

DR. ROWLAND TAYLOR.

On the 9th of February, in the year 1553, Dr. Rowland Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh in Suffolk, one of the first towns in England that entertained the Reformation, suffered death there for resisting the establishment of papal worship in his church.

Rowland Taylor was "a doctor in both the civil and canon lawes, and a right perfect divine." On induction to his benefice, he resided with his flock, "as a good shepherd abiding and dwelling among his sheep," and "not only was his word a preaching unto them, but all his life and conversation was an example of unfained Christian life and true holinesse: he was void of all pride, humble and meeke as any child, so that none were so poore but they might boldly, as unto their father, resort unto him; neither was his lowliness childlike or fearfull; but, as occasion, time, and place required, he would be stout in rebuking the sinfull and evil doers, so that none was so rich but he would tell him plainly his fault, with such earnest and grave rebukes as became a good curate and pastor." He continued in well-doing at Hadleigh during the reign of king Edward VI. till the days of queen Mary—when one Foster, a lawyer, and one John Clerk, of Hadley, "hired one Avert, parson of Aldam, a right popish priest, to come to Hadley, and there to give the onset to begin again the popish masse; to this purpose they builded up, with all haste possible, the altar, intending to bring in their masse again about the Palme Munday." The altar was thrown down in the night, but on the following day it was replaced, and the Aldam priest entered the church, attended by Foster and Clerk, and guarded by men with swords and bucklers. Dr. Taylor, who was in his study, and ignorant of this irruption, hearing the church bells ring, repaired thither, and found the priest, surrounded by his armed force, ready to begin mass, against whom he was unable to prevail, and was himself thrust, "with strong hand, out of the church." Two days afterwards, he was summoned by Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, to come before him at London, and answer complaints. His friends counselled him to fly; but Taylor determined to meet his enemies, "and, to their beads, resist their false doings." He took his departure amidst their weeping, "leaving his cure with a godly old priest named Sir Richard Yeoman, who afterwards, for God's truth, was burnt at Norwich." On his appearance, bishop Gardiner, who was also lord chancellor, reviled him, "calling him knave, traitor, heretike, with many other villainous reproaches." Taylor listened patiently; at last he said, "My lord, I am neither traitor nor heretike, but a true subject, and a faithfull Christian man; and am come, according to your commandment, to know what is the cause that your lordship hath sent for me?" The bishop charged upon him that he was married. "Yea," quoth Taylor, "that I thank God I am, and have had nine children, and all in lawful matrimony; and blessed be God that ordained matrimony." Then the bishop charged him with having resisted the priest of Aldam in saying mass at Hadleigh. Taylor also admitted this, and, after stout dispute, was committed to the king's bench, where he spent his time in praying, reading the scriptures, writing, preaching, and exhorting the prisoners to repentance and amendment of life. There he found "master Bradford," whom he comforted by his courage. While imprisoned, he was cited to appear "in the Arches at Bow church," and was carried thither, and "deprived of his benefice because he was married." On the 20th of January, 1553, Taylor was again taken before Gardiner and other bishops. He gives a long account of his disputations with them on that and like occasions. They urged him, and others with him, to recant; the prisoners refused, and "then the bishops read sentence of death upon them."

After condemnation, Dr. Taylor was "bestowed in the Clinke till it was toward night, and then he was removed to

the counter by the Poultry." On the 4th of February, Bonner, bishop of London, came to the counter to degrade him; first wishing him to return to the church of Rome, and promising him to sue for his pardon. Whereunto Taylor answered, "I woulde you and your followers would turne to Christ; as for me, I will not turn to Antichrist." "Well," quoth the bishop, "I am come to degrade you, wherefore put on these vestures." "No," quoth Dr. Taylor, "I will not." "Wilt thou not?" said the bishop; "I shall make thee ere I goe." Quoth Doctor Taylor, "You shall not, by the grace of God." Then Bonner caused another to put them on his back; and when thus arrayed, Taylor, walking up and down, said, "How say you, my lord, am I not a goodly foot? How say you, my masters; if I were in Cheap, should I not have boys enough to laugh at these apish toys, and toying trumpery?" The bishop proceeded, with certain ceremonies, to his purpose, till at the last, when, according to the form, he should have struck Taylor on the breast with his crosier, the bishop's chaplain said, "My lord, strike him not, for he will sore strike again." Taylor favoured the chaplain's suspicion. "The cause," said he "is Christ's; and I were no good Christian if I would not fight in my master's quarrel." It appears that "the bishop laid his curse upon him, but struck him not;" and after all was over, when he got up stairs, "he told master Bradford (for both lay in one chamber) that he had made the bishop of London afraid; for, saith he, laughingly, his chaplain gave him counsell not to strike with his crosier-staff, for that I would strike again; and by my troth, said he, rubbing his hands, I made him believe I would doe so indeed."

Thus was Taylor still cheerful from rectitude. In the afternoon his wife, his son, and John Hull, his servant, were permitted to sup with him. After supper, walking up and down, he impressively exhorted them, with grave advice, to good conduct and reliance on Providence. "Then they, with weeping tears, prayed together, and kissed one the other; and he gave to his wife a book of the church service, set out by king Edward, which in the time of his imprisonment he daily used; and unto his sonne Thomas he gave a latine booke, containing the notable sayings of the old martyrs, gathered out of *Ecclesiastica Historia*; and in the end of that booke he wrote his testament and last rule." In this "vale," dated the 5th of February, he says to his family, "I goe before, and you shall follow after, to our long home. I goe to the rest of my children. I have bequeathed you to the onely Omnipotent." In the same paper he tells his "dear friends of Hadley, to remain in the light opened so plainly and simply, truly, thoroughly, and generally in all England," for standing in which he was to die in flames.

In the morning at two o'clock, the sheriff of London, with his officers, brought him, without light, from the counter to Aldgate. His wife, suspecting that he would be carried away thus privately, had watched, from the time they had parted, within the porch of St. Botolph's church, having her daughter Mary with her, and a little orphan girl named Elizabeth, whom the honest martyr had reared from three years old to her then age of thirteen; and when the sheriff and his company came nigh to where they stood, the child Elizabeth cried, "O my dear father! Mother, mother, here is my father led away!" The darkness being so great that the one could not see the other, his wife cried, "Rowland, Rowland, where art thou?" Taylor answered, "Dear wife! I am here," and he stayed; and the sheriff's men would have forced him, but the sheriff said, "Stay a little, my masters, I pray you, and let him speak to his wife." Then he took his daughter Mary in his arms, and he, and his wife, and the orphan girl, kneeled and prayed; and the sheriff, and many who were present, wept; and he arose and kissed his wife, and shook her by the hand, and said, "Farewell, my dear wife; be of good comfort, for I am quiet in my conscience—God shall stir up a father for my children." He had