

hints the great lawyer, through the law. "There will never be wanting some pretence for deciding in the King's favour; as that equity is on his side, or the strict letter of the law, or some forced interpretation of it; or if none of these, that the royal prerogative ought with conscientious judges to outweigh all other considerations." We are startled at the precision with which More maps out the expedients by which the law courts were to lend themselves to the advance of tyranny till their crowning judgement in the case of ship-money. But behind these judicial expedients lay great principles of absolutism, which partly from the example of foreign monarchies, partly from the sense of social and political insecurity, and yet more from the isolated position of the Crown, were gradually winning their way in public opinion. "These notions," he goes boldly on, "are fostered by the maxim that the King can do no wrong, however much he may wish to do it; that not only the property but the persons of his subjects are his own; and that a man has a right to no more than the king's goodness thinks fit not to take from him." (In the hands of Wolsey these maxims were transformed into principles of State.) (The checks which had been imposed on the action of the sovereign by the presence of great prelates and nobles at his council were practically removed. (All authority was concentrated in the hands of a single minister.) Henry had munificently rewarded Wolsey's services to the Crown. He had been promoted to the See of Lincoln and thence to the Archbishopric of York. (Henry procured his elevation to the rank of Cardinal, and raised him to the post of Chancellor.) The revenues of two sees whose tenants were foreigners fell into his hands; he held the bishopric of Winchester and the abbacy of St. Albans; he was in receipt of pensions from France and Spain, while his official emoluments were enormous. His pomp was almost royal. A train of prelates and nobles followed him wherever he moved; his household was composed of five hundred persons of noble birth, and its chief posts were held by knights and barons of the realm. He spent his vast wealth with princely ostentation. Two of his houses, Hampton Court and York House, the later Whitehall, were splendid enough to serve at his fall as royal palaces. His school at Ipswich was eclipsed by the glories of his foundation at Oxford,

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WOLSEY

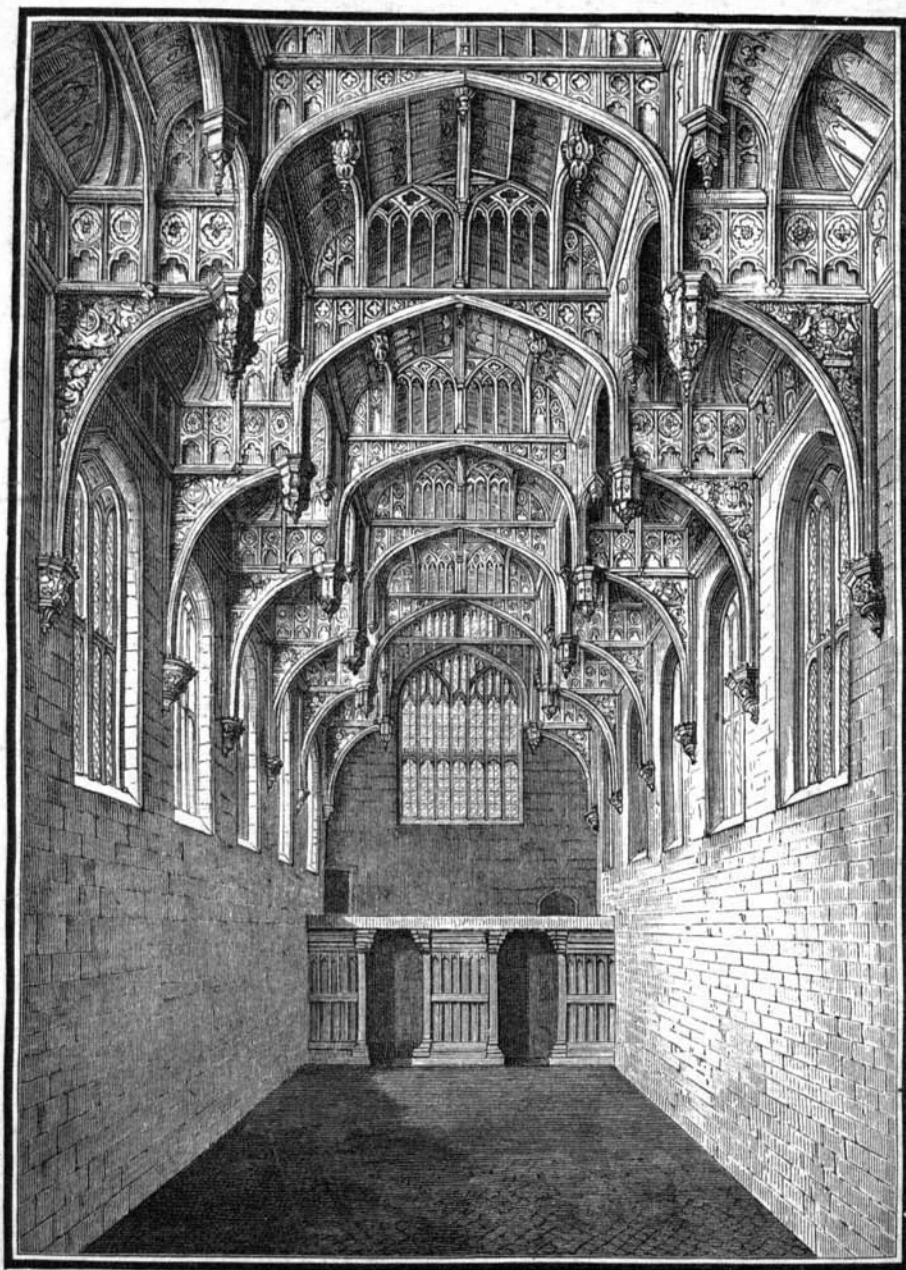
1515

TO

1531

absolut
the m*Wolsey's
Adminis-
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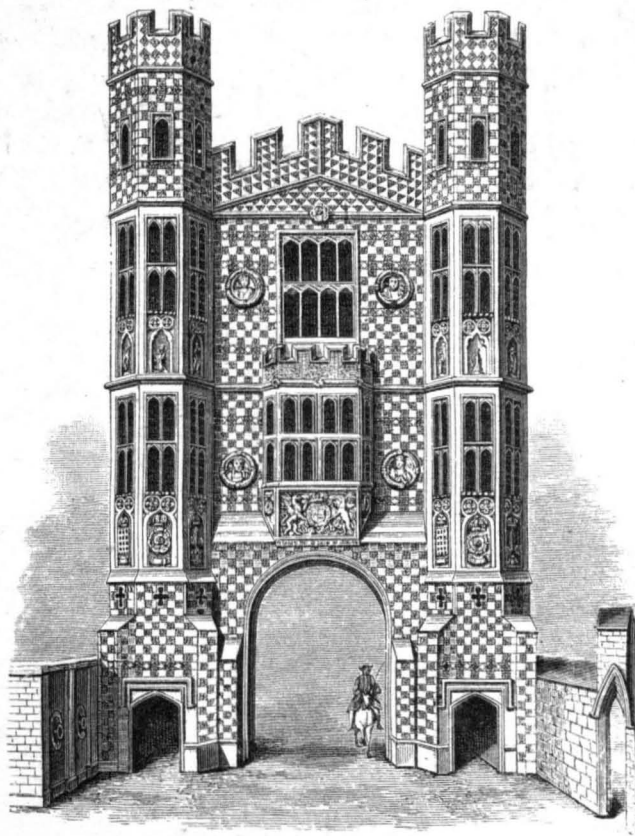
1515



HALL, HAMPTON COURT PALACE.
Built by Henry VIII., 1536—1537.

whose name of Cardinal College has been lost in its later title of Christ-church. Nor was this magnificence a mere show of power. (The whole direction of home and foreign affairs rested with Wolsey alone) (as Chancellor he stood at the head of public justice; his elevation to the office of Legate rendered him suprême

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1517



HOLBEIN'S GATE, WHITEHALL.
Built temp. Henry VIII. ; taken down 1750.
Vetusta Monumenta.

in the Church. Enormous as was the mass of work which he undertook, it was thoroughly done ; (his administration of the royal treasury was economical) ; the number of his despatches is hardly less remarkable than the care bestowed upon each ; even More, an avowed enemy, confesses that as Chancellor he surpassed all men's expectations. (The court of Chancery, indeed, became so

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crowded through the character for expedition and justice which it gained under his rule that subordinate courts had to be created for its relief. (It was this concentration of all secular and ecclesiastical power in a single hand which accustomed England to the personal government which began with Henry the Eighth; and it was, above all, Wolsey's long tenure of the whole Papal authority within the realm, and the consequent suspension of appeals to Rome, that led men to acquiesce at a later time in Henry's claim of religious supremacy. (For proud as was Wolsey's bearing and high as were his natural powers he stood before England as the mere creature of the King. Greatness, wealth, authority he held, and owned he held, simply at the royal will. (In raising his low-born favourite to the head of Church and State Henry was gathering all religious as well as all civil authority into his personal grasp.) (The nation which trembled before Wolsey learned to tremble before the King who could destroy Wolsey by a breath.

Wolsey
and the
Parliament

1519

The rise of Charles of Austria gave a new turn to Wolsey's policy. Possessor of the Netherlands, of Franche Comté, of Spain, the death of his grandfather Maximilian added to his dominions the heritage of the House of Austria in Swabia and on the Danube, and opened the way for his election as Emperor. France saw herself girt in on every side by a power greater than her own; and to Wolsey and his master the time seemed come for a bolder game. Disappointed in his hopes of obtaining the Imperial crown on the death of Maximilian, Henry turned to the dream of "recovering his French inheritance," which he had never really abandoned, and which was carefully fed by his nephew Charles. Nor was Wolsey forgotten. If Henry coveted France, his minister coveted no less a prize than the Papacy; and the young Emperor was lavish of promises of support in any coming election. The result of these seductions was quickly seen. In May, 1520, Charles landed at Dover to visit Henry, and King and Emperor rode alone to Canterbury. It was in vain that Francis strove to retain Henry's friendship by an interview near Guisnes, to which the profuse expenditure of both monarchs gave the name of the Field of Cloth of Gold. A second interview between Charles and his uncle as he returned from the meeting with Francis ended in a secret confederacy of the two sovereigns, and the promise of the Emperor to

1520

marry Henry's one child, Mary Tudor. (Her right to the throne was asserted by a deed which proved how utterly the baronage

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CHARLES V.
Picture by Titian.

now lay at the mercy of the King.) The Duke of Buckingham stood first in blood as in power among the English nobles ; he was the descendant of Edward the Third's youngest son, and if Mary's

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succession were denied he stood heir to the throne. His hopes had been fanned by prophets and astrologers, and wild words told his purpose to seize the Crown on Henry's death in defiance of every opponent. But word and act had for two years been watched by the King; and in 1521 the Duke was arrested, condemned as a traitor by his peers, and beheaded on Tower Hill. The French alliance came to an end, and at the outbreak of war between France and Spain a secret league was concluded at Calais between the Pope, the Emperor, and Henry. The first result of the new war policy at home was quickly seen. Wolsey's economy had done nothing more than tide the Crown through the past years of peace. But now that Henry had promised to raise forty thousand men for the coming campaign the ordinary resources of the treasury were utterly insufficient. With the instinct of despotism Wolsey shrank from reviving the tradition of the Parliament. Though Henry had thrice called together the Houses to supply the expenses of his earlier struggle with France, (Wolsey governed during seven years of peace without once assembling them.) War made a Parliament inevitable, but for a while the Cardinal strove to delay its summons by a wide extension of the practice which Edward the Fourth had invented of raising money by forced loans or "Benevolences," to be repaid from the first subsidy of a coming Parliament. (Large sums were assessed on every county.) Twenty thousand pounds were exacted from London; and its wealthier citizens were summoned before the Cardinal and required to give an account of the value of their estates. Commissioners were despatched into each shire for the purposes of assessment, and precepts were issued on their information, requiring in some cases supplies of soldiers, in others a tenth of a man's income, for the King's service. (So poor, however, was the return that in the following year Wolsey was forced to summon Parliament and lay before it the unprecedented demand of a

1523. (property-tax of twenty per cent.) The demand was made by the Cardinal in person, but he was received with obstinate silence. It was in vain that Wolsey called on member after member to answer; and his appeal to More, who had been elected to the chair of the House of Commons, was met by the Speaker's falling on his knees and representing his powerlessness to reply till he



LONDON. *Temp.* HENRY VII.

