

**A HISTORY
OF THE PROTESTANT
REFORMATION**

LETTER SEVEN



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 VII**

**Edward V. Crowned.
Perjury of the Executors of Henry VIII.
New Church "By Law Established."
Robbery of the Churches.
Insurrections of the People.
Treasons of Cranmer and his Associates.
Death of the King**

By William Cobbett

Kensington, 31st May, 1825

Dear Friends,

192. Having, in the preceding Numbers, shown, that thing, impudently called the "Reformation," was gendered in beastly lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and fed by plunder, devastation, and rivers of innocent English and Irish blood, I intended to write, in the present Number, how the main body of the people were, by these doings, impoverished and degraded to this time, that is to say, I intended to trace the impoverishment and degradation down to the end of the reign of the bloody tyrant, Henry VIII. But, upon reviewing my letter, I think it best first to go through the whole of my account of the plundering, persecuting and murdering of "Reformation" people and, when we have seen all robberies and barbarities that they committed under the doctrinal pretence of religious zeal; or, rather, when we have seen such of those robberies and barbarities as we can room for; then I shall conclude with showing how enormously the nation lost by the change; and, how that carnage made the main part of the people poor and wretched and degraded. By pursuing this plan, I shall, in one concluding Number, give, or, at least, endeavour to give, a fair and satisfactory history of this impoverishment. I will take the present Protestant labourer, with his cold potatoes and water, and show him how his Catholic fathers lived; and if those cold potatoes and water, if poorer than pig-diet, have not quite taken away all the natural qualities of English blood, I shall make him execute the plunderers and hypocrites by whom was produced change, which has finally led to his present misery, and nine-tenths of that mass of corruption and crime, public and private, which now threatens to uproot society.

193. In pursuance of this plan, and in conformity to my promise to conclude my little work in Ten Numbers; I shall distribute my matter thus: in Number VII. (present), the deeds and events of the reign of Edward In Number VIII, those of the reign of Queen Mary. Number IX, those of

the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and Number X, the facts and arguments to establish my point; namely, that the thing, impudently called the "Reformation" impoverished and degraded the main body of the people. In the course of the first three of these Numbers, I shall not touch, except incidentally, upon the impoverishing and degrading effects of the change; but, I reserve these for the last Number, when, having witnessed the horrid means, we will take an undivided view of consequences, tracing those consequences down to present day.

194. In paragraph 190 we had the satisfaction to see the savage tyrant expire at a premature old age, with his swelled and bursting from luxury, and with a mind towards contending passions. One of his last acts was a will which he made his infant son his immediate "Successor", remainder, in case he died without issue, to his daughter Mary first, and then, in default of issue again, to daughter Elizabeth, I though, observe, both the daughters still stood bastardised by Act of Parliament, though the latter was born of **ANNE BOLYN** while the King's first wife, the mother of Mary, was alive.

195. To carry this will into execution and to govern until, Howard, who was then ten years of age, until he should be eighteen years of age, there were sixteen executors appointed, amongst whom was **SEYMOUR**, Earl of Hertford and the "**HONEST CRANMER.**" These sixteen worthies began by taking, in the most solemn manner, an oath to stand to and maintain the last will of their master.

Their second act was to break that oath by making **HERTFORD**, who was a brother of **JANE SEYMOUR**, the King's Brother, "protector" though the will gave equal powers to all the executors. Their next step was to give new peerages to some of themselves. The fourth, to award to the new peers grants of the public money. The fifth was to lay aside, at the Coronation, the ancient English custom of asking the people if they were willing to have and obey the King. The sixth was to attend at a solemn high Mass. And the seventh was to begin a series of acts for the total subversion of all that remained of the Catholic Religion in England, and for the effecting of all that Old Harry had left unaffected in the way of plunder,

196. The monasteries were gone; the cream had been taken off; but there remained the skimmed milk of church altars, chantries, and guilds. Old Harry would, doubtless, if he had lived much longer, have plundered these, but, he had not done it, and he could not do it without openly becoming Protestant, which, for the reasons stated in paragraph 101, he would not do. But **HERTFORD** and his fifteen brother worthies had in their way no such obstacle as the ruffian-King had had. The church-altars, the chantries and the guilds contained something valuable; and they longed to be at it. The power of the Pope was gotten rid of; the country had been sacked; the poor had been despoiled; but, still there were some pickings left. The piety of ages had made every church, however small to contain some gold and silver appertaining to the altar. The altars, in the parish churches, and, generally, in the Cathedrals, had been left, as yet, untouched; for, though the wife-killer had abjured the Pope, whose power he had taken to himself, he still professed to be of the Catholic faith, and he maintained the mass and the sacraments and creeds with fire and faggot. Therefore he had left the church-altars un-plundered. But, they contained gold, silver and other valuables, and the worthies saw these with longing eyes and itching fingers.

197. To seize them, however, there required a pretext and what pretext could there be short of declaring, at once that the Catholic religion was false and wicked, and, of course, that there ought to be no altars, and, of course, gold and silver things appertaining to them. "The sixteen worthies", with **HERTFORD** at their head, and with **CRANMER** amongst them, they had the king crowned as a Catholic; he, as well as they, had taken the oaths as Catholics; they had sworn to uphold that religion; they had taken him to a high mass, after his coronation: but, the altars had good things about them; there was plunder remaining; and to get at this remaining plunder, the Catholic religion must be wholly put down. There were, doubtless, some fanatics, some who imagined that the religion of nine hundred years standing ought not to be changed; some who

had not plunder and plunder only in view; but, it is impossible for any man of common sense, of un-pervverted mind, to look at the history of this transaction, at this open avowal of Protestantism, and this change from the religion of England to that of a part of Germany, without being convinced that the principal authors of it had plunder and plunder only in view.

