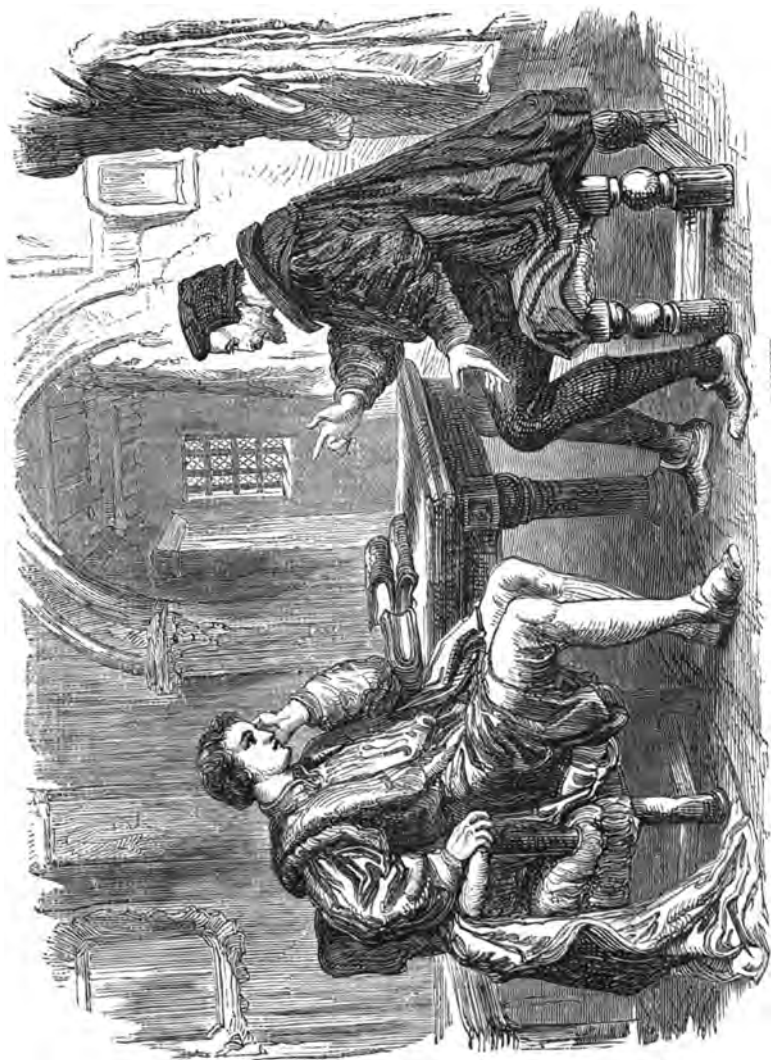




A TALE OF

OLD LONDON



ROGER WHAPLOT AND MASTER BROWNE.

RICHARD HUNNE.

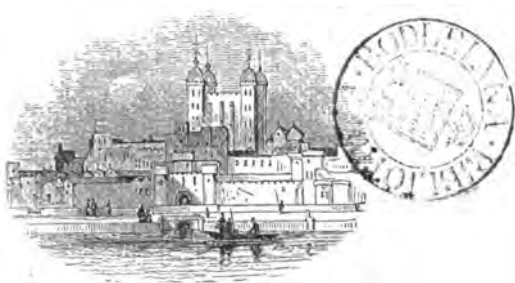
A STORY OF OLD LONDON.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"THE CHRONICLES OF AN OLD MANOR HOUSE," "THE STORY OF A POCKET BIBLE," ETC.



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PREFACE.

IN the full and complete edition of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," the story of Richard Hunne (or Hun) occupies a prominent place, and fills a good number of pages. The following narrative is founded on that true history; and though many simply imaginary details are set down, very great pains have been taken to make every part consistent with the character and conduct and religious views of the murdered citizen, as well as with the true causes of his imprisonment and violent death.

Care has also been exercised in the merely accessory portions of the story, in which are described the manners and customs of English citizens three hundred and sixty, or more, years ago. There was but little difficulty in tracing the localities of the various streets and suburbs of Old London trodden by the *dramatis personæ* of our narrative, and the reader will be interested in the fac-simile of a very curious old map of the city and neighbourhood as it existed before the Great Fire, which swept away so large a part of it.

In that fire perished the Cathedral Church of St. Paul's, with the Lollards' Tower spoken of in this history, and which must not be confounded with the old tower in Lambeth Palace, bearing the same ill-omened name. At the same time were consumed many

records, as well as many till then standing witnesses, of guilt and infamy. And not of guilt and infamy alone, but records and witnesses also of "the patience and the faith of the saints." Many such, however, still remain to teach us gratitude to God for mercies now enjoyed, and to incite us to be followers of those who now inherit the promises made to those who endure and overcome "through the blood of the Lamb."

