ENGLAND BEFORE THE REFORMATION

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Those heavenly powers which had lain dormant in the church since the first ages of Christianity, awoke from their slumber in the sixteenth century, and this awakening called the modern times into existence. The church was created anew, and from that regeneration have flowed the great developments of literature and science, of morality, liberty, and industry, which at present characterize the nations of Christendom. None of these things would have existed without the Reformation. Whenever society enters upon a new era, it requires the baptism of faith. In the sixteenth century God gave to man this consecration from on high by leading him back from mere outward profession and the mechanism of works to an inward and lively faith.

This transformation was not effected without struggles — struggles which presented at first a remarkable unity. On the day of battle one and the

same feeling animated every bosom: after the victory they became divided.

Unity of faith indeed remained, but the difference of nationalities brought into the church a diversity of forms. Of this we are about to witness a striking example. The Reformation, which had begun its triumphal march in Germany, Switzerland, France, and several other parts of the continent, was destined to receive new strength by the conversion of a celebrated country, long known as the Isle of Saints. This island was to add its banner to the trophy of Protestantism, but that banner preserved its distinctive colors. When England became reformed, a puissant individualism joined it might to the great unity.

If we search for the characteristics of the British Reformation, we shall find that, beyond any other, they were social, national, and truly human.

There is no people among whom the Reformation has produced to the same degree that morality and order, that liberty, public spirit, and

activity, which are the very essence of a nation's greatness. Just as the papacy has degraded the Spanish peninsula, has the gospel exalted the British islands. Hence the study upon which we are entering possesses an interest peculiar to itself.

In order that this study may be useful, it should have a character of universality. To confine the history of a people within the space of a few years, or even of a century, would deprive that history of both truth and life. We might indeed have traditions, chronicles, and legends, but there would be no history.

History is a wonderful organization, no part of which can be retrenched. To understand the present, we must know the past.

Society, like man himself, has its infancy, youth, maturity, and old age.

Ancient or pagan society, which had spent its infancy in the East in the midst of the antihellenic races, had its youth in the animated epoch of the

Greeks, its manhood in the stern period of Roman greatness, and its old age under the decline of the empire. Modern society has passed through analogous stages: at the time of the Reformation it attained that of the fullgrown man. We shall now proceed to trace the destinies of the church in England, from the earliest times of Christianity. These long and distant preparations are one of the distinctive characteristics of its reformation.

Before the sixteenth century this church had passed through two great phases.

The first was that of its formation — the second that of its corruption.

In its formation it was oriento-apostolical.

In its corruption it was successively national-papistical and royalpapistical.

After these two degrees of decline came the last and great phasis of the Reformation.

In the second century of the Christian era vessels were frequently sailing to the savage shores of Britain from the ports of Asia Minor, Greece, Alexandria, or the Greek colonies in Gaul. Among the merchants busied in calculating the profits they could make upon the produce of the East with which their ships were laden, would occasionally be found a few pious men from the banks of the Meander or the Hermus, conversing peacefully with one another about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and rejoicing at the prospect of saving by these glad tidings the pagans towards whom they were steering. It would appear that some British prisoners of war, having learnt to know Christ during their captivity, bore also to their fellow-countrymen the knowledge of this Savior. It may be, too, that some Christian soldiers, the Corneliuses of those Imperial armies whose advanced posts reached the southern parts of Scotland, desirous of more lasting conquests, may have read to the people whom they had subdued, the writings of Matthew, John, and Paul. It is of little consequence to know whether one of these first converts was, according to tradition, a prince

named Lucius. It is certain that the tidings of the Son of man, crucified and raised again, under Tiberius, spread through these islands more rapidly than the dominion of the emperors, and that before the end of the second century many churches worshipped Christ beyond the walls of Adrian; in those mountains, forests, and western isles, which for centuries past the Druids had filled with their mysteries and their sacrifices, and on which even the Roman eagles had never stooped. These churches were formed after the eastern type: the Britons would have refused to receive the type of that Rome whose yoke they detested.

The first thing which the British Christians received from the capital of the empire was persecution. But Diocletian, by striking the disciples of Jesus Christ in Britain, only increased their number. Many Christians from the southern part of the island took refuge in Scotland, where they raised their humble roofs, and under the name of Culdees prayed for the salvation of their protectors. When the surrounding pagans saw the holiness of these men of God, they abandoned in

great numbers their sacred oaks, their mysterious caverns, and their blood-stained altars, and obeyed the gentle voice of the Gospel. After the death of these pious refugees, their cells were transformed into houses of prayer. In 305 Constantius Chlorus succeeded to the throne of the Caesars, and put an end to the persecution.

The Christianity which was brought to these people by merchants, soldiers, or missionaries, although not the ecclesiastical catholicism already creeping into life in the Roman empire, was not the primitive evangelism of the apostles. The East and the South could only give to the North of what they possessed. The mere human period had succeeded to the creative and miraculous period of the church. After the extraordinary manifestations of the Holy Ghost, which had produced the apostolic age, the church had been left to the inward power of the word and of the Comforter. But Christians did not generally comprehend the spiritual life to which they were called. God had been pleased to give them a divine religion; and this they gradually assimilated more and more to the religions of

human origin.

Instead of saying, in the spirit of the Gospel, the word of God first, and through it the doctrine and the life — the doctrine and the life, and through them the forms; they said, forms first, and salvation by these forms. They ascribed to bishops a power which belongs only to Holy Scripture. Instead of ministers of the word, they desired to have priests; instead of an inward sacrifice, a sacrifice offered on the altar; and costly temples instead of a living church. They began to seek in men, in ceremonies, and in holy places, what they could find only in the Word and in the lively faith of the children of God. In this manner evangelical religion gave place to catholicism, and by gradual degeneration in after-years catholicism gave birth to popery.

This grievous transformation took place more particularly in the East, in Africa, and in Italy. Britain was at first comparatively exempt. At the very time that the savage Picts and Scots, rushing from their heathen homes, were devastating the

country, spreading terror on all sides, and reducing the people to slavery, we discover here and there some humble Christian receiving salvation not by a clerical sacramentalism, but by the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. At the end of the fourth century we meet with an illustrious example of such conversions.

On the picturesque banks of the Clyde, not far from Glasgow, in the Christian village of Bonavern, now Kilpatrick,, a little boy, of tender heart, lively temperament, and indefatigable activity, passed the earlier days of his life. He was born about the year 372 A.D., of a British family, and was named Succat. His father, Calpurnius, deacon of the church of Bonavern, a simple-hearted pious man, and his mother, Conchessa, sister to the celebrated Martin, arch-bishop of Tours, and a woman superior to the majority of her sex, had endeavored to instil into his heart the doctrines of Christianity; but Succat did not understand them. He was fond of pleasure, and delighted to be the leader of his youthful companions. In the midst of his frivolities, he

committed a serious fault.

Some few years later, his parents having quitted Scotland and settled in Armorica (Bretagne), a terrible calamity befell them. One day as Succat was playing near the seashore with two of his sisters, some Irish pirates, commanded by O'Neal, carried them all three off to their boats, and sold them in Ireland to the petty chieftain of some pagan clan. Succat was sent into the fields to keep swine. It was while alone in these solitary pastures, without priest and without temple, that the young slave called to mind the Divine lessons which his pious mother had so often read to him.

The fault which he had committed pressed heavily night and day upon his soul: he groaned in heart, and wept. He turned repenting towards that meek Savior of whom Conchessa had so often spoken; he fell at His knees in that heathen land, and imagined he felt the arms of a father uplifting the prodigal son. Succat was then born from on high, but by an agent so spiritual, so internal, that he knew not "whence it cometh or whither it

goeth.” The gospel was written with the finger of God on the tablets of his heart. “I was sixteen years old,” said he, “and knew not the true God; but in that strange land the Lord opened my unbelieving eyes, and, although late, I called my sins to mind, and was converted with my whole heart to the Lord my God, who regarded my low estate, had pity on my youth and ignorance, and consoled me as a father consoles his children.” Such words as these from the lips of a swineherd in the green pastures of Ireland set clearly before us the Christianity which in the fourth and fifth centuries converted many souls in the British isles. In after-years, Rome established the dominion of the priest and salvation by forms, independently of the dispositions of the heart; but the primitive religion of these celebrated islands was that living Christianity whose substance is the grace of Jesus Christ, and whose power is the grace of the Holy Ghost.

The herdsman from the banks of the Clyde was then undergoing those experiences which so many evangelical Christians in those countries have

subsequently undergone. “The love of God increased more and more in me,” said he, “with faith and the fear of His name. The Spirit urged me to such a degree that I poured forth as many as a hundred prayers in one day.

And even during the night, in the forests and on the mountains where I kept my flock, the rain, and snow, and frost, and sufferings which I endured, excited me to seek after God. At that time, I felt not the indifference which now I feel: the Spirit fermented in my heart.” Evangelical faith even then existed in the British islands in the person of this slave, and of some few Christians born again, like him, from on high.

Twice, a captive and twice rescued, Succat, after returning to his family, felt an irresistible appeal in his heart. It was his duty to carry the gospel to those Irish pagans among whom he had found Jesus Christ. His parents and his friends endeavored in vain to detain him; the same ardent desire pursued him in his dreams. During the silent watches of the night he fancied he heard voices

calling to him from the dark forests of Erin: “Come, holy child, and walk once more among us.” He awoke in tears, his breast filled with the keenest emotion. He tore himself from the arms of his parents, and rushed forth — not as heretofore with his playfellows, when he would climb the summit of some lofty hill — but with a heart full of charity in Christ. He departed: “It was not done of my own strength,” said he; “it was God who overcame all.” Succat, afterwards known as Saint Patrick, and to which name, as to that of Saint Peter and other servants of God, many superstitions have been attached, returned to Ireland, but without visiting Rome, as an historian of the twelfth century had asserted. Ever active, prompt, and ingenious, he collected the pagan tribes in the fields by beat of drum, and then narrated to them in their own tongue the history of the Son of God.

Erelong his simple recitals exercised a divine power over their rude hearts, and many souls were converted, not by external sacraments or by the worship of images, but by the preaching of the word of God. The son of a chieftain whom Patrick

calls Benignus, learnt from him to proclaim the Gospel, and was destined to succeed him. The court bard, Dubrach Mac Valubair, no longer sang druidical hymns, but canticles addressed to Jesus Christ. Patrick was not entirely free from the errors of the time; perhaps he believed in pious miracles; but generally speaking we meet with nothing but the gospel in the earlier days of the British church. The time no doubt will come when Ireland will again feel the power of the Holy Ghost, which had once converted it by the ministrations of a Scotchman.

Shortly before the evangelization of Patrick in Ireland, a Briton named Pelagius, having visited Italy, Africa, and palestine, began to teach a strange doctrine. Desirous of making head against the moral indifference into which most of the Christians in those countries had fallen, and which would appear to have been in strong contrast with the British austerity, he denied the doctrine of original sin, extolled free-will, and maintained that, if man made use of all the powers of his nature, he would attain perfection.

We do not find that he taught these opinions in his own country; but from the continent, where he disseminated them, they soon reached Britain. The British churches refused to receive this “perverse doctrine,” their historian tells us, “and to blaspheme the grace of Jesus Christ.” They do not appear to have held the strict doctrine of Saint Augustine: they believed indeed that man has need of an inward change, and that this the divine power alone can effect; but like the churches of Asia, from which they had sprung, they seem to have conceded something to our natural strength in the work of conversion; and Pelagius, with a good intention it would appear, went still further. However that may be, these churches, strangers to the controversy, were unacquainted with all its subtleties. Two Gaulish bishops, Germanus and Lupus, came to their aid, and those who had been perverted returned into the way of truth. Shortly after this, events of great importance took place in Great Britain, and the light of faith disappeared in profound night. In 449, Hengist and Horsa, with their Saxon followers, being invited by the

wretched inhabitants to aid them against the cruel ravages of the Picts and Scots, soon turned their swords against the people they had come to assist.

Christianity was driven back with the Britons into the mountains of the Wales and the wild moors of Northumberland and Cornwall. Many British families remained in the midst of the conquerors, but without exercising any religious influence over them. While the conquering races, settled at Paris, Ravenna, or Toledo, gradually laid aside their paganism and savage manners, the barbarous customs of the Saxons prevailed unmoderated throughout the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, and in every quarter temples to Thor rose above the churches in which Jesus Christ had been worshipped. Gaul and the south of Europe, which still exhibited to the eyes of the barbarians the last vestiges of Roman grandeur, alone had the power of inspiring some degree of respect in the formidable Germans, and of transforming their faith. From this period, the Greeks and Latins, and even the converted Goths, looked at this island with unutterable dread.

The soil, said they, is covered with serpents; the air is thick with deadly exhalations; the souls of the departed are transported thither at midnight from the shores of Gaul. Ferrymen, and sons of Erebus and Night, admit these invisible shades into their boats, and listen, with a shudder, to their mysterious whisperings. England, whence light was one day to be shed over the habitable globe, was then the trysting-place of the dead. And yet the Christianity of the British isles was not to be annihilated by these barbarian invasions; it possessed a strength which rendered it capable of energetic resistance.

In one of the churches formed by Succat's preaching, there arose about two centuries after him a pious man named Columba, son of Feidlimyd, the son of Fergus. Valuing the cross more highly than the royal blood that flowed in his veins, he resolved to devote himself to the King of heaven.

Shall he not repay to the country of Succat

what Succat had imparted to his? “I will go,” said he, “and preach the word of God in Scotland;” for the word of God and not an ecclesiastical hierarchism was then the converting agency. The grandson of Fergus communicated the zeal which animated him to the hearts of several fellow-christians. They repaired to the seashore, and cutting down the pliant branches of the osier, constructed a frail bark, which they covered with the skins of beasts. In this rude boat they embarked in the year 565, and after being driven to and fro on the ocean, the little missionary band reached the waters of the Hebrides. Columba landed near the barren rocks of Mull, to the south of 1619 the basaltic caverns of Staffa, and fixed his abode in a small island, afterwards known as Iona or Icolmkill, “the island of Columba’s cell.” Some Christian Culdees, driven out by the dissensions of the Picts and Scots, had already found a refuge in the same retired spot. Here the missionaries erected a chapel, whose walls, it is said, still exist among the stately ruins of a later age. Some authors have placed Columba in the first rank after the apostles. True, we do not find in him the faith of a Paul or a

John; but he lived as in the sight of God; he mortified the flesh, and slept on the ground with a stone for his pillow. Amid this solemn scenery, and among customs so rude, the form of the missionary, illumined by a light from heaven, shone with love, and manifested the joy and serenity of his heart. Qui de prosapia regali claruit, Sed morum gratia magis emicuit.

Although subject to the same passions as ourselves, he wrestled against his weakness, and would not have one moment lost for the glory of God. He prayed and read, he wrote and taught, he preached and redeemed the time.

With indefatigable activity he went from house to house, and from kingdom to kingdom. The king of the Picts was converted, as were also many of his people; precious manuscripts were conveyed to Iona; a school of theology was founded there, in which the word was studied; and many received through faith the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Erelong a missionary spirit breathed over this ocean rock, so justly named “the light of the

western world.” The Judaical sacerdotalism which was beginning to extend in the Christian church found no support in Iona. They had forms, but not to them did they look for life. It was the Holy Ghost, Columba maintained, that made a servant of God. When the youth of Caledonia assembled around the elders on these savage shores, or in their humble chapel, these ministers of the Lord would say to them: “The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith. Throw aside all merit of works, and look for salvation to the grace of God alone. Beware of a religion which consists of outward observances: it is better to keep your heart pure before God than to abstain from meats. One alone is your head, Jesus Christ. Bishops and presbyters are equal; they should be the husbands of one wife, and have their children in subjection.” The sages of Iona knew nothing of transubstantiation or of the withdrawal of the cup in the Lord’s Supper, or of auricular confession, or of prayers to the dead, or tapers, or incense; they celebrated Easter on a different day from Rome; synodal assemblies regulated the affairs of the church, and the papal supremacy was unknown. The sun of the gospel

shone upon these wild and distant shores. In after-years, it was the privilege of Great Britain to recover with a purer lustre the same sun and the same gospel.

Iona, governed by a simple elder, had become a missionary college. It has been sometimes called a monastery, but the dwelling of the grandson of Fergus in nowise resembled the popish convents. When its youthful inmates desired to spread the knowledge of Jesus Christ, they thought not of going elsewhere in quest of episcopal ordination. Kneeling in the chapel of Icolmkill, they were set apart by the laying on of the hands of the elders: they were called bishops, but remained obedient to the elder or presbyter of Iona. They even consecrated other bishops: thus Finan laid hands upon Diuma, bishop of Middlesex. These British Christians attached great importance to the ministry; but not to one form in preference to another. Presbytery and episcopacy were with them, as with the primitive church, almost identical. Somewhat later we find that neither the venerable Bede, nor Lanfranc, nor Anselm — the

two last were archbishops of Canterbury — made any objection to the ordination of British bishops by plain presbyters. The religious and moral element that belongs to Christianity still predominated; the sacerdotal element, which characterizes human religions, whether among the Brahmins or elsewhere, was beginning to show itself, but in Great Britain at least it held a very subordinate station. Christianity was still a religion and not a caste.

They did not require of the servant of God, as a warrant of his capacity, a long list of names succeeding one another like the beads of a rosary; they entertained serious, noble, and holy ideas of the ministry; its authority proceeded wholly from Jesus Christ its head.

The missionary fire, which the grandson of Fergus had kindled in a solitary island, soon spread over Great Britain. Not in Iona alone, but at Bangor and other places, the spirit of evangelization burst out. A fondness for travelling had already become a second nature in this people. Men of God,

burning with zeal, resolved to carry the evangelical torch to the continent — to the vast wildernesses sprinkled here and there with barbarous and heathen tribes. They did not set forth as antagonists of Rome, for at that epoch there was no place for such antagonism; but Iona and Bangor, less illustrious than Rome in the history of nations, possessed a more lively faith than the city of the Caesars; and that faith, — unerring sign of the presence of Jesus Christ, — gave those whom it inspired a right to evangelize the world, which Rome could not gainsay.

The missionary bishops of Britain accordingly set forth and traversed the Low Countries, Gaul, Switzerland, Germany, and even Italy. The free church of the Scots and Britons did more for the conversion of central Europe than the half-enslaved church of the Romans. These missionaries were not haughty and insolent like the priests of Italy; but supported themselves by the work of their hands. Columbanus (whom we must not confound with Columba), “feeling in his heart the burning of the fire which the Lord had kindled upon earth,”

quitted Bangor in 590 with twelve other missionaries, and carried the gospel to the Burgundians, Franks, and Swiss. He continued to preach it amidst frequent persecutions, left his disciple Gall in Helvetia, and retired to Bobbio, where he died, honoring Christian Rome, but placing the church of Jerusalem above it, — exhorting it to beware of corruption, and declaring that the power would remain with it so long only as it retained the true doctrine (recta ratio). Thus was Britain faithful in planting the standard of Christ in the heart of Europe. We might almost imagine this unknown people to be a new Israel, and Icolmkill and Bangor to have inherited the virtues of Zion.

Yet they should have done more: they should have preached — not only to the continental heathens, to those in the north of Scotland and the distant Ireland, but also to the still pagan Saxons of England. It is true that they made several attempts; but while the Britons considered their conquerors as the enemies of God and man, and shuddered while they pronounced their name, the Saxons refused to be converted by the voice of their slaves.

By neglecting this field, the Britons left room for other workmen, and thus it was that England yielded to a foreign power, beneath whose heavy yoke it long groaned in vain.

Chapter 2

Pope Gregory the Great

It is a matter of fact that the spiritual life had waned in Italian catholicism; and in proportion as the heavenly spirit had become weak, the lust of dominion had grown strong. The Roman metropolitans and their delegates soon became impatient to mould all Christendom to their peculiar forms.

About the end of the sixth century an eminent man filled the see of Rome.

Gregory was born of senatorial family, and already on the high road to honor, when he suddenly renounced the world, and transformed the palace of his fathers into a convent. But his ambition had only changed its object.

In his views, the whole church should submit to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rome. True, he rejected the title of universal bishop assumed by

the patriarch of Constantinople; but if he desired not the name, he was not the less eager for the substance. On the borders of the West, in the island of Great Britain, was a Christian church independent of Rome: this must be conquered, and a favorable opportunity soon occurred.

Before his elevation to the primacy, and while he was as yet only the monk Gregory, he chanced one day to cross a market in Rome where certain foreign dealers were exposing their wares for sale. Among them he perceived some fair-haired youthful slaves, whose noble bearing attracted his attention. On drawing near them, he learned that the Anglo-Saxon nation to which they belonged had refused to receive the gospel from the Britons. When he afterwards became bishop of Rome, this crafty and energetic pontiff, “the last of the good and the first of the bad,” as he has been called, determined to convert these proud conquerors, and make use of them in subduing the British church to the papacy, as he had already made use of the Frank monarchs to reduce the Gauls. Rome has often shown herself more eager to bring Christians

rather than idolaters to the pope. Was it thus with Gregory? We must leave the question unanswered.

Ethelbert, king of Kent, having married a Christian princess of Frank descent, the Roman bishop thought the conjuncture favorable for his design, and despatched a mission under the direction of one of his friends named Augustine, A.D. 596. At first the missionaries recoiled from the task appointed them; but Gregory was firm. Desirous of gaining the assistance of the Frank kings, Theodoric and Theodebert, he affected to consider them as the lords paramount of England, and commended to them the conversion of their subjects. Nor was this all. He claimed also the support of the powerful Brunehilda, grandmother of these two kings, and equally notorious for her treachery, her irregularities, and her crimes; and did not scruple to extol the good works and godly fear of this modern Jezebel. Under such auspices the Romish mission arrived in England.

The pope had made a skillful choice of his delegate. Augustine possessed even to a greater

extent than Gregory himself a mixture of ambition and devotedness, of superstition and piety, of cunning and zeal. He thought that faith and holiness were less essential to the church than authority and power; and that its prerogative was not so much to save souls as to collect all the human race under the scepter of Rome. Gregory himself was distressed at Augustine's spiritual pride, and often exhorted him to humility.

Success of that kind which popery desires soon crowned the labors of its servants. The forty-one missionaries having landed in the isle of Thanet, in the year, the king of Kent consented to receive them, but in the open air, for fear of magic. They drew up in such a manner as to produce an effect on the rude islanders. The procession was opened by a monk bearing a huge cross on which the figure of Christ was represented: his colleagues followed chanting their Latin hymns, and thus they approached the oak appointed for the place of conference. They inspired sufficient confidence in Ethelbert to gain permission to celebrate their worship in an old ruinous chapel at Durovern

(Canterbury), where British Christians had in former times adored the Savior Christ. The king and thousands of his subjects received not long after, with certain forms, and certain Christian doctrines, the errors of the Roman pontiffs — as purgatory, for instance, which Gregory was advocating with the aid of the most absurd fables. Augustine baptized ten thousand pagans in one day. As yet Rome had only set her foot in Great Britain; she did not fail erelong to establish her kingdom there.

We should be unwilling to under value the religious element now placed before the Anglo-Saxons, and we can readily believe that many of the missionaries sent from Italy desired to work a Christian work. We think, too, that the Middle Ages ought to be appreciated with more equitable sentiments than have always been found in the persons who have written on that period. Man’s conscience lived, spoke, and groaned during the long dominion of popery; and like a plant growing among thorns, it often succeeded in forcing a passage through the obstacles of traditionalism and

hierarchy, to blossom in the quickening sun of God's grace. The Christian element is even strongly marked in some of the most eminent men of the theocracy — in Anselm for instance.

Yet as it is our task to relate the history of the struggles which took place between primitive Christianity and Roman-catholicism, we cannot forbear pointing out the superiority of the former in a religious light, while we acknowledge the superiority of the latter in a political point of view. We believe (and we shall presently have a proof of it) that a visit to Iona would have taught the Anglo-Saxons much more than their frequent pilgrimages to the banks of the Tiber. Doubtless, as has been remarked, these pilgrims contemplated at Rome "the noble monuments of antiquity," but there existed at that time in the British islands — and it has been too often overlooked — a Christianity which, if not perfectly pure, was at least better than that of popery. The British church, which at the beginning of the seventh century carried faith and civilization into Burgundy, the Vosges mountains, and Switzerland, might well have spread them both

over Britain. The influence of the arts, whose civilizing influence we are far from depreciating, would have come later.

But so far was the Christianity of the Britons from converting the Saxon heptarchy, that it was, alas! the Romanism of the heptarchy which was destined to conquer Britain. These struggles between the Roman and British churches, which fill all the seventh century, are of the highest importance to the English church, for they establish clearly its primitive liberty. They possess also great interest for the other churches of the West, as showing in the most striking characters the usurping acts by which the papacy eventually reduced them beneath its yoke.

