

**A HISTORY
OF THE PROTESTANT
REFORMATION**

LETTER ELEVEN



By William Cobbett

1825

**A HISTORY
OF THE
PROTESTANT "REFORMATION"
IN
ENGLAND AND IRELAND**

**Showing how that event has impoverished and degraded
the main
body of the People in those Countries**

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

Addressed to all sensible and just Englishmen

BY WILLIAM COBBETT.

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**A HISTORY
OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMATION
LETTER XI**

**Bess's Hypocrisy as to the Death of Mary Stuart
Spanish Armada.
Poor-Laws.
Barbarous Treatment of Ireland.
Bess's Inquisition.
Horrid Persecution of the Catholics.
The Racks and Tortures she employed.
Her Death.**

By William Cobbett

Kensington, 30th September, 1825

Dear Friends,

320. Detestably base as was the conduct of "good Queen Bess" in the act of murdering her unfortunate cousin, her subsequent hypocrisy was still more detestable. She affected the deepest sorrow for the act that had been committed pretended that it had been done against her wish, and had the superlative injustice and baseness to imprison her Secretary **DAVISON**, for having dispatched the warrant for the execution, though she, observe, had signed that warranty, and though, as Witaker has fully proved, she had reviled Davison for not having dispatched it, after she had, in vain, used all the means in her power to induce him employ assassins to do the deed. She had, by a series of perfidies and cruelties wholly without a parallel, brought her hapless victim to the block, in that very country to which; she had invited her to seek safety; she had, in the last sad and awful moments of that victim, had the barbarity to refuse her the consolations of a divine of her own communion; she had pursued her with hatred and malice that remained un-glutted even when she saw her prostrate under the common hangman, and when she saw the blood gushing from her severed neck; un-sated with the destruction of her body, she, Satan-like, had sought the everlasting destruction of her soul: and yet, the deed being done, she had the more than Satan like hypocrisy to affect to weep for the untimely end of her "dear cousin"; and, which was, still more diabolical, to make use of her despotic power to crush her humane secretary, under pretence that he had been the cause of the sad catastrophe! All expressions of detestation and horror fall short of our feelings, and our only consolation is, that we are to see her own end ten thousand times more to be dreaded than that of her victim.

321. Yet, such were the peculiar circumstances of the times, that this wicked woman escaped, not only for the present, but throughout her long reign, that general hatred from her subjects, which her character and deeds so merited; Nay, it perversely happened, that, immediately after

this foul deed, there took place an event, which rallied all her people round her, and made her life, more than ever, an object of their solicitude.

322. PHILIP II., KING OF SPAIN, who was also sovereign of the Low Countries, resolved on an invasion of England, with a fleet from Spain and with an army from Flanders. She had given him quite provocation enough, she had fomented rebellions against him, as she long had in France against the king of that country. Philip was the most powerful monarch in Europe; he had fleets and armies vastly superior to hers; the danger to England was really great; but, though these dangers had been brought upon it solely by her malignity, bad faith, and perfidy, England was still England to her people, and they unanimously rallied round her. On this occasion, and, indeed, on all others, where love of country was brought to the test, the Catholics proved, that no degree of oppression could make them forget their duty as citizens, or as subjects. Even from **HUME**, it is extorted, that the Catholic gentlemen, though her laws excluded them from all trust and authority, entered as volunteers in her fleet or army. Some equipped ships at their own charge, and gave the command of them to Protestants: others were active in animating their tenants and vassals and neighbours, to the defence of their country: and, every rank of men, burying, for the present, all party distinctions, seemed to prepare themselves with order as well as vigour, to resist these invaders. **Charles I., James II., George I. and George II.**, and even **George III.**, all saw the time, when they might have lamented the want of similar loyalty in Protestants. The first lost his head: the second his throne; the third and fourth were exposed to great danger of a similar loss; and the fifth lost America; and all by the doings of Protestants.

323. The intended invasion was prevented by a tremendous storm, which scattered and half destroyed the Spanish fleet, called the **ARMADA**, and, in all human probability, the invaders would not have succeeded, even if no storm had arisen. But, at any rate, there was great danger and one could be certain of the result; the Catholics, had they listened to their just resentment, might have greatly added to the danger; and, therefore, their generous conduct; excited some relaxation of the cruel treatment, which they had hitherto endured under her iron, sceptre. No such relaxation, however, took place as they were still treated with every species of barbarous cruelty subjected to and subjected to an inquisition infinitely more severe than that of Spain ever had or ever has been; and, even on the bare suspicion of disaffection were imprisoned, racked, and not infrequently put to death!

