

QUEEN MARY TUDOR AND THE MARTYRS OF THE REFORMATION.

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III. (*Concluding Article.*)

THE confessors, fully apprehending now that which lay before them, in their letters, which passed from prison to prison, constantly exhorted one another to play the man : and to those who remained at large they gave the advice not to dissemble, but to be sure of their faith, and examine the foundations of it again and again. "Renew among yourselves the truth of your religion, comfort one another, make prayers together, confer one with another," said Hooper from the Fleet, "let some learned man show you all the articles of your belief, and the monuments of the Christian Faith from the time of Christ hitherto. Never be of those who dissemble and go to Mass and say, I am present in my body, but my heart is clean contrary, and I detest such idolatry. If it be idolatry, why give godly honour to it ?" . . . "Prepare yourself to suffer," said Bradford from King's Bench. "If the medicine be bitter, put a little sugar in it, and that is, a dram of Christ's sufferings. Never for anything resist the magistrates : but never dissemble, never go to Mass."

"The Parliament, which had set the lives of these men," says Dixon, "on the edge of the penal statutes of a century before, being still in session, they made another attempt to reach it : and to the appeals and provocations of Hooper, Bradford, and the rest of them, is to be added a stern rebuke for what had been done of late in legislation, and a renewed challenge to their enemies. "You have consented of late," said the prisoners for religion to the high court of Parliament, "to the unplacing of many godly laws touching religion, set forth by two noble kings, the father and brother of the Queen, and agreed upon by all your consents not without great and many deliberations on your part : not without great consultations by the most learned men in the realm at Windsor, Cambridge and Oxford : not without the willing consent of the whole realm (so that there is not a parish in England that desired to have again the Roman superstitions and

vain service). Persecutions must needs ensue, and vexations of bodies and goods. All the true preachers have been removed and punished with such open robbery and cruelty as in Turkey was never used. For the mercy's sake of our dear Saviour Jesus Christ, for the duty that you owe to your native country, for the duty that you owe to your own souls, consider from what light to what darkness this realm is now brought. Seek in your assembly some reformation of this most horrible deformation, in this Church of England. We desire that we may be called before you. And if we be not able to prove by the Catholic and canonical rules of Christ's true religion the Homilies and Service set forth in the most innocent King Edward's days, and to disallow and reprove the Service now set forth ; then we offer our bodies to be immediately burned, or to suffer any other painful and shameful death that shall be appointed. Let the trial be writing, or else by disputation in the plain English tongue." The appeal was unheard or unregarded, and the assembly which had wrought one of the most horrible pieces of mischief out of which good has ever been brought came to a dissolution on January 16. An unusual circumstance at the close of the session marked the deep discontent that lay beneath the surface of unanimity. Royal orders had been issued before Christmas Day that neither Lords nor Commons should depart before the end of the session, though some of the members had sent for their servants and carriages that they might go home for the usual recess. Hereupon no less than thirty-seven of the Commons broke away and went down, partly, it was thought, out of disgust, and attachment to the reformed religion.

It has been observed before, that the first trial of Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer was conducted by priests only, who had no right according to Catholic usage to try bishops. But the King and Queen were too much devoted to the Papacy to be satisfied to appoint on their own account English Bishops to examine their three episcopal brethren. They now appealed to the Pope and petitioned that the Archbishop should be tried. They appeared therefore as prosecutors not as authoritative judges in the affair ; and were represented by two laymen, Martin and Storey, while the judicial authority of the Pope was transmitted to Brooks, Bishop of Gloucester : with whom two priests were associated. Only a few points in the trial can be noticed. It must have been a strange and impressive scene. A platform ten feet high was erected at the east end of the Chancel of