MS. Roy. 16 F. ii.

had received instructions from the House itself. The effort to overawe the Commons failed, and Wolsey no sooner withdrew than an angry debate began. He again returned to answer the objections which had been raised, and again the Commons foiled the minister's attempt to influence their deliberations by refusing to discuss the matter in his presence. (The struggle continued for a fortnight; and though successful in procuring a subsidy, the court party were forced to content themselves with less than half Wolsey's demand.) Convocation betrayed as independent a spirit; and when money was again needed two years later, the Cardinal was driven once more to the system of Benevolences. A tenth was demanded from the laity, and a fourth from the clergy in every county by the royal commissioners. There was "sore grudging and murmuring," Warham wrote to the court, "among the people." "If men should give their goods by a commission," said the Kentish squires, "then it would be worse than the taxes of France, and England should be bond, not free." (The political instinct of the nation discerned as of old that in the question of self-taxation was involved that of the very existence of freedom.) The clergy put themselves in the forefront of the resistance, and preached from every pulpit that the commission was contrary to the liberties of the realm, and that the King could take no man's goods but by process of law. (So stirred was the nation that Wolsey bent to the storm, and offered to rely on the voluntary loans of each subject.) But the statute of Richard the Third which declared all exaction of Benevolences illegal was recalled to memory; the demand was evaded by London, and the commissioners were driven out of Kent. A revolt broke out in Suffolk; the men of Cambridge and Norwich threatened to rise. (There was in fact a general strike of the employers.) Clothmakers discharged their workers, farmers put away their servants. "They say the King asketh so much that they be not able to do as they have done before this time." (Such a peasant insurrection as was raging in Germany was only prevented by the unconditional withdrawal of the royal demand.)

Wolsey's defeat saved English freedom for the moment; but the danger from which he shrank was not merely that of a conflict with the sense of liberty. (The murmurs of the Kentish squires

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The
Agrarian
Discon-
tent

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only swelled the ever-deepening voice of public discontent. If the condition of the land question in the end gave strength to the Crown by making it the security for public order, it became a terrible peril at every crisis of conflict between the monarchy and the landowners. The steady rise in the price of wool was giving a fresh impulse to the agrarian changes which had now been



JOHN WINCHCOMBE, SON OF "JACK OF NEWBURY."

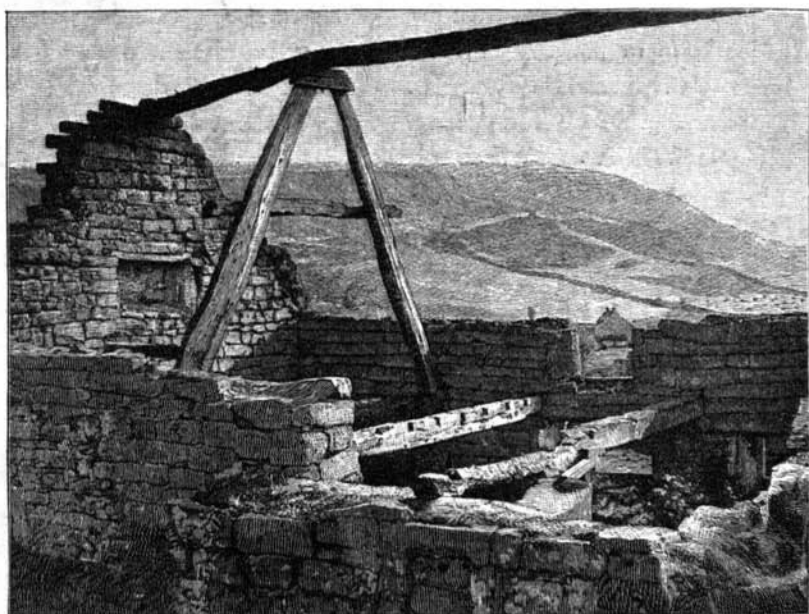
Picture by Holbein, at Sudeley Castle.

Dent, "Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley."

going on for over a hundred and fifty years, to the throwing together of the smaller holdings, and the introduction of sheep-farming on an enormous scale. The new wealth of the merchant classes helped on the change. They invested largely in land, and these "farming gentlemen and clerking knights," as Latimer bitterly styled them, were restrained by few traditions or associations in their eviction of the smaller tenants. The land indeed

had been greatly underlet, and as its value rose the temptation to raise the customary rents became irresistible. ✓ "That which went heretofore for twenty or forty pounds a year," we learn from the same source, "now is let for fifty or a hundred." (But it had been only by this low scale of rent that the small yeomanry class had been enabled to exist.) "My father," says Latimer, "was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of three or four pounds by the year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so

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OLD HOUSE IN CLEVELAND.
Atkinson, "Forty Years in a Moorland Parish."

much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine; he was able and did find the King a harness with himself and his horse while he came to the place that he should receive the King's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went to Blackheath Field. He kept me to school: he married my sisters with five pounds apiece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor, and all this he did of the same farm, where he that now

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hath it payeth sixteen pounds by year or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor." Increase of rent ended with such tenants in the relinquishment of their holdings, but the bitterness of ejection was increased by the iniquitous means which were often employed to bring it about. The farmers, if we believe More in 1515, were "got rid of either by fraud or force, or tired out with repeated wrongs into parting with their property." "In this way it comes to pass that these poor wretches, men, women, husbands, orphans, widows, parents with little children, households greater in number than in wealth (for arable farming requires many hands, while one shepherd and herdsman will suffice for a pasture farm), all these emigrate from their native fields without knowing where to go." The sale of their scanty household stuff drove them to wander homeless abroad, to be thrown into prison as vagabonds, to beg and to steal. Yet in the face of such a spectacle as this we still find the old complaint of scarcity of labour, and the old legal remedy for it in a fixed scale of wages. The social disorder, in fact, baffled the sagacity of English statesmen, and they could find no better remedy for it than laws against the further extension of sheep-farms, and a terrible increase of public executions. Both were alike fruitless. Enclosures and evictions went on as before. "If you do not remedy the evils which produce thieves," More urged with bitter truth, "the rigorous execution of justice in punishing thieves will be vain." But even More could only suggest a remedy which, efficacious as it was subsequently to prove, had yet to wait a century for its realization. "Let the woollen manufacture be introduced, so that honest employment may be found for those whom want has made thieves or will make thieves ere long." (The mass of social disorder grew steadily greater;) while the break up of the great military households of the nobles which was still going on, and the return of wounded and disabled soldiers from the wars, introduced a dangerous leaven of outrage and crime.

The
Divorce

1525

This public discontent, as well as the exhaustion of the treasury, added bitterness to the miserable result of the war. To France, indeed, the struggle had been disastrous, for the loss of the Milanese and the capture of Francis the First in the defeat of Pavia laid her at the feet of the Emperor. But Charles had no

purpose of carrying out the pledges by which he had lured England into war. Wolsey had seen two partizans of the Emperor successively raised to the Papal chair. The schemes of winning anew "our inheritance of France" had ended in utter failure; England, as before, gained nothing from two useless campaigns, and it was

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ALLEGORICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE BETROTHAL OF MARY TUDOR WITH THE SON OF THE DUKE OF ORLEANS, 1527.

Chapter House Treaties, August, 1527, Public Record Office.

plain that Charles meant it to win nothing. He concluded an armistice with his prisoner; he set aside all projects of a joint invasion; he broke his pledge to wed Mary Tudor, and married a princess of Portugal; he pressed for peace with France which



ALLIANCE OF HENRY VIII. AND FRANCIS I., AUGUST, 1527.

Chapter House Treaties, August, 1527, Public Record Office.

would give him Burgundy. It was time for Henry and his minister to change their course. They resolved to withdraw from all active part in the rivalry of the two powers, and a treaty was secretly concluded with France. But Henry remained on fair terms with the Emperor, and abstained from any part in the fresh

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*Anne
Boleyn*

war which broke out on the refusal of the French monarch to fulfil the terms by which he had purchased his release. No longer spurred by the interest of great events, the King ceased to take a busy part in foreign politics, and gave himself to hunting and sport. Among the fairest and gayest ladies of his court stood Anne Boleyn. Her gaiety and wit soon won Henry's favour, and grants



GOLD SEAL MADE BY BENVENUTO CELLINI FOR FRANCIS I. OF FRANCE.
Chapter House Treaty, 1527, Public Record Office.

of honours to her father marked her influence. In 1524 a new colour was given to this intimacy by a resolve on the King's part to break his marriage with the Queen. The death of every child save Mary may have woke scruples as to the lawfulness of a marriage on which a curse seemed to rest ; the need of a male heir may have deepened this impression. But, whatever were the

grounds of his action, Henry from this moment pressed the Roman See to grant him a divorce. Clement's consent to his wish, however, would mean a break with the Emperor, Catharine's nephew; and the Pope was now at the Emperor's mercy. While the English envoy was mooting the question of divorce, the surprise of Rome by an Imperial force brought home to Clement his utter helplessness; the next year the Pope was in fact a prisoner in the Emperor's hands after the storm and sack of Rome. Meanwhile a secret suit which had been brought before Wolsey as legate was suddenly dropped; as Catharine denied the facts on which Henry rested his case her appeal would have carried the matter to the tribunal of the Pope, and Clement's decision could hardly have been a favourable one. The difficulties of the divorce were indeed manifest. One of the most learned of the English Bishops, Fisher of Rochester, declared openly against it. The English theologians, who were consulted on the validity of the Papal dispensation which had allowed Henry's marriage to take place, referred the King to the Pope for a decision of the question. The commercial classes shrank from a step which involved an irretrievable breach with the Emperor, who was master of their great market in Flanders. Above all, the iniquity of the proposal jarred against the public conscience. But neither danger nor shame availed against the King's wilfulness and passion. A great party too had gathered to Anne's support. Her uncle the Duke of Norfolk, her father, now Lord Rochford, afterwards Earl of Wiltshire, pushed the divorce resolutely on; the brilliant group of young courtiers to which her brother belonged saw in her success their own elevation; and the Duke of Suffolk with the bulk of the nobles hoped through her means to bring about the ruin of the statesman before whom they trembled. It was needful for the Cardinal to find some expedients to carry out the King's will; but his schemes one by one broke down before the difficulties of the Papal Court. Clement indeed, perplexed at once by his wish to gratify Henry, his own conscientious doubts as to the course proposed, and his terror of the Emperor whose power was now predominant in Italy, even blamed Wolsey for having hindered the King from judging the matter in his own realm, and marrying on the sentence of his own courts. Henry was resolute in demanding the express sanction of the Pope