198. The old tyrant died in 1547; and, by the end of 1549, **CRANMER**, who had tied so many Protestants to the stake for not being Catholics, had pretty nearly completed a system of Protestant worship. He first prepared a book of homilies and a catechism, in order to pave the way. Next came a law to allow the clergy to have wives; and then, when all things had been prepared, came the **BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS**.

GARDINER who was Bishop of Winchester, reproached **CRANMER** with his duplicity, reminded him of the zeal with which he had upheld the Catholic worship under the king, and would have made him hang himself, or cut his throat, if he had had the slightest remains of shame in him.

199. This new system did not, however, go far enough for the fanatics and there instantly appeared arrayed against it whole tribes of new lights on the Continent. So that **CRANMER**, cunning as he was, soon found that he had undertaken no easy matter. The proclamations put forth, upon this occasion, were disgustingly ridiculous, coming, as they did, in the name of a king only ten years of age, and expressed in words so solemnly pompous and so full of arrogance. However, the chief object was the plunder; and to get at this nothing was spared. There were other things to attract the grasp; but, it will be unnecessary to dwell very particularly on any thing but the altars and the churches. This was the real "reformation reign"; for, it was a reign of robbery and hypocrisy without any thing to be compared with them; anything in any country or in any age. Religion, conscience, was always the pretext; but, in one way or another, robbery, plunder, was always the end. The people, once so united and so happy, became divided into innumerable sects, no man knowing hardly what to believe; and, indeed, no one knowing what it was lawful for him to say; for it soon became impossible for the common people to know what was heresy and what was not heresy.

200. That prince of hypocrites, **CRANMER**, who, during the reign of Henry, had condemned people to the flames for not believing in transubstantiation, was now ready to condemn them for believing in it. We have seen, that Luther was the beginner of the work of "reformation"; but, he was soon followed by further reformers on the Continent. These had made many attempts to propagate their doctrines in England; but, old Henry had kept them down, now however, when the churches were to be robbed of what remained in them, and when, to have a pretext for that robbery, it was necessary to make a complete change in the form of worship, these sectarians all flocked to England which became one great scene of religious disputation. Such were for the Common Prayer Book; others proposed alterations in it; others were for abolishing it altogether; and there now began that division, that multiplicity of hostile opinions, which has continued to the present day. **CRANMER** employed a part of the resources of the country to feed and fatten those of these religious, or, rather, impious, adventurers, who sided with him, and who chose the best market for their doctrines. England was overrun by these foreign traders in religions and this nation, so jealous of foreign influence, was now compelled to bend its haughty neck, not only to foreigners, but to foreigners of the most base and infamous character and description. **CRANMER** could not find Englishmen sufficiently supple to be his tools in executing the work that he had in hand. The Protector **HERTFORD**, whom we must now call Somerset (the child King having made him **DUKE OF SOMERSET**), was the greatest of all "reformers" that had yet appeared in the world, and, as we shall soon see, the greatest and most audacious of all the plunderers that this famous reformation has produced, save and except Old Harry himself. The total abolition of the Catholic worship was necessary to his projects of plunder and, therefore, he was a great encourager of these greedy and villainous foreigners. Perhaps the world has never, in any age, seen a nest of such atrocious miscreants as **LUTHER, ZUINGLIUS, CALVIN, BEZA**, and the rest of the distinguished reformers of the Catholic religion. Every one of them

was notorious for the most scandalous vices, even according to the full confession of his own followers. They agreed in nothing but in the doctrine, that good works were useless and their lives proved the sincerity of their teaching; for there was not; a man of them whose acts did not merit a halter.

201. The consequences to the morals of the people were such as were naturally to be expected. All historians agree, that vice of all sorts and crimes of every kind were never so great and so numerous before. This was confessed by the teachers themselves, and yet the Protestants have extolled this reign as the reign of conscience and religion! It was so manifest that the change was a bad one, that men could not have proceeded in it from error. Its mischiefs were all manifest before the death of the old tyrant, that death afforded an opportunity for returning into the right path; but, there was plunder remaining, and the plunderers went on. The "reformation". was not the work, of virtue, of fanaticism, of error, of ambition, but of a love of plunder. This was its great animating principle: in this it began, and in this it proceeded till there was nothing left for it to work on.

