

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*

Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, were now imprisoned and condemned at Oxford, as obstinate heretics. In prison they wrote to each other and to their friends, exhorting one another to continue stedfastly in the faith, and prayed for God's grace to strengthen them for that fiery trial which they saw fast approaching. Bishop Gardiner was vehement in urging the laity against heretics to be put in force. And the council, receiving the Queen's authority, set about their work of blood in good earnest. In Feb. 1555, Mr. Rogers, an eminent preacher, and Bishop Hooper were condemned. When the former was called upon early in the morning to prepare for Smithfield, the good man was so soundly asleep that they could scarcely awaken him. At the stake he was offered a pardon if he would recant, but he preferred a good conscience to life itself, which he willingly laid down for the truth's sake. His body was soon consumed to ashes. Bishop Hooper was sent down to Gloucester to be burnt, in order to strike a terror into his followers there. But the joy and holy triumph of this blessed martyr, only confirmed the people the more in the doctrines which he had taught them.—He died crying with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Mr. Saunders, a preacher, was burnt next, at Coventry. At the stake he exclaimed, "Welcome cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life!" Doctor Taylor, rector of Hadley, Suffolk, was placed in a pitched barrel and burnt, after having been cruelly treated by the soldiers; one of them at length knocked out his brains with his halberd.—Gardiner grew weary of his butchery, and it was committed to the ferocious and diabolical Bonner, Bishop of London. He began with one Thomas Hopkins, a weaver, whom he burnt in Smithfield, for denying the bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament. In prison, Bonner himself plucked off some of this poor man's beard, and burnt his hand in the flame of a candle till the blood flow out on the by-standers.—The next that suffered was William Hunter, a youth of nineteen years of age, and on the same day, two gentlemen, named Causton and Higbed, perished in the flames, near their own houses in Essex. Farrar, Bishop of St. David's, was burnt at Carmarthen; and two others about the same time. One of them named White, was burnt for "sending his son to school that he might hear the Bible read by him!"—Hear this, ye poor, who live in happier times, and rejoice with trembling, lest such a martyr as White rise up at the last day to your condemnation and confusion.

These cruel proceedings so enraged the populace, that the court was obliged to suspend them: but Bonner being encouraged by the Queen, renewed his proceedings against the heretics with such violence and outrage, as to establish his character as one of the most furious monsters that ever disgraced the name and office of a Christian bishop. Mr. Bradford, the celebrated preacher in King Edward's reign, was at length sent to the stake with a young man named John Lease. At the place of execution, Bradford encouraged and strengthened the young man, and died saying, "Strait is the way and narrow is the gate, and few there be that find it." Many others suffered at this time in various parts of the kingdom. But the great blow remaining to be struck was now to fall on the devoted heads of the three excellent bishops in prison at Oxford. Bishop Latimer and Ridley were burnt in front of Balliol College, on the 16th of October, 1555. They suffered with great constancy, Latimer saying to Ridley, "Be of good comfort, brother, we shall this day light such a candle in England, as I trust, by God's grace, shall never be put out." A prediction which has been verifying from that day to this, and will continue to be fulfilling till the whole earth be enlightened with Divine truth. The popish bishop Gardiner died four weeks after, of a painful disorder, full of remorse and horror, just as he was about to receive the object of his ambition, a cardinal's hat—"Man's breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish!" In this year, sixty seven persons were burnt for religion, among whom were four bishops and thirteen priests.

* Concluded.

The persecuting papists next proceeded to degrade Archbishop Cranmer from his priesthood; and a variety of artful means having been employed to induce this amiable man to recant and return to the errors of popery, he yielded to the temptation, and in an unguarded hour signed a paper of dubious meaning, through desire to save his life. The papists were elated at this victory over the unhappy archbishop; but their joy was of short duration; for happily for the reformation, happily for the security of his eternal salvation, Cranmer repented. He fell like Peter:—but like Peter wept.

On the 21st of March, 1556, he was taken to St. Mary's Church, and made a "spectacle to the world, to angels and to men;" and there, to the great astonishment and confusion of the papists, he solemnly declared, "that the fear of death alone had induced him to sign his recantation, and that in his heart he totally rejected the pope and the doctrines of the Church of Rome." As he was thus proceeding, Lord Williams cried out, "Stop the audacious heretic," and immediately the friars and priests pulled him down, and with savage haste, led him away to the stake, which was already prepared for him.—His conscience being now at ease, he died with great patience and serenity, crying out "This hand hath offended! This unworthy right hand! Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Thus was this great, this active, this holy reformer, added to the noble army of martyrs, which praise, and will to all eternity praise the Lord the Redeemer. Eighty five persons of both sexes were burnt this year for their religious opinions. But persecution, like the river Nile, only fertilized the country it threatened to destroy. The protestants exhorted each other, increased in numbers, and became more united and courageous by their sufferings. The blood of the martyrs has in all ages been the seed of the Church.

