

THE "LABRADOR" IN MID-OCEAN. *Page 218.*

Puritanism well nigh bore her down, for a time; indeed she suffered ship-wreck, but the storm subsided. Once more the ship was manned, with the Archbishop of her ancient see of Canterbury at the helm; her breaches were restored, all damages repaired, and with sails set anew she proceeded on her way.

The Church gained strength to a surprising extent during the reign of Charles II. There was a spiritual growth also that the age does not usually get credit for. In 1678 a few young men in London formed what they called "Societies." They had noticed clubs formed by atheists, Deists and "Socinians" and therefore, by way of counteraction, organized themselves in to societies of religion. This was the beginning of powerful agencies which afterwards were to spring up within the bosom of the Church, to her great benefit and enlargement. In fact, England, but a short time before overrun with dissent, put forth energies on behalf of her ancient Church, which, viewed from the present day, seems surprising; and all the more so because of fresh difficulties which at once began to assail her. If the people had shown an abhorrence of Puritanism, they now began to see that there was danger from Popery, a term very generally in use at the time we write about. It was known that the king himself (Charles II.) was tainted with Popery, as it was everywhere expressed, and that James, the king's brother, and heir to the throne, was an openly avowed Romanist.

The nation was undoubtedly and staunchly Protestant, and therefore, through its Parliament, endeavored to exclude the Duke of York from the succession. This angered the king. In 1679 he dissolved the Parliament. It met again in 1680, and also in 1681, and resolutely maintained its position. The Exclusion Bill was passed, but the king refused to sign it. This began to show great trouble looming up in the distance for the Church of England, for the great bulk of the members of the Church were Protestant, but at the same time were loyal to the throne. They were accordingly on the horns of a dilemma. If they supported the royal cause they would endanger the principles of the Church; if they did not support it they would be lifting up their hands

"against the Lord's anointed." Such was the doctrine which had been industriously preached. It was the divine right of kings. Charles caused a declaration to be read in all the churches censuring those who would have excluded his brother from the throne. Archbishop Sancroft supported the king in this. It caused much hardship among the Dissenters and led to much persecution among them.

But difficulties were precipitated by the death of the king. He died in 1685, shrieved, it was said, by a Romish priest.

UNDER JAMES II.

James II., the new king, was a Roman Catholic. Here then was another storm through which the Church had to be steered. Archbishop Sancroft was at the helm. For this position he had many of the qualifications, yet not all, for his management of the tossing ship, though admirable at first, became unfortunately weak towards the last.

James II. was an undoubted Romanist and clearly stated that fact in his first declaration, but he promised to maintain the Church of England as by law established. This, however, could not well be. The two things could not exist side by side. The laws of the realm were against the king. He wished his officers to be Romanists. The Test Act was in the way. His first attempt, therefore, was to erase it from the statute book.