202. The old tyrant had, in certain cases, enabled his minions to rob the bishoprics; but, now, there was a grand sweep at them. The Protector took the lead, and his example was followed by others. They took so much from one, so much from another, and some they wholly suppressed, as that of Westminster, and took their estates to themselves. There were many chantries (private property to all intents and purposes); free chapels, also private property, almshouses, hospitals; guilds, or fraternities, the property of which was as much private property as the funds of any Friendly Society now are. All these became lawful plunder. And yet there are men, who pretend, that what is now possessed by the Established Church is of so sacred a nature as not to be touched by Act of Parliament! This was the reign, in which this our present Established Church was founded, for, though the fabric was upset by **MARY**, it was raised again by **ELIZABETH**. Now it was that it was made, It was made, and the worship along with it, by Acts of Parliament, and it now seems to be high time, that, by similar Acts, it should be unmade. It had its very birth in division, disunion, discord; and its life has been worthy of its birth. The property it possesses was taken, nominally, from the Catholic Church; but, in reality, from that Church and also from the widow, the orphan, the indigent and the stranger. The pretext for making it was, that it would cause an union of sentiment amongst the people; that it would compose all dissensions. The truth, the obvious truth, that there could be but one true religion, was acknowledged and loudly proclaimed; and, it was not to be denied, that there were already twenty, the teachers of every one of which declared, that all the others were false; and, of course, that they were, at the very least, no better than no religion at all. Indeed, this is the language of common sense; though it is now so fashionable to disclaim the doctrine of exclusive salvation, I ask the **UNITARIAN** parson, or prater, for instance, why he takes upon him that office, why he does not go and follow some trade, or why he does not work in the fields? His answer is, that he is more usefully employed in teaching. If I ask, of what use his teaching is, he tells me, he must tell me, that his teaching is necessary, to the salvation of souls. Well, say I, but, why not leave that business to the Established Church, to which the people all pay tithes? Oh, no! says he. I cannot do that, because the Church does not teach the true religion. Well, say I but, true or false, if it serve for salvation, what signifies it? Here I have him penned up in a corner. He is compelled to confess, that he is a fellow wanting to lead an easy life by pandering to the passions or whims of conceited persons? or, to insist, that his sort of belief and teaching are absolutely necessary to salvation: as he will not confess the former, if obliged to insist on the latter; and here, after all his railing against the intolerance of the Catholics who maintains the doctrine of exclusive salvation.

203. Two true religions, two true creeds, differing from each other, contradicting each other, present us with an impossibility: what, then, are we to think of twenty or forty creeds, each differing from all the rest? If deism, or atheism be something not only wicked in itself, but so mischievous in its effects as to call, in case of the public profession of it, for imprisonment for years and years; if this be the case, what are we to think of laws, the same laws, too, which inflict that cruel punishment, tolerating and encouraging a multiplicity of creeds, all but one of which

must be false? A code of laws acknowledging and tolerating but one religion is consistent in punishing the deist and the atheist; but if it acknowledge or tolerate more than one, it acknowledges or tolerates one false one, and let divines say, whether a false religion is not as bad as deism or atheism. Besides, is it just to punish the deist or the atheist for not believing in the Christian religion at all, when he sees the laws tolerate so many religions all but one of which must be false. What is the natural effect of men seeing constantly before their eyes a score or two of different sects, all calling themselves Christians, all tolerated by the law, and each openly declaring that all the rest are false? The natural, the necessary effect is, that many men will believe that none of them have truth on their side; and, of course, that the thing is false altogether, and invented solely for the benefit of those who teach it, and who dispute about it.

204. The law should acknowledge and tolerate but one religion; or it should know nothing at all about the matter. The Catholic code was consistent. It said, that there was but one true religion; and it punished as offenders those who dared openly to profess any opinion contrary to that religion. Whether that were the true religion or not, we have not now to inquire but, while its long conformance, and in so many nations too, was a strong presumptive proof of its good moral effects upon the people, the disagreement amongst the Protestants was, and is, a presumptive proof, not less strong, of its truth. If, all observed upon a former occasion, there be forty persons, who, and whose fathers, for countless generations, have, up to this day, entertained a certain belief; and, if thirty-nine of these say, at last, that this belief is erroneous, we may naturally enough suppose, or, at least, we may think it possible, that the truth, so long hidden, is, though late, come to light. But, if the thirty-nine begin, aye, and instantly begin, to entertain, instead of the one old belief but thirty-nine new beliefs, each differing from all the other thirty-eight; must we not, in common justice, decide that the old belief must have been the true one? What; shall we hear these thirty-nine protestors against the ancient faith each protesting against all the other thirty-eight and still believe that their joint protest was just? Thirty-eight of them must now be in error; this must be: and are we still to believe in the correctness of their former decision, and that, too, relating to the same identical matter? If, in a trial, relating to the dimensions of a piece of land, which had been proved to have always been, time without mind, taken for twenty acres, there were one surveyor to swear that it contained twenty acres, and each of thirty-nine other surveyors to swear to each of the other number of acres between one and forty, what judge and jury would hesitate a moment in crediting him who swore to the twenty, and in wholly rejecting the testimony of all the rest?

205. Thus the argument would stand, on the supposition that thirty-nine parts out of forty of all Christendom had protested; but, there were not, and there are not, even unto this day, two parts out of fifty. So that here we have thirty-nine persons breaking off from about two thousand, protesting against the faith which the whole, and their fathers have held; we have each of these thirty-nine instantly protesting that all the other thirty-eight have protested upon fake grounds; and yet we are to believe, that their joint protest against the faith of the two thousand, who are backed by all antiquity, was wise and just! Is this the way in which we decide in other cases? Did honest men, not blinded by passion, or by some base motive, ever decide thus before? Besides, if the Catholic faith were so false as. it is by some pretended to be, how comes it not to have been extirpated before now? When, indeed, the Pope had very great power; when even kings were compelled to bend to him, it might be said, and pretty fairly, said, that no one dared to use the weapons of reason against the Catholic faith. But, we have seen the Pope a prisoner in a foreign land; we have seen him without scarcely food and raiment; and we have seen the press of more than half the world at liberty to treat him and his faith as it pleased to treat them. But have we not seen the Protestant sects at work for three hundred years to destroy the Catholic faith? Do we not see, at the end of those three hundred years, that, that faith is still the reigning faith of Christendom? Nay, do we not see that it is gaining ground at this very moment, even in this kingdom itself, where a Protestant hierarchy receives eight millions sterling a year, and where Catholics are still rigidly excluded from all honour and power, and, in some cases, from all political and civil rights, under a constitution founded by their Catholic ancestors? Can it be, then, that this faith is false? Can it be that this worship is Idolatrous? Can it be that it was

necessary to abolish them in England, (as far a law could do it) Can it be that it was for our good, our honour, to sack our country, to violate all the rights of property, to deluge the country with blood, in order to change our religion?