324. As to Ireland, where the estates of the convents, and where the church property had been confiscated in the same way as in England, and where the greater distance of the people from the focus of power and apostasy and from authority had rendered it more difficult to effect their coercion, at the point of the bayonet, or by the halter or rack; as to this portion of her dominions, her reign was almost one unbroken series of robberies and butchery. One greedy and merciless minion after another were to goad that devoted people into acts of desperation; and too, not only for the obvious purpose, but for the purpose, of obtaining a pretence for new confiscations. "Reformation" had, from its very outset, had plunder written on its front; but, as to Ireland, it was all plunder from the crown of its head to the sole of its foot. This horrid lynx like she tyrant could not watch each movement of Catholics there, as she did in England; where she could harass them in detail; she could find there no means of executing her dreadful policy; and therefore she must murder them in masses. She sent over those parsons whose successors are there to the present day. The ever blood-soaked sword secured them the tithes and the church-lands even that blood-stained sword could not then, and though at one time wielded by the unsparing and double distilled Protestant, Cromwell, obtain them congregations. However, she planted, she watered with rivers of blood, and her long reign saw take fast root in the that tree, the fruit of which the unfortunate Irish to this hour; and which will, unless prevented by more wise and more just measures than appear to have been yet suggested finally prove the overthrow of England herself.

325. I am to speak, further on, of the monstrous moralities produced in England by the "Reformation", and also of the poverty and misery that it produced; and I shall have to trace

(through Acts of Parliament) the poverty and misery up to the "Reformation;" yes therein we shall see, clearly as we see the rivulet bubbling out of the bed of the spring, the bread and water of England and the potatoes of Ireland; but, even in this place, it is necessary to state the cause of the greater poverty and degradation of the Irish people. For ages, that ill-treated people have, in point of clothing and food, formed a contrast with the English. **DR. FRANKLIN**, in speaking of Ireland, says, that "one would think that the cast-off clothes of the working-people of England were sent over to be worn by the working people here."

326. Whence comes it that this contrast has so long existed? The soil and the climate of Ireland are as good as those of England. The islands are but a few miles asunder. Both are surrounded by the same sea. The people of the former are as able and as willing to labour as those of the latter; and of this they have given proof in all parts of the world, to which they have migrated, not to carry packs to cheat fools out of their money not to carry the lash to make others work, but to share themselves, and cheerfully to share, in the hardest labours of those amongst whom they have sought shelter from the rod of unrelenting oppression. Whence comes it, then, that this contrast, so unfavourable to Ireland, has so long existed? The answer to this interesting question we shall find by attending to the different measures, dealt out to the two people, during the long and cruel reign of which we are now speaking; and we, at the same time, trace all the miseries of Ireland back, at once to that "Reformation" the blessings of which have, with such persevering falsehood and hypocrisy, been dinned in our ears for ages.

327. We have seen, in Letter III. of this little work, paragraphs 50, 51, and 52, that the Catholic Church was not, and is not, an affair of mere abstract faith; that it was not so very spiritual a concern as to scorn all cares relative to the bodies of the people; that one part, and that a capital part, of its business was, to cause works of charity to be performed; that this charity was not of so very spiritual a nature as not to be at all tangible, or obvious to the vulgar sense; that it showed itself in good works done to the needy and suffering; that the tithes and offerings and income from real property, of the Catholic Church, went, in great part, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to lodge and feed the stranger, to sustain the widow and the orphan, and to heal the wounded and the sick; that, in short, a great part, and indeed one of the chief parts, of the business of this Church was, to take care, that no person, however low in life, should suffer from want either of sustenance or care; and that the priests of this Church should have as few selfish cares as possible to withdraw them from this important part of their duty, they were forbidden to marry. Thus, as long as this Church was the national Church, there were hospitality and charity in the land, and the horrid word pauper had never been so much as thought of.

328. But, when the Protestant religion came, and along with it a married priesthood, the poorer classes were plundered of their birth-right, and thrown out to prowl about for what they could beg or steal. Luther and his followers wholly rejected the doctrine, that good works were necessary to salvation They held, that faith, and faith alone was necessary. They expunged from their Bible the Epistle of Saint James, because it recommends, and insists on the necessity of, good works; which Epistle Luther called, an Epistle of straw. The "Reformers" differed from each other, as widely as the colours of the rainbow, in most other things; but, they all agreed in this, that, good works were unnecessary to salvation, and that the "Saints" as they had the modesty to call themselves, could not forfeit their right to heaven by any sins, however numerous and enormous. By those, amongst whom plunder, sacrilege, adultery, polygamy, incest, perjury, and murder were almost as habitual as sleeping and waking; by those, who taught that the way to everlasting bliss could not be obstructed by any of these, nor by all of them put together; by such persons, charity, besides that it was a so well known Catholic commodity, would be, as a matter of course, set wholly at nought.

