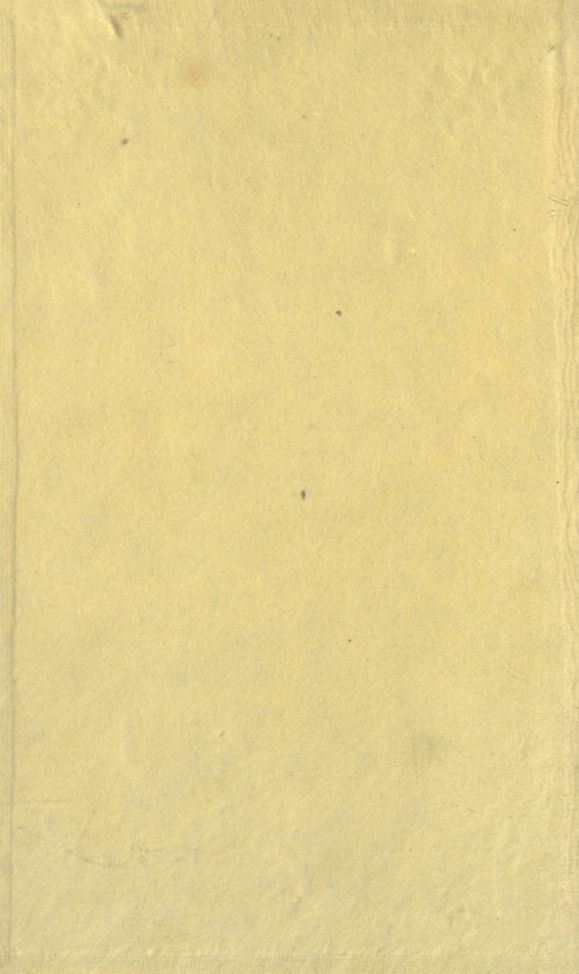
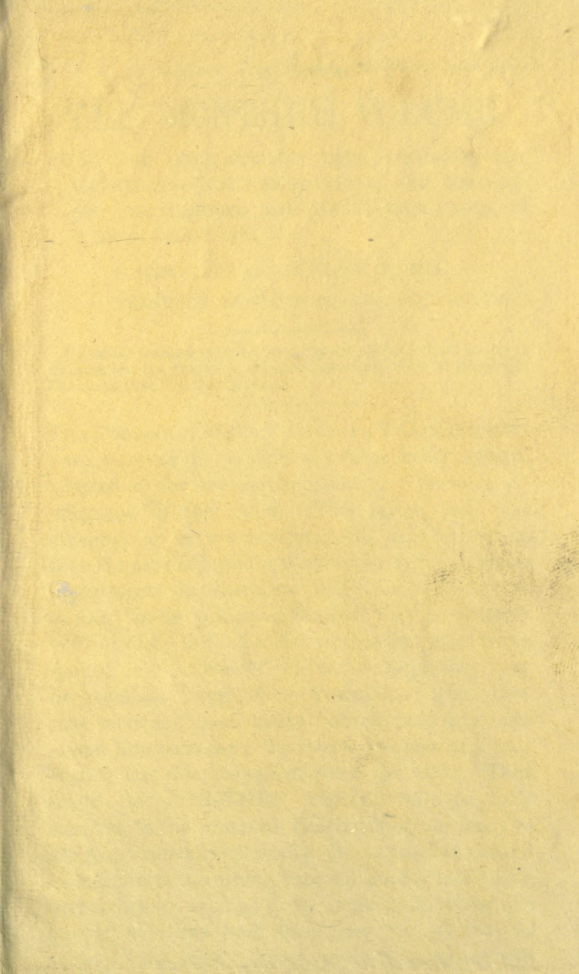


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LIFE

OF

THOMAS CRANMER,

THE FIRST PROTESTANT ARCHBISHOP
OF CANTERBURY.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

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LIFE OF CRANMER.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and education of Cranmer—Led to study the Scriptures—Marries a gentleman's daughter, who dies—He is re-elected to the fellowship of his former college, appointed divinity lecturer, and made doctor of divinity—Declines the offer of preferment in Wolsey's new foundation at Oxford—Is appointed by the university one of the public lecturers in theology—Interview with Fox and Gardiner—His opinion as to the king's divorce—Writes a treatise at the king's command respecting the divorce—Sent by the king on an embassy to Rome—Proceeds as ambassador to Charles v.—Marries the niece of Osiander, pastor of Nuremberg—His transactions in Germany—Is recalled from Germany to receive the archbishopric of Canterbury—Is consecrated after interposing his protest against the papal authority.

THOMAS CRANMER, the first Protestant archbishop of Canterbury, was born July 2, 1489, at Aslacton, in the county of Nottingham. He was the second son of a gentleman whose family had, for several generations, lived in that county, and traced their descent to "one who had come in with the conqueror." But little information has been transmitted

to posterity respecting his boyhood, except that "he was put to learn his grammar of a rude parish clerk," and was permitted by his father to follow "the civil and gentlemanlike exercises," as they were termed, of that day, which consisted of diversions of hunting and hawking, and skill in the use of the bow.

In the all-wise dispensations of Providence, it pleased God to remove his father from this world whilst the subject of this memoir was yet very young; but his mother, who appears to have designed him for the priesthood, sent him at the early age of fourteen (A.D. 1503) to Cambridge. Here he became a proficient in the subtleties of the scholastic philosophy of the day, and chiefly occupied his time, till he was twenty-two years of age, in acquiring a knowledge of the most acute questionists of the Roman Catholic church, as well as of the writings of Erasmus and other celebrated Latin authors. These pursuits he continued till the year 1519, when his attention was called to the study of the Scriptures, by the then prevailing religious controversies in Germany, which had their origin in the activity, faithfulness, and zeal, of that eminent reformer and man of God, MARTIN LUTHER.

For three years, Cranmer continued this occupation, "forasmuch as he perceived he could not judge indifferently in any weighty matters without a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; therefore, before he was infected by any man's opinions or errors, he applied his whole study therein;" and after this "he gave his mind to the study of good writers, both new and old, not rashly running over them; for he was a slow reader, but a diligent marker of whatsoever he read, seldom reading without pen in hand."

About this time, Cranmer first began to evince a distaste for the pretensions of the Romish church, and a disbelief in its doctrines. He studied the Scriptures attentively, and, probably, the questions that began to arise in his mind from this sacred source in relation to the papistical creed, may have been partially solved from a consideration of the works of Wycliffe, the great pioneer, or, as he has frequently been called, "the morning star of the reformation."

To this object he certainly devoted himself with assiduity and care, until the time of his proceeding to the university degree of doctor of divinity, which took place about the year

1523, when he had reached his thirty-fourth year. Several years before, Cranmer gave the first practical proof of the doubts he entertained respecting one, at least, of the most notoriously erroneous articles of the Roman Catholic creed,—the celibacy of the priesthood; for he married a gentleman's daughter, and thereby forfeited his fellowship at Jesus College, to which he had been elected about the year 1510 or 1511. This act did not, however, disqualify him from taking the appointment of reader or lecturer in Buckingham (now Magdalen) College, which he obtained immediately upon his marriage, and held for nearly twelve months until the death of his wife.

Cranmer made no attempt to conceal his marriage, and immediately afterwards betook himself to the office of instructing others, remaining at Cambridge, where he was in no way disowned for having made an unworthy connexion, as has been continually asserted by his adversaries, who gave out that he had privately married one Joan, a person of low condition, "surnamed Black or Brown, dwelling at the sign of the Dolphin." This report seems to have originated from his

having placed his wife at an inn called the Dolphin, the mistress of which was her cousin, in order that he might be near at hand to apply himself with greater diligence to the duties of his new appointment. "By reason whereof, and for his open resort unto his wife at that inn, he was marked by some popish merchants; whereupon arose the slanderous noise and report against him, after he was preferred to the archbishopric of Canterbury, raised up by the malicious disdain of certain malignant adversaries to Christ and his truth, bruited abroad everywhere, that he was but an hostler, and, therefore, without all good learning." So far, however, from this being the fact, the reputation of his learning had become so extensively circulated during the brief term of his married life, that, immediately upon his wife's decease, he was reinstated in his fellowship at Jesus College, and made reader of the divinity lecture, as well as doctor of divinity.

Many propositions were now made to him to accept a more advantageous position, not the least of which was the urgent invitation of the agents of cardinal Wolsey, in the year 1524, that he would join the new foundation

at Oxford, for the promotion of which the cardinal was anxious to select the most eminent scholars and divines of that day. At first, he was inclined to listen to their proposals, but, after weighing every consideration, he, at length, respectfully declined the honour pressed upon him.

In consequence of his faithful discharge of the duties of divinity lecturer in his own college, he was now chosen by the university one of the public examiners in theology, and, by his conduct in this capacity, he undoubtedly contributed to forward the after progress of the Reformation. Before he was thus distinguished, he had been also one of the select preachers employed by the university, and had obtained the name of a Scripturist, which was applied by some in scorn to those who, by the operation of the Spirit of God, and by the study of his word, were led to think for themselves, and to view the religious proceedings in Germany as specially guided and sanctioned by Divine Providence. His examination of those who wished to proceed in divinity was, therefore, no longer according to the accustomed method, which had been confined to the sentences of the schoolmen of

the Roman Catholic church, and from which a knowledge of the Scriptures had been entirely excluded. On the contrary, his first proceedings in his new office were regulated by the adoption of a rule, to which he rigidly adhered, that none should be admitted to proceed in divinity who were not thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures, and to none who were not well acquainted with them would he allow the degree required. Many of those, whom he thus admitted, ingenuously thanked him for his conscientious determination, which induced them to "aspire unto better knowledge" than the sophistry they had hitherto studied, and afterwards afforded him the greatest assistance in purifying religion from the superstitions and idolatries by which it had been for many centuries corrupted.

In the course of his continued residence in Cambridge, Cranmer was induced to undertake the direction of the studies of two young men, of the name of Cressy, whose mother was his niece, and whose father resided at Waltham Abbey, in Essex. Upon this event, in the dispensations of Providence, the leading circumstances of his eventful life were made to depend. Had he not consented to receive these young

men under his care, he might never have been concerned in the important events, which afterwards changed the entire religious condition of England; those events themselves, in fact, might never have occurred. Causes the most trivial, in the estimation of sense, are often productive of the most momentous consequences, and their commencement, apparently the least likely to conduce to important changes, is frequently the origin of those extraordinary revolutions which can only be truly celebrated in the world's history, as emanating from Him who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and guides them to their consummation for the wisest purposes.

In the year 1528, Cranmer left Cambridge on account of an infectious disease which had made its appearance there, and proceeded with his pupils, the Cressys, to Waltham, where he continued to superintend their education.

The legality of the marriage of Henry VIII. with his first cousin, queen Catharine of Aragon, began at this time (A.D. 1528) to be mooted by that monarch, on the hypocritical plea of a too near relationship. The pope, Clement VII., who assumed the sole right of judging in all

such cases, appointed a commission to determine the question, but the tardiness of the individuals constituting it in coming to a conclusion so enraged the impetuous king, that he took counsel how to bring the matter to a more speedy issue, and, in furtherance of his plan, removed for a night or two to Waltham, where Cranmer still happened to be residing. It was this event which brought Cranmer into royal notice, and marked out his future course.

The king's almoner, Dr. Fox, afterwards bishop of Hereford, and the king's secretary, Dr. Stephen Gardiner, subsequently bishop of Winchester, here met with Cranmer, and invited him to supper. Their conversation turned on the king's suit, upon which Dr. Cranmer's opinion was solicited. This he gave most unwillingly, as he had no desire to be implicated in the pending controversy. Fox and Gardiner, however, at length drew from him that his views were against an appeal to Rome, which was a direct blow aimed at papal pretension,—as Cranmer affirmed, that “there was but one truth in it, which the Scriptures would soon declare, make open, and manifest, being by learned men well handled; and that might be as well done in England,

in the universities here, as at Rome, or elsewhere in any foreign nation, the authority whereof would compel any judge soon to come to a definitive sentence, and, therefore, as he took it, they might, this way, have made an end of the matter long since."

This opinion was forthwith conveyed to the king, who, finding it so exceedingly agreeable to the purposes he had in view, immediately sent for Cranmer, and, after a short conference, commanded him to reduce his opinion and authorities to writing, and committed him to the care of the earl of Wiltshire and Ormond, sir Thomas Bolen, who then dwelt at Durham House, whilst he should be occupied in fulfilling the task he had imposed upon him. Cranmer soon finished his book, in which he proved from the Scriptures, that it was unlawful for a man to marry his brother's wife, and that the bishop of Rome had no authority "to dispense with the word of God and the Scriptures." Being asked by Henry if he would stand by what he had written before the bishop of Rome, Cranmer answered in the affirmative, and it was forthwith resolved, that he should at once be sent with others in solemn embassy to Rome, for such a purpose. Previously,

however, to his departure on this mission, Cranmer returned to Cambridge, where, as one of a commission, he was appointed to dispute the question of the divorce, in which he so far succeeded as to bring over several learned men to his opinion. Both the universities soon after “determined the king’s cause against the pope’s dispensation.”

The intercourse thus commenced between Henry VIII. and Cranmer, became more frequent; he was appointed one of the royal chaplains, and, by the king’s gift, archdeacon of Taunton; but the more important service was now required of him, which had been previously determined—that he should proceed immediately to Rome to plead the king’s cause, and to defend the opinions he had advanced in his book.

At the close of the year 1529, Cranmer, with several other divines, joined the embassy to the papal court; but no force of argument, nor art of diplomacy, could straighten the crooked policy of the Vatican, or overcome the fears of the perplexed and wary pontiff, haunted as he perpetually was by the terrors of the increasing wrath of Charles v., the emperor of Germany. The colleagues of

Cranmer soon found themselves compelled to return to England in despair; and in the July following, Cranmer, the only one of the embassy left behind, declared, in a letter to one of the agents of the king in Italy, "that he found Clement intractable, and his ecclesiastics reserved; and that he looked for nothing but an adverse decision from the pope with all his cardinals." Notwithstanding the unsuccessful issue of his mission, Cranmer continued for some time longer to reside at Rome, where he vainly solicited permission to maintain, by public disputation, the positions of his treatise, but his offer was uniformly, though courteously, evaded.

Having failed in his object, Cranmer returned to England about the end of the year 1530. The king was, however, so far pleased with his conduct in maintaining the royal cause, as well as with the exertions he had made at Rome to bring it to a favourable conclusion, that he did not permit him to remain very long in England; but, on the 21st of January, 1531, sent him a commission, with instructions to proceed as his sole ambassador, to the court of the emperor Charles v. Having arrived in Germany, Cranmer again applied

himself assiduously to the object of his visit, and, in some few instances, succeeded in gaining over several of the German divines to advocate the cause of his master, amongst whom were Cornelius Agrippa, at that time one of the council of Charles v., and Osiander, pastor of Nuremberg, whose niece Cranmer married during his residence in Germany.

Independently of the chief object for which Henry VIII. had sent Cranmer to the continent, his attention was called to other matters "of general diplomacy, of no very weighty importance, and attended with no very decisive results. He was employed in negotiations respecting the traffic between England and the Low Countries, and the contingent to be furnished by the king towards the war against the Turks. He also transmitted to Henry various matters of intelligence respecting the state of continental affairs; and despatched to him a copy of the emperor's important proclamation for summoning a general council. And, lastly, he went on a secret mission to the elector Frederic, duke of Saxony; in the course of which he ventured to intimate, that not only his master, but the French king, were ready to assist the cause of

the Protestant confederates." Notwithstanding the embassy was upon the whole unfavourable in its results, and but little in accordance with the desires of his master, Cranmer appears in no way to have incurred his displeasure, but rather to have secured, by his zeal and assiduity, a greater amount of the royal confidence and approbation.

Throughout these transactions the special providence of Almighty God is evident. The introduction of Cranmer to the imperious monarch was brought about apparently by means in themselves but little likely to effect the objects God intended should come to pass. It was evidently contrary to Cranmer's desire, that he should become involved in the absorbing and dangerous transactions of the times. From the natural timidity of his mind, he shrank from surmounting the difficulties which he perceived must surround the task imposed upon him; but he was led onward for a great and glorious purpose, and though his missions were unsuccessful in their results, and he had to dread the displeasure of a most unscrupulous and wicked master, yet it was turned aside, and Henry inclined with favour and good-will to his ambassador, simply because

the hand of God was guiding the helm, and controlling the storm, out of which should spring the restoration of his word to the nations of the earth.

Whilst Cranmer was still absent from England, the see of Canterbury became vacant by the death of William Warham, August 23, 1532. The king instantly determined to elevate his ambassador to this dignity; he was therefore summoned to return home as speedily as possible. Although the reason for such haste was not announced to him by the royal messengers, yet Cranmer received private intimation of the king's intention to make him archbishop; but so little desirous was he of obtaining this unexpected promotion, that he purposely delayed "his journey by seven weeks at the least, thinking that Henry would be forgetful of him in the meantime." On his return, finding the king was still resolute in his determination, although it was much against his own inclination; and after many refusals, proceeding from his great modesty and humility, and certain scruples he entertained, Cranmer at length "consented to accept the archbishopric, provided he could receive the appointment from the king himself,

as supreme governor of the church of England (a character which had already been recognised by the convocation,) and not from the pope, who, in his judgment, had no authority whatever within the realm."

There was an endeavour to remove this difficulty "by the expedient of a solemn protest, to be made by the archbishop on the day of his consecration," against the jurisdiction of the pope. Nevertheless, the king sent to Rome for the customary bulls for the investment of Cranmer with the primacy. On the 30th of March, 1533, he was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury. "On that day, previously to his taking the oath to the pope, he presented and read his protestation, to the effect already mentioned, in the presence of the royal prothonotary, of the two doctors of law, of one of the royal chaplains, and of the official principal of the court of Canterbury; and he required that the protestation should be formally recorded, and attested by the witnesses present. This was done in the chapter house at Westminster. At the steps of the altar in the church, he again presented his protestation, declaring that he understood and took the oath according to the tenor of

the protest, and required that a record should be made of this declaration, attested by the same witnesses as before. Lastly, when he was about to receive the pall, he once more proclaimed at the altar, that he understood the oath under the limitations of the same instrument; and demanded, for the third time, that the proceeding might be solemnly protested and enrolled." In order to prevent the possibility of mistake, he insisted "that the declaration, that he in no wise acknowledged the power or supremacy of the pope, as connected with his appointment, should be invested with the certainty and solemnity of a public record."

CHAPTER II.

Henry VIII. marries Anne Boleyn—Cranmer pronounces the divorce of Henry from Catharine, and denies that he married Henry to Anne Boleyn—Crowns her—Indignation of the partisans of Rome at Cranmer's conduct—The pope pronounces the marriage with Anne Boleyn invalid—Abortive attempt of the French king to effect a reconciliation between Henry and the pope, who excommunicates him—Difficulties of Cranmer's position—Endeavours to save the lives of sir Thomas More and bishop Fisher—Elizabeth Barton, the nun of Kent—The parliament invests Henry VIII. with ecclesiastical as well as spiritual supremacy—Cranmer denies the supremacy of the pope, and asserts the authority of the word of God.

ON the 23rd of May following the consecration of the new archbishop, the convocation having expressed its determination in favour of the king's cause respecting the divorce, and Henry having already privately married Anne Boleyn, January 25, 1533, and openly repeated that solemnity on the succeeding 12th of April, Cranmer pronounced the previous marriage with Catharine of

Aragon to be null and void, and on the 28th of May, confirmed the union between Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn, by a judicial sentence pronounced at Lambeth.

It has been generally reported that Cranmer was both an obsequious agent, and a willing instrument for aiding the king in his purposes; as a proof of this supposition, it has been asserted by more than one historian that he officiated at this marriage, and "stood as a witness to the nuptials." This report, and many others, to Cranmer's discredit, have been contradicted by unquestionable authorities, which are still extant. In this instance, the copy of a letter from the archbishop to archdeacon Hawkins, dated June 17, [1533,] is still preserved in the Harleian collection of mss.* in the British Museum, in which he asserts that, so far from having been present on this occasion, he did not even know of the event till a fortnight after it had taken place. In the same letter, he also indignantly denies many other reports, which were then circulated against him to his disadvantage and discredit. On Whit-Sunday, June 1, he crowned Anne Boleyn queen of England,

* No. 6148, fol. 23.

which ceremony was celebrated with much pomp and splendour.

