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LIFE

OF

THOMAS CRANMER,

ARCHBISHOP

OF

CANTERBURY.

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ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

THIS Christian Prelate, of whom it has been truly said, that his character has been 'equally the subject of exaggerated praise and undeserved censure,' was the son of Thomas Cranmer, Esq. a gentleman of respectable family, though of moderate fortune. He was born at Aslacton, in Nottinghamshire, on the second of July, 1489. Though much addicted in his youth, to rural amusements, he seems to have applied to his studies with eagerness, for at the age of fourteen, he was sent to Cambridge, where he spent ten years in the pursuits, which in that age, bore the name of science and learning, and which however of little value in themselves, were not, perhaps, without use, in consequence of the discipline which they afforded to the mind.

Not long before this period, the writings of Erasmus, and of the immortal Luther, aided by other causes, had awakened Europe to the corruptions of the Church of Rome, the crimes of the Clergy, the rights of conscience, and the supremacy and excellence of the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.

These writings had found their way to England—to Cambridge; and a conviction became general, that the best way to arrive at truth was, to abandon the volumes of the Schoolmen, and ponder the sacred text of the Scriptures themselves. These men who did so were denominated SCRIPTURISTS; and among these, young Craumer early ranked himself. Perusal of “the lively oracles,” illuminated and elevated his mind, released him from the trammels in which he had been fettered,—and awakened suspicions and convictions, which were one day to lead to important results, but for the open avowal of which, the time had not yet arrived.

An imprudent marriage occasioned the loss of his fellowship in College, but such was his reputation for talents and learning, that upon the death of his wife he was re-elected: and when afterwards he was nominated to a fellowship in a College in Oxford, founded by Cardinal Wolsey, which was much more profitable, such was his gratitude, and attachment to his friends, that he declined the acceptance of it.

In 1526, he took his degree of Doctor in Divinity, and was soon after appointed one of the examiners in Theology. This shews the rapid progress that free enquiry and regard for the Scriptures had made, as he ranked among the Scripturists. In this new office he made the Bible the subject of examination; suffered none to pass who were not well acquainted with it: and thus promoted the interests of religion and the good of the university. Some who were rejected by him, were led in consequence, to apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures; and afterwards publicly thanked him, for the better direction he had thus given to their studies. One of these was Dr. Banet, a White Friar, "who," says Fox, "was after that sort handled and who gave him commendation for his happy rejecting of him, for a better amendment."

The question of King Henry the Eighth's divorce from his queen, Catharine of Arragon, who had been his brother's wife, but of the lawfulness of living with whom, he expressed scruples, was now warmly agitated. The Cardinals Campeio and Wolsey, who had been appointed by the Pope to hear and determine that cause, had left the matter as they found it; and Henry began to see that nothing was farther from the Pope's intentions, than to come to a decision. To divert his mind, the King made a tour, or as it was called a *progress*; and stopped at Waltham Abbey, where Cran-

mer was, who had retired to the house of Mr. Cressey, a relative, to avoid the plague which had broken out at Cambridge. Fox, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and Gardiner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, met with Cranmer at the house of Mr. Cressey; and the conversation turning on this topic that then engaged all minds, Cranmer remarked, that while they tried the question by ecclesiastical law, it would never be determined; but the question, whether a man might marry his brother's wife, should be decided on the authority of Scripture. Let the universities of Europe be consulted as to what is the doctrine of Scripture on this question; if they decide that the Scriptures permit it, the King's conscience will be satisfied: if they decide against it, the authority of Scripture, supported by their suffrages will compel the Pope to pronounce a definitive sentence accordingly.*

This language was reported to the King, who immediately sent for Cranmer, and appointed him, the Earl of Wiltshire, and the Bishop of London, as Commissioners to carry the suggestion into effect. Dignities and honours, in rapid succession, now flowed in upon him; and from this time his history is closely identified with that of the nation.

* If the Pope sanctioned the divorce, he offended the Court of Spain—Catherine being the Infanta of Spain; if not, he disobliged Henry. This was the cause of his reluctance to come to a decision.

