

[Having given our readers last week the article on "Religion in England after the reformation," we present them in this number with an equally well written and able account of "Religion in England before the Reformation."]

From the Dublin Review.

### RELIGION IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

*Life and Times of John Reuchlin or Caprion, the Father of the Reformation.*  
By F. Barham, Esq. London: 1843.

Whatever ills afflicted this fair realm of England, from her conversion to Christianity under St. Augustine down to the fatal epoch of 1534, were most assuredly not attributable to the religion, which during that long and interesting period of her history, grew and flourished upon her soil in so singular a degree for that was a religion more peculiarly adapted to bring a blessing on the land,—a vision fair of peace and rest; making it "a land of hills and plains expecting rain from heaven, and which the Lord God for ever visited, keeping his eyes for ever on it, from the beginning of the year unto the end thereof; (Deut. xi, 11, 13); devoting her whole substance in this, to the interests of a future world, and consecrating her whole self, both spiritual and temporal, to those hallowed purposes.

For, in the first place, it was a religion which ever made the Church her home-stand. There she enthroned her God in splendid pageantry, collecting all her means to honor Him whom she adored, and attracting to His worship all the people over whom she ruled. There was enticing imagery for the young, and solemn service for the old, the note of sorrow or of triumph in her voice, the sign of mourning or of gladness on her altars, the daughter of Sion robed in "the garments of her glory," or clad in the weeds of her affliction, (as the season suggested; the emblem of redemption elevated upon high that while they gazed upon the sad symbol of their faith it might excite compunction, hope, and with hope charity. More elevated still, they beheld the representation of the last and awful doom, with Him who was crucified for the sins of men coming in great majesty and power to judge mankind by the standard of the cross, attended by choirs of angels to minister to his will, with companies of prophets and armies of martyrs to attest the judgment, and the whole host of heaven to do homage to his wisdom and his justice; the blessed on the right and the reprobate on the left, a gleam of eternal brightness indicating the reward of the one, and sulphurous flame and tormenting spirits the portion of the other. But this was not the only instruction which the pious votary might read in the decoration of the material temple. If his soul were oppressed or his eyes wearied by the contemplation of this awful scene, and he sought relief by casting them on the ground, there was still a lesson ready for him, or they but rested on the memorials of the dead. If he were a sinner he was again struck with terror; if he were looking with pious expectation for what was to come, he read his hope and his conso-

lation; for he knew that if death were the destruction of the wicked, it was also the resurrection of the just. Around him he beheld depicted the whole story of revelation, to elevate the mind by teaching it the dignity of a Christian, and the value of an immortal soul; the end for which it was created, and the price paid for its redemption. They were all appliances to excite devotion, and every requisite to satisfy it,—the daily sacrifice, the varied service, the frequent prayer, the priest of God to distribute his graces, to give strength to the weak and fresh vigor to the strong, to relieve the penitent of his burden at the foot of the cross, and impress the judgments of heaven on the obdurate sinner,—to afford consolation to the sorrowful, courage to the timid and assurance to the diffident; in fine, through the powers conferred upon her ministers by her divine Founder, as the vicegerents of Him who said, "Come to me all ye who labor and are burdened, and I will ease and refresh you;" dispensing relief to all miseries, temptations, and afflictions with which the poor wayfarer in this valley of tears is sure to be tried, bewildered or oppressed.

It was the religion which, from St. Augustine to Sir Thomas More, never omitted to put forth the most splendid examples of the noblest virtues, of the most steadfast faith, the most heroic courage, and the most ardent charity; leaving monuments of zeal to attest the disinterested and benignant piety of men who enthroned the covenant of God in the heart, and gave it dominion over the passions.

It was the only religion which ever possessed within herself such incentives to virtue, or which provided such safe-guards against vice; which ever realized the counsels of the Gospel, and of frail, sinful creatures, made men "rich in virtue,"—burying them in peace, but giving them a name which liveth unto generation and generation, (Eccles. xlv, 6, 14), and sending the souls to that blessed abode, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, for the former things are passed away."

It was the religion which, even in the darkest times, was ever found to be fighting the cause of truth and right against sin, to be a witness for God, or defending the poor, or purifying or reforming their own functionaries, or promoting peace, or maintaining the holy faith committed to her; and it was the only religion that ever put forth all her energies, or combated successfully in such a cause.

