

**A HISTORY
OF THE PROTESTANT
REFORMATION**

LETTER TWO



By William Cobbett

1824

**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 II**

**Origin of the Catholic Church.
History of the Church, in England, down to the time
of the "Reformation."
By William Cobbett**

Kensington, 30th December, 1824

Beginning of the "Reformation" by King Henry VIII

My FRIENDS,

37. It was not a reformation, but a devastation, of England, which was, at the time when this event took place, the happiest country, perhaps, that the world had ever seen; and, it is my chief business to show, that this devastation impoverished and degraded the main body of the people.

But, in order that you may see this devastation in its true light, and that you may feel a just portion of indignation against the devastators, and against their eulogists of the present day, it is necessary, first, that you take a correct view of the things on which their devastating powers were Exercised.

38. The far greater part of those books, which are called "Histories of England" are little better than romances. They treat of battles, negotiations, intrigues of courts, amours of kings, queens and nobles: they contain the gossip and scandal of former times, and very little else. There are histories of England, like that of **DR. GOLDSMITH**, for the use of young persons; but, no young person, who has read them through, knows any more, of any possible use, than he or she know before. The great use of history, is, to teach us how it was, usages and institutions arose, what were their effects on the people, how they promoted public happiness, or otherwise; and these things are precisely what the greater part of historians, as they call themselves, seem to think of no consequence.

39. We never understand the nature and constituent parts of a thing so well as when we ourselves have made the thing: next to making it is the seeing of it made: but, if we have neither of these advantages, we ought, at least, if possible, to get at a true description of the origin of the thing and of the manner in which it was put together. I have to speak to you of the Catholic Church generally; then of the Church in England, under which head I shall have to speak of the parish-churches, the monasteries, the tithes, and other revenues of the Church. It is, therefore, necessary that I explain to you how the Catholic Church arose; and how churches, monasteries, tithes and other church revenues came to be in England. When you have this

information, you will well understand what it was which was devastated by Henry VIII. and the "reformation" people. And, I am satisfied, that, when you have read this one Number of my little work, you will know more about your country than you have learned, or ever will learn, from the reading of hundreds of those bulky volumes, called "Histories of England."

40. The Catholic Church originated with Jesus Christ himself. He selected Peter to be head of his Church. This Apostle's name was Simon; but, his Master called him Peter, which means a stone, or rock; and he said, "on this rock will I build my church." Look at the Gospel of Saint Matthew, xvi. 18, 19, and at that of Saint John, xxi. 15, and onward; and you will see, that we must deny the truth of the Scriptures, or acknowledge, that here was a head of the Church promised for all generations.

41. Saint Peter died a martyr at Rome in about 60 years after the birth of Christ, But another supplied his place; and there is the most satisfactory evidence, that the chain of succession has remained unbroken from that day to this. When I said, in paragraph 10, that it might be said, that there was no Pope seated at Rome for the first three hundred years, I by no means meant to admit the fact; but to get rid of a pretence which, at any rate, could not apply to England, which was converted to Christianity by a mission sent by a Pope, the successor of other Popes, who had been seated at Rome for hundreds of years. The truth is, that, from the persecutions which, for the first three hundred years, the Church underwent, the Chief Bishops, successors of Saint Peter, had not always the means of openly maintaining their supremacy; but they always existed; there was always a Chief Bishop, and his supremacy was always acknowledged by the Church; that is to say, by all the Christians then in the world.

42. Of later date, the Chief Bishop has been called, in our language, the Pope, and, in the French, Pape. In the Latin he is called Papa, which is an union and abbreviation of the two Latin words, Pater Patrum, which mean Father of Fathers. Hence comes the appellation of papa, which children of all Christian nations give to their fathers; an appellation of the highest respect and most ardent and sincere affection. Thus, then, the Popes, each as he succeeded to his place, became the Chief or Head of the Church; and his supreme power and authority were acknowledged, as I have observed in paragraph 3, by all the bishops, and all the teachers of Christianity in all the nations where that religion existed. The Pope was, and is, assisted by a body of people called Cardinals, or Great Councillors; and at various and numerous times, Councils of the Church have been held, in order to discuss and settle matters of deep interest to the unity and well-being of the Church, These Councils have been held in all the countries of Christendom.

Many were held in England. The Popes themselves have been taken promiscuously from men of all the Christian nations. Pope Adrian IV. was an Englishman, the son of a very poor labouring man; but having become a servant in a monastery, he was there taught, and became himself a monk. In time he grew famous for his learning, his talents and piety, and at last became the Head of the Church.