His mission was successful; almost every where the marriage was declared unlawful from Scripture; and Cranmer was rewarded with the Archbishoprick of Canterbury.

There were two obstacles in the way to his acceptance of this exalted office. The one was the oath of obedience to the Pope, which he now scrupled to take, having fully embraced the principles of the Reformation while abroad, and the other was, his having contracted a second marriage when in Germany, with the Niece of the celebrated Osiander, which the prejudices of that age looked upon as unlawful in the clergy.

To obviate the former of these, he resolved on an expedient, doubtful, at least, in principle, and dangerous in practice, although patronized by the Church he wished to abandon, and congenial with the sentiments of the age—He openly declared, before taking it, that he did not thereby restrain himself from doing his duty to God, his king, or his country; and that whenever the Pope should attempt to exercise unlawful authority, he should on all occasions oppose it, and condemn his errors. His consecration was in March; and in May following, he pronounced sentence of divorce between the king and queen.

No one doubts, at this day, that it was the newly conceived affection of the king for Anna Boleyn, and not scruples of conscience, that chiefly impelled Henry to sue for the divorce;

and to this, reasons of state added their influence—as the validity of the marriage, and consequently the legitimacy of Mary, his daughter by Catherine, had been questioned, in treaties of marriage, with neighbouring Princes, and as male issue to the king, was desirable to guard against the danger of civil war. It does not, however, exalt the character of Cranmer, who could have no scruples of conscience, and with whom, as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, reasons of state should not have operated—that he became so readily and so devotedly subservient to the king's will. As he coupled with this question, however, another respecting the Pope's power to dispense with the laws of God—and, probably, felt anxious to avail himself of an opportunity of freeing his country from the tyranny of Rome, some abatement of censure may be made, while it is to be regretted that his anxiety did not lead him, at his consecration, to the Archbishoprick of Canterbury, without tampering, and decisively, to renounce that subjection to the Pope, which he never meant to yield. It is however to be observed, that although Cranmer had embraced the doctrines of the Reformation theoretically, he probably, up to this time, was not brought to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus.

On the 23d of May, he pronounced the sentence of divorce. The Pope threatened to excommunicate him: and he, in return, promoted

the Reformation by every means in his power, and was the principal means of abolishing the Pope's supremacy by Act of Parliament, of procuring a new and more correct translation of the Scriptures, and of suppressing the monasteries.

We may conclude that the providence of God was displayed in the breach produced between the Court of England and the See of Rome. Through the influence of Bellay, Bishop of Bayonne, and his master Francis I. the fickle-minded Henry was induced to send his submission to Rome; but they who carried it, were detained by contrary winds, till two days after the Pope's definitive sentence against the king had been passed, and which had been accelerated by the influence of the Emperor Charles V. and the Pope's own irascible temper. Thus he who "holdeth the winds in his fists"—and whom the waves obey—and who can make the "wrath of man to praise him"—overruled all to the accomplishment of his own holy designs.

The king's marriage with Anna Boleyn, was solemnized in January, 1533, and in the month of September following, at the king's order, Cranmer stood god-father for the Princess Elizabeth; but at the instigation of the king, who now wished to get rid of her, though for her sake he had divorced his former queen, Cranmer pronounced sentence of divorce against her, she was beheaded, and Henry married Jane Scymour the very next day. It is, as Gilpin

justly remarks, when all the circumstances of this abominable affair are considered, truly surprising to find a man of the Archbishop's character, submitting in any shape, to be an actor in so complicated a scene of barbarism, cruelty, absurdity, and injustice.

The conduct of Cranmer appears to have been a dishonest and cruel submission to the passions of a tyrant, and there is no apology whatever to be offered for a compliance with what was, no doubt, a cruel and unjust act. It is again to be remembered, that up to this date, Cranmer had given no decided evidence of his having advanced further than a speculative knowledge and reception of Scripture doctrine; and therefore his conduct is no more a reproach to religion than the conduct of any man before his conversion.