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*The
Legatine
Court*

1528

to his divorce, and this Clement steadily evaded. He at last, however, consented to a legatine commission for the trial of the case in England. In this commission Cardinal Campeggio was joined with Wolsey. Months however passed in fruitless negotiations. The Cardinals pressed on Catharine the expediency of her withdrawal to a religious house, while Henry pressed on the Pope that of a settlement of the matter by his formal declaration against the validity of the marriage. At last in 1529 the two Legates opened their court in the great hall of the Blackfriars. Henry briefly announced his resolve to live no longer in mortal sin. The Queen offered an appeal to Clement, and on the refusal of the Legates to admit it she flung herself at Henry's feet. "Sire," said Catharine, "I beseech you to pity me, a woman and a stranger, without an assured friend and without an indifferent counsellor. I take God to witness that I have always been to you a true and loyal wife, that I have made it my constant duty to seek your pleasure, that I have loved all whom you loved, whether I have reason or not, whether they are friends to me or foes. I have been your wife for years, I have



CLOCK GIVEN BY HENRY VIII. TO ANNE
BOLEYN, A.D. 1532.
Archæologia.

brought you many children. God knows that when I came to your bed I was a virgin, and I put it to your own conscience to say whether it was not so. If there be any offence which can be alleged against me I consent to depart with infamy ; if not, then I pray you to do me justice." The piteous appeal was wasted on a King who was already entertaining Anne Boleyn with royal state in his own palace. The trial proceeded, and the court assembled to pronounce sentence. Henry's hopes were at their highest when they were suddenly dashed to the ground. At the opening of the proceedings Campeggio rose to declare the court adjourned. The adjournment was a mere evasion. The pressure of the Imperialists had at last forced Clement to summon the cause to his own tribunal at Rome, and the jurisdiction of the Legates was at an end.

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July 23

"Now see I," cried the Duke of Suffolk, as he dashed his hand on the table, "that the old saw is true, that there was never Legate or Cardinal that did good to England!" "Of all men living," Wolsey boldly retorted, "you, my lord Duke, have the least reason to dispraise Cardinals, for if I, a poor Cardinal, had not been, you would not now have had a head on your shoulders wherewith to make such a brag in disrepute of us." But both the Cardinal and his enemies knew that the minister's doom was sealed. Through the twenty years of his reign Henry had known nothing of opposition to his will. His imperious temper had chafed at the weary negotiations, the subterfuges and perfidies of the Pope. His wrath fell at once on Wolsey, who had dissuaded him from acting at the first independently, from conducting the cause in his own courts and acting on the sentence of his own judges ; who had counselled him to seek a divorce from Rome and promised him success in his suit. From the close of the Legatine court he would see him no more. If Wolsey still remained minister for a while, it was because the thread of the complex foreign negotiations could not be roughly broken. Here too, however, failure awaited him as he saw himself deceived and outwitted by the conclusion of peace between France and the Emperor in a new treaty at Cambray. Not only was his French policy no longer possible, but a reconciliation with Charles was absolutely needful, and such a reconciliation could only be

The
Fall of
Wolsey

1529

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brought about by Wolsey's fall. (He was at once prosecuted for receiving bulls from Rome in violation of the Statute of Præmunire.) A few days later he was deprived of the seals. Wolsey was prostrated by the blow. He offered to give up everything that he possessed if the King would but cease from his displeasure. "His face," wrote the French ambassador, "is dwindled to half its natural size. In truth his misery is such that his enemies, Englishmen as they are, cannot help pitying him." Office and wealth were flung desperately at the King's feet, and for the moment Henry seemed contented with his disgrace. A thousand boats full of Londoners covered the Thames to see the Cardinal's barge pass to the Tower, but he was permitted to retire to Esher. Pardon was granted him on surrender of his vast possessions to the Crown, and he was permitted to withdraw to his diocese of York, the one dignity he had been suffered to retain. But hardly a year had passed before the jealousy of his political rivals was roused by the King's regrets, and on the eve of his installation feast he was arrested on a charge of high treason, and conducted by the Lieutenant of the Tower towards London. Already broken by his enormous labours, by internal disease, and the sense of his fall, Wolsey accepted the arrest as a sentence of death. An attack of dysentery forced him to rest at the abbey of Leicester, and as he reached the gate he said feebly to the brethren who met him, "I am come to lay my bones among you." On his death-bed his thoughts still clung to the prince whom he had served. "He is a prince," said the dying man to the Lieutenant of the Tower, "of a most royal courage: sooner than miss any part of his will he will endanger one half of his kingdom: and I do assure you I have often kneeled before him, sometimes for three hours together, to persuade him from his appetite, and could not prevail. And, Master Knyghton, had I but served God as diligently as I have served the king, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs. But this is my due reward for my pains and study, not regarding my service to God, but only my duty to my prince." No words could paint with so terrible a truthfulness the spirit of the new despotism which Wolsey had done more than any of those who went before him to build up. All sense of loyalty to England, to its freedom, to its institutions, had utterly

*Death of
Wolsey*
1530

passed away. The one duty which the statesman owned was a duty to his "prince," a prince whose personal will and appetite was overriding the highest interests of the State, trampling under foot the wisest counsels, and crushing with the blind ingratitude of Fate the servants who opposed him. But even Wolsey, while he recoiled from the monstrous form which had revealed itself, could hardly have dreamed of the work of destruction which the royal courage, and yet more royal appetite, of his master was to accomplish in the years to come.

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WOLSEY

1515

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HENRY VIII., A.D. 1530.

Chapter House, Wolsey's Patents, Public Record Office.

SEC. VI
 THOMAS
 CROMWELL
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 TO
 1540

Section VI.—Thomas Cromwell, 1530—1540

[*Authorities.*—Cromwell's early life as told by Foxe is a mass of fable; what we really know of it may be seen conveniently put together in Dean Hook's "Life of Archbishop Cranmer." For his ministry, the only real authorities are the State Papers for this period, which are now being calendared for the Master of the Rolls. For Sir Thomas More, we have a touching life by his son-in-law, Roper. The more important documents for the religious history of the time will be found in Mr. Pocock's new edition of Burnet's "History of the Reformation"; those relating to the dissolution of the Monasteries, in the collection of letters on that subject published by the Camden Society, and in the "Original Letters" of Sir Henry Ellis. A mass of material of very various value has been accumulated by Strype in his collections, which begin at this time. Mr. Froude's narrative ("History of England," vols. i. ii. iii.), though of great literary merit, is disfigured by a love of paradox, by hero-worship, and by a reckless defence of tyranny and crime. It possesses, during this period, little or no historical value.]

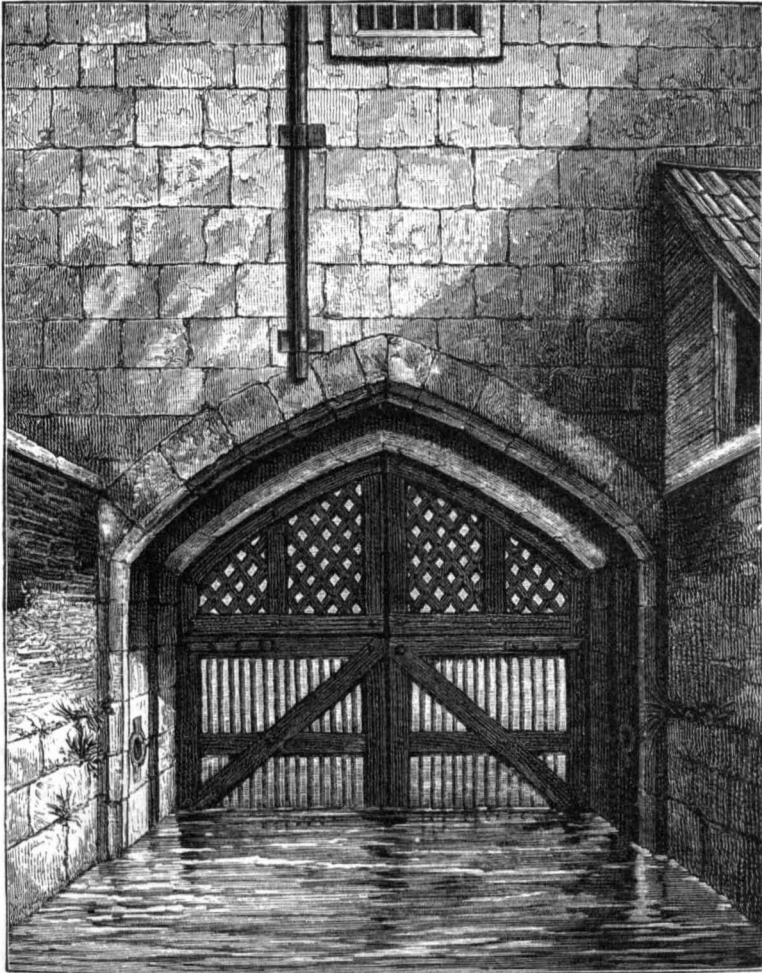
The ten years which follow the fall of Wolsey are among the most momentous in our history. The New Monarchy at last realized its power, and the work for which Wolsey had paved the way was carried out with a terrible thoroughness. The one great institution which could still offer resistance to the royal will was struck down. The Church became a mere instrument of the central despotism. The people learned their helplessness in rebellions easily suppressed and avenged with ruthless severity. A reign of terror, organized with consummate and merciless skill, held England panic-stricken at Henry's feet. The noblest heads rolled on the block. Virtue and learning could not save Thomas More: royal descent could not save Lady Salisbury. The putting away of one queen, the execution of another, taught England that nothing was too high for Henry's "courage" or too sacred for his "appetite." (Parliament assembled only to sanction acts of unscrupulous tyranny, or to build up by its own statutes the great fabric of absolute rule.) All the constitutional safe-guards of English freedom were swept

away. (Arbitrary taxation, arbitrary legislation, arbitrary imprisonment were powers claimed without dispute and unsparingly exercised by the Crown.)