A storm of obloquy now burst upon the head of Cranmer for the part he had taken in these proceedings, which the partisans of the papacy foresaw would speedily tend to invalidate the demands of Rome upon the English people. It does not, however, appear that he had attained as yet any full or distinct impression of gospel truth, or that he was moved by a higher impulse than the necessity of effecting a reform of the ecclesiastical power. Although he had made the Scriptures his study and was prepared to assert their authority, he yet retained a belief in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church, and bowed with an almost abject submission to that of transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Sentences to martyrdom for religious opinions were also still passed upon several unhappy victims of a cruel persecution, under the pretence of a zeal for the cause of religion, without his manifesting any positive spirit of compunction, or giving evidence of a desire to prove that he was under the influence of that merciful mind which pure Christianity

invariably produces. Even his "gentle disposition" was not yet proof against the exercise of the cruelties of the times. It was only by slow degrees that he arrived at clearer light on the first principles of Divine truth, and discovered that benevolence was one of the best evidences of a changed and renewed heart. As time advanced, he learned, however, to resist the pretensions of Rome, not only on political, but also upon religious grounds, and to adopt a higher standard of conduct than mere temporal objects can supply, striving to make his life correspondent with a Christian profession, and to use the authority of his position for the promulgation of those great doctrines of repentance, remission of sins, faith, and true comfort in times of adversity, which had been obscured for centuries by ceremonies that brought no profit, and were only intended by perverse and sinful men to hide the gospel of Christ Jesus, and to supplant it by means of the hidden works of darkness.

Notwithstanding, however, that Cranmer might have had no better motive at the time of the setting aside of the first wife, and subsequent marriage of Henry VIII., than the

prosecution of an object of state policy, it must not be forgotten that he grounded his opinions respecting the divorce upon the Scriptures, and adopted his line of conduct, as he thought it to be, in accordance with their teaching. This he did not attempt to conceal, and it may have been, and probably was, one of the causes, and not the slightest, of the clamorous indignation with which he was immediately assailed for his part in the transaction.

A step so utterly subversive of the hitherto acknowledged supremacy of the papacy in the spiritual affairs of England, could do nothing less than draw down the displeasure of the reigning pontiff and his coadjutors. It was apparent to the meanest comprehension that consequences must result, which would not only cut off all hope of accommodation between the several parties concerned in the business, but which might sever England altogether, as it did ultimately, from the authority of the church of Rome. It would be the extreme of folly to attribute this eventful crisis to secondary causes. Far more was connected with it than the most discerning eye could foresee. A great prin-

ciple was involved in the transaction, which thus began to be unfolded; and although it may be impossible to approve of the manner in which this, and many subsequent changes of the times were effected, yet a Christian mind will not fail to perceive, however little Cranmer and others might have understood the nature of their instrumentality, that God was about to "arise and plead his own cause," for the emancipation of a nation from the degradation of centuries of bondage, by the restoration of the liberty of his own glorious gospel, and so to overrule the many devices of men's proud hearts, that his counsel might finally stand and prevail.

From this period the conflict actually commenced between Henry VIII. and the pope, which terminated in the reformation of the church of England, and the subversion of the Roman Catholic power throughout the realm. The king now expressed his determination to appeal from the pope to a general council upon the subject of the divorce. When, however, the intelligence reached the court of Rome, that Henry had espoused Anne Boleyn, and been divorced from Catharine of Aragon, by the judicial

act of his newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury, the pope immediately pronounced that marriage void, and all the proceedings relative to the matter as utterly ineffectual. Yet no sentence of excommunication was issued against the king, though such a result was threatened, unless all the acts which had caused the displeasure of the Roman Catholic see were immediately revoked and annulled.

The French king, Francis I., in vain interfered to effect a reconciliation, to which Henry at length agreed; but his messenger, having been detained by contrary winds, did not arrive in time to prevent the sentence of excommunication being issued, it having been determined two days before his arrival, March 23, 1534, that unless Henry VIII. should take back Catharine of Aragon, as his queen and wife, this was the definitive and unalterable sentence against him at Rome.

Cranmer now began to experience the actual weight of those difficulties which he had foreseen would overtake an entrance on his arduous office. The extent and variety of the responsibilities he encountered were sufficient to appal him, and "to show, so far as his personal ease was concerned, that he did well to

deprecate the preferment." Nevertheless, he was enabled to set about his dangerous task with equal boldness and judgment.

The king now declared publicly against the domination of the pope and the Romish creed, and the Reformation was fairly commenced. In prosecuting this work, Cranmer resolved, notwithstanding the opposition such a bold determination would originate, that, instead of directing his attention to the minor abuses, or even to the more open scandals chargeable upon the Romish church, he would at once lay the axe to the very root of the papal power. His object was, first to convince the minds of men from the Scriptures, that the claim to universal spiritual and temporal dominion, made by the Roman pontiff, was founded on pretension and imposture; well knowing that, if this were once admitted, the inevitable consequence must be the demolition of that apparently indestructible Romish edifice, which appeared to be immovably planted in this kingdom.

The position in which Cranmer was placed, was, therefore, manifestly one of extraordinary difficulty. He had to deal with a monarch, whose repudiation of popery was possibly not

so much the consequence of conviction as of animal impulse, and a desire for vengeance on the then reigning pope, for the obstruction offered to the divorce from his queen, upon which his mind was fully bent. In fact, the outset of Cranmer's career as archbishop, was but the beginning of a storm, which having raged with more or less violence during his whole life, only ended with his death. Throughout all his labours, he had not only to contend against the variable humours of the king, but he had to struggle against the open opposition and indefatigable enmity of the adherents of the church of Rome, who continued to exercise an immense and unscrupulous power; now losing, now gaining ground, as the caprice or interest of the imperious and wavering monarch willed. Cranmer also quickly learned to know, if he failed or faltered in his purpose, that a cruel and ignominious death, from one party or the other, was his sure doom.

God, however, had an important work for him to do, and though he often wavered, though he sometimes appeared time-serving and obsequious, yet he was so directed that he never lost sight of his main purpose, nor

relaxed in his active efforts to advance the knowledge of Him who, though a God of justice, is yet a God of mercy and loving-kindness, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Undoubtedly Cranmer manifested each and almost all of the infirmities of human nature, which are rife and prevalent even in some of the most eminent of the children of the Highest: but the fact should never be lost sight of, that he was made the instrument, in the eternal purpose of God, for unlocking the depository of the richest treasure that man can possibly enjoy, and for bringing to light that precious word of truth which had for centuries been hidden under the rubbish of vain traditions, and obscured by every form and invention of false doctrine and superstition. Indeed it is only when we remember, that it was mainly through Cranmer's efforts that the Bible was given to England in the native tongue, that the value of his services rendered to his own times and to posterity, can be correctly appreciated.

Another fact should not be lost sight of, that whilst the most unsparing hatred was

manifested by his adversaries, he did not meet their evil designs with similar practices. He rather uniformly endeavoured to return good for evil, and, even in personal dangers, became their most strenuous advocate, using every means, after the first years of his archiepiscopal career, to save their lives, in a manner alike honourable to his benevolence and sagacity.

A remarkable instance of this feeling occurred in the case of sir Thomas More and bishop Fisher. Both these men were rigid favourers of the Roman Catholic see, and, as such, were not only opposed to the question of the king's divorce, but also to the progress of the Reformation, and to those who showed themselves most energetic in advancing it. Cranmer was an especial object of their dislike; but when Henry determined to sacrifice both these eminent men on account of their refusal to acquiesce in, or swear fidelity to the preamble of the act of succession, as it was called, which affirmed the nullity of the marriage with Catherine of Aragon, and made that with Anne Boleyn valid, the archbishop immediately wrote a letter to Cromwell, the lord privy seal, to

show that, as they did not object to swear to the act itself, and only refused to bind themselves to the preamble, this would answer all the purposes of the king. But notwithstanding he pleaded earnestly in their behalf, the determination of Henry was fixed, and not all the exertions of his favoured servant, nor the indignation of the whole of Europe, could turn him from his wicked purpose.

Amongst the earliest services which Cranmer rendered to the cause of good order and religion, was the detection of a fraud, which had nearly become formidably dangerous to the peace and safety of the kingdom, and which had been countenanced by his predecessor, archbishop Warham, as well as by sir Thomas More and bishop Fisher. A woman, named Elizabeth Barton, a native of Aldrington, in Kent, had been trained by Abel, the ecclesiastical agent of queen Catherine, and by several others of the most active partisans of the popish church, to pretend that she was gifted with a spirit of prophecy, and that she had received a letter, written in heaven, and delivered to her by Mary Magdalene. For no less than eight or nine years, this unhappy woman and her priestly confederates continued

to assail the proceedings and character of the king, and even went so far as to proclaim that he would die a villain's death, and to fix the day on which he should cease to reign. Her feigned visions and extraordinary proceedings at length so far attracted public attention, that Cranmer determined to discover the imposture, and to prevent its being any further continued. He therefore sent for, and examined her, when she confessed, "that she never had a vision in all her life, but all that she ever said was feigned of her own imagination only, to satisfy the minds of them that resorted to her, and to obtain worldly praise." The original contrivers of this fraud, with the adherents of the deluded woman, were afterwards executed at Tyburn.

Henry VIII. having now carried his object of resistance to the see of Rome, was determined to be invested with ecclesiastical as well as temporal supremacy, which the parliament complied with by its first act in November, 1534. The king and his successors were thus reputed and taken to be the only supreme heads on earth of the reformed church of England; while all the usurped powers of the pope, which had been exercised for centuries to the

disadvantage of the people, were transferred, in a direct and formal manner, to the British crown.

But Henry was not satisfied with the mere recognition of this power by the voice of his parliament and convocation; he demanded equal homage from the entire body of the clergy; and [for this purpose he caused a proclamation to be issued, to the effect, "that if he found any slackness in its execution, he would visit the defaulters with such extremity of punishment that the world should take example by it, and beware of disobedience to the lawful commandments of their sovereign and prince." Cranmer readily acquiesced in this demand of his imperious master, although he was fully aware that the king's supremacy was unpalatable to the majority of the clergy throughout the realm, and especially to those of his own diocese. But he was thoroughly convinced that the pretensions of the pope were nugatory and false, and, therefore, he used every method, which his conscience did not convince him was wrong, as a means to root out the noxious weed of popery.

In order to carry conviction to the minds of his clergy upon the subject, he preached two sermons in the cathedral at Canterbury, in

which, after having denied that the bishop of Rome was the vicar of God on earth, and fully exposing the many artifices by which the claim to this title had been set up, he proceeded to protest against the pernicious doctrine that the observance of any human commandments could be rendered available for the remission of sins, inasmuch as they are only taken away and remembered no more, by the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and, therefore, it was a manifest injury to Him to impute that to laws of human authority, which could only be conferred by himself. He showed that human legislation in such matters might be conducive to useful purposes, so far as they were based upon the doctrines of the word of God; but that they were of no more value for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God than were the maxims and principles of secular jurisprudence; and whilst the laws of the realm dispose men to peace and justice, neither they nor any other human enactments can ever confer the character of holiness upon those who observe them, or entitle them to acquittal in the righteous judgment of the Almighty.

Thus early in his archiepiscopal career did

Cranmer maintain the distinctive features of Protestant truth against the gross imposture of Rome. His views on these points were not in accordance with those of Henry VIII., and never found favour in his sight. To the last, the king would have remained a papist in action, as he was in fact; for no event of his life evidenced that he was disposed to refer salvation simply to belief in "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," as entirely independent of human authority. Nevertheless, Cranmer was not turned aside from the path of duty; with a thankful heart, undoubtedly, that Divine Providence permitted him to do anything for the cause of truth and righteousness, he availed himself of all occasions to insist upon the sufficiency of Holy Scripture as setting forth the only ground on which remission of sins is offered, endeavouring continually to show that the "treasure" was committed to us, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

About this time, the whole of Christendom was deeply agitated by the prospect of the appointment of a general council. For many years past, the Protestants of Germany had

been urgently soliciting the emperor, Charles v., to summon such an assembly by virtue of his imperial supremacy. The pope offered every available opposition to this object, upon which the continental divines had set their minds, and pronounced such an exercise of the secular power to be an infringement upon his prerogative, and a positive usurpation of his authority. Francis I., the king of France, also threw his weight into the scale to oppose a scheme which he looked upon as too favourable to the influence of Henry VIII. Many attempts were made to evade concession, by proposals to fix the place of meeting in obscure localities under the jurisdiction of popish princes, but the object was so palpable, that they were immediately as well as indignantly refused.

The authority of the secular power to call a general council was now fiercely debated, and drew forth from Cranmer the only speech of his which is extant. It was delivered in the House of Lords, and was intended to prove that there was no claim of Divine institution on behalf of papal supremacy; that councils were called general, "not because they were attended by delegates from every church, but

purely because the summons to attend them was universal; that Christ appointed no head to the church, and that even Peter himself remained accountable to his brethren, as appeared from his answer when questioned respecting the baptism of Cornelius; that the self-called successors of St. Peter could not be entitled to an independence which never belonged to that apostle himself; that the councils of Basil and Constance, and the divines of Paris, recognised in the pope, not the vicar of Christ, but only the vicar of the Catholic church; that the supremacy, wherever it might reside, could extend to nothing beyond purely spiritual matters; that the most ancient fathers always appealed to the Scriptures, but that, whenever they agreed in their expositions, their testimony was considered as having the stamp of Divine truth; that, consequently, the decisions of councils should be founded on the word of God, and on those interpretations of it which had received the unvarying consent of the doctors of the church; that the pope was manifestly unfit for the office of a judge in matters which vitally involved his own interests; and lastly, that princes, who had been betrayed into submission

by terror or mistake, might withdraw their necks from his yoke, as lawfully as a man may make his escape out of the hands of a robber."

This speech showed the amount of knowledge which Cranmer had obtained upon the important points of controversy that were then agitating the whole of Europe. It is an answer to the accusation of his opponents, who endeavoured to decry his attainments in this respect, as they had already maligned him on account of his perseverance in resisting the encroachments of the papal see, by imputing his conduct to a mere desire to pander to the will of an unscrupulous master, and to yield to his sensual passions for the sake of his own personal advancement. The intelligence of his mind, and his increasing attachment to the cause of truth, were strong impediments to a restoration of the abuses under which England had long groaned. The result, as is ever the case, was, therefore, untiring and unscrupulous opposition to the man who ventured to contend with error and superstition; who, though naturally of a timid disposition, yet did not dare to abstain from the conflict. The great fact already alluded to must never be lost

sight of, with respect to Cranmer's perseverance in carrying forward the English reformation, that the "foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men;" and that he, in this instance, as well as in a thousand others from the commencement of time, had "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

The proposed general council, however, came to nothing; and although various negotiations for restoring peace and harmony were held between the emperor and the Protestants, yet they produced no solid or determinate benefit, inasmuch as the pope, through the instrumentality of his legates and adherents, invariably contrived to disconcert all their measures, and to keep up a continued division of opinion between them.

CHAPTER III.

Prejudices of the clergy against the Reformation—Opposition of Gardiner and Stokesley—Cranmer sends Tyndale's Bible to the bishops for revision—Refusal of Stokesley to revise the Acts of the apostles—Cranmer's reply, and failure of his purpose—Negotiations of the Protestant princes of Germany—Bull of Pius III. against Henry VIII., which defeats the purposes for which it was issued and intended—Cranmer advances Latimer and others—Cromwell made vice-gerent in ecclesiastical affairs—Dissolution of the monasteries—Fall of Anne Boleyn—Cranmer forbidden to approach the king—His letter to him on the queen's behalf—The king's sentiments towards him unchanged—The king marries Jane Seymour.

THE condition of the clergy throughout the kingdom about this time was such, that a man of Cranmer's sentiments could not possibly overlook it. The majority of these men were uneducated, and bound together by a blind and infatuated subservience to the dogmas of the church in which they had been reared and educated. The consequence naturally was, that their prejudices were excited to the highest pitch of jealousy, that any man should dare to

interfere with their prerogative, which they held to be both sacred and inviolable. They therefore determined, with a few bright exceptions, to offer the most unqualified resistance to the archbishop's purpose of reforming the church, and to leave no engine unused by which they might thwart his object, and offer him personal annoyance. Whenever a man's mind is rightly directed, and he is taught that it is better to fear God than man, he does not shrink from encountering opposition, but, on the contrary, invariably rises with existing difficulty, and is enabled with greater effort to overcome it. So it was with Cranmer.

The deplorable ignorance and intolerance of the Roman Catholic priesthood caused him unceasing sorrow; and as it was impossible by any immediate enactment to remove these instruments of mischief to the souls of men, he determined to visit the whole province of Canterbury, hoping at least to effect an alteration, if not an immediate and perfect reformation, throughout that diocese. The general practice of such provincial visitations had been suspended for at least a century, and the revival of such an obsolete custom would

consequently have been unpalatable for the most part ; but to originate it at such a time, and from such a quarter, necessarily became most obnoxious to the other bishops, no less than to the clergy themselves. They perceived that Cranmer's object was not so much to promote the doctrine of the king's supremacy, as it was to examine into their own conduct, in order to correct the abuses and superstitious practices of which they were guilty, and to bring those doctrines into general belief for which Wycliffe had contended, and which Luther had caused to be carried to the furthest extremities of Europe.

Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, an unwearyed opponent of Cranmer to the last hour of his life, and Stokesley, bishop of London, following in the steps of Nix, the contumacious and bigoted bishop of Norwich, whose diocese Cranmer had visited under protest in the foregoing year, offered the most determined opposition to his purpose, and availed themselves of every means which they could unscrupulously devise, to frustrate his intentions. Still he persevered, and effected the purpose on which his mind was set, in defiance of the difficulties he had to encounter.

The translation of the word of God into the vulgar tongue was the next object he was intent upon accomplishing. Many attempts had been made to give a version of this most inestimable of all treasures to the people of England, through the unceasing exertion of one man—Tyndale. Cranmer's mind had been directed, from the period of his connexion with the University of Cambridge, to dwell upon the doctrines of the word of God. Through its teaching, he had been led by the Holy Spirit to escape from the trammels of an enslaving superstition, and the comforts and blessings he had enjoyed he was anxious to offer to others;—another evidence, if proof were wanting, that Christianity has nothing selfish in its nature, but, on the contrary, ever evinces the utmost anxiety to dispense the benefits it unfolds to the utmost limits of the earth.

In proceeding with his determined plan, Cranmer took an existing translation of Tyndale's Bible, and, causing it to be transcribed, he divided it into several parts. These he transmitted to the most learned of the bishops, with a request that they would revise and correct these portions by a certain day. At the

time appointed, every part, including that sent to Gardiner, was returned to Lambeth, with only one exception—the Acts of the Apostles, which had been assigned to Stokesley, and which he positively refused to revise or consider. When, however, he was requested to furnish his part, he sent the following reply to the archbishop:—

“I marvel much what my lord of Canterbury meaneth, that thus abuseth the people, and in giving them liberty to read the Scriptures; which doth nothing else than infect them with heresy. I have bestowed never an hour on my portion, and never will; and therefore, my lord of Canterbury shall have his book again; for I will never be guilty of bringing the simple people into error.”

“If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Here was an unhappy instance of the blindness and perverseness of a man, high in ecclesiastical authority, who yet had learned nothing of the first principles of religious truth, and who condemned the very fountain of all knowledge as the instrument for misleading “the simple people,” through the ignorance as well as through the sin of unbelief. “It had been good if he had not been

born," who could not only thus pervert the intention of the Holy Scriptures, but deny their circulation for the spiritual improvement and salvation of mankind, although he had offered no objection to undertake the task when it was first committed to his charge.

When Cranmer was informed of Stokesley's refusal, he merely remarked, "that he marvelled that my lord of London was so froward, that he would not do as other men did." The revised portions returned have never yet been discovered;—"they have been consigned to oblivion with the vain efforts, in ancient times, of many who had taken in hand that for which they were not competent, and that of which God did not approve." That the attempt should have miscarried is not remarkable. It was, however, calculated to be instructive to Cranmer, who was taught, by this failure of his desires, that God would not bless the labours of those men who set his truths at nought, and that, however high they were in worldly name and pretension, they were not His appointed ministers to proclaim "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

During the year 1535, another attempt was

made, on the part of the king, to negotiate with the German Protestant princes assembled at Smalcald. The object he had in view was to obtain a full approval of his marriage with Anne Boleyn;—their desire was to secure an accession of strength, by engaging Henry in a league, which should identify him with themselves, and pledge him to the adoption of their religious opinions and political interests. Cranmer was much interested as to the result of these proceedings, which lingered for several years, but, from a variety of causes, were at length altogether abandoned.