In 1537, with the bishops, he published the celebrated treatise entitled, "The Erudition of a Christian Man," in which many of the errors and absurdities of the Romish Church were laid aside, and some of the fundamental principles of the Reformation stated and maintained.

Through his means, too, the Bible was reprinted in English. Tindal's version was made the basis; portions were sent to learned divines to be corrected; and Cranmer himself revised the whole.

The following anecdote, connected with this important work, will interest the reader:—

Burnet (Hist. Reform. vol. I. p. 195) says, that the arguments for a new translation of the Bible, joined to the influence of Queen Anne Boleyn, caused the king to give orders for commencing the translation immediately; but that Bishop Gardiner, and all his party, opposed the measure both in convocation, and in secret with the king. But Cranmer, who had the work at heart, determined, if possible, to expedite the business; and that the translation might not be prohibited, as others had been, under a pretext of ignorance, or unfaithfulness in the translators, " he proceeded," says Strype, " in this method.—First he began with the translation of the New Testament, taking an old English translation thereof, which he divided into nine or ten parts; causing each part to be written at large in a paper book, and then to be sent to the best learned bishops and others, to the intent they should make a perfect correction thereof. And when they had done he required them to send back their parts, so corrected, unto him, at Lambeth, by a day limited for that purpose: and the same course, no question, he took with the Old Testament. It chanced that the Acts of the Apostles were sent to Bishop Stokely, to oversee and correct. When the day came, every man had sent to Lambeth his part corrected, only Stokely's was wanting. My lord of Canterbury wrote to the bishop a letter, for his part, requiring him to deliver it unto

the bringer, his secretary. He received the Archbishop's letter at Fulham, unto which he made this answer—' I marvel what my lord of Canterbury meaneth, that thus abuseth the people, in giving them liberty to read the Scriptures ; which doth nothing else but infect them with heresy. I have bestowed never an hour upon my portion, nor never will. And therefore my lord shall have this book again, nor will I ever be guilty of bringing the simple people into error.' My lord of Canterbury's servant took the book, and brought the same to Lambeth unto my lord, declaring my lord of London's answer. When the Archbishop had perceived that the bishop had done nothing therein, ' I marvel,' said he, ' that my lord of London is so froward, that he will not do as other men do.' One Mr. Thomas Lawney stood by, and hearing my Lord speak so much of the bishop's untowardness, said, ' I can tell your Grace why my lord of London will not bestow any labour or pains this way.—Your Graee knoweth well, that his portion is a piece of the New Testament ; but he, being persuaded that Christ had bequeathed nothing to him in his testament, thought it madness to bestow any labour or pain where no gain was to be gotten. And besides this, it is the Acts of the Apostles, which were simple poor fellows, and therefore my lord of London disdained to have to do with any of them.' Whereat, my lord of Canterbury and others that stood by, could

not forbear from laughing. This Lawney was chaplain to the old Duke of Norfolk, and had been one of the scholars placed by the Cardinal in his new college at Oxon; where he was chaplain of the house and prisoners there, with Firth another of the scholars."

The Bible was licenced by the king; and a copy fixed to the desk in all parochial churches.

"The ardour with which men flocked to read it is incredible. They who could, purchased it: and they who could not, crowded to read it, or to hear it read, in churches; where it was common to see little assemblies of mechanics meeting together for that purpose after the labour of the day. Many even learned to read in their old age, that they might have the pleasure of instructing themselves from the Scriptures. Mr. Fox mentions two apprentices, who joined, each his little stock, and bought a Bible, which, at every interval of leisure, they read; but, being afraid of their master, who was a zealous Roman Catholic, they kept it under the straw of their bed. Such was the extacy of joy with which this blessing was received at that time—when it was uncommon."