329. Accordingly we see that it is necessarily excluded by the very nature of all Protestant establishments; that is to say, in reality; for, the name of charity is retained by some of these establishments; but, the substance no where exists. The Catholic establishment interweaves deeds of constant and substantial charity with the faith itself. It makes the two inseparable. The Douay

Catechism, which the Protestant parsons so much abuse, says, that the first fruit of the Holy Ghost is charity. And, then, it tells us what charity is; namely, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit and ransom captives, to harbour the harbourless, to visit the sick, to bury the dead. Can you guess, my friends, why fat Protestant parsons rail so loudly against this "wicked Douay Catechism"? It is in the nature of man to love all this. This is what "the gates of hell will never prevail against." This is what our fathers believed, and what they acted upon; and this it was that produced in them that benevolent disposition which, thank God, has not yet been wholly extirpated from the breasts of their descendants.

330. Returning now, to paragraphs 50, 51, and 52, just mentioned; it is there seen, that the Catholic Church rendered all municipal laws about the poor wholly unnecessary; but, when that Church had been plundered and destroyed, when the greedy leading "Reformers" had sacked the convents and the churches; when those great estates, which of right belonged to the poorer classes, had been taken from them; when the parsonages had been first well pillaged, and the remnant of their revenues given to married men; then the poor (for poor there will and must be in every community) were left destitute of the means of existence other than the fruits of begging, theft, and robbery. Accordingly, when "good Queen Bess" had put the finishing hand to the plundering of the Church and poor, once happy and free and hospitable England became a den of famishing robbers and slaves. **STRYPE**, a Protestant, and an authority to whom **HUME** appeals and refers many hundreds of times, tells us of a letter from a Justice of the Peace in Somersetshire to the Lord Chief Justice, saying: I may justly say, that the able men that are abroad, seeking the spoil and confusion of the land, are able, if they were reduced to good subjection, to give the greatest enemy her Majesty hath a strong battle, and, as they are now, are so much strength to the enemy. Besides, the generation that daily springeth from them, is likely to be most wicked. These spare neither rich nor poor; but, whether it be great gain or small, all is fish that cometh to net with them; and yet I say, both they and the rest are trussed, up a-pace. The same Justice says: In default of justice, many wicked thieves escape. For most commonly the most simple countrymen and women, looking no farther than to the loss of their own goods, are of the opinion that they would not procure any man's death, for all the goods in the world. And while the "good Bess" complained bitterly of the non-execution of her laws, the same Protestant historian tells us, that she executed more than five hundred criminals in a year, and was so little satisfied with that number, that she threatened to send private persons to see her penal laws executed for profit and gain sake. It appears that she did not threaten in vain; for soon after this a complaint was made in Parliament, that the stipendiary magistrate of that day was a kind of living creature; who for half a half a dozen of chickens would dispense with a dozen of penal statutes. She did not, however, stop, with this "liberal" use of the gallows. Such was the degree of beggary, of vagabondage and of thievishness and robbery, that she resorted, particularly in London and its neighbourhood, to martial law. This fact is so complete a proof of the horrible effects of the "Reformation" upon the moral state of the people, and it is so fully characteristic of the Government, which the people of England had, in consequence of that Reformation, to come so debased as to submit to, that I must take the statement as it stands in **HUME**, who gives the very words of "good and glorious Bess's" commission to her head murderer upon this occasion. The streets of London were very much infested with idle vagabonds and riotous persons: the Lord Mayor had endeavoured to repress this disorder, the Star-chamber had exerted its authority, and inflicted punishment on these rioters. But the Queen, finding these remedies ineffectual, revived. [Revived? What does he mean by revived?] martial law, and gave Sir **THOMAS WILFORD** a commission, as Provost-martial: Granting him authority, and commanding him, upon signification given by the justices of the peace in London or the neighbouring counties, of such offenders, worthy to be speedily executed by martial law, to take them, and according, to the justice of martial law, to execute them upon the gallows or gibbet. And yet, this is she, whom we have been taught to call "good Queen Bess"; this is she, of the "glories" of whose reign there are men of learning base enough to talk, even to this day!

