

“Queen Elizabeth was a great and successful Princess at home, and the support of the Protestant interest abroad, while it was in its infancy; for, without her assistance, neither the Huguenots in France, nor the Dutch Reformers in Holland, could have stood their ground. She assisted the Protestants of Scotland against their Popish Queen, and the Princes of Germany against the Emperor; whilst at the same time she demanded absolute submission of her own subjects, and would not tolerate that religion at home which she countenanced and supported abroad. As to her own religion, she affected a middle way between Popery and Puritanism, though Her Majesty was more inclined to the former, disliking the secular pretensions of the Court of Rome over foreign states, though she was in love with the pomp and splendour of their worship. On the other hand, she approved of the doctrines of the foreign Reformed Churches, but thought they had stripped too much of its ornaments, and made it look with an unfriendly aspect upon the sovereign power of princes. She understood not the rights of conscience in matters of religion, and is, therefore, justly charged with persecuting principles. . . . However, notwithstanding all these blemishes, Queen Elizabeth stands on record as a wise and politic princess, for delivering the country from the difficulties in which it was involved at her accession; for preserving the Protestant Reformation against the potent attempts of the Pope, the Emperor, and the King of Spain abroad, and the Queen of Scots and her Popish subjects at home; and for advancing the renown of the English nation beyond any of her predecessors. Her Majesty had held the balance of power in Europe, and was in high esteem with all foreign princes, the greater part of her reign; and though her Protestant subjects were divided about Church affairs, they all discovered a high veneration for her royal person and government, on which account she was the glory of the age in which she lived, and will be the admiration of posterity.”*

It is true, as Mr. Neal says, “that Queen Elizabeth did not understand the rights of conscience,” nor did a single Puritan writer of her age “understand the rights of conscience” better

* *History of the Puritans*, chap. VIII., pp. 471, 472.