Augustine, appointed archbishop not only of the Saxons, but of the free Britons, was settled by papal ordinance, first at London and afterwards at Canterbury. Being at the head of a hierarchy composed of twelve bishops, he soon attempted to bring all the Christians of Britain under the Roman jurisdiction. At that time there existed at Bangor, in

North Wales, a large Christian society, amounting to nearly three thousand individuals, collected together to work with their own hands, to study, and to pray, and from whose bosom numerous missionaries (Columbanus was among the number) had from time to time gone forth. The president of this church was Dionoth, a faithful teacher, ready to serve all men in charity, yet firmly convinced that no one should have supremacy in the Lord's vineyard. Although one of the most influential men in the British church, he was somewhat timid and hesitating; he would yield to a certain point for the love of peace; but would never flinch from his duty. He was another apostle John, full of mildness, and yet condemning the Diotrephes, who love to have preeminence among the brethren. Augustine thus addressed him: "Acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome." These are the first words of the papacy to the ancient Christians of Britain. "We desire to love all men," meekly replied the venerable Briton: "and what we do for you, we will do for him also whom you call the pope.

But he is not entitled to call himself the father of fathers, and the only submission we can render him is that which we owe to every Christian." This was not what Augustine asked.

He was not discouraged by this first check. Proud of the pallium which Rome had sent him, and relying on the swords of the Anglo-Saxons, he convoked in a general assembly of British and Saxon bishops. The meeting took place in the open air, beneath a venerable oak, near Wigornia (Worcester or Hereford), and here occurred the second Romish aggression.

Dionoth resisted with firmness the extravagant pretensions of Augustine, who again summoned him to recognize the authority of Rome. Another Briton protested against the presumption of the Romans, who ascribed to their consecration a virtue which they refused to that of Iona or of the Asiatic churches. The Britons, exclaimed a third, "cannot submit either to the haughtiness of the Romans or the tyranny of the Saxons." To no purpose did the archbishop lavish his arguments,

prayers, censures, and miracles even; the Britons were firm. Some of them who had eaten with the Saxons while they were as yet heathens, refused to do so now that they had submitted to the pope. The Scotch were particularly inflexible; for one of their number, by name Dagam, would not only take no food at the same table with the Romans, but not even under the same roof. Thus did Augustine fail a second time, and the independence of Britain appeared secure.

And yet the formidable power of the popes, aided by the sword of the conquerors, alarmed the Britons. They imagined they saw a mysterious decree once more yoking the nations of the earth to the triumphal ear of Rome, and many left Wigornia uneasy and sad at heart. How is it possible to save a cause, when even its defenders begin to despair? It was not long before they were summoned to a new council. “What is to be done?” they exclaimed with sorrowful forebodings. Popery was not yet thoroughly known: it was hardly formed. The half-enlightened consciences of these believers were a prey to the most violent agitation. They asked

themselves whether, in rejecting this new power, they might not be rejecting God himself. A pious Christian, who led a solitary life, had acquired a great reputation in the surrounding district. Some of the Britons visited him, and inquired whether they should resist Augustine or follow him. “If he is a man of God, follow him,” replied the hermit. — “And how shall we know that?” — “If he is meek and humble of heart, he bears Christ’s yoke; but if he is violent and proud, he is not of God.” — “What sign shall we have of his humility?” — “If he rises from his seat when you enter the room.” Thus spoke the oracle of Britain: it would have been better to have consulted the Holy Scriptures.

But humility is not a virtue that flourishes among Romish pontiffs and legates: they love to remain seated while others court and worship them.

The British bishops entered the council-hall, and the archbishop, desirous of indicating his superiority, proudly kept his seat. Astonished at this sight, the Britons would hear no more of the authority of Rome. For the third time they said No

— they knew no other master but Christ.

Augustine, who expected to see these bishops prostrate their churches at his feet, was surprised and indignant. He had reckoned on the immediate submission of Britain, and the pope had now to learn that his missionary had deceive him.....Animated by that insolent spirit which is found too often in the ministers of the Romish church, Augustine exclaimed: “If you will not unite with us in showing the Saxons the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death.” Having thus spoken, the haughty archbishop withdrew, and occupied his last days in preparing the accomplishment of his illomened prophecy. Argument had failed: now for the sword!

Shortly after the death of Augustine, Edelfrid, one of the Anglo-Saxon kings, and who was still a heathen, collected a numerous army, and advanced towards Bangor, the center of British Christianity. Alarm spread through those feeble churches. They wept and prayed. The sword of Edelfrid drew nearer. To whom can they apply, or where shall

they find help? The magnitude of the danger seemed to recall the Britons to their pristine piety: not to men, but to the Lord himself will they turn their thoughts. Twelve hundred and fifty servants of the living God, calling to mind what are the arms of Christian warfare, after preparing themselves by fasting, met together in a retired spot to send up their prayers to God. A British chief, named Brocmail, moved by tender compassion, stationed himself near them with a few soldiers; but the cruel Edelfrid, observing from a distance this band of kneeling Christians, demanded: “Who are these people, and what are they doing?” On being informed, he added: “They are fighting then against us, although unarmed;” and immediately he ordered his soldiers to fall upon the prostrate crowd. Twelve hundred of them were slain. They prayed and they died. The Saxons forthwith proceeded to Bangor, the chief seat of Christian learning, and razed it to the ground. Romanism was triumphant in England. The news of these massacres filled the country with weeping and great mourning; but the priest of Romish consecration (and the venerable Bede shared their

sentiments) beheld in this cruel slaughter the accomplishment of the prophecy of the holy pontiff Augustine; and a national tradition among the Welsh for many ages pointed to him as the instigator of this cowardly butchery. Thus did Rome loose the savage pagan against the primitive church of Britain, and fastened it all dripping with blood to her triumphal car. A great mystery of iniquity was accomplishing.

But while the Saxon sword appeared to have swept everything from before the papacy, the ground trembled under its feet, and seemed about to swallow it up. The hierarchical rather than Christian conversions effected by the priests of Rome were so unreal that a vast number of neophytes suddenly returned to the worship of their idols. Eadbald, king of Kent, was himself among the number of apostates. Such reversions to paganism are not unfrequent in the history of the Romish missions. The bishops fled into Gaul: Mellitus and Justus had already reached the continent in safety, and Lawrence, Augustine's successor, was about to follow them. While lying

in the church, where he had desired to pass the night before leaving England, he groaned in spirit as he saw the work founded by Augustine perishing in his hands. He saved it by a miracle. The next morning he presented himself before the king with his clothes all disordered and his body covered with wounds. “Saint Peter,” he said, “appeared to me during the night and scourged me severely because I was about to forsake his flock.” The scourge was a means of moral persuasion which Peter had forgotten in his epistles. Did Lawrence cause these blows to be inflicted by others — or did he inflict them himself — or is the whole account an idle dream? We should prefer adopting the latter hypothesis. The superstitious prince, excited at the news of this supernatural intervention, eagerly acknowledged the authority of the pope, the vicar of an apostle who so mercilessly scourged those who had the misfortune to displease him. If the dominion of Rome had then disappeared from England, it is probable that the Britons, regaining their courage, and favored in other respects by the wants which would have been felt by the Saxons, would have recovered from

their defeat, and would have imparted their free Christianity to their conquerors. But now the Roman bishop seemed to remain master of England, and the faith of the Britons to be crushed for ever. But it was not so. A young man, sprung from the energetic race of the conquerors, was about to become the champion of truth and liberty, and almost the whole island to be freed from the Roman yoke.

Oswald, an Anglo-Saxon prince, son of the heathen and cruel Edelfrid, had been compelled by family reverses to take refuge in Scotland, when very young, accompanied by his brother Oswy and several other youthful chiefs. He had acquired the language of the country, been instructed in the truths of Holy Writ, converted by the grace of God, and baptized into the Scottish church. He loved to sit at the feet of the elders of Iona and listen to their words. They showed him Jesus Christ going from place to place doing good, and he desired to do so likewise; they told him that Christ was the only head of the church, and he promised never to acknowledge any other. Being a single-hearted

generous man, he was especially animated with tender compassion towards the poor, and would take off his own cloak to cover the nakedness of one of his brethren.

Often, while mingling in the quiet assemblies of the Scottish Christians, he had desired to go as a missionary to the Anglo-Saxons. It was not long before he conceived the bold design of leading the people of Northumberland to the Savior; but being a prince as well as a Christian, he determined to begin by reconquering the throne of his fathers. There was in this young Englishman the love of a disciple and the courage of a hero. At the head of an army, small indeed, but strong by faith in Christ, he entered Northumberland, knelt with his troops in prayer on the field of battle, and gained a signal victory over a powerful enemy, 634 A.D.

To recover the kingdom of his ancestors was only a part of his task.

Oswald desired to give his people the benefits of the true faith. The Christianity taught in 625 to

King Edwin and the Northumbrians by Pendin of York had disappeared amidst the ravages of the pagan armies.

Oswald requested a missionary from the Scots who had given him an asylum, and they accordingly sent one of the brethren named Corman, a pious but uncultivated and austere man. he soon returned dispirited to Iona: “The people to whom you sent me,” he told the elders of that island, “are so obstinate that we must renounce all idea of changing their manners.” As Aidan, one of their number, listened to this report, he said to himself: “If thy love had been offered to this people, oh, my Savior, many hearts would have been touched!.....I will go and make Thee known — Thee who breaketh not the bruised reed!” Then, turning to the missionary with a look of mild reproach, he added: “Brother, you have been too severe towards hearers so dull of heart. You should have given them spiritual milk to drink until they were able to receive more solid food.” All eyes were fixed on the man who spoke so wisely. “Aidan is worthy of the episcopate,” exclaimed the

brethren of Iona; and, like Timothy, he was consecrated by the laying on of the hands of the company of elders. Oswald received Aidan as an angel from heaven,and as the missionary was ignorant of the Saxon language, the king accompanied him everywhere, standing by his side, and interpreting his gentle discourses. The people crowded joyfully around Oswald, Aidan, and other missionaries from Scotland and Ireland, listening eagerly to the Word of God. The king preached by his works still more than by his words. One day during Easter, as he was about to take his seat at table, he was informed that a crowd of his subjects, driven by hunger, had collected before his palace gates. Instantly he ordered the food prepared for himself to be carried out and distributed among them, and taking the silver vessels which stood before him, he broke them in pieces and commanded his servants to divide them among the poor. He also introduced the knowledge of the Savior to the people of Wessex, whither he had gone to marry the king’s daughter; and after a reign of nine years, he died at the head of his army while repelling an invasion of the idolatrous Mercians,

headed by the cruel Penda (5th August 642 A.D.). As he fell he exclaimed: “Lord, have mercy on the souls of my people!” This youthful prince has left a name dear to the churches of Great Britain.

His death did not interrupt the labors of the missionaries. Their meekness and the recollection of Oswald endeared them to all. As soon as the villagers caught sight of one on the high-road, they would throng round him, begging him to teach them the Word of life. The faith which the terrible Edelfrid thought he had washed away in the blood of the worshippers of God, was re-appearing in every direction; and Rome, which once already in the days of Honorius had been forced to leave Britain, might be perhaps a second time compelled to flee to its ships from before the face of a people who asserted their liberty.

Chapter 3

Character of Oswy

Then uprose the papacy. If victory remained with the Britons, their church, becoming entirely free, might even in these early times head a strong opposition against the papal monarchy. If, on the contrary, the last champions of liberty are defeated, centuries of slavery awaited the Christian church. We shall have to witness the struggle that took place erelong in the very palace of the Northumbrian kings.

Oswald was succeeded by his brother Oswy, a prince instructed in the free doctrine of the Britons, but whose religion was all external. His heart overflowed with ambition, and he shrank from no crime that might increase his power. the throne of Deira was filled by his relative Oswin, an amiable king, much beloved by his people. Oswy, conceiving a deadly jealousy towards him, marched against him at the head of an army, and Oswin, desirous of avoiding bloodshed, took

shelter with a chief whom he had loaded with favors. But the latter offered to lead Oswy's soldiers to his hiding place; and at dead of night the fugitive king was basely assassinated, one only of his servants fighting in his defense. The gentle Aidan died of sorrow at his cruel fate. Such was the first exploit of that monarch who surrendered England to the papacy. Various circumstances tended to draw Oswy nearer Rome. He looked upon the Christian religion as a means of combining the Christian princes against the heathen Penda, and such a religion, in which expediency predominated, was not very unlike popery.

And further, Oswy's wife, the proud Eanfeld, was of the Romish communion. The private chaplain of this bigoted princess was a priest named Romanus, a man worthy of the name. He zealously maintained the rites of the Latin church, and accordingly the festival of Easter was celebrated at court twice in the year; for while the king, following the eastern rule, was joyfully commemorating the resurrection of our Lord, the

queen, who adopted the Roman ritual, was keeping Palm Sunday with fasting and humiliation. Eanfeld and Romanus would often converse together on the means of winning over Northumberland to the papacy. But the first step was to increase the number of its partisans, and the opportunity soon occurred.

A young Northumbrian, named Wilfrid, was one day admitted to an audience of the queen. He was a comely man, of extensive knowledge, keen wit, and enterprising character, of indefatigable activity, and insatiable ambition. In this interview he remarked to Eanfeld: “The way which the Scotch teach us is not perfect; I will go to Rome and learn in the very temples of the apostles.” She approved of his project, and with her assistance and directions he set out for Italy. Alas! he was destined at no very distant day to chain the whole British church to the Roman see. After a short stay at Lyons, where the bishop, delighted at his talents, would have desired to keep him, he arrived at Rome, and immediately became on the most friendly footing with Archdeacon Boniface, the

pope’s favorite councillor. He soon discovered that the priests of France and Italy possessed more power both in ecclesiastical and secular matters than the humble missionaries of Iona; and his thirst for honors was inflamed at the court of the pontiffs. If he should succeed in making England submit to the papacy, there was no dignity to which he might not aspire. Henceforward this was his only thought, and he had hardly returned to Northumberland before Eanfeld eagerly summoned him to court. A fanatical queen, from whom he might hope everything — a king with no religious convictions, and enslaved by political interests — a pious and zealous prince, Alfred, the king’s son, who was desirous of imitating his noble uncle Oswald, and converting the pagans, but who had neither the discernment nor the piety of the illustrious disciple of Iona: such were the materials Wilfrid had to work upon. He saw clearly that if Rome had gained her first victory by the sword of Edelfrid, she could only expect to gain a second by craft and management. He came to an understanding on the subject with the queen and Romanus, and having been place about the person of the young prince, by

adroit flattery he soon gained over Alfred’s mind. Then finding himself secure of two members of the royal family, he turned all his attention to Oswy.

The elders of Iona could not shut their eyes to the dangers which threatened Northumberland. They had sent Finan to supply Aidan’s place, and this bishop, consecrated by the presbyters of Iona, had witnessed the progress of popery at the court; at first humble and inoffensive, and then increasing year by year in ambition and audacity. He had openly opposed the pontiff’s agents, and his frequent contests had confirmed him in the truth. He was dead, and the presbyters of the Western Isles, seeing more clearly than ever the wants of Northumbria, had sent thither Bishop Colman, a simple-minded but stout-hearted man, — one determined to oppose a front of adamant to the wiles of the seducers.

Yet Eanfeld, Wilfrid, and Romanus were skillfully digging the mine that was to destroy the apostolic church of Britain. At first Wilfrid prepared his attack by adroit insinuations; and next

declared himself openly in the king’s presence. If Oswy withdrew into his domestic circle, he there found the bigoted Eanfeld, who zealously continued the work of the Roman missionary. No opportunities were neglected: in the midst of the diversions of the court, at table, and even during the chase, discussions were perpetually raised on the controverted doctrines. Men’s minds became excited: the Romanists already assumed the air of conquerors; and the Britons often withdrew full of anxiety and fear. The king, placed between his wife and his faith, and wearied by these disputes, inclined first to one side, and then to the other, as if he would soon fall altogether.

The papacy had more powerful motives than ever for coveting Northumberland. Oswy had not only usurped the throne of Deira, but after the death of the cruel Penda, who fell in battle in 654, he had conquered his states with the exception of a portion governed by his sonin- law Peada, the son of Penda. But Peada himself having fallen in a conspiracy said to have been got up by his wife, the daughter of Oswy, the latter completed the

conquest of Mercia, and thus united the greatest part of England under his scepter. Kent alone at that time acknowledged the jurisdiction of Rome: in every other province, free ministers, protected by the kings of Northumberland, preached the gospel. This wonderfully simplified the question. If Rome gained over Oswy, she would gain England: if she failed, she must sooner or later leave that island altogether.

This was not all. The blood of Oswyn, the premature death of Aidan, and other things besides, troubled the king’s breast. He desired to appease the Deity he had offended, and not knowing that Christ is the door, as Holy Scripture tells us, he sought among men for a doorkeeper who would open to him the kingdom of heaven. He was far from being the last of those kings whom the necessity of expiating their crimes impelled towards Romish practices. The crafty Wilfrid, keeping alive both the hopes and fears of the prince, often spoke to him of Rome, and of the grace to be found there. He thought that the fruit was ripe, and that now he had only to shake the

tree. “We must have a public disputation, in which the question may be settled once for all,” said the queen and her advisers; “but Rome must take her part in it with as much pomp as her adversaries. Let us oppose bishop to bishop.” A Saxon bishop named Agilbert, a friend of Wilfrid’s, who had won the affection of the young prince Alfred, was invited by Eanfeld to the conference, and he arrived in Northumberland attended by a priest named Agathon. Alas! poor British church, the earthen vessel is about to be dashed against the vase of iron. Britain must yield before the invading march of Rome.

On the coast of Yorkshire, at the farther extremity of a quiet bay, was situated the monastery of Strenaeshalh, or Whitby, of which Hilda, the pious daughter of King Edwin, was abbess. She, too, was desirous of seeing a termination of the violent disputes which had agitated the church since Wilfrid’s return. On the shores of the North Sea the struggle was to be decided between Britain and Rome, between the East and the West, or, as they said then, between

Saint John and Saint Peter. It was not a mere question about Easter, or certain rules of discipline, but of the great doctrine of the freedom of the church under Jesus Christ, or its enslavement under the papacy. Rome, ever domineering, desired for the second time to hold England in its grasp, not by means of the sword, but by her dogmas. With her usual cunning she concealed her enormous pretensions under secondary questions, and many superficial thinkers were deceived by this manoeuvre.

The meeting took place in the convent of Whitby. The king and his son entered first; then, on the one side, Colman, with the bishops and elders of the Britons; and on the other Bishop Agilbert, Agathon, Wilfrid, Romanus, a deacon named James, and several other priests of the Latin confession.

Last of all came Hilda with her attendants, among whom was an English bishop named Cedda, one of the most active missionaries of the age. He had at first preached the Gospel in the midland

districts, whence he turned his footsteps towards the Anglo-Saxons of the East, and after converting a great number of these pagans, he had returned to Finan, and, although an Englishman, had received Episcopal consecration from a bishop who had been himself ordained by the elders of Iona. Then proceeding westward, the indefatigable evangelist founded churches, and appointed elders and deacons wherever he went. By birth an Englishman, by ordination a Scotchman, everywhere treated with respect and consideration, he appeared to be set apart as mediator in this solemn conference. His intervention could not however, retard the victory of Rome. Alas! the primitive evangelism had gradually given way to an ecclesiasticism, course and rude in one place, subtle and insinuating in another. Whenever the priest were called upon to justify certain doctrines or ceremonies, instead of referring solely to the word of God, that fountain of all light, they maintained that thus St. James did at Jerusalem, St. Mark at Alexandria, St. John at Ephesus, or St. Peter at Rome. They gave the name of apostolical canons to rules which the apostles had never

known.

They even went further than this: at Rome and in the East, ecclesiasticism represented itself to be a law of God, and from a state of weakness, it thus became a state of sin. Some marks of this error were already beginning to appear in the Christianity of the Britons.

King Oswy was the first to speak: “As servants of one and the same God, we hope all to enjoy the same inheritance in heaven; why then should we not have the same rule of life here below? Let us inquire which is the true one, and follow it.”.....”Those who sent me hither as bishop,” said Colman, “and who gave me the rule which I observe, are the beloved of God.

Let us beware how we despise their teaching, for it is the teaching of Columba, of the blessed evangelist John, and of the churches over which that apostle presided.” “As for us,” boldly rejoined Wilfrid, for to him as to the most skillful had bishop Agilbert intrusted the defense of their cause,

“our custom is that of Rome, where the holy apostles Peter and Paul taught; we found it in Italy and Gaul, nay, it is spread over every nation. Shall the Picts and Britons, cast on these two islands, on the very confines of the ocean, dare to contend against the whole world? However holy your Columba may have been, will you prefer him to the prince of the apostles, to whom Christ said, Thou art Peter, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven?” Wilfrid spoke with animation, and his words being skillfully adapted to his audience, began to make them waver. He had artfully substituted Columba for the apostle John, from whom the British church claimed descent, and opposed to St. Peter a plain elder of Iona. Oswy, whose idol was power, could not hesitate between paltry bishops and that pope of Rome who commanded the whole world. Already imagining he saw Peter at the gates of paradise, with the keys in his hand, he exclaimed with emotion: “Is it true, Colman, that these words were addressed by our Lord to Saint Peter?” — “It is true.” — “Can you prove that similar powers were given to your Columba?” — The bishop replied, “We cannot;”

but he might have told the king: “John, whose doctrine we follow, and indeed every disciple, has received in the same sense as St. Peter the power to remit sins, to bind and to loose on earth and in heaven.” But the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures was fading away in Iona, and the unsuspecting Colman had not observed Wilfrid’s stratagem in substituting Columba for Saint John. Upon this Oswy, delighted to yield to the continual solicitations of the queen, and, above all, to find some one who would admit him into the kingdom of heaven, exclaimed, “Peter is the doorkeeper, I will obey him, lest when I appear at the gate there should be no one to open it to me.” The spectators, carried away by this royal confession, hastened to give in their submission to the vicar of St Peter.

Thus did Rome triumph at the Whitby conference. Oswy forgot that the Lord had said: I am he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. It was by ascribing to Peter the servant, what belongs to Jesus Christ the master, that the papacy reduced Britain. Oswy stretched out his hands, Rome riveted the chains,

and the liberty which Oswald had given his church seemed at the last gasp.

Colman saw with grief and consternation Oswy and his subjects bending their knees before the foreign priests. He did not, however, despair of the ultimate triumph of the truth. The apostolic faith could still find shelter in the old sanctuaries of the British church in Scotland and Ireland.

Immovable in the doctrine he had received, and resolute to uphold Christian liberty, Colman withdrew with those who would not bend beneath the yoke of Rome, and returned to Scotland. Thirty Anglo- Saxons, and a great number of Britons, shook off the dust of their feet against the tents of the Romish priests. The hatred of popery became more intense day by day among the remainder of the Britons. Determined to repel its erroneous dogmas and its illegitimate dominion, they maintained their communion with the Eastern Church, which was more ancient than that of Rome. They shuddered as they saw the red dragon of the Celts gradually retiring towards the western

sea from before the white dragon of the Saxons.

They ascribed their misfortunes to a horrible conspiracy planned by the iniquitous ambition of the foreign monks, and the bards in their chants cursed the negligent ministers who defended not the flock of the Lord against the wolves of Rome. But vain were their lamentations!

The Romish priests, aided by the queen, lost no time. Wilfrid, whom Oswy desired to reward for his triumph, was named bishop of Northumberland, and he immediately visited Paris to receive episcopal consecration in due form. He soon returned, and proceeded with singular activity to establish the Romish doctrine in all the churches. Bishop of a diocese extending from Edinburgh to Northampton, enriched with the goods which had belonged to divers monasteries, surrounded by a numerous train, served upon gold and silver plate, Wilfrid congratulated himself on having espoused the cause of the papacy; he offended every one who approached him by his insolence, and taught England how wide was the difference between the

humble ministers of Iona and a Romish priest. At the same time Oswy, coming to an understanding with the king of Kent, sent another priest named Wighard to Rome to learn the pope's intentions respecting the church in England, and to receive consecration as archbishop of Canterbury. There was no episcopal ordination in England worthy of a priest! In the meanwhile Oswy, with all the zeal of a new convert, ceased not to repeat that "the Roman Church was the catholic and apostolic church," and thought night and day on the means of converting his subjects, hoping thus (says a pope) to redeem his own soul. The arrival of this news at Rome created a great sensation. Vitalian, who then filled the episcopal chair, and was as insolent to his bishops as he was fawning and servile to the emperor, exclaimed with transport: "Who would not be overjoyed! a king converted to the true apostolic faith, a people that believes at last in Christ the Almighty God!" For many long years this people had believed in Christ, but they were now beginning to believe in the pope, and the pope will soon make them forget Jesus the Savior.