331. But, such were the natural consequences of the destruction of the Catholic Church, and of the plundering of the poor, which accompanied that destruction, and particularly of lodging all

power, ecclesiastical and civil, in the same hands. However, though this terrible she tyrant spared neither racks nor halter, though she was continually reproofing the executors of her bloody laws for their remissness they were strewing the country with the carcasses of malefactors or alleged malefactors, all would not do; that hunger, which breaks through stone walls, set even her tenon and torments at defiance; at last, it was found to be absolutely necessary to make some general and permanent and solid provision for the poor; and, in the 43rd year of her reign, was passed that Act, which is in force to this day, and which provides a maintenance for indigent persons, which maintenance is to come from the land, assessed and collected by overseers, and the payment enforced by process the most effectual and most summary. And here we have the great, the prominent, the staring, the horrible and ever durable consequence of the "Reformation"; that is to say, pauperism established by law.

332. Yet this was necessary. The choice that the plunderers had in England was this: legal pauperism, or, extermination; and this last they could not effect, and if they could, it would not have suited them. They did not possess power sufficient to make the people live in a state of three fourths starvation, therefore they made a legal provision for the poor: not, however, till they had tried in vain all other methods of obtaining a something to supply the place of Catholic charity. They attempted, at first, to cause the object to be effected by voluntary collections at the churches; but, alas! those who now entered those churches, looked upon **LUTHER** as the great teacher; and he considered Saint James's Epistle as an "epistle of straw". Every attempt of this sort, having failed, as it necessarily must, when the parsons, who were to exhort others to charity, had enough to do to rake together all they could for their own wives and children; every Act (and there were many passed) short of an enforced by distraint of goods and imprisonment of person, having failed, to this, "glorious Bess" and her "Reformation" Parliament at last came; and here we have it to this day, filling the country with endless quarrels and litigation, setting parish against parish, man against master, rich against poor, and producing, from a desire of the rich to shuffle out of its provisions a mass of hypocrisy, idleness, fraud, oppression, and cruelty, such as was, except in the deeds of the original "Reformers," never before witnessed in the world.

333. Nevertheless, it was, as far as it went, an act of justice. It was taking from the land and giving to the poor, a part, at least, of what they had been robbed of by the "Reformation". It was doing, in a hard and odious way, a part of that which had been done, in the most gentle and amiable way by the Church of our fathers. It was, indeed, feeding the poor like dogs, instead of like ones children; but it was feeding them. Even this, however, the "good Bess" and her plundering minions thought too much to do for the savagely treated Irish people; and here we come to the real cause of that contrast, of which I have spoken in paragraph 325; here we come to that which made Dr. Franklin suppose, or, to say, that any one might naturally suppose, that the old clothes of the working classes in England had been sent over to be worn by the same class in Ireland.

334. We have seen how absolute necessity compelled "good Bess" and her plunderers to make a legal provision for the relief of the indigent in England; we have seen, that it was only restoring to them a part of that of which they had been plundered; and, upon what principle was it, that they did not do the same with regard to the people of Ireland? These had been plundered in precisely the same manner that the former had; they had been plunged into misery by precisely the same means, used under precisely the same hypocritical pretences; why were not they to be relieved from that misery in the same manner; and why was not the poor law to be extended to Ireland?

335. Base and cruel plunderers! They grudged the relief in England; but, they had no compulsory means to be obtained out of England; and they found it impossible to make Englishmen compel one another to live in a state of three-fourths starvation. But, they had England to raise armies in to send to effect this purpose in Ireland, especially when those English armies were urged on by promised plunder, and were (consisting as they did of Protestants) stimulated by motives as powerful, or nearly so, as the promise of plunder itself. Thus it was, that Ireland was pillaged

