

INTRODUCTION.

We rejoice to notice that the noblest of England's children are fast returning to the true faith of their ancestors. The class of persons who were the first to accept Henry VIII's reformation of religion in England, are the first to see the error of such a step; and we now find them returning in goodly numbers to the one true fold under the one great shepherd.

Of the first class were those nobles and courtiers who were more greedy for this world's goods, no matter how they came, justly or unjustly, even though by sacrilege, than for the goods of life eternal. It is consoling to notice in this list names of men whose guilty ancestors were enriched with the spoils of monasteries, colleges, and hospitals, now making restitution in building churches, hospitals, schools, etc., whilst others perform the like good works as thanksgiving offerings for their conversion.

A second class of converts are the descendants of those who, less guilty, joined the new religion to preserve their lands, their estates, their situations in the governments, both Imperial and municipal, of the day, or their positions in the army. For the Reformation was not brought about by the preaching of the true Gospel by pious men, but by penal laws the most odious, fit imitation of the Imperial acts of pagan Rome, by which the Christians were put to death and their lands confiscated. Here is a brief synopsis of these barbarous enactments:

If any person or persons inhabiting within this realm or any other of her Majesty's dominions, shall...willingly or wittingly hear and be present at any other matter or form of common prayer, of administration of the sacraments, of making of ministers in the churches, or of any other rites contained in the book annexed to this act than is mentioned and set forth in the said book, and shall be thereof convicted, he or they shall suffer imprisonment for six months; for the second offence imprisonment for one whole year, and for the third offence imprisonment for his or their lives.—*Pickering's Statutes*, vol. 4, p. 350.

"Those not repairing to church every Sunday shall forfeit twenty pounds for every month they are absent."

"The month here is to be accounted twenty-eight days; so that the recusant will forfeit thirteen score pounds in a year."—*Laws against Papist and Popish recusants, Nonconformists and non-jurors*, p. 8.

If any above 16 years of age shall be convicted of absenting himself from church without lawful cause, one month; impugn the Queen's authority in causes ecclesiastical; frequent conventicles or persuade others so to do, on pretence of exercise of religion, he shall be committed to prison until he conforms.

If within three months after such conviction, he refuses to conform and submit himself, being thereto lawfully required, he shall, in open assizes or sessions, *abjure the realm* (i.e. swear to leave it.)

If the offender refuses to abjure (the realm), or returns without the Queen's license, he is guilty of felony without benefit of clergy.