One of the causes which now rendered the king impatient to obtain the favour of public opinion, and the alliance of the foreign powers at this juncture, was the conduct of Pius III., who had succeeded Clement VII. in the papedom. Enraged at the determination of Henry VIII. to persevere in the changes of the times, and especially indignant at the execution of sir Thomas More and bishop Fisher, Pius III. adopted a course which scattered to the winds all hope of accommodation, by issuing a bull, which, whilst it reminded the king of his offences in repudiating Catherine of Aragon

—espousing Anne Boleyn—and enacting laws in derogation of the papal supremacy, also summoned him and his accomplices—amongst whom Cranmer was undoubtedly included—to appear within sixty days before him at Rome; in default of which appearance, they were to be excommunicated, and deprived of Christian burial in the event of their death. The bull proceeded to state, that unless they complied with its terms, public worship and every kind of religious ministration would be interdicted in England; pronounced the children of Anne Boleyn illegitimate, and declared that they should be incapable of possessing property, and of enjoying any office or dignity. It further absolved the subjects of the king from their fealty and allegiance, disqualified his abettors from giving testimony, and from the exercise of any civil right, and forbade that any intercourse should be held with him or those who promoted his wishes. The clergy were also commanded to leave the realm, and the military were prohibited from acting in his defence. Finally, it commanded all foreign powers no longer to hold intercourse, or to make any treaty or confederacy with Henry;

and absolved them from such engagements as had already been entered into between them. A more wicked and unscrupulous document was scarcely ever issued. It, however, defeated the purpose for which it was intended by its violence; for whilst it stirred up Henry to make more energetic exertions for the defence of the prerogative he had lately claimed, it led thinking men to consider whether there was any right, either moral or Divine, for one man to usurp the authority to which the pope laid claim. God, in fact, made the wrath of man to redound to his praise, whilst he restrained the remainder of that wrath, and rendered it inoperative.

About this time, (A.D. 1535,) Cranmer was enabled to advance several of his friends and coadjutors in the work of the reformation to the episcopate, amongst whom the most remarkable was the learned and pious Latimer, who afterwards testified to the truth of God at the stake, and there, amidst the flames of martyrdom, declared "a candle was that day lighted in England which, by God's grace should never be put out."

In prosecuting the arduous and laborious task which Providence had assigned to him,

the archbishop now found an active and energetic friend in Cromwell, whom Henry VIII., by a formal appointment, had raised to the office of vicegerent in all ecclesiastical matters, for the purpose of redressing the errors, heresies, and abuses of the church. The mind of this man had been awakened by the solemn truths of revelation, and, as light cannot have concord with darkness, the result of his spiritual emancipation was an earnest desire to advance to the utmost the religious movement of the times. As an earnest of the determined opposition which he entertained to the practices of superstition, he heartily set about the reformation, and resolved to effect, in many instances, the entire abolition of the monasteries, in which the support of papal domination was most rife, and in which profligacy and immorality flourished.

A resolution more advantageous for the spiritual benefit of the people could scarcely have been conceived. Whilst these miscalled houses of religion remained unshorn of their mischievous powers, there was no hope that sound religious knowledge would be diffused; and the most despicable frauds would still

continue to be practised, to frustrate every attempt at emancipating the mind from the thralldom of falsehood and vice. Cranmer felt that the monasteries needed immediate and decisive purification, inasmuch as they were not merely the fortresses of the most pernicious abuses and perversions of Christianity, but also a dangerous part of that mechanism by which the influence of the papal powers was sustained, and, consequently, an unceasing impediment to the progress of the Reformation. He, therefore, viewed with favour the subversion of the system which fostered such demoralizing practices; but he was still anxious rather to see them converted to beneficial and pious purposes than to witness their entire destruction. He probably foresaw that the emoluments of these houses would be diverted to the most sensual purposes, and that instead of truth being ultimately benefited by their removal, it would tend rather to aggrandize the fortunes of a class of persons whose minds were set on spoliation rather than on the advancement of that which was great and ennobling to the souls of mankind. The tide, however, had set in with resistless strength; the con-

sequence was, that the possessions of the monasteries became alienated, and diverted to purposes which, in no respect, were beneficial to the object dearest to his mind.

Whilst Cranmer, with his friend Latimer, was striving to prevent the entire dissolution of these "houses," an event occurred which was not merely calculated to render him uneasy, but greatly to shake his influence at court. Henry VIII., becoming weary of Anne Boleyn, availed himself of imputations against her character to send her to the Tower, at a moment when all around her seemed to be serenity and sunshine. The danger which surrounded the queen could not but cause great anxiety to the archbishop, inasmuch as she had uniformly favoured the progress of the Reformation, and used her influence with the king for the protection of the men who were most eager to advance it. His apprehensions must have also been increased by the royal commands he received, not to approach the court, which clearly indicated that he was included amongst the influential persons about the king who might obstruct the proceedings which had been determined upon against the queen.

The grace of God, however, directed him in the course which it was right for him to pursue at such a juncture.

Though prevented from personally visiting the king to plead the cause of his queen, he was enabled by letter to appeal to him in her behalf, and to show himself fearless of consequences, in thus proving that he still would continue her friend, though all others might desert her. To the credit of Cranmer it may be affirmed, that he was the only man who dared to vindicate the unfortunate Anne Boleyn. His letter to the king is still extant; it exhibits great skill in his effort to interpose between the impetuous monarch and the victim of his brutal rage, and shows that he, at least, was convinced of her entire innocence of the infamous charges which had been alleged against her. Notwithstanding his exertions in her behalf were of no avail with the king, and, in the exercise of his judicial functions, he was compelled to pronounce the marriage as null and void, he left it upon record that, to the best of his belief, Anne Boleyn was undeserving of her fate; and though to persist in such an opinion was in direct contravention of Henry's

determination, and calculated to bring down wrath and vengeance upon himself, he yet maintained his ground irrespective of consequences. God had work for him still to do in the advancement of His cause, and the time was not arrived that he should be removed from the scene of his labours.

The king remained unchanged towards Cranmer, who found that even this manifestation of the monarch's iniquity, together with the savage precipitancy in which he hastened to join himself in marriage with Jane Seymour, on the day following Anne Boleyn's execution, was overruled in the end for good. The church of Rome looked for a speedy triumph from her destruction, but God took the counsels of the crafty in their own craftiness, and brought the devices of the ungodly to nought.

CHAPTER IV.

Rejoicings at Rome on the death of Anne Boleyn—New acts for the succession, and renouncing the power of the pope—Debates in convocation—Alexander Ales—Definition of justification by faith—The articles unsatisfactory both to Protestants and Papists—The Bible to be placed in churches—Protestation of the king against the council then summoned—The Bishops' Book—The king retains his regard for Cranmer notwithstanding the increasing opposition against him—Matthew's Bible.

GREAT were the rejoicings when tidings of the disgrace and death of Anne Boleyn reached the pontifical court; the hope of reconciliation with Henry VIII. immediately revived; and, for a moment, the bias of his parliament also appeared to favour the expectation that England would again become subject to papal authority. The legislature had, however, but little power to oppose the intentions of the king, who persisted in widening the breach that had already been effected between the

contending parties. Having obtained a new act for the succession, by which the crown was limited to the issue of Jane Seymour, or any future queen, the parliament passed another renouncing the authority of the pope; and thus rendered the royal prerogative, not only complete, but unassailable.

The crown now took possession of all the authority which had been hitherto yielded to the pope; and although an attempt was fiercely and obstinately made by the papal party in the convocation, to reinstate themselves, and to humble the archbishop, yet the decision arrived at only served to move onward the progress of the Reformation. The result of the deliberations in this assembly was also highly important, as exhibiting the transition of England toward the Protestantism of the present day. The first five of the articles determined upon at this juncture, contained some points of true religion, though considerably marred by the admixture of the ancient superstition. They maintained that everything was to be received as true which is comprehended in the canon of the Scriptures, and in the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds. They affirmed, that baptism was a sacrament

necessary to salvation; and that it may be administered to infants. Respecting the sacrament of the Lord's supper, they declared, in opposition to the opinion of Alexander Aless—a learned and pious Scotchman, who accompanied Cranmer and Cromwell to the assembly, and was introduced by them as the king's scholar—that, under the form and figure of bread and wine, are verily, substantially, and really contained and comprehended, the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic sacrifice of penance, though opposed most energetically by the archbishop and Cromwell, was permitted to remain; but the other four—matrimony, order, confirmation, and extreme unction—were altogether abolished. Justification was defined to be “the remission of sins, and acceptance and reconciliation into the grace and favour of God; and pronounced to be the gift of God, promised freely to mankind for the sake of Jesus Christ, and the merits of his blood and passion, as the only sufficient and worthy causes thereof.”

There was much of truth expressed in these declarations, particularly on the doctrine of the justification of a sinner: but, upon the sacrament of the Lord's supper, even Cran-

mer's views were, at this time, most defective, and, consequently, the erroneous and deadly doctrines of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass were not removed. Cranmer achieved one point, however, of great importance—the necessity of reference only to the word of God, in support of doctrine; so that, “whatsoever was not really proved thereby,” was not to be received as of any authority.

These articles, when published, gave little or no satisfaction, either to Protestants or Papists; they had, however, an unquestionable influence upon the important changes of the times, and were calculated much more to aid the former, than to support the views and pretensions of the latter. The work of the Reformation, like the general progress of Divine grace in the human heart, was gradual; it was not immediately completed. It was to go forward amidst much discouragement, to meet with great opposition, and to contend with many obstacles; but the cause of truth was, in the end, to be triumphant, and God's name was to be exalted and honoured throughout the earth.

The parliament now rose, convocation was

dissolved, and Cranmer and Cromwell, freed from their trammels, proceeded vigorously with the object they had at heart. Injunctions were immediately issued in the name of the king, to suppress the number of holidays, and to cause the royal supremacy to be declared from every pulpit. The people were also required to be instructed in the articles recently agreed upon in convocation, and to teach their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the creed, in *English*, as well as to receive directions upon other points. Not the least of these was, that the Bible, in Latin and English, should be placed in every church throughout the realm, to be read by every one who desired to do so.

These injunctions, especially the latter, were most obnoxious to those of the clergy who favoured the retention of the old superstition. They were assailed with many expressions of antipathy, and great efforts were made to escape from obeying them. Still Cranmer stood firmly, aided as he was by his friend Cromwell, and supported by the king, who, about this time, protested against a council summoned to meet at Mantua, "in which he declared, that he would neither comply with

the summons to that council, nor render any obedience to its decisions. He professed, however, that while he lived he would adhere to the faith and doctrine which had always been embraced by the true and catholic church; that he would never depart from the unity of that church, and that he sought nothing but the glory of God, and the welfare and peace of the Christian world."

As the opposition to the injunctions still continued on the part of the clergy, it was deemed to be both necessary and advisable to digest them into a more agreeable form. This work took place, under the eye and direction of the archbishop, at Lambeth, and was intituled, "The Institution of a Christian Man;" but it was better known amongst the people as the "Bishops' Book," since many of the hierarchy, including Gardiner and Stokesley, had been associated with Cranmer in its preparation. The result of this combination of labour was, for the most part, favourable to the Protestant cause, and placed the Reformation on the highest point it was destined to attain during the lifetime of Henry VIII.

The part which Cranmer had to take in

producing this work was most conspicuous, and it was attended with much sorrow and weariness of spirit. On the one hand, he had to contend with a monarch who was daily becoming more and more capricious, and disinclined to trouble himself about any other objects than those which favoured the pursuit of his own immediate pleasure. He was also growing increasingly reluctant to continue the contest against the pope of Rome; having obtained the object of his desire—full and supreme power, ecclesiastical as well as civil—and being free from all fear that his authority would be wrested from him by force of arms,—he seemed to be resolved to let matters take their course. He still retained, however, a regard for Cranmer, and generally assented to his wishes; yet it was becoming more apparent that the difficulty of guiding and animating him to prosecute the work of the Reformation was increasing. The archbishop had little more to hope for from this quarter, of which his opponents were striving to take every advantage, as well as to harass him incessantly, by besetting him with every obstacle that might retard his progress, and by throwing impedi-

ments in his way, which might check his power, and render him unpopular at court.

Naturally timid, as has been seen, Cranmer may well be supposed to have been nearly overwhelmed by the accumulating weight of opposition by which he was assailed. Many a man, constitutionally more courageous, might have been broken down by the incessant attacks of the most unscrupulous enemies, to which he had constantly to submit. But God carried him through them all, and enabled him to preserve a meek and quiet spirit, so that the purposes formed against him were frustrated, and his assailants themselves fell into the snare which they had laid for him, to their own discomfort and dishonour.

In the midst of the unceasing persecutions which he encountered, and especially of the resistance to his authority from the clergy of his own diocese of Canterbury, his hopes were again raised by the publication of the Holy Scriptures in his native tongue, under the name of "Matthew's" Bible. This translation had been partly executed by Tyndale, and partly by Coverdale; but Tyndale having suffered martyrdom in Flanders, it was thought advisable

to conceal the names of its real authors from the public, and to send it forth under a title untainted with the odour of heresy. The printing was conducted abroad, probably at Hamburg. The correction of the whole was committed to John Rogers, the protomartyr of the Marian persecution. The volume was provided with prologues and annotations, chiefly relating to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the marriage of priests, and the sacrifice of the mass; all of which documents were so offensive to the Romish party, that, afterwards, during the brief period of their ascendancy, they did everything they could to suppress them, as being heretical commentaries.

With the publication of this translation of the Bible, Cranmer had not, however, the slightest personal connexion. He had long and anxiously desired to see the sacred volume in general circulation; but all his plans had been baffled. Vainly had he toiled to produce a version of the New Testament, but after his utmost efforts, he could only confess that the task was literally beyond the power of the men who were associated with him in the work. Their conflicting opinions did nothing

but frustrate his desires, and finally overpowered his exertions.

No sooner, however, did "Matthew's Bible" appear, than Cranmer wrote, without a moment's loss of time, to Cromwell, intreating him to "exhibit the book unto the king's highness," and to obtain of him, if possible, "a license that it might be sold and read of every person, without danger of any act, proclamation, or ordinance heretofore granted to the contrary, until such time as the bishops should set forth another translation;" which "he thought would not be till a day after doomsday." He likewise added, that "if Cromwell would continue to take such pains for the setting forth of God's word, as he had already done, although in the mean season he suffered some snubs, and many slanders, lies, and reproaches for the same, yet one day God would requite him altogether: for the same word, as St. John saith, which shall judge every man at the last day, must needs show favour to them that then favoured it."

This one transaction of Cranmer's life should never be forgotten. Considered in itself and in its consequences, every other good thing he did shrinks into comparative insignificance.

For this, all who have prized the Holy Scriptures or now do so, stand indebted to him as an instrument in the hand of God. The purpose of the Most High had been constantly visible in the work which Cranmer was commissioned to prosecute; but it was most of all conspicuous at this moment. "He was the superintended agent," no less than "the willing instrument." The step he took was most bold and decided, notwithstanding he was "timid by constitution, and, according to his own repeated confession, had lost beyond recovery, every spice of audacity and daring, from the cruelty of his earliest teacher;" yet he was selected, "as only the more fit to be employed to overcome and take by surprise" all those who were contending against the truth.

"After a long and tedious war, the bitter, though comparatively fruitless opposition of eleven years, the opportunity for dealing with crafty opponents, and with stiff-necked and rebellious enemies to the truth, had arrived; the time for showing the weakness of God to be stronger than man. It was a select hour for choosing a cautious and a timid man, to sway the mighty and the way-

ward. It was thus shown in the most striking manner, to every devout observer, that the God of providence, is also the God of the sacred Scriptures. In the wide compass of English history, a more signal interposition on behalf of His own word has never occurred, simply for this reason—it has never been demanded; the present sufficed for all time to come. The God of heaven and earth arose to manifest his glory; and though ‘the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed,’ he brought ‘the counsel of the heathen to nought,’ and made ‘the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.’ ”

CHAPTER V.

Birth of Edward vi., and death of Jane Seymour—The education of Edward vi. entrusted to Cranmer—Suppression of the monasteries—Cranmer foiled in his purpose of education for the people—Eagerness of the people to read the Bible—Proclamation to restrain debates on religious topics—Honours of Thomas à Becket abolished—The fraud discovered upon the opening of his shrine—The bull of excommunication issued—The dominions of Henry viii. offered by the pope to the king of Scotland—Declarations of the bishops against the pope—Address of Cranmer to the king for a further reformation—Cranmer's endeavours to procure a conference between the German ambassadors and the English divines frustrated—Intrigues of Gardiner, Tonstal, and Stokesley—Cranmer still a believer in the Romish doctrine of the sacrament—The errors of eminent men left on record for instruction to others.

ON the 12th of October, 1537, Jane Seymour, the third queen of Henry viii., died, twelve days after giving birth to a son, who was named Edward, and subsequently became memorable in English history, by the promotion of the principles of the Reformation during his brief reign, and by his undoubted piety. His education was entrusted to Cran-

mer, who directed his mind to the study of the Scriptures, and trained him in the knowledge of Him by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice." The result was prominent in the wisdom of his conduct, which was unusual in one so young, and far in advance of his times.

Soon after the birth of the young prince Edward, the property of the monasteries was again confiscated, and their spoliation became universal for the aggrandizement of the king and his nobles. Cranmer and Latimer used every exertion to save some portion of the funds now being scattered with prodigal waste upon the most indigent and worthless of the members of Henry's dissolute court; and they also expressed every desire to turn them to the purpose of religious instruction throughout the nation. But the storm of cupidity had arisen, and their efforts were unavailing to allay it. The king was resolved to make this scheme subserve his own pecuniary advantage; his favourites, acting upon the same principle, had no other motive in view than to gratify themselves; thus, resources which might have been made to redound to the glory of God, were rendered useless and injurious; and

Cranmer, who earnestly desired that the Reformation should be complete, beheld this object seriously delayed.

Foiled in his more immediate purpose of procuring a religious and liberal education for the people, Cranmer turned his attention to a subject of much importance, although manifestly not equally so with the one he was compelled to lay aside. He perceived that if he stood still, or suffered the work he was engaged in to flag, the consequences would be serious, and, therefore, he bent the energies of his active mind to bring about the declaration of a new series of royal injunctions, in which the neglect of those that had been previously issued was deprecated, and obedience peremptorily demanded; and by which the order for placing the Bible in churches for the use of the people, was to be renewed. The laity were directed by this document, to be carefully taught the Lord's Prayer, the Belief, and the Ten Commandments, in English; also to be instructed to cast away all reliance upon superstitious works, and they were exhorted to deeds of charity and faith. The worship of images and relics was at the same time denounced, with every custom which

savoured of compliance with the superstitious practices of Rome.

The eagerness of the people to read the word of God was great, and hundreds availed themselves of the liberty offered them of searching the Scriptures for themselves. Many, who were unable to read, actually learned to do so for the express purpose of becoming acquainted with the sacred oracles; numbers flocked to the churches to hear them read; "they brought certain strange things to their ears," but those things affected their eternal salvation, and "acquainted them with God, and made them to be at peace with Him." Hitherto they had learned nothing of the fulness of salvation, wrought out and completed by the atonement of the Son of God. They had heard the name of Christ in the different services of the church; but they were never taught to consider or believe in Him as the one and only "Mediator between God and men." The glories of the Saviour had been dimmed by vain conceits and false doctrines, which led them to rely upon the supposed intervention of the virgin Mary with her Son; a sinful woman, whom they blasphemously called "the mother of

God." The honours that were only due to the one all-sufficient Redeemer, were transferred to sinners like themselves, who might or might not have been saved, but who, whether saved or not, had neither power to hear the intercessions offered to them, nor ability to aid the suppliants. The scales, therefore, fell from their eyes, and they rejoiced in the invitations of mercy for the first time freely offered them, and in the glad tidings which an opened Bible now proclaimed, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and that justification unto life everlasting resulted not from the works of man, but from the free favour of God.

Discussions sprang up on every side. The contest between truth and error had begun. The enemy would not, however, lose his hold without a struggle; and the excitement became universal. The sea of religious opinion had been stagnant; but the wind, which "bloweth where it listeth," even the good Spirit of the living God, had arisen, and, moving "upon the face of the waters" of this polluted ocean, began to drive away its pestilential vapours; and, as men escaped from certain ruin, which threat-

ened them, they could but tell of all the goodness of their God, and proclaim his praise. Religious discussion, however, now occasioned popular commotion, and it was found necessary to restrain the many debates that were presenting themselves on every hand, by a proclamation, lest they should run into riot, and cause destruction to the peace of the community. But so mercifully did God put forth his arm, that the progress of his truth was not hindered, but rather vindicated, by the royal determination, that, although public discussion should be discontinued, reference to learned and authorized teachers might yet be had on all questions of difficulty or doubt.

