present, but this need not be done at the universities.

24. All former laws and penalties for establishing a uniformity in Common Prayer to be in force and applied to the present form.

In fact, the purpose of the Government and the bishops could be easily seen before the Act was passed. They revived old penal laws, and it was in the power of every magistrate to persecute the Puritans. Even before the King landed at Dover, the Episcopal party were busy sending forty Quakers to Cardiff Gaol, and twenty-eight to Denbigh and Flint, while Montgomery was so full of Independents and Baptists and Quakers that the governor had to pack them in garrets. Three men were persecuted at Flint for not reading the Prayer Book, though it had not yet been enjoined. John Bunyan was sent to gaol November 16, 1660, and this was the beginning of the long term of twelve years' imprisonment. In 1661, 4,200 Quakers were in various prisons throughout the country, and there were five hundred in London alone. In March, 1662, forty ministers were condemned at Exeter for not reading the Prayer Book. The land was full of spies and informers whose words needed no corroboration. This was only a sign of the coming storm, which broke in all its fury over the land. Not only did Charles utterly violate his promise, but also the bishops, in order to gain the support of the Presbyterians, promised the same indulgence. Morley, the Bishop of Winchester, assured the leading

ministers in repeated interviews that "all former offences and animosities would be forgotten," and that all would live in peace. That very man, Morley, was afterwards one of their most vindictive enemies. Sheldon, the Archbishop, was another. These two ruled the rest. As to Sheldon, Samuel Taylor Coleridge said: "This was the incendiary! the most virulent enemy and poisoner of the English Church. I look on Gardiner as canonisable compared with Sheldon. Nothing in the history of the Inquisition was as wicked as the conduct of Sheldon and the Court after the Restoration." In fact, these men framed the provisions of the Act of Uniformity in such a way as to make it impossible for earnest, conscientious men to subscribe to them, and so the latter had nothing to do but to resign on "Black Bartholomew's Day," August 24, 1662. The Revised Prayer Book was not published before the 6th of that month; the ministers had to make up their minds by the 17th if they wished to take a public farewell of their people, and there were no trains or motor-cars in those slow-moving times. Most could not get a copy of it by that date. Many gave their consent to it before they even saw it, and thus subscribed blindly; but the most pious and conscientious as well as the most learned knew fairly well what would be its contents, and also knew they could not assent to many things in it; and so about two thousand of the noblest ministers that ever adorned a pulpit had to give up their

loved work and leave all rather than soil their conscience. Their number has been variously estimated. Calamy makes them 2,118, and Palmer 2,196. Of these Palmer gives an account, in more or less detail, of 1,667. But before this date about five hundred had been ejected and many more were in prison. They were one-fifth of all the clergy. What a difference between the Romish clergy of Queen Mary, who with the exception of about a hundred became the Protestant clergy of Queen Elizabeth! What an accommodating conscience these 9,900 had! No Act of Uniformity could have any terrors for them. But these Nonconformists were made of "sterner stuff" than those, and, we fear, than the Evangelicals in the Church of England to-day. In fact, the Puritans dared not conform, and, strange to say, the Evangelicals of to-day dare not dissent!

The decision of many of the Puritan clergy was soon taken. Baxter led in the secession, and many unhesitatingly followed his lead. But what darkness settled over many a heart and many a home before the fateful step was taken! The anxiety of the husband and father as he thought of his wife and little ones cast out on the cold, hard world, becoming familiar with the gaunt figure of abject want, and himself an outcast from the fold; the heart-breaking thought of having to relinquish the work he loved above everything else, to which he was called of God and qualified by His Holy Spirit,

the charge of feeding the Church of God and of leading sinners to Christ; the dark foreboding of a painful separation from his people, around whom the tenderest affection of his heart had entwined itself, and whose fellowship, loyalty, and love were to him as the very smile of Heaven! To leave all—social influence, a comfortable livelihood, the venerable church, the village home, the rural path, the Sabbath Day, with its sacred memories and holy engagements, and to be struck dumb at once and not permitted publicly to pray to God or preach to man, to be turned out into the bare and bleak highway of life with the feeling of utter homelessness, to face poverty and reproach and persecution in a hundred forms—all this required the bravest heart and an unyielding conscience loyal in every fibre to God and Truth. So, almost every fourth parsonage in the kingdom was for months the scene of tearful solicitude, of painful suspense, of heroic conflict. From many a pastor's heart rose the cry of agony, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but ever with that was coupled the noble resolve, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." So the noble Two Thousand never faltered, but calmly and resolutely faced all the consequences. They could not subscribe to the jumble of truth and error which was demanded of them. They could not append their names to the Popish doctrines of Priestly Absolution and Bap-

tismal Regeneration, and the many superstitious if not idolatrous usages of the Church ; they could not pronounce over every one they buried, the extortioner, the drunkard, the profligate, the doubly dyed criminal, the certainty of a glorious resurrection ; they could not submit to a second Episcopal ordination, who had been called of God and already ordained of His Church to their great work, nor even would they undertake not to take up arms against a wicked King who threatened to destroy their liberty or ruin their commonwealth. And so in proportion to the ever-thickening darkness without were the increasing light and firmness in their brave and resolute spirit.

So August 17th arrived—the last Sabbath they could occupy their pulpit, a long-dreaded day ! How pathetic the parting of pastor and people ! Amid the tears and sobs of crowded congregations, the Nonconforming preachers delivered their farewell sermons ; the voice that had been lifted in prayer and earnest, loving intercession, is now heard pleading for the welfare of their loved ones for the last time ; the instructors of youth, the counsellors of the inexperienced, the comforters in the dark hour of deep sorrow and dire trouble, in sickness and declining days, those who brought light to darkened homes, smoothed the pillow of death and lulled the weary to their sleep in Jesus, and who with tearful eyes but uplifted look performed the last solemn

rites in God's Acre, whose quivering voice gathered firmness and strength as they spoke of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life—these priests and prophets of God are about to be cast out of the sanctuary and exiled from society. The proceedings of that Sabbath were widely chronicled; and how affecting the narrative! Throughout the land there was sore lamentation, and there were thoughts and feelings too deep for tears; and yet no words of bitterness dropped from the preachers' lips, the discourses breathed the very spirit of Jesus Christ and of His deacon Stephen, "Father, forgive them." The exhortations inculcated a devout feeling, religious steadfastness, and loyal obedience to the Truth of God. The addresses of Richard Baxter, Dr. Jacomb, Dr. Bates, Edmund Calamy, and many more, are on record, and they are full of Christian charitableness. One of them said: "You have had for many years the benefit of my poor labours. I have fulfilled forty years, and performed my service to God, Christ, and His people, and, I bless His Name, not without acceptance and success. My work, so far as I know, is now at an end. My desire is that you may walk in love to God, love to Christ, and love to one another; that you may labour to manifest a noble and generous spirit in overcoming the world's errors, corruptions, false doctrines, and unwarrantable worship. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

And thus they went forth, like Abraham, not knowing whither they went, in utter dependence on God. They could not have saved anything with which to meet their wants. Their incomes, in many cases, had not been more than £30 or £40 a year. And with what cruel craftiness had the time of their ejection been arranged! It had been fixed at first to take place at Michaelmas, but it was afterwards shifted back to August 24th, so that they would have to leave their homes and churches some little time before the annual tithes became due, viz., at Michaelmas, of which therefore they would be deprived, and thus would have to face the world penniless as well as homeless.

We have said that these men, so ruthlessly turned out, were the choice spirits of the Church, the ornaments of learning, and the flower of the pulpit. Space will not allow us even to name the fiftieth part of them, much less describe them. Many of them have stood out as among the great giants of the centuries. Think of Richard Baxter, the faithful pastor, the voluminous writer of twenty-two large volumes, the unwearied Reformer, who did more than any other to stem the reaction of the Papal tide in England, and in modifying the theology of the nation. He left the impress of his personality and work deeply on the mind and heart of the people. An invalid throughout his life, yet the work he accomplished in many spheres was pro-

digious. The Church knows him best by the immortal classics he wrote : "Call to the Unconverted," "The Reformed Pastor," and "The Saints' Everlasting Rest." Then we have Dr. John Owen, once Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, but who was really ejected from Christ Church before the Act of Uniformity came into force, but who remained true to his "Independent" principles in spite of requests made afterward to him to return to the "fold." He was one of the greatest scholars and ablest theologians of the centuries, one who could firmly tread in the footsteps of the great Augustine himself. His works, like his massive "Commentary on the Hebrews" and his great disquisition on the "Person of Christ," are a storehouse of learning and weighty thought. John Howe was a man enriched with some of the best qualities ever bestowed on human nature. He was Baxter's junior by fifteen years, but was as mature in thought and ripe in judgment. He had been for three years chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, and had capacities to rise to the highest rank of pulpit power and spiritual influence; but he had to seek refuge in Ireland, and also on the Continent for some years; but when he returned, such was the power of his gentleness and the force of his goodness, that men like Archbishop Tillotson looked on him as the ideal Christian minister and theologian. But he could not conform. When a Conformist said to him that he thought he had

latitude enough to remain in the Church, he replied that it was "his latitude that made him a Nonconformist"; and when a bishop asked him how *re-ordination* would hurt him, he replied, "It hurts my *understanding*. Nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure I am a minister of Christ. I cannot begin again to be a minister." His works have been published in several volumes, and his "Living Temple" is one of the most eloquent sacred classics in any language. Another great name was that of Edmund Calamy, educated at Cambridge, and was a noted clergyman for years, until he was compelled to retire on account of the "Book of Sports," and so identified himself with the Puritan party. He was a great controversialist and possessed a very acute mind. He was one of the authors of the Reply to Bishop Hall's "Humble Remonstrance," in which the Liturgy and Episcopacy were strongly advocated. He was also a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. He was a great preacher, and frequently delivered sermons before Parliament and the Lord Mayors. His most popular work is "The Godly Man's Ark." He was ejected for his Nonconformity and was imprisoned for a time.