43. The Popedom, or office of Pope, continued in existence through all the great and repeated revolutions of kingdoms and empires. The Roman Empire, which was at the height of its glory at the beginning of the Christian era, and which extended, indeed, nearly over the whole of Europe, and part of Africa and Asia, crumbled all to pieces; yet the Popedom remained; and at the time when the devastation, commonly called the "Reformation," of England began, there had been, during the fifteen hundred years, about two hundred and sixty Popes, following each other in due and unbroken succession.

44. The History of the Church in England, down to the time of the "Reformation," is a matter of deep interest to us. A mere look at it, a bare sketch of the principal facts, will show how false, how unjust, how ungrateful those have been who have vilified the Catholic Church, its Popes, its Monks, and its Priests. It is supposed, by some, and, indeed, with good authorities on their side, that the Christian religion was partially introduced into England so early as the second

century after Christ. But we know for a certainty, that it was introduced effectually in the year 596; that is to say, 923 years before Henry VIII. began to destroy it.

45. England, at the time when this religion was introduced, was governed by seven kings, and that state was called the Heptarchy. The people of the whole country were **PAGANS**. Yes, my friends, our ancestors were **PAGANS**: they worshipped gods made with hands; and they sacrificed children on the altars of their idols, in this state England was, when the Pope of that day, Gregory I. sent forty monks, with a monk of the name of Austin (or Auovstin) at their head, to preach the gospel to the English.

Look into the Calendar of our Common Prayer Book, and you will find the name of Gregory the Great under the 12th of March, and that of Augustin under the 26th of May. It is probable that the Pope gave his order to Austin on the former day, and that Austin landed in Kent on the latter; or, perhaps, these may be the days of the year on which these great benefactors of England were born.

46. Now please to bear in mind, that this great event took place in the year 596. The Protestant writers have been strangely embarrassed in their endeavours to make it out, that up to this time, or thereabouts, the Catholic Church was pure, and trod in the steps of the Apostles; but that, after this time, that Church became corrupt. They applaud the character and acts of Pope Gregory; they do the same with regard to Austin: shame would not suffer them to leave their names out of the Calendar; but, still, they want to make it out, that there was no pure Christian religion after the Pope came to be the visible and acknowledged head, and to have supreme authority. There are scarcely any two of them that agree upon this point. Some say that it was 300, some 400, some 500, and some 600 years before the Catholic Church ceased to be the true Church of Christ. But, none of them can deny, nor dare they attempt it, that it was the Christian religion as practised at Rome; that it was the Roman Catholic religion that was introduced into England in the year 596, with all its dogmas, rites, ceremonies, and observances, just as they all continued to exist at the time of the "Reformation" and as they continue to exist in that Church even unto this day. Whence it clearly follows, that, if the Catholic Church were corrupt at the time of the Reformation," or be corrupt now, be radically bad now, it was so in 596; and then comes the impious and horrid inference, mentioned in paragraph 12, that "All our fathers who first built our churches, and whose bones and flesh, form the earth for many feet deep in all the churchyards, are now howling in the regions of the damned!"

47. "The tree is known by its fruit" Bear in mind, that it was the Catholic faith as now held, that was introduced into England by Pope Gregory the Great; and bearing this in mind; let us see what were the effects of that introduction; let us see how that faith worked its way, in spite of wars, invasions, tyrannies, and political revolutions.

48. Saint Austin, upon his arrival, applied to the Saxon king, within whose dominions the county of Kent lay. He obtained leave to preach to the people, and his success was great and immediate. He converted the king himself, who was very gracious to him and his brethren, and who provided dwellings and other necessaries for them at Canterbury.

Saint Austin and his brethren being monks, lived together in common, and from this common home, went forth over the country, preaching the gospel. As their community was diminished by death, new members were ordained to keep up the supply; and, besides this, the number was in time greatly augmented. A church was built at Canterbury.

Saint Austin was, of course, the Bishop, or Head Priest. He was succeeded by other Bishops. As Christianity spread over the island, other communities, like that at Canterbury, were founded in other cities; as at London, Winchester, Exeter, Worcester, Norwich, York and so of all the other places, where there are now Cathedrals, or Bishops' Churches. Hence, in process of time, arose those majestic and venerable edifices, of the possession of which we boast as the work of our

forefathers, while we have the folly and injustice and inconsistency, to brand the memory of these very forefathers with the charge of grovelling ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, and while we show our own meanness of mind in disfiguring and dishonouring those noble buildings by plastering them about with our childish and gingerbread “monuments”, nine times out of ten, the off spring of vanity, or corruption.

