

of the Roman Catholic they most positively and absolutely drew the line. The English statutes of William III. and Elizabeth were reproduced in all their hideous deformity. It was enacted that :

"Every Popish person exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and every Popish priest or person exercising the function of a Popish priest, shall depart out of this province on or before the twenty-fifth day of March, 1759. And if any such person, or persons, shall be found in this province after the said day he or they shall, upon conviction, be adjudged to suffer perpetual imprisonment. And if any person or persons so imprisoned shall escape out of prison, he or they shall be deemed and adjudged to be guilty of felony, without benefit of clergy.

"And be it further enacted that any person who shall knowingly harbor, relieve, conceal or entertain any such clergyman of the Popish religion, or Popish priest or person exercising the function of a Popish priest, shall forfeit fifty pounds . . . and shall be also adjudged to be set in the pillory, and to find sureties for his good behaviour, at the discretion of the court."

The Assembly that passed these severe enactments, will need, at the bar of history, all the advantage that can be gained from the more merciful proviso with which the statute concludes, to the effect that :

"The act shall not extend to any such Romish ecclesiastical persons who shall be sent into the province as prisoners of war, or who shall by shipwreck or other distress or necessity be driven into the province, so as that such prisoners of war do not escape before they can be sent out of the province, or that such persons arriving through necessity as aforesaid, depart out of the province as soon as there may be opportunity." They must also—that is the latter class—attend the Governor immediately and represent the necessity of their arrival, and obey any directions he may give as to

their departure, and neither class must exercise any ecclesiastical functions in the meantime, or otherwise they shall be liable to the penalties of the act.

Perhaps we need not humiliate ourselves too profoundly in view of this legislation, barbarous and oppressive as it appears to us in the light of this better and happier day. The plant of religious liberty is one of slow and painful growth. We are now a hundred years and more from the time when this legislation was placed on the statute book of the province. Look back another hundred years and you will find that even in Maryland (which enjoys the lasting honor of being one of the only two of the early colonies of England that were professedly founded on the principle of religious freedom), in spite of a decree framed by its General Assembly in 1649, that "no person whatsoever in this province, professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth be in any way troubled or molested for his or her religion, or in the free exercise thereof, or any way compelled to the belief or exercise of any other religion against his or her consent," it was, nevertheless, enacted that if any person should deny the Holy Trinity, he should be first bored through the tongue, and fined and imprisoned; that for the second offence he should be branded as a blasphemer, the letter B being stamped on his forehead; and that for the third offence he should die. While this extremely limited toleration existed in Maryland, under which such men as Channing and Freeman Clarke would have been bored through the tongue, branded on the forehead and finally put to death as blasphemers—not even such a narrow and limited toleration as this existed in any other of those early colonies, outside of Rhode Island. In all the other New England colonies persecution was practised on principle, and as a matter of religious duty. Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts by the very men who