The royal injunctions, which determined that the word of God should be given to the people, contained another important article, which must not here be overlooked, as it induced the reigning pope to proceed to extremities against the king, and rendered Henry more determined to set him at defiance. For nearly four hundred years, the credulity of the people of England had been heaping wealth and splendour upon the shrine, at Canterbury, of

Thomas à Becket, whom the church of Rome had canonized and pronounced to be a martyr, soon after he had been cruelly murdered, in the reign of Henry II. There certainly had been nothing in the character of this prelate to deserve the distinction which his church had conferred upon him. Proud, insolent, and ungrateful to the monarch who raised him from a comparatively low station to the very highest offices in the state, he had invariably resisted his authority, and rendered himself obnoxious by thwarting him in every purpose, and setting him at defiance, under the pretence that the interests of the church required such a course of action — acting upon the principles still in force in the canons of the Roman Catholic church, and which never yet have been repealed, that “All kings, bishops, and nobles, who allow or suffer the bishop of Rome’s decrees in anything to be violated, are accursed, and for ever are culpable before God as transgressors of the Catholic faith.”*

* “Generali decreto constituimus, ut execrandum anathema sit, et veluti prævaricator Catholicæ fidei semper apud Deum reus existat, quicumque regum, seu episcoporum, vel potentum deinceps Romanorum pontificorum decretorum censuram in quocumque crediderit vel permiserit violandum.”—Corpus Juris Canon. Decret. ii. Pars, Causa 25. quæst. i. cap. xi. tom. i. col. 874,5, Ed. Lips. 1839.

Thomas à Becket at length pushed his opposition to his royal patron to so great a length, that Henry II. could not refrain from giving utterance to the hasty expression, "that there would be no peace for him or his kingdom while Becket was alive." These words were construed into a wish for this proud bishop's death, and induced several nobles, whom he had treated with haughty contempt, to gratify their own wicked revenge, under the pretence that they would be doing service to the crown: Becket was slain in the cathedral at Canterbury, and forthwith was canonized and regarded as a saint and martyr, and upon this point, Henry II., who never ceased to deplore the murder, submitted that his understanding should be subdued to the spirit of the age in which he lived. A shrine was immediately erected to his memory, and no arts, falsehoods, or blasphemies were spared to raise its reputation above all other shrines in England. Miracles were said to be performed at it; and a jubilee was accorded every fifty years, when plenary indulgences were to be obtained by all who visited the tomb. One hundred thousand pilgrims were known to have been present at one of these seasons; and in one

year, more than £600—an enormous sum in those times—was offered at Becket's altar, while that dedicated to the Saviour had nothing laid upon it. So fearfully was the worship of the one true God disregarded, and the homage, which is due only to the Lord of hosts, transferred to a departed, turbulent, and ambitious man, between whom and the Saviour parallels were blasphemously allowed to be drawn.

Cranmer had beheld with disgust the continuance of the acts of will-worship at the shrine of Thomas à Becket, and undoubtedly desired to see the accumulated offerings devoted to a purpose far different from the base supposition that they could benefit the souls of those who offered them, or do something towards procuring them the favour of Heaven. But the cupidity of Henry forestalled any such intentions which the archbishop might have entertained. The wealth which loaded Becket's shrine was too tempting to his avaricious mind, and he therefore resolved to appropriate it to his own purposes. The enormities brought to light by the visitors, whom a commission had appointed to examine into the condition of the cathedrals, churches, and

monasteries, were found to be so immense, and the juggling tricks that were discovered, for the purpose of blinding the eyes, and captivating the senses of the people, so fraudulent, that they hastened the downfall of the Romish church more than they had promoted its rise ; and led the unthinking to care less about the manner in which the accumulated treasure should be appropriated or distributed, than the determination that such dishonest practices should cease to be perpetrated.

Henry failed not to take advantage of the temper which such disclosures brought to light. Shrines and treasures, which it might otherwise have been dangerous to invade, were now thought to be rightfully seized, when they were found to have been procured by such gross and palpable falsehoods. The spoil of Becket's shrine, in gold and precious stones, was so great, that it alone filled two great chests, each of which required the strength of six or seven men to convey it out of the church. " He was immediately unsainted, as well as unshrined, by the king, who taking up the cause of his ancestor, ordered Becket's name to be struck out of the calendar, and his bones

to be burned. Another fraud was then discovered, for the skull, with the wound of his death, and the piece cut out of the skull, laid in the same wound, were found with the rest of the skeleton in his grave, though another had been produced as his actual head, to work miracles in the church."

The pope had long threatened to issue a bull of deposition against Henry VIII., but had hitherto delayed to do so, because of the displeasure which he knew it would occasion amongst other sovereign princes of Europe. The manner in which Becket had been uncanonized, however, put an end to this suspension, and the bull was now fulminated, requiring the king and his accomplices to appear at Rome, and there give an account of their actions, on pain of excommunication, otherwise the pope declared that he was deprived of his crown, and the nobles of their estates, and both of Christian burial. He also interdicted his kingdom; absolved his subjects and their vassals from all oaths and obligations to him; declared him infamous; called upon all nobles and others in his dominions, to take arms against him; and required all kings, princes, and military persons, in virtue of the obedi-

ence they owed to the apostolic see, to proclaim war against him, and to make slaves of such of his subjects as they could seize. In his letters to the different potentates, which accompanied the bull, he called Henry a heretic, a schismatic, a manifest and public murderer, and a rebel convicted of high treason against his lord the pope ; and he offered his dominions to the king of Scotland, if he would go to take them.

But the throne of England was no longer to be shaken by such impotent manifestations of wrath ; the weapons of the Vatican had lost their edge and weight, and Henry could afford to laugh at such displays of weakness, which could neither affect him nor invalidate his power. Even the bishops who were still inclined to the old superstition, joined with Cranmer and his co-operating friends in a declaration, which Henry felt it advisable to issue, that Christ had forbidden his apostles, or their successors, to take to themselves the power of the sword, or the authority of kings ; and that if the bishop of Rome, or any other bishop, assumed any such power, he was a tyrant and usurper of other men's rights, and a subverter of the kingdom of Christ. The

bishops who were most devoted to the papal cause, deemed it politic rather to assent to the king's measures, than to oppose him; nor was there any one at this time, who defended the pope's proceedings, however inimical he might have been at heart to the onward progress of the Reformation.

As Cranmer left no effort untried for the advancement of the great cause he had in hand, he seized this opportunity of presenting an address to the king asking for a further reformation, the main point of which was, that permission should be granted for the marriage of the clergy. He was the more urgent in this respect because he had every reason to apprehend an approaching ascendancy of the Romish party, who dreaded nothing so much as this change, which they looked upon as the most formidable of all the means for the advancement of the Reformation, and the destruction of their own influence. They had sufficient interest to prevent the accomplishment of Cranmer's desires, who now met with opposition, not only on this subject, but on many others, which he felt would be conducive to the success of the work he had undertaken. A conference which he strove

to procure between the ambassadors despatched to England from Germany, and the English bishops, was frustrated, and all his purposes were defeated. His utmost endeavours could only effect a tedious and protracted discussion in writing, and a seeming agreement on leading points of doctrine, which had already been adopted from the Confession of Augsburg; but disputed opinions were left untouched, and the ambassadors returned home, to the great disappointment of the German divines, without bringing one of the matters to bear for which they had visited England.

Gardiner, Tonstal, and Stokesley now were pursuing every system of intrigue which they could adopt to establish a dominion over the mind of Henry, and to eclipse the influence of Cranmer. They availed themselves of the king's inveterate dislike to be considered an upholder of heresy, and represented to him that nothing could remove that imputation or establish his reputation for orthodoxy so effectually, as to make an example by timely severity upon those who were called Sacramentaries, from their denial of the Romish doctrines of transubstantiation,

and the sacrifice of the mass—an opinion which was gaining ground daily, but which none of the reforming bishops had yet openly adopted. Cranmer, for one, certainly had not changed his views at this period of his life, but was still a believer in the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation.

Educated as a papist in all the tenets of a perverted faith, it was not extraordinary that his mind should have dwelt upon that tenet, which the church of Rome makes to hold the most prominent position in her catalogue of errors. The conversion of Cranmer to the truths of Christianity, as we have already seen, was not a sudden work; for it was only by degrees that the dogmas of the church in which he had been reared fell before the Divine grace imparted to him, like “Dagon, headless and handless, to the ground.” Although, at this period of his life, he had shaken off many of the fetters with which he had been held captive, yet the last and most important change had not then occurred—the repudiation of that doctrine which sets aside the authority of the word of God, blasphemes the name of Christ, and invalidates the one and all-sufficient sacrifice for

sin, offered by Christ Jesus to his heavenly Father on Calvary, which was accepted by him as the only way, "the living way," by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of those who believe in his only begotten Son. Besides which, it must ever be contrary to the evidence of the senses, that the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are transubstantiated into the very body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that the wafer becomes the very body and blood of the Lord that was born of the virgin Mary; and that into how many parts soever that wafer may be divided, each part is the whole. Yet such is the teaching of the church of Rome to this very day.

Cranmer, in fact, held this doctrine until the year 1546, maintaining it to be the truth with unusual vehemence, for one of such acknowledged mildness of character and disposition; but in the course of time, by more mature and calm deliberation, and consideration of the point with less prejudice, and the sense of the early writers of the church more closely, in conference with Ridley, he at last became convinced of the error of these views.

Well would it have been for his character had an earlier change taken place in his opinions, for then we might have anticipated that he would at least have entered a protest against the proceedings referred to in the next chapter, if he had been unable, as undoubtedly he would have been, owing to the spirit of the times, to have arrested the persecuting disposition of Henry, and the men who urged him to vindicate and maintain his title of "defender of the faith" by the most cruel severity. But God permits the imperfections of his servants to be recorded, as an evidence, not only of the frailty, but of the sinfulness of human nature. It seems to have been the case in the character of Noah, of Lot, of Abraham, of David, and many others of the holiest of men; the history of their fall is left for our instruction, and as a living memorial, not only of the utter depravity of "the carnal mind," but of the necessity for those whose hearts are changed being constantly upheld by Divine grace.

CHAPTER VI.

Proceedings against Lambert, who appeals to the king—His trial, condemnation, and execution—Cranmer's conduct with reference to two Anabaptists, who were burned for heresy—His firmness in resisting the king's misapplication of church property—Bonner raised to the bench—Act of the Six Articles—Cranmer's opposition to it in parliament—He refuses to retire from the debate though desired by the king to do so—Latimer and Shaxton resign their bishoprics, and are committed to prison—Cranmer's distress of mind—The king's message to the archbishop—His reply—Prospect of a marriage with Anne of Cleves—The king's antipathy to her—Both parliament and convocation concur in the dissolution of the marriage—Cromwell is brought to trial—Cranmer intercedes for him—Cromwell is executed—Cranmer's firmness in opposing an intended popish formulary—Fidelity of the king to him at this time, and afterwards—Proclamation to enforce the placing of the Bible in churches—A new edition of the Bible published with a preface written by Cranmer—His conduct in the case of Catherine Howard.

WHILST the mind of Cranmer was held in bondage by the false opinions of the Roman Catholic church upon the subject of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, John Lambert, a convert of Bilney, who had suffered at Norwich for the truth's sake, was

brought to trial for having dared to offer to argue with Dr. John Taylor on the false doctrine of transubstantiation, upon which the latter had been preaching at St. Peter's Church, Cornhill.

Lambert had been suspected of being a Sacramentary, and a few years before imprisoned by archbishop Warren, Cranmer's predecessor, upon a charge of heresy; only escaping punishment, and perhaps martyrdom, by the death of that prelate. On Cranmer's accession to the primacy, he had been discharged, and, in order to avoid further persecution, he assumed the name of Lambert instead of Nicholson, which rightly belonged to him. Dr. Taylor did not refuse to accept the offer of Lambert; but, in order more effectually to entangle him, he required that he should commit his thoughts to writing, which he had no sooner done than Taylor instituted proceedings against him as a heretic, by laying the paper before Cranmer. In consequence of this accusation, Lambert was brought into court. He at once appealed from the bishops to the king; and Henry gladly assented to hear the cause, and to

decide upon it, upon the suggestion of Gardiner, who was ever ready to prompt his too willing master to acts of cruelty, and who urged upon him that an opportunity was now presented, which ought not to be lost, of vindicating himself from the charge of being the favourer of heretical doctrines and opinions. The nobles and prelates of the realm were immediately convoked to assist the king in the prosecution of his purpose for the extirpation of heresy. The trial—if such it can be called—took place in Westminster Hall; Henry was judge as well as disputant; and perceiving that Cranmer, who had opened the argument against Lambert, was likely to be defeated, he took the matter into his own hands, and was followed in succession by ten others on the same side. Lambert argued for five hours against his adversaries, when, at length, being exhausted with fatigue, he threw himself upon the mercy of the king—that king who never spared any man in his anger. To this appeal, he replied that he would never be a favourer of heretics, and ordered Cromwell to pass the sentence of death upon him. Lambert was burned to death,

under circumstances of peculiar barbarity, exclaiming to the last, "None but Christ! none but Christ!"

Cranmer's belief at this time in the corporeal presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper involved him in another act, influenced by the mistaken and cruel opinion that "death by fire was the only just and appropriate punishment for heresy." This dreadful infliction originated in the decrees of Constantine at the council of Nice, held A.D. 325, against the Arian doctrines of the time, which denied the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. These decrees were the foundation of all the subsequent imperial and ecclesiastical persecutions; and Cranmer had not yet learned what, in after days, he would be brought fully to understand, namely, that such a course was a gross violation of the laws of God. To this must be attributed not only his conduct in the matter of the martyr Lambert, but also in the burning of two natives of Holland, a man and a woman, both Anabaptists, who were delivered to the secular power, and committed to the flames in Smithfield. Many persons have ascribed his conduct on these occasions to a violation

of his conscience, for the purposes of time-serving, and with a view to the maintenance of the friendship of the king; but, after the most mature consideration, it appears to have arisen rather from the grievous error of judgment, that he was doing service to the cause of God, than from any intention of keeping up that influence, which the Romanists at this season were using every method to uproot and overturn.

The mildness with which Cranmer acted upon the trial of Lambert, when he addressed him before the king, in terms totally unlike those used by the other bishops, whose object was evidently rather to browbeat than to confute him, would induce the supposition that he would gladly have heard him, had he been allowed to do so, and striven to bring him over to his own views instead of subjecting him to punishment. He had used every means of persuasion, on a former occasion, to induce Frith to change his views, and certainly attempted by this method to save his life; and only a year before the trial of Lambert, whilst he declined to be the patron of a book addressed to him by the Swiss Reformer, Joachim Vadianus, upon the same subject,

“he evidently referred with sorrow, in his answer, to the sacrifice that had been made to this doctrine, in the death of Frith and his fellow-martyr, (Andrew, a tailor, of London,) by calling it ‘the bloody controversy.’” Still he taught the doctrine; but when reminded afterwards by Gardiner of it, he frankly confessed his error in these words: “I acknowledge that not many years past I was yet in darkness concerning this matter (of transubstantiation), being brought up in scholastical and Romish doctrine, whereunto I gave much credit. And, therefore, I grant that you have heard me stand and defend the untruth which I then took for the truth, and so did I hear you at the same time. But praise be to the everlasting God, who hath wiped away those Saulish scales from mine eyes; and I pray unto his Divine Majesty with all my heart, that he will likewise do once the same to you. Thy will be fulfilled, O Lord.”

No man, perhaps, was less adapted, physically, to resist the organized system of intrigue, which he had now to encounter. Naturally of a meek and retiring temperament, and possessing a mild and unsuspecting temper, he could scarcely withstand the sturdy and

resolute opposition with which he was assailed on every side ; least of all was he a match for his most crafty enemy, Gardiner, who, in the end, was permitted to triumph over him, and who never, during his whole life, ceased to use the most unscrupulous means for thwarting his purposes. Cranmer, however, did not lose, for a moment, the personal esteem and favour of the king. Providence overruled the natural inclinations of Henry's mind, although he was especially vindictive and cruel towards all others about him at this time, and Cranmer was daily losing his intimate confidence ; yet his original feeling of regard remained unbroken, and he visited the conduct of his servant with no mark of disapprobation. This is the more remarkable, and evinces most especially that God "restrained the wrath" of this wicked man ; for the archbishop, notwithstanding he could not but be aware that such a line of conduct might bring him into disgrace, did not abstain from opposing with great firmness the misapplication of the property of the church. He perceived that Henry was only bent upon appropriating to his own service funds which ought not to have been diverted from religious

purposes, and he resolved, cost what it might, to make an effort to stop the desecration then recklessly going on.

His desire was to found appointments from the funds taken from the monasteries for the advancement of the cause of truth; but the proposition was manifestly not consonant with the wishes of Henry and of the parasites by whom he was surrounded. No efforts were spared to defeat the labours of Cranmer; intent only upon personal advantage at the expense of the church, and fearing the opportunity of enriching themselves would neither last nor return, the king and the nobles alike effectually resisted the attempt of the archbishop to benefit the community. The latter hated him for his zeal, and were determined to thwart it, no matter how, upon the most unscrupulous principle, invariably adopted by wicked men for the basest purposes, that "the end justifies the means." A more noble plan than that brought forward by the reforming archbishop has scarcely ever been suggested, but insatiable cupidity and rapacious avarice rendered it abortive; and by making the proposition subservient to the end, most anxiously desired—of at least im-

pairing if not of destroying his influence in the councils of his sovereign,—they utterly annihilated all hope of benefit being derived to any but themselves from the dissolution of the monasteries and other religious houses.

The troubles of Cranmer now began to increase. Cromwell, his great friend and coadjutor in the work of the Reformation, was losing ground in the estimation of the king. Bonner was also raised to the bench—the man who was to gain an unenviable notoriety in after days, by the ferocity of his disposition, and the greatness of his crimes. Gardiner and the partisans of Rome were growing more bold and unscrupulous in their designs. The conduct of many of the reforming party was also most indiscreet and violent, and struck at the root of all civil and ecclesiastical authority, as well as social order. Indeed, they proceeded to such lengths, that they brought upon themselves a proclamation, which had the force of a law, forbidding all unlicensed persons to preach, or teach the Bible, and announcing the king's purpose to extinguish diversities of opinion, by law. This proclamation was only preparatory to the passing of a measure called the Act of the Six Articles, with a view, as

it was said, to the termination of religious dissensions. By these articles, it was declared that no substance of bread and wine remained after consecration—that communion in both kinds was not enjoined to all persons—that it was not lawful for the clergy to marry—that private masses were meet and good—and that auricular confession was necessary to salvation. To speak, preach, or write against any of these, was made an act of felony; and those who offended against the first, namely, the false doctrine of transubstantiation, were to be burned alive, and not even allowed to save their lives by abjuration.

For three whole days did Cranmer maintain a vigorous opposition against this most cruel and iniquitous measure, extorting admiration even from his most vindictive opponents. By the king's desire, he was commanded to deliver his reasons for his resistance in writing. To carry the statute into effect, Henry went down to the House of Lords; yet Cranmer dared to oppose it, upon which he was desired by the king to absent himself until it should be passed. "With this requisition Cranmer respectfully but firmly refused to comply; protesting that the cause was not his

own, but that of God." Even this resolute conduct did not shake Henry's attachment to Cranmer; he endured this display of uncompromising integrity, and suffered it to pass unreprieved. He further knew that the archbishop was married, and to this cause it may be attributed that the edict was so framed that it could only take effect upon such of the clergy who should marry after it had passed into law, or who should keep their wives openly. Yielding to the necessity of the times, Cranmer deemed it advisable to send his wife out of the country, until circumstances might arise to abrogate this mischievous law, which he anticipated might soon take place, since he was well aware that the king himself had no disinclination to permit the marriage of the clergy, but had been urged to prohibit it by the unceasing clamour of Gardiner and his associates.