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THOMAS
CROMWELL

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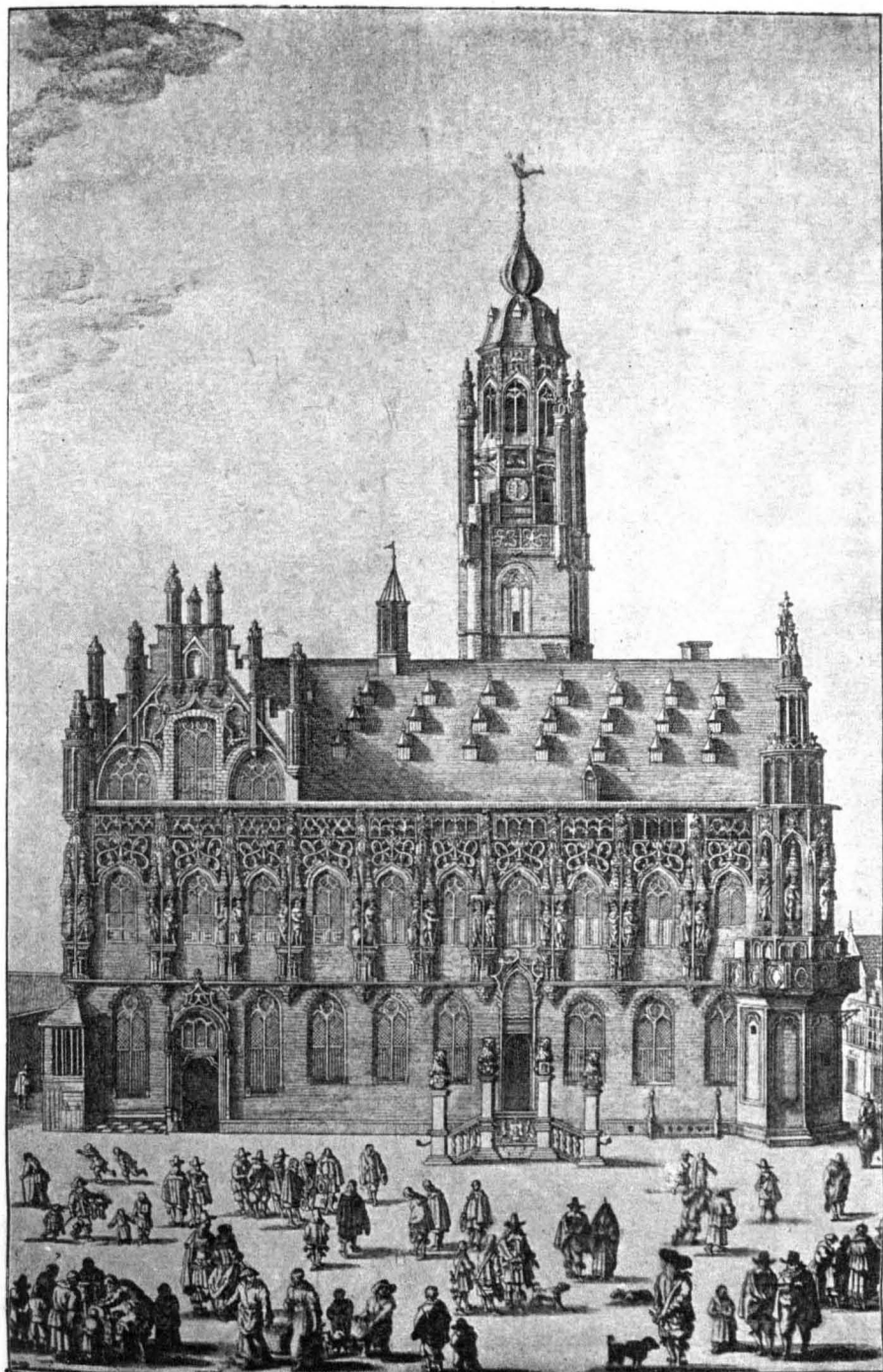
TRAITORS' GATE, TOWER OF LONDON.
Drawing by C. Tomkins, 1801, in British Museum.

The history of this great revolution, for it is nothing less, is the history of a single man. In the whole line of English statesmen there is no one of whom we would willingly know so much, no one

Thomas
Cromwell

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THOMAS
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TO
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of whom we really know so little, as Thomas Cromwell. When he meets us in Henry's service he had already passed middle life; and during his earlier years it is hardly possible to do more than disentangle a few fragmentary facts from the mass of fable which gathered round them. His youth was one of roving adventure. Whether he was the son of a poor blacksmith at Putney or no, he could hardly have been more than a boy when he was engaged in the service of the Marchioness of Dorset. He must still have been young when he took part as a common soldier in the wars of Italy, a "ruffian," as he owned afterwards to Cranmer, in the most unscrupulous school the world contained. But it was a school in which he learned lessons even more dangerous than those of the camp. He not only mastered the Italian language but drank in the manners and tone of the Italy around him, the Italy of the Borgias and the Medici. (It was with Italian versatility that he turned from the camp to the counting house;) he was certainly engaged as a commercial agent to one of the Venetian merchants; tradition finds him as a clerk at Antwerp; and in 1512 history at last encounters him as a thriving wool merchant at Middelburg in Zealand. Returning to England, Cromwell continued to amass wealth by adding the trade of scrivener, something between that of a banker and attorney, to his other occupations, as well as by advancing money to the poorer nobles; and on the outbreak of the second war with France we find him a busy and influential member of the Commons in Parliament. Five years later the aim of his ambition was declared by his entrance into Wolsey's service. The Cardinal needed a man of business for the suppression of some smaller monasteries which he had undertaken, and for the transfer of their revenues to his foundations at Oxford and Ipswich. The task was an unpopular one, and it was carried out with a rough indifference to the feelings it aroused which involved Cromwell in the hate which was gathering round his master. But his wonderful self-reliance and sense of power only broke upon the world at Wolsey's fall. Of the hundreds of dependents who waited on the Cardinal's nod, Cromwell was the only one who clung to him faithfully at the last. In the lonely hours of his disgrace at Esher Wolsey "made his moan unto Master Cromwell, who comforted him the best he



THE STADHUIS, MIDDELBURG.
Engraving by N. Vischer after P. Schut.

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CROMWELL
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could, and desired my lord to give him leave to go to London, where he could make or mar, which was always his common saying." He showed his consummate craft in a scheme by which Wolsey was persuaded to buy off the hostility of the courtiers by confirming the grants which had been made to them from his revenues, while Cromwell acquired importance as



THOMAS CROMWELL.
Holland, "Heroologia."

go-between in these transactions. It was by Cromwell's efforts in Parliament that a bill disqualifying Wolsey from all after employment was defeated, and it was by him that the negotiations were conducted which permitted the fallen minister to retire to York. A general esteem seems to have rewarded this rare instance of fidelity to a ruined patron. "For his honest behaviour

in his master's cause he was esteemed the most faithfulest servant, and was of all men greatly commended." But Henry's protection rested on other grounds. The ride to London had ended in a private interview with the King, in which Cromwell boldly advised him to cut the knot of the divorce by the simple exercise of his own supremacy. The advice struck the keynote of the later policy by which the daring counsellor was to change the whole face of Church and State ; but Henry still clung to the hopes held out by his new ministers, and shrank perhaps as yet from the bare absolutism to which Cromwell called him. The advice at any rate was concealed, and though high in the King's favour, his new servant waited patiently the progress of events.

For success in procuring the divorce, the Duke of Norfolk, who had come to the front on Wolsey's fall, relied not only on the alliance and aid of the Emperor, but on the support which the project was expected to receive from Parliament. (The reassembling of the two Houses marked the close of the system of Wolsey.) Instead of looking on Parliament as a danger the monarchy now felt itself strong enough to use it as a tool ; and Henry justly counted on warm support in his strife with Rome. Not less significant was the attitude of the men of the New Learning. To them, as to his mere political adversaries, the Cardinal's fall opened a prospect of better things. The dream of More in accepting the office of Chancellor, if we may judge it from the acts of his brief ministry, seems to have been that of carrying out the religious reformation which had been demanded by Colet and Erasmus, while checking the spirit of revolt against the unity of the Church. His severities against the Protestants, exaggerated as they have been by polemic rancour, remain the one stain on a memory that knows no other. But it was only by a rigid severance of the cause of reform from what seemed to him the cause of revolution that More could hope for a successful issue to the projects which the Council laid before Parliament. The petition of the Commons sounded like an echo of Colet's famous address to the Convocation. It attributed the growth of heresy not more to "frantic and seditious books published in the English tongue contrary to the very true Catholic and Christian faith" than to "the extreme and uncharitable behaviour of divers ordinaries." It remonstrated against the

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Norfolk
and
More

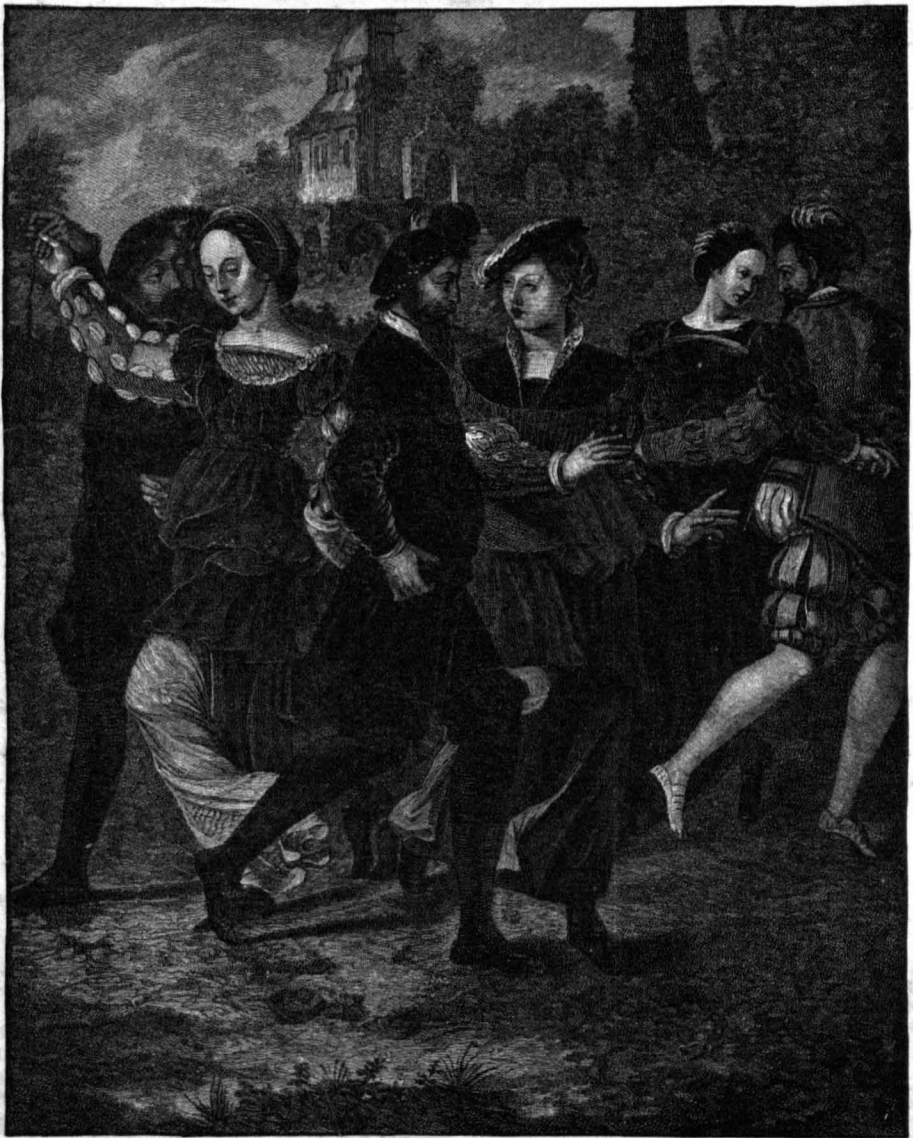


THE MORE FAMILY.
Miniature in collection of Major-General F. E. Solihby.

