

ham, Sir Nicholas Bacon, and others of honourable fame, were parties to the fraud; all because such persons think it unlikely that an interesting woman could have written those letters.

"And, strange to say, they see no difficulty in such an hypothesis, and English historical opinion is content to leave the question open—to leave open, that is, whether Elizabeth and those eminent public servants of hers, who carried England through the most dangerous crisis of its national existence, were among the basest villains that ever disgraced humanity. We may as well abandon the study of history if we are to carry it on upon such wilful principles.

"Again, as nothing is too bad to be believed of the reign of the English Bluebeard, a story passes as proved, and has been adopted into our books of criminal law, that while the Bluebeard was on the throne, 72,000 felons perished on the scaffold; from which it follows, first, that the nation was infested with robbers and murderers, and next, that the law was inhumanly cruel. No chain is stronger than its first links, and though the charge has been made a hundred times, it rests on nothing but a story told by Jerome Cardan, a crazy man of genius given to astrology, who says that he heard it from a French bishop. Literally that is all the authority. It is true that Wolsey was a strict administrator, and Lord Darcy accused him of being over-severe on the criminal classes. It is true also that Henry VIII. abolished the clerical immunities; and after the rebellion of the North, in which the clergy had been especially active, he hanged two hundred priests and monks, to the extreme abhorrence of Catholic bishops all over Europe. But surely English historians ought to have looked further before accepting a fact so

monstrous on the single evidence of one of these bishops, and that too at second-hand. The 72,000 victims of Henry's tyranny are about as chimerical as the 11,000 virgins at Cologne.

"Once more. The Netherland historians assert that 50,000 heretics (or 100,000 heretics, they are not sure which) were put to death judicially in the Low Countries alone, under the edicts of Charles V. I thought it strange, for Charles V., through the greater part of his reign, was trying to conciliate the German Protestants, whom a persecution so extravagant would have exasperated into fury. No doubt Charles, as a good son of the Church, did endeavor, to check what the popes called heresy, in his hereditary dominions, and the language of his edicts was extremely severe. But I have to observe, first, that the Inquisition was not established in the Netherlands in Charles's reign. He could govern only by the law, and the law was carried out by the Netherland officials themselves. Secondly, that in a well-ordered country 50,000 religious criminals could not have been tried and executed without leaving a distinct trace on the judicial records. No such trace exists that I know of, nor was the accusation brought till the war with Philip had begun. In the Dutch *Martyrologies* I found accounts of 500 who had suffered. The rest of the number must have been made up (and even so enormously exaggerated) of insurrectionary Anabaptists, who broke out again and again into furious communistic insurrections, directed not against the Church, but against order and civil authority.

"We might as well say that the Sepoys who were killed in the Indian Mutiny had been put to death for religion. Yet the 50,000 were accepted by no less an authority than Gibbon, who alludes to them to point