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I.

THOMAS AQUINAS AND LEO XIII.

AS an ecclesiastical diplomat, Leo XIII will no doubt take high rank among the popes of modern times. He had no power to marshal armies and to set in motion crusades against refractory dissenters, as did Innocent III, nor did he exercise the function of fulmination against princes. And yet his moral influence throughout the bounds of all western Christendom has been notably great. He has elevated the papacy to a position of world-wide influence such as it has not had since the Reformation. Not before in their history have the different portions of Protestantism had so kindly a feeling toward a pope. For the moment room has been made even for a feeling of toleration for the papacy itself. Both feelings are due to the impression made by the virtues of Leo's private character. This impression was enhanced by the exceptional mental vigor Leo displayed into a high age and the youthful interest he manifested to the very end in current events, and which has seldom, if ever, been equaled in recent times. This personal sympathy of Protestants, strange to say, has been accorded to Leo in spite of his sweeping condemnations of Protestantism. His encyclicals* have denounced the Reformation, with its novel doctrines, as having produced "sudden tumults and most audacious revolts, especially in Germany." Its so-called philosophy is made the mother of unnumbered pests, such as communism, socialism and nihilism. The ultimate fruit of the Lutheran revolt is the ruin of morals.† In one of his very first encyclicals the evan-

* June 29, 1881; August 1, 1897, etc.

† *Ruinam morum ultimam maturavit*, *Encyclical*, August 1, 1897.

III.

THOMAS CROMWELL.

TWO men have risen to larger power in England than has been wielded by any other Englishman not connected by birth or marriage with the royal line. These men were of the same blood, for Oliver Cromwell was descended in the fifth generation from the sister of Thomas Cromwell, who under Henry VIII wielded the highest authority in Church and State. They were very unlike in character, but had common traits: unusual capacity for the affairs of government, tact in dealing with men, an iron will and the gift of foresight.

Fame has been unfair to both of these great men. In giving judgment upon each in turn she has stood with eyes bound, not to weigh more evenly good against evil, but to take with blind confidence the opinion of his bitter enemies as a just estimate of his work and character.

The opponents of Oliver Cromwell hung his confined body on the gallows, and then flung his bones into a shallow grave at its foot. But they buried his memory under obloquy so deep that, more than two hundred years afterward, the city government of Leeds dared not accept the gift of a statue to him because they feared the people. A saner judgment has at last prevailed. It was voiced five years ago by the man who held at death the almost unquestioned primacy among the writers of history in the English tongue. "It is time for us to regard him as he really was, with all his physical and moral audacity, with all his tenderness and spiritual yearnings, in the world of action what Shakespeare was in the world of thought, the greatest, because the most typical, Englishman of all time."*

For the older but the smaller of these two kinsmen the ebb and flow of the tide of injustice has been reversed. Within two generations of Thomas Cromwell's death on the scaffold at the hands of a priestly cabal, Fletcher or Shakspeare put the popular estimate of his work and character into the prophetic adjuration of the dying Wolsey:

* Samuel R. Gardiner, *Oxford Lectures on Cromwell*.

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.
 Be just and fear not.
 Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
 Thy God's and truth's; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell!
 Thou fall'st a blessed martyr."

But modern writers, particularly during this generation, have presented him as the importer of the unknown vices of Italian politics, a mere tyrant's hireling and flatterer, the light of whose intellect displays no large aims, but, as by infernal fires, only illumines the cruelty and greed of an adventurer. This peculiarly sinister atmosphere comes chiefly from the *Apologia*, a long rhetorical letter written the year before Cromwell's execution to the Emperor Charles V, urging him to invade England and force it from schism to obedience. Its author was Cardinal Reginald Pole, an Englishman of the blood royal, outlawed for treason, who had tried to bring Papal money into England to back an insurrection which menaced the throne and demanded Cromwell's head.* This attempt Cromwell answered by sending to the block the head of the Pole family and its intimate friends. It is as unreasonable to base a final estimate of Cromwell upon such a document, as it would be to base a final estimate of the character and purposes of Abraham Lincoln on a letter of Jefferson Davis, written during the Civil War to gain the alliance of a European power for the Confederacy.†

An historical sketch of Cromwell must judge him, not by the ideals of his opponents, but by his own; test him by the moral average of his times, and take account of the qualities his friends truly praised, as well as the vices his enemies justly condemned. This attempt is based chiefly on the seven thousand letters by, to or about Cromwell calendared in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*. There is nothing in it which cannot be supported by citations from that collection or other contemporary writings. The writer believes he has never differed from the opinions of modern historians without being aware of it, and every such difference implies a dissent which seems to him justified by evidence drawn from the primary sources.

Henry VIII had that eye of a King which sees capacity while yet in obscurity. Under his favor two men, unaided by birth or money, rose to high positions which became the background to

* *Letters and Papers*, XII, part I, 123, 1141.

† In addition to this reflection, sufficient for the present purpose, the writer has found the *Apologia*, after critical examination, erroneous in detail. He expects to publish in the next (July) number of *The American Historical Review* what he ventures to believe is a demonstration of its untrustworthiness.

display remarkable talents—Thomas Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell.

Thomas Cromwell, born toward the end of the fifteenth century, was the son of Walter Cromwell, who was descended from two generations of people of wealth and importance in burgher society. He owned at various times a blacksmith shop, a fulling mill and a brewery, but in his later years lost most of his property.* The only contemporary accounts of Cromwell's youth contain several demonstrable mistakes, and have therefore been perhaps unduly discredited. But it is certain that while still a lad he traveled abroad and led a rough and adventurous life. In Italy he fell into great poverty, and for a time served as a soldier. During this wandering life he gained skill in business affairs, and acted as clerk or bookkeeper in the two great commercial cities of Antwerp and Venice. At some time in his early life he acquired Latin, French, Italian and a knowledge of law. According to a story told by a man who would be apt to know the facts, he developed, while still young, tact in managing men. The town of Boston wished to obtain some favor from the Pope, and Cromwell went with their agent to Rome. The request was reasonable, but Cromwell was delayed by a great crowd of suitors. In this situation he used his wits instead of the usual presents to attendants to get an audience before his turn. Waiting for the Pope as he came home from hunting, Cromwell's company, when the cavalcade drew near, sang an English "three-man song." The novel music attracted Julius' attention, Cromwell clinched the favorable impression by the gift of some English jellies or sweetmeats, and in the audience he got obtained the favor Boston sought.

Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty he came home, settled down and married the daughter of a shearman, an old neighbor, who had perhaps coöperated with his father's fulling mill in the manufacture of cloth. For a time he carried on the business of the fulling mill, to which he added the profession of a notary and business agent. His connections with the Italian and Flemish merchants living in London evidently helped him, and prosperity followed hard work. In 1524 he seems to have given up the fulling mill and devoted himself to his profession as a lawyer. He gained a good practice, and increased his earnings by loaning them among the merchants and gentry whose affairs he managed.

About ten years after he returned to England he bought land

* See the summary of evidence in *Thomas Cromwell*, by Roger B. Merriman. Macmillan, 1902.

in a good quarter of London. He had already become a person of position in the burgher society in which he moved. In 1522 he was put down in a joint power of attorney alongside of Poyser, grocer, London, as Thomas Cromwell, London, Gent.* In 1523 he sat on the inquest of wardmote for his ward. It was an energetic committee. It presented Hanchok and Bonyfaut for a defective pavement in front of their doors, and some twenty other owners had similar complaints lodged against them. There was a "noisome goose house in Scalding Alley." William Delke had threatened members of the inquest—probably for doing their duty. The wives of Spencer, Harrison and Badeoke were presented for scolding, and the wife of Andrew Forest for being a common scold. The draft of the committee's report is partly in Cromwell's hand.† The same year he sat in the House of Commons. Among his papers there is a draft of a speech in Parliament, in the handwriting of his clerk, which doubtless represents what Cromwell said or intended to say. The King had declared war against France and her ally Scotland. Wolsey, yielding when he must, presented the need of the throne and asked for a large grant of money, because the King intended to invade France in person. The speech of Cromwell combines most skillfully an appeal to patriotism, readiness to support the King, and the suggestion, conveyed so subtly that Henry could not have been offended, that the plan was a poor one. He denounces the treachery of France and the wrongs her King has done to England, but he is alarmed by the idea that Henry should put his person in danger across the sea. He points out the difficulty of bringing the Frenchmen to meet in open battle the forty thousand men to be sent, the risk of pushing on to Paris, leaving fortresses in the rear, and the impossibility of England's finding coin and bullion enough to feed so great an army, "seeing that the inhabitants of Flanders" (where provisions would have to be bought) are so anxious "to have much of our money for little of their victuals." These campaigns might prove more loss to England than to France and reduce the realm to coining leather. The true object of English arms was Scotland. "Who that intendeth France to win, with Scotland let him begin." It is folly to think of holding possessions across the sea when Scotland obeys another Prince. Scotland once united to England all other possessions are safe.‡

It was after sitting in this Parliament that he wrote one of the

* *Letters and Papers*, Dom. Series, III, 2447.

† *Letters and Papers*, III, 3657.

‡ *Ibid.*, III, 2958.

very few purely personal letters which have survived, and the only one which suggests the flavor of the pleasant conversation for which he was famous: "Supposing ye desire to know the news current in these parts, for it is said that news refresheth the spirit of life, wherefore ye shall understand that by long time I amongst others have indured a Parliament which continued by the space of seventeen whole weeks, where we communed of war, peace, strife, contentions, debate, murmur, grudge, riches, poverty, penury, truth, falsehood, justice, equity, deceit, oppression, magnanimity, activity, force, attempraunce, treason, murder, felony, and also how a commonwealth might be edified and continued within our realm. Howbeit in conclusion we have done as our predecessors have been wont to do, that is to say as well as we might, and left where we began."*

The habit of not taking himself too seriously, the friendly and familiar atmosphere out of which this comes, was evidently the atmosphere of Cromwell's house. And he seems to have early displayed that ready gratitude for kindness, that fidelity to those who had helped him, for which he became noted at home and abroad. People liked to go to his home and remembered their visit with pleasure. John Creke addresses him from Bilboa as "the dearest man in the world," and says that the recollection of walking with Cromwell in the garden and talking of spiritual things makes him desperate with loneliness.† Three different men within the year choose among the customary superscriptions for letters such forms as "my right loving friend, right faithful friend, heartily beloved friend." And several letters end with words of greeting to common friends. In the little circle which gathered round Cromwell his wife and his mother played their part. Correspondents ask to be remembered to them. One wants the good housewife "to send another plaster for his knee," and another desires to be commended "to your mother, after you my most singular good friend."‡ These are slight instances, but everything in the few letters which have survived from this early period points toward a merry and gentle house, visited by good friends and "gossips," with whom the Cromwells shared the pleasures of life down "to half a fat doe." And it was a prosperous house, for in 1524 Cromwell bought a sapphire ring worth in modern value some £40 and a gold bracelet with a jacinth worth £80.§

* *Letters and Papers*, III, 3249.

† *Ibid.*, III, 2394.

‡ *Ibid.*, III, 2624, 3015, 3502; IV, 1385.

§ *Ibid.*, IV, 166; IV, App., 57.

For most of his correspondents Mr. Thomas Cromwell became during the next five years "The Right Worshipful Thomas Cromwell." Though those who possessed or desired to claim intimacy choose the more familiar of the usual formal addresses, as when Lord Berners addressed his letter to "my well-beloved friend," or Lord George Grey endorses his "to my fellow and friend." The reason for this greater social consideration appears plainly from 1528 on, for his full title then becomes "The Right Worshipful Mr. Cromwell, Councilor to my Lord Cardinal's Most Honorable Grace."

Wolsey, the first man in the kingdom, whose wealth rivaled that of the King, employed him as the manager of the revenues of his diocese of York, and gradually a large part of the Cardinal's legal business had come into Cromwell's hands. As he trusted Cromwell's capacity, Wolsey naturally came to employ him in the project nearest to his heart—the establishment of his two colleges, one of which survives at Oxford, a monument to the love which could plan such a palace for learning, and the pride which blazoned his own insignia on every coign and chief stone of its walls. It was a visible evidence of the secret forces which were undermining mediæval institutions by changing scholastic habits of thought, that Wolsey obtained in Rome a bull permitting the suppression of smaller monasteries in England and the diversion of the funds to the establishment of his two colleges. For, as a man of the new learning which had spread in his day from Italy over Europe, Wolsey shared the Humanists' dislike of the ascetic ideal and was prepared to make war on the results of that exaggeration of it which had left Europe covered with thousands of monasteries, whose inmates no longer played any very useful part in the changed life of the world.

In this conversion of ancient foundations, which turned monasteries into colleges and substituted professors and students for monks, Cromwell was Wolsey's most active agent. And in this service he gained hatred. In any suppression of the kind there must be suffering to those who lose an assured living. Hatred is apt to follow, even in the gentler atmosphere of this century. The sixteenth century was anything but gentle, and therefore it is not surprising to find a letter to Wolsey in France at the end of August, 1527, telling him that "incredible things are reported about Allen (Cromwell's coadjutor) and Cromwell, as I have heard from the King and others."* What these "incredible things" were does

* *Letters and Papers*, IV, 3360.

not appear. Cromwell, like most men in subordinate positions, from Royal Ministers to the pages of a Baron's waiting-room, took fees and presents from the needs of suitors for such influence as they might have with their superiors.* And it is more than probable that, during this suppression of monasteries and the pensioning of their inmates, Cromwell made money which, to one of more delicate feelings of honor than those of the average man of his day, would have seemed to soil the hand that took it. But there are indications that the things reported were "incredible" and, to a large extent, the result of the hatred of the sufferers by the suppression, and its opponents. In the first place, we know of these charges only from letters which express disbelief in them, the one quoted above, the one quoted below, and one from John Rushe, a helper in the work, who wrote to Cromwell, "You would be astonished to learn what lies are told about us in these parts."† In the second place, an investigation evidently took place, for, in the beginning of November, John Cheking wrote Cromwell that various reports were spread in Oxford about him, which he is glad to know proved false.‡ And the next year, when Wolsey had fallen from power, Stephen Vaughan, a servant and friend, who did not hesitate to write a letter of stern warning and reproof when he thought it needed, writes: "You are more hated for your master's sake than for anything which I think you have wrongfully done against any man."§ At Wolsey's fall Cromwell was naked and open to his enemies. The London burghers and the House of Commons were apt to involve him in their vengeful feelings toward Wolsey, the incarnation of the idea of the temporal power of the clergy, against which they so strongly protested. Cromwell stood day after day in the House of Commons as the chief obstacle to bar that vengeance. If charges of unusual peculation or extortion could have been supported by any sort of evidence, it would have been easy to use the hatred of the master to overwhelm the man. And even if Cromwell, as seems probable,|| had obtained privately the royal assent to defend Wolsey, this would not necessarily have saved him from assault. Henry was

* Es lag im Geist dieser und auch noch der folgenden Zeit das ungescheut fürstliche Diener sich die Hände schmierem liessen. Ulmann, *Maximilian*, I, page 813. A dozen similar citations from men who know the period might be given.

† *Ibid.*, IV, 6110.

‡ *Ibid.*, IV, 4916.

§ *Ibid.*, IV, 6036. Compare VI, 1385.

|| *Ibid.*, IV, Appendix, 238.

unable to defend Wolsey against his enemies, and had to send secretly to assure him that he was not altogether abandoned.

Wolsey fell from the very faithfulness with which he had served his King. He had opposed the war, which rendered heavy taxes necessary, and then, when the storm of unpopularity which frightened even Henry arose, he shouldered all the blame.* And he had laid himself open to that indictment for the crime of *præmunire*, under which he was stripped of most of his property and power, by bringing into England his commission of Papal Legate at Henry's own desire. The King would not stand by his unpopular minister. Henry had the temperament of a tyrant, but he had also the Tudor instinct for Kingship, and though he might disregard the opposition of this or that class, he never risked too firm a resistance to any feeling he had reason to believe common to the mass of his people. And the bulk of the nation wished for Wolsey's fall.

Apparently Henry, while he wished Wolsey's fall, did not desire his utter destruction, and so when Cromwell, faithful in adversity, became the prop of his master's falling house, he saved it from ruin. He succeeded, by skillful bribery of Wolsey's chief opponents and by open defense before Parliament, in preventing his attainder for treason. Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman usher and biographer, writes: "There could nothing be spoken against my lord in the Parliament House but he would answer it incontinent or else take until the next day, against which time he would revert to my lord to know what answer he should make in his behalf; insomuch that there was no matter alleged against my lord but that he was ever ready furnished with a sufficient answer; so that at length for his honest behavior in his master's cause, he grew into such estimation in every man's opinion, that he was esteemed to be the most faithfullest servant to his master of all other, wherein he was of all men greatly commended."

No doubt he used the turn of the tide of feeling which drifted him out of danger to further his own fortune. But they who in these most recent times assert that he was faithful merely in the selfish hope of winning praise, not only choose to attribute the meanest possible motive to an action, but forget that he could not have been sure of success when he began the perilous task of defending his hated patron. Wolsey trusted him, and writes often in such phrases as "mine only aider in this mine intolerable anxiety and heaviness."†

* Hall's *Chronicle*.

† *Letters and Papers*, IV, 6093.

But Wolsey did not take Cromwell's advice to submit and return to the affairs of his archbishopric. He sought French influences for his reinstatement. The Spanish Ambassador reports that he sent messages suggesting forcible outside interference with Henry's divorce.* He seems to have written to Rome to cause pressure to be brought on the King for his own recall; at all events he hoped for Papal influence.† The Duke of Norfolk, his successor in the State, feared and Anne Boleyn hated him. They got hold of Wolsey's physician, who could give evidence partly true, quite enough to excite the fierce anger of Henry against any one who opposed a cherished plan. The physician perhaps distorted what he knew or added to it.‡ Wolsey was summoned to London, and his death on the journey probably saved him from the scaffold.

In the beginning of 1531, about a month after Wolsey's death, Cromwell became a Royal Councilor,§ an appointment which made it possible for him to be present at Councils of State, but did not necessarily give him any influence upon State policy. This, by the testimony of the foreign ambassadors, was largely determined by the Duke of Norfolk and the other relatives of Anne Boleyn. That Cromwell should have passed from Wolsey's service to the King's is nothing extraordinary. Large numbers of the Cardinal's "men," from yeomen of the guard up, did the same thing, and the careers of Bonner, afterward Bishop of London, and Gardiner, afterward Bishop of Winchester, were helped rather than hindered by the fact that the one had been Wolsey's chaplain and the other his secretary. Gardiner, as one of Cromwell's intimates wrote with disgust, refused to lift a finger to help his former patron.||

Of the way in which Cromwell became the King's man we have two contemporary accounts. Ten years afterward Reginald Pole wrote to the Emperor to prove that Henry VIII had become Anti-christ through the diabolically inspired Cromwell. He says that on one occasion, after Henry's attempted divorce had brought him into conflict with the Papacy and the Empire, "when he saw the strongest men of the State drawing back from the affair to such an extent that even Wolsey, smitten with dismay, had begun to withdraw his service, being very much disturbed in mind, he observed with a great sigh that he had sought a divorce from Rome

* *Calendar State Papers, Spanish*, Vol. IV, pp. 601, 619, 692.