When the monasteries were suppressed, the king wished to lay his rapacious hands upon the whole revenues. In this Cranmer eagerly opposed him, wishing to have a part appropriated to the promotion of learning, piety, and benevolence, by the establishment of schools,

colleges, and hospitals. This brought down upon him the king's displeasure; and the bishop of Winchester—of whom it was said, “he was to be traced like the fox, and read backwards like the Hebrew”—and other Popish bishops, seized on the opportunity of advancing their cause. An Act was passed favouring the peculiar tenets of the Church of Rome, and attaching penalties to those who should oppose them—for Henry only opposed the Pope's authority, and that merely because it thwarted his own schemes—but Cranmer, when almost all feared to oppose it, for three days in Parliament confuted every opponent, though he stood alone. In no part of his life does the Archbishop appear more amiable than in this. The king ordered him to leave the house. He refused, saying, “It is God's cause, not man's.” When he could do no more, he boldly entered his protest—“*O si sic omnia!*” Even after his unsuccessful opposition, he succeeded in mitigating the penalties, in getting the use of prayers in English, and also of the Bible, though under certain restrictions.

The death of the Earl of Essex, his friend and helper, by the machinations of the Duke of Norfolk, and the Bishop of Winchester, was a severe blow to Cranmer. They were united in the bonds of the closest friendship, and laboured for the advancement of the same great and good cause. The following anecdote shows the zeal of Essex for the Archbishop—mis-

guided, no doubt—and places the Archbishop in an amiable light:—

“A priest near Scarborough, was sitting among his companions over his beer, at the door of a country alehouse, when some one happened to mention the Archbishop; ‘That man,’ said the priest, ‘great as he is now, was once but an hostler; and has no more learning than the goslings yonder on the green.’ Essex, who had his spies in every quarter, was informed of what the priest had said. A messenger was dispatched immediately for him, and he was lodged in the Fleet prison. Some months elapsed, when the Archbishop, who was entirely ignorant of the affair, received a petition from the poor priest, full of penitence for his imprudence, and of supplication for mercy. The Primate, having enquired into the business, sent for him. ‘I hear you have accused me,’ said he, ‘of many things; and among others, of being very ignorant. You have now an opportunity of setting your neighbours right in this matter. You may examine me if you please.’ The priest, in great confusion, besought his Grace to pardon him: saying he never would offend in the same way again. ‘Well then,’ said the Archbishop, ‘since you will not examine me, let me examine you.’ Thunder-struck, the priest stammered out a thousand excuses and apologies, owning he was not much learned in book-matters. The Archbishop then told him he should

not go very deep; and asked him two or three of the easiest questions he could think of, out of the Bible—as, Who was David's father? and, Who was Solomon's? The priest, confused at his own ignorance, stood speechless. 'You see,' said the Archbishop, 'how your accusation of me rises against yourself: You are an admirable judge of learning and learned men! Well, my friend, I had no hand in bringing you here, and I have no desire to keep you. Get home, and if you are an ignorant man, learn, at least, to be an honest one.' Soon after, the Earl of Essex came to the Primate, and with some warmth, told him he might, for the future, fight his own battles—that he had intended to have made the priest do penance at St. Paul's Cross; but his Grace's misjudged lenity prevented him. 'My good lord,' said the Primate, taking him by the hand, 'be not offended. I have examined the man myself: and be assured from me, he is worthy neither your notice nor mine.' **

* The origin of the slander of Cranmer's having been originally an hostler, so often met with in Roman Catholic writers, was, that upon his marriage and consequent loss of his fellowship, he took lodgings for his wife at an inn, the landlady being a relation of his wife's, and from his frequently visiting the place, the Roman Catholics maliciously raised the report.

Another anecdote, similar to the above, farther illustrates this amiable trait in Cranmer's character. Two men, to whom he confided all his affairs, secretly accused him of heresy. He took them into his study,

It would far exceed the limits of this sketch, to detail the plots of the Roman Catholic faction, —the uniform and implacable enemies of Cranmer; the merciful and forgiving spirit evinced in his conduct towards them; and the kindness and regard which the arbitrary monarch retained for him, amid all his caprices and cruelties. It is enough to remark, that as this good man advanced in the divine life, he grew in *decision* of attachment to the truth and cause of Christ, and in the *meek* and *humble* spirit and deportment characteristic of his followers.

