

SACRILEGE.*

Theft and sacrilege are evil brethren, but sacrilege is the more sinful of the two. Theft is mere robbery of our fellow-creature; but sacrilege is robbery of God, and is committed by perverting holy and ecclesiastical things to profane and secular purposes. What has been at any time solemnly dedicated or consecrated to God or his Church, which is the same, can never be again taken away and applied to worldly uses with impunity or safety. All churches, buildings, tithes, lands, or other property that have been devoted to God, are his; and he will not be robbed, as we shall hereafter see, without punishing the robbers. To rob the Church of her tithes or other property is direct robbery of God; as we discover from Malachi, iii. 8. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even in this whole nation." If this language means anything it means that to rob the Church of tithes is to rob God; and as God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, we must believe that he will punish sin the same now as ever, though perhaps not always in the same manner.

Now, it is very clear, that this nation has robbed God to a very great extent, not only in past ages, but in the very time in which we live. It is only lately that the Church of Christ in Ireland was robbed of above one-fourth of all her tithes at one stroke; and we have no doubt that the curse will follow, and that the landlords will lose more in the way of rent than they have gained from the robbery of God. Besides, the Irish Church Temporalities Act, by which ten Bishops were cut off from the Church, and their money applied to improper purposes, the nation, through its representatives in Parliament, has, in England too, robbed God of a great deal of his right by the Tithe Commutation Act; although the nation is now suffering, and is likely to suffer still more severely as the natural consequence of past robberies of God. The New Poor Law is creating great excitement through the country, and is in a fair way of producing bad consequences, and of becoming, as many declare it to be, a curse to the country. Now, it may not be amiss to observe, that if God had never been robbed, no poor laws at all would have been made. The poor were chiefly supported by property which belonged to God, and until after sacrilege had been committed, and that property confiscated and applied to secular and profane uses, no poor law existed in the country. The first poor law was passed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when it was found, that in consequence of the very great extent of the robbery of God and the Church, the poor could not find maintenance as formerly, at the numerous abbeys and hospitals which studded the country. We are not about to advocate the monastic system, not to palliate the criminality of the monks and nuns, which we have little doubt was great indeed; but what we do contend for is, that the property had been dedicated to ecclesiastical uses, and it was direct robbery of God to convert it to secular purposes, as Henry VIII. profligately did. If the parties who used the property abused it, the abuse should have been corrected, but the use retained. The persons who consecrated the property to God, and those who used it, might be as wicked as Korah himself, but as the censers of Korah had been consecrated by him, wicked as he was, to holy uses, and were not to be perverted to profane purposes, so the property given to abbeys and such like places was consecrated to God, and ought never to have been confiscated, but all abuses reformed, and the property strictly retained and applied to spiritual purposes. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for sacrilege, in robbing God of a part of that which they had given to him; and it will be well if this nation does not suffer grievously for the crying sin of which it is guilty in robbing God of his "tithes and offerings." As the nation by its Parliament has committed the sin, so by the same means let it restore that which it has taken away. Let it give compensation to the present holders of Church property, as it did to the slave owners to obtain the liberty of the slaves, and

return the property to the Church; and we doubt not that God would fulfil to us the promise implied in the language delivered by the prophet to the Jews:—"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." May God grant us faith to trust him for the fulfilment of his word!

We cannot enter at length into this subject now; but as the Parliament are about to interfere with Church property which belongs to God, we have thought it not unreasonable to give a few facts, showing how sacrilegious persons have been punished for their wickedness. We are indebted for them to the preface to Sir Henry Spelman's work, *De Testamentis Ecclesiis*, and shall merely put them into a more modern dress.

We begin with William the Conqueror. In the first year of his reign he ordered his Normans to set fire to St. Peter's Church, York (the cathedral or minister.) In the fourth year he plundered the monasteries, and about fourteen years afterwards he destroyed thirty six churches in Hampshire, to make way for his New Forest; taking all their plate and treasure, and even their sacrament vessels. Well, and how did he prosper? In the thirteenth year of his reign, his own son, Robert of Normandy, rebelled against him, and in battle beat his father from his horse, wounded his person and his honour. About the nineteenth year, Richard, his second, but most beloved son, while sporting in his father's New Forest, where he had destroyed the churches, was there strangely killed by the goring of a stag. In the twentieth year of his reign William burnt the city of Mauntz and church of St. Mary's, with two anchorites; and coming too near the flame the heat of the fire and his arms attracted a disease; and his horse leaping with him, so injured him that he died, and his body, forsaken by his nobles and servants, lay there three days entirely neglected; afterwards, by the courtesy of a country gentleman, his corpse was brought to St. Stephen's Church, in Caen in Normandy; but while on the way the town took fire, and the bearers left the body and ran to quench the fire. So that even after he was dead, he did not go quietly to his grave; and at last, when he got there he was denied burial by one who claimed the ground as his inheritance, forced from him by the king. All ceremonies were delayed until a composition was made, and an annual rent paid for his grave. And before it could be buried his body swelled and burst, to the annoyance of all, and thus he was offensive both dead and living. Afterwards the town being taken by the enemy, his bones, unworthy of consecrated ground, were dug up and scattered like chaff before the wind, even death denying him rest.