† *Ibid.*, page 805.

‡ *Ibid.*, page 819.

§ A letter, dated January 10, is addressed to him as "One of the King's most gracious Council."

|| *Letters and Papers*, Dom. Series, Vol. IV, 6112.

in the hope of getting it, but if the Roman Church was determined to deny it he would not go any further in the matter. He remained in that state two days, and then began to renew his efforts more sharply than ever."* Pole says he got the King's remarks from one who heard it, and thus far he is probably telling facts. He then goes on to explain the cause of the change by relating what, from his own account, is conjecture. He says Satan sent to the King a messenger "whose real name was that of the demon by whose impulse he acted," "but to begin with the name he received from his family before he fell into the hands of demons and degenerated into their nature"; it is Cromwell. Pole gives a long speech (thirteen hundred and fifty words) which he supposes Cromwell delivered to Henry. It is an attempt to prove that a King may do as he pleases, without regard to the laws of God or man, and that therefore Henry ought to declare himself head of the English Church and deny all authority to the Pope. Pole gives no authority for believing that Cromwell had any such interview, and says expressly that he did not hear Cromwell's speech or know what he said, but there is nothing in the speech as he gives it which "he has not heard either from that devil's nuncio himself or, at different times, from his friends." Pole expressly tells us elsewhere that he had only spoken to Cromwell once† in his life, and gives an account of the interview. It makes no mention of the very point of Cromwell's advice to the King, the headship of the English Church and the denial of Papal authority. Nor did Henry's first assumption of the title of Head of the English Church, in January, 1531, necessarily imply the denial of Papal authority. It seems evident that Pole, in the account of this interview of Cromwell with the King, which he gives as the cause of his becoming a Royal Councilor, is making a conjecture based on Cromwell's subsequent activity in passing and defending the Act of Supremacy of 1534, which did separate England from the Papacy. And, as he tells the story, the conjecture is a violent one. He represents the King as in despair because Wolsey had drawn back from the attempt to secure the divorce. This scene must therefore have taken place before the fall of Wolsey, in October, 1529. Cromwell was not appointed to the Royal Council until 1531, and it was two years later before the Spanish Ambassador became aware that Cromwell was of sufficient importance to mention his name in a dispatch. If this interview with the King ever took place, why was the man who suggested the policy of

* *Apologia ad Carolian Quintum*, page 116.

† *Ex illo uno congressu et colloquio*.

England kept so long in the background? And how did Pole find out what the Spanish Ambassador, whose business it was to know the intrigues at Court, was ignorant of—the important fact that the King had a new all-powerful secret councilor?

The other contemporary account of the way in which Cromwell entered the King's service is not a conjecture, made in a highly rhetorical polemic by a man who in all his life had only a single talk with Cromwell, but a plain statement of fact by one who saw him often. Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman usher, writing his master's life, points out that Cromwell, at the time of Wolsey's fall, not only won men's respect by faithfulness to fallen fortunes, but also, having occasion to see the King frequently in connection with the Cardinal's property, by "witty demeanor" and capacity for business "enforced the King to repute him a very wise man and a meet instrument to serve his grace, as it afterward came to pass." And this fits exactly into the fact that for a long period after his reception into the Royal Council Cromwell had merely legal and business affairs to manage. The only exception was a disastrously unsuccessful attempt to induce the King to employ in his quarrel with the Pope the pen of William Tyndale, then abroad to avoid the laws against heresy. Cromwell became a Privy Councilor as he had gained wealth, by being, in the phrase of Tacitus, "equal to business and not above it."

He had accumulated a comfortable fortune before he entered the royal service. In July, 1529, he made a will in which he left about £1660 and real estate yielding in 1534 and 1535 an income of some £163 a year. As Cromwell considered five per cent. a safe and procurable rate of income from land, this represents a total property of some £5000, equal in modern purchasing power to £50,000 to £60,000.* He had added to the sapphire ring and gold bracelet a number of rings, plain jewels, intaglios or enameled stones. He shared the prevalent taste for silver plate and owned a number of spoons, goblets, flagons and cups.† ‡ His wardrobe was that of a well-to-do burgher. He dressed, usually, in black or russet, but occasionally put on a coat of dark blue, or a green

* *Letters and Papers*, IV, 5772; IX, 478; VII, 1610; IV, 5772.

† *Ibid.*, IV, 3197.

‡ It seems to have been the ambition of all English families to have silver. An Italian traveler of 1500 records his astonishment at the amount of plate to be seen in the houses of ordinary people. "In one single street named Strand there are fifty-two goldsmith shops, so rich, and full of silver vessels, great and small, that in all the shops of Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence put together, I do not think there would be found so many of the magnificence that are to be seen in London."—*Camden Society*, Vol. 37, page 43.

coat "welted with green velvet." He sometimes wore the orange tawney which was the dress of the gentlemen servants of Wolsey. He owned three rings, one set with a rock ruby, one with a table diamond, and one with a turquoise. He had three swords, one of them by a good maker in a black velvet scabbard. His hats and caps were black satin or velvet.*

There is nothing in the State papers to indicate that he had any particular weight within the Council until the latter half of 1532, eighteen months after he entered it. The Parliament of 1532 passed thirty-four bills. Drafts of three acts for that Parliament, written or corrected by Cromwell, have come down to us—one the germ of the future Act of Supremacy, one for the Improvement of Seaports, one for the Improvement of Husbandry. Only one of these was passed, and this indicates that as yet he was not employed in the more important affairs of the Crown. But by the middle of the year he was "in the high tide of prosperity and overwhelmed with affairs."† And in October he crossed to France, the only Commoner appointed for the train of twenty-five nobles who accompanied Henry to an interview with Francis I at Calais.‡ On his return his influence is evident. His correspondence, which had been increasing during the year, now began to rise to enormous proportions. From this time until his death an average of forty per cent. of the documents calendared for each year in the governmental series of *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* are addressed to Cromwell. In April, 1533, the Imperial Ambassador perceived his importance and mentioned him in a dispatch as "Cromwell who is powerful with the King."§ This late perception of the importance of Cromwell in the Royal Council was not due to the fact that his power had been artificially concealed.|| The testimony of the State papers points to the more natural conclusion that the growth of his influence had been so gradual as to escape notice until it was well established. Wolsey possessed great ability and a power of work which enabled him on one occasion to write twelve hours on a stretch without food or exercise.¶ Norfolk was incapable of the tact, work and insight necessary in the crisis through which England was passing. Henry openly

* *Letters and Papers*, IV, 3197.

† *Ibid.*, V, 1210.

‡ *Ibid.*, V, Appendix, 33.

§ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 168. There is a previous simple mention of his name in a dispatch of February 15 (*Calendars of State Papers, Spanish*, Vol. IV, part II, p. 601).

|| The hypothesis of Mr. Merriman.

¶ Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*, page 96.

regretted his great minister's death and rated the leading Councilors for their want of skill.* The King promoted Cromwell because of proved capacity; and for eight years all the internal affairs of England passed through his hand.

No English statesman has ever had a more difficult task. Europe was just entering upon a period which was to bring great disasters to her leading States. Germany was consolidating the power of scores of petty princedoms undermining the basis of central authority, destroying the sense of national unity. Among her people there was forming that fierce hatred about religious opinions which, opening the path for the greed of her princes, was, in the next century, to make her the fighting ground of all the nations of Europe. Italy, bleeding at every pore from the struggle of France and Spain over her conquest, was unable to repel the foreigners who wasted her fields and sacked her cities. In the Netherlands those sentiments were growing which were to turn the revolt against Spain into one of the bitterest of civil strifes. France was near the outbreak of the intermittent Huguenot wars which filled her with fire and blood for forty years, and threatened to place a Spanish dynasty on her throne. Spain was falling under that Hapsburg absolutism, supported by national pride, defended by the money of the New World and the pressure of the Inquisition, which, after stimulating a wondrous bloom of literature and art and guiding a marvelous output of energy, crushed the race for centuries into national nervous prostration.

England was to escape all these evils. She alone was to be free from protracted civil war about religion, from the misery and shame of foreign armies trampling her soil, from a kind of absolutism which destroyed the standing ground of future liberty.

Cromwell could not have foreseen these miseries which befell England's neighbors after his death, but he could perceive, and set himself to fight, the tendencies which produced them. The most dangerous of them appeared to be the separatist influences of feudalism. In the disorders of the ninth and tenth century a method of land tenure had bred a bastard government, the child, not of power and consent, but of power and circumstance. The Scholastic theology had given divine sanction to this progeny by a scheme of the world in which God figured as a supreme over-lord. During the last half of the fifteenth century the critical spirit of the Renaissance had, to the minds of many men, destroyed belief in the divinity of the mediæval scheme of the world. Some time before this weak-

* *Calendars, Spanish*, IV, part I, page 819.

ening of the mental habits which helped to support feudalism, it had ceased to be the necessary alleviation of a bad situation. Barbarian invasions had come to an end. Trade and manufactures enabled landless men to live outside of serfdom or the profession of fighting. Money exchange, replacing barter, decreased the social, political and economic weight of landowners. Barons who feared not God, neither regarded man, trembled when siege guns were leveled at the walls of their ancestral castles. The fierce rush of Swiss mountaineers, the unbroken phalanx of the Flemish artisans, the arrow flight of English yeomen, had proved to the astonished knights that a horse is a vain thing for safety. The day of chivalry was gone. The rough game of the tournament (compared with which football with its leather armor is a sport for young ladies' seminaries) long survived as a fashionable amusement; but it lost its meaning. The ideal of chivalry went to seed in the formal phrases of gallantry, and few knights even tried to remember, like Bayard, that privilege implies duty.

But feudalism had struck its roots too deep into selfish passion and local pride to be exterminated easily. It was a tremendous task for Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain and the Valois in France to beat it into subjection to the Crown as the symbol of the new sentiment, almost unknown to the middle ages, the sentiment of national patriotism. In England, at the very time when it seemed to be dying, feudalism revived in a hybrid form. Edward Third's marriages of his children to the heirs and heiresses of great landed estates had produced nobles uniting feudal influence to the authority of royal blood, and the aristocratic factions of the White and Red Rose had for two generations marred the peace of England in a struggle for the Crown. Henry VIII, whose favorite emblem was the Red Rose imposed on the White, was the first King for more than a century who inherited an undisputed title to the throne. He followed the policy, mingling ruthlessness and craft with wisdom, by which his father had won the nation's loyalty to a crown picked up on the battlefield of Bosworth. Like his father, Henry VIII tried to fill his Council with men of great ability rather than men of high birth. He realized that the support of the Tudor dynasty was the middle class, so strong in England that, to the astonishment of the French chronicler, the barons had not dared to plunder and slaughter the people, even in the merciless days of the wars of the Roses. These strongest of England's children dreaded the fires of civil war, and were willing to commit her destinies to a powerful, if need

be a tyrannical, throne. Henry VIII continued the work of suppressing the remanent abuses by which the aristocracy used their influence to wrong their weaker neighbors. He employed the power of the Crown, which his father had made efficient to enforce common law in the Court of Star Chamber, to break the power of the little great men of different localities. "Bearing," or the aiding of evildoers to continue crime or escape its punishment; "maintenance," or the willingness of a lord to stand by his "man" through thick and thin; "livery," which was usually the symbol of an expectation of maintenance and the willingness to back the quarrel of the maintainer; "embracery," where bearing showed itself in the attempt to coerce or bribe a jury—all felt the pressure of the King's justice.

The power of feudalism was broken when Cromwell became the chief man in England under the King, but the instincts and habits bred by it survived. Into the Tudor struggle to suppress them Cromwell threw himself with an energy which recked not of obstacles. His zeal for the support of the general authority of law tended to make him not too solicitous for justice to the individual. Most men who have fought deep-rooted traditions and habits of lawlessness in feudal, brigand or frontier communities have been driven toward the temper of the lyncher. The epithet of "sinister," which modern historians are so fond of applying to Cromwell, is not well chosen; but his aims, and the opposition to them, constantly strengthened in him some of the characteristics of the type which the Italians label "*uomo terribile*." There was no one left who could openly resist the King or the national law. The Duke of Buckingham, last of the great nobles of the old style, who kept solitary state almost royal, had died on the scaffold in 1521. But everywhere the forces of disorderly local privilege needed the strong hand of a master. Men were quick on the dagger.* A justice of the peace reports a quarrel with a courtier. "He said, 'I lied like a fool,' and I that 'He lied like a knave.' Then he drew his dagger and struck me on the head, and I drew mine, but the other gentlemen stepped between us."† Strong bands of men broke into parks, killed the deer and set the law at defiance.‡ As when, on one occasion, the parson drank at the inn with the young bloods of the neighborhood until they sallied out at two in the morning, some in harness, all with cross-bows or long-bows, to hunt in the neighboring park, threatening to kill the keeper unless he kept

* *c.g.*, *Letters and Papers*, XII, part I, 129.

† *Ibid.*, XIII, part II, 578.

‡ *e.g.*, *Ibid.*, XIII, 318, and Appendix, 7.

quiet about their poaching. The great lords near Winchester dammed the streams, made a marsh and destroyed the salmon fishing, and tried to stop those who broke down the "water-works" in obedience to statute. Latimer wrote from Hartlebury: "Here is much bolstering and bearing, and malefactors do not lack supporters. What is needed is a good Sheriff, and that is not easy to find."*

Cromwell supervised the enforcement of law without fear. The most disorderly parts of England were on the marches of Scotland and Wales, where the ideas and habits of feudalism still prevailed. He induced Parliament to extinguish the feudal courts of the Bishopric of Durham† and, according to memoranda in his notebook, wished to extinguish all franchises under which powerful wrongdoers might take refuge from the heavy hand of the King's justice. He continued the work of limiting, and he wished to abolish the right of sanctuary, by which criminals who reached the liberties of certain churches might dwell there untouched of law, or, if they wished, withdraw unarrested from England. The country squires of the borders oppressed their humble neighbors. "A poor man, following the tread of an ox that had been taken, found him lying in a petty gentleman's floor, and durst not say a word for fear of his life."‡ On the Welsh border things were so far out of order that the Bishop of Chester reported "by the common law they will never be redressed."

The five counties of the North were put under a permanent Royal Council, as the King said, "for the conservation of those counties in quiet, and the administration of common justice." Wales and its marches were placed in charge of a similar Council, whose decrees were executed by a bishop with a strong sense of injustice. "Two outlaws were brought in. We have sent them for trial, and tomorrow they shall have justice done them. God pardon their souls. Two days later four other outlaws were brought to us. Two had been at large for sixteen years. Three were alive and one slain, brought in a sack trussed on a horse. We have had him hanged on the gallows here as a sign. All thieves in Wales quake for fear."§ And he adds as a postscript a "list of thieves slain." By December, 1537, this bishop, with a halter for crozier, could write from Shrewsbury: "All is quiet here, save now and then a little conveying amongst themselves for a fat sheep or a bullock, which

* *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part I, 1258.

† *The County Palatine of Durham*, Lapsley, pp. 1, 99, 197-254, note 255.

‡ *Letters and Papers*, XIV, Appendix, 7.

§ *Ibid.*, X, 130.

is impossible to be amended, for thieves I found them and thieves I shall leave them.’* The good work in the Welsh borders was rendered permanent by the incorporation of Wales into England and its division into shires.

It is evident that Cromwell liked to be known as a promoter of stern and equal justice, for a series of letters have survived written by suppliants, who either believed him to be a defender of the rights of the weak or, at least, hoped to please by calling him so. Edward Beck, of Manchester, whom he sent to Ireland in 1535, writes: “The country is in good peace and quiet, and in greater fear of justice than it has been these forty years.” Cromwell made many enemies by his administration of England. None of his modern biographers has been at the pains to point out that he also made many friends. In his character there was joined to that unscrupulous severity which marked all the efficient governments of his time, a trait of humanity not so common. A man suspected of offenses in the North appeals to Cromwell. Sir William Goring writes: “He would rather die than appear before my Lord of Norfolk, he is so extreme. And he trusts you will hear him.”† Latimer, commending a poor man’s cause, writes that he thinks Cromwell was set up “to hear and help the little ones of God in their distress”;‡ and Maude Carew, in a grateful letter, “prays God to prosper and continue his Lordship to the comfort of all poor widows.” A prisoner gladly answers Cromwell’s agent, sent to look after poor prisoners, by a complaint of evil treatment.§ Another, asking for further help, quotes his charitable pity in delivering him from Ludgate Prison.|| The widow of the Marquis of Dorset writes to thank him and ask for more help, because she has “no other succour in all her troubles.”¶ She commends to his care her son at Court, to whom he has already shown such kindness. ‘Whenever you shall see him in any large playing or great usual swearing or any other demeanor unmeet for him to use, which I fear me shall be very often, I pray you for his father’s sake rebuke him.’** He evidently had a sympathetic ear for love troubles. Mary Boleyn, the Queen’s sister and former mistress of the King, had made a clandestine marriage with Sir William Stafford. The

**Letters and Papers*, XII, part II, 1237.

† *Ibid.*, VII, 1534.

‡ *Ibid.*, XI, 1374.

§ *Ibid.*, IX, 431.

|| *Ibid.*, IX, 1133.

¶ *Ibid.*, V, 926.

** *Ibid.*, VII, 153.

anger of the King and Queen and her powerful relatives of the families of Boleyn and Norfolk was great. In her trouble she writes to Cromwell, saying that her sister, father, brother and uncle are so "cruel against us" she dares not write to them. She knows that her marriage displeases the King and Queen, "but one thing, good Master Secretary, consider: that he was young and love overcame reason. And for my part, I saw so much honesty in him that I loved him as well as he did me; and was in bondage and glad I was to be at liberty; so that for my part I saw that all the world did set so little by me and he so much, that I thought I could take no better way than to take him and forsake all other ways and live a poor honest life with him. For well I might a had a greater man of birth and a higher, but, I ensure you, I could never a had one that should a loved me so well We have been now a quarter of a year married, but if I were at liberty and might choose, I ensure you, Master Secretary, for my little time I have tried so much honesty to be in him, that I had rather beg my bread with him than to be the greatest Queen christened." And she begs Cromwell, as he has "the name of helping all that need," that he will help them.*

At least one other pair of lovers turned to him for help. An unsigned letter has come down, thanking Cromwell for renewing his goodness "in writing to my father for us, as I understand by my dear friend. If I did not trust in you, I would soon tire of life to find my father no better to me than he is. My mother, that was wont in such matters best to persuade him, being taken to God's mercy. . . . As he whom my heart resteth upon regards you more as a father than a master, I will ever as one body with him bear a daughter's affection to you. Your Lordship's most bounden handmaid."†

Almost all who give an account of this age allude to the harsh letter Cromwell wrote to the Princess Mary when he was trying to induce her to avoid her father's brutal treatment by accepting the decrees that declared her mother's marriage void—a submission which brought her the Crown of England by her father's will. The letter was hard, but Mary came to feel that Cromwell had stood her friend. The Spanish Ambassador reports: "The King has been all the time furious and Cromwell himself in some danger of his life owing to his having shown sympathy for the Princess."‡ He says that after Mary submitted to her father Cromwell

* *Letters and Papers*, VII, 1655.