In the year 1557, the papists burnt all the English bibles. But, blessed be God, all their wicked efforts have not hindered the word of God from having free course amongst us. On the contrary, English bibles have increased in number, especially of late years, and are increasing to an incredible degree.

Great efforts were made in this unhappy reign to establish the infamous and diabolical court of inquisition: but it pleased God even in the worst of times to preserve this favoured land from so dreadful a calamity. Archbishop Grindall estimated that in this bloody reign, no fewer than eight hundred persons perished in the flames. Many, Alas! to save their lives, made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and although it may be hoped that some of them repented, yet they could never again recover their credit for sincerity. "Let him that staudeth, take heed lest he fall."

But in mercy to the nation, Divine Providence terminated this cruel reign, by the death of the Queen, on the 19th of November, 1558. She was succeeded in the throne by her sister, who had been carefully educated in the protestant faith. The death of Mary created an universal joy, and repeated cries of "long live Queen Elizabeth," were heard in all parts of the kingdom. The priests were the only persons who felt any grief at the death of the late Queen; and they were obliged to conceal themselves for a time, lest the rage of the populace should avenge itself for the innocent blood which they had so profusely shed.

On the 19th of November, 1558, Elizabeth ascended the throne, and went, according to ancient custom, to the tower of London, where she fell down on her knees, and praised God for His mercies, in delivering herself and the nation from such cruelties and dangers as they had lately experienced. She received all the bishops courteously excepting the atrocious Bonner, on whom she turned her back. By an act of oblivion for past offences, she soon quieted the fears of those who had reason to dread her power, and thus made the first display of her eminent wisdom. The Queen immediately released all persons confined for conscience sake, and consulted on the best plan for bringing about and settling the reformed religion. She took care to appoint wise councillors, who were friendly to the Reformation, and conducted herself with great courtesy to all ranks of peo-

ple. As soon as the parliament met, several bills were passed in favour of the reformed religion. The English service was restored; the Queen's supremacy acknowledged; and in short, all the laws respecting religion, which were made in the reign of King Edward, were revived, and those of Queen Mary repealed. All offensive popish observances were abolished, and the national worship was modelled to nearly the present excellent standard. Thus was the reformation of the Church of England finally settled by the wise policy and energetic measures of Queen Elizabeth, to whom, under God, the English protestants are indebted for their deliverance from popish darkness and tyranny.

Let us, as members of our established Church, testify our gratitude to God for our distinguished privileges, by a constant and diligent use of the means of grace which she so amply furnishes us. Let us, as a high value on our scriptural articles on our instructive homilies, and on our incomparable liturgy; each and all of which, with the public reading of the scriptures, afford sufficient means to enlighten the mind, to comfort the heart, and to direct the steps of every sincere enquirer after the truth.—If these be properly used, with fervent prayer for the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us, there can be no doubt but that our established Church will, in every city, town, and village, be as she has been, the blessed instrument of conducting many, very many, in all generations, to the realms of glory and everlasting felicity.

YOUTH'S DEPARTMENT.

A CONVERSATION ON DRESS.

Teacher.—I have come to you as the superintendent of the school to ask your advice on a subject that has been pressing on my mind lately. I have noticed among my scholars a disposition to imitate in a coarse way, and often with dirty finery, every article of dress I wear, and I fear the effect may be injurious to them, particularly since I have read an article in the old series of the Sunday School Visitor, headed, "A Girl who learned one thing too much the Sunday School."

Superintendent.—I remember the history you allude to; it was that of a poor girl who acquired, from the example of her Sunday-school teacher such a knowledge of fine dress as proved her ruin; and when I read I was forcibly struck with the responsibility resting on us female teachers to be exemplary in the neatness and sobriety of our apparel, particularly when present in the school, and when visiting the scholars at their homes.

T.—I feel that responsibility so strongly, that I would be glad if you would particularise such articles of my dress as you think I should lay aside at such times. It is easy to give general rules, but not so easy to apply them, and as I am young I should be glad to gain wisdom from your experience.

S.—Since you ask my opinion I will give it freely without fear of offending you. I do not think wrong for those teachers whose circumstances justify it to wear dresses of fine materials, and of a fashionable make, provided they are not too showy, and within the bounds of strict modesty; but I do earnestly wish they would not come to the Sunday-school arrayed in such superfluous articles as ear and finger-rings, worked pocket-handkerchiefs and cuffs, flowered skirts, and waving plumes.

T.—The articles you have enumerated are all deemed superfluities, and not in the least essential to a lady-like appearance; for the very persons who are in the habit of wearing them sometimes lay them aside for variety's sake, and still retain the air of dressed young women.

S.—Exactly so; and therefore it needs no self-denial to lay them aside one day in seven, if they are even suitable on any other occasions; but I believe if all professing Christians would abstain from wearing these ornaments at times of public worship, would more adorn their profession. And surely the injunctions of St. Peter and St. Paul, with regard to dress, should lead us to consider whether our ostentatiousness and the sobriety they inculcate.