49. As to the mode of supporting the clergy in those times, it was by oblations or free gifts, and sometimes by tithes, which land-owners paid themselves, or ordered their tenants to pay, though there was no general obligation to yield tithes for many years after the arrival of Saint Austin. This collective, or collegiate, state the clergy remained for many years. But in time, as the land-owners became converted to Christianity, they were desirous of having a priest settled near to them, and always upon the spot, ready to perform the offices of religion. The land was then owned by comparatively few persons. The rest of the people were vassals, or tenants, of the land-owners.

The land-owners, therefore, built churches on their estates, and generally near their own houses, for the benefit of themselves, their vassals, and tenants. And to this day we see, in numerous instances, the country church close by the gentleman's house. When they built the churches, they also built a house for the priest, which we now call the parsonage-house; and, in most cases, they attached some plough-land, or meadow-land, or both, to the priest's house, for his use; and this was called his glebe, which word, literally taken, means the top earth, which is turned over by the plough. Besides these, the land-owners, in conformity with the custom then prevalent in other Christian countries, endowed the Churches with the tithe of the produce of their estates.

50. Hence parishes arose. Parish means a priestship, as the land on which a town stands is a township. So that the great man's estate now became a parish. He retained the right of appointing the priest, whenever a vacancy happened; but, he could not displace a priest, when once appointed and the whole of the endowment became the property of the Church, independent of his control. It was a long while, even two centuries, or more, before this became the settled law of the whole kingdom; but, at last, it did become such. But, to this possession of so much property, by the Church certain important conditions were attached; and to these conditions it behoves us, of the present day, to pay particular attention; for, we are, at this time, more than ever, feeling the want of the performance of those conditions.

51. There never can have existed a state of society; that is to say, a state of things in which proprietorship in land was acknowledged, and in which it was maintained by law; there never can have existed such a state, without an obligation on the land-owners to take care of the necessitous, and to prevent them from perishing for want. The land owners in England took care of their vassals and dependents. But, when Christianity, the very basis of which is charity, became established, the taking care of the necessitous was deposited in the hands of the clergy. Upon the very face of it, it appears monstrous, that a house, a small farm, and the tenth part of the produce of a large estate, should have been given to a priest, who could have no wife, and, of course, no family. But, the fact is, that the grants were for other purposes as well as for the support of the priests.

The produce of the benefice was to be employed thus: Let the priests receive the tithes of the people, and keep a written account of all that have paid them; and divide them, in the presence of such as fear God, according to canonical authority. Let them set apart the first share for the repairs and ornaments of the church; let them distribute the second to the poor and the stranger with their own hands in mercy and humility; and reserve the third "part for themselves." These were the orders contained in a canon, issued by a Bishop of York. At different times, and under different Bishops, regulations somewhat different, were adopted; but there were always two fourths, at least, of the annual produce of the benefice to be given to the necessitous and to be employed in the repairing or in the ornamenting of the church.

52. Thus the providing for the poor became one of the great duties and uses of the Church. This duty rested before, on the land-owners. It must have rested on them; for, as Blackstone observes, a right in the indigent to demand a supply sufficient to all the necessities of life from the more opulent part of the community, is dictated by the principles of society. This duty could be lodged in no hands so fitly as in those of the clergy; for, thus the work of charity, the feeding of the hungry, the clothing of the naked, the administering to the sick, the comforting of the widow, the fostering of the fatherless, came always in company with the performance of services to God. For the uncertain disposition of the rich, for their occasional and sometimes capricious charity, was substituted the certain, the steady, the impartial hand of a constantly resident and unmarried administrator of bodily as well as of spiritual comfort to the poor, the unfortunate and the stranger.

53. We shall see, by-and-by, the condition that the poor were placed in, we shall see how all the labouring classes were impoverished and degraded, the moment the tithes and other revenues of the church were transferred to a protestant and married clergy; and we shall have to take a full view of the unparalleled barbarity with which the Irish people were treated at that time; but, I have not yet noticed another great branch, or constituent part, of the Catholic Church; namely, the Monasteries, which form a subject full of interest and worthy of our best attention. The choicest and most highly empoisoned shafts in the quiver of the malice of Protestant writers, seem always to be selected when they have to rail against Monks, Friars and Nuns. We have seen Blackstone talking about monkish ignorance and superstition; and we hear, every day, Protestant bishop and parsons railing against what they call "monkery," talking of the "drones" in monasteries and, indeed, abusing the whole of those ancient institutions, as something degrading to human nature, in which work of abuse they are most heartily joined by the thirty or forty mongrel sects, whose bawling-tubs are erected in every corner of the country.