Upon the passing of the Act of Six Articles, Latimer and Shaxton at once resigned their bishoprics, and were both committed to prison. It did not appear advisable to Cranmer to follow their example; he probably felt that, as the providence of God had placed him in the high position he occupied, it was not either

wise or prudent for him to retire at such a moment. Had he done so, it would have given his enemies a triumph over him; and it would, in all human probability, have arrested the progress of the Reformation. He was deeply pained at the course which events were taking; he was "troubled on every side, but not distressed; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." The inward conviction that "truth would prevail," assured him that it was no part of his province to shrink from the fulfilment of the onerous duties of his office; the cloud which overshadowed the people of God at this hour was dark and lowering, but faith in the promise of God told Cranmer "the Sun of righteousness" would yet arise to disperse it in His own good time, and therefore he determined to retain his post, in order to take advantage of any change in the aspect of affairs which might be made available for the furtherance of the cause of the Reformation.

The conscience of Henry, hard and seared as it was, was evidently pricked by the iniquity of the measure which had been forced upon the country. He was, moreover, affected by the conduct of Cranmer, whilst the

decision was pending ;—in order, therefore, to assuage any anxiety which he might feel for his own personal safety, he commanded that an entertainment should be given to all the peers of parliament, at Lambeth, whom he himself invited. None dared to refuse the royal command to whom its object was made known by the duke of Norfolk, who signified to the archbishop, in their presence, that the good-will of their master towards him was unimpaired, that he was much impressed with the industry and learning displayed by him in his recent exertions in parliament, and was anxious that he should not be discouraged by their unsuccessful result. Cranmer expressed himself as most grateful for this mark of royal condescension ; but instead of offering any apology for the part he had taken, or giving the slightest assent to the measure itself, he merely expressed a hope that “ hereafter, his allegations and authorities should prevail to the glory of God, and the commodity of the realm.” The mild and affable demeanour of Cranmer on this occasion drew forth, even from his most bitter enemies, the warmest tokens of approbation, inasmuch as he manifested a disposition to render

himself in every respect worthy of the esteem in which Henry had invariably held him.

The king had now remained nearly two years a widower, and Cromwell was still anxious to maintain the cause of the Reformation; he perceived that the passing of the Act of the Six Articles had shaken the opinions of the German Protestants with respect to England, and that the greatest exasperation was manifested at so flagrant a violation of faith on the part of Henry and his counsellors. In order, therefore, to counteract the alienation which was beginning to be felt between the two countries, he suggested to Henry that he might probably pacify the German princes, if he would form a matrimonial alliance with Anne, sister of the duke of Cleves, who had recently established the principles of the Reformation in his dominions. The assent of the duke of Cleves and of the elector of Saxony was readily granted to this match; but it speedily caused the downfall of Cromwell.

The king's disappointment, at finding Anne of Cleves so unlike the representations he had received of her, speedily degenerated into positive antipathy;—so much so, that he determined to be immediately divorced;

for which purpose he summoned both the parliament and convocation, who readily acceded to his wishes. The part which Cromwell had taken in this matter was speedily visited with the most decisive marks of Henry's rancorous disposition. He was brought to trial; and, notwithstanding Cranmer pleaded anxiously in his behalf with the king, and intreated, as far as he dared, that his life might be spared, he was sacrificed as another victim of the tyrant, who, to all his servants save to Cranmer, showed no pity. As in the case of Anne Boleyn, so in that of Cromwell, Cranmer was the only man who ventured to plead in his behalf with Henry. It required no ordinary fortitude to do this, and can only be accounted for upon the principle that Cranmer was led not to fear him that could kill the body, but Him, in whose hands alone are the issues of life and death.

No sooner was Cromwell sent to the Tower than the favourers of the papistical doctrines resolved to turn the opportunity to their advantage; they imagined themselves sufficiently strong to bear down the authority and resolution of their only remaining opponent, Cranmer, and felt assured they would be able to

overwhelm him by the predominance of their counsels in the commission. To their astonishment, they found him immovable. Many were the attempts to shake his fidelity; not the least of which was, that, if he continued to resist the re-action of the times, he would, in all probability, share the fate of Cromwell.

Two of his personal friends, who had up to this time favoured the Protestant cause—Heath, bishop of Rochester, and Skyp, bishop of Hereford—were despatched to him by their brother commissioners, with instructions to state that it was totally in vain for him to resist their design of re-establishing their opinions, as it was notorious that the king was determined that articles in favour of Romanist views should be set forth and published. His answer to these men is left on record, and is a remarkable evidence of his unshaken faith in the uprightness of his intentions, and the correctness of his views: “Beware,” he said, “what you do; the truth is but one, and though the king is now under sinister information, I cannot believe that the truth will long be hidden from him; and when he shall discover it, there will be an end of all his trust and confidence in you. I adjure you, therefore,

to take heed in time, and to discharge your consciences in maintenance of the truth."

It were an utter absurdity to attribute such expressions as these to the ordinary effects of a common resolution. Neither can they be attributed to obstinacy nor caprice. Had not Cranmer been upheld by Divine assistance, he would have shrunk from the adoption of a line of conduct which would apparently bring him nothing but disgrace; he would have assented to the urgency of his friends, and deemed expediency to be his best policy. But his resolution was formed not in his own, but in the strength of One mightier than he, who in the hour of trial suffered not His servant's faith to fail, and raised him above the fear of man, by taking charge of his safety, and assuring him of His unfailing support.

Finding himself thus assailed on all hands, and knowing he had nothing but vengeance to expect from his persecutors, he took the bold step of laying the whole matter before the king. His fall was now looked upon as certain; but the hour of Cranmer's martyrdom had not yet arrived. God had more work for him to do before he should be called from the scene of his labours and his trials. The king,

contrary to the expectation of the whole court, received him kindly, and not only accepted the suggestions which Cranmer made to him at this crisis, but gave his sanction to a set of articles, such as he could approve. "His honesty and courage seemed to have been generously appreciated by his master; for from that day forward, there could neither counsellor, bishop, nor papist, win him out of the king's favour."

Immediately after the successful result of Cranmer's application to Henry, he obtained a proclamation to enforce the placing of Bibles in all the churches of the kingdom, under the penalty of forty shillings a month, if the proclamation were not complied with, so long as the omission should continue. A new edition of the word of God was also published, to which he prefixed a preface from his own pen, recommending the study of the Scriptures, and urging all "who came to the reading of it, to bring with them first and foremost the fear of Almighty God."

It is not necessary here to dilate upon the conduct of the archbishop with reference to Catharine Howard, whom the king had married after his divorce from Anne of Cleves.

The discovery of her misconduct having been made to him, he had to encounter the painful task of representing it to Henry. The proofs of her guilt were unhappily too evident, and she consequently suffered its penalty upon the scaffold. The documents which are extant relative to this matter show that he executed his painful task with as much delicacy as was possible, whilst fulfilling a duty which was necessarily imposed upon him.

CHAPTER VII.

Attempts of the papists for a revision of the Bible—Opposition of Cranmer to their efforts—Henry VIII. consents to the prohibition of Tyndale's Bible, which remains in force for the rest of that king's life—The King's Book—Cranmer's wishes again obstructed—Visitation of his diocese—Abortive conspiracy for his ruin, and that of Catharine Parr, on the part of Gardiner, who loses the favour of the king—Act for mitigating the Six Articles—English Litany—Another fruitless plot against Cranmer, and the last during the life of Henry VIII.—Death of Henry VIII.

IN spite of recent defeats sustained by the Romish party, the struggle between the ancient and the reformed principles was still continued with unabated obstinacy; so that Cranmer was compelled to stand incessantly on the watch. In the course of the last year, a new edition of the Bible had been published by authority, under the superintendence of Toustal and Heath; but, nevertheless, the clamour of the Romanists was urgent for a fresh revision; and Gardiner, more particularly,

insisted on a retention, in the Latin form, of a number of words and phrases, the genuine sense and majesty of which, as he contended, the English tongue was incapable of rendering. It was therefore proposed to the convocation, that the bishops should divide the task of a complete revision. Cranmer saw the danger of this insidious suggestion, and he diverted it, by moving that the business should be confided to the universities. He was unshaken by the groundless objection that those learned bodies were in no condition to undertake so arduous an office, and he silenced all further opposition to his own measure, by obtaining the concurrence of the king. The project, however, fell to the ground; and the only advantage derived from the victory was the preservation of the sacred text from the unfaithful handling of Romish theology.

In the course of another twelvemonth, indeed, the anti-scripturists obtained a calamitous triumph. The king, by that time, was so wearied and perplexed by the spirit of dissension which was still abroad, that he began almost to repent of his liberality, and seemed disposed to suppress all writings on religious subjects. In this mood, probably, it was that

he consented to the prohibition of Tyndale's English Bible, and to an order for obliterating all prologues and annotations from every existing copy. The reading of Scripture, it is true, was not wholly forbidden, but it was permitted under a variety of capricious and arbitrary limitations. The indulgence was confined to noblemen and gentlemen, who might read it to their families, within the precincts of their gardens or their orchards ; to merchants, who were to read it alone and privately ; to women, who, if noble or of gentle blood, might enjoy the same solitary privilege. Imprisonment, and subsequently corporal punishment, was to be the lot of every artificer and husbandman who should be detected in the forbidden occupation ; and these vexatious restrictions continued unmitigated for the remainder of Henry's life.

Accustomed as the present generation has been to enjoy the free circulation of the Holy Scriptures, the great severity and cruelty of such enactments can scarcely be understood. To give permission to read God's revealed will now appears to be a positive and unjustifiable infringement of Christian liberty, inasmuch as it is nothing less than to show that man at-

tempts to grant or withhold what God has determined shall be the birthright of all his creatures. Regarding the merciful interposition in our own behalf, by the side of the fearful struggle which took place in the times of Cranmer, to wrest a positive right from an unwilling and intolerant priesthood, it is but too evident that the privilege is not valued as it ought to be. When it is calculated that no less a sum than four millions sterling has been expended in sending the word of life to the waste places of the earth, and that the efforts to disseminate the glad tidings of salvation are increasing, it is apparent that the guilt of those who reject it is dreadfully augmented. It is too often the case that sinful man lightly appreciates blessings when they are in possession, and only begins to discover their worth when he is deprived of them. Every man now sits under his own vine, and under his own fig tree, none making him afraid; but the times of the Reformation are forgotten, and the rage and fury of the enemies of truth are, unhappily, obliterated from the memory, as the easily insinuated idea prevails that the world is too intelligent now-a-days to submit to the deprivation of all that is valuable in religious liberty. Man has not,

however, become less sinful than he was three hundred years ago ; Satan is not less wily than he then was ; and if both are prevented from doing mischief, it is only because He, who holds the destinies of mankind, permits them to go to a certain point but no further, and restrains their malicious and wicked purposes. Should the darkness of the gloomy night, which hung over England previously to the Reformation, be ever permitted to return, may God give his servants grace to bear witness to his truth and cause, as one and all of the Reformers did in times of trial, persecution, and death !

The next business of importance upon which Craumer employed himself, was the diligent examination of "the necessary doctrine and erudition of any Christian man," which, after much toil, was found to be merely a revision of the King's Book. This work contained many errors of doctrine, and is, upon the whole, a most unsatisfactory proof of the state of Cranmer's mind. The motives of state policy which appeared throughout it hindered the progress of the Reformation, and threw many obstacles in the way of the archbishop. He availed himself of the best parts of the book, and as he well knew that Gardiner had been the per-

son who introduced the most obnoxious portions into it, he contented himself with the hope that times would change for the better. That he was impeded, as usual, in this work, by the unceasing hostility of his numerous enemies, and prevented from going as far in the ways of truth as he was able at this time of his life to proceed, is undoubted. The same cause held him back which had oftentimes before restrained him—the imperious disposition of the king, who was daily becoming more tyrannical and irritable towards all who dared to thwart him in his purposes.

Gardiner was now bent upon effecting Cranmer's disgrace. He also resolved to accomplish the ruin of Catharine Parr, the widow of Neville, lord Latimer, whom the king had married. The cause of his animosity against her was that she was attached to Protestant principles, and desirous of advancing their progress, for which purpose she used her influence with Henry. She was, however, most providentially preserved, and spared to outlive the husband who had outraged decency by this, his sixth marriage.

Certain members of the council, set on by the bishop of Winchester, (Gardiner,) now resorted

to a conspiracy, which bade fair to destroy Cranmer's influence, and render ineffective all that he had hitherto accomplished in the advancement of the Protestant cause. Various meetings were held, a regular scheme was organized, and a voluminous mass of articles was collected by Gardiner and his accomplices, to obtain an advantage over him. The chief accusations brought against him were—that he had discouraged and restrained those preachers who refused to promote the doctrines of the Reformation ; that he had ordered the removal of images ; and that he corresponded with the divines of Germany. These charges, however, were no sooner laid before the king, than he suspected the parties who originated them. He immediately showed them to the archbishop, who solicited that the whole matter might be sifted by a commission, to which the king at once acceded, but insisted upon appointing the primate himself as the chief commissioner. The result of the examinations which followed was—that Cranmer's character was cleared, and his adversaries confounded and punished. Gardiner never recovered the good opinion of the king, for his share in these transactions, although he was afterwards employed by him in diplomatic business.

Immediately after these circumstances, Cranmer succeeded, through his influence with the king, in mitigating the Act of the Six Articles, and in effecting a great change in the forms of public devotion, by the introduction of an English liturgy, with responses. Nevertheless, he had to endure another measure of hostility on the part of his adversaries, from which he was only released by the firm friendship of Henry. This conspiracy was got up under the patronage of the duke of Norfolk and other members of the council, who complained to the king that the archbishop had infected the land with heresy, and desired that, as he was a councillor, the king would give instructions for his committal to the Tower, when sufficient proofs and accusations would be brought against him, which otherwise would not appear.

Henry consented to their request that Cranmer should be the next day consigned to the Tower; but about midnight he sent a messenger to him at Lambeth, directing him to come over instantly to the court. Cranmer lost no time in obeying the summons; the king received him most graciously, and intimated to him the designs of his enemies. On Cranmer expressing

his willingness to go to trial, on what had been alleged against him, and his expectation that he would thereby be freed from the slanders which were promulgated, the king ridiculed the idea of his thus putting himself into the power of his adversaries, asking him whether he thought he would fare better at their hands than his Master, Christ, had done. He then placed his signet ring in his possession, directing him to show it, on the following morning, to the council, and dictated what answer he should give when his enemies should proceed to commit him to the Tower : he then dismissed him with other marks of his favour.

On the following morning, the council sent a messenger to Cranmer to demand his attendance, and, with a view to offer insult to him, compelled him for a long time to remain standing amongst the servants at the door of the chamber. Dr. Butts, the king's physician, passing this way, and seeing the archbishop thus humiliated, went straight to the king, and told him of the circumstance ; he replied, that the council showed but little discretion to use the archbishop thus, and that, if they were left alone, the result would soon appear. Cranmer was at length called into the council

chamber, and having answered according to the king's direction, showed his ring, and appealed at once to him. The council proceeded to the king, where they had to submit to his severe reproof, and to learn that he fully comprehended all their designs, notwithstanding they endeavoured to palliate their conduct. The consequence was, that the very men, who had a few minutes previously been the archbishop's most bitter enemies, now gave expressions to him of their warmest friendship, which he received with his usual meekness and benevolence of character. This was the last attempt made against the archbishop during Henry's life. Nevertheless, hatred did not abate, and was only restrained by the knowledge that, notwithstanding all his offences, that of unfaithfulness to Cranmer could never be brought against the king.

The days of Henry VIII. were now drawing to a close, at a period of the deepest interest to Cranmer, when he was anticipating the prospect of the speedy abolition of many of the remaining and notorious abuses of the church of Rome, which hitherto he had been unsuccessful in his efforts to remove. The state of religion remained most unsettled, and

presented no outward indications of improvement. The king gave no other evidence that he had embraced the reformed faith beyond the request that Cranmer might be sent for to attend him on his death-bed, or the pressure of the archbishop's hand, when, at this awful hour, he entreated him to give some token that he put his trust in God, through Jesus Christ. He died on the 28th January, 1547, at the very moment when a treaty with the king of France was on foot for altering the mass into a communion, and he had commanded Cranmer to compose a service with a view to the change. His character is variously estimated by different writers. This is not the place to examine it—suffice it to say, that, save to Cranmer, he was a man without mercy, and a monarch without forbearance.

CHAPTER VIII.

Unsettled state of religion at the time of Henry VIIIth's death—
Difficulty of the archbishop's position—A commission issued to the bishops—Cranmer's address to Edward VI. at his coronation—Persecution under the Six Articles terminated—Gardiner disgraced, but still opposes Cranmer—Visitation of the whole kingdom resolved upon—Preparation of Homilies—Translation of the Paraphrase of Erasmus—Continued opposition of Gardiner—His disputes with Cranmer—Is imprisoned during the remainder of Edward VIth's reign—Opposition of Bonner, who is also imprisoned—Cranmer's influence predominant in the convocation—An act for the sacrament in both kinds—Act of the Six Articles and other persecuting statutes repealed—Religious dissensions—Order of council respecting religious dissensions—Cranmer's views of the sacrament undergo a change—submits questions to the bishops respecting the mass—Their answers neither clear nor decisive—Steps for converting the mass into a communion service—Disorders attending the introduction of these changes—Cranmer's designs not tinged with mercenary motives.

THE state of parties at the time of the death of Henry VIII. was most unsettled; Cranmer and his friends had accomplished but little, comparatively speaking, for the general benefit of the community during the later years of his life. The authority of the pope, in the realm

of England, it is true, had been thrown off, and his supremacy in things spiritual abolished; but neither the persecuting dogmas of the Roman Catholic religion were removed, nor many of the most erroneous of its doctrines obliterated. Under the exertions of Cranmer, much had been done to mitigate the severity of the former, and much also was effected towards changing the character and complexion of the latter; but a great effort was necessary to cleanse the pollution of ages, under which truth had so long been entirely hidden.

The Act of the Six Articles was still the law of the land, and continued to produce its sanguinary effects. The Romanist party had the powerful support of the princess Mary, afterwards to be designated as the most cruel of sovereigns who ever occupied the British throne. Gardiner was active and energetic in carrying on schemes for arresting the progress of the cause of truth; and many of the most eminent for their piety, on the other hand, were for pressing onwards a more extensive and radical change than the temper of the times was willing to allow. Cranmer himself felt most acutely the difficulties of his position; whatever had

been effected in the late reign by his instrumentality, for the general benefit, had been done through the consent of the king, upon whose will and command he was able to fall back, and so withstand the malice of his enemies. The scene had now entirely changed. The throne was occupied by an infant prince, who required counsel and direction, and who could not possibly possess that influence which weight of years and decision of character could alone give. Henceforth, whatever progress was made, Cranmer himself must bear the responsibility, and endure the entire burden of any resistance that might be offered by the partisans of Rome.

When urged that he might now go forward in those matters, upon which he had long been intent, since the times much better served for such a purpose than those of Henry, his answer showed how keenly he felt the difficulties of his position, and how fearful he was of the result; for "it was better," said he, "to attempt such reformation in king Henry's days than at this time, the king being in his infancy. For if the king's father had set forth anything for the reformation of abuses, who was he that dared gainsay it? Marry, we are now in doubt

how men will take the change or alteration of abuses in the church; and, therefore, the council hath forborne especially to speak thereof, and of other things which gladly they would have reformed in this visitation, referring all those, and such like matters, to the discretion of the visitors. But if king Henry VIII. had lived unto this day, with the French king, it had been past my lord of Winchester's (Gardiner) power to have visored the king's highness, as he did when he was about the same league." Nevertheless, the same faith which had cheered him when he set out upon his arduous journey, sustained him now that the difficulties of the way were becoming greater, and induced him to take courage and press forward.

Edward VI. was scarcely ten years old when he was summoned, by the death of his father, to assume the government. The Reformers looked with hope, and the Romanists with dread and jealousy, to his administration. The former could not but anticipate happy results from his education having been entrusted to Cranmer; the latter, from the same cause, expected nothing but discouragement. These feelings were alike heightened by the issue of

a commission, under the advice of the archbishop, for the reappointment of the bishops at the hands of the sovereign, by which it was intended publicly to demonstrate, that the ecclesiastical supremacy was vested in the crown, and that the authority of the pope was now utterly and summarily rejected.

The ceremony of the coronation of the youthful monarch was performed by Cranmer himself, on which occasion, instead of preaching a sermon, as was usual, he briefly addressed a few observations to Edward, in which he admonished him, as he was God's vicerent and Christ's vicar within his own dominions, that, like a second Josiah, it was his duty to see "that God was truly worshipped, the poor relieved, and that throughout his kingdom violence was repressed, justice executed, and sin revenged." In conclusion, he prayed that God of his mercy would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and grant him a long, prosperous, and happy reign.