legislation of the clergy in Convocation without the King's assent or that of his subjects, the oppressive procedure of the Church Courts, the abuses of ecclesiastical patronage, and the excessive number of holydays. Henry referred the Petition to the bishops, but they could devise no means of redress, and the ministry persisted in pushing through the Houses their bills for ecclesiastical reform. The questions of Convocation and the bishops' courts were adjourned for further consideration, but the fees of the courts were curtailed, the clergy restricted from lay employments, pluralities restrained, and residence enforced. In spite of a dogged opposition from the bishops the bills received the assent of the House of Lords, "to the great rejoicing of lay people, and the great displeasure of spiritual persons." The importance of the new measures lay really in the action of Parliament. They were an explicit announcement that church-reform was now to be undertaken, not by the clergy, but by the people at large. On the other hand it was clear that it would be carried out, not in a spirit of hostility, but of loyalty to the church. The Commons forced from Bishop Fisher an apology for words which were taken as a doubt thrown on their orthodoxy. Henry forbade the circulation of Tyndale's translation of the Bible as executed in a Protestant spirit, while he promised a more correct version. But the domestic aims of the New Learning were foiled by the failure of the ministry in its negotiations for the divorce. The severance of the French alliance, and the accession of the party to power which clung to alliance with the Emperor, failed to detach Charles from his aunt's cause. The ministers accepted the suggestion of a Cambridge scholar, Thomas Cranmer, that the universities of Europe should be called on for their judgement; but the appeal to the learned opinion of Christendom ended in utter defeat. In France the profuse bribery of the English agents would have failed with the university of Paris but for the interference of Francis himself. As shameless an exercise of Henry's own authority was required to wring an approval of his cause from Oxford and Cambridge. In Germany the very Protestants, in the fervour of their moral revival, were dead against the King. So far as could be seen from Cranmer's test every learned man in Christendom but for bribery and threats would have condemned Henry's cause.

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THE DANCING PICTURE.
Temp. Henry VIII.
Collection of Major-General F. E. Sotheby.

It was at the moment when every expedient had been exhausted by Norfolk and his fellow ministers that Cromwell came again to the front. Despair of other means drove Henry nearer and nearer to the bold plan from which he had shrunk at Wolsey's fall. Cromwell was again ready with his suggestion that the King should disavow the Papal jurisdiction, declare himself Head of the Church within his realm, and obtain a divorce from his own Ecclesiastical Courts. But with Cromwell the divorce was but the prelude to a series of changes he was bent upon accomplishing. In all the chequered life of the new minister what had left its deepest stamp on him was Italy. Not only in the rapidity and ruthlessness of his designs, but in their larger scope, their clearer purpose, and their admirable combination, the Italian state-craft entered with Cromwell into English politics. He is in fact the first English minister in whom we can trace through the whole period of his rule the steady working out of a great and definite aim. His purpose was to raise the King to absolute authority on the ruins of every rival power within the realm. It was not that Cromwell was a mere slave of tyranny. Whether we may trust the tale that carries him in his youth to Florence or no, his statesmanship was closely modelled on the ideal of the Florentine thinker whose book was constantly in his hand. Even as a servant of Wolsey he startled the future Cardinal, Reginald Pole, by bidding him take for his manual in politics the "Prince" of Machiavelli. Machiavelli hoped to find in Cæsar Borgia or in the later Lorenzo de' Medici a tyrant who after crushing all rival tyrannies might unite and regenerate Italy; and it is possible to see in the policy of Cromwell the aim of securing enlightenment and order for England by the concentration of all authority in the Crown. The last check on royal absolutism which had survived the Wars of the Roses lay in the wealth, the independent synods and jurisdiction, and the religious claims of the Church. To reduce the great ecclesiastical body to a mere department of the State in which all authority should flow from the sovereign alone, and in which his will should be the only law, his decision the only test of truth, was a change hardly to be wrought without a struggle; and it was the opportunity for such a struggle that Cromwell saw in the divorce. His first blow showed how unscr-

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pulously the struggle was to be waged. A year had passed since Wolsey had been convicted of a breach of the Statute of *Præmunire*. The pedantry of the judges declared the whole nation to have been formally involved in the same charge by its acceptance of his authority. The legal absurdity was now redressed by a general pardon, but from this pardon the clergy found themselves omitted. They were told that forgiveness could be bought at no less a price than the payment of a fine amounting to a million of our present money, and the acknowledgement of the King as "the chief protector, the only and supreme lord, the Head of the Church and Clergy of England." To the first demand they at once submitted; against the second they struggled hard, but their appeals to Henry and to Cromwell met only with demands for instant obedience. A compromise was at last arrived at by the insertion of a qualifying phrase "So far as the law of Christ will allow;" and with this addition the words were again submitted by Warham to the Convocation. There was a general silence. "Whoever is silent seems to consent," said the Archbishop. "Then are we all silent," replied a voice from among the crowd.

The
Headship
of the
Church

There is no ground for thinking that the "Headship of the Church" which Henry claimed in this submission was more than a warning addressed to the independent spirit of the clergy, or that it bore as yet the meaning which was afterwards attached to it. It certainly implied no independence of Rome; but it told the Pope plainly that in any strife that might come the clergy were in the King's hand. The warning was backed by the demand for the settlement of the question addressed to Clement on the part of the Lords and some of the Commons. "The cause of his Majesty," the Peers were made to say, "is the cause of each of ourselves." If Clement would not confirm what was described as the judgement of the Universities in favour of the divorce "our condition will not be wholly irremediable. Extreme remedies are ever harsh of application; but he that is sick will by all means be rid of his distemper." The banishment of Catharine from the King's palace gave emphasis to the demand. The failure of a second embassy to the Pope left Cromwell free to take more decisive steps in the course on which he had entered. As his policy developed itself More withdrew from the post of Chancellor; but the revolution

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from which he shrank was an inevitable one. (From the reign of the Edwards men had been occupied with the problem of recon-

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HENRY VIII. READING
MS. Rey 2 A. xvi. (British Museum).

ciling the spiritual and temporal relations of the realm, (Parliament from the first became the organ of the national jealousy, whether of Papal jurisdiction without the kingdom or of the

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separate jurisdiction of the clergy within it. — (The movement, long arrested by religious reaction and civil war, was reviving under the new sense of national greatness and national unity, when it was suddenly stimulated by the question of the divorce, and by the submission of English interests to a foreign Court. With such a spur it moved forward quickly. The time had come when England was to claim for herself the fulness of power, ecclesiastical as well as temporal, within her bounds ; and, in the concentration of all authority within the hands of the sovereign which was the political characteristic of the time, to claim this power for the nation was to claim it for the King. The import of the headship of the Church was brought fully out in one of the propositions laid before the Convocation of 1532. "The King's Majesty," runs this memorable clause, "hath as well the care of the souls of his subjects as their bodies ; and may by the law of God by his Parliament make laws touching and concerning as well the one as the other." Under strong pressure Convocation was brought to pray that the power of independent legislation till now exercised by the Church should come to an end. Rome was dealt with in the same unsparing fashion. The Parliament forbade by statute any further appeals to the Papal Court ; and on a petition from the clergy in Convocation the Houses granted power to the King to suspend the payments of first-fruits, or the year's revenue which each bishop paid to Rome on his election to a see. All judicial, all financial connection with the Papacy was broken by these two measures. Cromwell fell back on Wolsey's policy. The hope of aid from Charles was abandoned, and by a new league with France he sought to bring pressure on the Papal court. But the pressure was as unsuccessful as before. Clement threatened the King with excommunication if he did not restore Catharine to her place as Queen and abstain from all intercourse with Anne Boleyn till the case was tried. Henry still refused to submit to the judgement of any court outside his realm ; and the Pope dared not consent to a trial within it. Henry at last closed the long debate by a secret union with Anne Boleyn. Warham was dead, and Cranmer, an active partizan of the divorce, was named to the see of Canterbury ; proceedings were at once commenced in his court ; and the marriage of Catharine was formally declared in-

valid by the new primate at Dunstable. A week later Cranmer set on the brow of Anne Boleyn the crown which she had so long coveted.

As yet the real character of Cromwell's ecclesiastical policy had been disguised by its connexion with the divorce. But though formal negotiations continued between England and Rome, until

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macy



THOMAS CRANMER, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.
Picture in National Portrait Gallery.

Clement's final decision in Catharine's favour, they had no longer any influence on the series of measures which in their rapid succession changed the whole character of the English Church. The acknowledgement of Henry's title as its Protector and Head was soon found by the clergy to have been more than a form of

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words. It was the first step in a policy by which the Church was to be laid prostrate at the foot of the throne. Parliament had shown its accordance with the royal will in the strife with Rome. Step by step the ground had been cleared for the great Statute by which the new character of the Church was defined. The Act of Supremacy ordered that the King "shall be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the Imperial Crown of this realm as well the title and state thereof as all the honours, jurisdictions, authorities, immunities, profits and commodities to the said dignity belonging, with full power to visit, repress, redress, reform, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, contempts, and enormities, which by any manner of spiritual authority or jurisdiction might or may lawfully be reformed." Authority in all matters ecclesiastical, as well as civil, was vested solely in the Crown. The "courts spiritual" became as thoroughly the King's courts as the temporal courts at Westminster. But the full import of the Act of Supremacy was only seen in the following year, when Henry formally took the title of "on earth Supreme Head of the Church of England," and some months later Cromwell was raised to the post of Vicar-General or Vicegerent of the King in all matters ecclesiastical. His title, like his office, recalled the system of Wolsey; but the fact that these powers were now united in the hands not of a priest but of a layman, showed the new drift of the royal policy. And this policy Cromwell's position enabled him to carry out with a terrible thoroughness. One great step towards its realization had already been taken in the statute which annihilated the free legislative powers of the convocations of the clergy. Another followed in an Act which under the pretext of restoring the free election of bishops turned every prelate into a nominee of the King. Their election by the chapters of their cathedral churches had long become formal, and their appointment had since the time of the Edwards been practically made by the Papacy on the nomination of the Crown. The privilege of free election was now with bitter irony restored to the chapters, but they were compelled on pain of præmunire to choose the candidate recommended by the King. This strange expedient has lasted till



HENRY VIII.