206. But, in returning, now, to the works of the plunderer wrought to remark, that, in discussions of this sort, it is a common, but a very great error, to keep our eyes so exclusively fixed on mere matters of religion. The Catholic Church included in it a great deal more than the business of teaching religion and of practising worship and Administering sacraments. It had a great deal to do with the temporal concerns of the people. It provided, and amicably provided, for all the wants of the poor and distressed.

It received back, in many instances, what the miser and extortioner had taken unfairly, and applied it to works of beneficence. It contained a great body of land proprietors, whose revenues were distributed, in various ways, amongst the people at large, upon terms always singularly advantageous to the latter. It was a great and powerful estate, independent both of the aristocracy and the crown, and naturally siding with the people. But, above all things, it was a provider for the poor and a keeper of hospitality. By its charity, and by its benevolence towards its tenants and dependants, it mitigated the rigour of proprietorship, and held society together by the ties of religion rather than by the trammel and terrors of the law. It was the great cause of that description of tenants called life-holders, who formed. a most important link in the chain of society, coming after the proprietors in fee, and before the tenant at will, participating in some degree, of the proprietorship of the estate, and yet, not wholly without dependence on the proprietor. This race of persons, formerly so numerous in England, has by degrees, become almost wholly extinct, their place having been supplied by a comparatively few rack-renters, and by swarms of miserable paupers. The Catholic Church held the lending of money for interest, or gain, to be directly in the face of the Gospel. It considered all such gain as usurious and, of course, criminal. It taught the making of loans without interest; and thus it prevented the greedy-minded from amassing wealth in that way in which wealth is most easily amassed. Usury amongst Christians was wholly unknown, until the wife-killing tyrant had laid his hands on the property of the Church and the poor. The principle of the Catholic Church was that all partook of generosity which was one of their great characteristics, selfishness is the catachrestic of that Church which was established in its stead.

207. The plunder which remained after the seizure of the monasteries was comparatively small; but, still, the very cravings of the old tyranny, the mere gleanings of the harvest of plunder, were something; and these were not suffered to remain. The plunder of the churches, parochial as well as collegiate was preceded by all sorts of antics played in those churches. **CALVIN** had got an influence opposed to that of **CRANMER**, so that there was almost open war amongst these protestants, which party should have the teaching of the people. After due preparation in this way, the robbery was set about in due form. Every church altar had, as I have before observed, more or less of gold and silver. A part consisted of images, a part of censers, candlesticks and other things used in the celebration of the mass. The mass was, therefore, abolished, and there was no longer to be an altar, but a table in its stead. The fanatical part of the reformers amused themselves with quarrelling about the part of the church where the table was to stand; about the shape of it, and whether the head of it was to be placed to the North, the East, the West, or the South; and whether the people were to stand, kneel, or sit at it! The plunderers, however, though about other things: they thought about the value of the images, censers, and the like.

208. To reconcile the people to these innovations the plunderers had a Bible contrived for the purpose, which Bible was a perversion of the original text, wherever it was found to be necessary. Of all the acts of this hypocritical and plundering reign this was, perhaps, the basest. In it we see the true character of the heroes of the "Protestant Reformation"; and the poor and miserable labourers of England who now live upon potatoes and water, feel the consequences of the deeds of the infamous times of which I am speaking. Every preparation being made, the robbery began, and a general plunder of churches took place by royal and parliamentary authority! The robbers

took away every thing valuable, even down to the vestments of the priests. Such mean rapacity never was heard of before and, for the honour of human nature, let us hope that it will never be heard of again. It seems that England was really become a den of thieves, and of thieves, too, of the lowest and most despicable character.

209. The Protector, **SOMERSET**, did not forget himself. Having plundered four or five of the bishoprics, he needed a palace in London. For the purpose of building this palace which was erected in the Strand, London, and which was called "Somerset-House" as the place is called to this day, he took from three bishops their town-houses; he pulled these down, together with a parish church, in order to get a suitable spot for the erection. The materials of these demolished buildings being insufficient for his purpose he pulled down a part of the buildings appertaining to the then cathedral of St. Paul; the church of St. John, near Smithfield; Barking Chapel, near the Tower; the college church of St. Martin-le-Grand; St. Ewen's church, Newgate, and the parish church of St. Nicholas. He, besides these, ordered the pulling down of the parish church of Saint Margaret, Westminster, but, says **DR. HEYLYN**, the workmen had no sooner advanced their scaffolds, when the parishioners gathered together in great multitudes; with bows and arrows, and staves and clubs which so terrified the workmen that they ran away in great amazement, and never could be brought again upon that employment. Thus arose **SOMERSET HOUSE**, the present grand seat of the power of fiscal grasping. It was first erected literally with the ruins of churches, and it now serves, under its old name, as the place from which issue the mandates to us to give up the fruit of our earning to pay the Interest of a Debt, which is one of the evident and great consequences of the "Protestant Reformation", without which that Debt never could have existed.

