

MODERN CHURCH HISTORY.

II.—THE POST RESTORATION PERIOD.

BY REV. L. N. TUCKER, MONTREAL.



HE period of English Church history now under consideration ranges from 1685 to 1714, and covers the reigns of James II, William and Mary and Anne. It was a remarkably disturbed period, both in Church and State, and, therefore, exhibits much that is best, as well as much that is worst, in human nature and in Church life. It contains the closing scenes of the great battle of the Reformation, when the Constitution of the Realm and of the Church of England was definitely established as it has stood ever since. It was a time of bitter controversy, with all the essential features of such a time, viz:—party spirit, personalities and uncharitableness. It was a time that strained to the uttermost the political principles of men, when the rights of royalty were brought into conflict with the rights of the nation, and when the principles of loyalty were at war with those of freedom. It was a time when the rights of reason claimed by the Reformation were carried to their utmost extremes, when the foundations of revealed religion itself were violently assailed, and its strongest bulwarks were set up. And, as the rage of strife and controversy began to subside, the Church began to gird herself to the practical work that lay before her, both at home and abroad. It was the time when earnest and faithful laymen and clergymen laid the foundations of those societies and institutions which have been an unspeakable blessing to the motherland and to the colonies, in the present age. Often regarded by Churchmen as a dull and dreary period, when the Church was too political, too worldly, or, at least, too oblivious of her high and holy mission, it was, in reality, the seed-bed of our most successful modern organizations, and, as such, it deserves our sincerest gratitude, and teaches us most important lessons in these modern days.

The reign of James II. was a deliberate attempt to subject the English Church and nation to the yoke of the papacy. No time could have been more suitable for such a task. The nation had scarcely recovered from the delirium of loyalty that greeted the return of Charles II.; and the Church, through its leaders, was hopelessly committed to the extremest views of the divine right of kings, and of the passive obedience of subjects. But never was ruler more bitterly disappointed. Never was nation more completely victorious, and never did Church act in a more prudent and dignified manner, and strike a stronger blow, in behalf of national rights and liberties.

The illegal cruelties inflicted by Judge Jeffries on the deluded followers of Monmouth; the un-

fair trial and imprisonment of the dissenting leader, Richard Baxter; the angry prorogation of Parliament because it would not repeal the Test Act to favour the Romanists; the appearance of the Papal Nuncio as ambassador to the English Court; the outrageous preferment of Romanists to high positions in the Church and the universities; and chiefly the bold resolve to dispense with the laws of the land by virtue of the royal prerogative; all this filled the clergy with sorrow and indignation, and violently roused the opposition of the whole nation.

The crisis was reached when the king ordered the clergy to read what they considered to be the illegal "Declaration of Indulgence" in all the churches of the land. In a body they declined to obey the order. Seven Bishops even ventured to approach the king with a respectful petition; but they were browbeaten and dismissed. And then they were sent to the tower and tried for libel. But their passage down the Thames was like a triumphal procession, and all the leaders of the nation openly showed their sympathy with the bishops; and when they were acquitted even the soldiers, then under review in the presence of the king himself, did not forbear to cheer.

Thus had James II. completely alienated the affections of the whole nation in the course of little more than two years. Thus had the Church of England become dearer to the people than ever it had been before. And, to their credit be it spoken, the Nonconformists stood shoulder to shoulder with the Church, refusing even the favours of the king. William and Mary were called to the throne by the unanimous vow of the nation. And, when they appeared, James could not count even on the loyalty of his children. There was nothing left for him but to fly to the continent, and the noblest crown in the world was lost forever to the dynasty of the Stuarts.

This change in the Government, known as the Revolution, was effected without bloodshed. William and Mary were declared to be King and Queen of England by the will of the nation. Their rights were, therefore, strictly defined and limited by Act of Parliament. This statute is called the "Bill of Rights," and the Monarchs of England have thenceforth been "Constitutional Rulers." At a later date, to ensure a "Protestant" succession to the crown, another statute was passed called the *Act of Settlement*, whereby it was decreed that the Monarchs should thenceforth "join in communion with the Church of England, as by law established." The Government and the Church of England now stand on the basis that was fixed at the Revolution.

But the Church of England could not be expected to pass suddenly and in a body from the doctrine of divine right and passive obedience to that of loyalty to a ruler, who held his crown