Vitalian wrote to Oswy, and sent him — not copies of the Holy Scriptures (which were already becoming scarce at Rome), but — relics of the Saints Peter, John, Lawrence, Gregory, and Paneratius; and being in an especial manner desirous of rewarding Queen Eanfeld, to whom with Wilfrid belonged the glory of this work, he offered her a cross, made, as he assured her, out of the chains of St Peter and St Paul. “Delay not,” said the pope in conclusion, “to reduce all your island under Jesus Christ,” — or in other words, under the bishop of Rome.

The essential thing, however, was to send an archbishop from Rome to Britain; but Wighard was dead, and no one seemed willing to undertake so long a journey. There was not much zeal in the city of the pontiffs: and the pope was compelled to look out for a stranger. There happened at that time to be in Rome a man of great reputation for learning, who had come from the east, and adopted the rites and doctrines of the Latins in exchange for the knowledge he had brought them. He was pointed out to Vitalian as well qualified to be the

metropolitan of England. Theodore, for such was his name, belonging by birth to the churches of Asia Minor, would be listened to by the Britons in preference to any other, when he solicited them to abandon their oriental customs. The Roman pontiff, however, fearful perhaps that he might yet entertain some leaven of his former Greek doctrines, gave him as companion, or rather as overseer, a zealous African monk named Adrian. Theodore began the great crusade against British Christianity; and, endeavoring to show the sincerity of his conversion by his zeal, he traversed all England in company with Adrian, everywhere imposing on the people that ecclesiastical supremacy to which Rome is indebted for her political supremacy. The superiority of character which distinguished Saint Peter, Theodore transformed into a superiority of office. For the jurisdiction of Christ and his word, he substituted that of the bishop of Rome and of his decrees. He insisted on the necessity of ordination by bishops who, in an unbroken chain, could trace back their authority to the apostles themselves. The British still maintained the validity of their consecration;

but the number was small of those who understood that pretended successors of the apostles, who sometimes carry Satan in their hearts, are not true ministers of Christ; that the one thing needful for the church is, that the apostles themselves (and not their successors only) should dwell in its bosom by their word, by their teaching, and by the Divine Comforter who shall be with it for ever and ever.

The grand defection now began: the best were sometimes the first to yield.

When Theodore met Cedda, who had been consecrated by a bishop who had himself received ordination from the elders of Iona, he said to him: “You have not been regularly ordained.” Cedda, instead of standing up boldly for the truth, gave way to a carnal modesty, and replied: “I never thought myself worthy of the episcopate, and am ready to lay it down.” — “No,” said Theodore, “you shall remain a bishop, but I will consecrate you anew according to the catholic ritual.” The British minister submitted. Rome, triumphant, felt herself strong enough to deny the imposition of

hands of the elders of Iona, which she had hitherto recognized. The most steadfast believers took refuge in Scotland.

In this manner a church in some respects deficient, but still a church in which the religious element held the foremost place, was succeeded by another in which the clerical element predominated. This was soon apparent: questions of authority and precedence, hitherto unknown among the British Christians, were now of daily occurrence. Wilfrid, who had fixed his residence at York, thought that no one deserved better than he to be primate of all England; and Theodore on his part was irritated at the haughty tone assumed by this bishop. During the life of Oswy, peace was maintained, for Wilfrid was his favorite; but erelong that prince fell ill; and, terrified by the near approach of death, he vowed that if he recovered he would make a pilgrimage to Rome and there end his days. “If you will be my guide to the city of the apostles,” he said to Wilfrid, “I will give you a large sum of money.” But his vow was of no avail; Oswy died in the spring of the year 670 A.D.

The Witan set aside prince Alfred, and raised his youngest brother Egfrid to the throne. The new monarch, who had often been offended by Wilfrid's insolence, denounced this haughty prelate to the archbishop.

Nothing could be more agreeable to Theodore. He assembled a council at Hertford, before which the chief of his converts were first summoned, and presenting to them, not the holy scripture but the canons of the Romish church, he received their solemn oaths: such was the religion then taught in England. But this was not all. "The diocese of our brother Wilfrid is so extensive," said the primate, "that there is room in it for four bishops." They were appointed accordingly. Wilfrid indignantly appealed from the primate and the king to the pope. "Who converted England, who, if not I?.....and it is thus I am rewarded!".....Not allowing himself to be checked by the difficulties of the journey, he set out for Rome attended by a few monks, and Pope Agathon assembling a council (679), the Englishman presented his complaint, and the

pontiff declared the destitution to be illegal. Wilfrid immediately returned to England, and haughtily presented the pope's decree to the king. But Egfrid, who was not of a disposition to tolerate these transalpine manners, far from restoring the see, cast the prelate into prison, and did not release him until the end of the year, and then only on condition that he would immediately quit Northumbria.

Wilfrid — for we must follow even to the end of his life that remarkable man, who exercised so great an influence over the destinies of the English church — Wilfrid was determined to be a bishop at any cost. The kingdom of Sussex was still pagan; and the deposed prelate, whose indefatigable activity we cannot but acknowledge, formed the resolution of winning a bishopric, as other men plan the conquest of a kingdom. He arrived in Sussex during a period of famine, and having brought with him a number of nets, he taught the people the art of fishing, and thus gained their affections. Their king Edilwalch had been baptized; his subjects now followed his example, and Wilfrid

was placed at the head of the church.

But he soon manifested the disposition by which he was animated: he furnished supplied of men and money to Ceadwalla, king of Wessex, and this cruel chieftain made a fierce inroad into Sussex, laying it waste, and putting to death Edilwalch, the prelate's benefactor. The career of the turbulent bishop was not ended. King Egfrid died, and was succeeded by his brother Alfred, whom Wilfrid had brought up, a prince fond of learning and religion, and emulous of the glory of his uncle Oswald. The ambitious Wilfrid hastened to claim his see of York, by acquiescing in the partition; it was restored to him, and he forthwith began to plunder others to enrich himself. A council begged him to submit to the decrees of the church of England; he refused, and having lost the esteem of the king, his former pupil, he undertook, notwithstanding his advanced years, a third journey to Rome. Knowing how popes are won, he threw himself at the pontiff's feet, exclaiming that "the suppliant bishop Wilfrid, the humble slave of the servant of God, implored the favor of our most

blessed lord, the pope universal.” The bishop could not restore his creature to his see, and the short remainder of Wilfrid’s life was spent in the midst of the riches his cupidity had so unworthily accumulated.

Yet he had accomplished the task of his life: all England was subservient to the papacy. The names of Oswy and of Wilfrid should be inscribed in letters of mourning in the annals of Great Britain. Posterity has erred in permitting them to sink into oblivion; for they were two of the most influential and energetic men that ever flourished in England. Still this very forgetfulness is not wanting in generosity. The grave in which the liberty of the church lay buried for nine centuries is the only monument — a mournful one indeed — that should perpetuate their memory.

But Scotland was still free, and to secure the definitive triumph of Rome, it was necessary to invade that virgin soil, over which the standard of the faith had floated for so many years.

Adamnan was then at the head of the church of Iona, the first elder of that religious house. He was virtuous and learned, but weak and somewhat vain, and his religion had little spirituality. To gain him was in the eyes of Rome to gain Scotland. A singular circumstance favored the plans of those who desired to draw him into the papal communion. One day during a violent tempest, a ship coming from the Holy Land, and on board of which was a Gaulish bishop named Arculf, was wrecked in the neighborhood of Iona. Arculf eagerly sought an asylum among the pious inhabitants of that island. Adamnan never grew tired of hearing the stranger's descriptions of Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Golgotha, of the sun-burnt plains over which our Lord had wandered, and the cleft stone which still lay before the door of the sepulcher. The elder of Iona, who prided himself on his learning, noted down Arculf's conversation, and from it composed a description of the Holy Land. As soon as his book was completed, the desire of making these wondrous things more widely known, combined with a little vanity, and perhaps other motives, urged him to

visit the court of Northumberland, where he presented his work to the pious King Alfred, who, being fond of learning and of the Christian traditions, caused a number of copies of it to be made.

Nor was this all: the Romish clergy perceived the advantage they might derive from this imprudent journey. They crowded round the elder; they showed him all the pomp of their worship, and said to him: “Will you and your friends, who live at the very extremity of the world, set yourselves in opposition to the observances of the universal church?” The nobles of the court flattered the author’s self-love, and invited him to their festivities, while the king loaded him with presents. The free presbyter of Britain became a priest of Rome, and Adamnan returned to Iona to betray his church to his new masters. But it was all to no purpose: Iona would not give way. He then went to hide his shame in Ireland, where, having brought a few individuals to the Romish uniformity, he took courage and revisited Scotland. But that country, still inflexible, repelled him with indignation.

When Rome found herself unable to conquer by the priest, she had recourse to the prince, and her eyes were turned to Naitam, king of the Picts. “How much more glorious it would be for you,” urged the Latin priests, “to belong to the powerful church of the universal pontiff of Rome, than to a congregation superintended by miserable elders! The Romish church is a monarchy, and ought to be the church of every monarch. The Roman ceremonial accords with the pomp of royalty, and its temples are palaces.” The prince was convinced by the last argument.

He despatched messengers to Ceolfrid, the abbot of an English convent, begging him to send him architects capable of building a church after the Roman pattern — of stone and not of wood. Architects, majestic porches, lofty columns, vaulted roofs, gilded altars, have often proved the most influential of Rome’s missionaries. The builder’s art, though in its earliest and simplest days, was more powerful than the Bible. Naitam, who, by submitting to the pope, thought himself the equal of Clovis and Clotaire, assembled the

nobles of his court and the pastors of his church, and thus addressed them: “I recommend all the clergy of my kingdom to receive the tonsure of Saint Peter.” Then without delay (as Bede informs us) this important revolution was accomplished by royal authority. He sent agents and letters into every province, and caused all the ministers and monks to receive the circular tonsure according to the Roman fashion. It was the mark that popery stamped, not on the forehead, but on the crown. A royal proclamation and a few clips of the scissors placed the Scotch, like a flock of sheep, beneath the crook of the shepherd of the Tiber.

Iona still held out. The orders of the Pictish king, the example of his subjects, the sight of that Italian power which was devouring the earth, had shaken some few minds; but the church still resisted the innovation. Iona was the last citadel of liberty in the western world, and popery was filled with anger at that miserable band which in its remote corner refused to bend before it. Human means appeared insufficient to conquer this rock; something more was needed, visions and miracles

for example; and these Rome always finds when she wants them. One day towards the end of the seventh century, an English monk, named Egbert, arriving from Ireland, appeared before the elders of Iona, who received him with their accustomed hospitality. He was a man in whom enthusiastic devotion was combined with great gentleness of heart, and he soon won upon the minds of these simple believers. He spoke to them of an external unity, urging that a universality manifested under different forms was unsuited to the church of Christ. He advocated the special form of Rome, and for the truly catholic element which the Christians of Iona had thus far possessed, substituted a sectarian element. He attacked the traditions of the British church, and lavishly distributing the rich presents confided to him by the lords of Ireland and of England, he soon had reason to acknowledge the truth of the saying of the wise man: A gift is a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth it prospereth.

Some pious souls, however, still held out in

Iona. The enthusiast Egbert — for such he appears to have been rather than an impostor — had recourse to other means. He represented himself to be a messenger from heaven: the saints themselves, said he, have commissioned me to convert Iona; and then he told the following history to the elders who stood round him.

“About thirty years ago, I entered the monastery of Rathmelfig in Ireland, when a terrible pestilence fell upon it, and of all the brethren the monk Edelhun and myself were left alone. Attacked by the plague, and fearing my last hour was come, I rose from my bed and crept into the chapel. There my whole body trembled at the recollection of my sins, and my face was bathed with tears. ‘O God,’ I exclaimed, ‘suffer me not to die until I have redeemed my debt to thee by an abundance of good works.” I returned staggering to the infirmary, got into bed, and fell asleep. When I awoke, I saw Edelhun with his eyes fixed on mine. ‘Brother Egbert,’ said he, ‘it has been revealed to me in a vision that thou shalt receive what thou hast asked.’ On the following night Edelhun died

and I recovered.

“Many years passed away: my repentance and my vigils did not satisfy me, and wishing to pay my debt, I resolved to go with a company of monks and preach the blessings of the gospel to the heathens of Germany. But during the night a blessed saint from heaven appeared to one of the brethren and said: ‘Tell Egbert that he must go to the monasteries of Columba, for their ploughs do not plough straight, and he must put them into the right furrow.’ I forbade this brother to speak of his vision, and went on board a ship bound for Germany. We were waiting for a favorable wind, when, of a sudden, in the middle of the night, a frightful tempest burst upon the vessel, and drove us on the shoals. ‘For my sake this tempest is upon us,’ I exclaimed in terror; ‘God speaks to me as He did to Jonah;’ and I ran to take refuge in my cell. At last I determined to obey the command which the holy man had brought me. I left Ireland, and came among you, in order to pay my debt by converting you. And now,” continues Egbert, “make answer to the voice of heaven, and submit

to Rome.” A ship thrown on shore by a storm was a frequent occurrence on those coasts, and the dream of a monk, absorbed in the plans of his brother, was nothing very unnatural. But in those times of darkness, everything appeared miraculous; phantoms and apparitions had more weight than the word of God. Instead of detecting the emptiness of these visions by the falseness of the religion they were brought to support, the elders of Iona listened seriously to Egbert’s narrative. The primitive faith planted on the rock of Icolmkill was now like a pine-tree tossed by the winds: but one gust, and it would be uprooted and blown into the sea. Egbert, perceiving the elders to be shaken, redoubled his prayers, and even had recourse to threats. “All the west,” said he, “bends the knee to Rome: alone against all, what can you do?” The Scotch still resisted: obscure and unknown, the last British Christians contended in behalf of expiring liberty. At length bewildered — they stumbled and fell. The scissors were brought; they received the Latin tonsure — they were the pope’s.

Thus fell Scotland. Yet there still remained

some sparks of grace, and the mountains of Caledonia long concealed the hidden fire which after many ages burst forth with such power and might. Here and there a few independent spirits were to be found who testified against the tyranny of Rome. In the time of Bede they might be seen “halting in their paths,” (to use the words of the Romish historian,) refusing to join in the holidays of the pontifical adherents, and pushing away the hands that were eager to shave their crowns. But the leaders of the state and of the church had laid down their arms. The contest was over, after lasting more than a century. British Christianity had in some degree prepared its own fall, by substituting too often the form for the faith. The foreign superstition took advantage of this weakness, and triumphed in these islands by means of royal decrees, church ornaments, monkish phantoms, and conventual apparitions. At the beginning of the eighth century the British Church became the serf of Rome; but an internal struggle was commencing, which did not cease until the period of the Reformation.

Chapter 4

Clement

The independent Christians of Scotland, who subordinated the authority of man to that of God, were filled with sorrow as they beheld these backslidings: and it was this no doubt which induced many to leave their homes and fight in the very heart of Europe in behalf of that Christian liberty which had just expired among themselves.

At the commencement of the eighth century a great idea took possession of a pious doctor of the Scottish church named Clement. The work of God is the very essence of Christianity, thought he, and this work must be defended against all the encroachments of man. To human traditionalism he opposed the sole authority of the word of God; to clerical materialism, a church which is the assembly of the saints; and to Pelagianism, the sovereignty of grace. He was a man of decided character and firm faith, but without fanaticism; his heart was open to the holiest emotions of our

nature; he was a husband and a father. He quitted Scotland and traveled among the Franks, everywhere scattering the seeds of the faith. It happened unfortunately that a man of kindred energy, Winifrid or Boniface of Wessex, was planting the pontifical Christianity in the same regions.

This great missionary, who possessed in an essential degree the faculty of organization, aimed at external unity above all things, and when he had taken the oath of fidelity of Gregory II, he had received from that pope a collection of the Roman laws. Boniface, henceforth a docile disciple or rather a fanatical champion of Rome, supported on the one hand by the pontiff, and on the other by Charles Martel, had preached to the people of Germany, among some undoubted Christian truths, — the doctrine of tithes and of papal supremacy. The Englishman and the Scotchman, representatives of two great systems, were about to engage in deadly combat in the heart of Europe — in a combat whose consequences might be incalculable.

Alarmed at the progress made by Clement's evangelical doctrines, Boniface, archbishop of the German churches, undertook to oppose them.

At first he confronted the Scotchman with the laws of the Roman church; but the latter denied the authority of these ecclesiastical canons, and refuted their contents. Boniface then put forward the decisions of various councils; but Clement replied that if the decisions of the councils are contrary to holy Scripture, they have no authority over Christians. The archbishop, astonished as such audacity, next had recourse to the writings of the most illustrious fathers of the Latin church, quoting Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory; but the Scotchman told him, that instead of submitting to the word of men, he would obey the word of God alone. Boniface with indignation now introduced the Catholic church, which, by its priests and bishops all united to the pope, forms an invincible unity; but to his great surprise his opponent maintained that there only, where the Holy Spirit dwells, can be found the spouse of Jesus Christ.

Vainly did the archbishop express his horror; Clement was not to be turned aside from his great idea, either by the clamors of the followers of Rome, or by the imprudent attacks made on the papacy by other Christian ministers.

Rome had, indeed, other adversaries. A Gallic bishop named Adalbert, with whom Boniface affected to associate Clement, one day saw the archbishop complacently exhibiting to the people some relics of St. Peter which he had brought from Rome and being desirous of showing the ridiculous character of these Romish practices, he distributed among the bystanders his own hair and nails, praying them to pay these the same honors as Boniface claimed for the relics of the papacy. Clement smiled, like may others, at Adalbert's singular argument; but it was not with such arms that he was wont to fight. Gifted with profound discernment, he had remarked that the authority of man substituted for the authority of God was the source of all the errors of Romanism. At the same time he maintained on predestination what the archbishop called "horrible doctrines, contrary to

the Catholic faith.” Clement’s character inclines us to believe that he was favorable to the doctrine of predestination. A century later the pious Gottschalk was persecuted by one of Boniface’s successors for holding this very doctrine of Augustine’s. Thus then did a Scotchman, the representative of the ancient faith of his country, withstand almost unaided in the center of Europe the invasion of the Romans. But he was not long alone: the great especially, more enlightened than the common people, thronged around him. If Clement had succeeded, a Christian church would have been founded on the continent independent of the papacy.

Boniface was confounded. He wished to do in central Europe what his fellow-countryman Wilfrid had done in England; and at the very moment he fancied he was advancing from triumph to triumph, victory escaped from his hands, he turned against this new enemy, and applying to Charles Martel’s sons, Pepin and Carloman, he obtained their consent to the assembling of a council before which he summoned Clement to appear.

The bishops, counts, and other notabilities having met at Soissons on the 2nd March 744, Boniface accused the Scotchman of despising the laws of Rome, the councils, and the fathers; attacked his marriage, which he called an adulterous union, and called in question some secondary points of doctrine. Clement was accordingly excommunicated by Boniface, at once his adversary, accuser, and judge, and thrown into prison, with the approbation of the pope and the king of the Franks. The Scotchman’s cause was everywhere taken up; accusations were brought against the German primate, his persecuting spirit was severely condemned, and his exertions for the triumph of the papacy were resisted.

Carloman yielded to this unanimous movement. The prison doors were opened, and Clement had hardly crossed the threshold before he began to protest boldly against human authority in matters of faith: the word of God is the only rule. Upon this Boniface applied to Rome for the heretic’s condemnation, and accompanied his

request by a silver cup and a garment of delicate texture. The pope decided in synod that if Clement did not retract his errors, he should be delivered up to everlasting damnation, and then requested Boniface to send him to Rome under a sure guard. We here lose all traces of the Scotchman, but it is easy to conjecture what must have been his fate.

Clement was not the only Briton who became distinguished in this contest.

Two fellow-countrymen, Sampson and Virgil, who preached in central Europe, were in like manner persecuted by the Church of Rome. Virgil, anticipating Galileo, dared maintain that there were other men and another world beneath our feet. He was denounced by Boniface for this heresy, and condemned by the pope, as were other Britons for the apostolical simplicity of their lives. In 813, certain Scotchmen who called themselves bishops, says a canon, having appeared before a council of the Roman church at Chalons, were rejected by the French prelates, because, like St Paul, they worked with their own hands. Those enlightened and

faithful men were superior to their time: Boniface and his ecclesiastical materialism were better fitted for an age in which clerical forms were regarded as the substance of religion.

Even Great Britain, although its light was not so pure, was not altogether plunged in darkness. The Anglo-Saxons imprinted on their church certain characteristics which distinguished it from that of Rome; several books of the Bible were translated into their tongue, and daring spirits on the one hand, with some pious souls on the other, labored in a direction hostile to popery.

At first we see the dawning of that philosophic rationalism, which gives out a certain degree of brightness, but which can neither conquer error nor still less establish truth. In the ninth century there was a learned scholar in Ireland, who afterwards settled at the court of Charles the Bald. He was a strange mysterious man, of profound thought, and as much raised above the doctors of his age by the boldness of his ideas, as Charlemagne above the princes of his day by the force of his will. John

Scot Erigena — that is, a native of Ireland and not of Ayr, as some have supposed — was a meteor in the theological heavens. With a great philosophic genius he combined a cheerful jesting disposition. One day, while seated at table opposite to Charles the Bald, the latter archly inquired of him: “What is the distance between a Scot and a sot?” “The width of the table,” was his ready answer, which drew a smile from the king. While the doctrine of Bede, Boniface, and even Alcuin was traditional, servile, and, in one word, Romanist, that of Scot was mystical, philosophic, free, and daring. He sought for the truth not in the word or in the Church, but in himself: — “The knowledge of ourselves is the true source of religious wisdom. Every creature is a theophany — a manifestation of God; since revelation presupposes the existence of truth, it is this truth, which is above revelation, with which man must set himself in immediate relation, leaving him at liberty to show afterwards its harmony with scripture, and the other theophanies. We must first employ reason, and then authority.

Authority proceeds from reason, and not reason

from authority.” Yet this bold thinker, when on his knees, could give way to aspirations full of piety: “O Lord Jesus,” exclaimed he, “I ask no other happiness of Thee, but to understand, unmixed with deceitful theories, the word that Thou hast inspired by the Holy Spirit! Show thyself to those who ask for Thee alone!” But while Scot rejected on the one hand certain traditional errors, and in particular the doctrine of transubstantiation, which was creeping into the church, he was near falling as regards God and the world into other errors savoring of pantheism. The philosophic rationalism of the contemporary of Charles the Bald — the strange product of one of the obscurest periods of history (850) — was destined after the lapse of many centuries to be taught once more in Great Britain as a modern invention of the most enlightened age.

While Scot was thus plumbing the depths of philosophy, others were examining their Bibles; and if thick darkness had not spread over these first glimpses of the dawn, perhaps the Church of Great Britain might even then have begun to labor for the

regeneration of Christendom. A youthful prince, thirsting for intellectual enjoyments, for domestic happiness, and for the word of God, and who sought, by frequent prayer, for deliverance from the bondage of sin, had ascended the throne of Wessex, in the year 871. Alfred being convinced that Christianity alone could rightly mould a nation, assembled round him the most learned men from all parts of Europe, and was anxious that the English, like the Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, should possess the holy Scripture in their own language. He is the real patron of the biblical work, — a title far more glorious than that of founder of the university of Oxford. After having fought more than fifty battles by land and sea, he died while translating the Psalms of David for his subjects. After this gleam of light thick darkness once more settled upon Great Britain. Nine Anglo-Saxon kings ended their days in monasteries; there was a seminary in Rome from which every year fresh scholars bore to England the new forms of popery; the celibacy of priests, that cement of the Romish hierarchy, was established by a bull about the close of the tenth century; convents were multiplied,

considerable possessions were bestowed on the Church, and the tax of Peter's pence, laid at the pontiff's feet, proclaimed the triumph of the papal system. But a reaction soon took place: England collected her forces for a war against the papacy — a war at one time secular and at another spiritual. William of Normandy, Edward III, Wickliffe, and the Reformation, are the four ascending steps of Protestantism in England.

A proud, enterprising, and far-sighted prince, the illegitimate son of a peasant girl of Falaise and Robert the Devil, duke of Normandy, began a contest with the papacy which lasted until the Reformation. William the Conqueror, having defeated the Saxons at Hastings in, A.D., took possession of England, under the benediction of the Roman pontiff. But the conquered country was destined to conquer its master. William, who had invaded England in the pope's name, had no sooner touched the soil of his new kingdom, than he learned to resist Rome, as if the ancient liberty of the British Church had revived in him. Being firmly resolved to allow no foreign prince or

prelate to possess in his dominions a jurisdiction independent of his own, he made preparations for a conquest far more difficult than that of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. The papacy itself furnished him with weapons. The Roman legates prevailed on the king to dispossess the English episcopacy in a mass, and this was exactly what he wished. To resist the papacy, William desired to be sure of the submission of the priests of England. Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, was removed, and Lanfranc of Pavia, who had been summoned from Bec in Normandy to fill his place, was commissioned by the Conqueror to bend the clergy to obedience. This prelate, who was regular in his life, abundant in almsgiving, a learned disputant, a prudent politician, and a skillful mediator, finding that he had to choose between his master King William and his friend the pontiff Hildebrand, gave the prince the preference. He refused to go to Rome, notwithstanding the threats of the pope, and applied himself resolutely to the work the king had intrusted to him. The Saxons sometimes resisted the Normans, as the Britons had resisted the Saxons; but the second struggle was less glorious

than the first. A synod at which the king was present having met in the abbey of Westminster, William commanded Wulston, bishop of Worcester, to give up his crosier to him. The old man rose, animated with holy fervor: “O king,” he said, “from a better man than you I received it, and to him only will I return it.” Unhappily this “better man” was not Jesus Christ. Then approaching the tomb of Edward the Confessor, he continued: “O my master, it was you who compelled me to assume this office; but now behold a new king and a new primate who promulgate new laws. Not unto them, O master, but unto you, do I resign my crosier and the care of my flock.” With these words Wulston laid his pastoral staff on Edward’s tomb. On the sepulcher of the confessor perished the liberty of the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy. The deprived Saxon bishops were consigned to fortresses or shut up in convents.