Having faithfully, according to our lights, represented Richard Hunne as a *professed* Roman Catholic, even down to the day of his death, it may seem that the hatred and malice manifested against him by his persecutors and slayers, either was madly mistaken and misplaced, or that it has been exaggerated in the story. It is not so, however; and little knowledge of men, in relation to religion, is required to show us that wherever true faith in Christ is felt and exercised, and love to Him shown, it is sure to call forth the bitter dislike and opposition of the enemies of the Saviour, although both friend and enemy may be called by the same distinctive name, may worship (outwardly) in the same earthly courts, or may even sit in the same pew.

The writer has, in the body of this volume, given his grounds for representing King Henry the Eighth in a fairer light in his younger days than that in which we are accustomed to look back upon him through the haze of history. The eighth Henry is not the only one, alas! of whom it might be said, as it was of that monarch, that, had he but died when young, his memory would have been embalmed in a nation's tears.

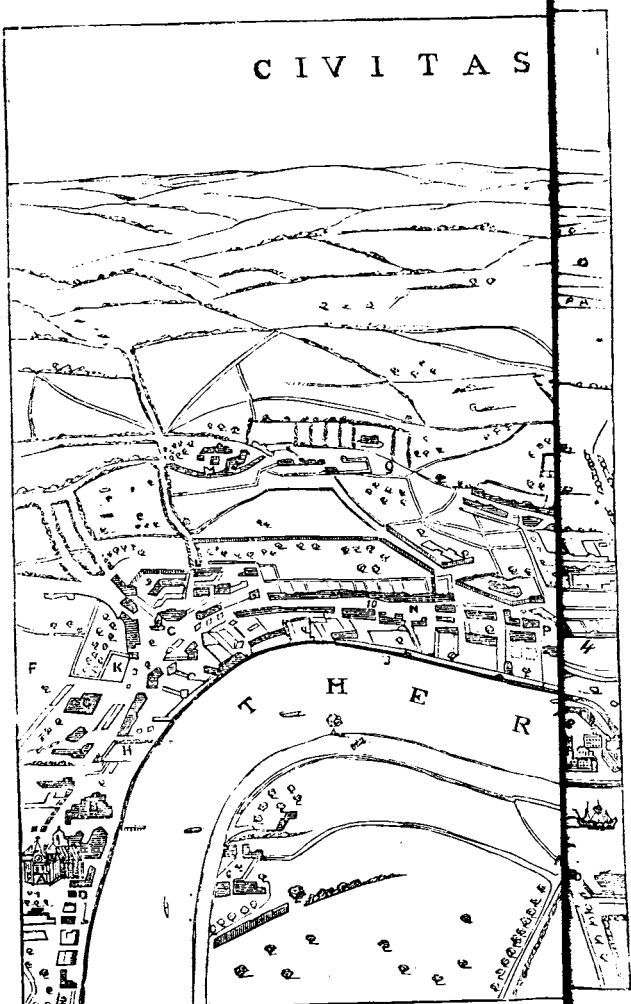


CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—IN THE DAYS OF HENRY VIII.	1
II.—OLD LONDON ; AND SOME SCENES IN “FINSBURIE FYELDE” . . .	8
III.—THE KING AND THE CONSTABLE	17
IV.—THE LONDON CITIZEN AND HIS GUEST	24
V.—MASTER JOHN BROWNE’S PERSONAL NARRATIVE BEGUN.	31
VI.—MASTER BROWNE’S PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONCLUDED	39
VII.—CLEARING THE GROUND	46
VIII.—RICHARD HUNNE AND HIS HOUSEHOLD	51
IX.—HALF AN HOUR IN MASTER HUNNE’S SHOP.	63
X.—MASTER HUNNE RECEIVES A GUEST	69
XI.—HALF AN HOUR’S CONTROVERSY	72
XII.—MISTRESS HUNNE HEARS UNPLEASANT NEWS	78
XIII.—JOAN BAKER GETS INTO TROUBLE.	86
XIV.—HOW MISTRESS HUNNE WAS BROUGHT TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH	93
XV.—MISTRESS HUNNE IS ENCOURAGED.	99
XVI.—CONSPIRACY	107
XVII.—MASTER ROGER WHAPLOT OBTAINS HIS DEAREST EARTHLY WISH. .	118

CHAP.	PAGE
XVIII.—LITTLE STEPHEN	122
XIX.—JOHN BROWNE'S LAST VISIT TO LONDON	128
XX.—THE GRAVESEND BARGE	137
XXI.—A SORROWFUL ENDING TO A JOYOUS DAY	141
XXII.—THOMAS DRYFIELD, CLERK	148
XXIII.—CANTERBURY PILGRIMS	153
XXIV.—AT CANTERBURY. NEAR WHITSUNTIDE	161
XXV.—AT ASHFORD IN KENT	166
XXVI.—MASTER JOHN BROWNE'S FIERY MARTYRDOM	172
XXVII.—ANTIQUARIAN JOTTINGS.	183
XXVIII.—RICHARD HUNNE AND HIS LAWYER.	193
XXIX.—IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD	199
XXX.—THE BEGINNING OF THE END	203
XXXI.—ROUND THE CONDUIT IN CHEAPSIDE.	212
XXXII.—THE LOLLARDS' TOWER	216
XXXIII.—THE DEAN AND THE DRAPER	222
XXXIV.—A DAY AT WINDSOR.	226
XXXV.—IN THE BISHOP OF LONDON'S PALACE, AT FULHAM	234
XXXVI.—WHAT HAPPENED ON THE THIRD OF DECEMBER, 1514	238
XXXVII.—TWO SCENES IN OLD LONDON	249
XXXVIII.—AND LAST	257