210. I am, in the last Number, to give an account of the Impoverishment and degradation that these and former Protestant proceedings produced amongst the people at large, but I must here notice, that the people heartily detested these Protestant tyrants and their acts. General discontent Prevailed, and this, in some cases, broke out into open insurrection. It is curious enough to observe the excuses that **HUME**, in giving an account of these times, attempts to make for the plunderers and their "reformation." It was his constant aim to blacken the Catholic institutions, and particularly the character and conduct of the Catholic clergy. Yet he could not pass over these discontents and rising of the people; and as there must have been a cause for these, he is under the necessity of ascribing them to the badness of the change, or to find out some other cause. He, therefore, goes to work in a very elaborate manner to make his readers believe, that the people were in error as to the tendency of the change. He says, that scarce any institution can be imagined less favourable, in the main, to the interests of mankind, than that of the Catholic; yet, says he, as it was followed by many good effects, which had ceased with the suppression of the monasteries, that suppression was very much regretted by the people, He then proceeds to describe the many benefits of the monastic institutions; says that the monks always residing on their estates caused a diffusion of good constantly around them; that, not having equal motives to avarice with other men, they were the best and most indulgent landlords that, when the church lands became private property, the rents were raised, the money spent at a distance, from the estates, and the tenants exposed to the rapacity of stewards, that whole estates were laid waste that the tenants were expelled, and that even the cottagers were deprived of the commons on which they formerly fed their cattle that a great decay of the people, as well as a diminution of former plenty, was remarked on in the kingdom, that, at the same time, the coin had been debased by Henry, and was now further debased; that the good coin was hoarded or exported: that the common people were robbed of part of their wages; that, complaints were heard in every part of the kingdom.

211. Well; was not this change a bad one then? And what are the excuses which are offered for it by this calumniator of the Catholic institutions? Why, he says, that their hospitality and charity gave encouragement to idleness, and prevented the increase of public wealth; and that, as it was by an addition alone of toil, that the people were able to live, this increase of industry was, the last, effect of the **PRESENT SITUATION**, an effect very beneficial to society. What does he

mean by the present situation! The situation of the country, I suppose, at the time when he wrote; and, though the "reformation" had not then produced pauperism and misery and Debt and taxes equal to the present, it was on the way to do it. But what does he mean by public riches? The Catholic institutions provided against the pressure of want amongst the people; but, prevented the increase of "public riches" What, again I ask, is the meaning of the words "public riches"? What is, or ought to be, the end of all government and of every institution? Why, the happiness of the people. But this man seems like Adam Smith, and indeed, like almost every Scotch writer, to have a notion, that there may be great public good, though producing individual misery. They seem always to regard the people as so many cattle, working for an indescribable something that they call "the public." The question with them, is, not whether the people, for whose good all government is instituted, be, well off, or wretched, but, whether, the "public" gain, or lose, money or money's worth. I am able to show, and I shall show, that England was a greater country before the "Reformation" than since, that it was greater positively and relatively; that its real wealth was greater. But, what do we have at present? to observe, is, that thus far, at any rate, the reformation had produced general misery amongst the common people; and that, accordingly, complaints were heard from one end of the kingdom to the other.

212. The Book of Common Prayer was to put an end to all dissensions but, its promulgation and the consequent robbery of the churches were followed by open insurrection, in many of the counties, by battles, and executions by martial law. The whole kingdom was in commotion; but, particularly to, the great honour of those counties, in Devonshire and Norfolk. In the former county the insurgents were superior in force to the hired troops, and had besieged Exeter. **LORD RUSSELL** was sent against them, and, at last, reinforced by **GERMAN TROOPS**, he defeated them, executed many by martial law, and most gallantly hanged a priest on the top of the tower of his church! This, I suppose, **MR. BROUGHAM** reckons amongst those services of the family of **RUSSELL**, which, he tells us, England can never repay! In Norfolk the insurrection was still more formidable; but was finally suppressed by the aid of **FOREIGN TROOPS**, and was also followed by the most barbarous executions. The people of Devonshire complained of the alterations in religion; that, as **DR. HEYLYN** (a protestant divine) expresses it, "that the free-born commonalty was oppressed by a small number of gentry, who glutted themselves with pleasures, while the poor commons, wasted by daily labour, like pack-horses, live in extreme slavery; and that holy rites, established by their fathers, were abolished, and a new form of religion "obtruded"; and they demanded, that the mass and a part of the monasteries should be restored, and that priests should not be allowed to marry. Similar were the complaints and the demands every where else. But, **CRANMER'S PRAYER BOOK** and the Church by law established, backed by foreign bayonets, finally triumphed, at least for the present, and during the remainder of this hypocritical, base, corrupt, and tyrannical reign.

213. Thus arose the Protestant Church, as by law established. Here we see its origin. Thus it was that it commenced its career. How different, alas! from the commencement of that Church of England, which arose under **ST. AUSTIN** at Canterbury, which had been cherished carefully by **ALFRED THE GREAT**, and, under the wings of which the people of England had, for nine hundred years, seen their country the greatest in the world, and had themselves lived in ease and plenty and real freedom, superior to those of all other nations!