The Conqueror being thus assured of the obedience of the bishops, put forward the supremacy of the sword in opposition to that of the pope. He nominated directly to all vacant

ecclesiastical offices, filled his treasury with the riches of the churches, required that all priests should make oath to him, forbade them to excommunicate his officers without his consent, not even for incest, and declared that all synodal decisions must be countersigned by him. “I claim,” said he to the archbishop one day, raising his arms towards heaven, “I claim to hold in this hand all the pastoral staffs in my kingdom.” Lanfranc was astonished at this daring speech, but prudently kept silent, for a time at least. Episcopacy connived at the royal pretensions.

Will Hildebrand, the most inflexible of popes, bend before William? The king was earnest in his desire to enslave the Church to the State; the pope to enslave the State to the Church: the collision of these two mighty champions threatened to be terrible. But the haughtiest of pontiffs was seen to yield as soon as he felt the mail-clad hand of the Conqueror, and to shrink unresistingly before it. The pope filled all Christendom with confusion, that he might deprive princes of the right of investiture to ecclesiastical dignities: William

would not permit him to interfere with that question in England, and Hildebrand submitted. The king went even farther: the pope, wishing to enslave the clergy, deprived the priests of their lawful wives; William got a decree passed by the council of Winchester in 1076 to the effect that the married priests living in castles and towns should not be compelled to put away their wives. This was too much: Hildebrand summoned Lanfranc to Rome, but William forbade him to go. “Never did king, not even a pagan,” exclaimed Gregory, “attempt against the holy see what this man does not fear to carry out!” .....To console himself, he demanded payment of the Peter’s pence, and an oath of fidelity. William sent the money, but refused the homage; and when Hildebrand saw the tribute which the king had paid, he said bitterly: “What value can I set on money which is contributed with so little honor!” William forbade his clergy to recognize the pope, or to publish a bull without the royal approbation, which did not prevent Hildebrand from styling him “the pearl of princes.” “It is true,” said he to his legate, “that the English king does not behave in certain matters so

religiously as we could desire.....Yet beware of exasperating him.....We shall win him over to God and St. Peter more surely by mildness and reason than by strictness or severity.” In this manner the pope acted like the archbishop siluit: he was silent. It is for feeble governments that Rome reserves her energies.

The Norman kings, desirous of strengthening their work, constructed Gothic cathedrals in the place of wooden churches, in which they installed their soldier-bishops, as if they were strong fortresses. Instead of the moral power and the humble crook of the shepherd, they gave them secular power and a staff. The religious episcopate was succeeded by a political one. William Rufus went even to greater lengths than his father. Taking advantage of the schism which divided the papacy, he did without a pope for ten years, leaving abbeys, bishoprics, and even Canterbury vacant, and scandalously squandering their revenues. Caesaropapia (which transforms a king into a pope) having thus attained its greatest excess, a sacerdotal reaction could not fail to take place.

The papacy is about to rise up again in England, and royalty to decline — two movements which are always found combined in Great Britain.

Chapter 5

Anselm’s Firmness

We are now entering upon a new phase of history. Romanism is on the point of triumphing by the exertions of learned men, energetic prelates, and princes in whom extreme imprudence was joined with extreme servility.

This is the era of the dominion of popery, and we shall see it unscrupulously employing the despotism by which it is characterized.

A malady having occasioned some degree of remorse in the king, he consented to fill up the vacancy in the archiepiscopal see. And now Anselm first appears in England. He was born in an Alpine valley, at the town of Aosta in Piedmont. Imbibing the instructions of his pious mother Ermenberga, and believing that God’s throne was placed on the summit of the gigantic mountains he saw rising around him, the child Anselm climbed them in his dreams, and received the bread of

heaven from the hands of the Lord. Unhappily in after-years he recognized another throne in the church of Christ, and bowed his head before the chair of St. Peter. This was the man whom William II summoned in 1093 to fill the primacy of Canterbury. Anselm, who was then sixty years old, and engaged in teaching at Bec, refused at first; the character of Rufus terrified him. “The church of England,” said he, “is a plough that ought to be drawn by two oxen of equal strength. How can you yoke together an old and timid sheep like me and that wild bull?” At length he accepted, and concealing a mind of great power under an appearance of humility, he had hardly arrived in England before he recognized Pope Urban II, demanded the estates of his see which the treasury had seized upon, refused to pay the king the sums he demanded, contested the right of investiture against Henry I, forbade all ecclesiastics to take the feudal oath, and determined that the priest should forthwith put away their wives. Scholasticism, of which Anselm was the first representative, freed the church from the yoke of royalty, but only to chain it to the papal chair.

The fetters were about to be riveted by a still more energetic hand; and what this great theologian had begun, a great worldling was to carry on.

At the hunting parties of Henry II a man attracted the attention of his sovereign by his air of frankness, agreeable manners, witty conversation, and exuberant vivacity. This was Thomas Becket, the son of an Anglo- Saxon and a Syrian woman. Being both priest and soldier, he was appointed at the same time by the king prebend of Hastings and governor of the Tower. When nominated chancellor of England, he showed himself no less expert than Wilfrid in misappropriating the wealth of the minors in his charge, and of the abbeys and bishoprics, and indulged in the most extravagant luxury. Henry, the first of the Plantagenets, a man of undecided character, having noticed Becket’s zeal in upholding the prerogatives of the crown, appointed him archbishop of Canterbury, “Now, sire,” remarked the primate, with a smile, “when I shall have to choose between God’s favor and

yours, remember it is yours that I shall sacrifice." Becket, who, as keeper of the seals, had been the most magnificent of courtiers, affected as archbishop to be the most venerable of saints. He sent back the seals to the king, assumed the robe of a monk, wore sackcloth filled with vermin, lived on the plainest food, every day knelt down to wash the feet of the poor, paced the cloisters of his cathedral with tearful eyes, and spent hours in prayer before the altar. As champion of the priests, even in their crimes, he took under his protection one who to the crime of seduction had added the murder of his victim's father.

The judges having represented to Henry that during the first eight years of his reign a hundred murders had been committed by ecclesiastics, the king in 1164 summoned a council at Clarendon, in which certain regulations or constitutions were drawn up, with the object of preventing the encroachments of the hierarchy. Becket at first refused to sign them, but at length consented, and then withdrew into solitary retirement to mourn over his fault. Pope Alexander III released him

from his oath; and then began a fierce and long struggle between the king and the primate. Four knights of the court, catching up a hasty expression of their master's, barbarously murdered the archbishop at the foot of the altar in his own cathedral church (A.D. 1170). The people looked upon Becket as a saint: immense crowds came to pray at his tomb, at which many miracles were worked. "Even from his grave," said Becket's partisans, "he renders his testimony in behalf of the papacy." Henry now passed from one extreme to the other. He entered Canterbury barefooted, and prostrated himself before the martyr's tomb: the bishops, priests, and monks, to the number of eighty, passed before him, each bearing a scourge, and struck three or five blows according to their rank on the naked shoulders of the king. In former ages, so the priestly fable ran, Saint Peter had scourged an archbishop of Canterbury: now Rome in sober reality scourges the back of royalty, and nothing can henceforward check her victorious career. A Plantagenet surrendered England to the pope, and the pope gave him authority to subdue Ireland. Rome, who had set her foot on the neck of

a king, was destined under one of the sons of Henry II to set it on the neck of England. John being unwilling to acknowledge an archbishop of Canterbury illegally nominated by Pope Innocent III, the latter, more daring than Hildebrand, laid the kingdom under an interdict. Upon this John ordered all the prelates and abbots to leave England, and sent a monk to Spain as ambassador to Mahomet-el-Nasir, offering to turn Mahometan and to become his vassal.

But as Philip Augustus was preparing to dethrone him, John made up his mind to become a vassal of Innocent, and not of Mahomet — which was about the same thing to him. On the 15th May 1213, he laid his crown at the legate’s feet, declared that he surrendered his kingdom of England to the pope, and made oath to him as to his lord paramount. A national protest then boldly claimed the ancient liberties of the people.

Forty-five barons, armed in complete mail, and mounted on their noble war-horses, surrounded by their knights and servants and about two thousand

soldiers, met at Brackley during the festival of Easter in 1215, and sent a deputation to Oxford, where the court then resided. “Here,” said they to the king, “is the charter which consecrates the liberties confirmed by Henry II, and which you also have solemnly sworn to observe.”.....”Why do they not demand my crown also?” said the king in a furious passion, and then with an oath, he added: “I will not grant them liberties which will make me a slave.” This is the usual language of weak and absolute kings. Neither would the nation submit to be enslaved.

The barons occupied London, and on the 15th June 1215, the king signed the famous Magna Charta at Runnymede. The political protestantism of the thirteenth century would have done but little, however, for the greatness of the nation, without the religious protestantism of the sixteenth.

This was the first time that the papacy came into collision with modern liberty. It shuddered in alarm, and the shock was violent. Innocent swore (as was his custom), and then declared the Great

Charter null and void, forbade the king under pain of anathema to respect the liberties which he had confirmed, ascribed the conduct of the barons to the instigation of Satan, and ordered them to make apology to the king, and to send a deputation to Rome to learn from the mouth of the pope himself what should be the government of England. This was the way in which the papacy welcomed the first manifestations of liberty among the nations, and made known the model system under which it claimed to govern the whole world.

The priests of England supported the anathemas pronounced by their chief. They indulged in a thousand jeers and sarcasms against John about the charter he had accepted: — “This is the twenty-fifth king of England — not a king, not even a kingling — but the disgrace of kings — a king without a kingdom — the fifth wheel of a wagon — the last of kings, and the disgrace of his people! — I would not give a straw for him.....Fuisti rex nunc fex, (once a king, but now a clown.)” John, unable to support his disgrace, groaned and gnashed his teeth and rolled his eyes,

tore sticks from the hedges and gnawed them like a maniac, or dashed them into fragments on the ground. The barons, unmoved alike by the insolence of the pope and the despair of the king, replied that they would maintain the charter. Innocent excommunicated them. “Is it the pope’s business to regulate temporal matters?” asked they. “By what right do vile usurers and foul simoniacs domineer over our country and excommunicate the whole world?” The pope soon triumphed throughout England. His vassal John, having hired some bands of adventurers from the continent, traversed at their head the whole country from the Channel to the Forth. These mercenaries carried desolation in their track: they extorted money, made prisoners, 1658 burnt the barons’ castles, laid waste their parks, and dishonored their wives and daughters. The king would sleep in a house, and the next morning set fire to it. Blood-stained assassins scoured the country during the night, the sword in one hand and the torch in the other, marking their progress by murder and conflagration. Such was the enthronization of popery in England. At this sight the barons,

overcome by emotion, denounced both the king and the pope: “Alas! poor country!” they exclaimed. “Wretched England!.....And thou, O pope, a curse light upon thee!” The curse was not long delayed. As the king was returning from some more than usually successful foray, and as the royal wagons were crossing the sands of the Wash, the tide rose and all sank in the abyss. This accident filled John with terror: it seemed to him that the earth was about to open and swallow him up; he fled to a convent, where he drank copiously of cider, and died of drunkenness and fright. Such was the end of the pope’s vassal — of his armed missionary in Great Britain. Never had so vile a prince been the involuntary occasion to his people of such great benefits. From his reign England may date her enthusiasm for liberty and her dread of popery.

During this time a great transformation had been accomplished.

Magnificent churches and the marvels of religious art, with ceremonies and a multitude of

prayers and chantings dazzled the eyes, charmed the ears, and captivated the senses; but testified also to the absence of every strong moral and Christian disposition, and the predominance of worldliness in the church. At the same time the adoration of images and relics, saints, angels, and Mary the mother of God, the worships of latria, doulia, and hyperdoulia, the real Mediator transported from the throne of mercy to the seat of vengeance, at once indicated and kept up among the people that ignorance of truth and absence of grace which characterize popery. All these errors tended to bring about a reaction: and in fact the march of the Reformation may now be said to begin.

England had been brought low by the papacy: it rose up again by resisting Rome. Grostete, Bradwardine, and Edward III prepared the way for Wickliffe, and Wickliffe for the Reformation.

Chapter 6

Reaction

In the reign of Henry III, son of John, while the king was conniving at the usurpations of Rome, and the pope ridiculing the complaints of the barons, a pious and energetic man, of comprehensive understanding, was occupied in the study of the Holy Scriptures in their original languages, and bowing to their sovereign authority. Robert Grostete (Great-head or Capito) was born of poor parents in the county of Lincolnshire, and raised to the see of Lincoln in, when he was sixty years of age, he boldly undertook to reform his diocese, one of the largest in England. Nor was this all. At the very time when the Roman pontiff, who had hitherto been content to be called the vicar of Saint Peter, proclaimed himself the vicar of God, and was ordering the English bishops to find benefices for three hundred Romans, Grostete was declaring, that “to follow a pope who rebels against the will of Christ, is to separate from Christ and his body; and if ever the time should come when all

men follow an erring pontiff, then will be the great apostasy. Then will true Christians refuse to obey, and Rome will be the cause of an unprecedented schism." Thus did he predict the Reformation. Disgusted at the avarice of the monks and priests, he visited Rome to demand a reform. "Brother," said Innocent IV to him with some irritation, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" The English bishop exclaimed with a sigh: "O money, money! how great is thy power — especially in this court of Rome!" A year had scarcely elapsed before Innocent commanded the bishop to give a canonry in Lincoln cathedral to his infant nephew. Grostete replied: "After the sin of Lucifer there is none more opposed to the gospel than that which ruins souls by giving them a faithless minister. Bad pastors are the cause of unbelief, heresy, and disorder. Those who introduce them into the church are little better than antichrists, and their culpability is in proportion to their dignity. Although the chief of the angels should order me to commit such a sin, I would refuse. My obedience forbids me to obey; and therefore I rebel." Thus spoke a bishop to his pontiff: his obedience to the word of God forbade

him to obey the pope. This was the principle of the Reformation.

“Who is this old driveller that in his dotage dares to judge of my conduct?” exclaimed Innocent, whose wrath was appeased by the intervention of certain cardinals. Grostete on his dying bed professed still more clearly the principles of the reformers; he declared that a heresy was “an opinion conceived by carnal motives, contrary to Scripture, openly taught and obstinately defended,” thus asserting the authority of Scripture instead of the authority of the church. He died in peace, and the public voice proclaimed him “a searcher of the Scriptures, an adversary of the pope, and despiser of the Romans.” Innocent, desiring to take vengeance on his bones, meditated the exhumation of his body, when one night (says Matthew of Paris) the bishop appeared before him. Drawing near the pontiff’s bed, he struck him with his crosier, and thus addressed him with terrible voice and threatening look: “Wretch! the Lord doth not permit thee to have any power over me. Woe be to thee!” The vision disappeared, and the pope,

uttering a cry as if he had been struck by some sharp weapon, lay senseless on his couch. Never after did he pass a quiet night, and pursued by the phantoms of his troubled imagination, he expired while the palace re-echoed with his lamentable groans.

Grostete was not single in his opposition to the pope. Sewal, archbishop of York, did the same, and “the more the pope cursed him, the more the people blessed him.” “Moderate your tyranny,” said the archbishop to the pontiff, “for the Lord said to Peter, Feed my sheep, and not shear them, flay them, or devour them.” The pope smiled and let the bishop speak, because the king allowed the pope to act. The power of England, which was constantly increasing, was soon able to give more force to these protests.

The nation was indeed growing in greatness. The madness of John, which had caused the English people to lose their continental possessions, had given them more unity and power. The Norman kings, being compelled to renounce

entirely the country which had been their cradle, had at length made up their minds to look upon England as their home. The two races, so long hostile, melted one into the other. Free institutions were formed; the laws were studied; and colleges were founded. The language began to assume a regular form, and the ships of England were already formidable at sea. For more than a century the most brilliant victories attended the British armies. A king of France was brought captive to London: an English king was crowned at Paris. Even Spain and Italy felt the valor of these proud islanders. The English people took their station in the foremost rank. Now the character of a nation is never raised by halves.

When the mighty ones of the earth were seen to fall before her, England could no longer crawl at the feet of an Italian priest.

At no period did her laws attack the papacy with so much energy. At the beginning of the fourteenth century an Englishman having brought to London one of the pope’s bulls — a bull of an

entirely spiritual character, it was an excommunication — was prosecuted as a traitor to the crown, and would have been hanged, had not the sentence, at the chancellor’s intercession, been changed to perpetual banishment. The common law was the weapon the government then opposed to the papal bulls. Shortly afterwards, in, King Edward ordered the sheriffs to resist the arrogant pretensions of the Romish agents. But it is to two great men in the fourteenth century, equally illustrious, the one in the state, and the other in the church, that England is indebted for the development of the protestant element in England.

In 1346, an English army, 34,000 strong, met face to face at Crecy a French army of 100,000 fighting men. Two individuals of very different characters were in the English host. One of them was King Edward III, a brave and ambitious prince, who, being resolved to recover for the royal authority all its power, and for England all her glory, had undertaken the conquest of France. The other was his chaplain Bradwardine, a man of so humble a character that his meekness was often

taken for stupidity. And thus it was that on his receiving the pallium at Avignon from the hands of the pope on his elevation to the see of Canterbury, a jester mounted on an ass rode into the hall and petitioned the pontiff to make him primate instead of that imbecile priest.

Bradwardine was one of the most pious men of the age, and to his prayers his sovereign's victories were ascribed. He was also one of the greatest geniuses of his time, and occupied the first rank among astronomers, philosophers, and mathematicians. The pride of science had at first alienated him from the doctrine of the cross. But one day while in the house of God and listening to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, these words struck his ear: It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. His ungrateful heart, he tells us, at first rejected this humiliating doctrine with aversion. Yet the word of God had laid its powerful hold upon him; he was converted to the truths he had despised, and immediately began to set forth the doctrines of eternal grace at Merton College, Oxford. He had

drunk so deep at the fountain of Scripture that the traditions of men concerned him but little, and he was so absorbed in adoration in spirit and in truth, that he remarked not outward superstitions. His lectures were eagerly listened to and circulated through all Europe. The grace of God was their very essence, as it was of the Reformation. With sorrow Bradwardine beheld Pelagianism everywhere substituting a mere religion of externals for inward Christianity, and on his knees he struggled for the salvation of the church. “As in the times of old, four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal strove against a single prophet of God; so now, O Lord,” he exclaimed, “the number of those who strive with Pelagius against thy free grace cannot be counted. They pretend not to receive grace freely, but to buy it. The will of men (they say) should precede, and thine should follow: theirs is the mistress, and thine the servant. ....Alas! nearly the whole world is walking in error in the steps of Pelagius. Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause.” And the Lord did arise, but not until after the death of this pious archbishop — in the days of Wickliffe, who, when a youth, listened to the

lectures at Merton College — and especially in the days of Luther and of Calvin. His contemporaries gave him the name of the profound doctor.

If Bradwardine walked truthfully in the path of faith, his illustrious patron Edward advance triumphantly in the field of policy. Pope Clement IV having decreed that the first two vacancies in the Anglican church should be conferred on two of his cardinals: “France is becoming English,” said the courtiers to the king; “and by way of compensation, England is becoming Italian.” Edward, desirous of guaranteeing the religious liberties of England, passed with the consent of parliament in 1350 the statute of Provisors, which made void every ecclesiastical appointment contrary to the rights of the king, the chapters, or the patrons. Thus the privileges of the chapters and the liberty of the English Catholics, as well as the independence of the crown, were protected against the invasion of foreigners; and imprisonment or banishment for life was denounced upon all offenders against the law.

This bold step alarmed the pontiff. Accordingly, three years after, the king having nominated one of his secretaries to the see of Durham — a man without any of the qualities becoming a bishop — the pope readily confirmed the appointment. When some one expressed his astonishment at this, the pope made answer: “If the king of England had nominated an ass, I would have accepted him.” This may remind us of the ass of Avignon; and it would seem that this humble animal at that time played a significant part in the elections of the papacy. But be that as it may, the pope withdrew his pretensions. “Empires have their term,” observes an historian at this place; “when once they have reached it, they halt, they retrograde, they fall.” The term seemed to be drawing nearer every day. In the reign of Edward III, between 1343 and 1353, again in 1364, and finally under Richard II in, those stringent laws were passed which interdicted all appeal to the court of Rome, all bulls from the Roman bishop, all excommunications, etc, in a word, every act infringing on the rights of the crown; and declared that whoever should bring such document into

England, or receive, publish, or execute them, should be put out of the king's protection, deprived of their property, attached in their persons, and brought before the king in council to undergo their trial according to the terms of the act. Such was the statute of Proemunire. Great was the indignation of the Romans at the news of this law: "If the statute of mortmain put the pope into a sweat," says Fuller, "this of proemunive gave him a fit of fever." One pope called it an "execrable statute," — "a horrible crime." Such are the terms applied by the pontiffs to all that thwarts their ambition.

Of the two wars carried on by Edward — the one against the king of France, and the other against popery — the latter was the most righteous and important. The benefits which this prince had hoped to derive from his brilliant victories at Crecy and Poitiers dwindled away almost entirely before his death; while his struggles with the papacy, founded as they were on truth, have exerted even to out own days an indisputable influence on the destinies of Great Britain. Yet the prayers and the conquests of Bradwardine, who proclaimed in that

fallen age the doctrine of grace, produced effects still greater, not only for the salvation of many souls, but for the liberty, moral force, and greatness of England.

Chapter 7

The Mendicant Friars

Thus in the first half of the fourteenth century, nearly two hundred years before the Reformation, England appeared weary of the yoke of Rome.

Bradwardine was no more; but a man who had been his disciple was about to succeed him, and without attaining to the highest functions, to exhibit in his person the past and future tendencies of the church of Christ in Great Britain. The English Reformation did not begin with Henry VIII: the revival of the sixteenth century is but a link in the chain commencing with the apostles and reaching to us.

The resistance of Edward III to the papacy without had not suppressed the papacy within. The mendicant friars, and particularly the Franciscans, those fanatical soldiers of the pope, were endeavoring by pious frauds to monopolize the wealth of the country. “Every year,” said they,

“Saint Francis descends from heaven to purgatory, and delivers the souls of all those who were buried in the dress of his order.” These friars used to kidnap children from their parents and shut them up in monasteries.

They affected to the poor, and with a wallet on their back, begged with a piteous air from both high and low; but at the same time they dwelt in palaces, heaped up treasures, dressed in costly garments, and wasted their time in luxurious entertainment. The least of them looked upon themselves as lords, and those who wore the doctor’s cap considered themselves kings. While they diverted themselves, eating and drinking at their well-spread tables, they used to send ignorant uneducated persons in their place to preach fables and legends to amuse and plunder the people.

If any rich man talked of giving alms to the poor and not to the monks, they exclaimed loudly against such impiety, and declared with threatening voice: “If you do so we will leave the country, and return accompanied by a legion of glittering

helmets.” Public indignation was at its height. “The monks and priests of Rome, was the cry, “are eating us away like a cancer. God must deliver us or the people will perish.....Woe be to them! the cup of wrath will run over. Men of holy church shall be despised as carrion, as dogs shall they be cast out in open places.” The arrogance of Rome made the cup run over. Pope Urban V, heedless of the laurels won by the conqueror at Crecy and Poitiers, summoned Edward III to recognize him as legitimate sovereign of England, and to pay as feudal tribute the annual rent of one thousand marcs. In case of refusal the king was to appear before him at Rome, For thirty-three years the popes had never mentioned the tribute accorded by John to Innocent III, and which had always been paid very irregularly. The conqueror of the Valois was irritated by this insolence on the part of an Italian bishop, and called on God to avenge England. From Oxford came forth the avenger.