We meet also with the noted name of Thomas Goodwin, the "Patriarch and Atlas of Independency," who could not stand the interference of Laud, and therefore resigned his high position and retired to Holland. After his return he was President of Mag-

dalen College, Oxford, from 1650 to the Restoration. He was also a member of the Westminster Assembly (1643-9). His learning was very great and his spiritual experience profound, and the twelve volumes of his published works are a mine of rich ore. We may also mention John Goodwin, the able American divine and controversialist; the saintly Joseph Alleine, author of "Alarm to Unconverted Sinners"; the devout Philip Henry, father of Matthew Henry; Dr. William Bates, who was once chaplain to Charles II., and wrote "Select Lives of Illustrious and Pious Persons"; Samuel Clarke, who published "The Old and New Testament with Annotations"; Samuel Cradock, who wrote several works in English and Latin; Edward Bowles; Joseph Caryl, so well known for his "Commentary on Job"; Stephen Charnock, author of the standard work, "The Attributes of God"; Simon Ashe, the "laughing philosopher"; Walton, the "weeping prophet"; Oliver Heywood; Henry Jessey; Nicholas Lockyer; Thomas Manton, one of Cromwell's chaplains, and who was one of his "Triers," also chaplain to Charles II., took part in the Savoy Conference, but was ejected in 1662 and arrested because he preached in his own house. He was one of the most learned theologians and ablest preachers. He preached 190 sermons on the 119th Psalm, and his works extend to twenty-two volumes. Then we have Increase Mather, Matthew Newcomen, John Ray, William Spurstow, Daniel Williams, John Nye, Bartholomew and John Wesley

(great-grandfather and grandfather of John Wesley). Last, but not least, Matthew Poole, one of the greatest scholars of any age, best known for his "Synopsis Criticorum" (five folio volumes), which has served many generations of students and will maintain its value for many more.

It is impossible to give an account of the sufferings endured, imprisonments, fines, and oppressions of all kinds, not only by the Two Thousand and their followers, but also by those who were never in the State Church. Take, as one instance, the case of Vavasor Powel, the great Evangelist of Wales. He had been one of Cromwell's Commissioners, but feeling he ought not to take Government pay in any shape or form, he relinquished all and devoted himself mainly to his beloved Principality. At the Restoration he was arrested and imprisoned at Shrewsbury for a time. As soon as he was released, like Bunyan, immediately he began preaching again, was apprehended and lodged in Fleet Prison, London. After lying for two years in that loathsome dungeon, he was removed to Southsea Castle, and confined there for five years. Immediately on his release he resumed his evangelistic work, was once more arrested, lodged in Cardiff Gaol, and thence removed again to the Fleet, and there he remained until he died in 1670, in his fifty-third year, worn out with labours and suffering, after having been, like Bunyan, nearly twelve years in prison.

There were other heroes in Wales who were quite prepared to resign their position and face want and all suffering rather than forswear their conscience. One was ejected in Anglesea, seven in Breconshire, ten in Cardiganshire, eleven in Carmarthenshire, one in Carnarvonshire, eight in Denbighshire, four in Flint, twenty-five in Glamorgan, one in Merioneth, fifteen in Monmouthshire, fourteen in Montgomery, eight in Pembroke, and five in Radnor. This makes 106, but the exact number is not certain. A large number of preachers had never entered the Church, because they were Nonconformists from the first. Such were a goodly number of Baptists and others, who were of the same spirit and unyielding courage as Vavasor Powel, such as David Jones, "one of the greatest benefactors of his country"; Stephen Hughes, "the Apostle of Carmarthenshire," who published Vicar Prichard's scathing poem on the ignorance and wickedness of his own Church, and who planted Churches in many parts of his county; John Myles of Ilston, who, to avoid the coming storm, emigrated with his whole Church to America; Daniel Higgs, M.A., who, according to Calamy, was one of the leading scholars, philosophers, and divines of the age; Samuel Jones, M.A., who preached in many counties, and who founded a celebrated academy for the training of young preachers, being the origin of the Theological Colleges at Brecon and Carmarthen; William Jones, of Cilmaenllwyd, who was imprisoned

for three years at Carmarthen, but who, whenever he was allowed to visit his home, arranged to meet his own people in secluded spots and preach the gospel to them; Peregrine Phillips, who might be styled the "Apostle of Pembrokeshire," who suffered much imprisonment for preaching, but who persevered to the end and was instrumental in laying the foundation of many flourishing Churches; Hugh Owen, of Bronclydwr, who was a nephew of Dr. John Owen and was confined in Powys Castle, and of whom Lord Powys, although a Papist, said, "Surely, this is a good Christian"; James Owen, who laboured mainly in North Wales, and the Churches he founded there flourish to-day; and Henry Williams, who lived at Ysgafell, near Newtown, one of the holiest men, who was harassed and persecuted exceedingly. His father was killed by the soldiers in his endeavour to dissuade them when they came to arrest him; at another time they burnt down his house, and his wife, near her confinement, had to flee for her life; afterwards he was assaulted and left for dead, and all the stock and crop on his farm were destroyed; but he had sown wheat in a large field which, when it grew, was of a *unique kind*, for the stalks produced as many as *nine heads*, and were of a different form from ordinary wheat. That field yielded an extraordinary harvest, and filled all with wonder. It is known to this day as *Cae'r Fendith* (The Field of Blessing). "Man's extremity was God's opportunity."

The Quakers in Wales, as in England, were to the fore in their unflinching loyalty to their faith, and they yield a glorious record of upwards of four hundred who suffered between 1660 and 1688.

Now it is evident that the Act of Uniformity, from every standpoint, was to the Episcopal Church the most stupid blunder, as it was one of the most atrocious crimes ever committed in the sacred name of religion. From the date of its enactment the progress and triumph of Nonconformity were assured. Its ranks were enriched and strengthened by the most illustrious names in the Calendar of the Church, and the senseless and sinful action of Monarch and Prelates weakened the Establishment for all time and was a clear prophecy of its ultimate overthrow as such. It was cut off from all other Christian communions, and sank into the lowest depths of spiritual impotency. Its strength was spent, not in prosecuting Christian work, but in persecuting those who endeavoured to do it. It tried hard to stamp out liberty, but it only served to thrust its seed deeper down into the rich soil of patient suffering, which was nourished by the tears of heroes and the blood of the saints. It welded all the forces of the spiritual "Ironsides" in favour of liberty of conscience into one invincible body of New Testament believers whose motto from that date has been "A Free Church in a Free Country."

As Green says: "From that time to this the Episcopal

Church has been unable to meet the varying spiritual needs of its adherents by any modification of its government or its worship. It stands alone among all the religious bodies of Western Christendom in its failure through two hundred years to devise even a single new service of prayer or praise." In fact, to this day the Act of Uniformity is like a millstone round the neck of the Church, and especially of its clergy; and while it is in force, it keeps it in the stocks and pillory. It holds it in the tightest grip of spiritual bondage. It cannot move hand or foot but as told by that strange mixture of believers of all colours, and of unbelievers of all grades, Parliament. It is true it is hopelessly split up into a large number of parties which could be almost designated *sects*—such are their fundamental differences—utterly at variance with one another, the Evangelical and the Sacerdotal; the High and Low, and the Broad, differing as widely as the Jews and the Samaritans, who had sense enough to dwell and worship apart, and yet these modern sects have all to enter the Church through the one narrow door of

SUBSCRIPTION !

What has each clergyman to swear on solemn oath at his ordination, and certainly each member of the Church by implication? It is this: "*I, A.B., do hereby declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book entitled 'The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the*

Sacraments' . . . and the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating bishops, priests, and deacons." What comprehensive and stringent expressions! They exclude all doubts, all scruples. They involve, in their plain, simple, literal meaning a complete and undoubted conviction of the truth of every proposition and a perfect approval of *every particle of the contents of that book!* It is assent and consent to all and everything! There is no loophole; and so the brave, true, conscientious Two Thousand said "goodbye" for ever to a Church that made such an unwarrantable demand. Yes, every clergyman of the Church of England, in the sight of God and of man, has to swear assent and consent to all, and must thus be fearfully weakened in his moral fibre at the very start. He must swear to the *Articles* which are Protestant and in many parts are confessedly at variance with many parts of the *Prayer Book*, which is strongly Popish, and thus he has to declare the perfect agreement between things that essentially differ. This is the new Euclid of which Pure Mathematics know nothing.

The Royal Declaration prohibited the least difference from the Articles. Paley said that the demand involved an absurdity. A literal compliance is impossible to the intellects and consciences of intelligent men from age to age; and this has been abundantly proved.

In fact, the unity of belief which the Act of Uniformity demands has never been attained. Clergymen

wrote "Tracts for the Times," and clergymen wrote "Essays and Reviews," and clergymen write sound Evangelical tracts; and what a difference! And yet all these subscribe *ex animo* to "all and sundry" in the Prayer Book! And if the law permits a clergyman to subscribe one doctrine and preach its opposite, it only shows that what is false in morals holds good in law; and which, we ask, should be supreme in the Church of Christ—good morals or bad law? Archbishop Sancroft confessed to Tillotson that he had never taken a cure of souls, because he could not use the Burial Service. Bishop Burnet declared that the greater part of the clergy in his time subscribed the Articles without even examining them. Dr. Arnold denounced the Uniformity sought in the Church of England as that which had been its curse since the Reformation. Dr. Stanley, Bishop of Norwich, father of Dean Stanley, declared in the House of Lords that he "never knew a clergyman who believed the Articles of the Established Church, and that it was impossible they should believe them, since they are contradictory"; and Rev. M. G. Ward said, in his defence before the Oxford Convocation, "If the Church of England means that the clergy should subscribe in any but non-natural sense, then it is her intention that there be no subscribers to them at all."