214. **SOMERSET**, who had brought his own brother's head to the block in 1549, chiefly because he had opposed himself to his usurpations (though both were plunderers), was, not long after the commission of the above cruelties on the people, destined to come to that block himself. **DUDLEY, EARL OF WARWICK**, who was his rival in baseness and injustice, and his superior in talent, had out-intrigued him in the Council; and, at last, he brought him to that end which he so well merited. On what grounds this was done is wholly un-interesting. It was a set of most wicked men, circumventing, and, if necessary, destroying each other; but, it is worthy of remark, that, amongst the crimes alleged against this great culprit, was, his having brought foreign troops into the kingdom! This was, to be sure, rather ungrateful in the pious reformers; for, it was those troops that established for them their new religion. But, it was good to see them putting their

leader to death, actually cutting off his head, for having caused their projects to succeed. It was, in plain words, a dispute about the plunder. Somerset had got more than his brother plunderers deemed his share. He was building a palace for himself and, if each plunderer could have had a palace, it would have been peace amongst them; but, as this could not be, the rest called him a "traitor," and as the king, the Protestant St. Edward, had signed the death-warrant of one uncle at the instigation of another uncle, he now signed the death-warrant of that other, the "Saint" himself being, even now, only fifteen years of age.

215. WARWICK, who was now become Protector, was made **DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND**, and got granted to him the immense estates of that ancient house, which had fallen into the hands of the crown. This was, if possible, a more zealous Protestant than the last Protector, that is to say, still more profligate, rapacious, and cruel. The work of plundering the church went on, until there remained scarcely anything worthy of the name of clergy. Many parishes were in all parts of the kingdom, united in one, and having but one priest amongst them. But, indeed, there were hardly any persons left, worthy of the name of clergy. All the good and all the learned had either been killed, starved to death, banished, or had gone out of the country; and those who remained were, during this reign of mean plunder, so stripped of their incomes, so pared down, that the parochial clergy worked as carpenters, smiths, masons, and were not infrequently menial servants in gentlemen houses, so that this Church of England, "as by law (and German troops) established" became the scorn, not only of the people of England, but of all the nations of Europe,

216. The king, who was a poor sickly lad, seems to have had no distinctive characteristic except that of hatred to the Catholics and their religion, in which hatred **CRANMER** and others had brought him up. His life was not likely to be long, and Northumberland, who was now his keeper, conceived the project of getting the crown into his own family, a project quite worthy of a hero of the "Reformation" In order to carry this project into effect, he married one of his sons, **LORD GUILFORD DUDLEY**, to Lady **JANE GREY** who, next after **MARY** and **ELIZABETH** and **MARY QUEEN OF SCOTLAND**, was heiress to the throne. Having done this, he got **EDWARD** to make a will, settling the crown on this Lady Jane, to the exclusion of his two sisters. The advocates of the "Reformation" who, of course, praise this boy-king, in whose reign the new church was invented, tell us long stories about the way in which Northumberland persuaded, **SAINT EDWARD**, to do this act of injustice, but, in all probability, there is not a word of truth in the story. However, what they say is this: that Lady Jane was a sincere Protestant; that the young king knew this; and that his anxiety for the security of the Protestant religion induced him to consent to Northumberland's proposition.

217. The settlement met with great difficulty, when it came to be laid before the lawyers, who, some how or other, always contrived to keep their heads out of the halter, even Old Harry's judges used, when hard pressed, to refer him to the Parliament for the committing of violations of law. The Judges, the Lord Chancellor, the Secretaries of State, the Privy Council!! were afraid to put their names to this transfer of the crown. The thing was, however last accomplished, and with the signature of **CRANMER** on it, though he, as one of the late king's executors, and first upon that list, had sworn in the most solemn manner to maintain his will, according to which will the two brothers, in case of no issue by the brother, were to succeed brother on the throne. Thus, in addition to his fourth of notorious perjury, this maker of the *Book of Common Prayer* became clearly guilty of high treason. He now at last, in spite of all his craft, had woven his own halter, that, too, beyond all doubt, for the purpose of preserving his bishopric. The princess **MARY** was next heir to throne. He had divorced her mother; he had been principal agent in that unjust and most wicked transaction and, besides, he knew that **MARY** was immovably a Catholic, and that, of course, her accession must be the death-knell of his office and his church. Therefore he now committed the greatest crime known to the law, and that, too, for the basest of motives.

218. The king having made this settlement, and being kept wholly in the hands of **NORTHUMBERLAND**, who placed his creatures about him, would naturally as was the case