His eldest son Robert of Normandy, was disinherited by his father, and taken prisoner by his brother Henry the First, who put out both his eyes; and after twenty-six years of imprisonment, Robert died, starved in the castle of Cardiff.

The grandchild of the Conqueror, Henry, the son of Robert duke of Normandy, while hunting in his grandfather's New Forest, was struck through the jaws with a bough of a tree, and like Absalom, was found hanging in the thicket of an oak. The Conqueror's grandchild William, second son of Robert, was made earl of Flanders; and in a war against his uncle Henry the First, received a small wound in his hand, and died of the wound; and thus perished, the last of the Conqueror's grandchildren, by his eldest son.

William Rufus succeeded his father (William the Conqueror,) in his crown and in his curse. In the first year of his reign, his nobles rebelled; in the sixth, a great famine raged, and such a mortality that the living could scarcely bury the dead. About the tenth year, he filled his treasury by robbing churches, and selling their plate. In the thirteenth year of his reign, Sir Walter Tyrrel, shooting at a deer in the New Forest, by accident killed the king, who died like a beast, without speaking a word; and in the same place where stood one of the six and thirty churches which his father had destroyed, to make way for his New Forest. As in the case of

his father, his followers left his body and fled. It was afterwards laid in a collier's cart, drawn by "one silly lean beast." In the journey the cart broke down in a bad road, and the body was left a miserable spectacle covered with mud. So like his father, he went not quietly to his grave; at last, however, he was brought to Winchester, and there buried unlamented. His bones were afterwards taken up and deposited with those of Canute, in one of the coffers wherein the bones of many of our ancient kings were preserved, but there he rests not; for in December 1642, when Winchester was entered by the dissenting rebels, the organs, windows, and coffers, were broken by the fury of the dissenting soldiers, and with others, his bones were scattered upon the face of the earth just as were his father's. This William Rufus was the third of the conqueror's issue which was killed in the very New Forest, to make which the churches had been destroyed.—Where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, there must they also lick the blood of Ahab. Where the sacrilege was committed, there also must the punishment be inflicted.

While this William Rufus was commanding against the Welshmen in Anglesey, Hugh earl of Shrewsbury kennelled his dogs in the church of St. Fridance, where in the morning they were found mad. The earl shortly after fighting with the enemy, was shot dead with an arrow in the eye.

Henry the first, the Conqueror's fourth son, succeeds his brother Rufus. He had several children, of whom his eldest son William, with his brother Richard, and sister Mary, were drowned on a calm day close by the English shore. Another daughter took herself to a nunnery, and died childless.—Himself died of a surfeit, in eating too many lampreys. The offensiveness of his body on being opened poisoned his physicians; and in the next generation his name was forgotten. Plantagenet takes the crown.

Now it is very remarkable that unless we consider the death of Henry by the lamprey surfeit a natural death, the sacrilegious conqueror and all his sons, and all their sons, died untimely deaths. And "what the author notes of Nebuchadnezzar, and Henry the Eighth, is also true of William the Conqueror; for in the sixty-eighth year after his destroying York Minister, his name becomes extinct, and his kingdom is departed from him, and given to another nation. And upon search it will be found that very few families among the many thousands in England, enjoy their sacrilegious possessions beyond three-score and ten years; and many hold them not half that time; and scarcely one dies, but with some remarkable misfortune.

The sacrilege and punishment of King John is very signal. In the seventeenth year of his reign, besides other churches, he plundered the abbeys and churches of Peterborough, and Croyland—and afterwards, he attempted to carry his sacrilegious plunder from Lynn to Lincoln; but in passing the Wash, the earth in the midst of the waters opened her mouth, as for Korah and his company, and at once swallowed up carts, carriages, and horses, and all his treasures, and all his regalties, all his Church spoil, and all the Church spoilers,—not one escaping. The king himself passed the Wash at another place, and reached Swineshead abbey that night. The news afterwards reached him, which together with a sickness which befel him, ended his days and his unhappy reign.—Some say, that one of the old monks poisoned him.

SHOEMAKERS—form the most numerous class of operatives in Canton; the number is estimated at 25,000. Of weavers there are about 15,000. Of lapidaries there are upwards of 7,000. The carpenters and cabinet makers are estimated at 16,000. There are about 18,000 trading boats of different sizes, which pass along the river from Canton to Wamoa. The Tanka, or small boats, in which people live, and which pay an annual fee to the police, are said to be upwards of 50,000.

*From the Church Magazine.