without the smallest chance of even the restoration which the English obtained; and thus have they, down unto this our day, been a sort of outcasts in their own country, being stripped of all the worldly goods that God and nature allotted them, and having received not the smallest pittance in return. We talk of "the outrages in Ireland"; we seem shocked at the violence committed there; and that sapient, profound, candid and modest gentleman, **MR. ADOLPHUS** the other day, in pleading at one of the police offices in London (a sphere to which his talents are exceedingly well adapted), took occasion, sought occasion, went out of his way to find occasion, to "thank God" that we, on this side of St. George's channel, knew nothing of those outrages, which, when they were mentioned to the Irish, they ascribed to the misrule of ages. Now, it might be a little too much to expect an answer of any sort from a lawyer so dignified as this police pleader; but, let me ask any English gentleman, or, any Englishman of any rank, except **MR. ADOLPHUS**, what he thinks would be the consequences here, if the poor-lawyers were abolished to-morrow? **Mr. Adolphus** can hardly help knowing, that **Parson Malthus** and his tribe have been preaching up the wisdom of such abolition; he may remember, too (for the example was terrific), that **Mr Scarlett** was "twisted down" in consequence of his having had the folly to mould this proposition of **Malthus** into the form of a Bill; but, **Mr. ADOLPHUS** may not know, that petitions were preparing against that Bill, and that, too, from the payers of the poor-rates, stating, that, if such Bill were passed, there would be no safety for their property or their lives. Let us, then, have a little justice, at any rate; and, above all things, let us not, adding blasphemy to ignorance, insolence, and low, mob-courting sycophancy "thank God" for the absence of outrages amongst us, as the wolf, in the fable, "thanked God" that he was not ferocious.

336. Why, there have been ages of misrule in Ireland many, many ages too; or the landholders of England have, during those ages, been most unjustly assessed. But, they are sensible, or, at least, the far greater part of them, that a provision for the indigent, a settled, certain, legal provision, coming out of the land, is a right which the indigent possess, to use the words of Blackstone, "in the very nature of civil society. Every man of reflection must know, that the labours, which the affairs of society absolutely demand, could never be performed but by persons who work for their bread"; he must see, that a very large part of these persons will do no more work than is necessary to enable them to supply their immediate wants; and, therefore, he must see, that there always must be, in every community, a great number of persons who, from sickness, old age, from being orphans, widows, insane, and from other causes, will need relief from some source or other. This is the lot of civil society, exist wherever and however it may, and it will require a solider head than that which is on the shoulders of **Mr. Scarlett**, to show, that this need of relief, to which all are liable, is not a necessary ingredient in the cement of civil society. The United States of America is a very happy country. The world has never yet seen a people better off. But, though the Americans cast off their allegiance to our king; though they abolished the monarchical rights; though they cast off the aristocracy of England; though they cast off the Church of England; they did not cast off the English poor-laws; and this very act of turbulent Bess, extorted from her by their English forefathers, is, at this moment, as completely in force in New York as it is in Old York, in New London as in Old London, in New Hampshire as in Old Hampshire, and is that whole country, from one end to the other, as it is in Old England herself.

337. Has it not, then, been a misrule of ages in Ireland? Have not that people been most barbarously treated by England? An Irishman, who has a thousand times been ready to expire from starvation in his native land, who has been driven to steal sea weed to save himself from death, goes to America, feels hunger without having the means of relieving it; and there, in that foreign land, he finds, at once, be he where be may, an overseer of the poor, ready to give him relief! And, is such monstrous, such crying injustice as this still to be allowed to exist? The folly here surpasses, if possible, the injustice and the cruelty. The English landholders make the laws: we all know that. They subject—justly subject, their own estates to assessments for to be relief of the poor in England; and, while they do this, they exonerate the estates of the Irish landholders from a like assessment, and choose rather to tax themselves and to tax us and tax the Irish besides, for the purpose of paying an army to keep that starving people from obtaining relief by force!

Lord Liverpool, when the Scotch Lords and others applied to him, in 1819, for a grant out of the taxes, to relieve the starving manufacturers in Scotland, very wisely and justly said, No: have poor-laws, such as ours, and then your poor will be sure of relief. Why not say the same thing to the Irish landholders? Why not compel them to give to the people that which is their due? Why is Ireland to be the only civilized country upon the face of the earth, where no sort of settled, legal provision is made for the indigent, and where the Pastors are, at the same time, total strangers to the flocks, except in the season of shearing? Let us, at least, as long as this state of things shall be suffered to exist, have the decency not to cry out quite so loudly against the "outrage" of the Irish.