In 1542 the Scottish army was defeated at Solway-moss. Many of the nobility were taken prisoners, and sent to London, where they were committed to the most considerable per-

told them he wanted their advice, that two men, who sat at his table, and were in his confidence, had secretly attempted falsely and maliciously to work his ruin, and he wanted them to tell him how he should act. One said, the villains should be banged; the other said, hanging was too good for them. The Archbishop lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "O Lord God, truly is it said, Cursed is the man who trusteth in man." Then pulling their own letters out, he showed them to them. They fell down on their knees, and implored mercy. "Well," said he, gently, "God make you both good men. I never deserved this at your hands. Ask God's forgiveness. Whom shall I trust since you deceive me? Truly I shall begin to fear lest my left hand shall accuse my right." With this he dismissed them; nor did he ever manifest displeasure afterwards.

sons of the court. The Earl of Cassilis was sent to Cranmer's palace at Lambeth. Here he found himself in a school of literature, philosophy, and religion; and being of a literary turn of mind, soon forgot, in his society and pursuits, the pains of captivity. He became greatly attached to the Archbishop; and such was the power of kindness, and the force of religious example, under the blessing of God, that Cassilis became a convert. Scotland was still in darkness: but Cranmer used to say, that when it should please God to send into that country the light of his blessed Gospel, he hoped his intimacy with the Earl would not be without its use. In fact, this became so; for afterwards, when the doctrines of the Reformation were introduced there, Cassilis became one of the most active, devoted, and useful propagators of them.

Upon the death of Henry, Cranmer was placed at the head of the regency, appointed to govern, during the minority of the young King Edward VI. and the proceedings he directed were marked by wisdom, prudence, learning, moderation, firmness, and piety.

Immediately Cranmer ordered a general visitation, in which corrupt doctrines were inquired into, and also corrupt practices, superstitious ceremonies, the lives of the clergy, and the manners of the laity. Most deplorable were the discoveries that were made; and this

pious and zealous prelate employed the most vigorous measures for a reformation. These abuses and corruptions had been exhibited in a memorial presented to the late king, entitled, —“ The Supplication of the poor commons to the King.” After exposing, in very forcible terms, and by striking facts, the corruptions and rapacity of the clergy, it concludes thus— “ If you suffer Christ’s poor members to be thus oppressed, expect the righteous judgment of God for your negligence. Be merciful, therefore, to yourself as well as to us. Endanger not your own soul by the suffering of us poor commons. Remember that your hoar hairs are a token that nature hasteth to absolve your life. Defer not then, most dread Sovereign, the reformation of these enormities; for the wound is even unto death. Whoredom is more esteemed than wedlock, Simony hath lost his name. Usury is lawful gain. What example of life do the people show this day, which declares us more to be the people of God, than Jews and Mahometans.”

Under Cranmer’s direction, a book of Homilies was published, as well as a catechism for the more ignorant and the young. The commentary of Erasmus was authorized, processions, and other abuses, were abolished, and considerable advancement in reformation was made.

It is painful to be obliged to note the remainders of that bigotry, of which he was not able altogether to free himself. Bonner, Gardiner, and others, were imprisoned for their attachment to Popery, though it must be acknowledged, their offences were partly political. But no apology can be made for his directing the secular arm against Joan Boacher, commonly called the Maid of Kent, for her denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ, however pernicious the errors she held and published; he happened to be infected with the spirit of persecution into which all the reformers, almost, had so largely drunk, before renouncing the fellowship of the Church of Rome. She was sentenced to the flames; but the pious and merciful mind of the young king revolted at signing the warrant for her execution, saying it was a piece of cruelty too like that which the reformers condemned in the Roman Catholics, Crapmer urged him; but the lovely youth replied—"What, my lord! will you have me send her quick to the devil in her error?"—The unhallowed persuasion of the primate prevailed, and Edward signing the warrant with tears, protesting, that if he did wrong, his advisers must answer for it to God.