John Wickliffe, born in, in a little village in Yorkshire, was one of the students who attended the lectures of the pious Bradwardine at Merton

College. He was in the flower of his age, and produced a great sensation in the university. In, a terrible pestilence, which is said to have carried off half the human race, appeared in England after successively devastating Asia and the continent of Europe. This visitation of the Almighty sounded like the trumpet of the judgment-day in the heart of Wickliffe. Alarmed at the thoughts of eternity, the young man — for he was then only twentyfour years old — passed days and nights in his cell groaning and sighing, and calling upon God to show him the path he ought to follow. He found it in the Holy Scriptures, and resolved to make it known to others.

He commenced with prudence; but being elected in 1361 warden of Balliol, and in 1365 warden of Canterbury College also, he began to set forth the doctrine of faith in a more energetic manner. His biblical and philosophical studies, his knowledge of theology, his penetrating mind, the purity of his manners, and his unbending courage, rendered him the object of general admiration. A profound teacher, like his master, and an eloquent

preacher, he demonstrated to the learned during the course of the week what he intended to preach, and on Sunday he preached to the people what he had previously demonstrated. His disputations gave strength to his sermons, and his sermons shed light upon his disputations. He accused the clergy of having banished the Holy Scriptures, and required that the authority of the word of God should be re-established in the church. Loud acclamations crowned these discussions, and the crowd of vulgar minds trembled with indignation when they heard these shouts of applause.

Wickliffe was forty years old when the papal arrogance stirred England to its depths. Being at once an able politician and a fervent Christian, he vigorously defended the rights of the crown against the Romish aggression, and by his arguments not only enlightened his fellow-countrymen generally, but stirred up the zeal of several members of both houses of parliament.

The parliament assembled, and never perhaps had it been summoned on a question which excited

to so high a degree the emotions of England, and indeed of Christendom. The debates in the House of Lords were especially remarkable: all the arguments of Wickliffe were reproduced. “Feudal tribute is due,” said one, “only to him who can grant feudal protection in return. Now how can the pope wage war to protect his fiefs?” — “Is it as vassal of the crown or as feudal superior,” asked another, “that the pope demands part of our property? Urban V will not accept the first of these titles.....Well and good! but the English people will not acknowledge the second.” — “Why,” said a third, “was this tribute originally granted? To pay the pope for absolving John.....His demand, then, is mere simony, a kind of clerical swindling, which the lords spiritual and temporal should indignantly oppose.” — “No,” said another speaker, “England belongs not to the pope. The pope is but a man, subject to sin; but Christ is the Lord of lords, and this kingdom is held directly and solely of Christ along.” Thus spoke the lords inspired by Wickliffe.

Parliament decided unanimously that no prince had the right to alienate the sovereignty of the

kingdom without the consent of the other two estates, and that if the pontiff should attempt to proceed against the king of England as his vassal, the nation should rise in a body to maintain the independence of the crown.

To no purpose did this generous resolution excite the wrath of the partisans of Rome; to no purpose did they assert that, by the canon law, the king ought to be deprived of his fief, and that England now belonged to the pope: “No,” replied Wickliffe, “the canon law has no force when it is opposed to the word of God.” Edward III made Wickliffe one of his chaplains, and the papacy has ceased from that hour to lay claim — in explicit terms at least — to the sovereignty of England.

When the pope gave up his temporal he was desirous, at the very least, of keeping up his ecclesiastical pretensions, and to procure the repeal of the statutes of Proemunire and Provisors. It was accordingly resolved to hold a conference at Bruges to treat of this question, and Wickliffe, who had been created doctor of theology two years

before, proceeded thither with the other commissioner in April 1374. They came to an arrangement in 1375 that the king should bind himself to repeal the penalties denounced against the pontifical agents, and that the pope should confirm the king's ecclesiastical presentations. But the nation was not pleased with this compromise. "The clerks sent from Rome," said the Commons, "are more dangerous for the kingdom than Jews or Saracens; every papal agent resident in England, and every Englishman living at the court of Rome, should be punished with death," Such was the language of the Good Parliament. In the fourteenth century the English nation called a parliament good which did not yield to the papacy.

Wickliffe, after his return to England, was presented to the rectory of Lutterworth, and from that time a practical activity was added to his academic influence. At Oxford he spoke as a master to the young theologians; in his parish he addressed the people as a preacher and as a pastor. "The Gospel," said he, "is the only source of religion. The Roman pontiff is a mere cut-purse,

and, far from having the right to reprimand the whole world, he may be lawfully reproved by his inferiors, and even by laymen.” The papacy grew alarmed. Courtenay, son of the Earl of Devonshire, an imperious but grave priest, and full of zeal for what he believed to be the truth, had recently been appointed to the see of London. In parliament he had resisted Wickliffe’s patron, John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, third son of Edward III, and head of the house of that name. The bishop, observing that the doctrines of the reformer were spreading among the people, both high and low, charged him with heresy, and summoned him to appear before the convocation assembled in St Paul’s Cathedral.

On the 19th February, an immense crowd, heated with fanaticism, thronged the approached to the church and filled its aisles, while the citizens favorable to the Reform remained concealed in their houses.

Wickliffe moved forward, preceded by Lord Percy, marshal of England, and supported by the

Duke of Lancaster, who defended him from purely political motives. He was followed by four bachelors of divinity, his counsel, and passed through the hostile multitude, who looked upon Lancaster as the enemy of their liberties, and upon himself as the enemy of the church. “Let not the sight of these bishops make you shrink a hair’s breadth in your profession of faith,” said the prince to the doctor. “They are unlearned; and as for this concourse of people, fear nothing, we are here to defend you.” When the reformer had crossed the threshold of the cathedral, the crowd within appeared like a solid wall; and, notwithstanding the efforts of the earl-marshal, Wickliffe and Lancaster could not advance. The people swayed to and fro, hands were raised in violence, and loud hootings re-echoed through the building. At length Percy made an opening in the dense multitude, and Wickliffe passed on.

The haughty Courtenay, who had been commissioned by the archbishop to preside over the assembly, watched these strange movements with anxiety, and beheld with displeasure the

learned doctor accompanied by the two most powerful men in England. He said nothing to the Duke of Lancaster, who at that time administered the kingdom, but turning towards Percy observed sharply: “If I had known, my lord, that you claimed to be master in this church, I would have taken measures to prevent your entrance.” Lancaster coldly rejoined: “He shall keep such mastery here, though you say nay.” Percy now turned to Wickliffe, who had remained standing and said: “Sit down and rest yourself,” At this Courtenay gave way to his anger, and exclaimed in a loud tone: “He must not sit down; criminals stand before their judges.” Lancaster, indignant that a learned doctor of England should be refused a favor to which his age alone entitled him (for he was between fifty and sixty) made answer to the bishop: “My lord, you are very arrogant; take care.....or I may bring down your pride, and not yours only, but that of all the prelacy in England.” — “Do me all the harm you can,” was Courtenay’s haughty reply. The prince rejoined with some emotion: “You are insolent, my lord. You think, no doubt, you can trust on your family.....but your

relations will have trouble enough to protect themselves.” To this the bishop nobly replied: “My confidence is not in my parents nor in any man; but only in God, in whom I trust, and by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth.” Lancaster, who saw hypocrisy only in these words, turned to one of his attendants, and whispered in his ear, but so loud as to be heard by the bystanders: “I would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of his chair, than take this at his hands.” Every impartial reader must confess that the prelate spoke with greater dignity than the prince. Lancaster had hardly uttered these imprudent words before the bishop’s partisan fell upon him and Percy, and even upon Wickliffe, who alone had remained calm. The two noblemen resisted, their friends and servants defended them, the uproar became extreme, and there was no hope of restoring tranquility.

The two lords escaped with difficulty, and the assembly broke up in great confusion.

On the following day the earl-marshall having

called upon parliament to apprehend the disturbers of the public peace, the clerical party, uniting with the enemies of Lancaster, filled the streets with their clamor; and while the duke and the earl escaped by the Thames, the mob collected before Percy's house broke down the doors, searched every chamber, and thrust their swords into every dark corner. When they found that he had escaped, the rioters, imagining that he was concealed in Lancaster's palace, rushed to the Savoy, at that time the most magnificent building in the kingdom. They killed a priest who endeavored to stay them, tore down the ducal arms, and hung them on the gallows like those of a traitor. They would have gone still farther if the bishop had not very opportunely reminded them that they were in Lent. As for Wickliffe, he was dismissed with an injunction against preaching his doctrines.

But this decision of the priests was not ratified by the people of England.

Public opinion declared in favor of Wickliffe. "If he is guilty," said they, "why is he not

punished? If he is innocent, why is he ordered to be silent?

If he is the weakest in power, he is the strongest in truth!” And so indeed he was, and never had he spoken with such energy. He openly attacked the pretended apostolical chair, and declared that the two antipopes who sat in Rome and Avignon together mad one antichrist. Being now in opposition to the pope, Wickliffe was soon to confess that Christ alone was king of the church; and that it is not possible for a man to be excommunicated, unless first and principally he be excommunicated by himself. Rome could not close her ears. Wickliffe’s enemies sent thither nineteen propositions which they ascribed to him, and in the month of June 1377, just as Richard II, son of the Black Prince, a child eleven years old, was ascending the throne, three letters from Gregory XI, addressed to the king, the archbishop of Canterbury, and the university of Oxford, denounced Wickliffe as a heretic, and called upon them to proceed against him as against a common thief. The archbishop issued the citation: the crown

and the university were silent.

On the appointed day, Wickliffe, unaccompanied by either Lancaster or Percy, proceeded to the archiepiscopal chapel at Lambeth. “Men expected he should be devoured,” says an historian; “being brought into the lion’s den.” But the burgesses had taken the prince’s place. The assault of Rome had aroused the friends of liberty and truth in England. “The pope’s briefs,” said they, “ought to have no effect in the realm without the king’s consent. Every man is master in his own house.” The archbishop had scarcely opened the sitting, when Sir Louis Clifford entered the chapel, and forbade the court, on the part of the queen-mother, to proceed against the reformer. The bishops were struck with a panicfear; “they bent their heads,” says a Roman-catholic historian, “like a reed before the wind.” Wickliffe retired after handing in a protest. “In the first place,” said he, “I resolve with my whole heart, and by the grace of God, to be a sincere Christian; and, while my life shall last, to profess and defend the law of Christ so far as I have power.” Wickliffe’s enemies attacked

this protest, and one of them eagerly maintained that whatever the pope ordered should be looked upon as right. “What!” answered the reformer; “the pope may then exclude from the canon of the Scriptures and book that displeases him, and altar the Bible at pleasure?” Wickliffe thought that Rome, unsettling the grounds of infallibility, had transferred it from the Scriptures to the pope, and was desirous of restoring it to its true place, and re-establishing authority in the church on a truly divine foundation.

A great change was now taking place in the reformer. Busying himself less about the kingdom of England, he occupied himself more about the kingdom of Christ. In him the political phasis was followed by the religious. To carry the glad tidings of the gospel into the remotest hamlets, was now the great idea which possessed Wickliffe. If begging friars (said he) stroll over the country, preaching the legends of saints and the history of the Trojan war, we must do for God’s glory what they do to fill their wallets, and form a vast itinerant evangelization to convert souls to Jesus

Christ. Turning to the most pious of his disciples, he said to them: “Go and preach, it is the sublimest work; but imitate not the priests whom we see after the sermon sitting in the almhouses, or at the gaming-table, or wasting their time in hunting. After your sermon is ended, do you visit the sick, the aged, the poor, the blind, and the lame, and succor them according to your ability.” Such was the new practical theology which Wickliffe inaugurated — it was that of Christ himself.

The “poor priests,” as they were called, set off barefoot, a staff in their hands, clothed in a coarse robe, living on alms, and satisfied with the plainest food. They stopped in the fields near some village, in the churchyards, in the market-places of the towns, and sometimes in the churches even. The people, among whom they were favorites, thronged around them, as the men of Northumbria had done at Aidan’s preaching. They spoke with a popular eloquence that entirely won over those who listened to them. Of these missionaries none was more beloved than John Ashton. He might be seen wandering over the country in every direction, or

seated at some cottage hearth, or alone in some retired crossway, preaching to an attentive crowd. Missions of this kind have constantly revived in England at the great epochs of the church.

The “poor priests” were not content with mere polemics: they preached the great mystery of godliness. “An angel could have made no propitiation for man,” one day exclaimed their master Wickliffe; “for the nature which has sinned is not that of the angels. The mediator must needs be a man; but every man being indebted to God for everything that he is able to do, this man must needs have infinite merit, and be at the same time God.” The clergy became alarmed, and a law was passed commanding every king’s officer to commit the preachers and their followers to prison. In consequence of this, as soon as the humble missionary began to preach, the monks set themselves in motion. They watched him from the windows of their cells, at the street-corners, or from behind a hedge, and then hastened off to procure assistance. But when the constables approached, a body of stout bold men stood forth,

with arms in their hands, who surrounded the preacher, and zealously protected him against the attacks of the clergy.

Carnal weapons were thus mingled with the preachings of the word of peace. The poor priests returned to their master: Wickliffe comforted them, advised with them, and then they departed once more. Every day this evangelization reached some new spot, and the light was thus penetrating into every quarter of England, when the reformer was suddenly stopped in his work.

Wickliffe was at Oxford in the year 1379, busied in the discharge of his duties as professor of divinity, when he fell dangerously ill. His was not a strong constitution; and work, age, and, above all, persecution had weakened him. Great was the joy in the monasteries; but for that joy to be complete, the heretic must recant. Every effort was made to bring this about in his last moments.

The four regents, who represented the four religious orders, accompanied by four aldermen,

hastened to the bedside of the dying man, hoping to frighten him by threatening him with the vengeance of Heaven. They found him calm and serene. “You have death on your lips,” said they; “be touched by your faults, and retract in our presence all that you have said to our injury.” Wickliffe remained silent, and the monks flattered themselves with an easy victory. But the nearer the reformer approached eternity, the greater was his horror of monkery. The consolation he had found in Jesus Christ had given him fresh energy. He begged his servant to raise him on his couch. Then, feeble and pale, and scarcely able to support himself, he turned towards the friars, who were waiting for his recantation, and opening his livid lips, and fixing on them a piercing look, he said with emphasis: “I shall not die, but live; and again declare the evil deeds of the friars.” We might almost picture to ourselves the spirit of Elijah threatening the priests of Baal. The regents and their companions looked at each other with astonishment. They left the room in confusion, and the reformer recovered to put the finishing touch to the most important of his works against the monks

and against the pope.

Chapter 8

The Bible

Wickliffe’s ministry had followed a progressive course. At first he had attacked the papacy; next he preached the gospel to the poor; he could take one more step and put the people in permanent possession of the word of God. This was the third phase of his activity.

Scholasticism had banished the Scriptures into a mysterious obscurity. It is true that Bede had translated the Gospel of St. John; that the learned men at Alfred’s court had translated the four evangelists; that Elfric in the reign of Ethelred had translated some books of the Old Testament; that an Anglo-Norman priest had paraphrased the Gospels and the Acts; that Richard Rolle, “the hermit of Hampole,” and some pious clerks in the fourteenth century, had produced a version of the Psalms, the Gospels, and Epistles: — but these rare volumes were hidden, like theological curiosities, in the libraries of a few convents. It was then a

maxim that the reading of the Bible was injurious to the laity; and accordingly the priests forbade it, just as the Brahmins forbid the Shasters to the Hindoos. Oral tradition alone preserved among the people the histories of the Holy Scriptures, mingled with legends of the saints. The time appeared ripe for the publication of a Bible. The increase of population, the attention the English were beginning to devote to their own language, the development which the system of representative government had received, the awakening of the human mind — all these circumstances favored the reformer's design.

Wickliffe was ignorant indeed of Greek and Hebrew; but was it nothing to shake off the dust which for ages had covered the Latin Bible, and to translate it into English? He was a good Latin scholar, of sound understanding, and great penetration; but above all he loved the Bible, he understood it, and desired to communicate this treasure to others. Let us imagine him in his quiet study: on his table is the Vulgate text, corrected after the best manuscripts; and lying open around

him are the commentaries of the doctors of the church, especially those of St. Jerome and Nicholas Lyrensis. Between ten and fifteen years he steadily prosecuted his task; learned men aided him with their advice, and one of them, Nicholas Hereford, appears to have translated a few chapters for him. At last in 1380 it was completed. This was a great event in the religious history of England, who, outstripping the nations on the continent, took her station in the foremost rank in the great work of disseminating the Scriptures.

As soon as the translation was finished, the labor of the copyists began, and the Bible was erelong widely circulated either wholly or in portions.

The reception of the work surpassed Wickliffe's expectations. The Holy Scriptures exercised a reviving influence over men's hearts; minds were enlightened; souls ere converted; the voices of the "poor priests" had done little in comparison with this voice; something new had entered into the world. Citizens, soldiers, and the

lower classes welcomed this new era with acclamations; the high-born curiously examined the unknown book; and even Anne of Luxemburg, wife of Richard II, having learnt English, began to read the Gospels diligently. She did more than this: she made them known to Arundel, archbishop of York and chancellor, and afterwards a persecutor, but who now, struck at the sight of a foreign lady — of a queen, humbly devoting her leisure to the study of such virtuous books, commenced reading them himself, and rebuked the prelates who neglected this holy pursuit. “You could not meet two persons on the highway,” says a contemporary writer, “but one of them was Wickliffe’s disciple.” Yet all in England did not equally rejoice: the lower clergy opposed this enthusiasm with complaints and maledictions. “Master John Wickliffe, by translating the gospel into English,” said the monks, “has rendered it more acceptable and more intelligible to laymen and even to women, than it had hitherto been to learned and intelligent clerks!.....The gospel pearl is everywhere cast out and trodden under foot of swine.” New contests arose for the reformer.

Wherever he bent his steps he was violently attacked. “It is heresy,” cried the monks, “to speak of Holy Scripture in English.” — “Since the church has approved of the four Gospels, she would have been just as able to reject them and admit others! The church sanctions and condemns what she pleases.....Learn to believe in the church rather than in the gospel.” These clamors did not alarm Wickliffe. “Many nations have had the Bible in their own language. The Bible is the faith of the church. Though the pope and all his clerks should disappear from the face of the earth,” said he, “our faith would not fail, for it is founded on Jesus alone, our Master and our God.” But Wickliffe did not stand alone: in the palace as in the cottage, and even in parliament, the rights of Holy Scripture found defenders. A motion having been made in the Upper House (1390) to seize all the copies of the Bible, the Duke of Lancaster exclaimed: “Are we then the very dregs of humanity, that we cannot possess the laws of our religion in our own tongue?” Having given his fellow-countrymen the Bible, Wickliffe began to reflect on its contents. This was a new step in his onward path. There

comes a moment when the Christian, saved by a lively faith, feels the need of giving an account to himself of this faith, and this originates the science of theology. This is a natural movement: if the child, who at first possesses sensations and affections only, feels the want, as he grows up, of reflection and knowledge, why should it not be the same with the Christians?

Politics — home missions — Holy Scripture — had engaged Wickliffe in succession; theology had its turn, and this was the fourth phase of his life.

Yet he did not penetrate to the same degree as the men of the sixteenth century into the depths of the Christian doctrine; and he attached himself in a more especial manner to those ecclesiastical dogmas which were more closely connected with the presumptuous hierarchy and the simoniacal gains of Rome, — such as transubstantiation. The Anglo-Saxon church had not professed this doctrine. “The host is the body of Christ, not bodily but spiritually,” said Elfric in the tenth century, in a letter addressed to the Archbishop of York; but

Lanfranc, the opponent of Berengarius, had taught England that at the word of a priest God quitted heaven and descended on the altar. Wickliffe undertook to overthrow the pedestal on which the pride of the priesthood was founded. “The eucharist is naturally bread and wine.” He taught at Oxford in 1381; “but by virtue of the sacramental words it contains in every part the real body and blood of Christ.” He did not stop here. “The consecrated wafer which we see on the altar,” said he, “is not Christ, nor any part of him, but his efficient sign.” He oscillated between those two shades of doctrine; but to the first he more habitually attached himself. He denied the sacrifice of the mass offered by the priest, because it was substituted for the sacrifice of the cross offered up by Jesus Christ; and rejected transubstantiation, because it nullified the spiritual and living presence of the Lord.

When Wickliffe’s enemies heard these propositions, they appeared horrorstricken, and yet in secret they were delighted at the prospect of destroying him. They met together, examined

twelve theses he had published, and pronounced against him suspension from all teaching, imprisonment, and the greater excommunication. At the same time his friends became alarmed, their zeal cooled, and many of them forsook him.

The Duke of Lancaster, in particular, could not follow him into this new sphere. That prince had no objection to an ecclesiastical opposition which might aid the political power, and for that purpose he had tried to enlist the reformer’s talents and courage; but he feared a dogmatic opposition that might compromise him. The sky was heavy with clouds; Wickliffe was alone.

The storm soon burst upon him. One day, while seated in his doctoral chair in he Augustine school, and calmly explaining the nature of the eucharist, an officer entered the hall, and read the sentence of condemnation. It was the design of his enemies to humble the professor in the eyes of his disciples. Lancaster immediately became alarmed, and hastening to his old friend begged him — ordered him even — to trouble himself no more about this

matter. Attacked on every side, Wickliffe for a time remained silent. Shall he sacrifice the truth to save his reputation — his repose — perhaps his life? Shall expediency get the better of faith, — Lancaster prevail over Wickliffe? No: his courage was invincible. “Since the year of our Lord 1000,” said he, “all the doctors have been in error about the sacrament of the altar — except, perhaps, it may be Berengarius.

How canst thou, O priest, who art but a man, make thy Maker? What! the thing that groweth in the fields — that ear which thou pluckest today, shall be God tomorrow!.....As you cannot make the works which He made, how shall ye make Him who made the works? Woe to the adulterous generation that believeth the testimony of Innocent rather than of the Gospel.” Wickliffe called upon his adversaries to refute the opinions they had condemned, and finding that they threatened him with a civil penalty (imprisonment), he appealed to the king.

The time was not favorable for such an appeal.

A fatal circumstance increased Wickliffe’s danger. Wat Tyler and a dissolute priest named Ball, taking advantage of the ill-will excited by the rapacity and brutality of the royal tax-gatherers, had occupied London with 100,000 men. John Ball kept up the spirits of he insurgents, not by expositions of the gospel, like Wickliffe’s poor priests, but by fiery comments on the distich they had chosen for their device:— When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman!

There were many who felt no scruple in ascribing these disorders to the reformer, who was quite innocent of them; and Courtenay, bishop of London, having been translated to the see of Canterbury, lost no time in convoking a synod to pronounce on this matter of Wickliffe’s. They met in the middle of May, about two o’clock in the afternoon, and were proceeding to pronounce sentence when an earthquake, which shook the city of London and all Britain, so alarmed the members of the council that they unanimously demanded the adjournment of a decision which appeared so manifestly rebuked by God. But the archbishop

skillfully turned this strange phenomenon to his own purposes: “Know you not,” said he, “that the noxious vapors which catch fire in the bosom of the earth, and give rise to these phenomena which alarm you, lose all their force when they burst forth? Well, in like manner, by rejecting the wicked from our community, we shall put an end to the convulsions of the church.” The bishops regained their courage; and one of the primate’s officers read ten propositions, said to be Wickliffe’s, but ascribing to him certain errors of which he was quite innocent. The following most excited the anger of the priests: “God must obey the devil. After Urban VI we must receive no one as pope, but live according to the manner of the Greeks.” The ten propositions were condemned as heretical, and the archbishop enjoined all persons to shun, as they would a venomous serpent, all who should preach the aforesaid errors. “If we permit this heretic to appeal continually to the passions of the people,” said the primate to the king, “our destruction is inevitable. We must silence these lollards — these psalm-singers.” The king gave authority “to confine in the prisons of the state any

who should maintain the condemned propositions." Day by day the circle contracted around Wickliffe. The prudent Repingdon, the learned Hereford, and even the eloquent Ashton, the firmest of the three, departed from him. The veteran champion of the truth which had once gathered a whole nation round it, had reached the days when "strong men shall bow themselves," and now, when harassed by persecution, he found himself alone. But boldly he uplifted his hoary head and exclaimed: "The doctrine of the gospel shall never perish; and if the earth once quaked, it was because they condemned Jesus Christ." He did not stop here. In proportion as his physical strength decreased, his moral strength increased. Instead of parrying the blows aimed at him, he resolved on dealing more terrible ones still. He knew that if the king and the nobility were for the priests, the lower house and the citizens were for liberty and truth. He therefore presented a bold petition to the Commons in the month of November 1382. "Since Jesus Christ shed his blood to free his church, I demand its freedom. I demand that every one may leave those gloomy walls [the convents], within which a tyrannical law

prevails, and embrace a simple and peaceful life under the open vault of heaven. I demand that the poor inhabitants of our towns and villages be not constrained to furnish a worldly priest, often a vicious man and a heretic, with the means of satisfying his ostentation, his gluttony, and his licentiousness — of buying a showy horse, costly saddles, bridles with tinkling bells, rich garments, and soft furs, while they see their wives, children, and neighbors, dying of hunger." The House of Commons, recollecting that they had not given their consent to the persecuting statute drawn up by the clergy and approved by the king and the lords, demanded its repeal. Was the Reformation about to begin by the will of the people?

