

John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. He was so much celebrated for his virtues, that he was appointed confessor to Margaret, Henry VIII.'s mother, in the reign of Henry VII. and was one of his privy counsellors. He induced him to build two colleges, in the university of Cambridge of which he was afterwards chancellor. He also advised the same king to found two chairs of theology, the one at Cambridge and the other at Oxford. The most famous professors of divinity and of oriental languages were so that many in the nation became perfectly versed in the holy scriptures.

Henry VII. appointed him to the see of Rochester; his only recommendation were his learning and virtue; but as this see was of but slight importance to a man of his singular merit, Henry VIII. wanted to promote him to a richer benefice, but he never could be prevailed on to quit his first spouse, although poor, for one more opulent. He said, "He would think himself happy, if he could, on the day of judgment, give a good account of his little flock and his moderate revenues, for which he must give a stricter account than people imagine. That, on that day, the severity would be great as the income and number of souls, committed to our trust, would be great; that he knew, from a charge so light as his own, how much a more heavy charge would embarrass him.

Henry VIII. was often heard to say, that he formerly had a particular friendship and veneration for this holy prelate; but his evil genius quite altered his kind dispositions. As soon as he understood that the pope had created him cardinal, he commanded the judges to ask him whether he had sought that honour himself, or known any thing of it? He replied, "That he never

sought that dignity, nor any other whatever, in all his life, and much less had he expected it, when weighed down with age, with chains, and at the very portals of death." So little was he attached to the greatness which excites the admiration of others. It is said that it was through his aid and suggestion that Henry published a book on the Seven Sacraments against Luther. A reply was afterwards made to this work, but Fisher ably defended it and the doctrine of the Church against all her enemies. He was, in the opinion of his contemporaries, one of the most learned writers that refuted the errors of Luther, Oecolampadius, and the other pests of religion. He defended, with incredible force and precision, in his sermons and writings, the sacrifice of the mass, the sacraments, the hierarchy, and all other points contested by sectaries.

He ruled the church of Rochester for thirty-three years, and furnished it with holy and admirable regulations. His fastings, watchings, alms-deeds, austerities, and all his works, so becoming a Christian bishop, caused him to be loved and considered as a man of God. He burned with episcopal and real apostolical charity. Every Friday he kept as a fast day, and many others, he visited not only the prisons and public hospitals, but also the private houses in which he learned there were poor, sick, and afflicted. He consoled them by his advice, and relieved them with money, when they stood in want of it. Thus he spent his whole income in works of charity, receiving strangers and especially men of letters.

When he was arrested, the guards seized on his furniture, and judging, that an old bishop must have laid up a great deal of money, they carefully