At a time however when persecution raged abroad, when the genuine followers of Christ suffered many deprivations for their attachment to his cause, and were called on to leave their native country for safety, when England became the asylum of these confessors of Jesus,

Cranmer's palace was ever open for their reception. Peter Martyr, Bucer, Aless, Fagius, and many others, found there a support and a sanctuary; and afterwards professorships were procured for them in the universities, where they greatly contributed to the advancement of learning, divine truth, and piety, in England. Sleiden, the historian of the Reformation, Leland, the first British antiquarian, Latimer, the amiable and primitive Bishop, and Erasmus, the learned adherent, yet witty satirist, of the Church of Rome, all shared in his liberality.

In 1549 a rebellion broke out, the *pretext* for which was the scarcity of provisions, but the *real cause* were the machinations of the priests to have the Popish system restored, with all its enormities. They demanded the re-establishment of ceremonies, the abolition of the new liturgy, the prohibition of the circulation of the Bible, and a general return to the darkness and superstitions of Popery. Lord Russell was sent with an army to quell them; and Cranmer undertook to reply to their memorials. His answer, which is an excellent model of the proper mode of reasoning with the lower classes, and of the successful way of combating their prejudices, is published in Strype's Appendix, and is well worth perusal. It is a masterly work.

If in some respects the lustre of Cranmer's character was tarnished by the errors of the age in which he lived, in some he was three

centuries before it. He formed the grand, the truly Christian design of uniting all Protestants who held the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in one holy fraternity. He corresponded, on this subject, with the most illustrious foreign reformers.—Alas! the hour had not come. Advancement, blessed and rapid advancement, seems making towards it in the present age; and to effect this glorious consummation, for which the Saviour prayed, and which God has promised, and for which the Spirit will be given in rich and abundant effusion, Missionary and Bible Societies, the glory of this era, have materially contributed. Cranmer, however, seems to have caught the true idea of the nature of that ultimate, blissful union of the people of God, when he supposed it to be an union of *hearts*, in holy and fervent affection—not of *heads*, in minute and specific agreement in sentiment, as to every jot and tittle revealed in the word of God.

Hitherto the Duke of Somerset had been protector, a zealous Protestant, and the steady friend of Cranmer; but, by the manœuvres of the Duke of Northumberland, he was supplanted, and brought to the scaffold, and the Duke himself made protector in his room. The Lady Jane Grey, the daughter of Henry VIII. by Anna Boleyn, was married to the Duke's son, and it became the favourite object of his policy to have the Princess Mary excluded, in her favour, from succeeding to the

throne. The young king was now far gone in a consumption, not without suspicions of having received slow poison, and under pretence of securing the reformation, he was persuaded to exclude his sister Mary, in favour of the Lady Jane Grey; and Cranmer was induced by Edward and others, though with much reluctance, to sanction the measure. This act of perjury—one of the greatest blots upon his memory, (for he had solemnly sworn to the entail of the crown on Mary,)—was the commencement of all his calamities.

The pious Edward was called from the troubles, and perplexities, of a throne on earth, to sit down with the Redeemer on *his* throne of glory in heaven, on the 6th of July, 1533: the power of the Lady Jane Grey soon expired. Cranmer, during her short-lived reign, having subscribed to the king's will, which fixed her in the throne, thought himself bound to support her; and upon the elevation of Mary to the throne, his enemies maliciously spread abroad a report, that he, to make his court to the new queen, had offered to restore the service of the Church of Rome. This he felt himself called upon to contradict; and the paper containing his declaration of his firm adherence to the principles of the Reformation, being carried to the council, he was committed to the tower.

When the Christian religion, says Mr. Gilpin, was first preached, the malice of its ene-

nics immediately arose, as if to try and prove it, and seal its truth by the blood of its martyrs; and now, when religion was restored, after so long an age of darkness, the providence of God seemed to direct that it should be purified and proved by persecution. The scaffold was erected, and the flames were kindled, and the hands of Antichrist were again crimsoned with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus.