at the time, not live long! In short he died on the 6th July, 1553, in the sixteenth year of his age and the seventh of his reign, expiring on the same day of the year that his savage father had brought Sir **THOMAS MORE** to the block. These were seven of the most miserable and most ignominious years that England had ever known. Fanaticism roguery, hypocrisy and plunder, divided the country between them. The people were wretched beyond all description from the plenty of Catholic times they had been reduced to general beggary; and, then, in order to repress this begging, laws being the most ferocious were passed to prevent even starving creatures from asking alms. Abroad as well as at home the nation sunk in the eyes of the world. The town of **BOULOGNE** in France, which had been won by Catholic Englishmen, the base Protestant rulers now, from sheer cowardice surrendered; and from one end of Europe to the other, was heard jeering and scoffing at this formerly great and mighty nation. **HUME**, who finds goodness in everyone who was hostile to the Catholic institutions, says, all English historians dwell with pleasure, on the excellences of this young king whom the flattering promises of hope, joined to many virtues made an object of the most tender affections of the public. He possessed mildness of disposition and capacity to learn and to judge, and attachment to equity and justice. Of his mildness we have, I suppose, an example in his assenting to the burning of several Protestants, nor, did not protest in his way; in his signing of the death warrants of his two uncles; and in his wish to bring his sister **MARY** to trial for not conforming to what she named blasphemy, and from doing which he was deterred by the menaces of the Emperor, her cousin. So much for his mildness. As for his justice, who can doubt that, who thinks of his will to disinherit his two sisters, after the judges had unanimously declared to him, it was contrary to law? The "tender affection" that the people had for him was, doubtless, evinced, by their being in insurrection against his ordinances from one end of kingdom to the other, and by their demanding the toleration of that religion, which all his acts tended wholly to extirpate. But, besides these internal proofs of the falsehood of **HUME'S** description, Dr. **HELYN**, who is, as one of "all the English historians," and one, too, whom he himself refers to no less than twenty-four times in part of his history relating to this very reign, does not swell with pleasure on the excellences of this young prince of whom he, in the 4th paragraph of his preface, so thus: King-Edward, whose death I cannot reckon for an infelicity to the Church of England for, seeing ill-principles in himself, and easily inclined to embrace such counsels as were offered him, it is not to be thought but that the rest of the bishoprics (before sufficiently impoverished) would have followed that of Durham, and the poor church be left as destitute as when he came into the world in her natural nakedness. Aye, this was his great merit in the eyes of **HUME**. He should have said so then, and should have left his good character of tyrant in the egg to rest on his own opinion; not have said, that all English historians dwelt with pleasure on his excellences.

219. The settlement of the crown had been kept a secret from the people, and so was the death of the king for three whole days. In the meanwhile, **NORTHUMBERLAND**, mourning the death of the young "Saint" approaching, had, conjunction to observe, with **CRANMER** and the rest of his council, ordered the two princesses to come to London under the pretence that they might be at hand to comfort their brother; but with the real design of putting them into prison the moment the breath should be out of his body. Traitors, foul conspirators, villains of all descriptions, have this in common, that they, when necessary to their own interest, are always ready to betray each, other. That happened here; for the Earl of Arundel, who was one of the council, and who went with Dudley and others, on the tenth of July, to kneel before Lady Jane as queen, had, in the night of the sixth, sent a secret messenger to **MARY** who was no farther off than **HODDERSDON**, informing her of the death of her brother, and of the whole of the plot against her. Thus warned, she set off on horseback, accompanied only by a few servants, to Kinninghall in Norfolk, whence she proceeded to Framlingham, in Suffolk, and thence issued her commands to the council to proclaim her as their sovereign, hinting at, but not positively accusing them with, their treasonable designs. They had, on the day before, proclaimed Lady Jane to be queen! They had taken all sorts of precautions to ensure their success: army, fleet, treasure, all the powers of government were in their hands. They, therefore, returned her a most insolent answer and commanded her to submit, as a dutiful subject, to the lawful queen, at the bottom of which command **CRANMER'S** name stood first.

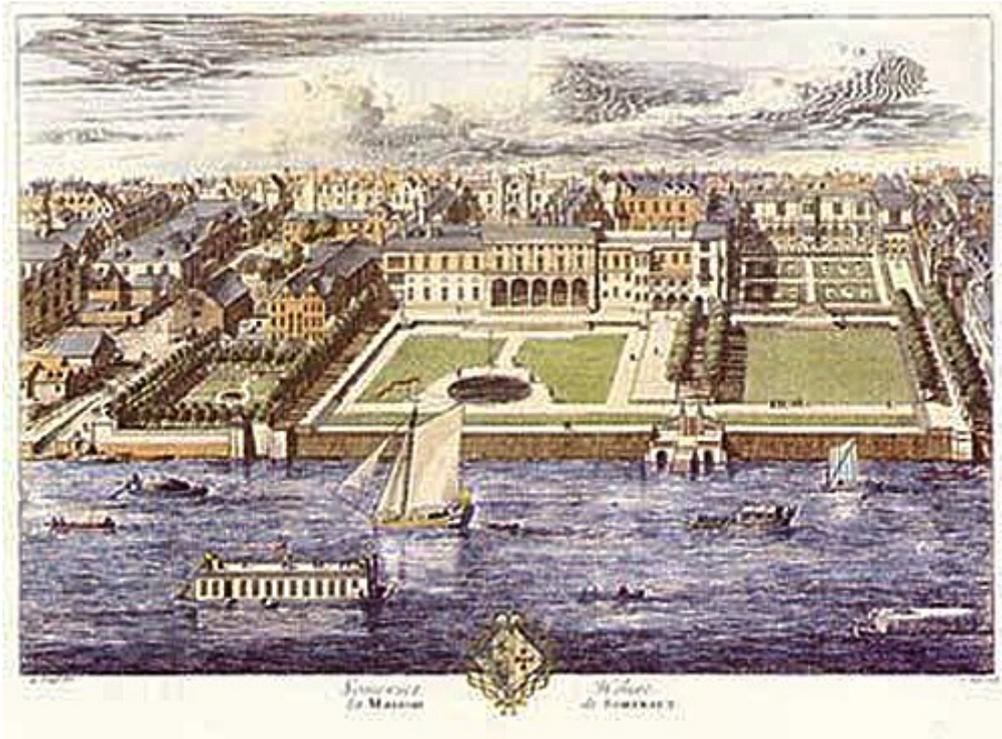
220. Honesty and sincerity exult to contemplate their misgivings, which, in a few hours afterwards, seized this head of almost unparalleled villains. The nobility and gentry had instantly flocked to the standard of Mary; and the people, even in London, who were most infected with the pestiferous principles of the foreign miscreants that had been brought from the continent to teach them the new religion, had native honesty enough left to make them disapprove of this last and most daring of robberies. **RIDLEY**, the Protestant Bishop of London, preached at St Paul's, to the **LORD MAYOR**, and a numerous assemblage, for the purpose of persuading them to take part against **MARY**, but, it was seen, that he preached in vain. **NORTHUMBERLAND** himself marched from London on the 13th of July, to attack the Queen. But, in a few days, she was surrounded by twenty or thirty thousand men, all volunteers in her cause, and refusing pay. Before **NORTHUMBERLAND** reached Bury St. Edmunds, he began to despair; he marched to Cambridge, and wrote to his brother conspirators for reinforcements. Amongst these, dismay first, and then perfidy, began to appear. In a few days, these men who had been so audacious, and who had sworn solemnly, to uphold the cause of **QUEEN JANE**, sent **NORTHUMBERLAND** an order to disband his army, while they themselves, proclaimed **QUEEN MARY**, amidst the unbounded applause of the people.