† *Ibid.*, XII, part II, Appendix, 26.

‡ *Calendars, Spanish*, V, part II, pp. 184, 185.

paid his respects to her, begging her pardon for the harsh terms and rude conduct of his former visit. "This she was glad enough to grant, knowing, as she now knows, Cromwell's good intentions and affection toward her, and that he has been and still is working for her welfare and the settlement."‡ And the Duchess of Norfolk, whom her husband abandoned for another woman, wrote to ask Cromwell's help, "because she has trust in him," having heard "how good he was to the King's daughter in her trouble."* The year before Cromwell's death Mary chose him "for her valentine,"† which she would hardly have done if she had felt in regard to his conduct toward her as many modern writers have felt. One of the charges in his attainder was that he had set at liberty persons convicted of misprision of treason and others suspected of treason. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, writing three generations after his death, says: "He was noted in the exercise of Judicature to have used much moderation." And the French Ambassador, who despised him because of his humble birth and who disliked his policy, wrote just before his fall: "He shows himself willing to do justice, especially to foreigners."‡

To exalt the authority of the King as the incarnation of common law, in order to subdue the lawless tendencies bred by feudalism, was the least difficult thing Cromwell helped to do. In that he only had to finish what was begun in the generation before he came to power. When he undertook to free England from connection with an Italianized Papacy, and to limit the political power of the clergy, he began a task harder and more dangerous. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Papacy was Italianized. When, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, three Popes claimed the tiara, and the strife threatened to destroy the Church, Christendom had met in the Council of Constance, deposed all three Popes, elected another by a conclave where representatives of the five chief nations sat with the Cardinals, decreed that the supreme power of the Church was in a General Council, not in the Pope, and solemnly charged the new Pope with the duty of reforming the Church in head and numbers, reporting as a responsible executive to regularly assembled Councils. That responsibility the succeeding Popes had refused to acknowledge, that duty of reform they had failed to carry out in a hundred years. This is no longer a controverted statement. It is conceded by the ablest Roman Catholic historians, and its truth can be seen with unmistakable

* *Letters and Papers*, Vol. XII, part II, 143.

† *Ibid.*, XIV, part II, page 329.

‡ *Ibid.*, XV, 486.

plainness in the contemporary writings of loyal Churchmen. One thing the Popes since Constance had done. They had ably restored the temporal power of the Papacy over the States of the Church. This task had absorbed their energies. And it lies on the surface of lives like those of Sixtus IV, Alexander VI, Julius II, Leo X, Clement VII, that they had little enthusiasm for the magnificent ideal of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, the visible representative of the justice and mercy of God. They used their authority as spiritual heads of Christendom, and the wealth which came from it, largely to gratify the ambitions and tastes they shared with other princes of the Italian Renaissance. The spectacle of this corrupted and Italianized Papacy had been denounced again and again by Italian writers of all shades of religious opinion from Savonarola to Machiavelli. The world north of the Alps had long watched it with an impatience foretelling exasperation. The general loyalty of Christendom to the ideal of the Papacy which had stood the strain of so many bitter disappointments was seriously weakened. Biting epigrams were circulating through the world. Like this on Alexander VI, who had been elected Pope by notorious bribery, from which only five out of twenty-three Cardinals were thought to have been free:

"Vendit Alexander cruces, altaria Christi
Vendere jure potest, emerat ille prius." †

(Alexander sells Christ's crosses and altars for pelf.

He has a right to sell them—he bought them first himself.)

When an Imperial Ambassador, in a letter which expresses horror at the iconoclasm of the Lutherans, writes that some of the Cardinals have "sneered at a General Council to reform the Church, and offered to wager ten to one it will never take place";* when another Ambassador writes from Rome to the High Commander of Leon, "since Cardinals sell themselves so cheap your Lordship, ought to consider that it would be inpolitic to defer rewarding those who are our friends,"† it seemed to some minds no longer a question of a theory of the Church, but of an impossible situation.

There were only two things to do: make another attempt to reform the Church, and secure the election of a Pontiff with spiritual enthusiasm, or else decide that the last two hundred years had shown the ideal of the Papacy to be unworkable, abandon it, and establish a series of national Churches, appealing for justification to another Council of Christendom as really representative as that

* *Calendars, Spanish Papers*, IV, part I, page S35.

† *Ibid.*, IV, part II, page S87.

of Constance. All those who believed that the "fullness of power" was given by God to the Pope stood by the ancient ideal for conscience' sake. And they were joined by people whose conservative temper suggested the fear that truth would perish if traditional institutions were destroyed. On the other hand, men whose radical habits of thought led them to hope that truth and order would survive the fall of ancient institutions to create new forms of expression and guarantees of law, were inclined to destroy the one remanent universal institution of Christendom as no longer fitted to the needs of the world.

A feeling common to those classes of the English people who possessed political power enabled the men of radical temper to sway English policy on the question of obedience to the Pope. There was a growing dislike of foreign interference with English affairs, rapidly crystallizing around the throne of the Tudors into the national sentiment which was to be the background of the great output of English energy under Elizabeth. The feeling was old and had been shown before. When Wiclif, not yet guilty of the crime of heresy, had voiced England's refusal of Papal tribute he had been the hero of the majority of Englishmen who were neither priests nor monks. When Cromwell came to power, five generations later, this dislike of foreign control was very strong. Circumstances enabled him to evoke and shape it into legislation.

In 1527, Henry VIII had made application to the Papal Court for a divorce from his Queen, Katherine, widow of his older brother Arthur, to whom he had been married eighteen years. Henry had but one legitimate child, Mary. No woman had ruled England except Matilda, four hundred and fifty years before. And her reign had been a long anarchy, ended only when she ceded the throne to her cousin Stephen, on condition that at his death her son Henry II should succeed. Henry VIII might well have doubted whether any woman could carry on the policy of the Tudors, for it was impossible to foresee the strength of that loyalty of the mass of the nation to the Tudor dynasty as the guarantee of peace, which afterward sustained the repeatedly shaken thrones of Mary and Elizabeth. And in addition only the single life of a delicate girl stood between England and the horrors of a certain renewal of civil war over a disputed succession.

If Henry desired to avoid this danger to his dynasty and England, he must obtain from the Church permission to put away his wife and take another who might bear him heirs. He believed that he

could obtain this from the Pope. The Church maintained in theory the noble attitude toward the sacredness of the marriage tie which is now enforced upon the adherents of the Roman Catholic communion. But the as yet unreformed abuses of the administration of the Curia rendered it possible for people of wealth and influence to obtain facile divorce. Henry's brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk, had two living wives beside the King's sister. And this complicated matrimonial situation had been made legal by Papal bulls and dispensations.*

Henry's sister Margaret, Queen of Scotland, in 1528 obtained a divorce from the Earl of Angus on such flimsy grounds that Henry bade Wolsey write her that "the shameless sentence sent from Rome plainly discovereth how unlawfully it was handled," and warn her of the "inevitable damnation of adulterers."† Twenty-nine years before the Pope had granted a divorce which Louis XII of France asked for reasons very similar to those which lay behind Henry's request. When Louis came to the throne in 1498 he had been married for twenty-two years to Joan, daughter of Louis XI, noted for her goodness and the dignity of her character, but unattractive and without children. Louis wished to marry Anne of Brittany, his predecessor's widow. Strong reasons of State as well as inclination suggested the match. The throne needed direct heirs, and marriage with the Queen Dowager would keep her hereditary Duchy of Brittany closely bound to the Crown of France. The Pope appointed a commission which granted the divorce, with his approval. Louis immediately married Anne of Brittany. The people resented the injustice to Queen Joan and nicknamed the three commissioners Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate.‡ Henry had very good reason to expect that the Pope would enable him to put away his wife in order to take another. He alleged in support of his application for divorce chiefly spiritual reasons. He said that the French Ambassador, while conducting negotiations about the marriage of the Princess Mary, had suggested that her title to succeed to the English throne was not beyond question, because Henry's marriage to Katherine, his brother's widow, although resting on special Papal dispensation, was against the laws of the Church and the Word of God. This remark, Henry said, had produced increasing torments of conscience for living with his brother's widow, in disobedience to the Word of God. The intimates of the English Court suspected, with good

* *Anne Boleyn*, by Paul Friedmann. Macmillan, 1884.

† *Letters and Papers*, IV, 4131.

‡ *Maulde de la Clavière Procédures Politiques du Règne de Louis XII.*

reason, that the most acute motive impelling him to seek this divorce was a passion for one of the Court ladies, Anne Boleyn, a woman of noble blood and vulgar nature, who was skillfully dallying with Henry in order to become Queen of England. Self-indulgence and flattery had bred in Henry a desperate selfishness and the temper of a tyrant. It is a Nemesis for these sins that his most active motives, which were generally his most unworthy motives, have often seemed to posterity his only motives. The facts, however, indicate beyond a question that Henry's eagerness to marry Anne Boleyn was not all passion, but partly statecraft, clearly seeing the need of male heirs to the throne. When her power over him was failing, Anne felt that the birth of a son would reinstate her in his favor. And her enemies openly rejoiced as soon as it became known that her child was a girl.

It is a superficial view of the complicated character of Henry and the subtle, morbid character of his depravity to see in his professions of torments of conscience nothing but bold, conscious hypocrisy. French literature has made us familiar with the type of woman at once *galante* and *dévôte*. Henry's conscience, too weak to control his conduct, was acutely sensitive. He thought himself to be religious, was proud of his training in theology, and possessed skill as a casuist. Whenever he did a bad thing, he usually succeeded in persuading himself that he had a good motive for it.

However much England might need heirs to the throne, the divorce was a most blatant injustice. Since an indiscretion of her youth, Katherine had lived a life above reproach. By her husband's own saying, she had been a most patient and faithful wife. It is to the credit of the Papacy that Henry, neither by bribes nor threats, could induce the Curia to consent to the divorce. Clement VII was in great fear of Katherine's nephew, the Emperor Charles V, whose Spanish and Lutheran regiments inflicted on Rome in 1527 a frightful sack, in which all the world, whether they rejoiced at it or deplored it, saw the punishment for the sins of the Curia. But it is unjust to assume that fear was the only motive for refusal. Even shifty and worldly Clement VII, using his office of Pope chiefly to advance his family of the Medici, probably shrank from dishonoring one of his predecessors and disregarding the appeal of a wronged woman to the visible judgment seat of Christ.

When Cromwell began in the middle of 1532 to acquire influence in the Royal Council, he found the King trying to force the Pope

to grant a divorce from Katherine that would enable him to marry Anne Boleyn. The fate of Wolsey told any man of discernment that the necessary condition of power was to help the King to get what he wanted. The original motives, England's need of more children of the royal blood and the inclination of passion turned by self-deceiving casuistry into the torments of conscience were now reinforced by the dominant trait of Henry's character. That habit, called by those who approve of the objects toward which it is turned strength of will, by those who disapprove of them obstinacy, had mastered him. Opposition to a purpose made him more bent on its accomplishment. Cavendish heard the dying Wolsey tell Kingston, the lieutenant of the Tower: "He is sure a prince of a royal courage and hath a princely heart, and rather than he will either miss or want any part of his will or appetite, he will put the loss of one-half his realm in danger. For I assure you I have often kneeled before him in his privy chamber on my knees for the space of an hour or two to persuade him from his will and appetite, but I could never bring to pass to dissuade him therefrom." Cromwell, years afterward, described to the Spanish Ambassador how "the King's whole Council were assembled for three or four hours, and there was not one of them but remained long on his knees before the King, to beg him for the honor of God not to lose so good an opportunity of establishing a friendship so necessary and advantageous, but they had not been able to change his opinion."*

Only one thing ever made Henry give way—the clear perception that he was in danger of destroying that consent of the English middle class on which he was basing his throne. He judged, and the result showed he was right, that the openly expressed sympathy of large numbers of the people for Katherine would not take the form of an irrepressible rebellion aiming to dethrone him, in order to prevent her from being uncrowned.

Whether Cromwell felt the injustice done to Katherine cannot be known. If he did, like many statesmen of his own and succeeding generations, he was not capable of the moral heroism of sacrificing the need of the State to the rights of an individual. No one would be apt to feel more strongly England's need of male heirs to the throne than this hater of disorder, born of that very burgher class to which the Tudor policy appealed.

He also saw in the situation an opportunity of doing something which would please the King, and at the same time be, from his

* *Letters and Papers*, X, page 293.

point of view, of great service to the English State. That was to make two changes in the English Church. First, to remove it from the overlordship of Popes, spending the money they drew from England in wars to create princedoms for their relatives, and, second, to destroy the independent political power of the clergy. The first intent was finally expressed by making the Church of England a national Church, using in service the vernacular instead of the universal Latin, constituting its own Primate, without the authority of the representative of Christendom. The second intent subjected the clergy to the efficient control of the Crown as symbolized in the Act of Supremacy.

Before Cromwell attained influence in the Royal Council, Henry may have thought of revolting from the traditionally established Papal authority. But if he had thought of schism from the body of Christendom, he had not yet determined upon it. In 1531 he had compelled the Convocations of the English clergy to acknowledge him as Supreme Head of the English Church, "so far as the law of Christ allows," but that title was not entirely new. It was unpleasant to the defenders of the Papal "fullness of power," but it did not necessarily imply a denial of the authority of the Pope, nor was its assumption taken by the Papacy as a declaration of schism. Practically it was quite consistent with a method of ecclesiastical management which the Papacy had conceded to nations by Concordats. Henry had induced Parliament to vote that annates, *i.e.*, the whole or a part of the first year's income of certain ecclesiastical offices, paid to the Papacy by custom which had become law, should be withheld. But this did not necessarily imply schism for the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, under which the French Church was managed from 1438 to 1516, forbade under penalties the payment of annates to the Pope. And the English act against annates was not final. It would only become law in case the King failed to come to an agreement with the Pope. Henry sent word to Clement that the usual annates would be paid if they could agree. And Henry and Francis, at an interview, promised to stand together to force the Pope to do what each wanted. The Acts of Parliament were as yet only threats to bring the Pope to terms with the King.

But, soon after Cromwell's rise to great influence in the Royal Council, this policy of threats and pressure, which had often been tried before by Kings who had no intention of seceding from the Papal obedience, was changed for a policy recently used by some Cantons of the Swiss Confederacy and some Princes and Free Cities

of Germany. The English nation, through its constituted heads, denied the right of the Bishop of Rome to exercise any jurisdiction over the Church of England.

This withdrawal from Papal obedience did not necessarily imply in the supporters of it heresy or the denial of the traditional creeds. And there is nothing to indicate that Cromwell had adopted at this time any of the new theological opinions. As a favorer of "the new learning," he probably disliked some traditional practices like pilgrimage, the veneration of relics and the sale of indulgences. But men who did not secede from the Roman communion, men like Erasmus and More, had denounced the abuses of those pious customs. The mediæval ascetic ideal seemed to him, as it did to most men of the new learning, to fetter the human spirit. But those most active servants of the orthodox creed and the traditional Church system, the Jesuits, were soon to break away from it.

Cromwell's will, made in 1529, leaves ten marks a year, equal to some three hundred and fifty dollars, "to hire a priest to sing for my soul for seven years."* And in May, 1530, he wrote to Wolsey, "The fame is that Luther is departed this life. I would he had never been born."†

As to the question, since so ingeniously and warmly debated, whether the withdrawal from the Roman obedience was or was not a schism, it is not probable that Cromwell took the smallest interest in it one way or the other. When a thing had to be done, he was not the sort of man to care much what it was to be called. Moreover, his mind was probably little affected by ideals of the Church. The intimate friends he made in his days of obscurity and kept in his days of splendor indicate that he cared for the things of the soul as well as for those of the mind; but he was a lawyer, not a clergyman; a politician, not an ecclesiastic. His habitual mood made him more actively interested in the glory of England than in the glory of the Kingdom of God. In addition, he seems to have gravitated by natural inclination toward an opportunist point of view. His perception that something ought to be done and his decision as to what was best to do were not apt to be obscured by theories. Some of the rulers of men who have been most useful in dealing with problems of politics complicated by hatred arising from discussions about religion have been subject to this secular temper or have been inclined toward the opportunist viewpoint. Under Elizabeth, England escaped the dangers of feudal

* *Letters and Papers*, IV, 5772.

† *Ibid.*, IV, 6391.

reaction and civil war about religion which ruined France because the Valois could not master them. Under Henry IV, who thought "Paris worth a mass," France laid down the torch and the sword for the plough and the loom. And it seems probable that the essential teachings of Jesus Christ about the Father in Heaven had freer course under the opportunist peace of secular-minded Elizabeth and Henry than amid the fanatic hatred of the Huguenot wars. But, useful as these rulers of secular mood and opportunist temper have been in times of intense hatred bred by differences about religion, certain minds find it difficult to be just to them. The man whose strongest emotions turn him toward the service of the Church is only too prone to conclude that he who in times of religious strife looks first to the safety of the State must be an infidel. The man who holds that a given form in Church or State is of divine origin thinks the opportunist must have no ideal, because his ideal is not definite. And the conservative, whose reverence for institutions outweighs his hopes of progress, is always apt to accuse the radical of undermining the moral foundations of human society. This was the attitude of Reginald Pole, Cardinal for England. He denounced Cromwell as an incarnate devil, denying the very distinction between right and wrong.*

But no mood defends a ruler against the temptations of the power to do great things. If the patriot is tempted to forget God, the ecclesiastic seems to be tempted to hate man, which, according to John, makes him unable to love God. The rule of ecstatically and sincerely devout Mary was certainly no less cruel than that of her father. And the maxim, "One may do evil that good may come," has been labeled in common speech as having in the past belonged to the practice of Machiavellians and of Jesuits. Cromwell gained power by helping the King to do what he wanted, and, like almost all men of ability in politics, he was ambitious. But there are reasons for what he did, which millions of her people then and since have thought to be connected with the best good of England. It is as superfluous to accuse him of being moved only by the base ambitions of a greedy and flattering adventurer, as it would be to assert that Pole, in standing by the Roman obedience, was bribed by the red robe of a cardinal and the income equivalent to \$100,000 which came to him from his benefices.†

For his plan of breaking from the Papacy, Cromwell could count on no assistance from the higher clergy, a body very distinct from

* *Apologia ad Carolium Quintum.*

† Phillip's *Life of Pole*, Vol. II, page 294.

the parish priests. It is true that only three of the twenty-six English bishops were now absentee Italians. But many English bishops, abbots and members of the Cathedral Chapters believed that the Pope's authority was given by God. All preferred it to the rule of the laity. Both these grounds of scruple were expressed in the protest of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of the Church, that no concessions made by Convocation were to be understood as implying any restriction of the power of the Roman Pontificate, or any infringement upon the liberties of the Province of Canterbury. The Convocation voted that the King was Supreme Head of the Church of England, "so far as the law of Christ allows." And many things indicate that the clergy gave a grudging assent to the revolt from the Papal authority, which left them without shelter against the power of the King.