Cranmer had for his companions in his bonds, Latimer, Ridley, and holy Bradford; and reading, converse, and prayer, in which they enjoyed the Divine presence, made them forget their chains, and they felt, that the darkest dungeon could not exclude the beams of God's countenance, nor could the cruelties of earth, or the malignity of hell, deprive them of the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

After a mock disputation, the Archbishop was condemned and degraded. The Parliament, according to the queen's desire, cancelled the laws that had been made in favour of the Reformation. Cranmer's book on the Sacrament was burnt; when told of it—"Ah!" said he, "they have honoured it more than it deserved; I hear they burnt it with the New Testament."

The man chosen to perform the ceremony of his degradation, in the spirit of refined and fiendlike cruelty, was Thirlby, Bishop of Ely. This man, in Cranmer's better days, had been

honoured with his most intimate friendship; and on none had he conferred greater or more numerous obligations. To make the stroke the heavier upon Cranmer, and to try the firmness of this apostate, the task was committed to him. He encountered it; but some sparks of humanity remained unextinguished by the principles he had espoused. The mild dignity of the primate, though he stood forth in all the mock pageantry of canvas robes, touched his heart. All the past came throbbing into his breast; and a few repentant drops began to trickle down the furrows of his aged cheeks. Cranmer gently exhorted him not to suffer his private feelings to overpower his public ones. At length, one by one, the canvas trappings were taken off, amid the taunts and exultations of Bonner, Bishop of London; and he was attired in a plain frize gown, the common habit of a yeoman at that time, and had what was then called a *townsman's cap* put upon his head; and in this garb he was led back to prison, while Bonner cried after him—"He is no longer now my lord!"

From the hour of his degradation, the conduct of the Popish party towards him was totally changed. Before, the utmost rigour, not to say cruelty, had been used.—Now, on the contrary, marked kindness, attention, and respect, were shewn him: and every means employed to induce him to recant. He was assured that the queen was most anxious to res-

tore him to his former dignities, and that the moment he should conform to the existing order of things in religion, it should be done. This was almost diabolical refinement in cruelty; for nothing could have procured his restoration. "His soul they had damned; his body they were determined to burn; and to complete their triumph, they wanted to blast his reputation." "Lord! what is man!" What persecutions failed to effect, the persuasions and seductions of false friends accomplished.—Cranmer fell!

The writ for his execution was signed before the last of the six papers of recantation was tendered to him! From the moment of his fall, his bosom became a prey to intolerable horrors. "I have denied the faith! I have pierced myself through with many sorrows!" were the melancholy words that seemed to be continually whispered in his ear.

The day fixed on for his execution was the 21st March, 1555. On that day he was brought from prison to St. Mary's Church, where Dr. Cole preached a sermon to a crowded audience; nor was it till, in his sermon, he turned to Cranmer and exhorted him not to despair, on the eve of death, for though he had returned late into the bosom of the Church of Rome, the example of the thief on the cross gave him hope of mercy—that Cranmer had any idea that he was to be put to death!

The state of his feelings was indescribable. An eye-witness, though a Roman Catholic, says --- "It is doleful to describe his behaviour; his sorrowful countenance; his heavy cheer; his face bedewed with tears: sometimes lifting up his eyes to heaven in hope; sometimes casting them down to the earth for shame. He was an image of sorrow. The dolor of his heart burst continually at his eyes in gushes of tears: yet he retained ever a quiet and grave behaviour, which increased the pity in men's hearts, who unfeignedly loved him, hoping it had been his repentance for his transgressions."

When the sermon was concluded the preacher desired the audience to join with him in silent prayers for the unhappy man before them. A solemn stillness pervaded the assembly. Every eye and every hand were lifted up to heaven.