Courtenay, indignant at this intervention of the Commons, and ever stimulated by a zeal for his church, which would have been better directed towards the word of God, visited Oxford in November, and having gathered round him a number of bishops, doctors, priests, students, and layman, summoned Wickliffe before him. Forty years ago the reformer had come up to the

university: Oxford had become his home.....and now it was turning against him! Weakened by labors, by trials, by that ardent soul which preyed upon his feeble body, he might have refused to appear. But Wickliffe, who never feared the face of man, came before them with a good conscience. We may conjecture that there were among the crowd some disciples who felt their hearts burn at the sight of their master; but no outward sign indicated their emotion. The solemn silence of a court of justice had succeeded the shouts of enthusiastic youths. Yet Wickliffe did not despair: he raised his venerable head, and turned to Courtenay with that confident look which had made the regents of Oxford shrink away.

Growing wroth against the priests of Baal, he reproached them with disseminating error in order to sell their masses. Then he stopped, and uttered these simple and energetic words: “The truth shall prevail!” Having thus spoken he prepared to leave the court: his enemies dared not say a word; and, like his divine master at Nazareth, he passed through the midst of them, and no man ventured to

stop him. He then withdrew to his cure at Lutterworth.

He had not yet reached the harbor. He was living peacefully among his books and his parishioners, and the priests seemed inclined to leave him alone, when another blow was aimed at him. A papal brief summoned him to Rome, to appear before that tribunal which had so often shed the blood of its adversaries. His bodily infirmities convinced him that he could not obey this summons. But if Wickliffe refused to hear Urban, Urban could not choose but hear Wickliffe. The church was at that time divided between two chiefs: France, Scotland, Savoy, Lorraine, Castile, and Aragon acknowledged Clement VII; while Italy, England, Sweden, Poland, and Hungary acknowledged Urban VI. Wickliffe shall tell us who is the true head of the church universal. And while the two popes were excommunicating and abusing each other, and selling heaven and earth for their own gain, the reformer was confessing that incorruptible Word, which establishes real unity in the church. “I believe,” said he, “that the

gospel of Christ is the whole body of God's law. I believe that Christ, who gave it to us, is very God and very man, and that this gospel revelation is, accordingly, superior to all other parts of Holy Scripture. I believe that the bishop of Rome is bound more than all other man to submit to it, for the greatness among Christ's disciples did not consist in worldly dignity or honors, but in the exact following of Christ in his life and manners. No faithful man ought to follow the pope, but in such points as he hath followed Jesus Christ. The pope ought to leave unto the secular power all temporal dominion and rule: and thereunto effectually more and more exhort his whole clergy.....If I could labor according to my desire in mine own person, I would surely present myself before the bishop of Rome, but the Lord hath otherwise visited me to the contrary, and hath taught me rather to obey God than men." Urban, who at that moment chanced to be very busied in his contest with Clement, did not think it prudent to begin another with Wickliffe, and so let the matter rest there. From this time the doctor passed the remainder of his days in peace in the company of

three personages, two of whom were his particular friends, and the third his constant adversary: these were Aletheia, Phronesis, and Pseudes. Aletheia (truth) proposed questions; Pseudes (falsehood) urged objections; and Phronesis (understanding) laid down the sound doctrine. These three characters carried on a conversation (trialogue) in which great truths were boldly professed. The opposition between the pope and Christ — between the canons of Romanism and the Bible — was painted in striking colors. This is one of the primary truths which the church must never forget. “The church has fallen,” said one of the interlocutors in the work in question, “because she has abandoned the gospel, and preferred the laws of the pope. Although there should be a hundred popes in the world at once, and all the friars living should be transformed into cardinals, we must withhold our confidence unless so far as they are founded in Holy Scripture.” These words were the last flicker of the torch. Wickliffe looked upon his end as near, and entertained no idea that it would come in peace. A dungeon on one of the seven hills, or a burning pile in London, was all he

expected. “Why do you talk of seeking the crown of martyrdom afar?” asked he, “Preach the gospel of Christ to haughty prelates, and martyrdom will not fail you. What! I should live an be silent?.....never! Let the blow fall, I await its coming.” The stroke was spared him. The war between two wicked priests, Urban and Clement, left the disciples of our Lord in peace. And besides, was it worth while cutting short a life that was drawing to a close? Wickliffe, therefore, continued tranquilly to preach Jesus Christ; and on the 29th December, as he was in his church at Lutterworth, in the midst of his flock, at the very moment that he stood before the altar, and was elevating the host with trembling hands, he fell upon the pavement struck with paralysis. He was carried to his house by the affectionate friends around him, and after lingering fortyeight hours resigned his soul to God on the last day of the year.

Thus was removed from the church one of the boldest witnesses to the truth. The seriousness of his language, the holiness of his life, and the energy of his faith, had intimidated the popedom.

Travellers relate that if a lion is met in the desert, it is sufficient to look steadily at him, and the beast turns away roaring from the eye of man. Wickliffe had fixed the eye of a Christian on the papacy, and the affrighted papacy had left him in peace. Hunted down unceasingly while living, he died in quiet, at the very moment when by faith he was eating the flesh and drinking the blood which gave eternal life. A glorious end to a glorious life.

The Reformation of England had begun.

Wickliffe is the greatest English reformer: he was in truth the first reformer of Christendom, and to him, under God, Britain is indebted for the honor of being the foremost in the attack upon the theocratic system of Gregory VII. The work of the Waldenses, excellent as it was, cannot be compared to his. If Luther and Calvin are the fathers of the Reformation, Wickliffe is its grandfather.

Wickliffe, like most great men, possessed qualities which are not generally found together. While his understanding was eminently speculative

— his treatise on the Reality of universal Ideas made a sensation in philosophy — he possessed that practical and active mind which characterizes the Anglo- Saxon race. As a divine, he was at once scriptural and spiritual, soundly orthodox, and possessed of an inward and lively faith. With a boldness that impelled him to rush into the midst of danger, he combined a logical and consistent mind, which constantly led him forward in knowledge, and caused him to maintain with perseverance the truths he had once proclaimed. First of all, as a Christian he had devoted his strength to the cause of the church; but he was at the same time a citizen, and the realm, his nation, and his king, had also a great share in his unwearied activity. He was a man complete.

If the man is admirable, his teaching is no less so. Scripture, which is the rule of truth, should be (according to his views) the rule of reformation, and we must reject every doctrine and every precept which does not rest on that foundation. To believe in the power of man in the work of regeneration is the great heresy of Rome, and from

that error has come the ruin of the church. Conversion proceeds from the grace of God alone, and the system which ascribes it partly to man and partly to God is worse than Pelagianism. Christ is everything in Christianity; whosoever abandons that fountain which is ever ready to impart life, and turns to muddy and stagnant waters, is a madman. Faith is a gift of God; it puts aside all merit, and should banish all fear from the mind. The one thing needful in the Christian life and in the Lord's Supper is not a vain formalism and superstitious rites, but communion with Christ according to the power of the spiritual life. Let Christians submit not to the word of a priest but to the word of God. In the primitive church there were but two orders, the deacon and the priest: the presbyter and the bishop were one. The sublimest calling which man can attain on earth is that of preaching the word of God. The true church is the assembly of the righteous for whom Christ shed his blood. So long as Christ is in heaven, in Him the church possesses the best pope. It is possible for a pope to be condemned at the last day because of his sins. Would men compel us to recognize as our head "a

devil of hell?” Such were the essential points of Wickliffe’s doctrine. It was the echo of the doctrine of the apostles — the prelude to that of the reformers.

In many respects Wickliffe is the Luther of England; but the times of revival had not yet come, and the English reformer could not gain such striking victories over Rome as the German reformer. While Luther was surrounded by an ever-increasing number of scholars and princes, who confessed the same faith as himself, Wickliffe shone almost alone in the firmament of the church. The boldness with which he substituted a living spirituality for a superstitious formalism, caused those to shrink back in affright who had gone with him against friars, priests, and popes. Erelong the Roman pontiff ordered him to be thrown into prison, and the monks threatened his life; but God protected him, and he remained calm amidst the machinations of his adversaries. “Antichrist,” said he, “can only kill the body.” Having one foot in the grave already, he foretold that, from the very bosom of monkery, would some day proceed the

regeneration of the church. “If the friars, whom God condescends to teach, shall be converted to the primitive religion of Christ,” said he, “we shall see them abandoning their unbelief, returning freely, with or without the permission of Antichrist, to the primitive religion of the Lord, and building up the church, as did St Paul.” Thus did Wickliffe’s piercing glance discover, at the distance of nearly a century and a half, the young monk Luther in the Augustine convent at Erfurth, converted by the epistle to the fulfillment of this prophecy. “The rising sun of the Reformation,” for so has Wickliffe been called, had appeared above the horizon, and its beams were no more to be extinguished. In vain will thick clouds veil soon reflect is rays; and its piercing light, increasing in brightness, will pour over all the world, at the hour of the church’s renovation, floods of knowledge and of life.

Chapter 9

The Wickliffites

Wickliffe’s death manifested the power of his teaching. The master being removed, his disciples set their hands to the plough, and England was almost won over to the reformer’s doctrines. The Wickliffites recognized a ministry independent of Rome, and deriving authority from the word of God alone. “Every minister,” said they, “can administer the sacraments and confer the cure of souls as well as the pope.” To the licentious wealth of the clergy they opposed a Christian poverty, and to the degenerate asceticism of the mendicant orders, a spiritual and free life. The townsfolk crowded around these humble preachers; the soldiers listened to them, armed with sword and buckler to defend them; the nobility took down the images from their baronial chapels; and even the royal family was partly won over to the Reformation. England was like a tree cut down to the ground, from whose roots fresh buds are shooting out on every side, erelong to cover all the

earth beneath their shade. This augmented the courage of Wickliffe's disciples, and in many places the people took the initiative in the reform. The walls of St. Paul's and other cathedrals were hung with placards aimed at the priests and friars, and the abuses of which they were defenders; and in the friends of the Gospel petitioned parliament for a general reform. "The essence of the worship which comes from Rome," said they, consists in signs and ceremonies, and not in the efficacity of the Holy Ghost: and therefore it is not that which Christ has ordained. Temporal things are distinct from spiritual things: a king and a bishop ought not to be one and the same person." And then, from not clearly understanding the principle of the separation of the functions which they proclaimed, they called upon parliament to "abolish celibacy, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, offerings to images, auricular confession, war, the arts unnecessary to life, the practice of blessing oil, salt, wax, incense, stones, mitres, and pilgrims' staffs. All these pertain to necromancy and not to theology." Emboldened by the absence of the king in Ireland, they fixed their Twelve Conclusions on

the gates of St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey. This became the signal for persecution.

As soon as Arundel, archbishop of York, and Braybrooke, bishop of London, had read these propositions, they hastily crossed St. George’s Channel, and conjured the king to return to England. The prince hesitated not to comply, for his wife, the pious Anne of Luxemburg was dead.

Richard, during childhood and youth, had been committed in succession to the charge of several guardians, and like children (says an historian), whose nurses have been often changed, he thrived none the better for it. He did good or evil, according to the influence of those around him, and had no decided inclinations except for ostentation and licentiousness. The clergy were not mistaken in calculating on such a prince. On his return to London he forbade the parliament to take the Wickliffite petition into consideration; and having summoned before him the most distinguished of its supporters, such as Story, Clifford, Latimer, and Montacute, he threatened them with death if they

continued to defend their abominable opinions. Thus was the work of the reformer about to be destroyed.

But Richard had hardly withdrawn his hand from the gospel, when God (says an annalist) withdrew his hand from him. His cousin, Henry of Hereford, son of the famous duke of Lancaster, and who had been banished from England, suddenly sailed from the continent, landed in Yorkshire, gathered all the malcontents around him, and was acknowledged king. The unhappy Richard, after being formally deposed, was confined in Pontefract castle, where he soon terminated his earthly career.

The son of Wickliffe’s old defender was now king: a reform of the church seemed imminent; but the primate Arundel had foreseen the danger. This cunning priest and skillful politician had observed which way the wind blew, and deserted Richard in good time. Taking Lancaster by the hand, he put the crown on his head, saying to him: “To consolidate your throne, conciliate the clergy, and sacrifice the Lollards.” — “I will be the protector

of the church," replied Henry IV, and from that hour the power of the priests was greater than the power of the nobility. Rome has ever been adroit in profiting by revolutions.

Lancaster, in his eagerness to show his gratitude to the priests, ordered that every incorrigible heretic should be burnt alive, to terrify his companions. Practice followed close upon the theory. A pious priest named William Sawtre had presumed to say: "Instead of adoring the cross on which Christ suffered, I adore Christ who suffered on it." He was dragged to St. Paul's; his hair was shaved off; a layman's cap was placed on his head; and the primate handed him over to the mercy of the earlmarshal of England. This mercy was shown him — he was burnt alive at Smithfield in the beginning of March 1401. Sawtre was the first martyr to protestantism.

Encourage by this act of faith — this auto da fe — the clergy drew up the articles known as the "Constitutions of Arundel," which forbade the reading of the Bible, and styled the pope, "not a

mere man, but a true God.” The Lollards’ tower, in the archiepiscopal palace of Lambeth, was soon filled with pretended heretics, many of whom carved on the walls of their dungeons the expression of their sorrow and their hopes: Jesus amor meus, wrote one of them. To crush the lowly was not enough: the Gospel must be driven from the more exalted stations. The priests, who were sincere in their belief, regarded those noblemen as misleaders who set the word of God above the laws of Rome, and accordingly their girded themselves for the work. A few miles from Rochester stood Cowling Castle, in the midst of the fertile pastures watered by the Medway, The fair Medwaya that with wanton pride Forms silver mazes with her crooked tide. In the beginning of the fifteenth century it was inhabited by Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, a man in high favor with the king. The “poor priests” thronged to Cowling in quest of Wickliffe’s writings, of which Cobham had caused numerous copies to be made, and whence they were circulated through the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London, and Hertford. Cobham attended their preaching, and if any enemies

ventured to interrupt them, he threatened them with his sword. “I would sooner risk my life,” said he, “than submit to such unjust decrees as dishonor the everlasting Testament.” The king would not permit the clergy to lay hands of his favorite.

But Henry V having succeeded his father in, and passed from the houses of ill-fame he had hitherto frequented, to the foot of the altars and the head of the armies, the archbishop immediately denounced Cobham to him, and he was summoned to appear before the king. Sir John had understood Wickliffe’s doctrine, and experienced in his own person the might of the divine Word. “As touching the pope and his spirituality,” he said o the king, “I owe them neither suit nor service, forasmuch as I know him by the Scriptures to be the great antichrist.” Henry thrust aside Cobham’s hand as he presented his confession of faith: “I will not receive this paper, lay it before your judges.” When he saw his profession refused, Cobham had recourse to the only arm which he knew of out of the gospel.

The differences which we now settle by pamphlets were then very commonly settled by the sword: — “I offer in defense of my faith to fight for life or death with any man living, Christian or pagan, always excepting your majesty.” Cobham was led to the Tower.

On the 23rd September 1413, he was taken before the ecclesiastical tribunal then sitting at St. Paul’s. “We must believe,” said the primate to him, “what the holy church of Rome teaches, without demanding Christ’s authority.” — “Believe!” shouted the priests, “believe!” — “I am willing to believe all that God desires,” said Sir John; “but that the pope should have authority to teach what is contrary to Scripture — that I can never believe.” He was led back to the Tower. The word of God was to have its martyr.

On Monday, 25th September, a crowd of priests, canons, friars, clerks, and indulgence-sellers, thronged the large hall of the Dominican convent, and attacked Lord Cobham with abusive language. These insults, and importance of the

moment for the Reformation of England, the catastrophe that must needs close the scene: all agitated his soul to its very depths.

When the archbishop called upon him to confess his offense, he fell on his knees, and lifting up his hands to heaven, exclaimed: “I confess to Thee, O God! and acknowledge that in my frail youth I seriously offended Thee by my pride, anger, intemperance, and impurity: for these offenses I implore thy mercy!” Then standing up, his face still wet with tears, he said: “I ask not your absolution: it is God’s only that I need.” The clergy did not despair, however, of reducing this high-spirited gentleman: they knew that spiritual strength is not always conjoined with bodily vigor, and they hoped to vanquish by priestly sophisms the man who dared challenge the papal champions to single combat. “Sir John,” said the primate at last, “you have said some very strange things: we have spent much time in endeavors to convince you, but all to no effect. The day passeth away: you must either submit yourself to the ordinance of the most holy church.....” — “I will none otherwise

believe than what I have told you.

Do with me what you will.” — “Well then, we must needs do the law,” the archbishop made answer.

Arundel stood up; all the priests and people rose with him and uncovered their heads. Then holding the sentence of death in his hand, he read it with a loud clear voice. “It is well,” said Sir John; “though you condemn my body, you can do no harm to my soul, by the grace of my eternal God.” He was again led back to the Tower, whence he escaped one night, and took refuge in Wales. He was retaken in December, carried to London, dragged on a hurdle to Saint Giles’s fields, and there suspended by chains over a slow fire, and cruelly burned to death. Thus died a Christian, illustrious after the fashion of his age — a champion of the word of God. The London prisons were filled with Wickliffites, and it was decreed that they should be hung on the king’s account, and burnt for God’s. The intimidated Lollards were compelled to hide themselves in the humblest ranks

of the people, and to hold their meetings in secret. The work of redemption was proceeding noiselessly among the elect of God.

Of these Lollards, there were many who had been redeemed by Jesus Christ; but in general they knew not, to the same extent as the evangelical Christians of the sixteenth century, the quickening and justifying power of faith. They were plain, meek, and often timid folks, attracted by the word of God, affected at the condemnation it pronounces against the errors of Rome, and desirous of living according to its commandments. God had assigned them a part — and an important part too — in the great transformation of Christianity. Their humble piety, their passive resistance, the shameful treatment which they bore with resignation, the penitent's robes with which they were covered, the tapers they were compelled to hold at the church-door — all these things betrayed the pride of the priests, and filled the most generous minds with doubts and vague desires. By a baptism of suffering, God was then preparing the way to a glorious reformation.

Chapter 10

Learning at Florence

This reformation was to be the result of two distinct forces — the revival of learning and the resurrection of the word of God. The latter was the principal cause, but the former was necessary as a means. Without it the living waters of the gospel would probably have traversed the age, like summer streams which soon dry up, such as those which had burst forth here and there during the middle ages; it would not have become that majestic river, which, by its inundations, fertilized all the earth. It was necessary to discover and examine the original fountains, and for this end the study of Greek and Hebrew was indispensable. Lollardism and humanism (the study of the classics) were the two laboratories of the reform. We have seen the preparations of the one, we must now trace the commencement of the other; and as we have discovered the light in the lowly valleys, we shall discern it also on the lofty mountain tops.

About the end of the fifteenth century, several young Englishmen chanced to be at Florence, attracted thither by the literary glory which environed the city of the Medici. Cosmo had collected together a great number of works of antiquity, and his palace was thronged with learned men. William Selling, a young English ecclesiastic, afterwards distinguished at Canterbury by his zeal in collecting valuable manuscripts; his fellowcountrymen, Grocyn, Lilly, and Latimer "more bashful than a maiden;" and, above all, Linacre, whom Erasmus ranked before all the scholars of Italy, — used to meet in the delicious villa of the Medici with Politian, Chalcondyles, and other men of learning; and there, in the calm evenings of summer, under that glorious Tuscan sky, they dreamed romantic visions of the Platonic philosophy. When they returned to England, these learned men laid before the youth of Oxford the marvelous treasures of the Greek language. Some Italians even, attracted by the desire to enlighten the barbarians, and a little, it may be, by the brilliant offers made them, quitted their beloved country for the distant Britain. Cornelius Vitelli

taught at Oxford, and Caius Amberino at Cambridge. Caxton imported the art of printing from Germany, and the nation hailed with enthusiasm the brilliant dawn which was breaking at last in their cloudy sky.

While learning was reviving in England, a new dynasty succeeded to the throne, bringing with it that energy of character which of itself is able to effect great revolutions; the Tudors succeeded the Plantagenets. That inflexible intrepidity by which the reformers of Germany, Switzerland, France, and Scotland were distinguished, did not exist so generally in those of England; but it was found in the character of her kings, who often stretched it even to violence. It may be that to this preponderance of energy in its rulers, the church owes the preponderance of the state in its affairs.

Henry Tudor, the Louis XI of England, was a clever prince, of decided but suspicious character, avaricious and narrow-minded. Being descended from a Welsh family, he belonged to that ancient race of Celts who had so long contended against

the papacy. Henry had extinguished faction at home, and taught foreign nations to respect his power. A good genius seemed to exercise a salutary influence over his court as well as over himself: this was his mother, the countess of Richmond. From her closet, where she consecrated the first five hours of the day to reading, meditation, and prayer, she moved to another part of the palace to dress the wounds of some of the lowest mendicants; thence she passed into the gay saloons, where she would converse with the scholars, whom she encourage by her munificence. This noble lady’s passion for study, of which her son inherited but little, was not without its influence in her family. Arthur and Henry, the king’s eldest sons, trembled in their father’s presence; but, captivated by the affection of their pious grandmother, they began to find a pleasure in the society of learned men. An important circumstance gave a new impulse to one of them.

Among the countess’s friends was Montjoy, who had known Erasmus at Paris, and heard his cutting sarcasms upon the schoolmen and friars. He

invited the illustrious Dutchman to England, and Erasmus, who was fearful of catching the plague, gladly accepted the invitation, and set out for what he believed to be the kingdom of darkness.

But he had not been long in England before he discovered unexpected light.

Shortly after his arrival, happening to dine with the lord-mayor, Erasmus noticed on the other side of the table a young man of nineteen, slender, fresh-colored, with blue eyes, coarse hands, and the right shoulder somewhat higher than the other. His features indicated affability and gaiety, and pleasant jests were continually dropping from his lips. If he could not find a joke in English, he would in French, and even in Latin or Greek. A literary contest soon ensued between Erasmus and the English youth. The former, astonished at meeting with any one that could hold his own against him, exclaimed: Aut tu es Morus aut nullus! (you are either More or nobody); and his companion, who had not learnt the stranger’s name, quickly replied: Aut tu es Erasmus aut

diabolus! (you are either the devil or Erasmus). More flung himself into the arms of Erasmus, and they became inseparable friends. More was continually joking, even with women, teasing the young maidens, and making fun of the dull, though without any tinge of ill-nature in his jests. But under this sportive exterior he concealed a deep understanding. He was at that time lecturing on Augustine's City of God before a numerous audience composed of priests and aged men. The thought of eternity had seized him; and being ignorant of that internal discipline of the Holy Ghost, which is the only true discipline, he had recourse to the scourge on every Friday. Thomas More is the ideal of the catholicism of this period. He had, like the Romish system, two poles — worldliness and asceticism; which, although contrary, often meet together. In fact, asceticism makes a sacrifice of self, only to preserve it; just as a traveler attacked by robbers will readily give up a portion of his treasures to save the rest. This was the case with More, if we rightly understand his character. He sacrificed the accessories of his fallen nature to save that same nature. He

submitted to fasts and vigils, wore a shirt of hair-cloth, mortified his body by small chains next to his skin — in a word, he immolated everything in order to preserve that self which a real regeneration alone can sacrifice.

From London Erasmus went to Oxford, where he met with John Colet, a friend of More's, but older, and of very dissimilar character. Colet, the scion of an ancient family, was a very portly man, of imposing aspect, great fortune, and elegance of manners, to which Erasmus had not been accustomed. Order, cleanliness, and decorum prevailed in his person and in his house. He kept an excellent table, which was open to all the friends of learning, and at which the Dutchman, no great admirer of the colleges of Paris with their sour wine and stale eggs, was glad to take a seat. He there met also most of the classical scholars of England, especially Grocyn, Linacre, Thomas Wolsey, bursar of Magdalene College, Halsey, and some others. "I cannot tell you how I am delighted with your England," he wrote to Lord Montjoy from Oxford. "With such men I could willingly

live in the farthest coasts of Scythia." But if Erasmus on the banks of the Thames found a Maecenas in Lord Montjoy, a Labeo and perhaps a Virgil in More, he nowhere found an Augustus. One day as he was expressing his regrets and his fears to More, the latter said: "Come, let us go to Eltham, perhaps we shall find there what you are looking for." They set out, More jesting all the way, inwardly resolving to expiate his gaiety by a severe scourging at night. On their arrival they were heartily welcomed by Lord and Lady Montjoy, the governor and governess of the king's children. As the two friends entered the hall, a pleasing and unexpected sight greeted Erasmus. The whole of the family were assembled, and they found themselves surrounded not only by some of the royal household, but by the domestics of Lord Montjoy also. On the right stood the Princess Margaret, a girl of eleven years, whose greatgrandson under the name of Stuart was to continue the Tudor in England; on the left was Mary, a child four years of age; Edmund was in his nurses arms; and in the middle of the circle, between his two sisters, stood a boy, at that time

only nine years old, whose handsome features, royal carriage, intelligent eye, and exquisite courtesy, had an extraordinary charm for Erasmus. That boy was Henry, duke of York, the king's second son, born on the 28th June 1491. More, advancing towards the young prince, presented to him some piece of his own writing; and from that hour Erasmus kept up a friendly intercourse with Henry, which in all probability exercised a certain influence over the destinies of England. The scholar of Rotterdam was delighted to see the prince excel in all the manly sports of the day. He sat his horse with perfect grace and rare intrepidity, could hurl a javelin farther than any of his companions, and having an excellent taste for music, he was already a performer on several instruments. The king took care that he should receive a learned education, for he destined him to fill the see of Canterbury; and the illustrious Erasmus, noticing his aptitude for everything he undertook, did his best to cut and polish this English diamond, that it might glitter with the greater brilliancy. "He will begin nothing that he will not finish," said the scholar.