The reluctance of the clergy to submit on equal terms with the laity to the control of the laws was one of the strongest reasons why Cromwell thought it best for England to separate from Rome. And the control of the laws meant to him the control of the King, the guarantee of peace and order, the symbol and defender of the nation. American ecclesiastical establishments are entirely voluntary, they have almost no endowments, and this puts them so entirely in the hands of the laity whenever they choose to use their power, that it is difficult for an American to appreciate the situation in England at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The clergy were a corporate body freed from the ordinary jurisdiction of the common law, deciding all matters connected with marriage and wills by courts constituted by themselves, having sanctuaries where the criminal who entered was free from arrest, enjoying an income two and a half times that of the Crown, owning real estate estimated at one-third the total of the kingdom, casting in the persons of the twenty-six bishops and the twenty-seven mitred abbots almost two-thirds of the votes in Henry VIII's first House of Lords, and able as great landed proprietors to exert influence on elections to the House of Commons. And this formidable body confessed supreme allegiance to a ruler living in Rome whose predecessors had repeatedly claimed the right to dictate to kings and nations about the conduct of their affairs.

A corporation legally so independent and politically so powerful would not be suffered to exist in any modern State. Large numbers of men of all shades of religious opinion thought this temporal power and political independence of the clergy, appealing to the irresponsible divine authority of the Pope, to be injurious both to

Church and State. The same attitude under modern conditions has been taken in our own day by the Roman Catholic people of Italy. They have felt it to be intolerable that an ecclesiastical jurisdiction independent of the laws of Italy should exist at Rome. Henry VIII expressed the views of numbers of statesmen in all countries of Europe when he wrote to James of Scotland: "What more intolerable calamity may there be to a Christian prince than unjustly to be defeated of the righteous jurisdiction within his own realm, to be a King by name, but not in deed? To be a ruler without regiment over his own liege people?"

Cromwell, a man of the Renaissance, who had thrown off mediæval ideals, was trying to form out of England a modern State by that process of unification under an absolute throne through which all the States of Europe which early achieved nationality passed. He wanted, therefore, to make the King the efficient head of the Church. He determined to loose upon the clergy the dislike of their independence and the jealousy of their power felt by a part of the people of England.

Unmistakable instances of this feeling appear in contemporary writings. In 1514 Richard Hunne was arrested for heresy. In reply he brought a criminal charge against the clergy who accused him. He was found hanging in his cell in the ecclesiastical prison, and the Chancellor of the Bishop was accused of murdering him. The Bishop wrote to Wolsey, asking that the prisoner might be tried by a commission of the Royal Council. "Assured am I that if my Chancellor be tryed by any twelve men in London, they be so maliciously set in favour of heresy that they will condemn my clerk though he be as innocent as Abel."* A popular pamphlet of 1527, in the form of a petition to the King reciting the abuses of the clergy, asks rhetorically: "What remedy? Make laws against them? Are they not stronger in your own Parliament house than yourself? What can law be made so strong against them that they, either with money or else with policy, will not break or set it at nought?"†

On the 8th of November, 1529, the Imperial Ambassador writes: "Sure as I am that your Imperial Majesty does not care for mere speculation as to the future, which after all is an art for which I am not at all fitted, I will not venture upon predictions. . . . Respecting the clergy of this kingdom I may say, without

* Hall's *Chronicle*, page 579.

† *Supplication for Beggars*.

having recourse to the said art of divination, that they will be for certain both punished and reformed, fined and mulcted, for they are generally very rich, from which circumstance and hatred of the Cardinal (Wolsey) they are an object of envy to the nobles and commoners of this country."* A month later he writes that the reform of the clergy will be pushed: "First in the hope of plunder by sale of Church property, second because they hope by antagonizing the clergy to persuade the people to consent to this marriage, because nearly all the people here hate the priests."†

This dislike of the wealth and power of the clergy, which was an outstanding fact before he came to power, Cromwell used. Already it had been expressed in laws. In 1529 Parliament had passed an act about the oppressions and exactions of the ecclesiastical courts in the probate of wills, which, in spite of "promises," "be nothing reformed or amended, but greatly augmented and increased against right and justice and to the great impoverishment of the King's subjects."‡ It had also been enacted, for the increase of "devotion and good opinion of the laity toward spiritual persons," that no spiritual persons "should farm or buy or sell for lucre"; and that an ordinary priest might not hold more than one "benefice with cure of souls," and must live in the place where his duty as a pastor was.§ A third act had been aimed at what the anti-clerical chronicler Hall calls "the great polling and extreme exaction which spiritual men used in taking corpse presents or mortuaries, for the children of the defunct should all die of hunger, go a-begging rather than they would of charity give to them the silly (simple) cow which the dead man ought (owed to the priest) if he had only one."

Cromwell from his first entry into the Royal Council appears to have been anxious to express this feeling against the clergy in the form of a general attack upon the clerical abuses under which many of the laity groaned. This was finally done in the form of a petition of the Commons against the ordinaries (judges of the spiritual courts), presented to the King 18th of March, 1532. Hall says after a long debate over "the griefs of temporal men caused by exactions of the spirituality." Four drafts of this "Book against the Clergy" are among the English records. Two are written in the hand of Cromwell's chief clerk; two in a strange hand; three of them are corrected and interlined in Cromwell's hand.|| Hence

* *Calendars, Spanish*, IV, part I, page 325.

† *Ibid.*, IV, part I, 367.

‡ *Revised Statutes*, I, 247.

§ *Statutes of the Realm*, III, 292.

|| *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*, Roger B. Merriman.

several writers on the period conclude that Cromwell was the author. It is not improbable. He was one of those London citizens among whom the feeling against the clergy was exceedingly strong. He had done business for many of them and they knew his capacity. He understood the clergy from his relations to Wolsey. Whether this complaint against the clergy originated among the representatives of London, or, as was often the case with petitions, was sent down by the Crown, it may easily be true that Cromwell was asked to write or revise it. That he artificially created the discontent it expressed, as has recently been suggested, is a conclusion not only superfluous but against the facts. There is abundant reason to believe that the majority of those in the English State who possessed political influence felt what Sir William Fairfax wrote to Cromwell: "There will never be peace in England so long as spiritual men have so much temporal power."*

It is more than probable that Cromwell was the framer of a series of Acts of Parliament which did four things—defended the Crown against wars over the succession, cut England from the Papacy, stripped the clergy of wealth and political power and subjected them to the King, conferred upon the Crown powers finally rising almost to summary court-martial to meet the attempt of Papal Curia to force England back to obedience. The vigor and unity of this legislation and the skill and energy of its administration indicate a single mind at the centre. The contrast between the eight years of Cromwell's power and the years which preceded and followed them strongly suggests him as the author of this policy; subject always to the powerful will, the tyrannous temper, the selfish impulses and the exceedingly able judgment of Henry. To accomplish this fourfold purpose Cromwell used Parliament. Henry had consulted Parliament comparatively little before Cromwell came to power. During the first twenty years of his reign statutes were passed only in eight. Wolsey feared or disliked Parliament. It met once between 1515 and 1529, and was soon dissolved after a reluctant grant of money. On the contrary, there was legislation during six out of the eight years of Cromwell's power, and the laws passed during his administration fill nearly forty per cent. of the pages which record the legislation of the thirty-eight years of Henry's reign.

It must be remembered, of course, that the Parliament of Henry VIII was not the Parliament of to-day. Very few writers on Henry VIII's reign for the last twenty years permit their

* *Letters and Papers*, XII, part I, 192.

readers to forget that. We are told repeatedly that it was a "packed" House of Commons. So it was. One of the complaints of the northern insurgents of 1536 was that "Parliaments ought to have knights of the shire and burgesses at their own election, not such men as the King will appoint."* But the reign of Henry VIII was not the only time when the members of Parliament did not represent the free choice of large numbers of the English people. The House of Commons was chosen under greater or less pressure from the Crown or the territorial aristocracy down to the nineteenth century. An over emphasis on Cromwell's activity in elections as if his conduct had been uniquely tyrannous may easily produce a false impression. The facts are these: He was in power during two general elections. Concerning those elections there have survived two electioneering reports, one from the Duke of Norfolk,† the other from the Earl of Southampton,‡ and letters in regard to six elections.§ These letters and reports show that divergent opinion was not entirely suppressed for there was opposition to the Court candidate in at least three places, and, with one exception, the often quoted case of the Canterbury election, they could be duplicated again and again in the election correspondence of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And even the Canterbury election is not unparalleled for the next two hundred and fifty years.

Cromwell did his best to fill Parliament with the King's friends, and he was able to find a large body of King's friends to choose from. And members opposed to the royal policy could be to a large extent controlled. For a century and a half later strong opposition to the Crown was dangerous and it was much more dangerous in the sixteenth than in the seventeenth centuries. Wolsey had told the citizens of London that to oppose the royal loan might "fortune to cost some their heads." The policy of suppressing opposition in the councils of the nation by fear was freely used by Cromwell's opponents. A single example will make this plain. Cromwell disliked the Bill of Six Articles. The approval of Henry for it marked the rising influence of that alliance between his deadly enemies, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and the Duke of Norfolk, which was to bring him to the scaffold. When it came down from the Lords he sent a message to his friends in the House of Commons, "that if any

* *Letters and Papers*, XI, 1244.

† *Ibid.*, XIV, part I, 800.

‡ *Ibid.*, XIV, part I, page 224.

§ Compare *Ibid.*, X, 903; XIV, 564, 598, 672, 695, 706, and others.

man should stand against the bill earnestly the same should put himself in great danger of his life." Thomas Brook, Alderman of Calais, spoke against it, and Cromwell sent a personal message to him telling him as he loved his life not to speak against the bill. Brook continued his opposition, and Cromwell, meeting him afterward, said "he never knew man to play so desperate a part as to speak against that bill, unless he made a reckoning to be either hanged or burned; but God," said he, "hath mightily preserved thee, whereof I am glad." On his return to Calais, Brook was arrested for heresy, as Kingston, the lieutenant of the Tower, had threatened in open Parliament. He would undoubtedly have perished but for his bold and skillful defense and an order from Cromwell that he should be sent to London for examination.* Cromwell had no objections to this pressure upon electors and members, common then and, by other methods, for generations afterward; except that he did not want it successfully used by his opponents.

But the conclusion that such unscrupulous terrorizing of opponents reduced Parliament to a negligible quantity is mistaken. Even under Henry VIII packing and controlling Parliament had its limits. Bills supported by the Crown were withdrawn and amended, and Henry found there were things he could not do.

That Cromwell, when it was necessary, tried to force Parliament to do what the King wanted done is not so much a thing that can be proved, as a conjecture supported by scattered facts and strongly suggested by probable inference from the political opinions which must have underlaid his policy as Chief Minister of the Crown. The modern ideals of Parliamentary government were unknown. To the Lancastrian constitutionalism which had worked so badly in the fifteenth century,† Cromwell preferred a Crown as powerful as possible. He believed that the will of the King was the best safeguard for the interests of the nation. But the nature of the absolutism he promoted ought not to be overlooked. The Tudor absolutism crushed opposition ruthlessly, but, while breaking the two chief pillars of the mediæval state, the nobility and the clergy, it was forced to find a base in the

* Catley's *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Vol. V, 502-519. This narrative finds support in the *Letters and Papers*, and Foxe could easily have known about it. Foxe is a strong partisan. It has been shown that he is inaccurate in some instances. But the present habit of disbelieving everything he says is not judicious.

† It will be sufficient to cite the opinion of Stubb's *Constitutional History*, Chap. XVIII, sections 363-373.

national consent. The potential of liberty destroyed under Hapsburg, Valois and Bourbon increased under Henry VIII and his children. "The House of Commons, down to the electoral reforms of the nineteenth century, was the House as they created it." They added or revived about ninety boroughs and the twelve shires of Wales, nearly doubling the strength of the lower House.* Cromwell used the royal power to flatter or dragoon members of Parliament, but he appealed by printing press, pulpit and in Parliament to national support for his bold policy, and the result shows that he must have obtained it. No English King was ever threatened by greater dangers than those Henry incurred in 1533 and 1534. He had no standing army, but had to depend for defense on the levies raised by commissions issued to loyal gentlemen. His regular expenses were exceeding the Crown income. No one could say of him as was said of the King of France that he could tax "as much as he pleased." Wolsey's experience with the Amicable Loan had warned him not to repeat the experiment of heavy taxation without grant of Parliament. A throne cannot rest on nothing. If the mass of the nation did not support Henry's throne, why did it not fall?

Nor was Henry trying to disarm his people and reduce them to the helplessness of the peasants who were slaughtered by the nobles in the French Jacquerie, or massacred by the Princes in the German peasant revolt. Legislation five times repeated forbade the use of the crossbow and the hand gun, those facile but as yet less efficient foreign weapons which were causing the "decay of the ancient artillery of England."† Every man between seventeen and sixty must keep a bow and shoot regularly at the butts. He was forbidden to practice at less than two hundred yards. For every boy between seven and seventeen his parents must provide a bow of elm or hazel. And bows must be sold cheap that every one might buy.‡

Events gave Cromwell opportunity to move toward the accomplishment of his purpose.

February 22, 1533, the Pope confirmed the election of Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of England, to succeed Warham. In May the new Archbishop secretly cited the King to answer a charge of living unlawfully with his brother's

* Poole's *Atlas*, Vol. II, Map XXIII.

† Tract on *Decay of England*. In 1541, when guns had improved, every inhabitant of a city, borough or market town was expressly freed from this prohibition, allowed to keep a long gun and practice at a mark.

‡ *Statutes of the Realm*; also *St. Paul's Magazine*, Vol. V, page 330.

wife, and declared his marriage to Katherine null and void. He followed the sentence by the declaration that the King's marriage to Anne Boleyn, privately celebrated four months before, was lawful. On June 1st Anne was crowned Queen in Westminster Hall with great splendor. This whole procedure had been planned by the Crown, and was defended beforehand by an act of Parliament, passed in February, prohibiting "appeals to Rome in causes of matrimony, divorce, etc." The Pope answered by a sentence declaring the marriage to Anne null and her children illegitimate, and threatening the King with excommunication unless he repudiated her and took back Katherine (July 11, 1533).*

Henry made every preparation to meet the threatened excommunication and defend the succession to the throne. He tried vainly to persuade the obstinately honest Katherine to withdraw her appeal to Rome, offering, if she did so, to recognize Mary's right to succeed to the Crown if he left no children by Anne Boleyn. Then he appealed in the ancient formula, "from the Pope all informed to the Pope better informed," and a pamphlet was published containing an "address from the King's Counsel to the residue of his loving subjects." It exhorted them to "despise" the Pope and stand by a marriage which "sets this realm in the way of true heirs." The Parliament sessions of 1534 and 1535 produced the legislation necessary to carrying out the intentions of the Government. It was contained in several bills which may be grouped with two chief acts, Of Succession, and Of Supremacy. Succeeding supplementary acts fall under the same heads. The Act of Succession, "calling to remembrance the great divisions which in time past hath been in the realm by reason of several titles pretended to the Crown of the same . . . whereof hath ensued great destruction of man's blood," declared the issue of Henry and Anne heirs to the Crown, adjudged the penalty of treason to any one obstinately and maliciously impugning their right, and required an oath from every subject to keep the whole contents of this act. A refusal of the oath was equivalent to a denial of the act.†

The Act of Supremacy, repudiating the authority of the laws of any foreign prince, potentate or prelate, made the King Supreme Head of the Church of England. The clergy might pass no canons without his assent. He was authorized to appoint a commission of thirty-two, sixteen clergymen and sixteen lay members of Parliament, to revise or repeal existing canons with their help and advice.

* Pococke, *Records of the Divorce*, II, App. 677.

† *Statutes of the Realm*.

From these two groups of acts concerning the Succession and the Headship of the Church, the threads of Cromwell's legislation and administration lead out to the accomplishment of his fourfold purpose—to avoid the danger of civil war over the Crown, break with Rome, destroy the political power of the clergy, and defend what was done.

For it needed defense. There were in England men whose devotion to the ancient ways would not permit them to see the power of the clergy and obedience to the Pope destroyed without a struggle. In 1533 many of the clergy, in the pulpit and the confessional, denounced the King's marriage and the denial of the Papal authority. The most effective of these appeals to popular sympathy for Katherine and devotion to the Pope was made by the Holy Maid of Kent, a nun who for many years had great influence because of her visions and miracles. She was thought to be connected in some way with a letter from heaven written by Mary Magdalen to a widow in London, with Jesus, Maria, in gold letters at its head. And those associated with her related, among other things, how the devil when she resisted his temptations had spat in her face, and that she showed the napkin with which she wiped it "black and stinking" to her confessor.* She prophesied that the King would in a short time lose his kingdom, and said she had "seen the place prepared for him in hell."† She, two monks, two friars and two priests, accused of having circulated her prophecies, were attainted of treason by Parliament and executed in May, 1534. On the scaffold the two friars were offered their lives if they would acknowledge the Act of Supremacy. The nun had publicly confessed, in the presence of the others, that she had deceived the people by false miracles. This confession may have been made in the hope of saving her life. But one of those who died with her sent word to Cromwell that he had been "miserably deceived by that false and dissembling woman."‡ And Sir Thomas More wrote: "Cromwell has done a very meritorious deed in bringing to light such detestable hypocrisy, so that others may take warning and be afraid to set forth their own devilish dissembled falsehood under the color of the wonderful word of God."§

Together with Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, the most distinguished and respected of the English bishops, More had been arrested for misprision of treason in concealing the nun's prophecies. He said

* *Letters and Papers*, VII, 72.

† *Ibid.*, VI, 1419.

‡ *Ibid.*, VII, 138.

§ *Ibid.*, VII, 287.

that he had been skeptical about her revelations, refused to listen to anything she said about the King, and warned her of danger. No steps were taken against him, but Fisher was attainted and condemned to the loss of all his property and imprisonment during the King's pleasure. The confiscation was remitted on payment of one year's revenue of his bishopric and he was not imprisoned.

Others made open assaults upon the royal marriage. Easter, 1532, Peto, a friar of the Franciscan Observant Monastery at Greenwich, was invited to preach before the King. He denounced the marriage with Anne and warned Henry to repent lest he receive the punishment of Ahab, whose blood was licked up by dogs. When the preacher was answering Peto, the next Sunday, two friars interrupted the sermon by denouncing him as one of "the four hundred prophets into whom the spirit of lying has entered, seeking to establish the succession by adultery."* Peto and one of his supporters were reprimanded and sent out of England. About a year later the Warden of a Franciscan convent in Southampton preached in defense of the Papal authority, exhorting the people to stand and suffer martyrdom for it. Cromwell had him brought to London for examination, and then sent him back to his convent.

When the Oath of Succession, by which all subjects were to be sworn to obedience to the King and Queen and their heirs, and not to any other within this realm, nor to any foreign authority nor potentate, and to defend the whole contents of the Act of Succession, was offered, every Englishman asked to take it did so, except some of the Franciscan friars, Sir Thomas More, the ex-Chancellor; Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, and a few others of less note.

The Government closed the convents of the Franciscans, and in June, 1534, threw about two hundred of their members into prison. Most of them were soon permitted to go either to Ireland, France or Scotland, but thirty-two were sent to prisons in various parts of England. The jails of England then, and for generations afterward, were cold and haunted by infectious diseases. Few survived a long confinement in them. Three years later only eight of these brave monks remained alive, and they were at last allowed to go to Belgium.

Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher offered to take an oath to the succession of the children of Henry and Anne, but not in the form prescribed, nor would they swear to the whole contents of

* Harpsfield (1519-1575), "The Pretended Divorce," etc., *Camden Society*, 1878, 202. Also Stow's *Annals*.

the Act implying a rejection of the Papal sentence annulling the marriage. They were committed to the Tower, April, 1534.

Their refusal to take the oath was a dangerous incident. The English clergy had voted in Convocation in accordance with the legislation of Parliament, but there was great opposition among them, not only to lay control, but also to the denial of the Papal authority. The Government began to be aware that in the confessional, in the pulpit, in private conversation, the nation was being urged to stand by the Pope and resist the King. They felt it necessary to take strenuous action.

It was the duty of the Pope to extirpate heresy and subdue schism. Previous Popes had again and again appealed to all good Christians to do this by the sword. And the temper of the modern Curia had not changed. The College of Cardinals wrote to the Emperor in March, 1524, telling him "that former Emperors did not earn their great reputation by expelling the French, conquering the English nor subjecting Italy, but by making war on the Jews, putting heretics to death and subduing Africa to the Christian obedience. They exhorted him to follow their example by concluding peace with France, making war with the Turks and trampling under foot and extirpating the Lutheran heresy."*

Cromwell wished to meet the attitude frankly expressed to him by the Imperial Ambassador, "that if the Pope were to fulminate censures . . . which would deprive the King of his title and deliver his kingdom to those who took possession, it would be the most just and catholic title that any prince could have."† An Act of Parliament was passed in the end of 1534 making it treason to deny any of the King's titles or to pronounce maliciously by words or writings that the King was heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper.

Under this Act the Carthusian monks were required to acknowledge expressly that Henry was Supreme Head of the Church of England. The result was one of the pitiable tragedies which continued intermittently down into the seventeenth century, because the conscience of some Englishmen made them traitors in the eyes of others. The Carthusian monks were honored of all men before religion and patriotism came into conflict, and they had proved the honesty of their convictions by their lives, before they sealed them with a martyr's blood. The priors of these convents finally pleaded guilty to declaring that "the King is not Su-

* *Calendars, Spanish*, Vol. II, page 609.

† *Letters and Papers*, VIII, page 371.

preme Head on earth of the Church of England." They were executed May 4, 1535, by the awful method of the legal punishment for treason, their leader declaring at the gallows that he was there because "Holy Mother Church has decreed otherwise than the King and Parliament, and rather than disobey the Church he was ready to die." Six weeks later three more were executed on the same charge. For two years the other brethren were confined in their convent, and every effort was made by sermons and distributing books to persuade them to give up their allegiance to the Pope. Under this treatment and the pressure of harsh discipline, twenty of them took the Oath acknowledging the Royal Supremacy in May, 1537. Twelve recalcitrants went to prison, where nine of them soon died. The remaining three were sent to the gallows. Their fate moved little pity in the minds of those who approved the policy they opposed. Executions were very common. Scores of men were hanged for petty offenses against the common law. Death, therefore, did not seem so severe a penalty as it does now.

Cromwell appears to have had a strong trait of humaneness in him, but it is probable that he thought of these executions for the safety of the State as calmly as his opponents, Gardiner and Pole, when they came to the head of affairs, took the burning of nearly three hundred men whose conscience forbade them to consent to the destruction of the Church established during Cromwell's administration.

Fisher was found guilty of treason by a jury and beheaded in June, 1535. He ascended the scaffold meekly and bravely, as became an honest old bishop dying for conscience' sake.

Sir Thomas More was condemned to death on the 1st of July. An acknowledgment of the Royal Supremacy or a denial of the Pope's power to depose the King or invalidate his marriage would at once have procured his liberty. There was difficulty about the evidence to convict him for he was a skilled lawyer, and had kept silence about his opinions. The testimony of Richard Rich, the Solicitor General, to a private conversation in the Tower was used to convict him, and More denounced Rich in open court as a perjurer. More was the most celebrated of living Englishmen, the worthy intimate of Erasmus. His virtues were as well known as his learning, and all men loved him, except the friends of heretics whom he had pursued to the death with conscientious severity and thought "worse than murderers."* Everybody, including his own family, tried to persuade him to conform, but he smilingly

* *More's Works*, page 901.

refused. In the writings of his youth he had rejected the ascetic ideal, pilgrimage, fasting and the use of relics, questioned the exclusive priesthood of the clergy, impugned the good faith of the Popes, and satirized their influence upon political morality. But when reform deepened into revolution he, like most of the older Humanists, took alarm. His hopes for the progress of truth gave way to a fear for the stability of institutions, and the bold advocate of religious liberty and the abolition of private property persecuted heretics fiercely and died in defense of the Papacy. In earlier years he advised Henry not to print that treatise for the Supremacy of the Pope which had earned the royal title of Defender of the Faith. But his study of the question under the stress of revolution converted him into a believer in the Papal Supremacy, even as similar study changed Luther from an adherent into an opponent of the Pope, and More died for his convictions with such beautiful simplicity that it seemed easy. When he laid his life on the altar of God he did not think too highly of the offering or take himself too seriously even as a martyr. Kneeling on the scaffold, the last gleam of his sunny humor played over the uplifted axe. He swept aside his long beard, saying, "Pity that should be cut; that has not committed treason."

To modern judgment the execution of these men seems both a crime and a blunder. But in the sixteenth century the killing of men for opinions was practiced by all governments and approved by religious teachers of almost all types. Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, Anglicans, Roman Catholics were agreed that it was the right and, if needful, the duty of the State to repress false opinions by the sword. When More urged that he should not be put in peril of life for opinion, Cromwell replied it was as just to put men in peril before the law for opinions dangerous to the State as for opinions dangerous to the Church, and More, when in office, had sternly enforced the laws against heresy. More could only reply that the opinions for whose denial he had condemned men to death were old and held in many countries; this opinion which he denied was new and held in one country.*

Cranmer felt that the execution of More and Fisher was a blunder. He advised that their offer to swear to the succession in their own words should be accepted. Cromwell wrote to him that the King could not agree because he felt "that manner of swearing, if it should be suffered, might be an utter destruction to his whole cause and to the effect of the law."

* *More's Examination.*

More and Fisher, like the Carthusians, were appointed to be tried because they were the most conspicuous and strongest of the defenders of the Papacy. When the Government felt it had made clear its determination to suppress without faltering all attacks upon the Succession executions stopped. More's son, condemned also for refusing the Oath, was pardoned.*

There are no signs of Cromwell's feeling about Fisher, unless this is one. Antonio Bonvisi, an Italian merchant living in London, sent meat, wine and jelly regularly to the two prisoners; and More wrote him with charcoal on the eve of execution a beautiful letter of gratitude and friendship. It was shown in court that he had done this kindness to Fisher. He had long been a close friend of Cromwell and the friendship continued intimate.† Fisher was a sincere ecclesiastic, unable to conceive of the English State as existing outside of the Roman Church. There was good reason to believe that he had not concealed his opinions from friends. The upshot of those opinions makes evident to us what Cromwell suspected, that, if excommunication produced either insurrection or invasion, Fisher would not stand by the Crown against the adherents of the Pope. He had frequent secret conferences with the Spanish Ambassador as to the best means of thwarting the royal policy. At a time when Chapuys was urging Charles V to forcibly interfere in the affairs of England, "A work as pleasing in the eyes of God as war upon the Turk," he writes: "Bishop Fisher advises prompt action on the part of your Majesty, such as I recommended in one of my last dispatches. Indeed, not many days ago he sent me word to say that strong measures must now be taken."‡

More, on the other hand, maintained silence on the Royal Supremacy, would neither affirm nor deny it when questioned in Court and had no dealings with any foreign ambassador. There is very strong proof that Cromwell deeply regretted his death. When he heard he had first refused the Oath, he cried out, "He would rather his own son had his head stricken off, for displeasure and suspicion would now be aroused in the King's mind." In a note from the Tower More tells his daughter that when he offered, if he had the King's license, to give his reasons for refusing to answer, Cromwell interrupted him, pointing out the legal danger of doing this even with the King's license. "In this good warning he showed

* *Life of Sir Thomas More*, by Cressacre More.

† *Letters and Papers*, VIII, page 329; X, No. 439.

‡ *Calendars, Spanish*, Vol. IV, pp. 812, 813, 821.

himself my especial tender friend." And he writes that when he finally refused the Oath "Cromwell seemed greatly to pity him."*

Fisher's fate, which was so closely bound to More's, was sealed when the Pope appointed him a Cardinal. Henry took this promotion of a man under the charge of treason as a challenge to touch him. When the divine right of kings was objected to Oliver Cromwell, who felt that the life of Charles endangered the Commonwealth, he answered, "I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown on it." To "throw the mantle of the Church" over Fisher was to draw the same fire from Henry. It brought out the question underlying the whole controversy, whether an Italian Pope or her own King was supreme ruler of England. Henry swore that when Fisher's red hat arrived he should have no head to wear it. It may be conjectured that the real cause of More's death was the jealous egotism of the King, now so inflamed that one word of criticism gave more pain than fifty of flattery could cause pleasure. Henry VIII was not satisfied to be allowed to do as he wanted. His morbid conscience played into his vanity, and all his intimates must also say on demand that what he wanted to do was right.

The conclusion of Cromwell's career will be sketched in the July number of the REVIEW.

Princeton.

PAUL VAN DYKE.

* *More's Works.*

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I.

THOMAS CROMWELL.*

(*Conclusion.*)

THE Bull of deprivation, long threatened against Henry, was now (August 30, 1535) prepared but not issued. It forbade his subjects to obey the King or his officials or magistrates. It absolved all Princes from every oath to him and commanded them to break every treaty with him. All Princes were commanded to rise in arms against him and all who obeyed him; all Christians were to seize wherever found the money, ships, credits and goods of any one who acknowledged his authority. And by the fullness of power given to the Pope, these became the absolute property of whoever seized them. All who refused to enforce this sentence became subject to the same penalties. Every clergyman in the world was to proclaim this curse before the largest possible concourse, and a lighted candle was to be cast down and extinguished, even as the souls of Henry and his supporters were condemned to hell.† But the publication of the Bull was suspended.

Such a sentence would readily suggest to Cromwell, even if there were no other motive in his mind, that the defense of his policy required the suppression of the monasteries. This act earned Cromwell's familiar name, "The Hammer of the Monks," and the worst traits of his character, traits common to most men of the day, show so plainly in the transaction that the solid reasons for it which appealed to a man of his type have been obscured. The monastic orders were corrupt. Cromwell sent commissioners to investigate the condition of the monasteries. Their sweeping denunciations

* *Vide* No. 2, April, 1904.

† Wilkins' *Concilia*, III, 792

were based on hasty investigation and probably exaggerated for a purpose. The so-called "Black Book" which presented to Parliament the reports of the investigators of the condition of the monasteries has perished. It is safe to conclude, however, that it was not drawn up in a judicial frame of mind. But there are unquestionable judgments on the general corruption of the monastic orders of the day.

Gasparo Contarini, afterward Cardinal, writing in 1516 on "The Duties of a Bishop," said: "Unfortunately in some of the chief and celebrated cities most cloisters have become almost lupanaria."*

Bembo, Papal Secretary to Leo X, afterward Cardinal, wrote: "I have often found, under the affairs of friars, all human wickednesses covered with diabolical hypocrisy."† In 1536 the Pope appointed a commission of the ablest and best men around him to draw up a report on the reform of the Church. There is no language in any of the English reports or discussions stronger than that in which they denounce the condition of the monastic orders.

"Another abuse to be corrected is in the religious orders, because many have departed from God to such an extent that they are a scandal to secular Christians and do much harm by their example. *We think all the conventual orders ought to be abolished*; not, however, in such a way as to do injury to any one, but by prohibiting them from admitting novices. For thus, without any wrong, they might be swiftly swept out of existence and good religious could be substituted for them. But for the present we think it would be best if all boys who have not taken vows of any sort should be kept out of their monasteries."‡ This report was, quite properly, intended to be private, but the Protestant apologetes, having by some means procured a copy, its publication was forced. It was forwarded to Crannier from Louvain, with the report that the monks of that place "fear their houses will perish. They have faith in the Provincial of the Carthusians who lately came from Italy, prophesying all rules of religion to be annulled."§ Cranmer forwarded this letter to the Government, probably to Cromwell, adding, "The book he sent me was *Concilium delectorum Cardinalium de emendenda ecclesia*," and copies out the passage quoted above.¶

* *Opera Parisiis*, 1571, page 426.

† *Letters*, 1520, *Opere Venezia*, 1729, I, III, page 385.

‡ *Concilium delectorum Cardinalium de emendenda ecclesia*, British Museum.

§ *Letters and Papers*, VIII, 739. This letter is assigned to the wrong date, 1535. The *Concilium* was first published in 1538. The letter also alludes to an answer in preparation to the King's *Epistle to the Emperor*. The *Epistle* appeared in 1538.

There is reason to believe that the monasteries of England were not as bad as those in some other parts of the world. There are satires and attacks on them in English popular literature, but they are less numerous and bitter than in Germany or Italy. During the destruction of the English monasteries there were no outbreaks of popular hatred against them, while several counties rose in arms to defend them. On the other hand, the insurgent German peasants, in 1525, though they killed no monks, destroyed monastic buildings with a careful fury that indicates hatred coming out of a long smouldering sense of wrong. But though the English monasteries were probably neither as corrupt as monasteries in other parts of the world nor as bad as they were reported to be by their enemies, it would be possible to collect out of the remanant material from which the Black Book was prepared a formidable body of definite evidence to show that in many of them the ideal of their own order did not control the lives of the inmates. The Jesuit apologete Sanders wrote, in 1575, of "the publication of the enormities of the monasteries, partly discovered and partly invented."* This judgment by an orthodox churchman of the next generation after their fall agrees with the testimony which survives and is probably fair.

Whatever the degree of their guilt may have been they menaced the State. There were in England more than seven hundred monastic establishments and they owned enormous estates. Ninety monasteries of Gloucestershire had an average of sixty-five thousand acres apiece. Twenty-seven abbots had seats in Parliament. The bishops could not control the monks, whose vows bound them to allegiance to their superiors, generally foreigners. They were directly connected with the Papacy, and the monastic orders came to be spoken of as the Pope's standing army. Cromwell was afraid of them. The schismatic Governments of Europe—the Lutheran States, the Scandinavian kingdoms and the Zwinglian Cantons of Switzerland—suppressed the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Most of the Roman Catholic countries limited the power and wealth of the monasteries under different conditions in the nineteenth—Portugal, 1834-64; Spain, 1835-51; Italy, 1866; Prussia, 1875; France, 1880. The United States is a country whose Constitution and practice exclude any suspicion of religious intolerance, but her Commission in the Philippines reported that the landed possessions of the monastic orders and their power among the people was an

* Sanders' *Anglican Schism*, Ed. David Lewis, page 130.

obstacle to good government. And steps have been taken to destroy their political power by buying their great estates. There must be some reasons, plausible to say the least, for so universal an action.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century monastic institutions seemed to many people an anachronism in the modern world coming into being. The ascetic ideal was outworn. Cromwell, as a man of the Renaissance, shared that repulsion of the Humanist for the monk which appears in Renaissance literature from the *Decameron* to the *Utopia*, and led the Jesuits, who used the new learning in the service of the Church, to abandon the ascetic ideal. The loss of its power over men's minds went far deeper than appears in controversy. In the twelfth century four hundred and eighteen monasteries were founded in England. In the thirteenth, one hundred and thirty-nine. In the fourteenth century only twenty-three. In the fifteenth century only three.* The monks were no longer the conservators of learning, but the strongest defenders of Scholasticism against the Humanist revival of letters. On the Continent they were the bitterest opponents of Reuchlin and Erasmus. Nor were they more intellectually progressive in England. Pole says that Reynolds was the "only monk in England who knew the three languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew) in which all liberal learning is contained."† Beyond all this, in the opinion of many men, the monks did too little and got too much. A contemporary writer expresses their feeling roughly when he writes of the "nourishing of a great sort of idle abbey lubbers, which are apt to nothing only to eat and drink."‡ Sir Thomas More, in his critical youth, wrote of "those holy men, the abbots, who, not thinking it enough that they living at their ease do no good to the public, resolve to do it harm instead of good"§ (by turning tillage fields into pasture). And Sir Richard Gresham, Lord Mayor of London, gave the criticism practical form when he asked the King to put three hospitals in the city under the rule of the Mayor and Aldermen, because they "had been founded and endowed for the aid of poor and impotent people, not to maintain canons, priests and monks to live in pleasure."

Early in 1536 an Act of Parliament gave to the King the property of all religious houses having a yearly income below £200 (equivalent to \$10,000-\$12,000), because "of the vicious, carnal and

* Pearson, *Hist. Atlas*, page 61.

† *Letters and Papers*, X, page 405.

‡ *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*.

§ *Utopia*.

abominable living of small monasteries." Their superiors, if they did not try to embezzle the jewels of the houses, were to be pensioned. The monks might be assigned to the greater monasteries, "wherein, thanks be to God, religion is right well kept and observed." Any monk who wished to return to the world was to receive eight gold pieces.

But this last change in the ancient order caused the cup of wrath against Henry to overflow. That there was discontent in England and danger to the throne is sufficiently shown by the legislation passed to defend it and the nine executions under it. Observers differed as to the extent of that discontent. The Spanish Ambassador, who spoke no English and heard only what the opposition faction of the nobility told him, thought the great majority of the people were against the King and only waiting to welcome the Emperor when he should come to punish his rebellion from the Pope. This judgment, as far as we can judge from what happened fifteen years later when the marriage of Mary to the Emperor's son almost cost her the crown, was very much mistaken. The opposition faction of the nobility were, it is true, engaged in forming a conspiracy against the throne. They had long been begging the Spanish Ambassador to persuade Charles V to invade England, and promising to support him in arms if he came. As early as the end of 1534 Lords Hussey and Darcy offered, if Imperial troops were sent to the North and the mouth of the Thames, to rise under the Imperial banner with a crucifix attached. They promised the support of large numbers of noblemen and gentlemen of the North. From several quarters advice came to the Emperor to centre this discontent of the nobles around Reginald Pole, an heir to the Yorkist claim to the throne and intimately connected with three families in the Southwest who had great wealth and influence. "In two counties alone they might easily raise twenty thousand men under arms, the best soldiers England can boast of." The Ambassador told him that many people thought Pole's title better than Henry's,* and said his brother Geoffrey continually urged that if Reginald came with an Imperial army England could easily be conquered.† His elder brother, Lord Montague, was reported ready to take arms, and his neighbor, the Marquis of Exeter, "only regrets that he has no opportunity to shed his blood for Katherine and Mary. If anything were doing, he would not be among the laggards." But the threads

* *Spanish Calendars*, IV, part II, page 813

† *Letters and Papers*, VII, page 520.

of this conspiracy could not be drawn together, and it was surprised by an unpremeditated outbreak against the throne arising among the common people of the North.