54. When I come to speak of the measures by which the monasteries were robbed, devastated and destroyed in England and Ireland, I shall show how unjust, base and ungrateful, this railing against them is; and how foolish it is besides, I shall show the various ways in which they were greatly useful to the community; and I shall especially show how they operated in behalf of the labouring and poorer classed of the people. But, in this place, I shall merely describe, in the shortest manner possible, the origin and nature of those institutions, and the extent to which they existed in England.

55. Monastery means a place of residence for monks; and the word monk comes from a Greek word, which means a lonely person, or a person in solitude. There were monks, friars, and nuns. The word friar comes from the French word *frère*, which, in English, is brother; and the word nun comes from the French word *nonne*, which means sister in religion, a virgin separated from the world. The persons, whether male or female, composing one of these religious communities, were called a convent, and that name was sometimes also given to the buildings and enclosures in which the community lived. The place where monks lived was called a monastery; that where friars lived, a friary; and that where nuns lived, a nunnery. As, however, we are not, in this case, inquiring into the differences in the rules, orders, and habits of the persons belonging to these institutions, I shall speak of them all as monasteries.

56. Then, again, some of these were abbeys and some priories; of the difference between which it will be sufficient to say, that the former were of a rank superior to the latter, and had various privileges of a higher value. An abbey had an abbot, or an abbess; a priory, a prior, or a prioress. Then there, were different orders of monks, friars, and nuns; and these orders had different rules for their government and mode of life, and were distinguished by different dresses. With these distinctions we have here, however, little to do; for we shall, by-and-by, see them all involved in one common devastation.

57. The persons belonging to a monastery lived in common; they lived in one and the same building; they could possess no property individually; when they entered the walls of the monastery, they left the world wholly behind them; they: made a solemn vow of celibacy; they

could devise nothing by will; each had a life interest but nothing more, in the revenues belonging to the community; some of the monks and friars were also priests, but this was not always the case; and the business of the whole was, to say masses and prayers, and to do deeds of hospitality and charity.

58. This mode of life began by single persons separating themselves from the world, and living in complete solitude, passing all their days in prayer, and dedicating themselves wholly to the serving of God. These were called hermits and their conduct drew towards them great respect. In time, such men, or men having a similar propensity, formed themselves into societies and agreed to live together in one house, and to possess things in common. Women did the same.

And hence came those places called monasteries. The Piety, the austerities, and particularly, the works of kindness and of charity performed by those persons, made them objects of great veneration; and the rich made them, in time, the channels of their benevolence to the poor. Kings, queens, princes, princesses, nobles, and gentlemen founded monasteries that is to say, erected the buildings, and endowed them with estates for their maintenance. Others, some in the way of atonement for their sins, and some from a pious disposition, gave, while alive, or bequeathed at their death, lands, houses, or money, to monasteries already erected. So that in time, the monasteries became the owners of great landed estates; they had the lordship over innumerable manors, and had a tenantry of prodigious extent, especially in England, where the monastic orders were always held in great esteem, in consequence of Christianity having been introduced into the kingdom by a community of monks.

59. To give you as clear a notion as I can of what a monastery was, I will describe to you, with as much exactness as my memory will enable me, a monastery which I saw in France, in 1792, just after the monks had been turned out of it, and when it was about to be put up for sale! The whole of the space enclosed was about eight English acres, which was fenced in by a wall about twenty feet high. It was an oblong square, and at one end of one of the sides was a gate-way, with gates as high as the wall, and with a little door in one of the great gates for the ingress and egress of foot-passengers. This gate opened into a spacious court-yard, very nicely paved. On one side, and at one end of this yard, were the kitchen, lodging rooms for servants, a dining or eating place for them and for strangers and poor people; stables, coach-houses, and other buildings. On the other side of the court-yard, we entered in at a door-way to the place of residence of the monks. There was about half an acre of ground of a square form, for a burying ground. On the four sides of this square there was a cloister; or piazza, the roof of which was, on the side of the burying ground, supported by pillars, and, at the back, supported by a low building, which went round the four sides. This building contained the several dormitories, or sleeping-rooms of the monks, each of whom had two little rooms, one for his bed, and one for his books and to sit in.