338. I must now return from this digression (into which the mention of "good Bess's" barbarous treatment of Ireland has led me), in order to proceed with my account of her "reforming" projects. Betsy was a great Doctor of Divinity. She was extremely jealous of her prerogatives and powers, but particularly in what regarded her headship of the church. She would make all her subjects be of her religion, though she had solemnly sworn, at her coronation, that she was a Catholic, and though, in turning Protestant, she had made a change in *Crammer's prayer-book* and in his articles of faith. In order to bend the people's consciences to her tyrannical will, which was the more unjust, because she herself had changed her religion, and had even changed the Protestant articles, she established an inquisition the most horrible that ever was heard of in the world. She gave what she called a Commission to certain Bishops and others, whose power extended over the whole kingdom, and over all ranks and degrees of the people. They were empowered to have an absolute control over the opinions of all men, and to punish all men according to their discretion, short of death. They might proceed legally, if they chose, in the obtaining of evidence against parties; but, if they chose, they were to employ imprisonment, the rack, or torture of any sort, for the purpose. If their suspicions alighted upon any man, no matter respecting what, and they had no evidence, nor any even hearsay, against them, they might administer an oath, called *ex-officio*, to him, on which he was bound, if called upon, to reveal his thoughts, and to accuse himself, his friend, his brother, or his father, upon pain of death. These subaltern monsters inflicted what fines they pleased; they imprisoned men for any length of time that they pleased. They put forth whatever new articles of faith they pleased; and, in short, this was a Commission exercising, in the name and for the purposes of "good Queen Bess," an absolute control over the bodies and the minds of that people, whom the base and hypocritical and plundering "reformers" pretended to have delivered from a slavish subjection to the Pope, but whom they had, without any pretending, actually delivered from freedom, charity and hospitality.

339. When one looks at the deeds of this foul tyrant, when one sees what abject slavery she had reduced the nation to, and especially when one views this Commission, it is impossible for us not to reflect with shame on what we have so long been saying against the Spanish Inquisition, which, from its first establishment to the present hour, have not committed so much cruelty as this ferocious Protestant apostate committed in any one single year of the forty-three years of her reign. And, observe again, and never forget, that Catholics, where they inflicted punishments, inflicted them on the ground, that the offenders had departed from the faith in which they had been bred and which they had professed; whereas the Protestant punishments have been inflicted on men because they refused to depart from the faith in which they had been bred, and which they had professed all their lives. And, in the particular case of this brutal hypocrite, they were punished, and that, too, in the most barbarous manner, for adhering to that very religion, which she had openly professed for many years of her life, and to which she, even at her coronation, had sworn that she belonged!

340. It is hardly necessary to attempt to describe the suffering that the Catholics had to endure during this murderous reign. No tongue, no pen is adequate to the task to hear mass, to harbour a priest, to admit the supremacy of the Pope, to deny this horrid virago's spiritual supremacy, and many other things, which an honourable Catholic could scarcely avoid, consigned him to the scaffold and to the bowel ripping knife. But, the most cruel of her acts, even more cruel than her butcheries, because of far more extent she effected, and far more productive of suffering in

the end, were the penal laws inflicting fines for recusancy, that is to say, for not going to her new-fangled Protestant church. And, was there ever tyranny equal to this? Not only were men to be punished for not confessing that the new religion was the true one; not only for continuing to practice the religion in which they and their fathers and children had been born and bred; but also punished for not actually going to the new assemblages, and there performing what they must, if they were sincere, necessarily deem an act of open apostasy and blasphemy! Never, in the whole world, was there heard of before tyranny equal to this.

341. The fines were so heavy, and were exacted with such unrelenting rigour, and, for the offence of recusancy alone the sums were so enormous, that the whole of the conscientious Catholics were menaced with utter ruin. The priests who had never been out of England, and who were priests before the reign of this horrible woman, were, by the 20th year of her reign few in number, for the law forbade the making of any new ones on pain of death, and, denied, none could be made in England, where there was no clerical authority to ordain them, the surviving Catholic bishops being forbidden to do it on pain of death. Then she harassed the remainder of the old priests in such a way, that they were, by the 20th year of her reign, nearly exterminated; and, as it was death for a priest to come from abroad, death to harbour him, death for him to perform his functions in England, death to confess to him, there appeared to be an impossibility of preventing her from extirpating, totally extirpating from the land, that religion, under which England had been so great and so happy for ages so numerous; that religion of charity and hospitality, that religion which made the name of pauper unknown; this religion which had built the churches and cathedrals, and had planted and reared the Universities, whose professors had made Magna Charta and the Common-Law, and had performed all those glorious deeds in legislation and in arms, which had made England really the envy of surrounding nations and the admiration of the world: there now appeared to be an impossibility and especially if the termagant tyrant should live for another twenty years, (which she did), to prevent her from effecting this total extirpation. From accomplishing this object she was prevented, by the real zeal and talents of **WILLIAM ALLEN**, an English gentleman, now a priest, and who had before been of the University of Oxford. In order to defeat the she tyrant schemes for rooting out the Catholic religion, he formed a Seminary at Douay, in Flanders, for the education of English priests. He was joined by many other learned men; and, from this depôt, though at the manifest hazard of their lives, priests came into England; and thereby the malignity of the inexorable apostate was defeated. There was the sea between her and Allen, but, while he safely defied her death dealing power, she could not defy his, for she could not erect a wall round the island, and into it priests would come and did come; and, in spite of her hundreds of spies and her thousands of pursuivants, as were called the myrmidons who executed her tormenting and bloody behests, the race of English priests was kept in existence, and "the religion" of their fathers along with it. In order to break the seminary of Allen, who was afterwards made a Cardinal, and whose name can never be pronounced but with feelings of admiration, she resorted to all sorts of schemes; and, at last, by perfidiously excluding from her ports the fleet of the Dutch and Flemish insurgents, to which she stood pledged to give protection, she obtained from the Spanish Governor, a dissolution of Allen's college; but, he found protection in France, from the House of Guise, by whom he and his college were, in spite of most bitter remonstrances from "good Bess" to the King of France, reestablished at Rheims.