The coronation of Edward VI. was speedily followed by further indications of the determination to maintain and extend the rejection of the usurped jurisdiction of the see of Rome. The persecutions under the Act of the Six

Articles now terminated, and those of the clergy, who had fled for safety and freedom to the continent, at the close of the late reign, returned to give the benefit of their counsel and advice to Cranmer and his friends, and to assist them in carrying forward their important work. Gardiner was excluded from the number of the late monarch's executors, and from all share in the regency during the minority of Edward VI. He did not, on this account, however, relax in his activity against the prevailing changes of the day. He still vindicated the superstitious observances of his church, and resisted Cranmer as far as he felt it politic to do so. But the power which his opponent now possessed was too strong to be withstood effectually; the caution and kindness which the archbishop manifested in the exercise of his office, disarmed all those whose object was to defeat his intentions, and none more than Gardiner himself. A general visitation of the whole kingdom was immediately resolved upon, in order to rectify abuses, and to consolidate the establishment of those changes which had so recently been effected, for the social, moral, and religious improvement of the people. "The Book of Homilies"

was also prepared, with a view to suit the comprehension of simple and illiterate persons. The Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the New Testament was commanded to be translated, and the portion containing the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, to be immediately issued by royal authority, with injunctions that copies, both of this work and of the Homilies, should be deposited in every church in the kingdom, in order that they might be publicly read by the ministers to their several congregations.

These resolutions were most distasteful to Gardiner, who positively refused to take any part in the preparation or diffusion of either book. He urgently solicited permission to appear before the council, in order to show that the doctrines they contained were false and contradictory; this was permitted: but the council, finding that no argument could shake his opinions, unhappily for their character for moderation, came to the decision to commit him to the Fleet, for contempt of the royal authority, and disobedience to its injunctions. Bonner, bishop of London, was also sentenced to a like imprisonment for a similar resistance; but, after a short confinement

he was discharged. Gardiner remained in durance throughout Edward's reign.

The Reformation was now holding its course calmly and steadily onward. In the month of November, both the parliament and convocation assembled, and the session was, in several respects, signally important. Cranmer's influence was happily predominant in the deliberations of the clergy. On the 22nd of November, he produced an ordinance for the receiving of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper under both kinds, of bread and wine; the proposition was unanimously adopted in the next sitting, whereby the iniquitous and unscriptural decision of the clergy, assembled at the council of Constance, in the year 1413, was repealed; namely, that the laity and officiating ministers should not partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper under each species. This momentous recognition of the practice of the primitive church was not suffered to sleep in the records of the convocation. The activity of Cranmer secured for it without delay the sanction of the legislature, as appears by the very first act of the present parliament, whereby it was decreed, "that the laity should receive the cup as well

as the officiating minister, except necessity should otherwise require ; and that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should not be denied, without a lawful cause, to any person who should humbly and devoutly desire it." There is but little doubt that this statute was drawn by Cranmer himself. The next result of this session of parliament was the repeal of the Act of the Six Articles, and of the persecuting statutes of the realm, by which decision the terrors of further religious persecutions were altogether removed.

Religious dissensions were, however, still prevalent. The shades of human character are so varied, and the complexion of men's minds so dissimilar, that changes of any kind are certain to produce diversities of opinion and contradictory intentions. So it was at this season. The old leaven was not taken away ; the shadowy and unreal forms of superstition were more consonant to the minds of many than the recently introduced rigid and uncompromising realities of truth ; the one interfered with the pleasures and occupations of the present time, and demanded attention at the sacrifice of all that was agreeable to the carnal mind ; the other flattered, whilst it deceived

the soul into a deadly security. The principles were then antagonistic, as they ever will be ; there was no accordance " between Christ and Belial," and consequently, society was kept in a continual ferment by the impediments advanced on the one hand, and the determined resolution to do the work of God on the other.

Cranmer often desponded ; he felt that he should surely be overwhelmed by the obstacles which continually arose in his way ; yet he made progress, and succeeded in removing one superstitious usage after another. Considering the difficulties that he encountered, it will remain a marvel that he effected so much. At the outset of his public life, he found the doctrines and practices of the church of Rome in full force ; he lived to see them one by one removed, chiefly through his own instrumentality ; and although for a season the country reverted to the degradation from which he had striven to release it, yet it may be safely asserted, that a large part of the religious liberty we now enjoy, is to be attributed to this one man, who least of all seemed fitted to bring about the remarkable changes of his times, and whose weakness and irresolution in many

points, appear little calculated in human estimation for the purposes which God had in hand for the promulgation of his truth, and the glorification of his great and holy name.

In his solicitude to dislodge the traditional absurdities, which still had a great hold upon the minds of the lower classes of the people, Cranmer aimed to do so by slow, yet certain steps, in order to win their consent without openly attacking their prejudices. He had also much need to restrain the desire of the more zealous, but less judicious favourers of his designs, who preferred and adopted violent means, and accused him of time-serving, because he proceeded much too slowly to suit their spirit. And undoubtedly one cause of the success of so many of his measures was, that in spite of all the blame imputed to him, he was determined to win confidence by prudence, rather than extend his prerogative at the expense of a more lasting censure. Hence he caused a royal proclamation to go forth, that no changes of religious practice and usage should take place, unless authorized by himself under the king's sanction; but, in order to show that he was sincere in all he did, he at once caused the abolition of

images, and the worship which had been paid to them, and set about the removal of every practice which dishonoured God, and was contrary to his revealed will.

Hitherto, his views of the doctrine of transubstantiation had accorded with those taught by the Roman Catholic church; they now underwent a change; but though he had shaken off his belief in this preposterous notion, he was well aware, that it still had a strong hold upon the public mind, and that if upon his own authority he made an immediate change, and restored the service of the Lord's Supper to a communion, instead of acknowledging it as a sacrifice, he would rouse an opposition which it would be most difficult to control, and would, in all human probability, entirely defeat his purpose. He therefore submitted ten questions to the bishops respecting the doctrine of the mass, requiring them to state, in writing, what was their opinion thereon. In the answers, which are still extant, it will be discovered, that scarcely one of the bishops, nay, not even the archbishop himself, nor even Ridley, had as yet thoroughly clear notions on the subject. There was a greater approach to a belief in true doc-

trine, than had already been discovered ; but several of the superstitious trammels of former times had yet to be removed, before they escaped from that darkened state of vision in which, like the blind man healed by our Lord, "they saw men," but "as trees walking." The result of their discussions was, however, the first step towards changing the mass into a communion service ; the sacrament was henceforth to be administered in both kinds, and auricular confession to a priest before the reception of it, left as optional, the communicant being either at liberty to confess his sins to God, or, if troubled in conscience, to any learned or discreet divine, for consolation as well as advice and direction.

Whilst this change dealt a formidable blow at the old superstition, it did not go far enough to satisfy many. The rapacious spirit which Henry VIII. had raised upon the dissolution of the monasteries, was not allayed, and this feeling encouraged many to aim at benefiting themselves by the spoliation of everything that remained. A feverish desire was prevalent on every side to appropriate this to secular purposes, and no effort was left untried to secure a share in it by those who

esteemed the religious changes of the day as of no use, unless they subserved their pecuniary advantage. They aided in the demolition of certain objects of idolatry, such as images, shrines, and consecrated wafers, but they merely changed the objects of their veneration, and placed "Mammon" in their stead. The old practice had been maintained with a view to save the soul, though it was worthless for such a purpose; and under the pretence of introducing better measures for this great end, a blind and base reverence was now submitted to, which degraded human nature, and "excluded God from the conscience, Christ from the recollection, and left men in all the guilt of a salvation still neglected and abused."

This spirit of the times deeply afflicted Cranmer, no less than the other matters, which have been already noticed. No man was less anxious than he to avail himself of opportunities for his own advantage. Whilst others had enriched themselves, he still remained poor, scarcely being able to obtain the necessaries of life, so that his worst enemies have never, with any truth, been able to allege that his activity in promoting the reformation of religion was excited by sordid or avaricious

designs. He opposed to the last every attempt at the appropriation of the revenues of chantries and monasteries to secular purposes; and though his resistance was in vain, he had the satisfaction of knowing, that he at least had endeavoured to do his duty, by trying to save those possessions, which, if rightly administered, would have tended to the amelioration, social and religious, of the people.

CHAPTER IX.

Cranmer's unceasing activity—His translation of Justus Jonas' Catechism led to the rejection of transubstantiation by Ridley—The English liturgy—Aversion of the Romanists to the new ritual—Their rebellion in Devonshire and Cornwall—Cranmer replies to the rebels—Variety of pernicious opinions—Burning of Joan Bocher—Cranmer had no share in it—Attainder of the Protector Somerset—New formulary of ordination—Cranmer entertains learned foreigners at Lambeth—Bucer and Fagius appointed to professorships at Cambridge, where they soon die—Bishop Hooper refuses to wear the episcopal vestments—Degradation of Gardiner—Gardiner's answer to Cranmer's "Defence of the true Doctrine of the Sacrament"—Cranmer replies to it—His revision of the English liturgy—Cranmer occupied in framing the articles of religion—These articles intended to oppose the decrees of the Council of Trent—Project for a reformation of the ecclesiastical laws—Death of Edward vi.—His last prayer.

THE labours of Cranmer at this period of his life were incessant. Whatever had hitherto been wrested from the Roman Catholic church was acquired solely by his importunity, energy, and perseverance. He gave himself no rest either night or day, but wholly devoted his time and talents to furnish instruction for the

people, which should, under the Divine blessing, improve their condition, and lead them to embrace the revealed truths of Scripture. To this end he translated the catechism of Justus Jonas, a Lutheran divine, which consisted of elementary expositions of the Lord's prayer, of the sacrament of baptism, and of the Lord's supper. This work he dedicated to the king, and set it forth as "overseen and corrected" by his own hand. Considering the period in which it was published, it was an evident advance towards the promulgation of sounder doctrine and more scriptural instruction; but it was faulty in many points, and leaves it somewhat doubtful whether the archbishop's views were yet thoroughly sound upon the principal tenets of religious faith.

The translation of the catechism of Justus Jonas, by his hand, has given rise to a supposition that, at the time of its publication, he held the doctrine of consubstantiation. Be this as it may, and it seems probable that it was so, his mind did not long hesitate between the opinions of the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches. Ridley had been led by the study of the celebrated work of Bertram on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which

first appeared in the middle of the ninth century, to take a scriptural view of this subject, and he at once communicated to his intimate friend the light which had dawned upon him from God. Cranmer immediately bent his mind to the investigation to which he was invited, and held many conferences with Ridley, the consequence of which was that he followed the noble example placed before him, and rejected for ever all belief either in transubstantiation or consubstantiation.

The changes of opinions upon points of doctrine had now become so marked and positive, that it was necessary to adopt means to get rid of the old Papist service books, and to frame a liturgy more in accordance with the return to scriptural teaching and practice. The undertaking was one which was urgently demanded by the adventurous spirit of the times. The Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, had already become familiar to the people, from being heard in their native tongue. "But these provisions were far from satisfying the impatience of the reforming clergy; many of whom were eagerly outstripping the tardy pace of civil or ecclesiastical authority. The consequence of their haste

was that, in proportion as the Reformation spread, every church was likely to have a separate ritual, or rather an ever-changing form of devotion, dependent solely upon the knowledge or ignorance, the prudence or caprice, of the minister for the time being."

It was in vain that proclamations were made to control this state of things. The only method, it was thought, which could remedy the want of uniformity, was to frame a new service book, which should be prepared by the most learned and pious persons that could be found to be employed on such a work. Twelve eminent divines were forthwith nominated under the superintendence of the archbishop, to effect this purpose, upon the fulfilment of which they were solemnly enjoined by the king to proceed with diligence and zeal.

They commenced their work in May, A.D. 1548, and finished it by the end of November. In the following January, it passed the legislature, and received a final sanction from the authority of the king. It was ordered that the use of this liturgy should commence on the following Whit-Sunday; but many of the reforming clergy, in their anxiety to aid the progress of events, introduced it as early as

Easter. The people eagerly attended the services of the church, now intelligible to them from the use of their native tongue. The clergy, as a body, received it with a more doubtful approval, and although they used it, yet many of them did not refrain from expressing their dissatisfaction at the change. The aversion of the Romanists to the new service-book was undisguised. They hated it, and did not hesitate to express their dislike in the strongest terms. The spirit of rebellion was, however, abroad; and while a vast proportion of the inhabitants of the country rejoiced at the changes which were taking place, an active opposition was roused by the disaffected in Devonshire and Cornwall, and a formidable revolt broke out, which terminated in the signal defeat of the rebels, not, however, until the most active efforts had been adopted for its suppression. The part which Cranmer had to take in these events was of a prominent and decisive character; his answer to the demands of the insurgents remains as a most important and interesting document.

A circumstance in his life, which has most commonly been reported to his prejudice, occurred about this time—the burning of Joan

Bocher, on a charge of heresy. Owing to the excitement of human nature at all periods of unusual changes, various opinions arise which are pushed to extremes, and thus lead the injudicious astray. Doctrines were now promulgated which had no warrant for belief from the only source from which truth emanates. Amongst these, the notions were included "that the elect could never sin,—that the regenerate could never fall away from godly love,—that the people of the Lord are invested not merely with a certain title to the inheritance of heaven, but also with the right of helping themselves to all that may supply their necessities upon earth." Besides these ideas, disputations arose respecting the person and dignity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; it was stated that he was nothing but a human being, and the only benefit conferred by him, was a more perfect knowledge of God ; whilst on the other hand, it was asserted that he was not born of the virgin Mary, and that, therefore, it was improper to call him "very man," because he took no substance of his mother. The unhappy woman, whose life was sacrificed, held erroneous opinions on the subject of the incarnation of our Lord ; for these she was

summoned before the council, and, after examination, condemned to suffer at the stake. That Cranmer was not present at the council when this sentence was passed has been satisfactorily proved; and although all classes of objectors to the Reformation have availed themselves of the presumed fact, that Cranmer urged the young king to sanction the punishment of Joan Bocher, and that, when he at last yielded, he declared before God that the guilt should rest upon his adviser; yet there is reason to believe that Cranmer had no share in this part of the business, since the warrant for her execution has been discovered to have been signed by the council, and not by the king at all. This passage in Cranmer's history has been pronounced incapable of defence; and truly it must ever have been so considered, had not recent researches released him from the imputation from which he has so long and so injuriously suffered.*

In the year 1549, Cranmer appears supporting the falling cause of the protector Somerset, whom the Romanists determined, if possible, to overthrow, for his support of Protestant

* See the writings of Roger Hutchinson, published by the Parker Society, 1842. Biog. notice, pp. iv. v.

principles. The cupidity of this nobleman also hastened his disgrace, and drew down upon him general indignation. No man partook more largely of the spoliation of church property or stained his] reputation by a more extravagant appropriation of it. His disposition was frank and generous, and his manners amiable ; but they could not save him from the unpopularity which his conduct deserved, or avert the consequences of public disgust and execration. Cranmer was not, however, the man to desert an old friend when his greatness was departing ; he was thankful for the aid which the protector had given in prosecuting the Reformation, and remembered in the season of his adversity the many kind offices he had received when his affairs were in a prosperous condition. He, therefore, lost not a moment in using every endeavour, in conjunction with sir William Paget and sir Thomas Smith, to avert the consequences of the storm, which was about to break ; his efforts, however, did not prevent the removal of Somerset from the protectorship, or the deep humiliation which his enemies were resolved to heap upon him. Still the expectations of the Romanists, who were tempted to hope for the restoration of

their principles by the removal of Somerset from the regency, were doomed to be disappointed. The activity and perseverance of Cranmer crushed them in the bud, inasmuch as he adopted the most effectual method for the further suppression of their designs, and not only obtained an order in council for the abolition of all popish works of devotion, but also effected the completion of a formulary for the future ordination of the clergy.

The archbishop, during the time in which he was engaged in prosecuting the public duties of his office, and in passing measures through parliament for the permanent establishment of the Reformation, never lost sight of the important object, which was nearest his heart—of aiding the progress of sound scriptural divinity. Among the expedients to which he resorted for this end was the entertainment of many of the learned foreign divines at Lambeth, in order to gain their counsel and advice respecting the maintenance of true religion. He sent many invitations to Melancthon to join Martin Bucer, Paulus Fagius, Peter Martyr, Bernardine Ochinus, and others, in these conferences, but many circumstances prevented his visit to England at this season, as well as at

a former period in the times of Henry VIII. M. Bucer afterwards became professor of theology at Cambridge, and Fagius, Hebrew professor in the same university; but the benefit which Cranmer anticipated from these appointments was of short duration, since they both were shortly after called away from this world to a better, and thus escaped the bitter persecution of the succeeding years, to which their patron and friend was himself to fall a victim.

The progress of spoliation still went on. Notwithstanding Cranmer procured letters from the council to stop this evil, he found that his prohibitions were but of little avail. Of no service was it that both he and M. Bucer loudly protested against the plunder upon which the nobles had determined. Their voice was unheeded. The professed friends of the changes which were taking place in the establishment, were the most active in securing something for themselves in the scramble, and cared neither for prohibition nor entreaty so long as there remained one particle of church property upon which they could lay their hands. The afflictions of Cranmer indeed abounded. Dissension

increased amongst his own personal friends in the ministry, and spread most rapidly. The great point of difference amongst them was the refusal of bishop Hooper to wear the episcopal vestments then generally in use. Cranmer endeavoured for some time to abstain from taking any part in the matter, but at length he could no longer remain silent, and the consequence was, that partly from persuasion, and partly from perceiving that animosity and ill-will were producing disastrous effects to the peace of the community, Hooper gave way, and consented to be consecrated bishop of Gloucester in the usual manner. During the time he discharged the arduous duties of this appointment, he fulfilled his task with exemplary zeal, and finally closed a holy life by martyrdom.

The degradation of Gardiner, who was still in close confinement, was now determined upon. During his imprisonment, he had prepared his celebrated treatise, in answer to the archbishop's "Defence of the true Doctrine of the Sacrament," which attracted great attention, and met with extraordinary success. Cranmer lost no time in replying to it, and showed that he possessed a vast amount of learning, and was well skilled in all the

rules of logical reasoning, which were then adopted in every controversy of the kind. The remainder of his life was, indeed, spent in the confutation of Gardiner's writings, for the latter never ceased to be "a thorn in the side," so long as his days were spared. Although he could not be considered altogether free from blame in the matter of Gardiner's degradation, yet he carried forward no vindictive spirit towards his adversary. Unceasingly he strove to show that all he had done arose from the feeling that it was necessary to use such means to hold his opponent in check: on the other hand, Gardiner's course of action was dictated by the most rancorous detestation. He hated Cranmer, not merely on account of his holding a prominent position, but because he used the influence he possessed to "bring to light the hidden works of darkness," and to "remove them out of the way." A bitter enemy to the gospel of Christ, he became the antagonist of every man who had embraced its truths, and supposed he was doing God service by availing himself of every opportunity to crush the most active and energetic servants of the Most High. In the end he triumphed, but for a season only; affording another proof how true

it is that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

Cranmer next undertook the revision of the English liturgy. In this he was assisted by Ridley, and Cox, (afterwards bishop of Ely,) who adopted several of the suggestions of Peter Martyr, Bucer, and others of the foreign divines then in England. The result of these labours was the Book of Common Prayer, reduced very nearly into the form in which it stands at present; the subsequent changes in queen Elizabeth's reign, having been principally intended to render it less objectionable to the opponents of the Reformation.

The greatest monument perhaps of the archbishop's learning, industry, and prudence, was now to be brought forward. The Council of Trent was holding its sessions for the establishment of the false doctrines of the church of Rome, and it appeared positively necessary to Cranmer, as he wrote to John Calvin, that a synod should be holden in England, for the refutation of error, and the restoration and propagation of the truth. The decrees respecting the worship of the host were now under discussion, and he felt that no stone ought to be left unturned to guard against this idolatry.

It was found impossible, however, to hold a synod; but Cranmer immediately set himself to the drawing up of a code of articles, which should especially meet the case, and be the exponent of what was scriptural doctrine on the subject of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as well as on the essentials of religious truth. The framing of Forty-Two Articles was the result, from which, with subsequent modifications and alterations, the present Confession of Faith of the church of England was afterwards formed.