Out of the hinder room, a door opened into a little garden about thirty feet wide, and forty long. On one side of the cloister, there was a door opening into their dining-room, in one corner of which there was a pulpit for the monk who read while the rest were eating in silence, which was according to the rules of the Carthusians, to which Order these monks belonged. On the other side of the cloister, a door opened into the kitchen garden, which was laid out in the nicest manner, and was well stocked with fruit trees of all sorts. On another side of the cloister, a door opened and led to the church, which, though not large, was one of the most beautiful that I had ever seen. I believe, that these monks were, by their rules, confined within their walls. The country people spoke of them with great reverence, and most grievously deplored the loss of them. They had large estates, were easy landlords, and they wholly provided for all the indigent within miles of their monastery.

60. England, more, perhaps, than any other country in Europe, abounded in such institutions, and these more richly endowed than any where else. In England there was, on an average, more than twenty (we shall see the exact number by-and-by) of those establishments to a county!

Here was a prize for an unjust and cruel tyrant to lay his lawless hands upon, and for "reformation" gentry to share amongst them! Here was enough, indeed, to make robbers on a grand scale cry out against "monkish ignorance and superstition". No wonder that the bowels of Cranmer, Knox, and all their mongrel litter, yearned so piteously as they did, when they cast their pious eyes on all the farms and manors, and on all the silver and gold ornaments, belonging to these communities! We shall see, by and bye, with what alacrity they ousted, plundered, and pulled down: we shall see them robbing, under the basest pretences, even the altars of the county parish churches, down to the very smallest of those churches, and down to the value of five shillings. But, we must first take a view of the motives which led the tyrant, Henry VIII., to set their devastating and plundering faculties in motion.

61. This King succeeded his father, Henry VII., in the year 1509. He succeeded to a great and prosperous kingdom, a full treasury, and a happy and contented people, who expected in him the wisdom of his father without his avarice, which seems to have been that fathers only fault.

Henry VIII. was eighteen years old when his father died. He had had an elder brother, named Arthur, who, at the early age of twelve years, had been betrothed to **CATHERINE** fourth daughter of Ferdinand, King of Castile and Aragon. When Arthur was four teen years old, the Princess came to England, and the marriage ceremony was performed; but Arthur, who was a weak and sickly boy, died before the year was out, and the marriage never was consummated and, indeed, who will believe that it could be? Henry wished to marry Catherine, and the marriage was agreed to by the parents on both sides; but it did not take place until after the death of Henry VII. The moment the young King came to the throne, he took measures for his marriage. Catherine being, though only nominally, the widow of his deceased brother, it was necessary to have, from the Pope, as supreme head of the Church, a dispensation, in order to render the marriage lawful in the eye of the canon law. The dispensation to which there could be no valid objection, was obtained, and the marriage was, amidst the rejoicings of the whole nation, celebrated in June, 1509, in less than two months after the King's accession.

62. With this lady, who was beautiful in her youth, and whose virtues of all sorts seem scarcely ever to have been exceeded, he lived in the married state, seventeen years, before the end of which he had had three sons and two daughters by her) one of whom only, a daughter, was still alive, who afterwards was Mary Queen of England. But now, at the end of seventeen years, he being thirty-five years of age, and eight years younger than the queen, and having cast his eyes on a young lady, an attendant on the, queen, named Anne Boleyn, he, all of a sudden, affected, to believe that he was living in sin, because he was married to the widow of his brother, though, as we have seen, the marriage between Catherine and the brother had never been consummated, and though the parents of both the parties together with his own Council, had unanimously and unhesitatingly approved of his marriage, which had, moreover, been sanctioned by the Pope, the head of the Church, of the faith and observances of which Henry himself had, as we shall hereafter see, been, long since his marriage, a zealous defender

63. But the tyrant's passions were now in motion, and he resolved to gratify his beastly lust, cost what it might in reputation, in treasure, and in blood. He first applied to the Pope to divorce him from his queen. He was a great favourite of the Pope, he was very powerful, there were many strong motives for yielding to his request; but that request was so full of injustice, it would have been so cruel towards the virtuous queen to accede to it, that the Pope could not, and did not, grant it. He, however, in hopes that time might induce the tyrant to relent, ordered a court to be held by his Legate and Wolsey, in England, to hear and determine the case. Before this court the Queen disdained to plead, and the Legate, dissolving the court, referred the matter back to the Pope, who still refused to take any step towards the granting of the divorce. The tyrant now became furious, resolved upon overthrowing the power of the Pope in England, upon making himself the head of the Church in this country, and upon doing whatever else might be necessary to insure the gratification of his beastly desires and the glutting of his vengeance.