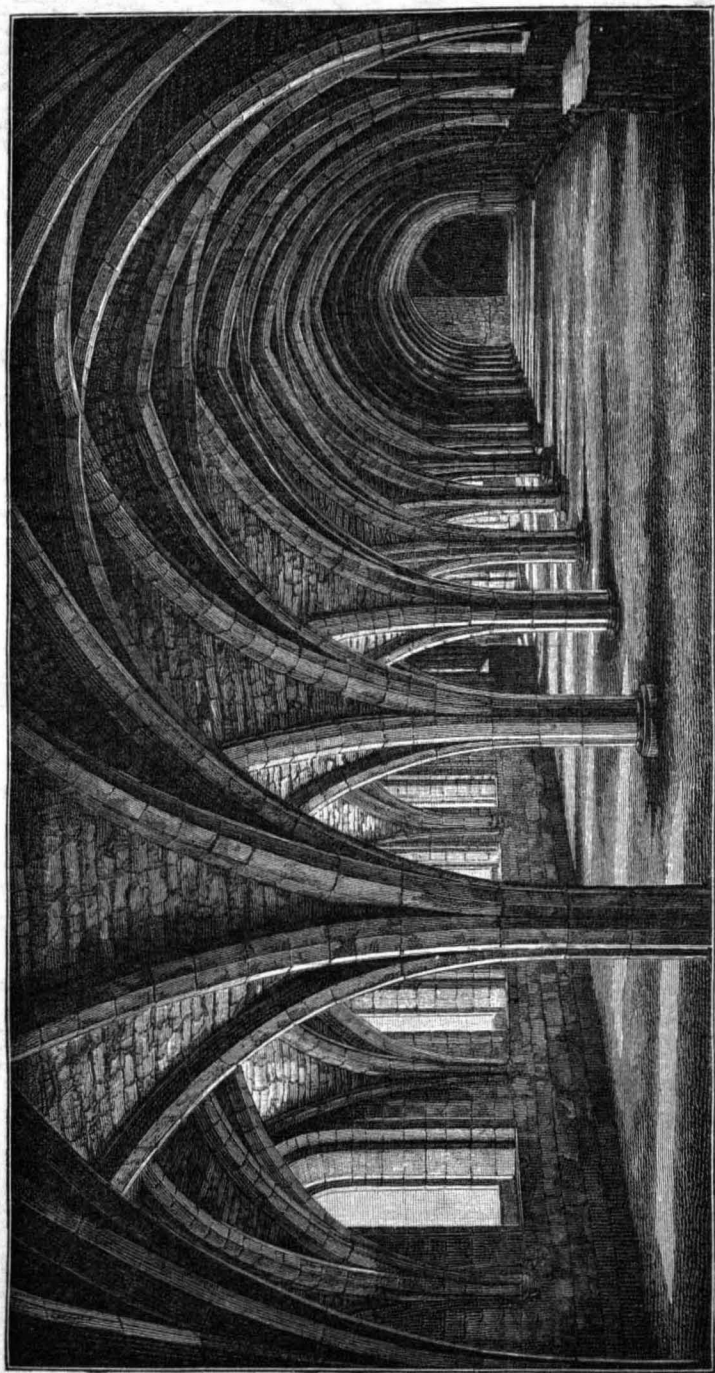
Engraved by O. LACOUR from the Picture by HOLBEIN at Berkeley Castle.

the present time ; but its character has wholly changed with the developement of constitutional rule. The nomination of bishops has ever since the accession of the Georges passed from the King in person to the Minister who represents the will of the people. Practically therefore an English prelate, alone among all the prelates of the world, is now raised to his episcopal throne by the same popular election which raised Ambrose to his episcopal chair at Milan. But at the moment Cromwell's measure reduced the English bishops to absolute dependence on the Crown. Their dependence would have been complete had his policy been thoroughly carried out and the royal power of deposition put in force as well as that of appointment. As it was Henry could warn the Archbishop of Dublin that if he persevered in his "proud folly, we be able to remove you again and to put another man of more virtue and honesty in your place." Even Elizabeth in a burst of ill-humour threatened to "unfrock" the Bishop of Ely. By the more ardent partizans of the Reformation this dependence of the bishops on the Crown was fully recognized. On the death of Henry the Eighth Cranmer took out a new commission from Edward for the exercise of his office. Latimer, when the royal policy clashed with his belief, felt bound to resign the See of Worcester. That the power of deposition was at a later time quietly abandoned was due not so much to any deference for the religious instincts of the nation as to the fact that the steady servility of the bishops rendered its exercise unnecessary.

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Master of Convocation, absolute master of the bishops, Henry had become master of the monastic orders through the right of visitation over them which had been transferred by the Act of Supremacy from the Papacy to the Crown. The religious houses had drawn on themselves at once the hatred of the New Learning and of the Monarchy. In the early days of the revival of letters Popes and bishops had joined with princes and scholars in welcoming the diffusion of culture and the hopes of religious reform. But though an abbot or a prior here or there might be found among the supporters of the movement, the monastic orders as a whole repelled it with unswerving obstinacy. The quarrel only became more bitter as years went on. The keen

The Dis-
solution
of the
Monas-
teries



THE "DOMUS CONVERSORUM" (WORK-ROOM OF THE LAY BRETHREN), FOUNTAINS ABBEY, YORKSHIRE.

sarcasms of Erasmus, the insolent buffoonery of Hutten, were lavished on the "lovers of darkness" and of the cloister. In England Colet and More echoed with greater reserve the scorn and invective of their friends. As an outlet for religious enthusiasm, indeed, monasticism was practically dead. The friar, now that his fervour of devotion and his intellectual energy had passed away, had sunk into a mere beggar. The monks had become mere landowners. Most of their houses were anxious only to enlarge their revenues and to diminish the number of those who shared them. In the general carelessness which prevailed as to

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Marianus Libro Tertio De Monasterio Colcestrensi & eius fundatore

COLCHESTER ABBEY CHURCH.

Drawing temp. Henry VIII.

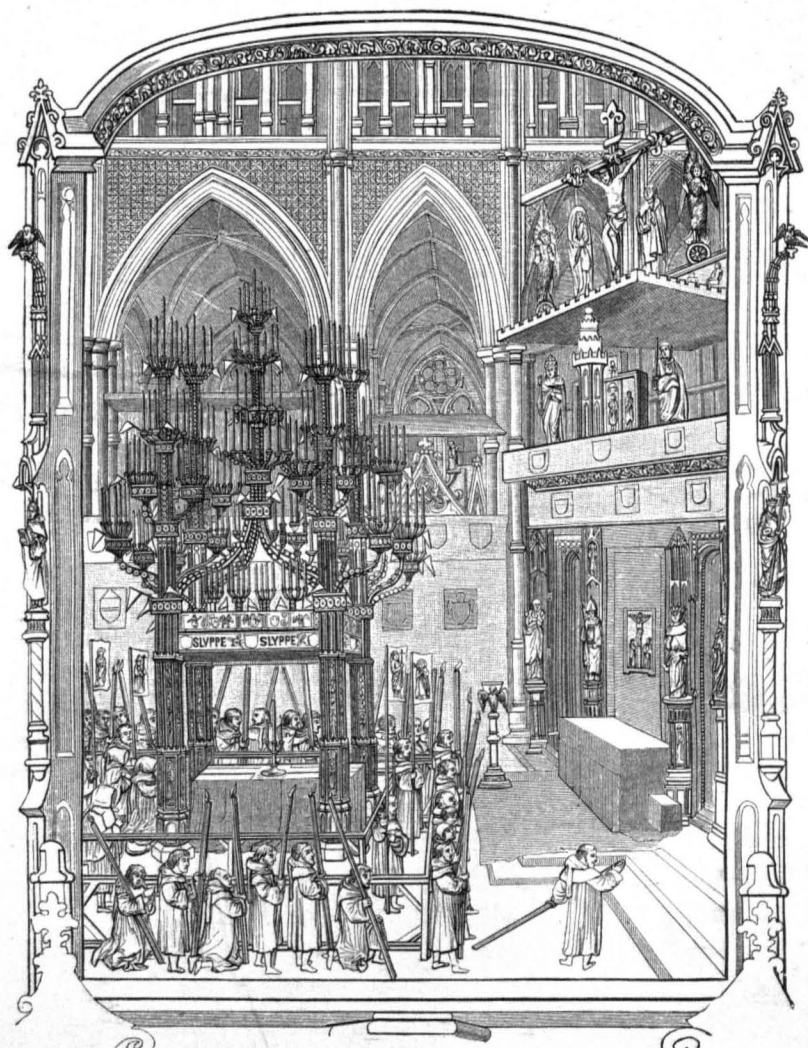
MS. Cott. Nero D. viii.

the spiritual objects of their trust, in the wasteful management of their estates, in the indolence and self-indulgence which for the most part characterized them, the monastic houses simply exhibited the faults of all corporate bodies which have outlived the work which they were created to perform. But they were no more unpopular than such corporate bodies generally are. The Lollard cry for their suppression had died away. In the north, where some of the greatest abbeys were situated, the monks were on good terms with the country gentry, and their houses served as schools for their children; nor is there any sign of a different feeling elsewhere. But in Cromwell's system there was no room

SEC. VI for either the virtues or the vices of monasticism, for its indolence and superstition, or for its independence of the throne. Two

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FUNERAL OF ABBOT ISLIP OF WESTMINSTER, A.D. 1532.

Islip Roll.

royal commissioners therefore were despatched on a general visitation of the religious houses, and their reports formed a
1536 "Black Book" which was laid before Parliament on their return.

It was acknowledged that about a third of the religious houses, including the bulk of the larger abbeys, were fairly and decently conducted. The rest were charged with drunkenness, with simony, and with the foulest and most revolting crimes. The character of the visitors, the sweeping nature of their report, and the long debate which followed on its reception, leaves little doubt that the charges were grossly exaggerated. But the want of any effective discipline which had resulted from their exemption from any but Papal supervision told fatally against monastic morality even in abbeys like St. Alban's: and the acknowledgment of Warham, as well as the partial measures of suppression begun by Wolsey, go far to prove that in the smaller houses at least indolence had passed into crime. But in spite of the cry of "Down with them" which broke from the Commons as the report was read, the country was still far from desiring the utter downfall of the monastic system. A long and bitter debate was followed by a compromise which suppressed all houses whose incomes fell below £200 a year, and granted their revenues to the Crown; but the great abbeys were still preserved intact.

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The secular clergy alone remained; and injunction after injunction from the Vicar-General taught rector and vicar that they must learn to regard themselves as mere mouthpieces of the roya^l will. With the instinct of genius Cromwell discerned the part which the pulpit, as the one means which then existed of speaking to the people at large, was to play in the religious and political struggle that was at hand; and he resolved to turn it to the profit of the Monarchy. The restriction of the right of preaching to priests who received licenses from the Crown silenced every voice of opposition. Even to those who received these licenses theological controversy was forbidden; and a high-handed process of "tuning the pulpits" by directions as to the subject and tenor of each special discourse made the preachers at every crisis mere means of diffusing the royal will. As a first step in this process every bishop, abbot, and parish priest, was required to preach against the usurpation of the Papacy, and to proclaim the King as the supreme Head of the Church on earth. The very topics of the sermon were carefully prescribed; the bishops were held responsible for the compliance

Enslave-
ment
of the
Clergy

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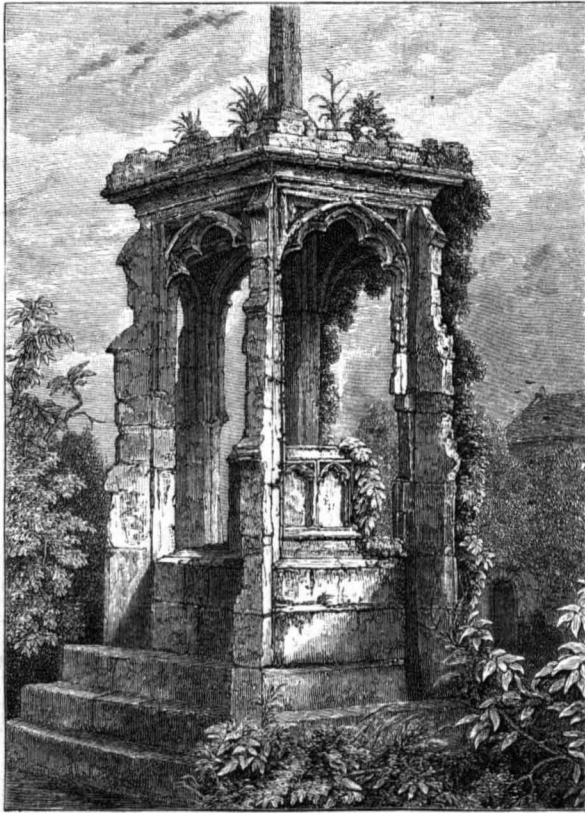
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of the clergy with these orders, and the sheriffs were held responsible for the compliance of the bishops. It was only when all possibility of resistance was at an end, when the Church was gagged and its pulpits turned into mere echoes of Henry's will, that Cromwell ventured on his last and crowning change, that