It is an important historical fact, and one which cannot be sufficiently dwelt upon in the present times, that Cranmer had an especial eye to the refutation of the decrees of Trent, when he set to work to compile the Forty-Two Articles of religion, after his design to bring about an agreement in doctrine amongst the Protestants of the Continent and England had failed. The fashion now-a-days is to endeavour to impugn the intentions of the archbishop and his friends, and to assert that the Articles of the Christian faith of the church of England were never intended to mean what they state; this fact, however, annihilates the assertion, and throws back on those who make

it, the difficulty of proof, that the Reformation was not intended to depart at any length from the doctrines and teachings of the church of Rome. Cranmer's design in the preparation of these Articles, as he himself states, was to "effect such a concord and quietness in religion, as otherwise could not be expected for many years; whereby God should be glorified, his truth advanced, and the promoters of the undertaking rewarded by him, as the setters forth of his true word and gospel." But it must never be forgotten that he also intimated that this could not occur unless measures were taken to show the inconsistency and the falsehood of the doctrines of the Romanists, and especially upon the great difficulty of the times, that of transubstantiation.

This was by far the greatest step in the progress of the work of the Reformation which had yet been taken; and was calculated to confirm it in all its principles and bearings. It was the foundation, in fact, of the reformation of the ecclesiastical laws, which the archbishop also entertained, and with which he was about to proceed, when his project was cut short by the untimely removal of Edward vi., who died before he could give his sanction to the code

prepared for this purpose, and which was printed in the reign of Elizabeth, though it was never authorized or adopted. The health of the youthful monarch had been some time declining; his constitution had a natural tendency to consumption; to this alone must be attributed his early death. The physicians who attended him in his last illness, pronounced that the disease of which he died, was putrefaction of the lungs, and utterly incurable. The last prayer he uttered was that "God would defend the realm from papistry,"—a prayer, indeed, heard and answered, but not immediately; for, although the church of Christ had to undergo a season of bitter trial and affliction immediately upon the accession of Mary, and during the five memorable and sanguinary years of her ruthless reign; yet, from the hour in which Elizabeth succeeded her, till now, "papistry" has never recovered its baneful sway and power. Many have been the attempts, great and energetic have been the efforts, to restore its dominion: hitherto they have signally failed, and so long as the word of God is no sealed book, and the right of private judgment remains unrepealed, it is not to be anticipated that the people of this land will

return to the darkness from which their forefathers emerged, or give up willingly their possession of that glorious light which shines for the salvation of souls, and makes the way to eternal glory plain before their face. Little do the generality value their privilege,—little do they esteem the blessing which God has in His mercy conferred upon them; but no one, who reads the pages of the inspired volume aright, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and dwells prayerfully upon the consideration of the privation, suffering, and death, which those endured, who rescued it from oblivion and neglect, can do otherwise than bless God for the boon, and use every effort placed within his reach, to make known the covenant of loving-kindness it displays, in order that not only this realm, but every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue, may henceforth and for ever be defended from the curse of papistry.

CHAPTER X.

Sorrowful presentiments of Cranmer and the Reformers—Opposed to the design of making the lady Jane Grey queen—Duplicity of queen Mary—Restoration of Gardiner, who is made chancellor—Many of the Reformers anticipating persecution leave the country—Cranmer recommends this course to his friends, but refuses to adopt it himself—He is summoned before the council and committed to the Tower—Offers to defend the doctrines of the Reformation—Act for confirming the marriage of Henry VIII. with Catharine of Aragon, and the legitimacy of the queen—Cranmer attainted of high treason—Led through London—Address to the people—Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer confined in the same room—They are removed to Oxford—Cranmer's disputations there—Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley condemned—Cranmer writes a letter to the council—Treachery of Weston respecting the delivery of it—The execution of the reformers delayed—Cranmer reserved for another trial upon the revival of the pope's authority—Courage of the Reformers.

THE prospects of the Reformation were now wholly darkened. By the accession of Mary, Cranmer lost not only all hope of completing the work he had so long been prosecuting, but he soon found that he could expect no mercy at the hands of the successor of Edward VI. Although he raised his voice against the design for making the lady Jane Grey queen,

agreeably to the tenor of the late king's will, yet he had taken too great a part in the changes of religion, and also given too strong a cause of offence in the conduct he displayed in the divorce of queen Catharine, the first wife of Henry VIII., to remain long unmolested after Mary, her daughter, was seated on the throne.

Mary had promised, in order to secure her succession, in opposition to the design of making the lady Jane Grey queen, that no alteration should be made in the religion which her brother had established; and by this promise she mainly succeeded in obtaining that position, to which she was undoubtedly entitled. No sooner, however, did she feel herself secure than she commenced a totally different course. Acting upon the principle that no faith was to be kept with heretics, she threw off the mask, and showed that she was intent on following the directions of those men who had violently opposed the progress of events in the late reigns, and resolved to restore the superstition which had been removed. The time-serving, and the half-hearted, perceiving the bias of her mind, and being also well aware of her detestation of the religion established partly by her father, and more

fully by her brother, as originating primarily from her mother's wrongs, took possession of the churches, turned out the incumbents, and celebrated mass in anticipation of the approaching return to former usages. One of her first acts was to restore Gardiner, the unceasing adversary of Cranmer, to the dignities from which he had been removed, and to appoint him chancellor. The Protestant clergy at once understood from this mark of favour, that persecution would speedily be resorted to, and many sought safety in flight. Cranmer perceived that if his friends remained, nothing short of death awaited them; he therefore earnestly recommended them to withdraw to other countries, where they would be safe from the ruthless fury which already began to prevail; but when those most anxious for his preservation intreated him to save himself by the like precaution, he replied that it was not fitting he should desert his post, and, if danger was to be apprehended, his place and duty were to be found ready to meet it, and to disregard the consequences.

The fears of his friends for his safety were not long unfounded. Early in the month of August, immediately after the appointment of

a commission, consisting of Bonner, Gardiner, Day, and Tonsal, authorizing them to degrade and imprison the Protestant clergy on the charges of treason, heresy, and marriage, he was summoned before the council to give an account of his conduct in the matter of the lady Jane Grey, and was commanded to keep his house at Lambeth. On the 27th of the same month, he was again brought before it, and ordered to give in an inventory of his goods. Up to this time, it seems that the council were undetermined what course they should take with respect to him; but they were not long in deciding upon harsh measures, for in the middle of the following September he was committed to the Tower.

The archbishop was now prepared for extremities, which he anticipated would quickly follow upon his imprisonment. From the time of Edward sixth's death he had begun "to make himself ready for the worst, and to set his house in order." His enemies were determined to lose no opportunity of blackening his reputation; they added to their accusations against him that he had expressed his willingness to officiate at the funeral of the late king according to the old formularies, and

that he had actually restored the celebration of the mass in the cathedral church of Canterbury. Even the habitual meekness of the man could not brook their calumnies, and he drew up a most energetic denial of any wish or intention to participate in the revival of any of the abuses which he had been chiefly instrumental in abolishing. "For this vindication of himself, he also added an intrepid challenge to the adherents of the Romish faith. If the queen would but grant him the opportunity, he said, he, together with Peter Martyr, and four or five more, whom he should choose, would engage not only to defend the common prayer, the ministration of the sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies, but also to show, that all the doctrine and religion established by Edward VI. was more pure and more conformable to God's word than any that had been known in England for the last ten centuries; and that it was essentially the same that had been used in the church for fifteen hundred years. All this he engaged to prove, on the condition that the matter might be brought to the test of God's word, and that the disputation might be carried on in writing." Before Cranmer had time to revise the

declaration which he had put forth, it was stolen, surreptitiously published, and openly read in public. Copies of the document being brought to the council, he was required to state whether he was the author of it. He at once asserted that he was, and though he could but regret its having been made public before he had corrected and enlarged it, with a view to affixing it upon the doors of all the churches of London, yet he was determined to stand by its statements, and to defend the principles it contained, even should it be, as it undoubtedly would be, at the risk of his life. There is no question that this boldness hastened his imprisonment, which took place in the September following his appearance before the council, as has been already intimated.

The conduct of Cranmer, at this period of his life, was such as merited the warmest approbation. He exhibited an example of unflinching resolution in the first hours of his trial, which proved him to be under the influence of nobler principles than the mind, uninfluenced by Divine grace, is capable of experiencing. This undaunted spirit continued to support him in the midst of the dangers which every moment were gathering round

him, and which were now to burst upon him with all the merciless violence, for which the dealings of the adherents of the Roman Catholic church had been for several centuries so notoriously infamous.

The blow now struck at the archbishop was at the instigation of Gardiner. The queen was determined that the first act of the legislature under her reign should be the confirmation of the legality of her father's first marriage, and the restoration of her own legitimacy. No one had been more active than Gardiner, in former times, to denounce the legality of this marriage, and the legitimacy of the issue thereof in the person of the princess Mary. Long before Cranmer had been called upon by Henry to take part in that vexatious question, Gardiner had been implicated in it, and had himself been the means of discovering the archbishop's sentiments, and of communicating them to the king, in order to bring the matter to a speedy termination. Under present circumstances, however, he felt it convenient to put aside all recollection of the part he had taken, and studied only how he might involve his opponent in the transaction. To this end, he caused it to be inserted in the preamble to the

statute about to be passed, "that Thomas Cranmer, late archbishop, did, most ungodly, and against law, judge the divorce upon his own unadvised understanding of the Scriptures, and upon testimonies of the universities, and some bare and most untrue conjectures." So little regard had this unscrupulous man for truth, that he deemed any course expedient and lawful which should enable him to direct his hatred against Cranmer, and bring him within the power of his vengeance.

The same parliament which restored the queen attainted Cranmer of high treason. As a necessary consequence, he was divested of the temporalities of the archbishop, which were immediately placed under sequestration. He appears to have been severely disquieted by the thought of being branded as a traitor, and he lost no time in addressing to the queen a petition for pardon, in which he gave an elaborate explanation of his conduct in sanctioning the design of Henry VIII. with a view to a change in the succession to the throne. The idea of having to suffer as a violater of the laws of the realm was a source of much trouble to his mind; that he might be counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake was his anxious

desire ; he continually expressed his readiness to meet death, if it were but for the cause of God, and as soon as he learned that it would be on this head that he would be called upon to endure trial and persecution, his cheerfulness returned, and he expressed his conviction that he should be able to do all things through the strength of his Saviour. As the narrative of the close of his eventful life will show, in the order of events in which he was concerned, he was much shaken, and gave proofs that the strength of human nature is nothing when spiritual aid is withdrawn, and that the creature can never remain stedfast or unmovable for a moment, unless upheld by Him who is Almighty ; in a word, that he is only safe, when His “everlasting arms” are underneath, and he refreshes him with the continual “light of his countenance.”

Cranmer was now in daily expectation that his execution would speedily follow this act of degradation, especially, as within a few days after his attainder, he was led through London publicly. In this trying scene, he maintained a firm and cheerful demeanour, and availed himself of the opportunity earnestly to implore the spectators of his humiliation not to give

way to grief, but to conduct themselves peaceably and in accordance with the principles of the gospel, which he had laboured to give them untainted with the superstitious dogmas of the church of Rome. His anticipation of a speedy execution was not realized. The implacable Mary, instigated by the malicious suggestions of her adviser, Gardiner, had other objects in view than to put the degraded archbishop immediately to death. She had already resolved to devote him as a sacrifice to the hatred of that church whose system inculcates no pity, and whose dealing is by anathema and the flames against all whom she pronounces "heretical" or apostate.

Cranmer, at this season of his imprisonment in the Tower, was not without consolation. Ridley and Latimer were also confined in one of its dungeons "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ:" owing to the crowded condition of this prison, they were placed in the same chamber with their old friend and associate. Here they employed their time in reading and deliberating upon the word of God, and in striving together in prayer that God would support them under their trials, and make them redound to his

honour and glory. This happy intercourse lasted but a few months, when they were broken in upon by a command that Cranmer should enter upon a public disputation before the convocation, which had been summoned at the same time with the parliament, at the command of Bonner, who had now supplanted Ridley in the bishopric of London.

Nothing could be more creditable to the reformer than his conduct on this occasion. Feeling the importance of the cause for which he was called in question, he answered meekly, but firmly, to the points mooted for discussion, contending, that he had the word of God as his authority for the doctrines he maintained and taught. The spirit of his opponents was totally in opposition to that which he was enabled to manifest. It was marked by an unprecedented display of insolence and shameless indecorum ; nay, they did not hesitate to reply, when Cranmer stated that the reformers had the word of God for their guide, that they had the sword, intimating thereby that as their power was now in the ascendant, they would not be very scrupulous in the use of it. So flagrant and so manifestly intemperate and unjust were their proceedings,⁶ that it roused the indigna-

tion of many of their own partisans. With a view, therefore, to allay the rising indignation, "it was resolved that the controversy should be renewed at Oxford under the management of a committee selected from both universities; and it was further determined that Cranmer, and his two fellow-prisoners, who had been excluded from the former conflict, should now be summoned to share in this. In pursuance of this resolution, they were removed from the Tower to the prison of Bocardo, in Oxford, in the month of March;" and, in the following April, the strife of words commenced, upon the presence, substance, and sacrifice of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The dominant party regarded the approaching contest as one of no ordinary moment. They ushered it in with many preparations, and with an unusual amount of pageantry. On the 14th of April, the representatives of the lower house of convocation, with Dr. Weston as their prolocutor, attended by the delegates of each university, went in procession to the church of St. Mary's, and seated themselves in the choir, immediately before the high altar at the eastern end of the church. When they had performed their respective devotions, and

settled the preliminaries of the business upon which they had met, they summoned the mayor and bailiffs of the city to produce Cranmer, who soon appeared, under a strong guard. He stood with his staff in his hand, with a grave and reverential aspect ; and in that posture he remained, having declined a seat which they had the courtesy to offer him. The proceedings were opened by an address from the prolocutor, Dr. Weston, in which he laboured to prove how valuable it was to maintain unity in the church of Christ ; and then turning to Cranmer, he lamented that he who had once been a Catholic, (that is to say a papist,) should have made an unseemly breach in that unity, not merely by setting forth erroneous doctrines, but by teaching a new faith every year. He made it a great point in this address to assure the archbishop that it was the queen's earnest desire, that he should, if possible, be recovered from his schismatical separation ; and that she had accordingly been pleased to charge himself (Dr. Weston) and the other delegates with the office of reclaiming him.

He then produced the three Articles which had been agreed upon as the main points of discussion ; the first of which affirmed the

corporeal presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; the second declared the transubstantiation of the consecrated elements; and the third maintained the life-giving and propitiatory virtue of the mass. Cranmer was commanded to give expression to his sentiments upon these propositions; to which he answered, that no one valued unity more than he did, if that which was proposed was in agreement with the words of Christ. He then deliberately read over the Articles submitted to him, three or four times, and being asked, whether he would subscribe them, he replied, that as they were there worded, they were all false, and at variance with Scripture; and that, consequently, he must decline all unity of which these propositions were the basis. He offered, nevertheless, to prepare his answer in writing by the next day, if he might be allowed a copy of the Articles. The prolocutor assented; but told him his answer must be in readiness that very night, and that he would be called upon to maintain the points of his dissent, by scholastic argument in Latin, in the public schools. He was then again consigned to the custody of the mayor, and conducted back to his confine-

ment at Bocardo, which was no better than a filthy prison for the reception of ordinary criminals. His demeanour on this day was, throughout, so distinguished by venerable gravity and modest self-possession, that several of the academics, who disapproved of his opinions, were moved even to tears.

The next day, Sunday, April 15, a banquet was given at Magdalen College, after a sermon at St. Mary's Church, by Harpsfield, chaplain to Bonner, bishop of London. Cranmer sent in his answer to the Articles, in the course of the evening, to Dr. Weston, who was staying in Lincoln College. In this reply, he maintained that the opinions held by the Roman Catholic doctors were erroneous; namely, that the bread of the Lord's supper is not bread, but the actual flesh, and the wine the actual blood, of Christ, made so by the act of consecration of the priest at the words, "*Hoc est corpus meum*,"—"This is my body." He also declared that he was ready and prepared to substantiate the rational and Scriptural signification of this holy institution; that the bread and wine were but types, and that they were to be eaten and drunk symbolically of the one great and all-sufficient sacrifice of

Christ for the redemption of mankind; and, lastly, he maintained that the one oblation of Christ once offered upon the cross was of supreme and final efficacy, and that to seek for any other sacrifice for sin than this, would be to make the great propitiation of no effect, and the sufferings of our Lord nugatory, as well as to rob him of his honour and glory.

The following day, the commissioners proceeded, at the early hour of eight o'clock, to the divinity school, where Cranmer was to undergo a disputation, single-handed, against a host of opponents. The mayor and aldermen of the city attended on this occasion, and were seated near to the archbishop. Dr. Weston commenced the proceedings by a speech, the opening of which caused much laughter, which soon ceased upon his entering on a defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the staple commodity of all discussions at that period, to which doctrine Rome has bound herself hand and foot by the statutes of the councils of Lateran and Trent, and to which she still adheres in her fearfully erroneous creed. Cranmer boldly and energetically defended his opinions against this doctrine from Scripture, and by logical arguments, amidst

uproarious interruption and unseemly abuse, from eight o'clock in the morning till two in the afternoon, sometimes addressing the assembly in Latin, and at others in English. His patience and endurance under ridicule and insult, manifested that he was influenced by the Spirit of his great Master, "who when He was reviled, reviled not again;" whilst his readiness of reply, and aptitude of reference to the Scriptures and scholastic divines, also verified the declaration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as it had previously been verified in apostolic times again and again, and in the early ages of the Christian church; "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak. . . For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."*

* Matt. x. 16—20.

Like wolves, gloating over their prey, the followers of the restored Romish faith, which Cranmer had done so much to remove from the minds of the English people, by teaching the truths of Christ, and giving them the word of the eternal God, which alone can make wise unto salvation, determined to attack him yet again on the following Thursday (April 19). On that day, he was brought once more into the schools to dispute, as an opponent, with Harpsfield, who was to perform the usual exercises previously to proceeding to the degree of Doctor of Divinity. The discussion was carried on between them agreeably to the ancient forms, by crude logical syllogisms, which, at these times, appear to be nothing better than worthless jargon. Cranmer again defended his cause with such accurate judgment that it drew forth even compliment and applause from Dr. Weston, and the other doctors who were present. But it had no effect in softening their hearts, or in bringing them to a more righteous conclusion. They admired the tact and learning of the man, but they still abhorred and detested his opinions.

Cranmer returned to his prison, only to be

again summoned, on the following day, (April 20,) to St. Mary's Church, to hear his own condemnation with that of Ridley and Latimer. They were peremptorily asked whether or not they would subscribe the articles which had been presented to them on a previous occasion, and, again, they were told that they had been defeated in fair open disputation. Cranmer instantly repelled the assertion, and protested that, so far as he was concerned, the whole proceeding had been most iniquitously conducted; that he had been exposed throughout to 'clamorous interruption; and that it would have been impossible for him either to oppose or answer, as he was prepared to do, without condescending to an unseemly brawl, with four or five antagonists at once. Ridley and Latimer declared that they would stand to every word that they had uttered; upon which the three were placed together, and the reading of their sentence commenced, by which they were pronounced to be no longer members of the church. In the midst of his task, the reader was interrupted, and the prisoners were once more, and finally asked, whether they would turn or no? "Read on, in the

name of God," was their unanimous reply, "for we are not minded to turn;" and the officer then completed the promulgation of their doom. The moment he had finished, Cranmer exclaimed, "From this your judgment and sentence I appeal to the just judgment of the Almighty; trusting to be present with him in heaven, for whose presence in the altar I am thus condemned." "I trust," said Ridley, "that although I be not of your communion, my name is written in another place, whither your voices will soon despatch us." "And I thank God most heartily," added Latimer, "that he hath preserved me to glorify him by this kind of death." The three were then sent back to the prison, as condemned and excommunicated heretics.

Cranmer felt that, though all prospect of his life being spared was now at an end, he ought to lay before the government a representation of the manner in which he had been used during his imprisonment and in this discussion; he, therefore, wrote to the lords of the council, soliciting that they would intercede with the queen for pardon of his treason, if his conduct could thus be termed,

and requesting, that as they were acquainted with his conduct, they would do their utmost to relieve him of this accusation. It is not certain whether this letter ever reached its destination. Cranmer entrusted it to Dr. Weston; who, notwithstanding his faithful promise to deliver it, upon which the archbishop had relied, was base enough to open, and instantly send it back to the archbishop; but whether he adopted any other means of transmitting it is not now known.

