

her side; and More consented, as Chancellor, to act ministerially against her. He assured the House of Commons that Henry was not urging the Divorce for his own pleasure, but solely to satisfy his conscience and to preserve the succession; that the opinions of the Universities had been honestly given, and that those of Oxford and Cambridge alone were enough to settle the question. Whilst he remained in power he left the Queen to her fate, and did his best to put off the hour of trial that was to prove the heroic temper of his soul.

The Bishop of Rochester, indeed, was faithful and outspoken to the end; but his judgment was not safe to trust. Death for the sake of conscience has surrounded the memory of Fisher with imperishable praise; but at that time he was the one writer among our countrymen who had crudely avowed the conviction that there is no remedy for religious error but fire and steel; and the sanction of his fame was already given to the Bloody Statute, and to a century of persecution and of suffering more cruel than his own. Fisher suspected the attack on the Dispensation of concealing a design against the Church; and he therefore based the Queen's defence on the loftiest assertion of prerogative. His examination of the authorities was able and convincing. He admitted that they were not all on his side; but he held that even if the balance had leaned heavily against him it would not have injured his client. The interpretation of law, the solution of doubts pertained to the Pope; and the Pope had decided this dispute by the undeniable act of dispensation. The question might have been difficult on its merits; but there was, in reality, no question at all.

The value of the maxim, that the fact proves the right, had just then been seriously impaired. The divine whom Leo X. appointed to encounter Luther had invoked that principle. It was absurd, he contended, to try the existing system of indulgences by the rule of tradition, when it was plainly justified by the daily practice of the Church. But the argument of Prierias was discredited by Adrian VI., who readily avowed that there had of