64. By making himself the supreme head of the Church, he made himself, he having the sword and the gibbet at his command, master of all the property of that Church including that of the monasteries! His counsellors and courtiers knew this and, as it was soon discovered that a sweeping confiscation would take place, the parliament was by no means backward in aiding his designs, every one hoping to share in the plunder. The first step was to pass acts taking from the Pope all authority and power over the Church in England, and giving to the King all authority whatever as to ecclesiastical matters. His chief adviser and abettor was **THOMAS CRANMER**, a name which deserves to be held in everlasting execration; a name which we could not pronounce without almost doubting of the justice of God, were it not for our knowledge of the fact, that the cold-blooded, most perfidious, most impious, most blasphemous caitiff expired, at last, amidst those flames which he himself had been the chief cause of kindling.

65. The tyrant, being now both Pope and King, made Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury, a dignity just then become vacant. Of course, this adviser and ready tool now became chief judge in all ecclesiastical matters. But, here was a difficulty; for the tyrant still professed to be a Catholic; so that his new Archbishop was to be consecrated according to the usual pontifical form, which required of him to swear obedience to the Pope. And here a transaction took place that will, at once, show us of what sort of stuff the "reformation" gentry were made. Cranmer before he went to the altar to be consecrated, went into a chapel, and there made a declaration on oath, that, by the oath that he was about to take, and which, for the sake of form, he was obliged to take, he did not intend to bind himself to any thing that tended to prevent him from assisting the King in making any such "reforms" as he might think useful in the Church of England! - I once knew a corrupt Cornish knave, who having sworn to a direct falsehood (and that he, in private, acknowledged to be such) before an Election Committee of the House of Commons, being asked how he could possibly give such evidence, actually declared, in so many words, "that he had, before he left his lodging in the morning, taken an oath, that he would swear falsely that day." He, perhaps, imbibed his principles from this very Archbishop, who occupies the highest place in lying Fox's lying book of Protestant Martyrs.

66. Having provided himself with so famous a judge in ecclesiastical matters, the King lost, of course, no time in bringing his hard case before him, and demanding justice at his hands! Hard case, indeed; to be compelled to live with a wife of forty-three, when he could have, for next to nothing and only for asking for, a young one of eighteen or twenty! A really hard case; and he sought relief now that he had got such an upright and impartial judge, with all imaginable dispatch. What I am now going to relate of the conduct of this Archbishop and of the other parties concerned in the transaction is calculated to make us shudder with horror, to make our very bowels heave with loathing, to make us turn our eyes from the paper and resolve to read no further. But, we must not give way to these feelings, if we have a mind to know the true history of the Protestant "Reformation." We must keep ourselves cool; we must reason ourselves out of our ordinary impulses; we must beseech nature to be quiet within us for a while; for, from first to last, we have to contemplate nothing that is not of a kind to fill us with horror and disgust.

67. It was now four or five years since the king and Cranmer had begun to hatch the project of the divorce but, in the meanwhile, the king had kept Anne Boylen or, in more modern phrase, she had been under his protection for about three years. And, here, let me state, that, in Dr. Bayley's life of Bishop Fisher, it is positively asserted, that Anne Boylen was the king's daughter, and that Lady Boylen, her mother, said to the king when he was about to marry Anne, "Sir, for the reverence of God, take heed what you do in marrying my" daughter, for, if you record your own conscience well, she is your own daughter as well as mine. To which the king replied, "Whose daughter soever she is, she shall be my wife." Now, though I believe this fact, I do not give it as a thing the truth of which is undeniable. I find it in the writings of a man, who was the eulogist (and justly) of the excellent Bishop Fisher, who suffered death because he stood firmly on the side of Queen Catherine. I believe it; but I do not give it, as I do the other facts that I state, as what is undeniably true. God knows, it is unnecessary to make the parties blacker than they are made by the Protestant historians themselves, in even a favourable record of their horrid deeds.

