

admitted that Henry VIII., forceful and imperious as he was, could not have howled over the Catholic Church by himself. Opposition to Rome had been growing ever since the days of Wicklif. The Reformation had spread widely in England, despite the efforts of the Catholic Church to crush it. And a still greater movement had been in progress, that which is known as Renaissance, the new birth of science and philosophy. Henry VIII. counted for something, but the successful revolt against Rome would certainly have taken place (sooner or later) without him. He struck at the Pope in his anger, but the time was ripe for the blow, and the forces of Protestantism which he liberated were not of his own creation. He simply transformed latent power into potential energy. A single spark will do that in a barrel of gunpowder. Some people call the spark the cause of the explosion, as though it would have caused an explosion had it fallen on a barrel of sand!

But let us leave history for the affairs of the present. Cardinal Vaughan calls himself the unworthy successor of Augustine, and we will not quarrel with the description. He tells us that he wears the same pallium (how dirty it must be!), exercises the same metropolitan jurisdiction, teaches the same doctrine, uses the same holy water (how it must stink!), venerates the same relics, and offers the same sacrifice of the Mass. It is with this rubbish that Cardinal Vaughan aims at the conquest of England—the England of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. We venture to prophesy that he will fail. England shows no signs of going back to Rome. The Catholic Church will doubtless sweep into its net a growing number of respectable superstitionists from other churches. But science is against it, philosophy is against it, democracy is against it, freethought is against it—and history is against it. It is all very well to censure the tyranny and lust of Henry VIII., but when did the Catholic Church denounce the vices or the crimes of a king who served its interests? Cardinal Vaughan weeps over three hundred English Catholics who “suffered death for the spiritual power of the Pope” under Henry VIII. Has he ever dropped a tear over the Protestants who were sent to the fire by Mary? Has he mourned over the butcheries of Alva in the Netherlands? Has he deplored the frightful massacres of St Bartholomew? Has he sighed over the wholesale torture and extermination of the American natives by the Christian Spaniards? Has he regretted the agony of a single victim of the dread Inquisition, the bloodiest tribunal ever established on earth?

Back to Rome! Back to relics and holy water, and childish superstition, and cunning, unscrupulous priestcraft, and suppression of liberty, and persecution and murder of heretics! Back to the glorious condition of Spain! Back to the state of Italy under Papal dominion! Never! England must cease to be England before this can happen. Rome may go on capturing idle rich men, and fantastic professionals, and the poorest of the poor who admire charity above justice; but the moment she imagines the time has come to dare as she once did, she will have to face millions of free men, who would fight lions in defence of their rights, and would soon settle an army of wolves.—*Freethinker.*