Yet, having entered through the same door, how the parties in the Church have railed against each other! The Evangelical accuses the Tractarian, the Sacerdo-

talist, and the Ritualist of denying the Articles to which they gave full assent; the Tractarian says with force that the Evangelical evades the simple sense of the Liturgy; the Broad Churchman says that they cannot be taken in their simple, straightforward sense, because, if so taken, they contradict each other! And thus resort is had to subterfuges and evasions and Jesuitical methods in the vain endeavour to get out of the difficulty, such as: that assent is given only to the *use* of the Liturgy, or that the consent is only *general* and not to *details*, or that the clergy claim to put their own sense upon the language, &c. What would be the effect of this juggling with words? According to the learned counsel, Mr. FitzJames Stephens, "It would be, were it generally adopted, the practical annihilation of all obligation." In fact, the requirement is so precise, the affirmation so solemn, there cannot be any mistaking of what is demanded—full subscription to all in the services, all in the Articles, all in the Rubrics, all in the Canons. All this and many other absurdities made Archdeacon Hare exclaim, "That most disastrous, most tyrannical, most Schismatic Act, the Act of Uniformity!" And a highly respected member of Parliament, a Churchman, declared that he "did not believe one layman in a thousand would be prepared deliberately to subscribe all the obligations subscribed to by the clergy."

Let us look for a moment at the matter from the

Evangelical clergyman's standpoint. Can he subscribe to Baptismal Regeneration as taught in the Prayer Book? He knows it is rank and undiluted Popery: "We yield Thee most hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church." The jugglers with words say there is a difference between regeneration and conversion. But we ask, When can one take place without the other? In fact, Sir Herbert James Fust was right when giving judgment in the notorious Gorham case when he decided that the doctrine of the Church of England is "that infants are invariably and always spiritually regenerated in and by the act of baptism." It was good law, but bad gospel!

Another Popish demand is that in the 20th Article—that "the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith." On this Rome built up her power, and this doctrine is utterly subversive of Protestantism. Then to the Evangelical there is no priestly absolution, and he cannot say, "I absolve thee from all thy sins." This is Rome all over. Take the Ordination Service. The bishop places his hand on the young clergyman's head and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." It is not a prayer but an assertion, a demand. Evangelicalism does not believe in any such prelatial mechanical power. And yet a Bishop of Oxford declared, "It is the most blasphemous frivolity if it

be not the deepest truth that the candidate there and then receives the Holy Ghost." Which is it? we ask in all solemnity. Let God's Word give the answer.

And as the falsehood is uttered over the newly born child, it is not silenced even over the coffin and grave of the dead. It may be the wicked man who wallowed in sin, till death stopped his career of gross immorality and deception and perfidy, and brought him, like another Charles II., to an untimely grave through his own bad living; and his boon companions may for the time being be subdued into awe at his fearful end, until they are soon reassured, for the Prayer Book mumbles over his mortal remains, "It hath pleased Almighty God, in His great mercy, to take to Himself the soul of our dear brother; we therefore commit his body to the ground . . . in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal life"! Surely it is full time to draw a veil of decency to cover the horrid blasphemy! And yet the pure and innocent unbaptized child, having fallen asleep in its Saviour's arms, who whispered, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," is unregenerate, and so, it may be inferred, is *lost*, and therefore no words of comfort must fall on the father's ear or the mother's stricken heart; yea, a William Carey, an Alfred Saker, or a Christmas Evans should be, so far as the Burial Service of the Church is concerned, consigned to the place of suicides and murderers and unbaptized children! Cardinal Wiseman said that the "Romanists cared little for Maynooth

as long as they held Oxford," and they hold Oxford through the Popish element in the Prayer Book ; and yet to everything in this Book every Evangelical clergyman has to give his full assent and consent !

But notwithstanding the Act of Uniformity, Nonconformity was not dead, but rather struck its roots deeper into the rich soil of undoubted faith and unflinching courage, and so in 1664 was passed

THE CONVENTICLE ACT,

which consisted of twenty-three sections, which aimed directly at the *people*, as the Uniformity Act did at the *pastors*. The shepherd has already been struck and wounded ; the flock was now to be scattered. It was enacted that each person attending a meeting or conventicle where more than five besides members of the family were present for any religious purpose not in conformity with the Church of England should be subject to a fine of £5 or three months' imprisonment for the first offence, £10 or six months for the second, and to £100 or transportation for seven years to some one of his Majesty's plantations beyond the seas for the third. And this Act was put into force in the most cruel manner. All classes of Nonconformists suffered, but chief of all the Quakers. They dared the oppressor, and met in the light of day and with open doors, and fiendish vengeance was wreaked on them. The gaols were crowded, and more consideration was shown to the blackest criminals than

to God's people. Scores of them died in prison; their leader, George Fox, was cast into gaol, and was there for three years, and his hard lot hastened his death.

Amid all this dire persecution the terrible Plague visited our country, and in London carried away its thousands, and daily it increased in virulence. During one week twelve thousand perished, even as many as four thousand dying in one night. Undoubtedly more than one hundred thousand succumbed—a large number, considering the population at the time. But who were the heroes of the hour? Parliament had fled to Oxford, and Charles feared for his life. Many, if not most, of the cowardly Conformist clergy deserted their posts, and allowed the people to perish and to be buried without any Christian service. So many of the ejected ministers came out of their forced seclusion and braved the law and the Plague, occupied the pulpits, warned the impenitent, comforted the dying, and ministered at the last solemn rite. Baxter gives a good list of them, and the people in their extremity looked to these true servants of God and the benefactors of stricken humanity, and not to the hirelings who had fled. What was their reward? The thanks of King and Parliament? Restoration to the posts they had adorned and to the people who loved them? It is almost incredible, but such are the callousness and cruelty of the human heart, even under the guise of

piety, that it pays tenfold evil for good done. The self-sacrificing service of the Nonconformist heroes was only a further occasion for the poisonous tooth of the serpent to be more deeply embedded in their flesh, and further punishment was to be meted out to them, and so in 1665 was passed the

FIVE MILE ACT,

which was even the cruellest of all. It meant banishment for the ex-ministers from their old friends, and from all the populous centres where their benign influence was still strongly felt. In London and almost every other large centre they were a quiet power and the latent force which the enemy greatly dreaded. So this Act required that all persons in holy orders, or pretending to be in holy orders, who had not taken the oath required by the Act of Uniformity, should take the following: "I, A.B., do swear that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever, to take arms against the King . . . and that I will not at any time endeavour any alteration or Government in Church or State." "Every Nonconformist minister refusing to take this oath is forbidden to come, except on a journey, within five miles of any city or corporate town, or of any parliamentary borough, or of any parish, town or place in which he had formerly been parson, vicar, curate, stipendiary or lecturer, or had conducted any Nonconformist service. The penalty for violating this law is £40."

This £40 would be about the value of £160 to-day!

It was further provided that such persons should not "teach any public or private school, or take any boarders or tablers that are taught or instructed by him or any other." Many of the ejected had turned schoolmasters and teachers, the only means of livelihood open to them, and now that only door was slammed in their faces. It was the instrument invented and wielded with fiendish cunning to bring about poverty, starvation, death. The poor breadwinner had at last been rendered utterly helpless, apparently with only one door open to him, and that the door of heaven. He would have to be removed from all his friends who in any way could help him, and from towns where some precarious means of subsistence could be picked up, and be driven into solitary places, and even there to be hunted like the partridges on the mountain. Baxter says that many were necessitated to break the law "lest they should murder themselves and their families."

Thus the Corporation Act had driven out all Nonconformists from public life, the Uniformity Act all ministers from public religious life; the Conventicle Act all Nonconformist ministers and laymen from public religious life, and the Five Mile Act all ministers and schoolmasters almost from life altogether.

The Conventicle Act of 1664 was to continue for four years; and when its time expired there was one man

among many that was determined that Nonconformity should be stamped out of the land, viz., Archbishop Sheldon, and another whip of scorpions was provided in the

NEW CONVENTICLES ACT,

which was passed in 1670, and was much more severe than the first. Marvell called it "the quintessence of arbitrary malice." It enacted that every one above the age of sixteen present at a religious gathering in a house or in a field, provided five and upwards were present, should on conviction be fined five shillings for the first offence, and ten for the second ; any person preaching at the same should be fined £20 for the first offence, and £40 for every subsequent offence ; any person allowing such conventicle in his house, outhouse, barn or field, should forfeit £20. Justices omitting to do their duty would be fined £100, half to go to the King, and half to go to the informer ! What a premium on false swearing ! All the bishops, with the exception of two, voted for this abominable measure !

At this time the noted trial of the Quakers Penn and Mead took place. The latter finding a place of worship in London closed and held by soldiers, addressed the people in an open street, and so was prosecuted. He and his friend were treated shamelessly by the officials of the court, but they defended themselves with calmness and dignity, and in spite of every pressure brought on them, the jury, after being locked

in for days, persisted in declaring them not guilty. Then a new charge was brought against them of coming into court with their hats on! and Penn and Mead were sent to Newgate, and the jury were sent to the same place until each man paid a fine of forty marks. As soon as the last Act passed, Sheldon, a worthy successor of a Gardiner and a Bonner, sent letters to all the bishops to set it in operation, which they were forward to do. Still the Nonconformists held on bravely in spite of all, and everywhere the gaols were crowded, and even felons turned out to make room for the saints of God. None can describe their treatment and wretchedness. Informers abounded everywhere, and persons were arrested and committed to prison without knowing the reason why; the gaols were most filthy and the atmosphere foetid, the fare was wretched, and in hundreds of cases not only health was impaired but death ensued. How many suffered the last Great Day of Assize alone will tell.