The general expectation—as indeed that of the three sufferers—was, that an immediate execution would follow as the result of their determined assertion of religious principle. The emissaries of Rome, however, paused before they carried their hateful project into effect. Eighteen months elapsed before Ridley and Latimer were brought to the stake; and three years were passed by Cranmer in duration.

Cranmer was, in fact, reserved for another trial, when the authority of the pope, and the whole body of the canon law, which he had done so much to abolish, should be restored. The queen and her council hesitated to brave public opinion by sacrificing him upon the

mere charge of treason, and trusted to the course of events, and the dread of the persecution of the times, to effect, sooner or later, the archbishop's destruction, which would be rendered more effectual as proceeding from the ecclesiastical power. The courage of the reformers did not shrink under the persecution they had to endure. They trusted in the God of their salvation, and doubted not that the issue of their trial would redound to the honour of his name. The gloom of Romish darkness again settled upon England, but beyond it they perceived the brightness of His countenance, who renewed his gracious promise to their faith, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."* They therefore thanked God, and took courage, deeming that to them to live was Christ, and to die would be eternal gain.

* Isaiah xlii. 2, 3.

CHAPTER XI.

A commission issued to try Ridley and Latimer—Their martyrdom—Authority obtained from Rome for the trial of Cranmer—His examination before Brokes, bishop of Gloucester—Cranmer defends himself—The process against him closed—Cited to appear at Rome in eighty days—sentenced to excommunication at Rome—The pope's letter for execution of the sentence—Degradation of Cranmer—His appeals to a general council disregarded—The queen solicited to spare his life—Her rancorous feelings against him—His recantations—Order for his execution—Is taken to St. Mary's church previously to his death—Proceedings there—His demeanour and prayer—Retracts his recantations—Bewilderment of his persecutors—Cranmer is hurried to execution—His behaviour at the stake—Reflections upon his character and fate.

THE destruction of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer was delayed, as we have seen, for a lengthened period after their condemnation; it was not till September, A.D. 1555, that a new commission was issued to try again the two latter, which ended in their enduring the flames of martyrdom, in proof of their confidence in the truths of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." On the 12th of September,

Cranmer was again summoned into the presence of his judges, and was arraigned before them, and Brokes, bishop of Gloucester, as the representative of cardinal de Puteo, whom the pope had appointed chief commissioner in the matter; the crimes laid to his charge were blasphemy, heresy, and incontinency. His judges had already sentenced Ridley and Latimer, and he therefore looked for no mercy at their hands.

Upon entering St. Mary's church, wherein the examination was held, Cranmer saluted the proctors of the king and queen with all due respect. But looking from them to Brokes, who sat as the delegate of the pope, he covered his head, and offered no token of recognition or of obeisance. Being interrogated as to this manifestation of disrespect, he made answer, that it was not out of personal disrespect to the bishop of Gloucester that he refrained from showing any mark of courtesy, but that, having solemnly pledged himself never to recognise the authority of the pope in this realm, he refused to give any token now to his delegate, which should intimate the making of such submission. Had the president derived his power from the king and queen, he would have acknowledged their

authority to him in the same manner that he had done to the proctors, Martin and Story, who represented them. Brokes was evidently much chagrined at this proof of Cranmer's unalterable determination to abide by his opinions. But he at once commenced the proceedings with a long rambling speech, in which he reminded the archbishop of the low origin from which he had risen, and the high degree whence he had fallen, and now to the lowest degree of all, to the end of honour and life. In conclusion, he exhorted him to renounce his errors, and assured him he had been spared for his treason, in the hope of his amendment, and that if he would recant, in all probability he would be restored to the dignities and the position, as metropolitan, from which he had been removed.

Cranmer having obtained permission to enter upon his defence, immediately kneeled down and said the Lord's prayer; which finished, he rose, and repeated the articles of the creed, and then proceeded to the vindication of his conduct and character, which he maintained with his usual learning and gentleness, and that superiority which the cause itself gave him. Eight witnesses were produced to give

evidence against him, one and all of whom he challenged as being guilty of perjury, since they had once taken an oath against the pope, and now appeared in court to maintain and defend his power. This challenge on Cranmer's part was utterly disregarded, and he was again sent back to his prison. On his departure, as on his entrance, he refused to show any mark of recognising the authority of the pope by saluting the bishop of Gloucester. The next day, September 13th, the depositions of these witnesses were taken, and are still extant in the process against Cranmer, which is preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. This brought the proceedings to a close, a report of which was immediately transmitted to Rome.

On the 7th of September, Cranmer received a citation to appear at Rome within eighty days. This was of course impossible, as he was closely imprisoned at Oxford; but the cause against him proceeded, as if his absence had been voluntary. Being pronounced contumacious, he was sentenced by the pope to be degraded, and delivered over to the secular magistrate for execution. On the 29th of November, the eighty days appointed for his

appearance elapsed, and his enemies now lost no time in hurrying on his humiliation. On the 4th December, at the instance of cardinal de Puteo, he was sentenced to be excommunicated and deprived of his archbishopric; and on the 11th of the same month, the administration of the see of Canterbury was conferred on cardinal Pole. The final executory letter of the pope was dated December 14. An unexpected delay in the further proceedings now occurred, as it was not till the 14th of February, 1554, that the pope's mandate, commanding his disgrace, was carried into execution. Thirlby, bishop of Ely, and the cruel Bonner, bishop of London, were commissioned to perform this ceremony. The former had been his old and familiar friend, and received many and great kindnesses at his hands; his tears and emotion in the course of the proceedings showed that he had not forgotten the friendship of former times. But Bonner acted with all his usual characteristic insolence, loading him with abuse, notwithstanding Thirlby repeatedly plucked his sleeve and implored him to desist, reminding him of his promise, that he would not be guilty of violence against a fallen opponent. That the mockery of degradation might

be the more insulting, the vestments with which Cranmer was to be clothed for the occasion were made of the coarsest materials. Thus attired, with a mock mitre upon his head, and a pall upon his shoulders, and a crozier, or pastoral staff, in his hand, he was exhibited to the multitude in the church of St. Mary's, while the savage and infuriated Bonner exclaimed, "This is the man that hath despised the pope, and now is to be judged by him! This is the man that hath pulled down so many churches, and is now come to be judged in a church! This is the man that hath condemned the blessed sacrament, and is now come to be contemned before that sacrament!" Cranmer submitted to all this indignity calmly and patiently, saying, as he was stripped one by one of his episcopal garments, that he had done with them long ago; but he held the crozier fast, and instead of giving it up, delivered to Thirlby a paper, which he had placed in his sleeve, containing his appeal to a general council. He remembered that Luther had adopted this course and found it successful; but it was not ordained that he should die in his bed, as that great reformer was permitted to do. In the providence of God, he was to assist with his fellow-

martyrs Ridley and Latimer, "in lighting the candle of Protestant truth in England, which, by God's grace, shall never be put out."

After the process of degradation had been completed, he was dressed in a yeoman's threadbare gown, and sent back to prison. Thirlby promised him that his appeal should be received if possible, but at the same time reminded him that the commission against him, which had been issued by the pope, was upon the express terms that all right of appeal should be taken away. As might have been anticipated, the appeal was totally disregarded. "This, however," he said, "gave him but little uneasiness. He desired that God's will might be done, and that God's name might be glorified, either by his life or by his death. He thought it much better to die in Christ's quarrel than to be shut up in the prison of the body, unless it were for the advancement of God's glory, and the profit of his brethren." These words seem to imply, that he fully anticipated death, and it further appears, from this language, that the appeal was attempted chiefly as a measure for delay, which might enable him before his execution to complete his answer to Gardiner's last treatise on the sacrament.

But whatever might be his own expectations, it is quite certain his enemies were resolved on his destruction. There was no quarter to which he could look with any hope of mercy. The queen had been indebted to him for her liberty, and perhaps even for her life; for, at one time, it was the purpose of her father to have sent her to the Tower, there to suffer as a subject, for her adherence to the pope and her disobedience to the law; and nothing but the intercession of Cranmer could divert him from his resolution. And when the king yielded to his persuasions, he said that "Cranmer's good offices in her behalf would, in the end, turn to his utter confusion." She had been reminded of this fact by her subjects who had fled to the continent, who petitioned her to mitigate her persecution against the reformers, and especially Cranmer; but the recollection of this service seems only to have determined her to proceed against him, as a proof that her sincerity in the cause of the church of Rome was unshaken, and as an evidence that she could sacrifice a private benefit, to that which she considered a public good.

His adversaries were determined to carry

out the queen's intentions ; and having succeeded in destroying Ridley and Latimer, felt secure of their prey. The plan that was adopted was contrary to that under which these martyrs had been despatched. If it were possible to blacken the reputation of Cranmer, previously to his destruction, it would probably materially damage the cause of the reformation, and be the means of removing many obstacles out of the way for the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic domination. Cranmer was, therefore, dealt with very differently from any of the former sufferers.

That his enemies succeeded in their object is certain ; but it is now established that the current report of his recantations must be received with considerable suspicion. The letters of the times, lately published,* assert that the most important of these documents, in which he was made to vilify himself, were "forged by the papists during his lifetime," and it is generally supposed that Bonner was the author of them, whose sole object was to asperse and injure the character

* By the Parker Society: "Original Letters of the Reformation."

of the Reformers, and that of Cranmer in particular. The history of the extortion of this paper from him, as generally received, has been thus narrated by an ancient biographer.* “The doctors and divines of Oxford busied themselves all that ever they could to have him recant, essaying by all crafty practices and allurements they might devise how to bring their purpose to pass. And to the intent that they might win him easily, they had him to the dean’s house of Christ Church in the said university, where he lacked no delicate fare, played at bowls, had his pleasure for walking, and all other things that might bring him from Christ. Over and besides all this, secretly and sleightly, they suborned certain men, which when they could not expunge him by arguments and disputations, should, by intreaty and fair promises, and many other means, allure him to recantation, perceiving otherwise what a great wound they should receive, if the archbishop had stood stedfast in his sentence; and again on the other side, how great profit they should get, if he, as the principal standard-bearer, should be overthrown. By reason whereof

* Foxe.

the wily papists flocked about him with threatening, flattering, entreating, and promising, and all other means, especially Henry Sydall and Friar John de Villa Garcina, a Spaniard, to the end to drive him, to the uttermost of their possibility, from his former sentence to recantation: whose force his manly constancy did a great while resist; but, at last, when they made no end of calling and crying upon him, the archbishop being overcome, whether through their importunity, or by his own imbecility, or of what mind I cannot tell, at length gave his hand."

This written recantation (in whatever way it was procured,) having been obtained by the most ignoble means, orders were secretly sent for his immediate execution. The 21st of March was appointed for his death, the fatal fact being carefully concealed from him; but, from what was going on around him, Cranmer began to surmise the truth; and now he set about in earnest to retrieve the error into which he had been treacherously seduced. He wrote out with his own hand his last confession of faith, and placed the paper in his bosom to be used at the fitting moment. He was brought from the prison to St. Mary's

to hear his condemned sermon preached by Dr. Cole. During the delivery of this discourse Cranmer stood, manifesting great grief of mind, and showing outwardly, both by his actions, and by the expression of his countenance, how much he was suffering. In this hour of utter humiliation and severe repentance, he possessed his soul in patience. His mind never, perhaps, had been more clear and collected, and never had his heart been stronger.

The sermon ended, the preacher desired all men to pray for the sufferer. Cranmer knelt and offered secret prayer to "Him who rewardeth openly," whilst the whole of the congregation, whatever had been their sentiments, followed his example, praying secretly together, as if by one consent.

So fully persuaded were his enemies that they had entangled him in the meshes of the net of their weaving for destroying his reputation, that Dr. Cole, when the silent devotions of Cranmer and of the people had ended, addressed the audience in these words: "Brethren, lest any one should doubt of this man's earnest conversion and repentance, you shall hear him speak before you; and,

therefore, I pray you, Master Cranmer, that you will now perform that which you promised not long ago; namely, that you would openly express the true and undoubted profession of your faith, that you may take away all suspicion from men, and that all men may understand you are a Catholic indeed." "I will do it," replied Cranmer, "and that with a good will." He then rose from his knees, and putting off his cap, spake to the assembled people in the following words: "Good Christian people, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, I beseech you most heartily to pray for me to Almighty God, that he will forgive me my sins and offences, which be many without number, and great above measure. But yet one thing grieveth my conscience more than all the rest, whereof, God willing, I intend to speak more hereafter. But how many and how great soever they be, I beseech you to pray God of his mercy to pardon and forgive me all." Then kneeling down, and drawing from his bosom a written document, he repeated this prayer: "O Father of heaven, O Son of God, Redeemer of the world, O Holy Ghost, proceeding from them both,

three persons and one God, have mercy upon me a most wretched caitiff and miserable sinner. I have offended both heaven and earth more than my tongue can express. Whither, then, may I go, or whither may I flee for succour? To heaven I may be ashamed to lift up mine eyes, and in earth I find no refuge or succour. What shall I then do? Shall I despair? God forbid. O God, thou art merciful, and refusest none that come unto thee for succour. To thee, therefore, do I run; to thee do I humble myself, saying, O Lord my God, my sins be great, but have mercy upon me for thy great mercy. God was not made man for our small offences. Thou didst not give thy Son unto death for small sins only, but for all, and the greatest sins of the world, so that the sinner return to thee in his heart, as I do here at this present. Wherefore have mercy on me, O Lord; for although my sins be great, yet thy mercy is greater. I crave nothing, O Lord, for mine own merits, but for thy name's sake, that it may be hallowed thereby, and for thy dear Son, Jesus Christ's sake. And now therefore, O Father, that art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come," etc.

No prayer had ever been composed and uttered in deeper misery, nor with more earnest and devout contrition. Rising then, he addressed the spectators, not hurrying impatiently to his purpose, but calmly and deliberately.

Well aware how little he should be allowed to speak, when he came to the point, he still proceeded with a caution, which it would have been impossible to have thus observed to the last, if he had not attained to the most perfect self-possession in this trying hour.

“And now,” he continued, “I come to the great thing, which so much troubleth my conscience more than anything that I ever did or said in my whole life, and that is the setting abroad of a writing contrary to the truth; which now here I renounce and refuse as things written with my hand contrary to the truth, which I thought in my heart, and written for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be; and that is, all such bills and papers which I have written or signed with my hand since my degradation, wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished therefor, for,

may I come to the fire, it shall first be burned. And as for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy, and antichrist, with all his false doctrines." And as for the sacrament, I believe, as I have taught in my book against the bishop of Winchester, the which my book teacheth so true a doctrine of the sacrament that it shall stand at the last day at the judgment of God, where papistical doctrine contrary thereto shall be ashamed to show her face."

His persecutors were, at first, so bewildered with surprise and astonishment at this bold renunciation of the recantations they had obtained from him, that they had neither power to check his speech nor to interrupt him. They were utterly confounded, having expected nothing less from his lips than an open and positive abjuration of his Protestant principles; instead of which, he declared that he had nothing to repent of nor lament but the unhappy sin, into which he had been betrayed, through fear of death. Lord Williams indignantly reminded him of what he had done, and bade him remember himself and play the man. He persisted, however, in his declaration, and remained unshaken amidst the vehement up-

braidings of his opponents; replying that, "he had been a man that all his life had loved plainness, and had never dissembled till then against the truth, which he was most sorry for, and that he could not better play the Christian man than by speaking the truth, as he now did." He would have spoken at greater length, but the exasperation of the Romanists was so intense, that they would not allow him to proceed, whilst Cole vociferated from the pulpit, that they should stop the heretic's mouth, and take him away.

Cranmer was now hurried to the same place of execution where Ridley and Latimer had previously yielded up their lives, in conformity to the Moloch spirit of the popish creed. The weakness of his nature had now left him. Grace was permitted to triumph in his end, and another proof was to be manifested in his death, that the Christian can ever bear all things, even the approach and final stroke of the last enemy, through Christ that strengtheneth him. Having reached the spot, in which he was to be consumed in the flames of cruelty and persecution, he again kneeled down and prayed most earnestly. He then put off his clothes with a cheerful countenance, and prepared himself to die. His feet were

bare, his head, when both his caps were off, was perfectly bald, but his beard was long and thick, and his countenance so calm and composed, that even his enemies could not but pity him. Whilst the preparations for burning him were hurried forward, two friars ceased not to ply him with entreaties that he would again recant and die a papist. The only reply, however, which they could draw from him was, that he only grieved over his sin, in having previously listened to their advice, and being seduced into error through their wicked instrumentality. Upon this they desisted from their vain attempt, exclaiming that the devil was surely with him, and that they ought no longer to remain near him. He was then bound to the stake with an iron chain; and as his enemies perceived that nothing could move him from his resolution to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free," they therefore commanded the fire to be lighted. And when the wood was kindled, and the fire began to burn near him, stretching out his right hand, he put it into the flame, saying—which he repeated again and again, in a firm and a loud voice—"This hand hath offended! this unworthy right hand!" And so stedfastly and immovably

did he hold it in the fire, except that he once wiped his face with it, that it was consumed before his body was reached by the flames. No other cry was heard from him, save that in reference to his right hand, and that of the first martyr for the truth's sake—Stephen, “ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !” With his eyes towards heaven, he stood as immovable as the stake to which he was bound ; anticipating the rest into which he was about to enter, he yielded up his spirit without one sigh, or groan of anguish “ in the greatness of the flame.” The fire quickly did its work ; but his heart was found unconsumed amid the ashes.

Thus died Cranmer, and with him, to all seeming probability, the last hopes of the adherents of the Reformation perished. But the impress of his mind was left on the age in which he lived, and continued to work its way steadily onward, until the accession of queen Elizabeth once more lifted the reformed faith from the lowly position into which it had been temporarily cast, and placed it on a foundation that has bid, and will continue to bid, defiance to the assaults of Rome.

That Cranmer was unexceptionable in all his acts, it is impossible to assert. He was human ; therefore he was imperfect. It has

been seen that in many of the passing scenes of his eventful life he must be charged with a degree of irresolution and of inconsistency, if particular acts are taken and abstracted from all the collateral circumstances. But even in the most censurable points of his conduct—his assistance to Henry VIII. to obtain divorces from his wives, his anxiety to confer favours upon those who aided his views, and especially his recantation before his death;—taking the most favourable view of that circumstance, and giving him the benefit of all that may be advanced against his having committed himself so fully as it has been asserted;—are all susceptible of such explanation and mitigation, when viewed in connexion with the peculiar times and positions in which he was placed, that they can scarcely serve to injure his character materially, in the estimation of those who desire to judge of him charitably and impartially.

That he was not an ambitious man, in the sordid acceptation of the term, is clearly evidenced by his reluctance to accept the honour forced upon him by his sovereign. That he was no hypocrite in his hostility to popery is placed beyond all question by the last act of his life. His recantation previous to his death,

casts but little obloquy upon his memory, compared with that which falls upon those who infamously extorted it from him by the most astute treachery and unmitigated falsehood. His life was to be the reward of his recantation—he was but a man, a fallen sinful man. Fires were lighted, and were burning fiercely on every side, in obedience to the merciless spirit of a ruthless creed, and he fell into the snare, which was cunningly contrived upon the knowledge that he was naturally of a timid mind. Had other recantations been wrung from him under such hard and treacherous circumstances, in the extension of that great principle of English jurisprudence, which will not permit a confession coming from a party accused, either by fear or favour, to be used against him, it must resolutely be asserted, that these extorted acts must be laid wholly out of consideration whilst judgment is pronounced upon Cranmer's character.

The verdict of the history of his life is one that posterity will universally ratify—that he was great and gifted, a sincere and resolute reformer, and one to whom England owes, under the Providence of Almighty God, much of that civil and religious liberty she has so long enjoyed. But it is not merely in such a

light that the narrative of his life will be viewed and considered by the Christian. He will discern more in it than this : he will perceive that the God, in whom he trusts, designs to teach him the lesson, which his word inculcates from its first to its last pages—that no human character is perfect, and no one event of life happeneth by chance. He designed that circumstances, mighty in their consequences for the eternal good of souls, should be brought about through the weak instrumentality of this poor servant ; but at the same time he would not leave his people without the record that he reigned in them, one and all, proving that his foolishness is wiser than man, and his weakness stronger than man. In a word, the life of Cranmer is another important elucidation of the great fact, that the creature is worse than nothing without the grace of God ; but with that grace, “ out of weakness he is made strong,” and, his imperfections being overruled for good, he is enabled to give proof that “ the Lord reigneth,” and that he will accomplish the work of his hands to the glory of his great name, and for the salvation of his people.

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worn and worn by the Christian. He
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Life of Thomas Cranmer

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