

# The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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### EXTRACT FROM AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

An historian whose acknowledged celebrity is unfortunately surpassed by his unfaithfulness, has asserted that the history of the English Reformation was its apology. Had he asserted the opposite to this, he would, in my opinion, have been much nearer the truth. Of this you will be enabled to judge by the following brief narrative, in which I shall not contradict him in facts, but shall merely have recourse to authorities, which he himself would have admitted.

Eighteen years had elapsed since the marriage which Henry VIII. had contracted, according to the dispensation granted in 1509, by Julius II. with the widow of Arthur, his elder-brother, Catharine of Arragon, daughter of Ferdinand, King of Spain. By her he had many children, of whom the Princess Mary was alone surviving. In 1521, appeared at the court of Catharine the famous Anna Boleyn. She was in her twenty-first year, and was just returned from France, where she had spent seven years in the presence of two successive Queens, and the Duchess of Alencon, sister of Francis the First.—Youth, beauty and the graces set off her person, and inspired the Monarch with that fatal passion, which a few years later drove Catharine from the throne, put Anne in her place, for a time, then sent her to the scaffold, and involved England in a schism, that continues to this day.

Immediately it became known at Rome that Cranmer, the successor of Warham to the see of Canterbury, had taken upon himself to annul the marriage of Catharine in order to facilitate that of the King with Anne of Boleyn, the consistory, on the 24th of March, 1533, gave a decision, by which they confirmed the validity of Henry's first marriage with Catharine, and commanded the Prince to live with her, and, in case of refusal, pronounced against him a sentence of excommunication. On hearing this, the enraged Monarch determined on breaking with the see of Rome and withdrawing himself and his dominions from the jurisdiction of St. Peter whose authority and rights he himself had so stoutly defended against Luther. Already were the people prepared to expect a change; sundry menaces had been sent to the sovereign Pontiff, and many blows had been struck at his jurisdiction. In fine, the Parliament meeting again in November 1534, seizes hold of the jurisdiction of the Church and invests the crown with it, by an act, that decorates the King with the pompous title of the temporal and spiritual head of the Church of

England. The King is eager to have his new jurisdiction acknowledged in the kingdom: he has a form of oath drawn up to which the bishops and clergy are obliged to subscribe; whoever refuses, or pretends to raise his voice in favor of the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, is punished with death. Cromwell, Henry's vicar-general, delegated by him to exercise his supremacy, runs over the different dioceses, suspends during his diocesan visits the jurisdiction of those bishops, who carry their cowardly compliance so far as to receive letters-patent, by which they acknowledge the Prince as the source and origin of all jurisdiction, themselves only exercising a precarious jurisdiction, subject to the good pleasure of the Sovereign.\* The remainder of this reign was marked by the frequent exercise of spiritual jurisdiction, by the suppression of abbeys and monasteries, by various arbitrary dismemberments of dioceses, by erections of new sees, whose incumbents were consecrated and confirmed by letters patent from the King. While; however, the supreme ruler was maintaining the schism with the utmost severity, he repelled heresy with equal rigour, and at the same time that he was punishing Catholics, who still dared to declare themselves for the chair of Peter, he condemned to the flames the disciples of Luther and Calvin, who were busy enough to dogmatize in his states. But it was not difficult to foresee, that the schism would one day open the door to heresy; and that, unity being once destroyed, innovations held in esteem upon the continent, would finally appear and gain ground in England.

Scarcely had Henry closed his eyes, when the Duke of Somerset took upon him the guardianship of his nephew, Edward VI. and the administration of the kingdom at the head of the council of regency under the name of Protector. He was a Zealot in heart, and had for his confidant, Archbishop Cranmer; who, no longer having reason to dissemble, soon threw off the mask, and openly entered into the views of the Regent. The Archbishop hoped to get his marriage into credit, which hitherto he had been obliged to keep concealed. The Protector looked for the spoils of the Church—many others wished to share them with him—nothing but the reformation could serve them all to their satisfaction: it was therefore determined upon. The Duke of Somerset commences by proclaiming his nephew supreme head in spirituals and temporals; he then obliges the Bishops to receive commissions revocable at the will of the King, names

\* We must except Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who courageously maintained his faith, and lost his head on the scaffold.

commissaries to perform the visitation of the dioceses, and in the mean time suspends the exercise of all episcopal authority. He announces by an edict that a collection of articles of faith is preparing in the council; that it will appear before long, and that they are to hold themselves in readiness to receive it with submission. and in the mean time he forbids any ecclesiastic to preach in any assembly whatsoever. Already had Peter Martyr and Ochin, his companion been called to labour in the work of reformation. Both of these were Italian religious, who like the greater part of the reformers, had quitted the monastic state to embrace that of marriage. The announced work at length appeared. It took away from public worship its ancient forms, and from ceremonies their majesty. Confession, works of satisfaction, purgatory, prayers for the dead, the invocation of saints, the honor paid to images, relics, and the cross were abolished. the ritual, the liturgy, the mass with its sacrifice, the real presence with transubstantiation, all are swept away, and England is astonished to behold itself on a sudden become Calvinistic.

But by this time heaven appeared to be wearied with so many sacrileges. It removed from the world this youthful sovereign, whose weakness was so shamefully abused. Mary, his eldest sister, brought to the throne the Catholic sentiments, with which her mother, the virtuous Catharine, had constantly inspired her—aided by the ministers with whom she was surrounded, and above all by the wise counsels of Cardinal Pole, her kinsman, she succeeded in bringing back her people to the obedience of the Holy See. The Parliament had itself solicited the reconciliation, which was pronounced by Cardinal Pole, nuncio of Julius II. The affairs of the Church were adjusted between the legate and parliament with as much prudence as moderation. On their return to unity, they resumed the dogmas and liturgy, which had always been received in this great island from its conversion to Christianity to the young Edward. England, although troubled with the innovations and the outrages of the last reign, appeared generally to applaud itself for its return to Catholicity—and probably would have done so, much more, had not God, whose judgments are inscrutable, refused posterity to Mary, and deprived her, after a short reign of her crown and her life.

She was replaced by her natural sister, Elizabeth, who was indebted for the crown to the last will of Henry rather than to her birth, for she was born in the life time of Catharine, his Queen and lawful wife; and even the marriage of Anne, her mother had been declared null, a little before she