In a preface to Delaune's "Plea for the Nonconformists" it is said that in this reign sixty thousand suffered for their Nonconformity, and that five thousand died of their sufferings. Over five thousand Quakers were in gaol at the same time, and ministers and others remained in prison for long years. Joseph Wright, a Baptist minister, lay in Maidstone Gaol for twenty years. Women and tender children were not immune. A religious bigot, like Sheldon, is the cruellest and most conscienceless of all. His chief instruments of torture

were the bishops, whom he hounded on in their nefarious work. Over £2,000,000 in three years was paid in fines, and mostly by poor people. Thousands fled beyond the seas for asylum. Genuine piety or loyalty to an enlightened Christian conscience could scarcely find a place for its foot in the country; and yet these episcopal persecutors could not only wink at the indescribable dissoluteness of the Court of Charles, but even take part in its disgusting buffoonery.

In 1672 Charles issued his Declaration of Indulgence, which suspended all manner of penal laws in matters ecclesiastical against Nonconformists and Roman Catholics; and the country seemed to breathe with hope for a while; but the following year Parliament declared against it, and the King had to cancel it, and this was immediately followed by the passing of

THE TEST ACT (1673),

which imposed on everybody holding a civil or military office an *oath denouncing Transubstantiation and also the Obligation to take the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England.*

It was evident that this Act was aimed primarily against the Roman Catholics, but it pressed with almost equal heaviness on Nonconformists. The latter were promised a relief bill, which was never forthcoming, and were thus completely deceived, and this Act was not abrogated for 155 years—not until 1828; so Protestant Dissenters were excluded from all

civil and military offices for this long period. Later, a Catholic Exclusion Bill was passed, and the Roman Catholics had, like the Nonconformists, to wait till 1829 for their emancipation. The oppressor's heel remained on the neck of the people until the close of the inglorious chapter of Charles II., which came to rather a sudden end in 1685, when he declared himself a Roman Catholic, although he had been the Head of the Established Protestant Church of England for twenty-five years, and had previously taken the oath of the Solemn League and Covenant. We are glad to draw at last the veil over one of the blackest periods of history, when licentiousness sat on the throne, bigotry and cruelty abode in the Episcopal Palace, and genuine piety and unswerving loyalty to Christ languished in prison, or wandered a homeless fugitive over the land, or found shelter beyond the stormy main.

CHAPTER X

JAMES THE SECOND

THE reign of Charles II. has, naturally, detained us at length, but now we may somewhat hasten our footsteps.

Probably no English King came to the throne with less welcome than James II. His brother Charles had said to him years before, "Do not trouble, James; they will never kill me in order to make you King." He was a declared Catholic, having resigned his post of Lord High Admiral in consequence of the passing of the Test Act. He was, it is needless to say, more conscientious than his brother, but narrow and obstinate to a degree, and hence he was a fit successor to "Bloody Mary." He was determined to restore the Roman Catholic religion as the Established religion of the country. Soon the Romish Mass was celebrated at Westminster, Romish priests were inducted into the livings of the Church; Jesuits and monks returned to the country in large numbers; four Roman Catholic Lords were promoted to the Privy Council; Roman

Catholics were appointed to high offices of State ; the High Commission Court was restored ; he tampered with the Universities ; a Catholic was made Dean of Christ Church, Oxford ; the Fellows of Magdalen College were deprived of their Fellowships, and the Vice-Chancellor at Cambridge was put out of office to make room for a full-blown Romish priest ; and, after all, James was the Supreme Governor and Head of the Protestant Church !

It is wonderful how tyrants can secure abettors. Mary had her Bonner, Charles I. his Laud, Charles II. his Sheldon, and now James II. his Judge Jeffreys. The rebellion of the Duke of Monmouth (son of Charles II. and Lucy Walters) and the trial of Titus Oates gave him his opportunity. The "Bloody Assize" recorded one of the most villainous crimes in the annals of any country. It afforded an opportunity for the bitter persecution of Nonconformists. Jeffreys set out "with a savage joy" to carry on his nefarious task. The whole country was filled with terror, as it was strewn with the heads of "traitors." Innocent women were treated with the utmost barbarity. Alice Lisle, for giving shelter to a man—and she did not know the reason of his flight—was sentenced to be burned alive the same afternoon, and it was only the earnest entreaty of the clergy of Winchester Cathedral that prevented the immediate execution of this ; but afterwards she was beheaded in the market-place, and met her doom "with serene

courage." Elizabeth Gaunt, a Baptist, was charged with the same crime as Alice Lisle. She had spent her life in deeds of charity, in visiting prisoners, and in helping the poor ; yet this noble woman was sentenced by Jeffreys to be burned at Tyburn. No one believed that such an atrocity could be perpetrated ; yet the cruel monster insisted on it, and in the midst of the flames her face, like that of Stephen, was "like that of an angel." About 330 were put to death during the "Bloody Assize"; not only men and women, but young lads and tender maidens. Over eight hundred were sold into slavery and sent to the West Indies ; many of these, huddled together in the convict ships, never reached alive the land of their destination.

Among those arraigned was the godly and noble veteran, now seventy years of age, Richard Baxter, whom Jeffreys bullied and threatened in most abusive terms. He described Oates and Baxter as "the two greatest rogues in the whole kingdom." He called the latter "an old rogue, a schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain, a snivelling Presbyterian." Perhaps he regarded the last term as the most degrading of all! Baxter was fined and sent to prison, and had Jeffreys had his own way he would have had the great but aged Christian leader whipped at the cart's-tail. Nothing would satisfy the Court. Even those who received pardon had to pay fines that reduced them to beggary. Many bought a pardon by bribing the judge, who made a large sum of money by such

means ; and soon this paragon of justice was made Lord Chancellor !

In 1687 James issued his Declaration of Indulgence, in which he suspended all penal laws against Nonconformists. His object was to prepare the way for the full sway of the Papacy. The Nonconformists were not caught by the bait. They would rather suffer than place full power in the hands of a Romish King. Parliament declared against his right to a dispensing power. Then he resorted to a bench of judges, carefully packed, who declared in his favour, who said there was nothing with which the King might not dispense ! This was the restoration of the *Divine Right of Kings* with a vengeance, which had cost his father his throne and his head ! Now the Charters of Corporations were annulled and the King's supporters placed in authority, his Army was increased, and about five thousand Protestant soldiers were dismissed. He garrisoned Ireland. Catholics were put in possession of the Council-table, of the courts of judicature, and of the bench of magistrates and justices. The Pope's Nuncio came to England and received a great Royal reception ; four Catholic bishops were publicly consecrated in the King's Chapel, and everywhere Roman Catholicism was in full sway. But matters were coming to a head. The King published a second Declaration of Indulgence, and ordered it should be read in all the churches by the clergy (April, 1688). Six prelates,

the Bishops of St. Asaph, Bath and Wells, Ely, Chichester, Peterborough, and Bristol, together with Archbishop Sancroft, presented to the King a respectful but firm protest against his action. The result was that they were committed to the Tower. Their trial became a noted one, and when they were pronounced "Not Guilty" the rejoicing in London and elsewhere was unbounded, and it was clear the beginning of the end was at hand.

We cannot pass unnoticed the revocation of the *Edict of Nantes* by Louis XIV. in France and the consequent terrible persecutions of the Protestants. About five hundred thousand of its most industrious people left the country. About a tenth of them came over into this country. That event helped to increase the detestation of Popery in England. And we can never forget the sufferings of the Covenanters in Scotland previous to and at this time in consequence of the attempt to thrust the Episcopal Church on Scotland. Their story has been told in many a thrilling narrative. Their leader, the Marquis of Argyll, had been beheaded, and James Guthrie had died on the gallows. Four hundred ministers resigned rather than comply with the Scotch "Uniformity Act." They were prohibited from holding meetings on pain of death. The counterpart of Judge Jeffreys in England was Graham of Claverhouse in Scotland. It was reckoned that in twenty-eight years eighteen thousand persons were banished or put to death. Several Pro-

testant noblemen, seeing the great damage to the liberties of their country, had privately met together with the view of inviting William, Prince of Orange, to come over, who shared to the full the noble convictions of his House as to religious liberty. He was a sincere Protestant and an ardent Calvinist. He had married Mary, daughter of James II. As a result of the negotiations, he arrived in England and was hailed by the country as a deliverer. James escaped into France, and William III. and Mary were crowned King and Queen.

CHAPTER XI

WILLIAM THE THIRD AND MARY

WILLIAM was thirty-eight when he ascended the throne. Very wisely, he chose his Ministers from all parties that had been at variance. He met with great difficulties at first, as James's emissaries were busy. Soldiers mutinied; many peers and eight bishops, including the Primate Sancroft, refused to take the oath of allegiance, and about four hundred clergymen followed their example. These were afterwards called the "non-jurors." Parliament, called the "Convention Parliament," was summoned. About the first Act was to present to Their Majesties what is called the "Bill of Rights," which the King and Queen accepted. It recited the unconstitutional action of James as regards many things, such as exercising dispensing power, committing prelates, establishing an Ecclesiastical Commission, levying money, disarming Protestants, violating elections, wrongful persecutions, summoning illegal juries, levying excessive fines and punishments, &c. Then it indicated the rights of subjects,

which form the basis of our Constitutional Government to-day. It declares that no foreign prince, prelate, or potentate has any right of jurisdiction, secular or ecclesiastical, within this realm. It points out the limitation of the Crown, the exclusion of Papists from it, and the true sovereignty of Parliament as expressive of the will of the people.