England, north of a line drawn from the Wash to the mouth of the Humber, has until recent times differed much from the remaining two-thirds of the kingdom. It was always conservative, standing for things as they were or had been. In the civil wars of the seventeenth century it became the stronghold of the Crown. During the sixteenth century it rose intermittently against the Crown in attempts to restore the pillars of the old State, the aristocracy and the mediæval Church. It was thinly settled and the inhabitants lived by raising grain and cattle, with very little trade or manufactures. The instincts bred by feudalism lingered in the North long after they had perished elsewhere in England. The influence of the priests over the people was stronger than in the South, and the habit of fighting with the Scots and each other made the inhabitants apt to take to their weapons.

The monastery of Hexham stood near the debatable land of the border. Its stout walls and bold canons were a defense against the raids of the Scots, a refuge to retreating English raiders. In September the commissioners for its dissolution found the gates shut, the inmates in full armor standing on the roof, and the people of the neighborhood pouring in armed at the sound of the alarm bell. One of the canons, holding an arrow on the string of his bent bow, called out, "We be twēty brethren, and we shall die all ere you shall have the house." Before any steps could be taken to subdue these bold monks, Lincolnshire rose in rebellion. By the 6th of October, "ten thousand well harnessed men, with thirty thousand others, some harnessed and some not," were reported to be marching on Lincoln. "And the country rises wholly before them as they go."* They cursed Cromwell, and a false rumor said they had hanged one of his men, sewed up another in a bullskin and then baited him with dogs. Their banner, displaying a plough and a chalice, and their demand for the expulsion of "vile blood" from the royal councils, indicates the mixed motives, agrarian, feudal, religious, which roused them.

Steps were at once taken to raise the royal levies. A list of two hundred and thirty-eight gentlemen and noblemen who were to muster from two men to a thousand has survived. But there was no need to put forth the strength of the kingdom. As the van of the King's forces approached, the insurgents began to

* *Letters and Papers*, XI, 567.

break up and return to their homes.* On the 13th of October, one week after the issuing of the commissions of array, Lincoln, the centre of the rebellion, was defenseless, and the gentlemen, who claimed to have been forced to join the Commons in this rising, were offering to come into the royal camp.

But on the same day that this news arrived in London, a message came from York, the second city of the Kingdom, asking aid against a new rebellion. It was far more serious than the first. On the 17th of October 40,000 men were reported under arms.† The leaders made every effort to organize the movement and force the whole North into it. The Commons were called to arms on pain of death. And if any gentleman refused the oath of the insurgents, he was to be put to death, the next of his blood put in his place, "and if he deny it, put him to death likewise, and so on."‡ This notice was to be posted on the doors of all parish churches.

In the mind of the lawyer Aske, who was its active leader, the movement was aimed against the statutes of Succession and Supremacy and the Act suppressing the smaller monasteries.§ The Commonalty rose in defense of the old institutions they loved and against the men who had changed them. "I trust to God," cried out a priest when the insurrection was in full swing, "we shall have the old world again." Their oath bound them to enter into "The Pilgrimage of Grace for the Commonwealth for the maintenance of God's faith and Church, preservation of the King's person and issue, purifying the nobility of all villains' blood and evil counselors to the institutions of Christ's Church, and suppression of heretic opinions."|| Their songs demanded that the innkeeper (Cranmer) should give place to the ancient nobles in the Royal Council and the shearnian (Cromwell) be hanged high as Haman.

However much power Henry might delegate to his ministers, he was always King of England—a strong-willed man and an able ruler of men. From the time when the trouble began in the North until it ended letters and reports came, not as before to Cromwell, but to Henry. And the orders of Government issued directly from the King. This was not simply to avoid irritating the rebels, one of whose chief demands was Cromwell's head. In the hour of danger the master wanted the helm in his own hand. There are no signs that Henry lost courage before the storm. There is in all

* *Letters and Papers*, XI, 658, 694, 701.

† *Ibid.*, XI, 692, 758.

‡ *Ibid.*, XII, part I, 163.

§ *Ibid.*, XII, part I, page 405.

|| *Ibid.*, XI, page 272.

his letters no trace of any intention of yielding one bit to an insurrection raised, like most rebellions in the name of the throne it attacked, to free the King from evil counsels. He was angry with the Duke of Norfolk for making a truce with the insurgents,* because, Norfolk said, his army was without fuel or provisions and the pestilence had begun among them. Henry sent commissioners to meet the rebel leaders in December, with instructions to grant a Parliament to assemble when he should appoint, and a pardon. If they demanded anything else the commissioners must ask twenty days' respite, secretly levy the forces of the nearest shires, of which 5000 men were to be ready at an hour's warning, hold the fords of the river Don, and wait till he advanced in person with the entire force of the kingdom at his back.† The royal terms were accepted, and a letter from the King invited Aske to London.‡ On his return he issued in January a manifesto that the King would order his subjects' petitions in Parliament to be shortly held at York.

But the North did not trust these promises. Two futile risings followed, and the Council of the North advised Henry to exercise great severity. He took their advice. These, as well as the two previous insurrections, were punished with the rigor which marked the suppression of rebellion in England down to the eighteenth century. Norfolk had been suspected by others beside the King of not wanting to fight the rebels. The Spanish Ambassador, writing to advise that the Pope should send Reginald Pole with money and musketeers to aid the insurrection, had reported that Norfolk sympathized with their demands. And the Pope, in telling the Spanish Ambassador at Rome that he had sent the money, said the rebels had found a new leader whose name ended in "folc."§ Norfolk was anxious to disprove the reports about his lack of zeal of which the King had informed him. He executed seventy-four by martial law, induced Aske and other leaders to go to London, and wrote advising that they never come back. "Hemlock is no worse in a good salad than I think the remaining of any of them in these parts should be ill to the Commonwealth."|| Cromwell was not inclined to show mercy to those who had asked his head and threatened England with civil war. Henry had always insisted on force and punishment, and accepted reluctantly the temporizing policy which Norfolk and his Councilors advised. None of

* *Letters and Papers*, XI, 1226.

† *Ibid.*, XI, 1227.

‡ *Ibid.*, XI, 1306.

§ *Ibid.*, XI, 1159.

|| *Ibid.*, XII, page 311.

the leaders came back to the North, except in chains to be hanged. Aske, in private, just before his death (July, 1537), acknowledged that they had expected help from abroad, and accused the King and Cromwell of having promised him life if he would confess.* There is other reason to believe that treachery mingled with severity in the punishment of the insurrection.

It made evident that the forces which desired a return to the old Church and State were not strong enough in England to stay the progress of the revolution which was destroying the institutions of the Middle Ages. Even in the northern counties part of the gentry and nobility could not be dragooned into joining the insurgents even by the threat of death. The great families had stood aloof and some country gentlemen had held their houses for the King by arms. The doubtful counties of Lancaster and Cheshire had offered 3000 men each for the King. Only seven out of the thirty-seven counties, and those the most thinly populated ones, were affected at all. Nor could the utmost inquiries of the Government find any dangerous signs of widespread sympathy in the rest of England. If the southern counties had backed the north the throne of Henry must have fallen.

The motives of the revolt were mixed, but it was predominantly religious, led by the priests and monks, or due largely to their influence. The Government answered by ordering the pulpits everywhere to attack the supremacy of the Pope and defend the new Anglican Church. And Cromwell did his best in every way to replace the Scholastic learning which underlay mediæval institutions and ideas by the new learning of the Renaissance. A clergyman of Bristol felt this strongly and denounced the "new preachers preaching new learning with their new books. Their new learning is old heresy new risen like unto old rusty harness new furbished. And whereas they say they have brought in the light—no—no—they have brought in damnable darkness and endless damnation."†

Just before this Northern rebellion, a new Parliament had been called, June, 1537, to secure the work of the Parliament of 1529. In a session of six weeks it established two new oaths on the Supremacy and the Succession. The first was to be taken by every ecclesiastical and temporal officer. It solemnly renounced the Bishop of Rome, his authority and jurisdictions, and promised support to the King as Supreme Head of England, in Church and State, against all opponents.

**Letters and Papers*, XII, part II, page 121.

† *Ibid.*, XII, part I, page 528.

The second was appointed because the "whole peace, unity and greatness of realm and subjects depends upon the surety in the succession to the Crown." It promised to hold the marriage with Anne Boleyn invalid and to defend the succession of the children of Jane Seymour (made Queen May, 1536), or failing children by her, the right of the heir named by the King in his will. To refuse either oath was treason.

The tragedy of Anne Boleyn had been foretold by Wolsey because he knew Henry's brutal fickleness, by Thomas More because he knew Anne's vulgar levity. And only one child, a girl, had been born of her to meet the kingdom's need of heirs. As Henry's passion cooled into neglect Anne struggled desperately to hold her power. Cromwell told the Spanish Ambassador she was doing her best to get his head. She angered the King by hysterical reproaches for his infidelities. By the spring of 1536 a new divorce was talked of in Court circles, because of the lack of a male heir and the King's dislike for his wife. There would have been small difficulty in getting it from the subservient Archbishop for the same grounds on which he declared Anne's marriage null and void, May 17, 1536. But in the end of April Anne was accused to the King of adultery and desiring his death. Together with her brother, three courtiers and a Court attendant, she was arrested, tried before the peerage of England, the Mayor, Council and representatives from the trade guilds of London, declared guilty in the presence of a great crowd of spectators, and soon after executed.

All of the prisoners but one, who confessed adultery, asserted their innocence. The distinct and definite charges which have survived in summary are very difficult to reconcile with Anne's innocence of the entire indictment. The chief reason for doubting her guilt on all the charges is that some are too bad to be credible. The modern hypothesis that she was the innocent victim of a diabolical plot is not supported by evidence. If the object had been simply to smooth the way for another marriage, Anne's death, and certainly the death of five men, was unnecessary. And the hypothesis is therefore not only unsustained but superfluous.*

Cromwell knew that the "Pilgrimage of Grace," the rising of the North for mediæval ideals against the new State, national and lay, independent of the Universal Church and the power of the clergy, had been connected with a Papal conspiracy to force England back to obedience. Of the nobles who had plotted with the Spanish Am-

* This opinion is also suggested by Mr. A. F. Pollard, in his recent small but exceedingly strong *Life of Henry VIII.*

bassador, only Lords Hussey and Darcy had been involved in the Northern rebellion, and Cromwell did not know that the houses of Exeter and Pole had offered to serve the Emperor against the King. But he had gotten hold of the thread of conspiracy from the other end. Secret information from Rome told him that the Pope had made Reginald Pole Cardinal for England, with the express purpose, as the Pope himself said, of sending him "to Flanders, publicly to admonish the King to return to the Church, secretly to aid the Northern insurrection" with money and Church authority.* He knew that Pole had written a most terrific indictment of Henry's policy, appealing for insurrection and foreign invasion, and that, on arriving in Flanders too late to help the insurrection, he threatened unless England returned to the Papal obedience to publish his attack, together with the suspended Papal excommunication calling on all Christians in and out of England to drive Henry from his throne, on pain of being outlawed in this world and damned in the next. Cromwell had tried to trepan Pole and bring him to England. Pole had slipped away to Rome, and Cromwell had written him a savage letter, hinting "that ways might be found in Italy to rid a treacherous subject"—a threat that greatly alarmed Pole, though a careful review of existing evidence implies that Cromwell did not try to carry it out.† Two subjects of the Emperor, who were trying to do precisely what Pole was trying to do, stir up war against their former sovereign, were assassinated in Italy by the Viceroy of Milan in 1540, certainly with Charles' approval, probably by his orders. And fanatic zeal was soon to make the assassin's arm a common weapon on both sides of the great hatred bred by disputes over religious opinions. But assassination does not seem to have been Henry's way. Not because it involved either treachery or cruelty. He shrank from those as little as most contemporary sovereigns. But Lord Herbert of Cherbury wrote, two generations after his death, "I do not find him bloody but where law, or at least pretext drawn from thence, did countenance his actions."

Though it is doubtful that Cromwell tried to assassinate Pole, he did make every other possible preparation to defend his policy against assault from Rome, which was using Pole as its chief implement. During the year 1538 he renewed his attack on the monk, that most characteristic product of the ancient world whose

* *Letters and Papers*, XII, part I, 123, 1141. The last reference reports that the Pope does not want Pole to take Priest's orders that he may be ready to marry Mary and replace Henry on the throne.

† The editor of the *Letters and Papers* thinks differently.

institutions he was destroying. Over three hundred monasteries had been suppressed under the Act; two hundred friaries still surviving were now swept away.*

There remained over two hundred large monastic establishments, which had been, as a whole, excepted from the charges of immorality presented against the smaller ones. The abbots of some of these were executed for complicity in the Northern rebellion; in which, Cromwell was informed, the priests and monks were the chief "doers". A process, not completed for three years, then began by which the heads of these large monasteries were induced to surrender their establishments to the King. The way for this course of action had been opened by the Act of Suppression, which, in addition to all monasteries under £200 annual income, had given to the King the property of any which might be granted to His Majesty by their abbots. It looked for some time as if there would be little difficulty in getting rid of the last corps of this class of men, among whom were to be found the most devoted adherents of the Pope. In many monasteries some monks wanted to abandon the monastic life. Six of the White Friars of Stamford, for example, signed a surrender, "considering that Christian living does not consist in wearing a white coat . . . ducking and beeking . . . and other like papistical ceremonies."† Many abbots were willing to take the pensions or afraid to refuse surrender. Most of them doubtless simply yielded to the inevitable.

But while thus steadily moving in a policy which destroyed the centres of support for any invasion to carry out the Bull of Excommunication Pole had dangled like a sword of Damocles over Henry's head, Cromwell was watching for an excuse to strike hard at a certain section of the nobility which, if the threatened blow fell, would be still more formidable. These were the Yorkist nobles, the Marquis of Exeter, Lord Montague, Cardinal Pole's elder brother, and Sir Edward Neville. He was the son of Lord Bergavenny, whose father-in-law, the Duke of Buckingham, had talked of his claims to the throne, and revealed a mind to renew the War of the Roses if the death of Henry should leave the infant Mary, an unprotected little girl, as his heir. For these incautious words Henry had sent him to the block in 1521. This was the knot of nobles—Exeter, Montague and Neville's father—which had been pointed out to the Emperor by his ambassador as able to put 20,000 men into the field, and to be depended upon to do so if they

* Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the Suppression of the Monasteries*, Vol. II, page 239.

† *Letters and Papers*, XIII. part 2, 565.

were given the centre of an invading force. Cromwell did not know this. But he knew they were dangerous to his plans, and he used without the slightest scruple the first chance to indict them for treason.

He heard that a certain Hugh Holland had carried letters from Lord Montague to his brother the Cardinal. Holland was arrested and carried to London. Sir Geoffrey, the youngest Pole, frightened out of self-control, immediately volunteered confessions which threw the net around the men Cromwell wanted. There was no evidence of any overt act of treason, but there was stronger evidence of a will to destroy the Tudor monarchy than that by which Henry had executed Buckingham seventeen years before. And the modern presumption of the law among English-speaking people, that a man is innocent until he is proved guilty, did not obtain in trials for treason for more than five generations later. In 1614 a manuscript sermon attacking the Government and denouncing a death like that of Ananias or Nabal for the King was found among the papers of Edward Peacham, a rector of Somersetshire. It had never been preached, but with the approval of Francis Bacon he was tortured to extract evidence of a conspiracy, tried and condemned to death for treason. At the end of the eighteenth century Algernon Sydney died on the scaffold for opinions in an unpublished manuscript which Charles II and a Tory jury thought dangerous to the monarchy. There was current in England under Henry VIII a cant phrase to label the attitude of those whose opinions threatened the throne. As men spoke of the malicious "obstinacy" of heretics who dissented from the orthodox Church, so the adherents of the "new world" in England spoke constantly of the "cankered hearts"* of those who longed for the ancient system in Church and State. Of such "cankered hearts" there was good evidence in the case of the prisoners. The breaking of the power of nobles and clergy, a career open to talents, the revolt from Rome, an indisputable succession to the throne—these things were against their feudal instincts and their religious feelings. "Knives rule about the King," Sir Edward Neville was wont to sing, "but lords shall rule again one day." And Exeter, shaking his fist, said, "I'll give these knaves a buffet some day." Montague said, "The Northern rebels were fools to strike only at the Council. They should have struck at the head." Letters had been carried to the Cardinal and brought from him. At the news of the arrest some of these had been hastily

* See *Letters and Papers, passim*.

burned. "They liked not the proceedings of the realm, they approved the opinions of Cardinal Pole." "The King will die suddenly," said Montague, "then we shall have jolly stirring."* As remorselessly as they would have killed him and destroyed his work, Cromwell had them condemned for treason, executed in December, 1538, and their execution confirmed by Parliament in a bill of attainder. Montague's mother and Exeter's wife were included in the attainder, but they were not touched during Cromwell's lifetime.

On the 17th of December, 1538, the long-suspended Papal excommunication, condemning Henry and all who obeyed his magistrates to hell, making them outlaws and calling upon all Christians to attack and despoil them, was published.

Cardinal Pole was sent from Rome on a mission to the Emperor and the King of France. It was suspected, in spite of Pole's denials, that his errand was to persuade them to make peace and unite in a crusade against England. The suspicion was correct, as appears in Pole's *Apologia*, written at the time, and in Charles' report of his conversation to the Venetian Ambassador. For the Emperor told Mocenigo that Pole tried to persuade him to defer the Turkish expedition in order to attack England, and related his answer, pointing out the danger of leaving Italy open to Turkish attack if he withdrew his forces to attack England.† Henry and Cromwell did not know that Charles would take this view of the matter. In the middle of 1538 they had seen the war between France and Spain closed in a personal interview of Charles and Francis, in which they showed the most pleasant relations and swore eternal friendship. If France, Spain, Scotland and Ireland should attack England she would be ringed about by foes. Such a combination in support of a Papal Bull of Deposition, though difficult to form, was not impossible. The danger was not a paper one. The same threat fifty years later materialized into the great Armada, flying the banner of a crusade and bringing a Spanish army to drive excommunicated Elizabeth from her throne. The same spiritual power gave its chief strength to the Holy League and compelled Henry IV to be reconciled to Rome in order to gain peace for France. It is not "reading history backward"‡ to perceive that what caused and maintained war in the end of the sixteenth century

* See the depositions against Neville, Montague and Exeter, *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part II.

† This conversation is reprinted in full in *The Emperor Charles V*, by Edward Armstrong, M.A., Vol. II, page 21.

