

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*

John Wickliffe, "the rising sun" of the Reformation, was born in 1324, near Richmond, in Yorkshire. At Oxford he resisted the pretensions of the popish friars with great effect, and brought himself into celebrity. He was presented to the Rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, through the influence of his friend the Duke of Lancaster. Here he preached with great diligence and success, although he was harassed and persecuted by the pope and the bishops. His doctrines and character became extremely popular; and his translation of the holy scriptures into English, is sufficient to endear his name and memory to all posterity. He died in peace at Lutterworth, of the palsy, in 1384. In the year 1428, his bones were taken up and burnt, by an order of the council of Constance, and his works were publicly thrown into the flames at Oxford. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" and no popish artifice has been able to prevent it from having free course amongst us. The followers of Wickliffe rapidly increased, and were usually called *Lollards*, a German word, signifying a "psalm singer." Real Christians have always been stigmatized with some reproachful name by the world. But they must be content to go through evil as well as good report. Courtney, Archbishop of Canterbury, dreadfully persecuted the Lollards, whom he charged with sedition, but they suffered purely for conscience sake.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Henry the fourth having usurped the throne, undertook with Archbishop Arundel, the work of exterminating the Lollards by fire. And the king empowered the magistrates to burn all heretics whom the bishops should give up for that infernal purpose. William Sautre, rector of St. Osyth, in London, having boldly preached salvation through faith in the blood of Christ, was the first person who thus suffered death for the truth's sake. He was burnt in the year 1400. In the reign of Henry the fifth, a great many suffered the same painful death, amongst whom was Lord Cobham a zealous promoter of the doctrines of Wickliffe; when he was brought before the bishops, he protested against all popish superstitions, and declared his firm reliance on the sacrifice and mediation of Christ for his salvation. He was executed in the year 1417, as a heretic, being burnt alive, suspended on a gallows by a chain fastened round his waist.—At this period, nothing but bonds, imprisonment, and death, awaited those who dared to oppose the errors of popery, and profess a more scriptural faith. During the long minority of Henry the sixth, the persecution of the Lollards continued unabated. Hundreds suffered a variety of cruel torments, particularly John Brown, of Ashford, in Kent. His feet were burnt in prison to the bare bones, with red hot coals. He was afterwards put in the stocks, where his afflicted wife attended him all night, and heard the mournful account of his previous sufferings; and on the next day, being Whitsun eve, he was burnt alive.—He died exclaiming, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."

But now behold the inscrutable wisdom of God, in delivering the Church from that degrading tyranny under which it had so long groaned. The very cruelty of the papists roused the nation to action, and called forth those energies of the human mind which led to the Reformation of religion. But before we proceed, let us place ourselves in the situation of the poor Lollards, and ask ourselves, "Are we prepared to suffer every torture, and part even with life itself, rather than make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience?" Are we like them looking for salvation only through the blood and righteousness of Christ: renouncing all dependence upon forms and ceremonies? Have we such a settled conviction that the creed of our established Church is agreeable to the word of God, that we would rather die at the stake than deny her faith? These are important questions which the members of the Church of England are seriously and particularly called upon to consider. The time may come when their principles will be put to the test here on earth; and at all events, we must appear at the bar of God, to give an ac-

count of the improvement we have made of the blessed privileges, which, as protestant churchmen, we enjoy.

The reformation of our Church from popery and its abominations, began in the reign of Henry the eighth. That capricious monarch had, when very young, married Catherine of Arragon, the widow of his brother Arthur, who died without issue, Henry was so devoted a papist, that he wrote a book in defence of popery against Martin Luther, the celebrated Saxon Reformer; for which the Pope bestowed on him the title of "Defender of the Faith;" which our beloved monarch, in a far nobler sense, enjoys at this day. But the doctrines of Wickliffe had now existed 150 years, and made great progress amongst all ranks in the nation. Many persons, however, suffered great persecutions during this period, and amongst many others that might be mentioned, it is recorded that in the year 1519, six men and a woman were burnt at Coventry, for teaching the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue!!! Let us never hear the minister's solemn exhortation at the conclusion of the ceremony of baptizing our children, without calling to mind the miseries of our forefathers, and praising God for his great mercies vouchsafed unto us their unworthy posterity. King Henry having fallen in love with the beautiful Ann Boleyn, began to express scruples of conscience respecting the lawfulness of his marriage with his brother's wife, and he was determined, if possible, to obtain the pope's authority for a divorce, in order that he might marry his new favourite. His holiness made Henry many promises, but for political reasons, delayed from time to time to fulfil them, and so wearied the patience of the King, that at length he began to think of accomplishing his wishes in spite of the pope. It was suggested to him by the learned Doctor Cranmer, to consult the different Universities on the subject, and Henry was so pleased with this plan, that he exclaimed, "I have now the sow by the right ear." Cardinal Wolsey was dismissed from his high office of Lord Chancellor, and succeeded by Sir Thomas More, a man of great wisdom, strict integrity, and exemplary morals, but a furious persecutor. Doctor Cranmer, for the advice he had given, was promoted from one step to another, till on the death of Dr. Warham, he was raised to the archbishopric of Canterbury. On the promotion of More to the Chancellorship, Cardinal Wolsey was disgraced and banished from the court.—This haughty prelate, who had been so insolent in office and favour, now became, under the frowns of the king the most abject wretch imaginable; and had the shocking profaneness to declare, that "he preferred the king's favour to that of Almighty God."* He was at length arrested in Yorkshire, on a charge of high treason, and ordered to be committed to the Tower. But he fell sick in his way up to London, and died at Leicester, on the 28th of Nov. 1530—His dying words are so important that they ought to be had in remembrance by all. "Had I," said he, "served my God as I have served the king, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs."—No, for none ever served God in vain. None ever trusted in him and were confounded. And we see by the mournful end of this great man, who had risen by his talents, from being a butcher's son at Ipswich, to the highest rank and authority under the king, "that it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in princes." We may learn too, that unless riches and talents and honours and power be employed for the glory of God, they only expose a man to greater calamities even in this life, than he would otherwise be subject to, and very much increase the risk of his salvation in the next.