THE TOLERATION ACT

was passed May 24, 1689. It enacted that the laws against religious Nonconformity shall not extend to Dissenters who shall take the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. All were required to make a declaration against Transubstantiation. They were restrained from meeting with locked doors, but protected against disturbance. The ancient penal statutes remained, however, unrepealed, and persons who denied the Trinity, as well as Papists, were excluded from the benefit of the Act. But Nonconformist ministers were to profess their belief in the Thirty-nine Articles, with the exception of the 34th, concerning the traditions of the Church; the 35th, which approves the Book of Homilies; the 36th, which relates to the consecration of bishops or clergymen; and a part of the 20th, which declares that the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and has authority in controversies of faith, and each was to pay sixpence to have his name registered. Baptists were also exempted from subscribing to a part of the

27th, touching infant baptism. Quakers were allowed to make a declaration instead of taking an oath. No congregation was permitted to assemble until their place of worship had been certified before the bishop of the diocese, his archdeacon, or a magistrate. Still, in spite of these limitations, this was the *Magna Charta* of Nonconformity. It was a great step in advance, and yet it was far from being complete. The Unitarian was put in the same class as the Roman Catholic; the Dissenter was tied down to the Athanasian Creed; the iniquitous Test and Corporation Acts were still in force; he had still to pay tithes and Church rates, and had to bear many a burden and endure many a wrong that should have been removed in one grand comprehensive sweep. Instead of that, inequalities and disabilities were perpetuated in the realm of religion, education, civic life, and the National Universities. Still, under the wise and beneficent rule of William, the foundation of our liberties was laid, deep and stable, on which generation after generation of Nonconformists and others have been laying their contribution. Yet we must remember, even this day, that we are only "tolerated"—a term which hurts our understanding, does violence to our conscience, and degrades our position. It would have been a good thing if King and Parliament had carefully read and studied the masterly work of John Locke on Toleration. In his views he was a second John Milton. During this reign Noncon-

formity prospered. About 2,500 places of worship were licensed, and De Foe said that Dissenters numbered two millions, which probably was an exaggeration. The Quakers were numerous, and a new life animated the whole community. His wife had predeceased the King, and he died, having met with an accident, February 21, 1702. In comparison with his two immediate predecessors, his reign was characterised by great contentment among his people and much prosperity at home and abroad.

CHAPTER XII

QUEEN ANNE

IT is a strange coincidence that each of the three Queens, Mary, Elizabeth, and Anne, was the bitter enemy of the Puritans or Nonconformists. Anne had not the capacities of Elizabeth, but she was as narrow and vindictive as Mary. She, like Queen Bess, has had the sobriquet "Good" applied to her, but her "goodness" was woefully lopsided. She was the daughter of James II. and sister of Queen Mary. She was crowned April 23, 1702. When the Nonconformist bodies presented her with an address, she received them in silence. They were hardly to be "tolerated," notwithstanding the Toleration Act. She was, in fact, "High Church" and a "High Tory," and the party with which she was in deep sympathy lost no opportunity in forwarding their cause.

Nonconformists had occasionally taken Communion in the Church of England, and so were able to retain their posts on public bodies. So an agitation was set on foot to abolish the Occasional Conformity Act.

The clergy regarded the "Occasional" Communicants as evading the Statute, and when the Lord Mayor of London carried the regalia of his office to his own Congregational Church, their anger knew no bounds, and a feeling of hostility to Dissenters was sedulously fostered. It was at this time that the redoubtable Daniel De Foe published his "Shortest Way with Dissenters," in which, with most biting sarcasm and subtle irony, he recommended their opponents to treat them as the Papists of France treated the Protestant Huguenots and others. Even many Dissenters did not perceive the vein of sarcasm that ran throughout the whole, whilst their enemies were simply delighted. When at last the latter perceived that it was written against them, they prosecuted De Foe for malicious libel; he was sentenced to pay 200 marks, to stand three times in the pillory, to be imprisoned during Queen Anne's pleasure, and to find securities for his good behaviour for three years! What a powerful argument against all forms of Nonconformity! But he became the favourite of the people, and the pillory became his pulpit, from which he preached liberty of conscience. After one or two vain attempts the *Occasional Conformity Bill* was passed. There was a Dr. Sacheverell, a High Church demagogue, a vain man, who preached a bitter sermon at St. Paul's before the Lord Mayor and the Corporation against the Government, who had shown some consideration for the claims and rights of Nonconformists. Political

passion was aroused. Sacheverell was persecuted, and the Court decided he should be suspended from preaching for three years, and his sermon burned by the common hangman. At this time he was the idol of the populace of London, and the High Church Party being in the ascendant, the Bill got easily through both Houses of Parliament. It provided that all persons holding any public office, if they attended any meeting for worship attended by ten persons in addition to the family, where the Book of Common Prayer was not used, should forfeit their office and pay a fine of £40, *the money to go to the informer!* And such persons could not hold any public office afterwards, unless they could prove that they had not attended a Conventicle for twelve months.

THE SCHISM BILL.

As if the above measure was not drastic enough, a blow was now aimed at a very large portion of the community. The Occasional Conformity Act affected but a few, this would affect the many. So in 1714 the "Schism Bill" was introduced into the Commons. By this it was provided that: "No person should keep a private school, or teach or instruct, as tutor or schoolmaster, who had not subscribed a declaration to conform to the Established Church, and obtained from the bishop of the diocese a licence to teach. No licence was to be granted unless the applicant could

produce a certificate that he had received the sacrament, according to the rites of the Church, for the preceding year. If he taught without such a licence, he was, on conviction, to be imprisoned without bail." This Bill was the "unkindest cut of all" to Nonconformists. They had already established, after a great effort, some excellent academies. They were shut out of the National Universities. Their ignorance was ridiculed, and now they were to be deprived of all opportunities for education. Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers had institutions that had done excellent work, and this alarmed the "powers that were." With the Dissenters' schools closed, and every educational institution under the complete control of the High Church clergy, the way would be prepared for the re-establishment of the Stuart Dynasty, which had wrought such irreparable mischief. The Bill was easily carried in the Commons. It encountered a more stubborn opposition in the Lords. "Dissenters," said the Bishop of London, "have made the Bill necessary by their endeavours to propagate their schism, and to draw their children to their schools and academies." Lord Wharton spoke strongly in reply. He said "that such a measure was but an indifferent return for the benefit the public had received from these schools, in which the greatest men had been educated—men who had made glorious peace for England, men who had paid the debts of the nation, and who had extended its commerce." The Bill was

carried in the House of Lords by only five votes ! The Queen signed the Bill with alacrity on June 25th. It was to come into operation on August 1st. An affecting story is told of Thomas Bradbury, the godly Congregational minister of Fetter Lane. He was out walking to his service through Smithfield that day, with a downcast look, when Bishop Burnet met him, who inquired as to the cause of his depression. "I am thinking," he replied, "whether I shall have the constancy and resolution of that noble company of martyrs, whose ashes are deposited in this place, for I see that I shall be called to suffer in a like cause." The bishop informed him that the physician had given the Queen up, and that she was expected every hour to die ; that if she died before his service would be over he would send a messenger to his chapel, who, as a sign, would drop a handkerchief. The messenger came and did so, and Thomas Bradbury was about the first to announce her death and the accession of the House of Hanover. With the death of Anne, the Schism Act became a dead-letter.

CHAPTER XIII

GEORGE THE FIRST—GEORGE THE FIFTH

GEORGE I. became King in 1714, and reigned thirteen years (1714–27.) He was favourable to the Dissenters. He declared his intention of supporting the Established Church, "which," he said, "I am of opinion may be done without impairing the toleration allowed by law to Protestant Dissenters, so agreeable to Christian charity, and so necessary to the trade and riches of the kingdom." Some of the bishops were much more liberal than the rank and file of the clergy. Bishop Hoadley of Bangor preached a powerful sermon before the King, on the Sole Headship of Christ, and argued against the erection of any sort of temporal kingdom, under the covert name of a spiritual one. The King was pleased with it and ordered its publication. But Convocation was furious and condemned it. It proceeded to such length that soon the High Church party got into discredit. Convocation was prorogued in 1717, *and never again sat*

for business until the reign of Victoria, when the High Church party prevailed on the Government to allow Convocation to assemble for a few days at the beginning of each session.

In 1780 Earl Stanhope brought in a Bill to repeal a part of the Act "against occasional Conformity," and also a part of the "Act of the 12th of Queen Anne against the growth of Schism," and some of the clauses in the Test and Corporation Acts. After a keen fight in the Lords and a majority of fifty-one in the Commons, the Bill was passed, and so commenced *that process of undoing the mischief and gross injustice of generations*, and which yet awaits its full accomplishment.

From 1719 to 1736 no measure was brought before Parliament affecting the Nonconformists. It was a period of comparative quiet. The Dissenters enjoyed a measure of that spurious substitution for liberty called "Toleration." Convocation, the hot-bed of tyrannous measures, was defunct.

Efforts were made time after time to abolish the Test Act. In 1739 a deputation waited on the Premier, Sir Robert Walpole, who, although deeply sympathetic, did not see his way clear to introduce the question into Parliament. He was in fear of the parrot-cry of generations, "The Church in Danger!" A Bill was introduced, but soon defeated. About this time Nonconformists became depressed with the realisation of their hopes long deferred. Nearly two generations

passed away before another appeal was made for the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts. In 1787 a Bill was submitted to the House by Mr. Beaufoy, who made a most eloquent and convincing speech, stating that as the law stood, not even the great philanthropist, John Howard, could hold any public office, and showed how religion was degraded, hypocrisy encouraged, and clergymen placed in the most painful positions by the law, a law whose object was "to strengthen the Church of England by the debasement of the Church of Christ." Still the motion was rejected by a hundred and seventy-eight to one hundred. Without referring to much discussion and agitation that afterwards took place, we come to the final struggle. An Act of Indemnity had been passed every year to protect Dissenters against provisions of the Test and Corporation Acts. Lord John Russell introduced his Bill in February, 1828, and demanded this act of justice to three millions of the most loyal subjects of the realm. Lord Brougham delivered the weightiest speech of all in its favour. The Bill passed the House of Commons by a majority of forty-four. It included an amendment that a Sacramental Test should be abolished "on the understanding that all persons seeking or holding office in any Corporation or any position of trust under the Government should subscribe a declaration that he believes in the authenticity and truth of the Canonical Books of Scripture, and that he swears to do nothing to the injury of the

Established Church" ! So in a measure a *Test Act* was still in existence, an embargo on the conscience, and an insult to reason and intelligence. Still, a heavy part of the burden was removed after a hundred and fifty years' hard and stern struggle !