342. Thus defeated in all her projects for destroying the missionary trunk, she fell with more fury than ever on the branches and on the fruit. To say mass, to hear mass, to make confession, to hear confession, to teach the Catholic religion, to be taught it, to keep from her church service: these were all great crimes, and all punished with a greater or less degree of severity; so that the gallows and gibbets and racks were in constant use, and the gaols and dungeons choking with the victims. The punishment of keeping away from her church was £20 a lunar month, which, of money of the present day, was about £250. Thousands upon thousands refused to go to her church; and mad thus she sacked their thousands upon thousands of estates; for, observe, here was, in money of this day, a fine of £3,250 a year. And now, sensible and just reader, look at the barbarity of this "Protestant Reformation." See a gentleman of, perhaps, sixty years of age or

more; see him, born and bred a Catholic, compelled to make himself and his children beggars, actual beggars, or to commit, what he deemed, an act of apostasy and blasphemy. Imagine, if you can, barbarity equal to this; and yet even this is not seen in its most horrible light, unless we take into view, that the tyrant who committed it, had, for many years of her life, openly professed the Catholic religion, and had, at her coronation, sworn that she firmly believed in that religion.

343. In the enforcing of these horrible edicts, every insult that base minds could devise, was resorted to and in constant use. No Catholic or reputed Catholic had a moment's security or peace. At all hours, but generally in the nighttime, the ruffians entered his house by breaking it open, rushed in different divisions into the rooms, broke open closets, chests and drawers, rummaged beds and pockets, in short, searched every place and thing for priests, books, crosses, vestments or any person or thing appertaining to the Catholic worship. In order to pay the fines gentlemen were compelled to sell their estates piece by piece; when they were in arrears the tyrant was by law authorised to seize all their personal property, and two thirds of their real estate every six months, and they were in some cases suffered, as a great indulgence, to pay an annual composition for the liberty of abstaining from what they deemed apostasy and blasphemy. Yet whenever she took it into her suspicious head that her life was in danger, from whatever cause and causes, and just cause enough there always was, she had no consideration for them on account of the fines or the composition. She imprisoned them either in gaol or in the houses of Protestants—kept them banished from their own homes for years. The Catholic gentleman's own house afforded him no security; the indiscretion of children or friends, the malice of enemies, the dishonesty or revenge of tenants or servants, the hasty conclusions of false suspicion, the deadly wickedness of those ready to commit perjury for gain's sake, the rapacity and corruption of constables, sheriffs and magistrates, the virulent prejudice of fanaticism,—to every passion hostile to justice, happiness and peace, to every evil against which it is the object of just laws to protect a man, the conscientious Catholic gentleman lived continually exposed, and that, too, in that land which had become renowned throughout the world by those deeds of valour and those laws of freedom which had been performed and framed by his Catholic ancestors.

344. As to the poor conscientious "recusants," that is to say, keepers away from the tyrant's church, they who had no money to pay fines with were crammed into prison until the gaols could (which was very soon) hold no more, and until the counties petitioned to be relieved from the charge of keeping them. They were then discharged, being first publicly whipped, or having their ears bored with a hot iron. This not answering the purpose, an act was passed to compel all "recusants" not worth twenty marks a year to quit the country in three months after conviction, and to punish them with death in case of their return. The old "good Bess" defeated herself here, for it was found impossible to cause the law to be executed, in spite of all her menaces against the justices and sheriffs who could not be brought up to her standard of ferociousness; and they, therefore, in order to punish the poor Catholics, levied sums on them at their pleasure, as a composition for the crime of abstaining from apostasy and profanation.