221. The master-plotter had disbanded his army, or, rather, it had deserted him, before the order of the council reached him. This was the age of "reformation" and of bareness. Seeing himself abandoned, he, by the advice of **DR. SANDS**, the Vice Chancellor of the University, who, only four days before, had preached against **MARY**, went to the Marketplace of Cambridge, and proclaimed her Queen, tossing, says **STOWE**, his cap into the air in token of his joy and satisfaction. In a few hours afterwards he was arrested by the Queen's order, and that, too, by his brother conspirator, the **EARL OF ARUNDEL**, who had been one of the very first to kneel before Lady Jane, No reign, no age, no country, ever witnessed rapacity, hypocrisy, meanness, baseness, perfidy such as England witnessed in those, who were the destroyers of the Catholic, and the founders of the Protestant, Church. This Dudley, who, had, for years, been a plunderer of the Church; who had been a promoter of every ruffian-like measure against those who adhered to the religion of his fathers; who had caused a transfer of the crown because, as he alleged, the accession of Mary would endanger the Protestant religion; this very man, when he came to receive justice on the block, confessed his belief in the Catholic faith; and, which is more, exhorted the nation to return to it. He, according to **DR. HEYLYN** (a Protestant, mind), exhorted them to stand to the religion of their ancestors, rejecting that of a later date, which had occasioned all the misery of the foregoing thirty years and that, if they desired to present their souls, unspotted, before God, and were truly affected to their country, they should expel the preachers of the reformed religion. For himself, he said, being blinded by ambition, he made a rack of his conscience, by temporising, and so acknowledged the injustice of his sentence. **FOX**, author of the lying "*Book of Martyrs*," of whose lies we shall see more by-and-by, asserts, that **DUDLEY** made this confession in consequence of a promise of pardon. But, when he came on the scaffold, he knew that he was not to be pardoned and besides, he himself expressly declared the contrary at his execution and told the people, that he had not been moved by any one to make it, and had not done it from any hope of saving his life. However, we have yet to see **CRANMER** himself recant, and to see the whole band of Protestant plunderers on their knees before the Pope's legate, confessing their sins of heresy and sacrilege, and receiving absolution for their offences

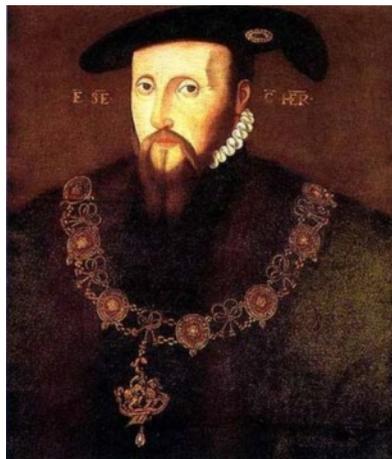
222. Thus ended this reign of "reformation" plunder, wretchedness and disgrace. Three times the form of the new worship was changed, and yet those who adhered to the old worship, or who went beyond the new worship, were punished with the utmost severity. The nation became every day more and more despised abroad, and more and more distracted and miserable at home. The Church, as "by law established," arose and was enforced under two protectors, or chief ministers, both of whom deservedly suffered death as traitors. Its principal author was a man who had sent both Protestants and Catholics to the stake; who had burnt people for adhering to the Pope, others for not believing in transubstantiation, others for believing in it; and who now burnt others for disbelieving in it for reasons different from his own; a man, who now openly professed to disbelieve in that, for not believing in which he had burnt many of his fellow-creatures, and who,

after this, most solemnly declared, that his own belief was that of these very persons! As this Church by "law established," advanced, all the remains of Christian charity vanished before it. The indigent, whom the Catholic church had so tenderly, gathered under her wings, were now, merely for asking alms, branded with red-hot irons and made slaves, though no provision was made to prevent them from perishing from hunger and cold and England, so long famed as the land of hospitality, generosity, ease, plenty, and security to person and property, became, under a Protestant Church, a scene of repulsive selfishness, of pack-horse toil, of pinching want, and of rapacity and plunder and tyranny that made the very names of law and justice a mockery.

The End Letter 7



Somerset House Palace - London



Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset



**Hugh Percy (1712–1786),
1st Duke of Northumberland**



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Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"
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