The Corporation of London was guilty of a most oppressive measure as regards Dissenters. Knowing the objection of the latter to take the Sacrament in the Church of England in order to qualify for office, it was enacted that a fine of £400 be imposed on every person who should refuse the office of sheriff after nomination, or £600 if he should refuse to serve having been elected. With cunning cruelty, for six years (1748 to 1754) Dissenters only were nominated, and fines exacted amounted altogether to £15,000 ! The last to be nominated was Allen Evans. He was a Welshman and a member of the Baptist Church, of which Dr. Stennett was pastor. He fought the battle of the Nonconformists against this iniquitous exaction. He refused to serve as Sheriff because of his strong objection to the sacramental test that was in force, which he regarded as a travesty of a sacred ordinance. A fierce battle was fought in the Courts : the matter was brought before the House of Lords, which gave its verdict in favour of the Nonconformists. The judges made a clear declaration in their favour, and Lord Mansfield said that any attempt to compel the conscience was contrary to natural and revealed

religion, as well as to every wise policy and administration. Allen Evans was then on his death-bed, being eighty-two years of age, and he had the joy, before he died, of winning a glorious victory on behalf of his co-religionists. His name will remain indelible on the list of heroes of liberty of conscience.

In 1779 another victory was won when Nonconformists were relieved from subscription to the *Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England*. This was accomplished after several attempts to secure it. The bishops and clergy had been, as usual, the strongest opponents, and they were now attacked in scathing terms and burning language.

The pen and tongue of Dissenters had been released, and they were used to advantage. Robert Robinson, the eminent Baptist minister of Cambridge, after a powerful apostrophe to Liberty, said: "All good men hailed Thee! the generous British Commons caressed Thee, and led Thee into an Upper House, and there—Thou didst expire in the holy lap of Spiritual Lords!" They quailed before the storm, and Subscription was a thing of the past.

In 1810 there was an insidious attempt to fetter Nonconformist preachers in Lord Sidmouth's Bill, the object of which was to check the facility with which persons entered *the Nonconformist Ministry*. It was evident it was a preliminary step for further restriction, but it met with strong opposition and was dropped.

In 1813 *the right to reside and preach in India* was

granted after strenuous opposition by the East India Company and others. Thus the great William Carey and his coadjutors and successors were granted liberty to carry on their great work. In the same year a Bill was passed doing away with the law that made it a penal offence *to deny the Doctrine of the Trinity*. This was a great boon to Unitarians.

After many attempts to secure civil equality, the *Catholic Emancipation Act* was passed in 1829. It was introduced by Sir Robert Peel, who, up to that time, had been its strongest opponent. It was called *The Catholic Relief Bill*. But it had several restrictions. It was the last Bill to which George IV. gave his signature, which he did with much reluctance.

National Elementary Education suffered greatly through the opposition of the Church of England. Joseph Lancaster laboured strenuously for the training of poor children, and in 1808 was founded "the British and Foreign School Society," which was formed to assist unsectarian schools. The clergy offered bitter opposition to an undenominational scheme. The old cry, "Church in Danger!" once more was raised, and the young Quaker was scurrilously maligned just as his confrère, Robert Raikes, the Founder of Sunday Schools, had been. The Quakers, noble and brave people, were still special objects of attack. According to a Church Authority, "Quakerism was a disgusting amalgam of all those anti-Christian heresies and blasphemies which were

permitted to disgrace and disturb the Church in her primitive days!" So in 1811 an opposition Society was started with the high-sounding title of "National Society," and from that day to this, so far as Elementary Education is concerned, Dissenters have laboured under grievous disabilities. What a Church preserve throughout the century the Training Colleges have been, although supported nearly altogether out of public funds! The mere fact of a young applicant being a Nonconformist, however brilliant he might have been, was sufficient to shut the door against him, at least until the fourth-rate Conformist had been accommodated.

If we consider Higher or University Education, what restrictions have been placed on Dissenters throughout the ages, and what a standing disgrace to a Church that aspires to the title of "National Church"! What a long and arduous struggle was the endeavour to open to them the National Universities, which are theirs by common right as much as anybody's. In 1834 the Lords rejected a Bill for the admission of Dissenters to *Degrees* at the Universities. Twenty-two bishops voted for the rejection, whilst only two for the Bill. It was only in 1854 that degrees were made accessible at Oxford, and 1856 at Cambridge. In 1867 they rejected the *Bill for Abolishing Tests of Membership in the Church of England at the Universities*, a large majority of the bishops voting against it. They did the same in 1869, and also in 1870. It was passed in 1871, but

even then several bishops opposed it. Thus it took *one hundred and fifty years* to admit Dissenters to these National Seats of Learning since the first formal application was made. When the doors were thrown open, Nonconformists soon distinguished themselves. Nineteen times in thirty years a Dissenter won the high distinction of Senior Wrangler, that is, from 1860 to 1889, once four years in succession. Similarly, they distinguished themselves at Oxford. Still they labour under disabilities, as the next chapter will show.

What an imposition the notorious *Church Rate* was, which was of too recent an origin to have been fathered on the "pious ancestor." In 1834 the first *Church Rate Abolition Bill* was introduced, only to be speedily withdrawn. In 1836 a Church Rate Abolition Society was formed, and the agitation was pushed forward with energy. A Resolution for its abolition was carried in the House of Commons, but only by a small majority, and it was not proceeded with, and the struggle continued down to 1868, when Mr. Gladstone brought in a Bill, which was passed, abolishing the right of a vestry to compel payment of a rate.

The *National Churchyards* were practically closed to Nonconformists until 1880. None of their ministers would be allowed to utter a word by the graveside of their noblest saints or dearest friends. It was only the parson that had the right, or rather the painful ordeal, of reciting the same service over the godliest man or

the filthiest moral leper. The old cry of "Church in Danger!" did duty until the above year.

If for a moment we turn our eyes to Scotland, we find that one of the most glorious events in the annals of ecclesiastical history was that of the Secessionists from the Established Church of Scotland in 1843, when the Assembly insisted on its "Claim of Right," which sets forth how constitutional privileges had been infringed. Presbyteries had acted on the assumed right of appointing ministers to new parishes: they were now told they had no such right, and could not act independently of the secular power. The question was, were they to remain in bondage to that power or leave the Establishment and found a new Spiritual Church. The most eminent men, such as Drs. Chalmers, Guthrie, Cunningham, Candlish, Gordon, Welsh, and a host of others, chose freedom, and marched forth, out of manse and Church, like the Two Thousand of 1662, scarcely knowing whither they went; but they faced the light, having implicit faith in God and His people. In an incredibly short time they founded Colleges and Churches, built manses, and raised funds, so that in less than two years there were over five hundred Churches, and by 1848 nearly £400,000 had been raised for a Building Fund, and a Sustentation Fund of £70,000 was raised the first year. What a demonstration of the power of Voluntaryism!

In 1868 the Church in Ireland was disestablished.

Fearful prophecies as to its ruin, in consequence, were uttered ; but they have all been falsified. In fact, the Episcopal Church in Ireland has been far more prosperous, and has accomplished more good than when in union with the State.

Disestablishment also took place in the Colonies ; in New South Wales in 1863, and soon afterwards in Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania. The other self-governing Colonies followed suit, and now in them all is a Free Church in a Free Land. Scotland and even her "Established" Church claim the freedom of managing their own affairs, and it is only England and Wales have to carry on their back the "old man of the sea," the survival of ecclesiastical mediævalism. Wales has demanded its removal for more than forty years, and the attempt to prolong its continuance any longer will be not only a blunder but a crime.

We have thus traced the disabilities under which Nonconformists have suffered throughout the long period of four hundred years—since the Church of England became really a State-Church, and the simple recital of facts is sufficient to convince every thinking and unprejudiced mind that the Establishment is wrong in principle, mischievous in operation, and most injurious in its results.

CHAPTER XIV

DISABILITIES STILL UNREDRESSED

THUS we have taken a rapid survey of four centuries. It has been impossible, not only to dwell upon but even to mention many important matters of detail, but we trust we have enabled the reader to have an accurate and comprehensive view of the treatment by the State-Church, or, if we may coin a word, of the "Church-State," of all that would not fall down and worship the image it had set up ; and we believe that the simple recital of facts, of the edicts of Kings, Acts of Parliament, pronouncements of Archbishops, proclamations of Convocations, and the exactions and sentences of magistrates and judges, will carry with it the utter and eternal condemnation of the establishment of any and every form of religion by the State, whether by way of patronage, support, or control ; that, as a matter of fact, it is quite outside its province and beyond its power, and that the result of its attempt has been, not to *Christianise the State*, but to *secularise the Church*, to reduce religion to mere

forms and ceremonies, forgetting that it is spirit and life, and that it insists on the free action of its own laws and the full sway of its own spiritual forces in order to grow and expand. We have traced the path of Nonconformists throughout the oppressive periods of the Tudors and the Stuarts, and others, and have chronicled some of their sufferings and struggles for civil and religious liberty, often being but a few stalwarts against great odds, but whose confidence in the righteousness of their cause never wavered, and whose trust in its ultimate triumph never faltered. The night of their oppression was long and the day of their emancipation delayed its coming, but their night was never without its star of hope. We have seen the repeal of the cruel laws framed with the view of their utter destruction, wrung, as we are sorry to have witnessed, in spite of the most strenuous opposition of those in ecclesiastical position and authority, *especially of the bishops*, with but few noble exceptions. Not *a single measure of justice to Nonconformists ever originated with any of them*, but they arrayed themselves in a solid phalanx against proposals brought forward in Parliament to grant relief and equal treatment to Dissenters. We would refer the reader to Clayton's admirable and most instructive Compendium of the bishops' votes on a large number of measures of Reform.