And it is but too true, that this prince always attained his end, even if it were necessary to tread on the bleeding bodies of those he had loved.

Flattered by the attentions of the young Henry, attracted by his winning grave, charmed by his wit, Erasmus on his return to the continent everywhere proclaimed that England at last had found its Octavius.

As for Henry VII he thought of everything but Virgil or Augustus. Avarice and ambition were his predominant tastes, which he gratified by the marriage of his eldest son in 1501. Burgundy, Artois, Provence, and Brittany having been recently united to France, the European powers felt the necessity of combining against that encroaching state. It was in consequence of this that Ferdinand of Aragon had given his daughter Joanna to Philip of Austria, and that Henry VII asked the hand of his daughter Catherine, then in her sixteenth year and the richest princess in Europe, for Arthur prince of Wales, a youth about

ten months younger.

The catholic king made one condition to the marriage of his daughter.

Warwick, the last of the Plantagenets and a pretender to the crown, was confined in the Tower. Ferdinand, to secure the certainty that Catherine would really ascend the English throne, required that the unhappy prince should be put to death. Nor did this alone satisfy the king of Spain. Henry VII, who was not a cruel man, might conceal Warwick, and say that he was no more. Ferdinand demanded that the chancellor of Castile should be present at the execution. The blood of Warwick was shed; his head rolled duly on the scaffold; the Castilian chancellor verified and registered the murder, and on the 14th November the marriage was solemnized at St.

Paul’s. At midnight the prince and princess were conducted with great pomp to the bridal-chamber. These were ill-omened nuptials — fated to set the kings and nations of Christendom in

battle against each other, and to serve as a pretext for the external and political discussions of the English Reformation. The marriage of Catherine the Catholic was a marriage of blood.

In the early part of 1502, Prince Arthur fell ill, and on the 2nd of April he died. The necessary time was taken to be sure that Catherine had no hope of becoming a mother, after which the friend of Erasmus, the youthful Henry, was declared heir to the crown, to the great joy of all the learned.

This prince did not forsake his studies: he spoke and wrote in French, German, and Spanish with the facility of a native; and England hoped to behold one day the most learned of Christian kings upon the throne of Alfred the Great.

A very different question however, filled the mind of the covetous Henry VII. Must he restore to Spain the two hundred thousand ducats which formed Catherine’s dowry? Shall this rich heiress be permitted to marry some rival of England? To prevent so great a misfortune the king conceived

the project of uniting Henry to Arthur's widow. The most serious objections were urged against it. "It is not only inconsistent with propriety," said Warham, the primate, "but the will of God himself is against it. It is declared in His law that if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing (Leviticus 20:21); and in the Gospel John Baptist says to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18). Fox, bishop of Winchester, suggested that a dispensation might be procured from the pope, and in December 1503, Julius II granted a bull declaring that for the sake of preserving union between the catholic princes he authorized Catherine's marriage with the brother of her first husband, accedente forsan copula carnali. These four words, it is said, were inserted in the bull at the express desire of the princess. All these details will be of importance in the course of our history. The two parties were betrothed, but not married in consideration of the youth of the prince of Wales.

The second marriage projected by Henry VII was ushered in with auspices still less promising

than the first. The king having fallen sick and lost his queen, looked upon these visitations as a divine judgement. The nation murmured, and demanded whether it was in the pope’s power to permit what God had forbidden. The young prince, being informed of his father’s scruples and of the people’s discontent, declared, just before attaining his majority (27th June 1505), in the presence of the bishop of Winchester and several royal counsellors, that he protested against the engagement entered into during his minority, and that he would never make Catherine his wife.

His father’s death, which made him free, made him also recall this virtuous decision. In 1509, the hopes of the learned seemed about to be realized. On the 9th of May, a hearse decorated with regal pomp, bearing on a rich pall of cloth of gold the mortal remains of Henry VII, with his scepter and his crown, entered London, followed by a long procession. The great officers of state, assembled round the coffin, broke their staves and cast them into the vault, and the heralds cried with a loud voice: “God send the noble King Henry VIII long

life.” Such a cry perhaps had never on any previous occasion been so joyfully repeated by the people. The young king gratified the wishes of the nation by ordering the arrest of Empson and Dudley, who were charged with extortion; and he conformed to the enlightened counsels of his grandmother, by choosing the most able ministers, and placing the archbishop of Canterbury as lord-chancellor at their head. Warham was a man of great capacity. The day was not too short for him to hear mass, receive ambassadors, consult with the king in the royal closet, entertain as many as two hundred guests at his table, take his seat on the woolsack, and find time for his private devotions. The joy of the learned surpassed that of the people. The old king wanted none of their praises or congratulations, for fear he should have to pay for them; but now they could give free course to their enthusiasm. Montjoy pronounced the young king “divine;” the Venetian ambassador likened his port to Apollo’s, and his noble chest to the torso of Mars; he was lauded both in Greek and Latin; he was hailed as the founder of a new era, and Henry seemed desirous of meriting these eulogiums. Far

from permitting himself to be intoxicated by so much adulation, he said to Montjoy: “Ah! how I should like to be a scholar!” — “Sire,” replied the courtier, “it is enough that you show your regard for those who possess the learning you desire for yourself.” — “How can I do otherwise,” he replied with earnestness; “without them we hardly exist!” Montjoy immediately communicated this to Erasmus.

Erasmus! — Erasmus! — the walls of Eltham, Oxford, and London resounded with the name. The king could not live without the learned; not the learned without Erasmus. This scholar, who was an enthusiast for the young king, was not long in answering to the call. When Richard Pace, one of the most accomplished men of that age, met the learned Dutchman at Ferrara, the latter took from his pocket a little box which he always carried with him: “You don’t know,” he said, “what a treasure you have in England: I will just show you;” and he took from the box a letter of Henry’s expressing in Latin of considerable purity the tenderest regard for his correspondent. Immediately after the

coronation Montjoy wrote to Erasmus: “Our Henry Octavus, or rather Octavius, is on the throne.

Come and behold the new star. The heavens smile, the earth leaps for joy, and all is flowing with milk, nectar, and honey. Avarice had fled away, liberality has descended, scattering on every side with gracious hand her bounteous largesses. Our king desires not gold or precious stones, but virtue, glory, and immortality.” In such glowing terms was the young king described by a man who had seen him closely. Erasmus could resist no longer: he bade the pope farewell, and hastened to London, where he met with a hearty welcome from Henry. Science and power embraced each other: England was about to have its Medici; and the friends of learning no longer doubted of the regeneration of Britain.

Julius II, who had permitted Erasmus to exchange the white frock of the monks for the black dress of the seculars, allowed him to depart without much regret. This pontiff had little taste for letters, but was fond of war hunting, and the

pleasures of the table. The English sent him a dish to his taste in exchange for the scholar. Some time after Erasmus had left, as the pope was one day reposing from the fatigues of the chase, he heard voices near him singing a strange song. He asked with surprise what it meant. “It is some Englishmen,” was the answer, and three foreigners entered the room, each bearing a closely-covered jar, which the youngest presented on his knees. This was Thomas Cromwell, who appears here for the first time on the historic scene. He was the son of a blacksmith of Putney; but he possessed a mind so penetrating, a judgment so sound, a heart so bold, ability so consummate, such easy elocution, such an accurate memory, such great activity, and so able a pen, that the most brilliant career was foreboded him. At the age of twenty he left England, being desirous to see the world, and began life as a clerk in the English factory at Antwerp. Shortly after this two fellow-countrymen from Boston came to him in their embarrassment. “What do you want?” he asked them. “Our townsmen have sent us to the pope,” they told him, “to get the renewal of the greater and lesser

pardons, whose term is nearly run, and which are necessary for the repair of our harbour. But we do not know how to appear before him." Cromwell, prompt to undertake everything, and knowing a little Italian, replied, "I will go with you." Then slapping his forehead he muttered to himself: "What fish can I throw out as a bait to these greedy cormorants?" A friend informed him that the pope was very fond of dainties. Cromwell immediately ordered some exquisite jelly to be prepared, after the English fashion, and set out for Italy with his provisions and his two companions.

This was the man who appeared before Julius after his return from the chase. "Kings and princes alone eat of this preserve in England," said Cromwell to the pope. One cardinal, who was a greedier "cormorant" than his master, eagerly tasted the delicacy. "Try it," he exclaimed, and the pope, relishing this new confectionery, immediately signed the pardons, on condition however that the receipt for the jelly should be left with him.

“And thus were the jelly-pardons obtained,” says the annalist. It was Cromwell’s first exploit, and the man who began his busy career by presenting jars of confectionery to the pope was also the man destined to separate England from Rome.

The court of the pontiff was not the only one in Europe devoted to gaiety.

Hunting parties were as common in London as at Rome. The young king and his companions were at the time absorbed in balls, banquets, and the other festivities inseparable from a new reign. He recollected however that he must give a queen to his people: Catherine of Aragon was still in England, and the council recommended her for his wife. He admired her piety without caring to imitate it; he was pleased with her love for literature, and even felt some inclination towards her. His advisers represented to him that “Catherine, daughter of the illustrious Isabella of Castile, was the image of her mother. Like her, she possessed that wisdom and greatness of mind

which win the respect of nations; and that if she carried to any of his rivals her marriage-portion and the Spanish alliance, the long-contested crown of England would soon fall from his head.....We have the pope’s dispensation: will you be more scrupulous than he is?” The archbishop of Canterbury opposed in vain: Henry gave way, and on the eleventh of June, about seven weeks after his father’s death, the nuptials were privately celebrated. On the twenty-third the king and queen went in state through the city, the bride wearing a white satin dress with her hair hanging down her back nearly to her feet. On the next day they were crowned at Westminster with great magnificence.

Then followed a series of expensive entertainments. The treasures which the nobility had long concealed from fear of the old king, were now brought out; the ladies glittered with gold and diamonds; and the king and queen, whom the people never grew tired of admiring, amused themselves like children with the splendor of their royal robes. Henry VIII was the forerunner of Louis XIV. Naturally inclined to pomp and

pleasure, the idol of his people a devoted admirer of female beauty, and the husband of almost as many wives as Louis had adulterous mistresses, he made the court of England what the son of Anne of Austria made the court of France, — one constant scene of amusements. He thought he could never get to the end of the riches amassed by his prudent father. His youth — for he was only eighteen — the gaiety of his disposition, the grace he displayed in all bodily exercises, the tales of chivalry in which he delighted, and which even the clergy recommended to their high-born hearers, the flattery of his courtiers — all these combined to set his young imagination in a ferment. Wherever he appeared, all were filled with admiration of his handsome countenance and graceful figure: such is the portrait bequeathed to us by his greatest enemy. “His brow was made to wear the crown, and his majestic port the kingly mantle,” adds Noryson. Henry resolved to realize without delay the chivalrous combats and fabulous splendors of the heroes of the Round Table, as if to prepare himself for those more real struggles which he would one day have to maintain against the papacy. At the

sound of the trumpet the youthful monarch would enter the lists, clad in costly armor, and wearing a plume that fell gracefully down to the saddle of his vigorous courser; “like an untamed bull,” says an historian, “which breaks away from its yoke and rushes into the arena.” On one occasion, at the celebration of the queen’s churching, Catherine with her ladies was seated in a tent of purple and gold, in the midst of an artificial forest, strewn with rocks and variegated with flowers. On a sudden a monk stepped forward, wearing a long brown robe, and kneeling before her, begged permission to run a course. It was granted, and rising up he threw aside his coarse frock, and appeared gorgeously armed for the tourney. He was Charles Brandon, afterwards duke of Suffolk, one of the handsomest and strongest men in the kingdom, and the first after Henry in military exercises. He was followed by a number of others dressed in black velvet, with wide-brimmed hats on their heads, staffs in their hands, and scarfs across their shoulders ornamented with cockle-shells, like pilgrims from St. James of Compostella. These also threw off their disguise, and stood forth in complete armor.

At their head was Sir Thomas Boleyn, whose daughter was fated to surpass in beauty, greatness, and misfortune, all the women of England. The tournament began. Henry, who has been compared to Amadis in boldness, to the lionhearted Richard in courage, and to Edward III in courtesy, did not always escape danger in these chivalrous contests. One day the king had forgotten to lower his vizor, and Brandon, his opponent, setting off at full gallop, the spectators noticed the oversight, and cried out in alarm. But nothing could stop their horses: the two cavaliers met. Suffolk's lance was shivered against Henry, and the fragments struck him in the face. Every one thought the king was dead, and some were running to arrest Brandon, when Henry, recovering from the blow which had fallen on his helmet, recommenced the combat, and ran six new courses amid the admiring cries of his subjects.

This intrepid courage changed as he grew older into unsparing cruelty; and it was this young tiger, whose movements were then so graceful, that at no distant day tore with his bloody fangs the mother of

his children.

Chapter 11

The Pope excites to War

A message from the pope stopped Henry in the midst of these amusements. In Scotland, Spain, France, and Italy, the young king had nothing but friends — a harmony which the papacy was intent on disturbing. One day, immediately after high-mass had been celebrated, the archbishop of Canterbury, on behalf of Julius II laid at his feet a golden rose, which had been blessed by the pope, anointed with holy oil, and perfumed with musk. It was accompanied by a letter saluting him as head of the Italian league. The warlike pontiff having reduced the Venetians, desired to humble France, and to employ Henry as the instrument of his vengeance. Henry, only a short time before, had renewed his alliance with Louis XII; but the pope was not to be baffled by such a trifle as that, and the young king soon began to dream of rivalling the glories of Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt. To no purpose did his wisest councillors represent to him that England, in the most favorable times, had

never been able to hold her ground in France, and that the sea was the true field open to her conquests. Julius, knowing his vanity, had promised to deprive Louis of the title of Most Christian king, and confer it upon him.

“His holiness hopes that your Grace will utterly exterminate the king of France,” wrote the king’s agent. Henry saw nothing objectionable in this very unapostolic mission, and decided on substituting the terrible game of war for the gentler sports of peace.

In the spring of 1511, after some unsuccessful attempts by his generals, Henry determined to invade France in person. He was in the midst of his preparations when the festival of Easter arrived. Dean Colet had been appointed to preach before Henry on Good Friday, and in the course of his sermon he showed more courage than could have been expected in a scholar, for a spark of the Christian spirit was glowing in his bosom. He chose for the subject of his discourse Christ’s victory over death and the 1702 grave. “Whoever

takes up arms from ambition," said he, "fights not under the standard of Christ, but of Satan. If you desire to contend against your enemies, follow Jesus Christ as your prince and captain, rather than Caesar or Alexander." His hearers looked at each other with astonishment; the friends of polite literature became alarmed; and the priests, who were getting uneasy at the uprising of the human mind, hoped to profit by this opportunity of inflicting a deadly blow, on their antagonists. There were among them men whose opinions we must condemn, while we cannot forbear respecting their zeal for what they believed to be the truth: of this number were Bricot, Fitzjames, and above all Standish. Their zeal, however, went a little too far on this occasion: they even talked of burning the dean. After the sermon, Colet was informed that the king requested his attendance in the garden of the Franciscan monastery, and immediately the priests and monks crowded round the gate, hoping to see their adversary led forth as a criminal. "Let us be alone," said Henry; "put on your cap, Master Dean, and we will take a walk. Cheer up," he continued, "you have nothing to fear. You have

spoken admirably of Christian charity, and have almost reconciled me to the king of France; yet, as the contest is not one of choice, but of necessity, I must beg of you in some future sermon to explain this to my people. Unless you do so, I fear my soldiers may misunderstand your meaning." Colet was not a John Baptist, and, affected by the king's condescension, he gave the required explanation. The king was satisfied, and exclaimed: "Let every man have his doctor as he pleases; this man is my doctor, and I will drink his health!" Henry was then young: very different was the fashion with which in after-years he treated those who opposed him.

At heart the king cared little more about the victories of Alexander than of Jesus Christ. Having fitted out his army, he embarked at the end of June, accompanied by his almoner, Wolsey, who was rising into favor, and set out for the war as if for a tournament. Shortly after this, he went, all glittering with jewels, to meet the Emperor Maximilian, who received him in a plain doublet and cloak of black serge. After his victory at the battle of Spurs, Henry, instead of pressing forward

to the conquest of France, returned to the siege of Terouenne, wasted his time in jousts and entertainments, conferred on Wolsey the bishopric of Tournay which he had just captured, and then returned to England, delighted at having made so pleasant an excursion.

Louis XII was a widower in his 53rd year, and bowed down by the infirmities of a premature old age; but being desirous of preventing, at any cost, the renewal of the war, he sought the hand of Henry's sister, the Princess Mary, then in her 16th year. Her affections were already fixed on Charles Brandon, and for him she would have sacrificed the splendor of a throne. But reasons of state opposed their union. "The princess," remarked Wolsey, "will soon return to England a widow with a royal dowry." This decided the question. The disconsolate Mary, who was an object of universal pity, embarked at Dover with a numerous train, and from Boulogne, where she was received by the duke of Angouleme, she was conducted to the king, elated at the idea of marrying the handsomest princess in Europe.

Among Mary’s attendants was the youthful Anne Boleyn. Her father, Sir Thomas Boleyn, had been charged by Henry, conjointly with the bishop of Ely, with the diplomatic negotiations preliminary to this marriage. Anne had passed her childhood at Hever caster, surrounded by all that could heat the imagination. Her maternal grandfather, the earl of Surrey, whose eldest son had married the sister of Henry the Seventh’s queen, had filled, as did his sons also, the most important offices of state. At the age probably of fourteen, when summoned by her father to court, she wrote him the following letter in French, which appears to refer to her departure for France: — “Sir, — I find by your letter that you wish me to appear at court in a manner becoming a respectable female, and likewise that the queen will condescend to enter into conversation with me; at this I rejoice, as I do to think, that conversing with so sensible and elegant a princess will make me even more desirous of continuing to speak and to write good French; the more as it is by your earnest advice, which (I acquaint you by this present

writing) I shall follow to the best of my ability.....As to myself, rest assured that I shall not ungratefully look upon this fatherly office as one that might be dispensed with; nor will it tend to diminish my affection, quest [wish], and deliberation to lead as holy a life as you may please to desire of me; indeed my love for you is founded on so firm a basis that it can never be impaired. I put an end to this my lucubration after having very humbly craved your good will and affection.

Written at Hever, by “Your very humble and obedient daughter, “Anna De Boullan.” Such were the feelings under which this young and interesting lady, so calumniated by papistical writers, appeared at court.

The marriage was celebrated at Abbeville on the 9th of October 1514, and after a sumptuous banquet, the king of France distributed his royal largesses among the English lords, who were charmed by his courtesy. But the morrow was a day of trial to the young queen. Louis XII had dismissed the numerous train which had

accompanied her, and even Lady Guildford, to whom Henry had specially confided her. Three only were left, — of whom the youthful Anne Boleyn was one. At this separation, Mary gave way to the keenest sorrow. To cheer her spirits, Louis proclaimed a grand tournament. Brandon hastened to France at its first announcement, and carried off all the prizes; while the king, languidly reclining on a couch, could with difficulty look upon the brilliant spectacle over which his queen presided, sick at heart yet radiant with youth and beauty. Mary was unable to conceal her emotion, and Louisa of Savoy, who was watching her, divined her secret. But Louis, if he experienced the tortures of jealousy, did not feel them long, for his death took place on the 1st January 1515.

Even before her husband’s funeral was over, Mary’s heart beat high with hope. Francis I, impatient to see her wedded to some unimportant political personage, encouraged her love for Brandon. The latter, who had been commissioned by Henry to convey to her his letters of condolence, feared his master’s anger if he should

dare aspire to the hand of the princess. But the widowed queen, who was resolved to brave everything, told her lover: “Either you marry me in four days or you see me no more.” The choice the king had made of his ambassador announced that he would not behave very harshly. The marriage was celebrated in the abbey of Clugny, and Henry pardoned them.

While Mary returned to England, as Wolsey had predicted, Anne Boleyn remained in France. Her father, desiring his daughter to become an accomplished woman, instructed her to the care of the virtuous Claude of France, the good queen, at whose court the daughters of the first families of the kingdom were trained. Margaret, duchess of Alencon, the sister of Francis, and afterwards queen of Navarre, often charmed the queen’s circle by her lively conversation. She soon became deeply attached to the young Englishwoman, and on the death of Claude took her into her own family.

Anne Boleyn was destined at no very remote

period to be at the court of London a reflection of the graceful Margaret, and her relations with that princess were not without influence on the English Reformation.

And indeed the literary movement which had passed from Italy into France appeared at that time as if it would cross from France into Britain.

Oxford exercises over England as great an influence as the metropolis; and it is almost always within its walls that a movement commences whether for good or evil. At this period of our history, an enthusiastic youth hailed with joy the first beams of the new sun, and attacked with their sarcasms the idleness of the monks, the immorality of the clergy, and the superstition of the people. Disgusted with the priestcraft of the middle ages, and captivated by the writers of antiquity and the purity of the Gospel, Oxford boldly called for a reform which should burst the bonds of clerical domination and emancipate the human mind. Men of letters thought for a while that they had found the most powerful man in England in Wolsey, the

ally that would give them the victory.

He possessed little taste for learning, but seeing the wind of public favor blow in that direction, he readily spread his sails before it. He got the reputation of a profound divine, by quoting a few words of Thomas Aquinas, and the fame of a Marcenas and Ptolemy, by inviting the learned to his gorgeous entertainments. “O happy cardinal,” exclaimed Erasmus, “who can surround his table with such torches!” At that time the king felt the same ambition as his minister, and having tasted in turn the pleasures of war and diplomacy, he now bent his mind to literature. He desired Wolsey to present Sir Thomas More to him. — “What shall I do at court?” replied the latter. “I shall be as awkward as a man that never rode sitteth in a saddle.” Happy in his family circle, where his father, mother, and children, gathering round the same table, formed a pleasing group, which the pencil of Holbein has transmitted to us, More had no desire to leave it. But Henry was not a man to put up with a refusal; he employed force almost to draw More from his retirement, and in a short time

he could not live without the society of the man of letters.

On calm and starlight nights they would walk together upon the leads at the top of the palace, discoursing on the motions of the heavenly bodies. If More did not appear at court, Henry would go to Chelsea and share the frugal dinner of the family with some of their simple neighbors. “Where,” asked Erasmus, “where is the Athens, the Porch, or the Academe, that can be compared with the court of England?.....It is a seat of the muses rather than a palace.....The golden age is reviving, and I congratulate the world.” But the friends of classical learning were not content with the cardinal’s banquets or the king’s favors. They wanted victories, and their keenest darts were aimed at the cloisters, those strong fortresses of the hierarchy and of uncleanness. The abbot of Saint Albans, having taken a married woman for his concubine, and placed her at the head of a nunnery, his monks had followed his example, and indulged in the most scandalous debauchery. Public indignation was so far aroused, that Wolsey himself — Wolsey, the

father of several illegitimate children, and who was suffering the penalty of his irregularities — was carried away by the spirit of the age, and demanded of the pope a general reform of manners. When they heard of this request, the priests and friars were loud in their outcries.

“What are you about?” said they to Wolsey. “You are giving the victory to the enemies of the church, and your only reward will be the hatred of the whole world.” As this was not the cardinal’s game, he abandoned his project, and conceived one more easily executed. Wishing to deserve the name of “Ptolemy” conferred on him by Erasmus, he undertook to build two large colleges, one at Ipswich, his native town, the other at Oxford; and found it convenient to take the money necessary for their endowment, not from his own purse, but from the purses of the monks. He pointed out to the pope twenty-two monasteries in which (he said) vice and impiety had taken up their abode. The pope granted their secularization, and Wolsey having thus procured a revenue of L2000 sterling, laid the foundations of his college, traced out

various courts, and constructed spacious kitchens. He fell into disgrace before he had completed his work, which led Gualter to say with a sneer: “He began a college and built a cook’s shop.” But a great example had been set: the monasteries had been attacked, and the first breach made in them by a cardinal. Cromwell, Wolsey’s secretary, remarked how his master had set about his work, and in after-years profited by the lesson.