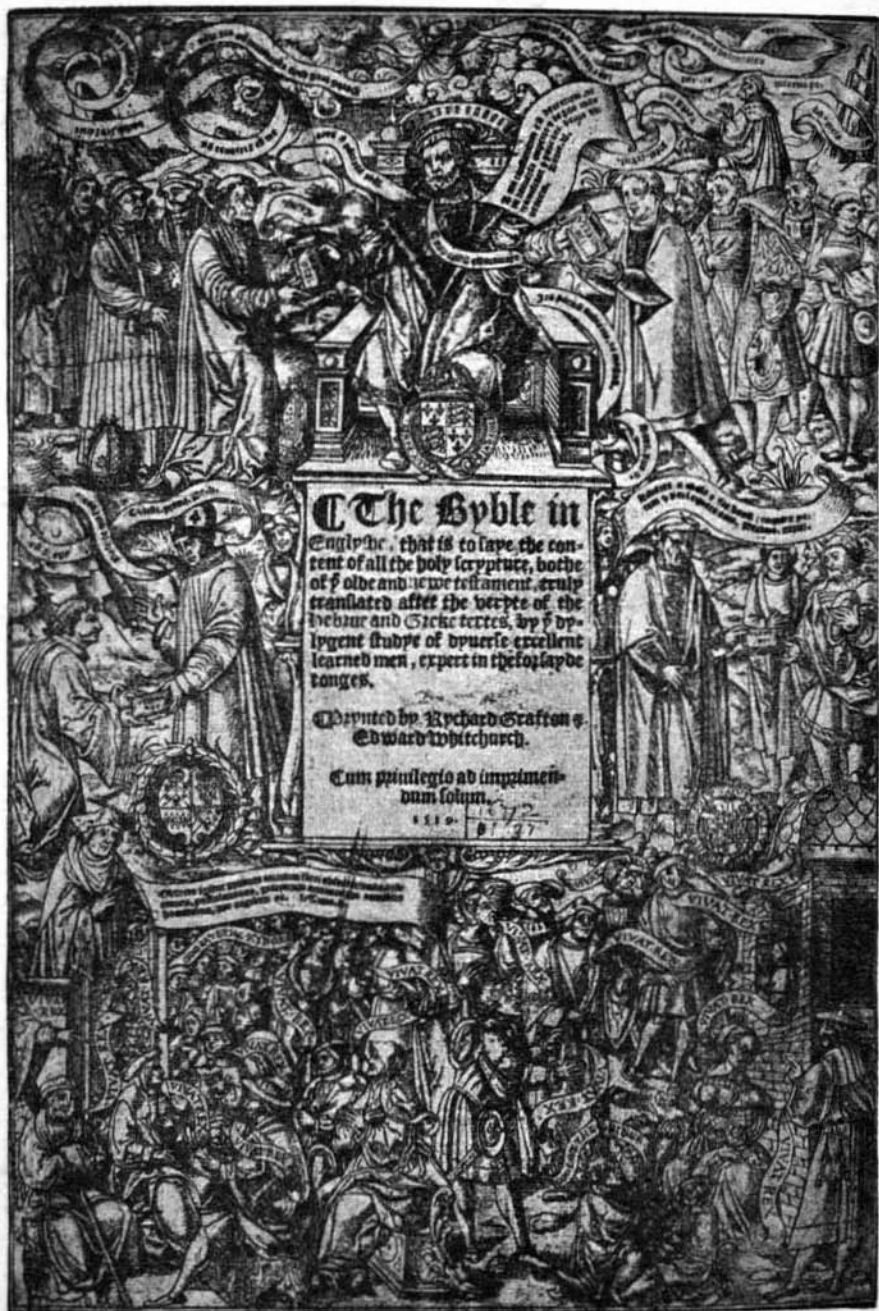
BLACK FRIARS' PULPIT, HEREFORD.

Britton, "English Cities."

of claiming for the Crown the right of dictating at its pleasure the form of faith and doctrine to be held and taught throughout the land. A purified Catholicism such as Erasmus and Colet had dreamed of was now to be the religion of England. But the dream of the New Learning was to be wrought out, not by the progress of education and piety, but by the brute force of the .

Monarchy. The Articles of Religion, which Convocation received and adopted without venturing on a protest, were drawn up by the hand of Henry himself. The Bible and the three Creeds were laid down as the sole grounds of faith. The Sacraments were reduced from seven to three, only Penance being allowed to rank on an equality with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The doctrines of Transubstantiation and Confession were maintained, as they were also in the Lutheran Churches. The spirit of Erasmus was seen in the acknowledgement of Justification by Faith, a doctrine for which the friends of the New Learning, such as Pole and Contarini, were struggling at Rome itself, in the condemnation of purgatory, of pardons, and of masses for the dead, in the admission of prayers for the dead, and in the retention of the ceremonies of the Church without material change. Enormous as was the doctrinal revolution, not a murmur broke the assent of Convocation, and the Articles were sent by the Vicar-General into every county to be obeyed at men's peril. The policy of reform was carried steadily out by a series of royal injunctions which followed. Pilgrimages were suppressed; the excessive number of holy days diminished; the worship of images and relics discouraged in words which seem almost copied from the protest of Erasmus. His burning appeal for a translation of the Bible which weavers might repeat at their shuttle and ploughmen sing at their plough received at last a reply. At the outset of the ministry of Norfolk and More the King had promised an English version of the scriptures, while prohibiting the circulation of Tyndale's Lutheran translation. The work however lagged in the hands of the bishops; and as a preliminary measure the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments were now rendered into English, and ordered to be taught by every schoolmaster and father of a family to his children and pupils. But the bishops' version still hung on hand; till in despair of its appearance a friend of Archbishop Cranmer, Miles Coverdale, was employed to correct and revise the translation of Tyndale; and the Bible which he edited was published in 1539 under the avowed patronage of Henry himself. The story of the royal supremacy was graven on its very title-page. The new foundation of religious truth was to be regarded throughout

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TITLE-PAGE OF THE "GREAT BIBLE," A.D. 1539.

England as a gift, not from the Church, but from the King. It is Henry on his throne who gives the sacred volume to Cranmer, ere Cranmer and Cromwell can distribute it to the throng of priests and laymen below.

The debate on the suppression of the monasteries was the first instance of opposition with which Cromwell had met, and for some time longer it was to remain the only one. While the great revolution which struck down the Church was in progress, England looked silently on. In all the earlier ecclesiastical changes, in the contest over the Papal jurisdiction and Papal exactions, in the reform of the Church courts, even in the curtailment of the legislative independence of the clergy, the nation as a whole had gone with the King. But from the enslavement of the clergy, from the gagging of the pulpits, from the suppression of the monasteries, the bulk of the nation stood aloof. It is only through the stray depositions of royal spies that we catch a glimpse of the wrath and hate which lay seething under this silence of a whole people. For the silence was a silence of terror. Before Cromwell's rise and after his fall from power the reign of Henry the Eighth witnessed no more than the common tyranny and bloodshed of the time. But the years of Cromwell's administration form the one period in our history which deserves the name which men have given to the rule of Robespierre. It was the English Terror. It was by terror that Cromwell mastered the King. Cranmer could plead for him at a later time with Henry as "one whose surety was only by your Majesty, who loved your Majesty, as I ever thought, no less than God." But the attitude of Cromwell towards the King was something more than that of absolute dependence and unquestioning devotion. He was "so vigilant to preserve your Majesty from all treasons," adds the Primate, "that few could be so secretly conceived but he detected the same from the beginning." Henry, like every Tudor, was fearless of open danger, but tremulously sensitive to the slightest breath of hidden disloyalty. It was on this inner dread that Cromwell based the fabric of his power. He was hardly secretary before a host of spies were scattered broadcast over the land. Secret denunciations poured into the open ear of the minister. The air was thick with tales of plots and conspiracies, and with the detection and suppression of each Cromwell

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tightened his hold on the King. And as it was by terror that he mastered the King, so it was by terror that he mastered the people. Men felt in England, to use the figure by which Erasmus paints the time, "as if a scorpion lay sleeping under every stone." The confessional had no secrets for Cromwell. Men's talk with their closest friends found its way to his ear. "Words idly spoken," the murmurs of a petulant abbot, the ravings of a moon-struck nun, were, as the nobles cried passionately at his fall, "tortured into treason." The only chance of safety lay in silence. "Friends who used to write and send me presents," Erasmus tells us, "now send neither letter nor gifts, nor receive any from any one, and this through fear." But even the refuge of silence was closed by a law more infamous than any that has ever blotted the Statute-book of England. (Not only was thought made treason, but men were forced to reveal their thoughts on pain of their very silence being punished with the penalties of treason.) All trust in the older bulwarks of liberty was destroyed by a policy as daring as it was unscrupulous. The noblest institutions were degraded into instruments of terror. Though Wolsey had strained the law to the utmost he had made no open attack on the freedom of justice. If he had shrunk from assembling Parliaments it was from his sense that they were the bulwarks of liberty. (Under Cromwell the coercion of juries and the management of judges rendered the courts mere mouth-pieces of the royal will; and where even this shadow of justice proved an obstacle to bloodshed, Parliament was brought into play to pass bill after bill of attainder. "He shall be judged by the bloody laws he has himself made;" was the cry of the Council at the moment of his fall, and by a singular retribution the crowning injustice which he sought to introduce even into the practice of attainder, the condemnation of a man without hearing his defence, was only practised on himself. But ruthless as was the Terror of Cromwell it was of a nobler type than the Terror of France. He never struck uselessly or capriciously, or stooped to the meaner victims of the guillotine. His blows were effective just because he chose his victims from among the noblest and the best. If he struck at the Church, it was through the Carthusians, the holiest and the most renowned of English churchmen. If he struck at the baronage, it was through the Courtenays and the

Poles, in whose veins flowed the blood of kings. If he struck at the New Learning it was through the murder of Sir Thomas More. But no personal vindictiveness mingled with his crime. In temper, indeed, so far as we can judge from the few stories which lingered among his friends, he was a generous, kindly-hearted man, with pleasant and winning manners which atoned for a certain awkwardness of person, and with a constancy of friendship which won him a host of devoted adherents. But no touch either of love or hate swayed him from his course. The student of Machiavelli had not studied the "Prince" in vain. (He had reduced bloodshed to a system.) Fragments of his papers still show us with what a business-like brevity he ticked off human lives among the casual "remembrances" of the day. "Item, the Abbot of Reading to be sent down to be tried and executed at Reading." "Item, to know the King's pleasure touching Master More." "Item, when Master Fisher shall go to his execution, and the other." (It is indeed this utter absence of all passion, of all personal feeling, that makes the figure of Cromwell the most terrible in our history.) He has an absolute faith in the end he is pursuing, and he simply hews his way to it as a woodman hews his way through the forest, axe in hand. ✓