68. The king had had Anne about three years under his protection, when she became, for the first time, with child. There was now, therefore, no time to be lost in order to make an honest woman of her. A private marriage took place in January, 1533. As Anne's pregnancy could not be long disguised, it became necessary to avow her marriage; and, therefore, it was also necessary to press onward the trial for the divorce; for, it might have seemed rather awkward, even amongst "reformation" people, for the king to have two wives at a time! Now, then, the famous ecclesiastical judge, Cranmer, had to play his part; and, if his hypocrisy did not make the devil blush, he could have no blushing faculties in him, Cranmer, in April 1533, wrote a letter to the king, begging him, for the good of the nation, and for the safety of his own soul, to grant his permission to try the question of the divorce, and beseeching him no longer to live in the peril attending an incestuous intercourse! Matchless, astonishing hypocrite! He knew, and the king knew that he knew, and he knew that the king knew that he knew it, that the king had been actually married to Anne three months before, she being with child at the time when he married her!

69. The King graciously condescended to listen to this ghastly advice of his pious primate, who was so anxious about the safety of his royal soul; and, without delay, he, as Head of the Church, granted the ghostly father, Cranmer, who, in violation of his clerical vows, had, in private, a woman of his own; to this ghostly father the King granted a licence to hold a spiritual court for the trial of the divorce. Queen Catherine, who had been ordered to retire from the court, resided, at this time, at Amphill, in Bedfordshire a little distance from Dunstable. At this latter, place Cranmer opened his court and sent a citation to the Queen to appear before him, which citation she treated with the scorn that it deserved. When he had kept his court open the number of days required by the law, he pronounced sentence against the Queen, declaring, her marriage with the King null from the beginning; and having done this, he closed his farcical court. We shall see him doing more jobs in the divorcing line; but thus he finished the first.

70. The result of this trial was, by this incomparable judge, made known to the King, whom this wonderful hypocrite gravely besought to submit himself with resignation to the will of God, as declared to him in this decision of the spiritual court, acting according to the laws of holy Church! The pious and resigned King yielded to the admonition; and then **CRANMER** held another court at **LAMBETH**, at which he declared, that the King had been lawfully married to Anne Boylen; and that he now confirmed the marriage by his pastoral and judicial authority, which he derived from the successors of the Apostles! We shall see him, by-and-bye, exercising the same authority to declare this new marriage null and void from the beginning, and see him assist in bastardising the fruit of it: but we must now follow Mrs. Anne Boylen (whom the Protestant writers strain hard to whitewash), till we have seen the end of her.

71. She was delivered of a daughter (who was afterwards Queen Elizabeth) at the end of eight months from the date of her marriage. This did not please the king, who wanted a son, and who was quite monster enough to be displeased with her on this account. The couple jogged on apparently without quarrelling for about three years, a pretty long time, if we duly consider the many obstacles which vice opposes to peace and happiness. The husband, however, had plenty of occupation; for, being now "head of the Church," he had a deal to manage: he had, poor man, to labour hard at making a new religion, new articles of faith, new rules of discipline, and he had new things of all sorts to prepare. Besides which he had, as we shall see in the next Number, some of the best men in his kingdom, and that ever lived in any kingdom or country, to behead, hang, rip up, and cut into quarters. He had, moreover, as we shall see, begun the grand work of confiscation, plunder and devastation. So that he could not have a great deal of time for family squabbles.

72. If, however, he had no time to jar with Anne, he had no time to look after her, which is a thing to be thought of when a man marries a woman half his own age; and that this "great female reformer" as some of the Protestant writers call her, wanted a little of husband like vigilance, we

are now going to see. The freedom, or rather the looseness of her manners, so very different from those of that virtuous Queen, whom the English court and nation had had before them as an example for so many years, gave offence to the more sober, and excited the mirth and set a going the chat of persons of another description. In January 1536, Queen Catherine died. She had been banished from the court. She had seen her marriage annulled by Cranmer, and her daughter and only surviving child bastardised by act of parliament; and the husband, who had had five children by her, that "reformation" husband, had had the barbarity to keep her separated from, and never to suffer her, after her banishment, to set her eyes on that only child! She died, as she had lived, beloved and revered by every good man and woman in the kingdom, and was buried, amidst the sobbing and tears of a vast assemblage of the people, in the Abbey-church of Peterborough.

73. The King, whose iron heart seems to have been softened, for a moment, by a most affectionate letter, which she dictated to him from her death bed, ordered the persons about him to wear mourning on the day of her burial. But, our famous "great female reformer" not only did not wear mourning, but dressed herself out in the gayest and gaudiest attire; expressed her unbounded joy; and said, that she was now in reality a Queen! Alas, for our "great female reformer"! In just three months and sixteen days from this day of her exultation, she died herself; not, however, as the real Queen had died, in her bed, deeply lamented by all the good, and without a soul on earth to impute to her a single fault; but, on a scaffold, under a death-warrant signed by her husband, and charged with treason, adultery, and incest!