It was fortunate for letters that they had sincerer friends in London than Wolsey. Of these were Colet, dean of St. Paul’s whose house was the center of the literary movement which preceded the Reformation, and his friend and guest Erasmus. The latter was the hardy pioneer who opened the road of antiquity to modern Europe. One day he would entertain Colet’s guests with the account of a new manuscript; on another, with a discussion on the forms of ancient literature; and at other times he would attack the schoolmen and monks, when Colet would take the same side.

The only antagonist who dared measure his

strength with him was Sir Thomas More, who, although a layman, stoutly defended the ordinances of the church.

But mere table-talk could not satisfy the dean: a numerous audience attended his sermons at St. Paul's. The spirituality of Christ's words, the authority which characterizes them, their admirable simplicity and mysterious depth, had deeply charmed him: "I admire the writings of the apostles," he would say, "but I forget them almost, when I contemplate the wonderful majesty of Jesus Christ." Setting aside the texts prescribed by the church, he explained, like Zwingle, the Gospel of St. Matthew. Nor did he stop here. Taking advantage of the Convocation, he delivered a sermon on conformation and reformation, which was one of the numerous forerunners of the great reform of the sixteenth century. "We see strange and heretical ideas appear in our days, and no wonder," said he.

"But you must know there is no heresy more dangerous to the church than the vicious lives of its

priests. A reformation is needed; and that reformation must begin with the bishops and be extended to the priests.

The clergy once reformed, we shall proceed to the reformation of the people.” Thus spoke Colet, while the citizens of London listened to him with rapture, and called him a new Saint Paul. Such discourses could not be allowed to pass unpunished. Fitzjames, bishop of London, was a superstitious obstinate old man of eighty, fond of money, excessively irritable, a poor theologian, and a slave to Duns Scotus, the subtle doctor. Calling to his aid two other bishops as zealous as himself for the preservation of abuses, namely, Bricot and Standish, he denounced the dean of St Paul’s to Warham. The archbishop having inquired what he had done: “What had he done?” rejoined the bishop of London. “He teaches that we must not worship images; he translates the Lord’s Prayer into English; he pretends that the text Feed my sheep, does not include the temporal supplies the clergy draw from their flock. And besides all this,” he continued with some embarrassment, “he has

spoken against those who carry their manuscripts into the pulpit and read their sermons!” As this was the bishop’s practice, the primate could not refrain from smiling; and since Colet refused to justify himself, Warham did so for him.

From that time Colet labored with fresh zeal to scatter the darkness. He devoted the larger portion of his fortune to found the celebrated school of St. Paul, of which the learned Lilly was the first master. Two parties, the Greeks and the Trojans, entered the lists, not to contend with sword and spear, as in the ancient epic, but with the tongue, the pen, and sometimes the fist. If the Trojans (the obscurants) were defeated in the public disputations, they had their revenge in the secret of the confessional. Cave a Graecis ne fias hereticus, was the watchword of the priests — their daily lesson to the youths under their care. They looked on the school founded by Colet as the monstrous horse of the perjured Sinon, and announced that from its bosom would inevitably issue the destruction of the people. Colet and Erasmus replied to the monks by inflicting fresh blows.

Linacre, a thorough literary enthusiast, — Grocyn a man of sarcastic humor but generous heart, — and many others, reinforced the Grecian phalanx. Henry himself used to take one of them with him during his journeys, and if any unlucky Trojan ventured in his presence to attack the tongue of Plato and of St. Paul, the young king would set his Hellenian on him. Not more numerous were the contests witnessed in times of yore on the classic banks of Xanthus and Simois.

Chapter 12

Wolsey

Just as everything seemed tending to a reformation, a powerful priest rendered the way more difficult.

One of the most striking personages of the age was then making his appearance on the stage of the world. It was the destiny of that man, in the reign of Henry VIII, to combine extreme ability with extreme immortality; and to be a new and striking example of the wholesome truth that immorality is more effectual to destroy a man than ability to save him.

Wolsey was the last high-priest of Rome in England, and when his fall startled the nation, it was the signal of a still more striking fall — the fall of popery.

Thomas Wolsey, the son of a wealthy butcher of Ipswich, according to the common story, which

is sanctioned by high authority, had attained under Henry VII the post of almoner, at the recommendation of Sir Richard Nanfan, treasurer of Calais and an old patron of his. But Wolsey was not at all desirous of passing his life in saying mass. As soon as he had discharged the regular duties of his office, instead of spending the rest of the day in idleness, as his colleagues did, he strove to win the good graces of the persons round the king.

Fox, bishop of Winchester, keeper of the privy-seal under Henry VII, uneasy at the growing power or the earl of Surrey, looked about for a man to counterbalance him. He thought he had found such a one in Wolsey. It was to oppose the Surreys, the grandfather and uncles of Anne Boleyn, that the son of the Ipswich butcher was drawn from his obscurity. This is not an unimportant circumstance in our narrative. Fox began to praise Wolsey in the king’s hearing, and at the same time he encouraged the almoner to give himself to public affairs. The latter was not deaf, and soon found an opportunity of winning his sovereign’s favor.

The king having business of importance with the emperor, who was then in Flanders, sent for Wolsey, explained his wishes, and ordered him to prepare to set out. The chaplain determined to show Henry VII how capable he was of serving him. It was long past noon when he took leave of the king at Richmond — at four o'clock he was in London, at seven at Gravesend. By travelling all night he reached Dover just as the packet-boat was about to sail. After a passage of three hours he reached Calais, whence he traveled post, and the same evening appeared before Maximilian.

Having obtained what he desired, he set off again by night, and on the next day but one reached Richmond, three days and some few hours after his departure. The king, catching sight of him just as he was going to mass, sharply inquired, why he had not set out. "Sire, I am just returned," answered Wolsey, placing the emperor's letters in his master's hands.

Henry was delighted, and Wolsey saw that his

fortune was made.

The courtiers hoped at first that Wolsey, like an inexperienced pilot, would run his vessel on some hidden rock; but never did helmsman manage his ship with more skill. Although twenty years older than Henry VIII the almoner danced, and sang, and laughed with the prince’s companions, and amused his new master with tales of scandal and quotations from Thomas Aquinas. The young king found his house a temple of paganism, a shrine of voluptuousness; and while Henry’s councillors were entreating him to leave his pleasures and attend to business, Wolsey was continually reminding him that he ought to devote his youth to learning and amusement, and leave the toils of government to others. Wolsey was created bishop of Tournay during the campaign in Flanders, and on his return to England, was raised to the sees of Lincoln and of York. Three mitres had been placed on his head in one year. He found at last the vein he so ardently sought for.

And yet he was not satisfied. The archbishop of

Canterbury had insisted, as primate, that the cross of York should be lowered to his. Wolsey was not of a disposition to concede this, and when he found that Warham was not content with being his equal, he resolved to make him his inferior. He wrote to Paris and to Rome. Francis I, who desired to conciliate England, demanded the purple for Wolsey, and the archbishop of York received the title of Cardinal St. Cecilia beyond the Tiber. In November 1515, his hat was brought by the envoy of the pope: “It would have been better to have given him a Tyburn tippet,” said some indignant Englishmen; “these Romish hats never brought good into England” — a saying that has become proverbial.

This was not enough for Wolsey: he desired secular greatness above all things. Warham, tired of contending with so arrogant a rival, resigned the seals, and the king immediately transferred them to the cardinal. At length a bull appointed him legate a latere of the holy see, and placed under his jurisdiction all the colleges, monasteries, spiritual courts, bishops, and the primate himself (1519).

From that time, as lord-chancellor of England and legate, Wolsey administered everything in church and state. He filled his coffers with money procured both at home and from abroad, and yielded without restraint to his dominant vices, ostentation and pride. Whenever he appeared in public, two priests, the tallest and comeliest that could be found, carried before him two huge silver crosses, one to mark his dignity as archbishop, the other as papal legate. Chamberlains, gentlemen, pages, sergeants, chaplains, choristers, clerks, cupbearers, cooks, and other domestics, to the number of more than 500, among whom were nine or ten lords and the stateliest yeomen of the country, filled his palace. He generally wore a dress of scarlet velvet and silk, with hat and gloves of the same color. His shoes were embroidered with gold and silver, inlaid with pearls and precious stones. A kind of papacy was thus forming in England; for wherever pride flourishes there popery is developed.

One thing occupied Wolsey more than all the pomp with which he was surrounded: his desire,

namely, to captivate the king. For this purpose he cast Henry’s nativity, and procured an amulet which he wore constantly, in order to charm his master by its magic properties. Then having recourse to a still more effectual necromancy, he selected from among the licentious companions of the young monarch those of the keenest discernment and most ambitious character; and after binding them to him by a solemn oath, he placed them at court to be as eyes and ears to him.

Accordingly not a word was said in the presence of the monarch, particularly against Wolsey, of which he was not informed an hour afterwards. If the culprit was not in favor, he was expelled without mercy; in the contrary case, the minister sent him on some distant mission. The queen’s ladies, the king’s chaplains, and even their confessors, were the cardinal’s spies. He pretended to omnipresence, as the pope to infallibility.

Wolsey was not devoid of certain showy virtues, for he was liberal to the poor even to affectation, and as chancellor inexorable to every

kind of irregularity, and strove particularly to make the rich and highborn bend beneath his power. Men of learning alone obtained from him some little attention, and hence Erasmus calls him “the Achates of a new Aeneas.” But the nation was not to be carried away by the eulogies of a few scholars. Wolsey — a man of more than suspected morals, double-hearted, faithless to his promises, oppressing the people with heavy taxes, and exceedingly arrogant to everybody — Wolsey soon became hated by the people of England.

The elevation of a prince of the Roman Church could not be favorable to the Reformation. The priests, encouraged by it, determined to make a stand against the triple attack of the learned, the reformers, and the state; and they soon had an opportunity of trying their strength. Holy orders had become during the middle ages a warrant for every sort of crime.

Parliament, desirous of correcting this abuse and checking the encroachments of the church, declared in the year, that any ecclesiastic, accused

of theft or murder, should be tried before the secular tribunals. Exceptions, however, were made in favor of bishops, priests, and deacons — that is to say, nearly all the clergy. Notwithstanding this timid precaution, an insolent clerk, the abbot of Winchelcomb, began the battle by exclaiming at St. Paul's: "Touch not mine anointed, said the Lord." At the same time Wolsey, accompanied by a long train of priests and prelates, had an audience of the king, at which he said with hands upraised to heaven: "Sire, to try a clerk, is a violation of God's laws." This time, however, Henry did not gave way. "By God's will, we are king of England," he replied, "and the kings of England in times past had never any superior but God only. Therefore know you well that we will maintain the right of our crown." He saw distinctly that to put the clergy above the laws was to put them above the throne. The priests were beaten, but not disheartened: perseverance is a characteristic feature of every hierarchical order. Not walking by faith, they walk all the more by sight; and skillful combinations supply the place of the holy aspirations of the Christian.

Humble disciples of the gospel were soon to experience this, for the clergy by a few isolated attacks were about to flesh themselves for the great struggles of the Reformation.

Chapter 13

The Wolves

It is occasionally necessary to soften down the somewhat exaggerated colors in which contemporary writers describe the Romish clergy; but there are certain appellations which history is bound to accept. The wolves, for so the priests were called, by attacking the Lords and Commons had attempted a work beyond their reach. They turned their wrath on others. There were many shepherds endeavoring to gather together the sheep of the Lord beside the peaceful waters: these must be frightened, and the sheep driven into the howling wilderness. “The wolves” determined to fall upon the Lollards.

There lived in London an honest tradesman named Richard Hun, one of those witnesses of the truth who, sincere though unenlightened, have been often found in the bosom of Catholicism. It was his practice to retire to his closet and spend a portion of each day in the study of the Bible. At the death

of one of his children, the priest required of him an exorbitant fee, which Hun refused to pay, and for which he was summoned before the legate's court. Animated by that public spirit which characterizes the people of England, he felt indignant that an Englishman should be cited before a foreign tribunal, and laid an information against the priest and his counsel under the act of proemunire. Such boldness — most extraordinary at that time — exasperated the clergy beyond all bounds. "If these proud citizens are allowed to have their way," exclaimed the monks, "every layman will dare to resist a priest." Exertions were accordingly made to snare the pretended rebel in the trap of heresy; he was thrown into the Lollards' tower at St. Paul's, and an iron collar was fastened round his neck, attached to which was a chain so heavy that neither man nor beast (says Foxe) would have been able to bear it long. When taken before his judges, they could not convict him of heresy, and it was observed with astonishment "that he had his beads in prison with him." They would have set him at liberty, after inflicting on him perhaps some trifling penance — but then, what a bad example it would

be, and who could stop the reformers, if it was so easy to resist the papacy? Unable to triumph by justice, certain fanatics resolved to triumph by crime.

At midnight on the 2nd December — the day of his examination — three men stealthy ascended the stairs of the Lollards' tower: the bellringer went first carrying a torch; a sergeant named Charles Joseph followed, and last came the bishop's chancellor. Having entered the cell, they went up to the bed on which Hun was lying, and finding that he was asleep, the chancellor said: "Lay hands on the thief," Charles Joseph and the bellringer fell upon the prisoner, who, awaking with a start, saw at a glance what this midnight visit meant. He resisted the assassins at first, but was soon overpowered and strangled. Charles Joseph then fixed the dead man's belt round his neck, the bellringer helped to raise his lifeless body, and the chancellor slipped the other end of the belt through a ring fixed in the wall. They then placed his cap on his head, and hastily quitted the cell." Immediately after, the conscience-stricken Charles

Joseph got on horseback and rode from the city; the bellringer left the cathedral and hid himself: the crime dispersed the criminals. The chancellor alone kept his ground, and he was at prayers when the news was brought him that the turnkey had found Hun hanging. “He must have killed himself in despair” said the hypocrite.

But every one knew poor Hun’s Christian feelings. “It is the priests who have murdered him,” was the general cry in London, and an inquest was ordered to be held on his body.

On Tuesday, the 5th of December, William Barnwell the city coroner, the two sheriffs, and twenty-four jurymen, proceeded to the Lollards’ tower.

They remarked that the belt was so short that the head could not be got out of it, and that consequently it had never been placed in it voluntarily, and hence the jury concluded that the suspension was an after-thought of some other persons. Moreover they found that the ring was too

high for the poor victim to reach it, — that the body bore marks of violence — and that traces of blood were to be seen in the cell: “Wherefore all we find by God and all our consciences (runs the verdict), that Richard Hun was murdered. Also we acquit the said Richard Hun of his own death.” It was but too true, and the criminals themselves confessed it. The miserable Charles Joseph having returned home on the evening of the 6th December, said to his maid-servant: “If you will swear to keep my secret, I will tell you all.” — “Yes, master,” she replied, “if it is neither felony nor treason.” — Joseph took a book, swore the girl on it, and then said to her: “I have killed Richard Hun!” — “O master! how? he was called a worthy man.” — “I would lever [rather] than a hundred pounds it were not done,” he made answer; “but what is done cannot be undone.” He then rushed out of the house.

The clergy foresaw what a serious blow this unhappy affair would be to them, and to justify themselves they examined Hun’s Bible (it was Wickliffe’s version), and having read in the preface

that “poor men and idiots [simple folks] have the truth of the Holy Scriptures more than a thousand prelates and religious men and clerks of the school,” and further, that “the pope ought to be called Antichrist,” the bishop of London, assisted by the bishops of Durham and Lincoln, declared Hun guilty of heresy, and on the 20th December his dead body was burnt at Smithfield.

“Hun’s bones have been burnt, and therefore he was a heretic,” said the priests; “he was a heretic, and therefore he committed suicide.” The triumph of the clergy was of short duration; for almost at the same time William Horsey, the bishop’s chancellor, Charles Joseph, and John Spalding the bellringer, were convicted of the murder. A bill passed the Commons restoring Hun’s property to his family and vindicating his character; the Lords accepted the bill, and the king himself said to the priests: “Restore to these wretched children the property of their father, whom you so cruelly murdered, to our great and just horror.” — “If the clerical theocracy should gain the mastery of the state,” was the general remark in London, “it

would not only be a very great lie, but the most frightful tyranny!” England has never gone back since that time, and a theocratic rule has always inspired the sound portion of the nation with a just and insurmountable antipathy. Such were the events taking place in England shortly before the Reformation. This was not all.

The clergy had not been fortunate in Hun’s affair, but they were not for that reason unwilling to attempt a new one.

In the spring of 1517 — the year in which Luther posted up his theses — a priest, whose manners announced a man swollen with pride, happened to be on board the passage-boat from London to Gravesend with an intelligent and pious Christian of Ashford, by name John Brown. The passengers, as they floated down the stream, were amusing themselves by watching the banks glide away from them, when the priest, turning towards Brown, said to him insolently: “You are too near me, get farther off. Do you know who I am?” — “No, sir,” answered Brown. — “Well, then you

must know that I am a priest.” — “Indeed, sir; are you a parson, or vicar, or a lady’s chaplain?” — “No; I am a soul-priest,” he haughtily replied; “I sing mass to save souls.” — “Do you, sir,” rejoined Brown somewhat ironically, “that is well done; and can you tell me where you find the soul when you begin the mass?” — “I cannot,” said the priest. — “And where you leave it when the mass is ended?” — “I do not know.” — “What!” continued Brown with marks of astonishment, “you do not know where you find the soul or where you leave it.....and yet you say that you save it!” — “Go thy ways,” said the priest angrily, “thou art a heretic, and I will be even with thee.” Thenceforward the priest and his neighbor conversed no more together. At last they reached Gravesend and the boat anchored.

As soon as the priest had landed, he hastened to two of his friends, Walter and William More, and all three mounting their horses set off for Canterbury, and denounced Brown to the archbishop.

In the meantime John Brown had reached home. Three days later, his wife, Elizabeth, who had just left her chamber, went to church, dressed all in white, to return thanks to God for delivering her in the perils of childbirth.

Her husband, assisted by her daughter Alice and the maid-servant, were preparing for their friends the feast usual on such occasions, and they had all of them taken their seats at table, joy beaming on every face, when the street-door was abruptly opened, and Chilton, the constable, a cruel and savage man, accompanied by several of the archbishop’s apparitors, seized upon the worthy townsman. All sprang from their seats in alarm; Elizabeth and Alice uttered the most heartrending cries; but the primate’s officers, without showing any emotion, pulled Brown out of the house, and placed him on horseback, tying his feet under the animal’s belly. It is a serious matter to jest with a priest. The cavalcade rode off quickly, and Brown was thrown into prison, and there left forty days.

At the end of this time, the archbishop of

Canterbury and the bishop of Rochester called before them the impudent fellow who doubted whether a priest's mass could save souls, and required him to retract this "blasphemy." But Brown, if he did not believe in the mass, believed in the gospel: "Christ was once offered," he said, "to take away the sins of many. It is by this sacrifice we are saved, and not by the repetitions of the priests." At this reply the archbishop made a sign to the executioners, one of whom took off the shoes and stockings of this pious Christian, while the other brought in a pan of burning coals, upon which they set the martyr's feet. The English laws in truth forbade torture to be inflicted on any subject of the crown, but the clergy thought themselves above the laws. "Confess the efficacity of the mass," cried the two bishops to poor Brown. "If I deny my Lord upon earth," he replied, "He will deny me before his Father in heaven." The flesh was burnt off the soles of the feet even to the bones, and still John Brown remained unshaken. The bishops therefore ordered him to be given over to the secular arm that he might be burnt alive.

On the Saturday preceding the festival of Pentecost, in the year 1517, the martyr was led back to Ashford, where he arrived just as the day was drawing to a close. A number of idle persons were collected in the street, and among them was Brown's maid-servant, who ran off crying to the house, and told her mistress: "I have seen him.....He was bound, and they were taking him to prison." Elizabeth hastened to her husband and found him sitting with his feet in the stocks, his features changed by suffering, and expecting to be burnt alive on the morrow. The poor woman sat down beside him, weeping most bitterly; while he, being hindered by his chains, could not so much as bend towards her. "I cannot set my feet to the ground," said he, "for bishops have burnt them to the bones; but they could not burn ny tongue and prevent my confessing the Lord.....O Elizabeth!.....continue to live him for He is good; and bring up our children in his fear." On the following morning — it was Whitsunday — the brutal Chilton and his assistants led Brown to the place of execution, and fastened him to the 1719 stake. Elizabeth and Alice, with his other children

and his friends, desirous of receiving his last sigh, surrounded the pile, uttering cries of anguish. The fagots were set on fire; while Brown, calm and collected, and full of confidence in the blood of the Savior, clasped his hands, and repeated this hymn, which Foxe has preserved: — O Lord, I yield me to thy grace, Grant my mercy for my trespass; Let never the fiend my soul chase Lord, I will bow, and thou shalt beat, Let never my soul come in hell-heat.

The martyr was silent: the flames had consumed their victim. Then redoubled cries of anguish rent the air. His wife and daughter seemed as if they would lose their senses. The bystanders showed them the tenderest compassion, and turned with a movement of indignation towards the executioners. The brutal Chilton perceiving this, cried out: — “Come along; let us toss the heretic’s children into the flames, lest they should one day spring from their father’s ashes.” He rushed towards Alice, and was about to lay hold of her, when the maiden shrank back screaming with horror. To the end of her life, she recollected the

fearful moment, and to her we are indebted for the particulars. The fury of the monster was checked. Such were the scenes passing in England shortly before the Reformation.

The priests were not yet satisfied, for the scholars still remained in England: if they could not be burnt, they should at least be banished. They set to work accordingly. Standish, bishop of St. Asaph, a sincere man, as it would seem, but fanatical, was inveterate in his hatred of Erasmus, who had irritated him by an idle sarcasm. When speaking of St. Asaph's it was very common to abbreviate it into St. As's; And as Standish was a theologian of no great learning, Erasmus, in his jesting way, would sometimes call him Episcopus a Sancto Asino. As the bishop could not destroy Colet, the disciple, he flattered himself that he should triumph over the master.

Erasmus knew Standish's intentions. Should he commence in England that struggle with the papacy which Luther was about to begin in Germany: It was no longer possible to steer a

middle course: he must either fight or leave. The Dutchman was faithful to his nature — we may even say, to his vocation: he left the country.

Erasmus was, in his time, the head of the great literary community. By means of his connections and his correspondence, which extended over all Europe, he established between those countries where learning was reviving, and interchange of ideas and manuscripts. The pioneer of antiquity, an eminent critic, a witty satirist, the advocate of correct taste, and a restorer of literature, one only glory was wanting: he had not the creative spirit, the heroic soul of a Luther. He calculated with no little skill, could detect the smile on the lips or the knitting of the brows; but he had not that self-abandonment, that enthusiasm for the truth, that firm confidence in God, without which nothing great can be done in the world, and least of all in the church. “Erasmus had much, but was little,” said one of his biographers. In the year 1517, a crisis had arrived: the period of the revival was over, that of the Reformation was beginning. The restoration of letters was succeeded by the

regeneration of religion: the days of criticism and neutrality by those of courage and action. Erasmus was then only fortynine years old; but he had finished his career. From being first, he must now be second: the monk of Wittenberg dethroned him. He looked around himself in vain: placed in a new country, he had lost his road. A hero was needed to inaugurate the great movement of modern times: Erasmus was a mere man of letters.

When attacked by Standish in 1516, the literary king determined to quit the court of England, and take refuge in a printing-office. But before laying down his scepter at the foot of a Saxon monk, he signalized the end of his reign by the most brilliant of his publications. The epoch of 1516-17, memorable for the theses of Luther, was destined to be equally remarkable by a work which was to imprint on the new times their essential character.

What distinguishes the Reformation from all anterior revivals is the union of the learning with piety, and a faith more profound, more enlightened, and based on the word of God. The Christian

people was then emancipated from the tutelage of the schools and the popes, and its charter of enfranchisement was the Bible. The sixteenth century did more than its predecessors: it went straight to the fountain (the Holy Scriptures), cleared it of weeds and brambles, plumbed its depths, and caused its abundant streams to pour forth on all around. The Reformation age studied the Greek Testament, which the clerical age had almost forgotten, — and this is its greatest glory. Now the first explorer of this divine source was Erasmus. When attacked by the hierarchy, the leader of the schools withdrew from the splendid halls of Henry VIII. It seemed to him that the new era which he had announced to the world was rudely interrupted: he could do nothing more by his conversation for the country of the Tudors.

But he carried with him those precious leaves, the fruit of his labors — a book which would do more than he desired. He hastened to Basle, and took up his quarters in Frobenius's printing-office, where he not only labored himself, but made others labor. England will soon receive the seed of the

new life, and the Reformation is about to begin.