The choice of his first victim showed the ruthless precision with which Cromwell was to strike. In the general opinion of Europe the foremost Englishman of his time was Sir Thomas More. As the policy of the divorce ended in an open rupture with Rome he had withdrawn silently from the ministry, but his silent disapproval was more telling than the opposition of obscurer foes. To Cromwell there must have been something specially galling in More's attitude of reserve. The religious reforms of the New Learning were being rapidly carried out, but it was plain that the man who represented the very life of the New Learning believed that the sacrifice of liberty and justice was too dear a price to pay even for religious reform. More indeed looked on the divorce and re-marriage as without religious warrant, though his faith in the power of Parliament to regulate the succession made him regard the children of Anne Boleyn as the legal heirs of the Crown. The Act of Succession, however, required an oath to be taken by all persons, which not only recognized the succession, but contained an acknowledgement that the marriage with Catharine was against

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More

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Scripture and invalid from the beginning. Henry had long known More's belief on this point ; and the summons to take this oath was simply a summons to death. More was at his house at Chelsea when the summons called him to Lambeth, to the house where he had bandied fun with Warham and Erasmus or bent over the easel of Holbein. For a moment there may have been some passing impulse to yield. But it was soon over. "I thank the Lord," More said with a sudden start as the boat dropped silently down the river from his garden steps in the early morning, "I thank the Lord that the field is won." Cranmer and his fellow commissioners tendered to him the new oath of allegiance ; but, as they expected, it was refused. They bade him walk in the garden that he might reconsider his reply. The day was hot and More seated himself in a window from which he could look down into the crowded court. Even in the presence of death, the quick sympathy of his nature could enjoy the humour and life of the throng below. "I saw," he said afterwards, "Master Latimer very merry in the court, for he laughed and took one or twain by the neck so handsomely that if they had been women I should have weened that he waxed wanton." The crowd below was chiefly of priests, rectors and vicars, pressing to take the oath that More found harder than death. He bore them no grudge for it. When he heard the voice of one who was known to have boggled hard at the oath a little while before calling loudly and ostentatiously for drink, he only noted him with his peculiar humour. "He drank," More supposed, "either from dryness or from gladness," or "to show quod ille notus erat Pontifici." He was called in again at last, but only repeated his refusal. It was in vain that Cranmer plied him with distinctions which perplexed even the subtle wit of the ex-chancellor ; he remained unshaken and passed to the Tower. He was followed there by Bishop Fisher of Rochester, charged with countenancing treason by listening to the prophecies of a fanatic called the "Nun of Kent." For the moment even Cromwell shrank from their blood. They remained prisoners while a new and more terrible engine was devised to crush out the silent but widespread opposition to the religious changes. By a statute passed at the close of 1534 a new treason was created in the denial of the King's titles ; and in the opening of 1535 Henry assumed,

as we have seen, the title of "on earth supreme Head of the Church of England." In the general relaxation of the religious life the charity and devotion of the brethren of the Charter-house had won the reverence even of those who condemned monasticism. After a stubborn resistance they had acknowledged the royal Supremacy, and taken the oath of submission prescribed by the Act. But by an infamous construction of the statute which made the denial of the Supremacy treason, the refusal of satisfactory answers to official questions as to a conscientious belief in it was held to be equivalent to open denial. The aim of the new measure was well known, and the brethren prepared to die. In the agony of waiting

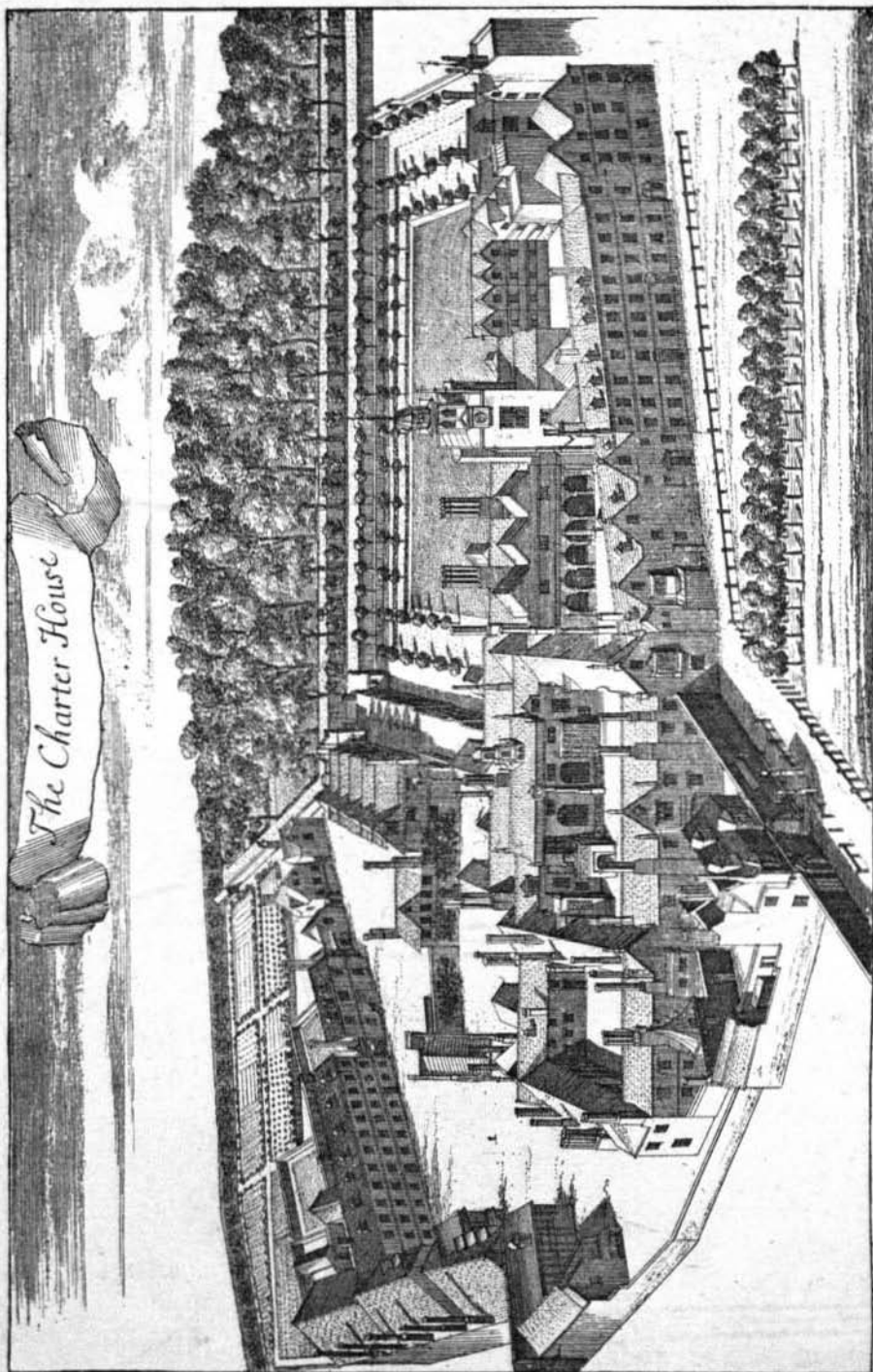
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*The Car-
thusians*



SEAL OF WALSINGHAM PRIORY.
Twelfth or Thirteenth Century.

Appended to Acknowledgement of Royal Supremacy, 26 Hen. VIII., Public Record Office.

enthusiasm brought its imaginative consolations ; "when the Host was lifted up there came as it were a whisper of air which breathed upon our faces as we knelt ; and there came a sweet soft sound of music." They had not long however to wait. Their refusal to answer was the signal for their doom. Three of the brethren went to the gallows ; the rest were flung into Newgate, chained to posts in a noisome dungeon where, "tied and not able to stir," they were left to perish of gaol-fever and starvation. In a fortnight five were dead and the rest at the point of death, "almost despatched," Cromwell's envoy wrote to him, "by the hand of God, of which, considering their behaviour, I am not sorry." The interval of imprisonment had failed to break the resolution of More, and the



THE CHARTERHOUSE.
Granted, 1545, to Sir Edward North. Finally, in 1611, transformed by Sir Thomas Sutton into the Hospital and School here represented.
From a print published according to Act of Parliament, 1755, for Stow's Survey.

new statute sufficed to bring him to the block. With Fisher he was convicted of denying the King's title as only supreme head of the Church. The old Bishop approached the block with a book of the New Testament in his hand. He opened it at a venture ere he knelt, and read, "This is life eternal to know Thee, the only

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JOHN FISHER, BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.
Drawing by Holbein, in British Museum.

true God." Fisher's death was soon followed by that of More. On the eve of the fatal blow he moved his beard carefully from the block. "Pity that should be cut," he was heard to mutter with a touch of the old sad irony, "that has never committed treason."

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Cromwell
and the
Nobles*The Pil-
grimage
of Grace*
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But it required, as Cromwell well knew, heavier blows even than these to break the stubborn resistance of Englishmen to his projects of change, and he seized his opportunity in the revolt of the North. In the north the monks had been popular; and the outrages with which the dissolution of the monasteries was accompanied gave point to the mutinous feeling that prevailed through the country. The nobles too were writhing beneath the rule of one whom they looked upon as a low-born upstart. "The world will never mend," Lord Hussey was heard to say, "till we fight for it." (Agrarian discontent and the love of the old religion united in a revolt which broke out in Lincolnshire.) The rising was hardly suppressed when Yorkshire was in arms. From every parish the farmers marched with the parish priest at their head upon York, and the surrender of the city determined the waverers. In a few days Skipton Castle, where the Earl of Cumberland held out with a handful of men, was the only spot north of the Humber which remained true to the King. Durham rose at the call of Lords Latimer and Westmoreland. Though the Earl of Northumberland feigned sickness, the Percies joined the revolt. Lord Dacre, the chief of the Yorkshire nobles, surrendered Pomfret, and was at once acknowledged as their chief by the insurgents. The whole nobility of the north were now in arms, and thirty thousand "tall men and well horsed" moved on the Don, demanding the reversal of the royal policy, a reunion with Rome, the restoration of Catharine's daughter, Mary, to her rights as heiress of the Crown, redress for the wrongs done to the Church, and above all the driving away of base-born counsellors, in other words the fall of Cromwell. Though their advance was checked by negotiation, the organization of the revolt went steadily on throughout the winter, and a Parliament of the North gathered at Pomfret, and formally adopted the demands of the insurgents. Only six thousand men under Norfolk barred their way southward, and the Midland counties were known to be disaffected. Cromwell, however, remained undaunted by the peril. He suffered Norfolk to negotiate; and allowed Henry under pressure from his Council to promise pardon and a free Parliament at York, a pledge which Norfolk and Dacre alike construed into an acceptance of the demands made by the insurgents. Their leaders at once flung aside the