Whilst much has been gained there are disabilities still remaining. We see this in connection with

Education. The Act of 1870 contained grave elements of injustice to Nonconformists. But that of 1902, sprung upon Parliament and utterly unwarranted, was a most reactionary enactment. It placed the "Voluntary" schools, Anglican and Roman, on the rates, but not under public control. The country has to maintain them, and yet the public, as such, have no effective voice in their management. Over 16,000 head teacherships are closed against all who are not members of the Church of England, and over 32,000 assistants are practically subjected to the same test. As one vicar said: "The Act said they *might* appoint Nonconformists as assistants. He never would. He would sooner give up his post than do it. If once they admitted Nonconformists as assistants they would be compelled to have them as head teachers." There would be about a million Nonconformist children in these "Voluntary" schools, and they have to breathe all day the "clerical atmosphere" for which their Nonconformist parents have to pay. Canon Pennington said: "In Denominational schools we are training the children of Dissenters to be the children of the Church"; and the *Church Review* declares that "if Protestant children come under their [the clergy] charge, it is their business to make Catholics of them."

If we look at the Training Colleges, nearly altogether supported out of public funds, although a wise Liberal Government has smoothed the way of the Noncon-

formist student, yet we find that several anomalies should be removed in order to secure perfect equality. There still "the conscience clause" holds sway.

What a struggle, long and severe, was that for the opening of the National Universities! Bishops and clerics came up in their hundreds from their snug country parsonages whenever the bugle sounded "The Church in Danger!" and for long effectually kept the gates of the Temple of Learning with its emoluments and privileges closed to Dissenters; but enlightened opinion and a growing sense of justice gradually prevailed. Yet the task is not fully accomplished. A Nonconformist divine, however great a scholar or theologian, cannot receive a D.D. from Oxford and Cambridge. Even a medical man could not, before the establishment of the London University, secure the M.D. degree in England. The Thirty-nine Articles barred his way. There is a popular impression that with the opening of Oxford and Cambridge their degrees in Divinity are absolutely within the grasp of all without reference to sect or creed; but it is not so. Restrictions on religious equality still prevail there. No Nonconformist student can take a *Theological Degree* at either Oxford or Cambridge. Not the most learned Fellows of their Colleges can even obtain a B.D. from their University! The same restrictions obtain with regard to Lecturers and Professors in Theology. As yet they are not even "tolerated." The most eminent

men of both Universities plead that these great Universities should become "national" in the widest sense of the term, but, so far, they have been outvoted by their country brethren.

The chaplaincies of prisons and workhouses are still reserved for Anglicans. "Instructors" for those that are Nonconformists may be appointed, but they cannot occupy the position that the Anglican chaplain does. Even Nonconformist prison visitors, if they are asked to give an address to the inmates, are definitely warned to keep clear of religion—the very subject, one might think, it would be most desirable to bring before their mind.

Many Nonconformist sheriffs have appointed Nonconformist chaplains, and there are several Nonconformist judges of high reputation on the Bench; yet these judges, if they attend any place of worship in their official capacity, *must attend the Church of England*, where no Nonconformist is allowed to preach. As these lines are written, one of the greatest preachers of Wales is chaplain to a high-sheriff in North Wales, but he is told by the Bishop of Bangor that he will not be allowed to do anything in the church on the occasion of the judge's attendance! These are the sentiments of that "Sweet Charity" which must inevitably hasten the downfall of the Establishment. They can be put side by side with the declaration of a Church of England mayor, that he will not engage the services of any

person who refuses to sign a petition against the Welsh Disestablishment Bill! In another county, the judge, high-sheriff, and chaplain belong to the same Nonconformist denomination. What would be more fitting than that they should attend a service in a Baptist chapel? but fitness is sacrificed on the altar of empty convention and official red-tapeism. The same distinction runs throughout the strata of society. Up to a very recent date, of the magistrates that adorned the Bench, not one in twenty would be a Nonconformist. Nonconformist chapels and ministers are still under the ban of the State according to the present *Marriage Laws*. We do not say that the Registrar should be abolished, but we should insist that the difference between the clergyman and Nonconformist minister should be abolished. We should have reform with regard to chaplaincies in the Army and Navy. Why is the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland compelled to be a Churchman? Why is even the King of England compelled to belong to the same Church? If he desires to be a true Protestant it would be safer for him to remain outside. Can the Lord Chancellor be the keeper of his Sovereign's conscience? We think he has sufficient task to answer for himself, like every other individual, before God. America gets her noble Presidents of various creeds, who render invaluable service to the State, and why should our rulers be obliged to subscribe to what they may not believe? It may be worse than useless, especially if they follow in the steps of thousands of the Ritualistic

clergy who have subscribed to the Protestant Articles of the Church, and then flagrantly and defiantly violated them.

But at the bottom of all Disabilities is the Establishment itself. From this one root has grown up the various offshoots of a upas-tree under the shadow of which true liberty cannot remain and live. And the only remedy is Disestablishment, accompanied necessarily by Disendowment. Then the Church of England can do her own work in her own way and at her own expense, when the property given and voted for the benefit of all the community shall be devoted to beneficent public uses. In fact, after Disestablishment the Church will retain much wealth that really belongs to the nation as such. Therefore the cry of "spoliation" and "robbery" sounds absurd to every person that has given careful consideration to the question. The "pious ancestor," who, in his *universal capacity*, never lived, has been "ridden to death." The highest authorities declare with practical unanimity that the tithes are a tax imposed by the State. They were personal property when paid voluntarily, but they became State property when made compulsory, when the Church was made not a beneficiary but a trustee for the nation. The clergy are ecclesiastical servants of the State, public functionaries who are paid not by the Treasury out of taxes annually imposed, but at the same time out of public property. The tithes are a tax imposed, not so much after all on *land* as on *labour*,

and what pious ancestor could mortgage the labour of future generations? Take the testimony of the greatest lawyers and authorities on the Constitution, such as Selden, Blackstone, Lord Coke (who declared that "the settlement of tithes among us has been by ancient and unquestionable laws of the land"), Lord Brougham, Sir James Mackintosh, Lord Macaulay, Lord Palmerston, John Stuart Mill, Lord Campbell, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Coleridge, Lord Althorp, Earl Russell, &c. Even bishops maintain the same, like Horsley, Stillingfleet, Watson, Frazer; also Dean Milman. Lord Chief Justice Cockburn said: "The legal right of tithes was originally established by Acts of State." Mr. Gladstone, a great and conscientious Churchman, spoke in the same strain. He said that the clergy were a salaried body supported by the income of the State, and that the Establishment was a "great system of State-endowment"; that it was "for the nation the property was given to be applied for all time to the benefit of the entire population"; and so Dr. Arnold said: "The only way in which there can be robbery of public property is to transfer it to private uses."

As regards tithes in Wales, there is no room whatever for any "pious ancestor" theory. There is no record of any being paid before the Norman Conquest. In fact, they were *imposed in Wales from the first as a tax* by the Conqueror. Mr. Willis Bund, a staunch Churchman and Conservative, says in his valuable book: "Tithes are a payment imposed

on the Welsh by the Conqueror. He imposed them on the conquered as a mark of his victory and of their subjection."

Therefore Disendowment is the inevitable accompaniment of Disestablishment.

Then the hardship of taxing the labour of Non-conformists and others for the support of a Church whose ministrations they do not attend or require is aggravated when the uses to which their contributions are often devoted is considered. To enforce payment even in support of the highest spiritual truth is utterly wrong in principle; but to exact tithes or rates in support of what is supposed to be the propagation of gross error aggravates the evil. And what do we see to-day? A mighty propaganda carried on throughout the country since the inception of the Tractarian Movement to Romanise the people of this land and bring them back once again into mediæval thralldom. Even if the Church were the very foundation of orthodoxy, and all its clergy faithful preachers of the pure gospel of Christ, and administrators of the New Testament ordinances, we should plead for this; but when Ritualism, which is bastard Popery, is coming in like a mighty flood into the Establishment, then the united voice of Protestant England and Wales should be lifted against it in a loud, unmistakable tone. The Church of England has been described as "The

Bulwark of Protestantism." This could be done to-day only by a mighty stretch of the imagination. Whilst there is a large number of earnest Evangelical clergymen, there are thousands of Ritualistic priests occupying influential positions in the Church; and their star is in the ascendancy. The younger portion of the clergy are distinctly Ritualistic in their views and practices. England is practically lost to the Evangelical Party, and ominous inroads have been made into Wales. In our large towns and in country villages we have practically the millinery and candles and altars of the Popish Church; and thousands have passed the "Half-Way-House" to Rome. Like full-blown Papists, they teach Apostolical Succession and Baptismal Regeneration; they practise Auricular Confession, the worship of the Virgin, the Invocation of Saints, the setting-up of images, the veneration of relics, prayers for the dead, and Extreme Unction. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England they call "The forty stripes—save one," and declare that they must get rid of them. The "imputed righteousness of Christ" they declare to be profoundly *immoral*. "Of these Protestants," one of them says, "we do not lose sight. We are busy hunting them down, and have no intention of foregoing the chase till we have extirpated them." Such is the language of one of the officers of the Establishment, "the bulwark of Protestantism"!