‡ William Stubbs, D.D., *The Study of Mediaval and Modern History*.

was entirely capable of causing it at the beginning of the century. Contemporaries did not think the danger imaginary. The Spanish Ambassador writes from Venice that it is common talk throughout the city that Spain and France are to attack England.* It would have been reckless indeed for the King and his minister to take this danger as lightly as some modern historians insist they ought to have taken it. Henry wrote instructions to enforce Cromwell's readiness to put England in a state of defense, adding as a spur to his work, "Diligence passe sence."†

Four thousand sets of armor and supplies of powder were bought in Germany. And the King tried to engage there 100 expert artillerymen.‡ Government ordered a general muster of the kingdom, and the rolls show that it was carried out, at least in part, for Wales and two-thirds of England. The following entry in the records of the Corporation shows what the capital did: "His Highness was lately informed that the cankered and venomous arch traitor Reynold Pole, enemy to God's word and his own natural country, had moved diverse great princes of Christendom not only to invade this realm of England with mortal war, but also by fire and sword to exterminate and utterly destroy the whole generation and nation of the same." . . . "Thereupon His Highness in person took many journeys toward the sea coasts and caused many bulwarks to be made. He also caused towers to be built from the Mount to Dover and so to Berwick. He caused the Admiral to assemble all the navy at Portsmouth, and directed commissions throughout the realm to have his people mustered." . . . "But when the Lord Mayor and his brethren were informed by Lord Thomas Cromwell, Keeper of the Privy Seal (to whom the city is and has been much bounden), that the King himself would see his loving subjects muster before him, they decided that no alien, even though he were a denizen, should muster, and that Englishmen who had jacks, brigandines or coats of fence should not go out, but only such as had white harness and full accoutrements."§ The parade took place on the 8th of May, 1539, and the French Ambassador estimated fifteen thousand men in the ranks, for those days a large force.

The surrenders of the greater monasteries had stopped with April, when two-thirds of the number had been surrendered, and from then until the 1st of November they did not average one a month,

* *Letters and Papers*, XIV, part I, 372.

† *Ibid.*, XIV, part I, 529.

‡ *Ibid.*, XIV, part II, App. 14.

§ *Ibid.*, XIV, part I, 940; *Reprint from Archaeologia*, XXXII, 30

whereas for the previous sixteen months they had averaged about six a month. And the unsundered included a number of those most dangerous from the Crown's point of view. There were twenty-five mitred Abbots in England with the right to sit in the House of Lords; only seven of them had surrendered by the 1st of November, 1539. And the Government had reason to believe they were in communication to encourage one another in resistance. Cromwell determined to break their opposition. After his manner, he struck at the tallest heads. The Abbot of Glastonbury was, by virtue of his office, a great noble. The broad acres of the monastery lands were rated to supply from among their laborers and tenants twenty-five hundred men to the royal muster, and brought in one of the largest incomes in England. November 15th, 1539, he was executed on a charge of robbing the monastery church. On the same day the Abbot of Reading, two weeks later the Abbot of Colchester, were hanged on a charge of treason for having supported the authority of the Bishop of Rome over the King, desired the success of the Northern insurrection, and wished Cromwell and the other Councilors at Rome or in the North, *i.e.*, at the stake or on the gallows. The hiding of plate to keep it from the spoiler, talking against the changes in the Church and the Councilors who made them, these were doubtless being done in most of the monasteries left in England. They do not seem serious offenses. But the same Parliament which imposed the penalty of death for night fishing in a private fish pond, imposed the death penalty on them. Cromwell, who with all his lack of scruple was not inclined to bloodshed, might have left these offenses go. But he needed an example, and he made it. So far as we can judge, the evidence of the charges was quite sufficient to justify a verdict according to the laws made to defend the revolution in England against the plots of those within and without her bounds who wanted the "Old World" again.* These laws, like most laws inspired by fear, were cruel.

The hard stroke broke the last resistance of the Orders. Within six weeks twenty-nine monasteries surrendered, among them ten mitred abbots. In another month the "standing army of the Pope" was entirely disbanded in England.

It has been estimated that the seven hundred and odd conventual establishments thus suppressed yielded to the royal treasury in gold and silver vessels, estimated simply at their melting

* See letters on the subject in *Letters and Papers*, Vol. XIV. This judgment is made after full consideration of Gasquet's able special pleading for them. It is, perhaps, needless to remark that these laws, like most laws motivated by fear, were cruel.

value, a sum equal to about five millions of dollars. Of the large quantities of jewels set in sacred vessels or shrines, no estimate can be found. The sale of monastic lands realized between forty and fifty millions. The income of monastic estates during the eleven years from the beginning of the suppression to the death of Henry was between twenty and twenty-five millions. Miscellaneous profits amounted to some three to four millions more. The last included the sale of everything in the monasteries down to the lead of the roofs. Cromwell was determined to make it difficult to restore monasticism. The great churches, the stately buildings which an Italian visitor in the beginning of the century described "as more like baronial palaces than monasteries," were carefully swept out of existence. From the church of Lewes, four hundred and twenty feet long, supported by pillars ten to fourteen feet thick, to the tiny house of Wilton, with its church thirty-four feet by fourteen, a cloister twenty-four feet long, a dortour sixteen feet by twelve, a little garden and meadow-ground of three acres, wherein dwelt one friar,* all went down in ruin, an enormous destruction of beautiful creations of past generations. Of the eight thousand monks and nuns supposed to have lived in them, some who were priests received benefices, and about one-half were pensioned. Abbots of large monasteries received, on the average, from five to six thousand dollars a year; monks, on the average, about three hundred a year. Heads of smaller houses got less, ranging down to nine hundred dollars a year. Of the fifteen hundred friars and the fifteen hundred monks in the smaller monasteries who preferred going out into the world to transference to larger houses, some received a present of from ten to fifty dollars.

Henry was subject, like most monarchs of his day, to the vice of reckless extravagance, and like all selfish men, when he needed money was exceedingly greedy for it. This latter vice was exaggerated by popular report. And the hanged Abbot of Colchester doubtless expressed the opinion of many when he said: "The King and his Councilors were driven into such a covetous mind that if the Thames flowed gold and silver it would not quench their thirst."† Henry did not, however, take the greater part of the vast profits of the suppression of the monasteries for himself. In the many cases of suppressing monastic and ecclesiastical foundations during and since the sixteenth century, the privileged or

* *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part I, 590.

† *Ibid.*, XIV, part II, 458.

influential classes have always tried to make their profit out of the situation. On the whole, perhaps as large a proportion of monastic property in England was devoted to public uses as in other suppressions when public opinion was unorganized and the people powerless to control and revise. Henry used in building and for personal and household purposes about twenty millions of dollars. Four or five millions went in pensions and expenses. The foundations of six new bishoprics used up five or six millions more.

The bells of the monasteries were melted into cannon, and about forty millions, over half the royal profits from the dissolution, were spent on the fleet, coast defenses and military preparations to resist the invasions threatened by the Papal excommunication. Of the estates of the monasteries the King probably did not keep more than a quarter.* He distributed the rest for nothing, or at a very low price, to the ancient nobility, to country gentlemen or to the "new men" he was raising to greatness by his service. For Cromwell's policy used greed as a factor, and his knowledge of human nature told him that the sharers of the spoils would never consent to the reversal of that by which they profited. From the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Marquis of Exeter, etc., down to the cooks in the royal kitchen, every one scrambled for a share in the spoils. And Cromwell took his share with the rest.† He accumulated a great estate in monastery lands. Its exact value cannot be estimated, but in rough numbers it brought him in between £2000 and £3500 a year, equal in purchasing value to between \$120,000 and \$200,000. His income from all sources was large. In 1536 it was between \$130,000 and \$150,000. During the years '37, '38 and '39 he received what is equivalent to between \$2,250,000 and \$2,500,000. His expenses ate up more than half this. But his accounts show that he invested some \$600,000 to \$700,000 in lands and annuities, and put over \$100,000 into a diamond and a ruby, probably because they were portable. His steward's books show a balance in his favor of £7000 (\$350,000 to \$400,000 modern value), which agrees with the account of the ambassador who wrote at his fall that people were surprised because much money

* This account is condensed from Father Gasquet, who bases his reckoning on books of the Augmentations Office. The sums are roughly transferred into modern American values. It is held by most English writers that the purchasing value of money was then ten to twelve times what it is now.

† This summary account of Cromwell's finances is the result of a careful examination of all letters and accounts bearing on the subject in *Letters and Papers*, checked, so far as possible, by the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.

was not found in his house, the total sum being only about £7000.

Cromwell made all he could out of his office and influence. The English of the sixteenth century seem to have given presents very much as the modern Chinese do, and the list of the things Cromwell received is most incongruous. It ranges from "twenty apples good to drink wine with" and "ten bags of sweet powder to lay among cloths," through a toothpick and a gold whistle, four live beavers, seeds from Barbary, a complete Innsbruck harness and six Bibles, to a thousand-weight of tin to make pewter vessels, and 18,000 slates to roof his new house. He took fees and bribes very commonly, and those possessed of any means who asked his help or influence generally sent money or a promise of money. Sometimes the gift was delicately conveyed in a pair of gloves, left under a cushion or elsewhere in the house. Much of this would be recognized as illegitimate at the time, for Sir Thomas More, who as Chancellor astonished his contemporaries by refusing to take any presents, was greatly praised for uprightness. But the condemnation was so formal that people did not lose caste by a practice which was universal and taken for granted. Wolsey received a huge pension from Francis I; and other nobles of Henry's Council, the Duke of Norfolk, the Bishop of Winchester, Earl of Worcester, etc., Cromwell's enemies as well as his supporters, received pensions from the Kings of France or Spain to look after their interests. The Councils of Switzerland, Germany and Flanders were equally, if not more, corrupt. The Fuggers were used to convey into Spain the foreign pensions of Councilors. When Francis Bacon, Chancellor, was condemned in 1621 for having taken bribes, he wrote, "And howsoever I acknowledge the sentence just and for reformation sake fit, I am the justest Chancellor that hath been in the five changes since Sir Nicholas Bacon's time" (1559).^{*} Practices so deeply condemned by modern opinion as to ruin those guilty of them persisted with small concealment and no rebuke among English State officials into the eighteenth century. Pitt created a great sensation and won an unmatched reputation for honesty in 1746 by refusing to accept commissions on foreign subsidies or appropriate the interest of balances in his hands. Cromwell's bribes and fees are not in the least to be defended, but it is unhistorical to separate his greed from its background and represent it as unusual in kind or even unique in degree.

This wealth Cromwell spent freely. He built a stately house

^{*} *Spedding*, Vol. II, p. 518. Ed. Boston, 1878.

opposite where the Stock Exchange now stands in the heart of London.* The eight lots and four gardens of his building plot he bought for the equivalent of \$12,000 from his friend Antony Vivaldi.† The ward was then a good residence quarter in the outer edge of the city. The house, though stately, was not one of the magnificent palaces built in the Tudor age. A rough sketch which has survived indicates the heavy square gate tower common to contemporary architecture; a good specimen of which can be seen at Coughton, the seat of Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, whose false testimony brought Cromwell to the block. The building has since been destroyed by fire, but we have a description of the interior, made after Cromwell's death. It had a large banqueting hall, and ample kitchens well fitted for hospitality on a large scale. It was furnished like the house of one who shares the tastes of the Renaissance. Whether he ever got from Flanders the dinner table, "of such size as there are few in England," about which his agent wrote in 1529, we do not know. Its price was forty crowns (equal to more than \$500), and it had a border with an inscription in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the three languages whose combination was a symbol of the New Learning as against Scholasticism.‡ A mutilated list of his furniture at the time of his death shows that he had twelve pictures. No list of his books has survived. But there are scattered notices of them among his papers from the beginning of his power, when we find a poem, "Amongst all Flowers the Rose doth Excel," jumbled up with the "Estimate of charges of the King's house for a year"; "A Dialogue between Pasquillus and Maforius" next to "A list of wastes done by divers persons to the King's forests of Dean," and Italian verses between the "Supplication of the inhabitants of Rompney Marsh" and "The answer of the King of Denmark and his Secretary."§ Cromwell had attracted before he became great the friendship of men of literary tastes. Miles Coverdale, translator of the Bible; Henry Morley, author of a large number of works on Biblical criticism; Thomas Elyot, author of the *Book of the Governor*, a Latin Dictionary and a number of other books; Richard Morison, author of several treatises and translations; Thomas Starkey, one of the best writers of his generation on affairs of Church and State; John Palsgrave, who did much for the knowledge of French in

* See description in Herbert, *Twelve Great Livery Companies of London*, under Drapers' Company.

† *Letters and Papers*, VII, 944.

‡ *Ibid.*, IV, part II, 5860.

§ *Ibid.*, VI, page 135.

England and wrote one of the earliest French grammars and dictionaries—all these were more or less intimate with him in his early days of law practice. And they made a circle very large in comparison to the limited number of literary men in England. These and other friends he made before his rise to power he kept. The contemporary Italian Bandello, afterward titular Bishop of Agen, made him the hero of one of his tales. It presents Cromwell in the most odious light, as a destroyer of the Church, who killed “an infinite number of monks, decapitated many great prelates of the holiest life and extinguished almost all the nobility of England.” But it relates and praises his gratitude and magnificent liberality to a Florentine merchant who had helped him in his poverty-stricken youth and, having lost his fortune by the chances of trade, was in misery in London. The fact that this Italian monk, supporter of orthodoxy, chose the great heretic and schismatic for the hero of his tale on gratitude is a proof that Cromwell had the reputation that cannot be earned except by deserving it. Richard Morison wrote: “You are the only man in your place who has never forgotten his old friends.”*

Cromwell entertained largely, dining the King and foreign ambassadors. And his varied and witty conversations added to the pleasure of his guests. He kept a large household and took care to have men among them who could play on various instruments and make up a band.† He was evidently fond of music, for his steward paid a poor woman for bringing a nightingale, and “Mr. Reynolds’ servant for bringing a cage of canaries,” sums equal to over seventeen and twenty-five dollars.‡ He kept a fool to amuse his guests,† and played bowls,‡ cards and dice,‡ losing at the latter Court amusements sums ranging from \$50 to \$1200. He shot with the long bow and hunted. But his favorite sport was hawking.§ The gifts that pleased him best were hawks, spaniels or greyhounds. The Spanish Ambassador went out hawking with him, to find a good opportunity for a private talk, and his favorite sport colored his speech, for the ambassador reports that he said: “The Emperor and his agents, like hawks, rise high, to come down faster on their prey.”|| Just before his fall Parliament reënacted laws to prevent the destruction of hawks’ nests and eggs. He kept nearly a hundred horses, but rode a mule to and fro between

* *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part I, 1297.

† *Ibid.*, XIV, part II, 782.

‡ *Ibid.*, VIII, page 433; also above note.

§ *Ibid.*, V, 1281; VI, 1164, etc.

|| *Ibid.*, XII, part II, 629.

his house and Court.* A bitter enemy said of him: "He was a great taker and briber, like his brother the Cardinal (Wolsey). No lord or gentleman in England favors him, because he will do for no man except for money, but he spent it honorably and freely like a gentleman (though he were none), and helped many honest men and preferred his servants well."† Nor was his hospitality limited to his friends. His steward's accounts show many entries of gifts to the poor, as, for instance, £6 20*d.*, equal to some \$350, "to be distributed" in alms in the prisons about London.† And Stow, no friend of Cromwell, whom he thought guilty of an act of injustice to his father, says that when a boy he had seen more than two hundred poor fed twice a day at Cromwell's gate.‡

Around the house of Cromwell, with its filled banqueting hall and open gates, there centred not only friendship and gratitude but hatred. The hospitality which has any of its roots in extortion is apt to make more enemies than friends. And there were other reasons, beside the way in which he gained part of his money, which suggest to us how much he was disliked. The sincere and intense antipathy of extreme conservatives for a radical and opportunist, the malignant hatred which some members of any privileged class always feel toward the man who destroys their privileges, the honest indignation of religious men who believed that the mediæval Church was the divinely authenticated form of the Kingdom of God on earth—these varied motives engendered in the hearts of a large section of the English clergy a terrible anger against him.

The nobility also disliked Cromwell. Even those who may have come to acquiesce in the Tudor policy, which had destroyed their feudal independence, did not like the prominent instrument of that policy. Almost all the English nobles of ancient descent were men of small capacity. A paper is extant, found among the archives of the Papacy, in which some one has given a brief account of the heads of the English nobility—probably as a basis for judgment of the possibility of exciting successful religious war against the Crown. It passes favorable judgments on "The Duke of Norfolk, 72 years, the chief and best captain": "The Marquis of Exeter, lusty and great power, specially beloved, diseased often with gout, next to the throne," and "The Marquis of Dorset, 26, with little or no experience, well learned and a great wit." But the more characteristic entries are: "The Earl of Oxford, 66 years,¹/₂a

* *Letters and Papers*, XIV, part II, 337.

† *Ibid.*, XIII, part I, 471.

‡ Stow, *Survey of London*, Ed. 1618, page 139.

man of great power, little wit and less experience"; "The Earl of Derby, young, and a child in wisdom and half a fool"; "The Earl of Cumberland, a man of 50 years, without discretion or conduct"; "The Earl of Sussex, of little discretion and many words"; "The Earl of Bath, old and foolish"; "The Earl of Worcester, young and foolish"; "The Earl of Huntingdon, of great power, little discretion and less experience."* The new nobles advanced by Henry received more favorable judgment. "The Duke of Suffolk" (Henry's brother-in-law), "a good man and captain, sickly and half lame"; "The Earl of Wiltshire, wise and little experienced, Queen Anne's father"; "The Earl of Hampton and Admiral of England, made by the King, wise, active and of good experience; one of the best captains in England"; "The Earl of Hertford, young and wise, brother unto the last Queen deceased."*

The pride of an hereditary aristocracy degenerated in ability often bears an inverse ratio to its capacity, and its members resent particularly the rise of capable men to the influence and positions once wielded by their class. The new blood which the Tudors infused into the highest classes of English society was greatly to the advantage of the English nobility. The families they founded became the great families of later times. But the members of the played-out old lines did not welcome the newcomers, and they hated Cromwell more than the rest because his influence was greater, and he was not of gentle blood. Idle courtiers, who could not have led a company in war without disaster or managed the simplest affairs of State without confusion, had sneered at Wolsey as "the butcher's dog." Cavendish wrote of Cromwell "as a kite flying with royal eagles, a jay chattering in a golden cage." And in the same spirit the Marquis of Exeter, forced from the Royal Council, had shaken his fist at the "knaves" (base-born men) "who ruled about the King." The story, often repeated, that in 1536 he struck Cromwell with his dagger, which was turned by a secret coat of mail, is not very authentic. Cromwell may indeed have worn a secret coat of mail. For at the end of 1533 the Duke of Norfolk had asked the Venetian Ambassador to get five impenetrable coats, of the kind made at Brescia, for himself, the father and brother of Queen Anne, the Lord Treasurer and Cromwell.† They probably had some reason to fear a plot to assassinate them, though there does not appear to have been any. And the Spanish Ambassador reports the delivery of five coats of secret scale armor as a

* *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part II, 732.

† *Calendar, Venetian*, Vol. IV, pp. 374, 382.

present from the Venetian Senate.* But it is highly improbable that Exeter ever probed for this on Cromwell's body with his dagger. The story rests only on the malicious denunciation before a Somersetshire magistrate of the boastful words of a butcher, said to have been spoken six months before they were denounced. But we do not need this anecdote to tell us that most of the nobility, like the orthodox clergy, were enemies of Cromwell for reasons both good and bad.