After a solemn pause, Cranmer arose and addressed the multitude, saying—"I had myself intended to desire your prayers: my desires have been anticipated, and I return you all that a dying man can give—my sincere thanks. To your prayers for me let me add my own." He then, with great fervour of devotion, thus addressed the throne of grace;—"O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have mercy on me a miserable sinner. I who have offended heaven and earth more grievously than tongue can express, whither shall I fly for succour? On earth all refuge fails me. Towards heaven I am ashamed to lift my eyes. What shall I then

do? Shall I despair? God forbid. O good God, thou art merciful, and refuseth none who come unto thee for succour. To thee therefore I fly. Before thee I humble myself. My sins are great. Have mercy upon me, O blessed Redeemer, who assumed not a mortal shape for small offences, who died not to atone for venial sins. Accept a penitent heart, though stained with the foulest offences. Have mercy upon me, O God, whose property is always to have mercy. My sins are great; but thy mercy is greater still. O Lord, for Christ's sake, hear me—hear me, O most gracious God." While he thus prayed, the whole crowd caught the fervour, and spontaneously and audibly joined him.

He had, in prison, prepared a paper retracting his recantation, which he intended to publish the first convenient opportunity. Taking this from his bosom, he read as follows:—"It is now, my brethren, no time to dissemble. I stand upon the verge of life—a vast eternity is before me. What my fears are, or what my hopes, it matters not here to unfold. For one action of my life, at least, I am accountable to the world—my late shameful subscription to opinions which are wholly opposite to my real sentiments. Before this congregation I solemnly declare, that the fear of death alone induced me to this ignominious action—that it hath cost me many bitter tears—that in my heart I totally reject the Pope and the doe-

trines of the Church of Rome."—They heard him patiently until this word; and then, in the spirit of the Jewish mob, exclaimed—"Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fitting that he should live."

He was hurried to the stake, with a countenance not now, as before, fallen, and bathed in tears; but lighted up with that heavenly gleam which the peace of God which passeth understanding, enjoyed within, can impart.

When the flames ascended and enveloped him, he thrust into them his right hand, with which he had signed the recantation, exclaiming, "This unworthy right hand! This hand offended." He kept it steadily in the flame, and looked upon it calmly, as if insensible to pain; and at length expired, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

He died in the 67th year of his age.

Cranmer has been made the object of indiscriminate censure by the enemies, and of indiscriminate praises by the friends of the Reformation; but he is worthy of neither. That he was a great and good man no unprejudiced person, acquainted with his history, can hesitate to admit.

He had not much of what is usually called genius; but his mental powers were highly respectable—capable of profound researches rather than of brilliant displays. His industry was astonishing, and to this is to be ascribed his varied and extensive knowledge, in an age

when the facilities for acquiring it were, comparatively, few, and his situation called him to almost incessant activity.

He was frugal in his mode of living, but hospitable; humble and courteous in his demeanour; mild and forgiving in his disposition; open to conviction in his inquiries after truth, and candid and honest in avowing them. The least sign of penitence in an enemy restored him immediately to favour, and Cranmer took the first opportunity of testifying, by some deed of kindness, the sincerity of his reconciliation. When the Archbishop of York was importuning him for a favour unsuccessfully, he said, "Well, my Lord, if I cannot have my suit in one way I will in another. I shall presently do your grace some ill turn; and then, I doubt not, but I can manage so as to gain my request."

The pliancy of his temper led him into errors, over which, when it is considered that a blind submission to the will of princes was considered in those days, among the Christian virtues, and that he had to deal with the most capricious, furious despot that ever swayed the English sceptre—pity will draw a veil, and palliate what cannot be justified. Even for his great crime—his apostacy, are there alleviating circumstances; and, if he fell like Peter, like him he wept—bitterly wept, confessed the Saviour he had denied, and sealed the truth of his confession with his blood.

He published 25 different works; and 11 volumes of his manuscripts still exist.

Authorities—*Strype's Memorials*; *Fox's Martyrology*; *Gilpin's Life of Cranmer*; *Middleton's Biographia Evangelica*; *Brewster's Encyclopedia*, article *Cranmer*.

THE END.

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