On the fall of the cardinal, new measures were adopted, and the parliament passed several laws for reforming the abuses of the clergy, who in vain attempted to oppose their enactment.

The different universities, having given their opinions in favour of the king's divorce he began to take great liberties, and assert boldly the "Prerogative of the English Crown," and that he himself, and not the pope, was the "supreme Head of the Church and Clergy of England." Sir Thomas More resign-

ed his office, when he saw the lengths the king intended to go, and was permitted to retire from councils which he could no longer sanction.—To be continued.

THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE.*

That science (which is simply knowledge reduced to a system) should confer power, may easily be comprehended; because he who has most extensively examined and best understood the constitution of the material world, will be preeminently qualified to make it subservient to his own purposes. That such knowledge may be made applicable to the acquirement of riches is quite obvious; but, independently of worldly riches, the keen enquirer after knowledge secures for himself a meed of intellectual affluence and gratification, which by its very nature is placed beyond the ordinary accidents and fatalities of fortune. Though poor apparently, he is rich indeed. Though deprived of the society of friends and companions, yet he is far from being alone; *nunquam minus solus est quam cum solus*. All the pleasures of such a person are derived from other objects than those of sense, and, like the Roman philosopher, he feels that he is born for higher things than to be the slave of the body.

But knowledge, besides thus giving power and wealth both material and intellectual to its possessor, gives also—what we most desire to get—time. It does not certainly give time in the literal sense of the word, but it teaches the proper use and value of time. The ignorant soon become depraved, because they have no idea of the true value of time, and of the responsibility they lie under to make a proper use of it. Vanities beyond laughter, listlessness, vacancy, frivolity, systematic egotism and positively vicious debauchery, are the enjoyments of those only who have not begun to appreciate the delights of knowledge, and who have never felt the intense satisfaction which results from the discovery of truth, by the use and unaided exercise of one's own intrinsic powers.

True it is, however discouraging it apparently may be to be told so at the outset, that the more knowledge we attain to, the more we are led to feel our own ignorance.—The contemporaries of Columbus believed that they were already acquainted with all the world; and they rested content in their ignorance. Even he, when he first set his foot on the New World—even he, the intrepid navigator—sighed that so much more was yet to be done before he saw the limits of the new country. But did this cause him to be discontented, or to repine, or to despair? No. The prospect was inviting as it was new, and the vastness of the whole was not less impressive than the novelty and interest of the part which he already had discovered. The very magnitude of the object was to him, accordingly, a stimulus to increased exertion; and hearty, vigorous and resolute exertion brought with it more enlarged and more important discovery. So it is in knowledge. Let us first discover the outer island, and we shall soon discover the all but limitless continent behind—we become aware of our own ignorance, but we are rewarded by what we have already learned or observed; and hope still urges us on to further attainment. No man, however, may flatter himself with the hope of obtaining all. They who pretend to universal knowledge are little better than quacks; and the true philosopher is the first to confess his own ignorance. Not even Newton—the Columbus of Science—not even Newton believed he had attained to perfect wisdom; on the contrary, we are informed, that he was the modest and diffident of himself to a more than ordinary degree. "I do not know," he exclaims shortly before his death,—"I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a little boy, playing on the sea shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of Truth lay all undiscovered before me."

The first lesson in knowledge, therefore, will be humility; and if we thus at the outset lay down the conceit and swelling pride of ignorance, whilst we

* This fact is stated on the authority of Bishop Burnet, although the Monthly Reviewers deny it.

* From an Oration delivered at the Encenia of King's College, Fredericton, by the Professor, &c. James Robb.