And thus it was that the ancient religion of the realm covered the land with consecrated spots, where men were separated from this troubled world, and carried into serene and tranquil regions before their time—where they escaped from the thorny desert to dwell among enamelled meads—from the contagious atmosphere of every vice to the salubrious abodes of every virtue. They "who were better than the world in their youth, or weary of it in their age; they whose sensitive nature rendered them alike incapable of resisting

either the soft breeze or the rude blast, whose sympathizing tenderness ever melted before the feelings, or whose unresisting timidity ever yielded before the violence of others; they whose iniquities sat heavier on them than they could bear to carry amidst the haunts of sin, and who must needs lay them at the foot of the cross; they whose pilgrimage of toil and mourning had so bruised the heart that it could alone be healed within the balmy influence of the cloister, because there alone the voice of God could reach it amidst the sacred stillness, converting its sorrows into love,—all found their solace and their joy within these holy precincts.

There, too, it was, that the apostolic man was schooled in the science of the saints, till he went forth as the herald of salvation on his triumphant course, conquering sin and death, enlarging the boundaries of faith, and establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

There it was that the storms of a thousand years swept unheeded over the virtue, which required the protection of the sanctuary to bring it to maturity, and where alone the sublime perfection of the Gospel could be attained: there, that men were congregated together to pray for the sins of their fellow-men—"for a world which forgets to pray for itself"—and to invoke the blessings of God upon his fallen creatures.

There it was that the arts and sciences found their cradle and their refuge, in a rude and troubled age; there the lives of the saints were chronicled, and the history of passing events recorded that otherwise had been lost in oblivion.

There it was that the word of God was treasured up, and explored for the benefit of others with less learning and less leisure than themselves, and there, even, that the classic lore of antiquity was preserved for the amusement and instruction of after generations, till the arts of more modern days were to place them beyond all future danger; then, as now, "a cloister without a library was said to be like a castle without an armory."

There it was that the renunciation of the superstitious of life was reckoned an honorable and meritorious sacrifice, and men were content to be abstemious themselves to enjoy the means of gratifying the necessities of others; for there the hand of charity doled out the daily pittance to the destitute, without any offensive inquiry into the cause of a distress, the presence of which was alone a sufficient recommendation for relief. The spiritual, too, kept pace with the corporal works of mercy, and while food for the body was distributed without, food for the soul was abundantly supplied within.

It was the monastic rule that enabled the possessors of the abbey lands to let them on easy terms, which, together with the hospitalities and charities which they practised, served as a check on the rapacity or cruelty of the feudal baron; and, as a consequence, a prosperous tenantry and a happy people were sure to grow up around the sanctuary. The same benefits were conferred by the property of the prelates and dignitaries of the

Church, [so that it became a proverb, "that it was better, to be governed by a bishop's crozier than by a monarch's sceptre;" and such was the condition of about a fourth part of the kingdom, from which not an eighth probably of the revenue was collected. Yet another blessing did they bring with them, that when war and misery had well nigh desolated the land, through the reckless ambition of some noble, or the rough tyranny of some lawless sovereign, these "cities of refuge" usually escaped the general wreck, and remained as nurseries of virtue and of learning, for the regeneration of the people; while, if the Church also fell into disorder or decay, from similar causes or from onward circumstances, it was the monasteries that ever furnished the materials for its reform.

Such were among the blessings which the religion of our ancestors conferred upon the country. But there were others still; let us take them discursively, as they present themselves to the mind, without order or method.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

From the Tablet.

### LIVES OF THE QUEENS OF ENGLAND from the Norman conquest.

We have already noticed in terms of commendation the work of which the sixth volume now claims our attention: and we are happy to be able again to use towards our industrious and intelligent authoress the language of praise. The present volume contains a part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and, allowing for a little under-current of admiration, which oddly enough shines through the mass of soul materials of which a biography of Elizabeth must be composed, Miss Strickland gives an extremely candid and accurate picture "of that mighty Sovereign." It is strange how quacks and sham pretenders to greatness in all departments sooner or later find their level. They run through a career of reputation for, it may be, a long period; so long as the weakness to which they have powdered, or the follies which they have typified, retain their empire. But at length the fashion of the time out, the old idol is looked at from a new point of view, and through a new medium, the paint peels off, the stuffing is found to be but stuffing, and to be devoid of life, and then ocular demonstration convinces the most prejudiced and credulous that what seemed for a time to be "a live lion," is after all only "stuffed with straw."

Lord Bacon in his first book, "Of the Advancement of Learning," says of her; that she was "a princess that, if Plutarch were now alive to write lives by parallels, would trouble him, I think, to find for her a parallel among women." Among women it is possible that modern history may furnish, from among princesses, some worthy to be her parallel. Russia can supply at least one her equal, or superior, in vigour and resolution of mind, in the strange mixture of feminine weakness and general force of character, and, above all, in personal infamy. But if we look at her on another side, and try to discover by a parallel to what qualities her great