May we not say that the very germ of Ritualism is found in the connection of *Church and State*? Does not reason teach us that State religion is naturally Ritualistic, and does not history corroborate the assertion? Every religion begins to lose its spirituality as soon as it is protected or enforced by the power of the State. From Constantine downwards the truth of this is amply illustrated. There may be a revulsion against the Antichrist when its climax of iniquity and abomination has been reached, as in the days of an Inquisition or of a Bloody Mary. Still, whatever may have been the disturbance, the needle of the compass of State-patronised religion ever points to Ritualism, which is a species of Paganism. See with what external authority the English priest is clothed! What facilities and advantages he has for furthering the spread of his propaganda! He is full of priestly assumptions, and he has not much difficulty in finding a sphere for the dissemination of his pernicious doctrine. There is the old parish church, with all its hallowed memories and tender associations; with its "God's acre" close by, where "the forefathers of the hamlet lie." He is master of all he surveys, safe and secure in an ample "living"! The State takes care that it provides the means of his subsistence whilst he goes on with his Romanising work. Whether his teaching is distasteful or not he reckes little, as his stay and "staff of life" do not

depend upon his parishioners. "He is priest for ever after the order of the Pope"; and it is not "Peter's pence," but "John Bull's pounds," that must be paid him for the promulgation of his heresies. He has all the influence that place, tradition, association, and authority can give in favour of his teaching. He possesses all the adventitious aid that God's truth does not require, and which error should not have. All his rival religious teachers labour under disabilities. They are put under the ban of the State. Until now they are simply "tolerated," living under the "Toleration Act." Truth is not a cripple, and does not need crutches: this falsehood is lame, and it would not have travelled so far had it not leaned upon the powerful support of the State. But the priest has gone forth in his full canonicals, with his sacerdotalism, and bastard Popery; and the State has gone blowing the trumpet before him, preparing his way with the cry, "This is the man. All others are heretics and schismatics. Hear him."

In fact, the Ritualistic party is the strong, aggressive party in the Church, and the English Church Union, which numbers thousands of the clergy among its members, is determined to capture the entire Church for Catholicism. They hate the very word Protestant.

Speaking of the Reformation, one thus delivers himself: "I am the last man likely to deny that

some reformation was wanted, but a Church which could produce such a set of *miscreants* as the leading English and Scottish Reformers must have been in a perfectly rotten state." He declares that the monsters of the French Revolution—Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Couthon, and the like—merit quite as much admiration and respect as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, and the others.

And what have they to say of poor Nonconformists? "Our duty is to try and win these to union. We must show them the danger of their position, inasmuch as, being without Creed or Prayer Book, and trusting to their own private judgment, or the theories of their teachers, they have no safeguards against the most deadly perversion of the truth." If we leave the Church of England and become Nonconformists, in their opinion we commit an act of practical apostasy; but a secession from the Church of England to Rome is simply a "transference to another part of Christ's vineyard."

CHAPTER XV

WALES AND THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

WE declare, in conclusion, that if the Established Church is an anachronism and injustice anywhere, it is in the Principality of Wales. We have seen how the Ancient British Church was destroyed by the persecution and oppression of Augustine and his followers, and how tithes were imposed on the Welsh people by the Conqueror. From that time onward the country was entirely neglected, and Wales, which had been filled with gospel light, was soon covered with heathen darkness. Even after the Reformation its condition was deplorable. The old teachers had been silenced, and strangers filled their places. These spoke a foreign tongue, and not only had no sympathy with the native population, but regarded them with contempt. These years constituted the darkest night that the Principality ever experienced. The country was poor, yet it was robbed on every hand to enrich Englishmen. In North Wales the poor county of Merioneth was

robbed of its tithes to endow the new bishopric of Lichfield, to the amount of one-half of the whole income of all its resident clergy put together. The endowments of Carnarvonshire were appropriated to Chester. Worse than this the Great Tithes in South Wales were given to laymen, all of whom were strangers, and a tax was levied for the support of several bishoprics in England. Thus, the poor Welsh had to pay dearly for something worse than nothing. The bishops and clergy lived in affluence and ease, utterly careless of the spiritual state of the people. Many of them were guilty of the grossest immorality, of vices which we cannot name to-day. In 1560 Dr. Meyrick, Bishop of Bangor, complained that he had only two clergymen that could preach. The clergy lived immoral lives, some having many concubines. This was so prevalent that one of the questions which were sent out by the Bishop was in respect to the clergy, "How many of them be concubinaries, or receive suspicious women into their houses?" There was even allowance of concubines to the clergy by paying a pension, notwithstanding the liberty of marriage granted. And the Archbishop at that time was earnestly solicited to have such a commissioner there as kept openly three concubines, as men of good reputation offered to prove before him. There was scarcely any preaching of any kind. Dr. William Hughes, Bishop of St. Asaph, was accused in 1587 of misgoverning

his diocese and of tolerating the most disgraceful abuses. There were only three parsons who resided in their livings; one of these was the good and the great Dr. Wm. Morgan, the translator of the Welsh Bible. Most of the other livings were in the hands of persons who lived out of the country. The Bishop himself kept sixteen livings in his own hands.

In many places no sermons were preached in twelve months. In some places the clergymen were expected to preach once a quarter, but they did not do even this. The old Vicar of Llandovery, Rees Prichard, the author of "The Welshman's Candle," who died 250 years ago, says that "not one in a hundred could read his Bible; that no copy of the Word of God was to be found, even in the mansions of many of the gentry; that the clergy were asleep, leaving the people to sin unwarned and unrebuked; that it was difficult to decide whether the clergyman, the farmer, the labourer, the artisan, the bailiff, the judge, or the nobleman was the most daring in impiety; and that the unchastity of the Sodomites, the drunkenness of the Parthians, the theft of the Cretans, the falsehood of the Greeks, and the infidelity of the Samaritans were rampant throughout every part of the Principality."

In 1623 Dr. Bailey, Bishop of Bangor, gave a report of the condition of his parishes, and here are some extracts: "Only two sermons for the last twelve months"; "No sermon here for five years"; "Never

any preaching here." In 1651 Rev. J. Edwards, a clergyman, writes: "Among the clergy, not one in fifteen knew how to read and write Welsh." In 1721 Dr. Erasmus Saunders says, in respect of churches in the diocese of St. David's: "They do only serve for the solitary habitations of owls and jackdaws." In 1730 the good Griffith Jones wrote: "In many churches there was no sermon for months together; in some places nothing but an English discourse to an illiterate Welsh congregation." For 150 years, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, *not a single Welshman was made a bishop in Wales*. So the late Dean of Bangor, brother of the Bishop of St. Asaph, said: "Chief pastors, devoid of Welsh sympathies, illiterate in the Welsh tongue, produced a clergy in their own image."

So it was the same tale of misery, ignorance, and neglect that could be told from the date of the suppression of the Welsh Church right down the ages to the nineteenth century. There were heroes who fought for the Christian faith, like Penry, Vavasor Powel, and many more. Baptists and Independents here and there kept the light burning. The tale of the Methodist Revival is a glorious chapter, but the light on the one side makes the darkness on the other exceeding gross; chapels were demolished; the preachers' lives were in danger; Howel Harris and others were driven from place to place, pelted

with stones, mud, and rotten eggs. His companion, Seward, was killed in Hay by the mob. In Bala they broke into the house where Harris was preaching, dragged him out, and nearly killed him; they were mad with rage and drink—the drink, a whole cask of beer, having been given them beforehand by the parson of the parish. A pistol was fired at him in Machynlleth. The clergy very often headed the mob, pelted the preachers and hearers with stones, wounded them with knives and swords, and treated them most mercilessly. One Church magistrate said to the Saintly Philip Henry and others, “We will root you out of the country.” But Philip Henry’s religion prospered; for with undaunted courage and implicit trust in God and the cause they had espoused, the Nonconformists persevered, and they did for Wales what the Church was commissioned and paid to do; and now for scores of years they have filled the Principality with their commodious places of worship and sound doctrine. These places numbered in 1742 only 105; by 1816 they had increased to 993; in 1861 they amounted to 2,927; and in 1883 to 4,391; and the increase has gone on throughout the years, and the Nonconformists have, in fact, provided *more than the required accommodation for the whole available population*, even if every Church of England door were closed for ever. The Welsh have been properly denominated “a nation of Nonconformists.” The growth of the population in the

two counties of the great coalfield, Glamorgan and Monmouth, has of late years been phenomenal. They have attracted settlers from almost every country. The population of Wales in 1911 was 2,421,218, and yet it can be safely said that considerably more than one-half are actually adherents of Nonconformity. The actual membership, as furnished by the Commission, was as follows:—

Baptists	143,835
Calvinistic Methodists	170,617
Congregationalists	175,147
Wesleyans	40,811
Smaller Denominations	19,870
	<hr/>
	550,280
Church of England	193,081

In the Church of England Official Year Book for 1906 the number of Communicants was 160,191. Whence came the sudden increase as submitted to the Commissioners?

If we take the Sunday Schools, the Free Churches have 610,735 scholars and the Church 168,786. Thus, so far as Wales is concerned, the Free Churches are pre-eminently "the National Church." This is a democratic age, of government by majority, and of the recognition of nationality, and the people of Wales have proclaimed in a hundred ways that the Establishment as such should come to an end. In Parliament they have a solid phalanx of represen-

tatives. No question in any popular assembly elicits such enthusiasm as the righteous, almost indignant cry for Disestablishment. With the Welsh people it is, above all things, a great religious question. They know that the religion of a people or of individuals is a matter between them and God ; that no man, no King, no Parliament has any right or power to intermeddle in spiritual affairs ; that the hands of the State should keep off the Ark of God ; and that the only Head and Lawgiver of His Church is the Lord Jesus Himself, who declared, " My kingdom is not of this world."

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