St. Mary's, Oxford, on which the Bishop of Gloucester was placed, with the representation of the King and Queen on his right but beneath him to signify their inferiority. Bishop Brooks treated the Archbishop with respectful courtesy; Martin, the Royal proctor, brought forward the charges of accusation, and then Cranmer made his defence. Before beginning to speak, he knelt down, and with his face to the west, he recited the Lord's Prayer. The westward position in kneeling was adopted, so says Dean Spence in his recently published Church History, that Cranmer might avoid any suspicion of paying adoration to the consecrated wafer which was displayed in the pyx on the altar above the papal delegate's throne. To the representatives of the Queen, Martin and Storey, he had, on coming in, made a low obeisance, but had taken no notice whatever of the Bishop of Gloucester, as acting for the Pope. His defence denied any supremacy to the Papal See in England, and repudiated the doctrine of transubstantiation, asserting that the presence of Christ was spiritually received. A fortnight after Cranmer's trial in St. Mary's, a commission was issued for the examination of Ridley and Latimer. It was held in the Divinity School, and conducted by three Bishops, Brooks of Gloucester, White of Lincoln, and Holyman of Bristol. Of course they were condemned.

We extract from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* some particulars of the executions of Ridley and Latimer: ¹

"Upon the north side of the town of Oxford, in the ditch over against Balliol College, the place of execution was appointed. Dr. Ridley went to the place dressed in a black furred gown, and velvet tippet, and velvet cap, such as he used to wear as a bishop, walking between the mayor and one of the aldermen. After him came Mr. Latimer in a poor Bristol frieze frock, much worn, and under it a new long shroud down to his feet all ready for the fire; so that men beheld on one side the honour they sometime had, and on the other the calamity whereto they were fallen. When they met at the place of execution, Ridley embraced Latimer with a very cheerful look, and comforted him saying, 'Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it.' With that he went to the stake, kneeled down by it and earnestly prayed, and behind him Mr. Latimer kneeled as earnestly calling upon God as he. Then a sermon was preached, to which the martyrs wished, but were not permitted, to reply. Then they prepared for the stake. Ridley gave away a number of little things as mementoes to the friends about him; some plucked the points (fastenings) off his hose. Happy was he that might get any rag of him. Mr. Latimer gave nothing, but suffered his keeper to pull off his hose and his coat, and so being stripped to his shroud, he stood bolt upright, and as comely a father as one

¹ Foxe is regarded as inaccurate, but there is no ground to doubt the quotation here given.

might behold. They were fastened to the stake by a chain round the waist and faggots were piled upon them. Ridley's brother tied a bag of gunpowder round his neck, and another round the neck of Latimer. Then they brought a lighted faggot and laid it at Dr. Ridley's feet. Thereupon Mr. Latimer said, 'Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.' When Dr. Ridley saw the fire flaming up towards him, he cried with a wonderful loud voice, 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; Lord, receive my spirit'; and after, repeated this often, 'Lord, Lord, receive my spirit.' Mr. Latimer cried as vehemently on the other side, 'O Father of heaven, receive my soul'; who received the flame as if embracing it. After he had stroked his face with his hands, and as it were bathed them a little in the fire, he soon died (as it appeareth) with very little or no pain. But Dr. Ridley, by the ill-making of the fire, the faggots being green and built up too nigh, the fire being kept down by the green wood, burnt fiercely beneath, which put him to such exquisite pain that he desired them for God's sake to let the fire come unto him. In mistaken kindness his brother-in-law heaped faggots upon him, which only made the fire more vehement beneath, so that he leaped up and down crying, 'I cannot burn,' and his legs were consumed while the upper part of his body was yet untouched. At length one of the bystanders with his bill pulled off the faggots above, and the martyr wrested his body over to that side, and the flame touched the gunpowder and he was seen to stir no more, and his body fell over the chain at Mr. Latimer's feet, and so the fire consumed them. What reward remaineth for them in heaven, the day of God's glory, when He cometh with His saints, shall shortly declare."

Cranmer's sentence was at length pronounced by the Pope. He was degraded from his episcopal character with circumstances of unfeeling insult. But then an attempt was made to induce him to recant. He was removed from prison and became the guest of the Dean of Christchurch, where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was told that the king and queen greatly desired his conversion; that the council was kindly disposed towards him; that it was a pity his great learning, which might profit so many, should be lost to the Church; life was made sweet to him; the recantation was made easy; the friends whose courage had been wont to sustain him were absent, and his constitutional timidity and irresolution, betrayed him, and he signed a recantation. But what was intended was, to injure the cause of the Reformation by the recantation of its great representative: it was not intended to spare his life. A series of recantations were now extracted from him, each rising above the others in its strength, while at the very time that they were being wrung from him the preparations were being made for his execution. It would seem that he was left to indulge the expectation of pardon up to the very morning of his death.

