

made for the unmistakable influence of political and personal prejudices. Foreseeing that the freedom of his strictures would give offence in many quarters, Burnet left an injunction in his will that the work should not be published till six years after his death, so that it did not make its appearance till 1723, and even then some passages—afterwards restored—were omitted by his sons. Its publication, as might have been expected, was a signal for fierce attacks on the reputation of the author, whose candour and veracity were loudly impeached. All the Tory and Jacobite pens of the age were pointed against the *History*. Swift, Dartmouth, Lansdowne, and many others proclaimed it to be grossly partial and inaccurate; Pope and Arbuthnot ridiculed its egotistic style; and Hume and later historians continued the depreciatory attacks, which cannot yet be said to have ceased. Whoever writes of the period or of its leading public characters must consult Burnet, and will find plenty of points for assault on the theological and political views so complacently advanced by the author. Burnet was a strong and somewhat credulous partisan, a minute and garrulous describer of events great and small. But he was doubtless an honest, well-meaning, and usually good-natured man. He appealed to the God of truth that he had on all occasions in his work told the truth, and, however mistaken or biassed he may be on some points, he may claim the praise of having been, according to his lights, a faithful chronicler. That he is a lively and interesting one has never been disputed; his book is a gallery of pictures—some overshadowed, some too bright, but all life-like. 'It seems,' as Horace Walpole said, 'as if he had just come from the king's closet, or from the apartments of the men whom he describes, and was telling his readers, in plain, honest terms, what he had seen and heard.' The diaries of Evelyn and Pepys serve as supplements to Burnet. It should perhaps be added that Dr Routh, Tory and High Churchman, who published two editions of the *History of my Own Time* (1823-33), did not take the most favourable view of Burnet; succinctly declaring, 'I know the man to be a liar, and I am determined to prove him so.' The first extract is from the *History of the Reformation*, the others all from the *History of my Own Time*:

Death and Character of Edward VI.

But now the King's death broke off this negotiation. He had last year first the measles, and then the small-pox, of which he was perfectly recovered; in his progress he has been sometimes violent in his exercises, which had cast him into great colds; but these went off, and he seemed to be well after it: in the beginning of January this year [1553], he was seized with a deep cough, and all medicines that were used did rather increase than lessen it; upon which a suspicion was taken up, and spread over all the world (so that it is mentioned by most of the historians of that age) that some lingering poison had been given him; but more than rumours, and

some ill-favoured circumstances, could never discover concerning this. He was so ill when the parliament met that he was not able to go to Westminster, but ordered their first meeting and the sermon to be at Whitehall. In the time of his sickness, Bishop Ridley preached before him, and took occasion to run out much on works of charity, and the obligation that lay on men of high condition to be eminent in good works. This touched the King to the quick; so that presently after the sermon he sent for the Bishop. And after he had commanded him to sit down by him and be covered, he resumed most of the heads of the sermon, and said he looked on himself as chiefly touched by it: he desired him, as he had already given him the exhortation in general, so to direct him to do his duty in that particular. The Bishop,



BISHOP BURNET.

From the Portrait by John Riley in the National Portrait Gallery.

astonished at this tenderness in so young a prince, burst forth in tears, expressing how much he was overjoyed to see such inclinations in him; but told him he must take time to think on it, and craved leave to consult with the Lord-Mayor and court of Aldermen. So the King writ by him to them to consult speedily how the poor should be relieved. They considered there were three sorts of poor: such as were so by natural infirmity or folly, as impotent persons, and madmen or idiots; such as were so by accident, as sick or maimed persons; and such as by their illiness did cast themselves into poverty. So the King ordered the Greyfriars' church, near Newgate, with the revenues belonging to it, to be a house for orphans; St Bartholomew's, near Smithfield, to be an hospital; and gave his own house of Bridewell to be a place of correction and work for such as were wilfully idle. He also confirmed and enlarged the grant for the hospital of St Thomas in Southwark, which he had erected and endowed in August last. And when he set his hand to these foundations, which was not done before the 26th of June this year, he thanked God that had prolonged his life till he had finished that design. So he was the first founder of those houses, which by