345. The Catholics at one time entertained a hope that, by a declaration of their loyalty, they should obtain from the Queen some mitigation, at least, of their sufferings. With this view they drew up a very able and most dutiful petition, containing an expression of their principles, their sufferings and their prayers. Alas! they appealed to her to whom truth and justice and mercy were all alike wholly unknown. The petition being prepared, all trembled at the thought of the danger of presenting it to her. At last **RICHARD SHELLEY**, of Michael Grove, Sussex, assumed the perilous charge. She had the (as it would have been in any other human being) incomparable baseness to refer him for an answer to the gloomy echoes of a pestiferous prison, where he expired, a victim to his own virtue and to her implacable cruelty.

346. Talk of Catholic tyrants! Talk of the Catholics having propagated their faith by acts of force and cruelty! I wonder that an English Protestant, even one whose very bread comes from the spoliation of the Catholics, can be found with so little shame as to talk thus. Our Protestant historians tell us that the ships of the Spanish Armada were "loaded with racks," to be used upon

the bodies of the English, who were preserved from these by the wisdom and valour of "good and glorious Queen Bess." In the first place it was the storm and not the Queen that prevented an invasion of the country, and in the next place the Spaniards might have saved themselves the trouble of importing racks, seeing that Elizabeth had always plenty of them, which she kept in excellent order and in almost daily use. It is to inflict most painful feelings on Protestants, to be sure; but justice demands that I describe one or two of her instruments of torture, because in them we see some of the most powerful of those means which she made use of for establishing her Protestant Church: and here I thank **DR. LINGARD** for having enabled me to give this description. One kind of torture which was called the Scavenger's Daughter, was a broad hoop of iron, consisting of two parts fastened by a hinge. The prisoner was made to kneel on the pavement and to contract himself into as small a compass as he could. Then the executioner, kneeling on his shoulders, and having introduced the hoop under his legs, compressed the victim close together till he was able to fasten the feet and hands together over the small of the back. The time allotted to this kind of torture was an hour and a half, during which time the blood gushed from the nostrils, and sometimes from the hands and feet. There were several other kinds of augments of conversion that gentle Betsy made use of to eradicate the "damnable errors" of popery, but her great argument was the rack. This was a large open frame of oak raised three feet from the ground. The prisoner was laid under it on his back on the floor; his wrists and ankles were attached by cords to two rollers at the ends of the frame; these were moved by levers in opposite directions, till the body rose to a level with the frame. Questions were then put; and if the answers did not prove satisfactory, the sufferer was stretched more and more till the bones parted from their sockets."

347. There, Protestants; there, revilers of the Catholic religion; there are some of the means which "good Queen Bess" made use of to make her Church established by law. Compare, oh! compare, if you have one particle of justice left in you, compare these means with the means made use of by those who introduced and established the Catholic Church.

348. The other deeds and events of the reign of this ferocious woman are now of little interest, and indeed do not belong to my subject; but seeing that the pensioned poet, **JAMMY THOMPSON**, in that sickly stuff of his which no man of sense ever can endure after he gets to the age of twenty, has told us about "the glories of the maiden reign," it may not be amiss, before I take my leave of this "good" creature, to observe that her "glories" consisted in having broken innumerable solemn treaties and compacts, in having been continually bribing rebel subjects to annoy their sovereigns, in having had a navy of freebooters, in having had an army of plunderers, in having bartered for a little money the important town of Calais, and in never having added even one single leaf of laurel to that ample branch which had for ages been seated on the brows of England; and that as to her maiden virtues, Whitaker (a Protestant clergyman, mind,) says that her life was stained with gross licentiousness, and she had many gallants, while she called herself a maiden queen. Her life, as he truly says, was a life of "mischief and of misery," and in her death (which took place in the year 1603, the seventieth of her age and the forty-fifth of her reign) she did all the mischief that it remained in her power to do by sulkily refusing to name her successor, and thus leaving to a people whom she had been pillaging and scourging for forty-five years a probable civil war, as "a legacy of mischief after her death." Historians have been divided in opinion as to which was the worst man that England ever produced, her father or **CRANMER**; but all mankind must agree that this was the worst woman that ever existed in England, or in the whole world, Jezebel herself not excepted.

The End of Letter 11





Queen Elizabeth 1



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**"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the
Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"
(Isaiah 2:3)."**