74. In the month of May, 1536, she was, along with the King, amongst the spectators at a tilting-match, at Greenwich when, being incautious, she gave to one of the combatants, who was also one of her paramours, a sign of her attachment, which seems only to have confirmed the King in suspicions which he before entertained. He instantly quitted the place, returned to Westminster, ordered her to be confined at Greenwich that night, and to be brought, by water, to Westminster the next day. But, she was met, by his order, on the river, and conveyed to the Tower; and, as it were to remind her of the injustice, which she had so mainly assisted in committing against the late virtuous Queen; as it were to say to her, "see, after all, God is just," she was imprisoned in the very room in which she had slept the night before her coronation!

75. From the moment of her imprisonment her behaviour indicated any thing but conscious innocence. She was charged with adultery committed with four gentlemen of the King's household, and with incest with her brother, Lord Rochford, and she was, of course, charged with treason, those being acts of treason by law. They were all found guilty, and all put to death. But, before Anne was executed, our friend, Thomas Cranmer, had another tough job to perform. The King, who never did things by halves, ordered, as "head of the church" the Archbishop to hold his "spiritual court," and to divorce him from Anne! One would think it impossible that a man, that any thing bearing the name of man, should have consented to do such a thing, should not have perished before a slow fire rather than do it. What he had, we have seen in paragraph 70, pronounced the marriage with Anne to be lawful, and had confirmed it by his authority, judicial and pastoral which he derived from the successors of the Apostles. How was he now, then, to annul this marriage? How was he to declare it unlawful?

76. He cited the King and Queen to appear in his "court" (Oh! that court!) His citation stated, that their marriage had been unlawful, that they were living in adultery, and that, for the "salvation of their souls," they should come and show cause why they should not be respected. They were just going to be separated most effectually; for this was on the 17th of May, and Anne, who had been condemned to death on the 15th, was to be and was, executed on the 19th! They both obeyed his citation, and appeared before him by their proctors; and, after having heard these, Cranmer, who, observe, afterwards drew up the Book of Common Prayer, wound up the blasphemous farce by pronouncing, "in the name of Christ, and for the honour of God," that the marriage was, and always had been null and void. Good God! But we must not give way to exclamations, or they will interrupt us at every step. Thus was the daughter, Elizabeth, bastardised by the decision of the very man who had not only pronounced her mother's marriage lawful, but who had been

the contriver of that marriage! And yet Burnet has the impudence to say, that Cranmer appears to have done every thing with a good conscience! Yes, with such another conscious as Burnet did the deeds by which he got into the Bishoprick of Salisbury, at the time of "Old Glorious" which, as we shall see, was by no means disconnected with the "Reformation."

77. On the 19th Anne was beheaded in the Tower, put into an elm-coffin, and buried there. At the place of execution she did not pretend that she was innocent; and there appears to me to be very little doubt of her having done some at least of the things imputed to her: but, if her marriage with the King had "always been null and void"; that is to say, if she had never been married to him, how could she, by her commerce with other men, have been guilty of treason? On the 15th, she is condemned as the wife of the King, on the 17th she is pronounced never to have been his wife, and, on the 19th, she is executed for having been his unfaithful wife! However, as to the effect which this event has upon the character of the "Reformation", it signifies not a straw whether she were guilty or innocent of the crimes now laid to her charge; for, if she were innocent, how are we to describe the monsters who brought her to the block? How are we to describe that "Head of the Church" and that Archbishop, who had now the management of the religious affairs of England?. It is said, that the evening before her execution, she begged the lady of the lieutenant of the Tower to go to the Princess Mary, and to beg her to pardon her for the many wrongs she had done her. There were others, to whom she had done wrongs. She had been the cause, and the guilty cause, of breaking the heart of the rightful Queen; she had caused the blood of Moore and of Fisher to be shed; and she had been the promoter of Cranmer, and his aider and abettor in all those crafty and pernicious councils, by acting upon which an obstinate and hard-hearted king had plunged the kingdom into confusion and blood. The king, in order to show his total disregard for her, and, as it were, to repay her for her conduct on the day of the funeral of Catherine, dressed himself in white on the day of her execution; and, the very next day, was married to Jane Seymour, at Marevell Hall, in Hampshire.

78. Thus, then, my friends, we have seen, that the thing called the "Reformation" was engendered in beastly lust, and brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy. How it proceeded in devastating and in shedding innocent blood we have yet to see.

The End Of Letter 2



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