It has been so frequently repeated that Cromwell was generally hated because he filled England with spies that it is a little surprising to find how little ground for the charge is found in the State Papers. If Cromwell sustained a general spy system throughout England, or had a regular establishment equivalent to the secret service men of modern governments, it would plainly appear in their reports made to him of arrests for seditious and treasonable words. The ancient laws of England made "tale-bearing" against "the great men of the realm" a serious offense. A statute of Edward I,† twice confirmed under Richard II, ordered the imprisonment of any one repeating "such scandalous reports until he had brought into court him who was the first author of the tale," to be punished by the Royal Council. The new law making it treason to call the King heretic, schismatic or infidel, or to deny the legitimacy of his heir or impugn his title of Head of the Church, had commended to all magistrates the enforcement of the old as well as the new law. I have examined in the *Calendars* reports of ninety odd arrests under these laws, new and old, made to Cromwell between 1533 and 1540, practically all that exist. In none of them is there any suggestion of a system of spies to watch the people or report their incautious words. A King's commissioner, a yeoman of the Crown, a commissioner of subsidy, each report one case; several county magistrates, evidently seeking to curry favor, report a few cases; in five cases a constable or bailiff seems to be the chief accuser. Even this does not indicate any "spy system." And the overwhelming majority of the cases are denunciations before the local magistrates by ordinary inhabitants of town or village--tinkers, ironmongers, fullers, weavers, butchers, etc. They show that numbers of the people throughout England believed in the laws or were freely willing to use them. Some fifteen to twenty cases are the denunciations of parsons by their parishioners, who evidently want an incumbent of the "new learning."

* *Calendars, Spanish*, Vol. V, part I, page 74.

† III, Edward I, 34.

In ten cases priests denounce another priest. This also probably was the "new learning" against the "old learning." Some ten cases look like simple malicious false witness growing out of a quarrel; and most of these are so commented upon by the magistrates who report them. The examination of these hundred cases is very far from suggesting the presence or the need of a body of spies to keep down the people.

In the year 1540 Cromwell suddenly fell before his enemies. April 17th he was made Earl of Essex; July 28th he was beheaded. He had long foreseen his misfortune. He told the Spanish Ambassador in 1536, "He had admitted to himself that the day might come when fate would strike him as it had struck his predecessors in office; then he would arm himself in patience and place himself for the rest in the hands of God."* During the year 1540 Cromwell's foreign policy had brought him into disfavor with his master. It crossed the theological beliefs of the King and it made him personally uncomfortable. Cromwell prepared to resist the possible invasion of France and Spain in support of the Papal bull excommunicating Henry, not only by fortifications and musters, but also by alliances. Against such a combination England must obviously seek allies in the North. Cromwell did his best to form an alliance with the anti-Imperial and anti-Catholic Princes of Germany. In this he found one practically insurmountable obstacle—the theological differences between the Lutheran and English Churches. Most of the Lutheran divines received from Luther himself a great tenacity of theological opinions and a strong intolerance for dissent. They had refused to join a defensive league with the Zwinglians; many of them were to refuse fellowship with the Reformed of France. After examining the doctrines of the English Church they advised their Princes not to make alliance unless the English accepted the true Word of God—namely, the formulas of the Lutheran Church. But, far from doing that, an Act of Parliament in June, 1539, made the Six Articles the test of religious orthodoxy in England. These denounced the penalty of death against all who spoke or wrote against transubstantiation, communion in one kind, the need of celibacy in the clergy, the perpetual obligation of monastic vows, private masses or auricular confession.

For some years Cromwell had been encouraging in England the spread of Lutheran opinions. Between 1536 and 1539 two books were printed containing *The Augsburg Confession* and *Melanchthon's Apology*, "translated by Richard Tavernier at the com-

* *Calendars, Spanish*, V, part II, p. 82.

mandment of Lord Thomas Cromwell." He had not only licensed Coverdale's translation of the Bible, but, as he told the French Ambassador, spent six hundred marks (equivalent to some \$20,000) in getting it printed. It finally appeared in 1539 with Cromwell's arms upon the title-page, and a Preface setting forth a "Summary and Content of Scripture" quite Protestant in tone.* He must have used his influence to promote clergymen of anti-orthodox opinions, for the heretical Bishop Latimer wrote him in the end of 1538, saying that "your Lordship has promoted many more honest men since God promoted you than any of like authority have done before you."† By the beginning of 1539 Cromwell was regarded by all who wished to see England advance rapidly toward the position taken by the Protestant Princes of Germany or the Zwinglian Cantons of Switzerland as the hope of "the gospel" in England. Their opinion of him may be fairly represented (making due allowance for the tone usual in Prefaces to patrons) by the dedication of Richard Morison's *Apomaxis*, published in the middle of 1538: "Who that knows anything is ignorant that all things depend on you? Who does not wonder at your bodily strength, broken by no labours? It is incredible that the strength and memory of one man can suffice for so many and such divergent affairs. You receive all suppliant letters, you hear all complaints, you send few from you without help, either in the trouble itself or, next best, by counsel. Is there any one distinguished by virtue or learning or any of unusual mental powers whom you have not aided? All, except very few, gladly see conquered and bound by you Popes, heaps of indulgences, pounds of lead, wax easily moulded to evil (Papal seals), a thousand stratagems of fraud, huge armies of rapine and finally the bodyguards of Papal rule—Force, Terror, Cruelty, Flames, Threats, Thunders—captive, sad and hopeless, following the triumphant chariot.

"May Christ long keep you safe to ornament our State and make plain our gospel."

How far Cromwell was moved by conviction in thus promoting Protestant opinions is difficult to determine. His early literary friends, with the exception of Lord Morley, had moved toward heresy as well as schism, and Cromwell may have moved with them. In any case we may assume that he thought more of England than of theology. Probably he concluded that, if England was to

* In the title-page of the subsequent editions under the Royal patronage the arms of Cromwell have been cut out of the plate, leaving a blank in the engraving. See copies in the British Museum.

† *Letters and Papers*, XIII, part II, 1036.

be kept from connection with Rome, she must not only break with the mediæval Papacy, but also with some doctrines of the Scholastic theology, for the two hang so closely together that it is hard to separate them. And he understood that if any permanent alliance was to be formed in Germany some concession must be made to the doctrinal prepossessions of the Lutherans. Now the King was not at all inclined to rapid divergence from old theological opinions. He piqued himself on his knowledge of theology. He hated Luther, who in 1522 had handled him without gloves in controversy. And he was so averse to heresy that Cromwell had not been able in 1531 to get him to have any dealings with Tyndale, in spite of the strong support to theories of absolute power given to Kings by God contained in Tyndale's book. In protecting men who held opinions denounced by the Act of Six Articles, Cromwell was playing the dangerous part of forcing the hand of the King, a thing which Henry always deeply resented.

In addition, Cromwell's policy had made Henry uncomfortable, and that had come to be in his eyes the worst possible offense. To cement the German alliance, Henry, a widower since 1537, had married Anne, sister of the Duke of Cleves, whose rich and fertile domains in the Rhine country, on the borders of the Netherlands and Germany, made him a sort of diplomatic centre for any anti-Imperial European alliance. Before Cromwell came to power the advantages of marriage into this family, whose eldest daughter was wife of the Elector of Saxony, head of the defensive League of Lutheran Princes, had been laid before the King in a memorial of Herman Ring (May, 1530). The King had been told that Anne was very beautiful and, satisfied with the reports and a portrait painted by Holbein, had agreed to the marriage. When she came to England to be married, a glance made plain that she was not at all beautiful. The King at first sight took a great dislike to her, and tried hard to get out of keeping his promise to make her his wife. Cromwell pointed out how impossible this was, and he reluctantly went through the ceremony. But woe be to the man who forced him to do what he disliked. An intense irritation gathered in his heart. And the desire to get rid of Anne was increased by his liking for Katherine Howard, a pretty young niece of the Duke of Norfolk. Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, head of the orthodox clerical party and Cromwell's bitterest opponent, gave the King opportunity to meet Anne's rival in his palace.*

* *Letters and Papers*, XVI, page 114, and *Letters from Richard Hillis, Zurich Letters*, Vol. I, page 200.

Cromwell was aware of his danger, but saw no way to avoid it. Sir Thomas Wriothesley, one of the King's secretaries, deposed that five months after the marriage, "He asked Lord Cromwell to devise some way for the relief of the King, for if he remained in this grief and trouble they should all one day smart for it. To which Lord Cromwell answered that it was true, but it was a great matter. 'Marry,' said Sir Thomas, 'I grant, but let the remedy be searched for.' 'Well,' said Lord Cromwell, and broke off."

The French Ambassador perceived that a fight for the control of the State had begun. The party of reaction, with Gardiner and Norfolk as its leaders, and the radical progressive party, under Cromwell, had locked arms for a battle to the death. The orthodoxy of Henry, his dislike for Anne, his growing passion for pretty Katherine were strong cards held by Gardiner. But Cromwell was an old player and it looked for a moment as if he would win. On the 1st of June the French Ambassador reports the Bishop of Chichester in the Tower on a charge of treason and adds: "A trustworthy person says he heard from Cromwell that there were still five bishops who ought to be treated thus, whose names, however, cannot yet be learned; unless they are those who lately shook the credit of Master Cromwell so that he was very near coming to grief. Things are brought to such a pass that either Cromwell's party or the Bishop of Winchester's must succumb. Although both are in great authority and favour of the King, their master, still the course of things seems to incline to Cromwell's side, as Winchester's chief friend, the Bishop of Chichester, is down."* On the 7th of June the Bishop of Chichester wrote to Cromwell a letter from the Tower showing an inclination to be used against the leaders of the clericals.* Then the frightened opposition struck a blow which they must have plotted some days before. On the 10th of June Cromwell was arrested for treason in the Council chamber itself.

He recognized in an instant that the ground was countermined beneath his feet by some false but plausible witness. A charge of treason against Cromwell, who lived to exalt the throne, was ridiculous. As he saw his work undone by the tricky but incapable Norfolk and the able but reactionary Winchester, he flung his cap on the ground in sudden wrath, appealing to their consciences whether he was a traitor, and bidding them not let him languish long in prison. The French Ambassador understood it perfectly as a faction fight "between this King's ministers who are trying to destroy each other. Cromwell's party seemed the

* *Letters and Papers*, XV, pages 351, 360.

stronger lately, but it seems quite overthrown by the taking of the said Lord Cromwell, who was chief of his band.”* The King sent the ambassador word that “he wished by all possible means to lead back religion to the way of truth. Cromwell, as attached to the German Lutherans, had always favored the doctors who preached such erroneous opinions, and that recently warned by some of his principal servants to reflect that he was working against the instructions of the King and the Act of Parliament, he said that the affair would soon be brought to such a pass that the King with all his power could not prevent it, but rather his own party would be so strong that he would make the King descend to the new doctrines even if he had to take arms against him.”*

The King's irritation, caused by dislike for Anne and liking for Katherine, had increased, while at the same time the peace of the Duke of Cleves with the Emperor, and a truce between Charles and the French King made Henry fear that the marriage he hated was a political mistake. His distaste for heresy deepened. And at the psychological moment, when the unconscious dislike for the minister who had been the means of making him uncomfortable was ready to burst into the fury of a selfish man who is crossed, a sudden false accusation evoked the terrible pride of the King. Rich, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, and Nicholas Throgmorton, with whom Cromwell had long been at odds, accused him of having said two years before: “If the King would turn from it (the promotion of the Protestant doctrine), yet I would not turn; and if the King did turn and all his people, I would fight in the field in mine own person with my sword in my hand against him and all others.” They added that he pulled out his dagger with the words: “Or else this dagger thrust me to the heart, if I would not die in that quarrel against them all.”

To have desired insurrection against the Crown was against all Cromwell's ideas, to have plotted a hopeless rebellion was utterly at variance with his sagacity, to have expressed his intent before a personal enemy like Throgmorton was a lack of caution impossible in one who had so long walked with firm step the slippery corridors of Henry's palaces. A son of Cromwell's grandchild informed Fuller that, when told by Rich and Throgmorton that he had an accuser of want of fidelity, he had replied, “Were he here now I would strike my dagger into his heart.”

Cromwell might have said this. He was not fool enough to have said the other before such witnesses, even in the highly improbable

* *Letters and Papers*, XV, 766, 767.

event of feeling it. Like Sir Thomas More, Cromwell accused Rich of plain perjury. Whether distortion or sheer invention, the false witness served its purpose. The King at once believed it, though later he came to think it false.

Cromwell had forced him into a hated marriage. He had encouraged heresy when the King loved orthodoxy. Henry had unconsciously wanted an excuse for a nervous discharge of rage which might relieve his irritated egotism. He stripped his favorite of all his dignities, and every incapable scion of a noble house in England rejoiced that the "base knave" who had risen to the head of the English State, because he was the most capable man of affairs in it, was in accordance with royal edict to be spoken of as "the shearinan." The contemporary chronicler tells us that "many lamented" his arrest, but "more rejoiced, and especially such as had been religious men or favored religious persons, for they banqueted and triumphed together that night, . . . and some, fearing lest he should escape although he were imprisoned, could not be merry. Others, who knew nothing but truth by him, both lamented him and heartily prayed for him."

At the Courts of France, Spain and Rome the news of his fall was received with great joy, which, curiously enough, has been taken by some modern writers as an indication of the injury his ministry had done to England. From France came accusations apt to insure his death—that he had plotted to marry the Princess Mary and seize the Crown. No pretense was ever made of sending the promised proofs when the King asked for them after Cromwell's death.

From that death nothing could save him. For many generations later little stood between a fallen minister and the scaffold. A threat of the axe was the ancient equivalent of a vote of want of confidence. From Wolsey, who died on his way to death, the list is long of fallen rulers of England who saw the scaffold on their path. More, Cromwell, Norfolk, Seymour of Sudeley, Somerset, Northumberland, Norfolk, Buckingham, Stafford, Charles I, Sir Henry Vane, Clarendon, Danby, Shaftesbury and the Councilors of James II, all met death or looked hard upon the axe. During a century and a half, on the average, once in ten years a leader of the English State died on the scaffold or was in danger of it. None of these men, with the possible exception of Northumberland, could be convicted or attainted of treason by a modern jury or Parliament. Cromwell was therefore only one in a long list of those who came to the steps of the scaffold by the violence of English political parties.

He understood that his one hope of mercy lay in the will of the King, and tried by the most abject efforts to placate the diseased egotism he knew so well. It was his last card in the game of life, and he played it with the same lack of dignity which his antagonist, the Duke of Norfolk, head of the English aristocracy, showed when his turn came. He got nothing by it, except that the title and estates were left undisturbed to his son, which was, perhaps, all he hoped.

The men of the sixteenth century often died better than they lived. There is no particular reason to doubt the authenticity of Cromwell's prayer on the scaffold, in which he humbly repents of all his sins, trusting in the mercy of God, and asking that the righteousness of Christ might hide and cover all his unrighteousness. Those sins were many. But, to put his career against the background of his times, and look at it with the eyes of a man who believes in God and righteousness rather than with those of an ecclesiastic who believes that the world gets at God and righteousness only by a Church establishment, is to see that there was in them no peculiar tinge of sinister wickedness. He was the most active servant the Tudors found in destroying mediæval institutions. He stood for a career open to talents and the energies of England, going out in the light of the new learning and the new patriotism unto those paths of thought, of industry, of adventure, which have brought the men who speak the English tongue into their inheritance. Therefore the distant North and the ancient nobility hated him. But those who knew him best liked him most. He struck hard at those who opposed his plans, but he did not willingly shed blood which seemed needless, and he helped many of the weak. He took bribes and sold his influence, but it is nowhere recorded of him that he ground the faces of the poor. He did not die, like Wolsey, unlamented. His arrest had been secret and sudden because of fear of trouble in the city. A war of broadside ballads arose over his death which had to be suppressed by the Council, and the joy at Madrid, Paris and Rome was broken by laments from Germany and the Netherlands over the deeds of the English Nero and the martyrdom of the friend of the Gospel. For in those days nobody judged a man by what he was or what he did, but by his attitude toward their faction in religion and politics.*

It was easier for the King to get rid of a good servant than to find another. Wolsey, More and Cromwell were the ablest men

* It is impossible to write the history of the sixteenth century fairly until this fact is more clearly and widely recognized than it has been.

he raised to high office in the State. Within a year of Cromwell's death, the Spanish Ambassador tells us, "the King has no confidence in his ministers, and sometimes even reproaches them with Cromwell's death, saying that upon light pretexts, by false accusation, they made him put to death the most faithful servant he ever had."* The last part of Henry's reign was the least successful. He began to shed blood which, from any point of view, was superfluous, so that the French Ambassador reports: "Cromwell was reckoned the sole deviser of the death of so many people, but it appears since that he was not altogether author of that piteous tragedy, but rather played his part as it was rehearsed to him."† No one could be found to manage the English finances. The debasement of the coinage, continued during Henry's reign before Cromwell came to power, suspended as long as he had influence, went on again worse than ever, until Elizabeth made her generation pay for the mistakes of their forefathers by returning it to purity and beginning to build up again the ruined credit of England.

Cromwell left no account of his motives and no description of his policy. He shed without remorse the blood of men who, if they could have gained the power they asked the Spanish King and the Italian Pope to help them gain, would have killed him without an instant's hesitation and thought it God's service to destroy all his work. He increased by every means the power of the throne, because, in common with many of the ablest statesmen and writers of the age, he believed an absolute Prince to be the only security for national peace and national prosperity. But he did not try to strengthen the throne by creating a standing army or disarming the people. He defended his policy by the pulpit and the printing press. He used the arts so long familiar to English ministers to manage Parliament, but he appealed to the consent of the nation through it, and increased the potential of liberty. He broke England from all connection with the Papacy. He tried to make that alliance with the nations of the North in which England afterward found safety. He fostered the Renaissance against mediævalism, the new learning against the old. He reduced the Welsh and Scotch borders to order. He helped the destruction of local jurisdictions and made it possible to bring them under the common law. He maintained the stability of the succession by a policy which defended the loyalty to the throne that carried England through the sixteenth century without a great civil war. He finished the breaking of the feudal nobility, eager to renew the

* *Letters and Papers*, XVI, 590, page 285.

† *Ibid.*, XVI, page 289.

War of the Roses, and kept the path open to talents. He aided trade, retrieved the finances and stopped the adulteration of the coinage. He swept monasticism from England as an anachronism which had outgrown its usefulness, and used half its wealth for national purposes. He broke the temporal power of the clergy and put the national Church under the same control as all other national affairs. Most of this is so opposed to certain theories of Church and State that it seemed to their advocates a diabolical work, even as it seemed to their opponents a blessed work. The truth is that Thomas Cromwell was neither martyr of Protestantism nor Satan's agent to attack the Church; but a statesman working hard to give England an efficient government, and to guide her safely during the difficult transition from the mediæval to the modern State. Close mouthed and unscrupulous as he was, there was nothing particularly mysterious about his methods nor uniquely sinister about his personality.

He sought to advance his own fortune, but it seems plain that he aimed in addition at something else. Surely labors so consistent and efficient must have been inspired by some other motive and reason than the greed of a crafty adventurer flattering a tyrant. And if, without theological prejudice or ecclesiastical bias, we judge him for what he was, a person whose ideals were predominantly secular, we find him morally neither better nor worse than the average man of his age; if we judge him by what he did, it seems difficult to deny him a place among the most capable statesmen of all ages.

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