On March 21, 1566, Cranmer was brought out of prison and taken to St. Mary's Church, and placed on a low platform in front of the

pulpit to hear his "condemned sermon." Dr. Cole, who preached the sermon, took for granted his reconciliation with the Church, exhorted him to courage in the prospect of death, and to take comfort from the example of the penitent thief. The sermon ended, Cranmer was called upon to read his recantation before the Mayor and Aldermen there assembled, and the whole congregation. But his first words were words of prayer for true repentance, for mercy through Christ to him the most wretched and miserable of sinners; he concluded with the Lord's Prayer, the whole congregation kneeling down and saying it aloud with him. "Never," says a spectator, "was there such a number earnestly praying together. Cranmer himself an image of sorrow, the dolour of his heart bursting out at his eyes in plenty of tears; but in other respects retaining 'the quiet and grave behaviour which was natural to him.' Rising from his knees he turned to address the people, but at first the swaying of the great congregation drowned his voice; shortly, in the increasing silence, his voice was heard repeating the Apostles' Creed—it was his farewell confession of faith. But as he proceeded astonishment and anger began to rise in the minds of his adversaries; he was not making any recantation, but solemnly affirming the doctrines of the Reformation. For his recantation, he declared that 'it troubled his conscience more than anything that ever he did or said in his whole life; and for as much,' said he, 'as my hand offended writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished therefor, for may I come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the Pope I refuse him, as being Christ's enemy and anti-Christ, with all his false doctrine.' 'Stop the heretic's mouth and take him away,' cried Cole; and he was pulled down from the platform and carried away to punishment. He suffered on the same spot as Ridley and Latimer. He did not tarry long at his prayers, but putting off his garments he stood in his long white shirt reaching to the ground, and with his feet bare, his head bald, his beard long and thick, he presented a moving spectacle. Fastened to the stake, and surrounded by faggots, as soon as the fire began to burn up about him he thrust his right hand into it and held it there till it was consumed, repeating, 'This unworthy right hand,' and 'Lord, receive my spirit'; and took his death with singular courage, seeming to move no more than the stake to which he was bound." "The death of Cranmer," says Canon Dixon, "completed the circle of five men of episcopal degree who

loosed the yoke of Rome from the neck of the Church of England by the sacrifice of their lives—a glorious crown of Bishops, the like of which is set upon the brow of no other Church in Christendom.”¹

The last years of Mary were saddened by misfortunes on all sides. Besides those which had been brought on by her own mistakes, the greatest of her sorrows was entirely undeserved. The Pope turned against Philip, and therefore really though not professedly against Mary. Philip and his father had shown a devoted reverence for the papacy, but Paul at the finish turned against them for political reasons, and allied himself with the French and the Turks. For the papacy Mary had sacrificed everything, she had cast aside her own popularity as nothing worth, to burn her countrymen alive for the Pope; and had willingly accepted instead, the detestation of her subjects; and now she found she had been leaning on a broken reed. Not only was the Pope at war with her husband, causing her the loss of Calais to his French allies: but he tried to displace Cardinal Pole from being legate—and to appoint an obscure man in his place. Mary refused to admit the messenger of the Holy See to England. Pole remained her only friend. He at least was true to her. But her heart was broken, and she found her best consolation in gazing with dying eyes on the Holy Sacrament as her spirit passed to its rest. Rest she indeed needed—her life from early years had been a sad one—as a queen, she had few wise counsellors and her Tudor obstinacy, unsupported by Tudor statesmanship, had wrecked the promise of success. As we contemplate so sad a life, we cannot but thank God that whatever evils are around us now, the fearful error of forcibly coercing opinion in matters of religion has been by common consent abandoned.

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¹ The other two were Ferrar of St. David's and Hooper of Gloucester.