CIVITAS



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|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|
| A Westminster Abby. | F St. James's Parke. | J Holborne Bridge. | ne. |
| B St. Margaret's. | G Cock Pit. | K Spring Garden. | rand. |
| C Charing Crosse. | H Queen's Garden. | L St. Martin's Church. | ample. |
| D Parliament House. | I Fleete Strete. | M St. Giles's Church. | Well. |

RICHARD HUNNE.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE DAYS OF HENRY VIII.

It is profitable, sometimes, to look back upon the past, and, from the records of history, to draw motives for gratitude for present mercies, although by doing so we may rather rudely dispel the illusion which would represent the former days as being better than these.

The story we have to tell, in the following chapters, is, in all its true features, one of those valuable waymarks of the past which bring home to our feelings and sympathies the conviction of how much we owe, under God, to those ancestors of ours who bravely stood up for right against might when combined with wrong, and who bought for us, with their groans and tears and blood, the goodly heritage of civil and religious freedom which has fallen to our happier lot.

The incidents to be narrated came to pass about three centuries and a half ago, when, as our readers need scarcely be informed, the church of Rome, as the established church in England, demanded the universal obedience of the people. What was thus demanded was apparently yielded: nor is this to be much wondered at; for

besides having the stamp of earthly authority, and the support of temporal power, and being enforced by terrible pains and penalties, it was a comfortable faith for worldly-minded men—indulgent to depraved human nature, and captivating to the bodily senses. It was (and is) a religion of forms and ceremonies, of ritualistic observances, in which the natural emotions of admiration and tenderness and awe were excited; but in which it was indifferent (or seemed to be) whether or not the spiritual affections had any share. Thus it suited all who, unwilling to make the complete surrender of themselves to God, required by the gospel of Christ, sought to work out for themselves, or to have worked out for them by priestly efficacy and favour, a way to heaven.

A faith, or religion, thus recommended, is sure to be popular; but it would be a mistake to suppose that it was universal in its dominion over the minds of those who were exposed to its blandishments, and liable to its curses. As in the days of Ahab, king of Israel, and of his abandoned queen, when the prophet Elijah—faithful to his God—despondingly cried, “I, I only am left; and they seek my life, to take it away;” and the reply came to him from Israel’s Jehovah, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him;” so in England, in its days of densest spiritual ignorance and destitution, there were some who mourned over the iniquities of a corrupt and corrupting church, and sought their souls’ salvation in God’s own appointed and only way. Besides these more secret disciples—these hidden ones of the Lord—there had, from time to time, arisen, even from the bosom of the church itself, and from the ranks of the clergy, men who not only saw and felt their country’s need of a purer and more evangelical faith than that taught by the Romish or papal church, but who, more or less, boldly declared that need, and plainly taught the way of life.

In the forefront of these divinely enlightened men was Bradwardine,* whose piety and attainments appear evident in his writings, and are remarkable in contrast with the spiritual darkness with which he was surrounded, and who has fitly been called "the morning star of the Reformation." Following closely after him was John Wycliffe, who being, partly by Bradwardine's means, brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel, was stirred up and filled with lively concern for the souls of those around him, who were perishing for lack of knowledge. It does not come within the range of this narrative to sketch, even ever so slightly, the plans he adopted for enlightening his countrymen; it must be sufficient to remind the reader that, while bringing down upon himself the stormy indignation of the church of which he was a priest, he was preserved, by God's providence, from its utmost malice, and was strengthened to complete the great work of translating the Scriptures into his native tongue, and in spreading written copies of them (in part or in whole), together with his gospel tracts, broadcast over England.

What effect was produced by these efforts is well known in history. As the word of God spread, and the preaching of that word by the mouths of Wycliffe's travelling agents, or "poor priests" as they were called, was boldly pushed forward, believers increased and multiplied, so that in the century and a quarter which had elapsed between the date of Wycliffe's death and the accession of Henry VIII.—and before the word "Protestant" was

* Bradwardine was born in the reign of Edward I. He attended Edward III. in his French wars, and often preached before the army. We are told that "he made it his business to calm and mitigate the fierceness of his master's temper when he saw him either excited by warlike rage, or improperly flushed with the advantages of victory." He was afterwards made archbishop of Canterbury, but died in 1349—a few weeks after his consecration. The writings of Bradwardine were adapted for the scholar, not for the mass of the people; but they were powerful instruments of good. They influenced scholars. Wycliffe and his associates came forth, and spoke to the hearts and feelings of the community at large.

known—there was a cheering effusion of gospel light all over the land; dim, indeed, at its commencement, and overclouded, but sufficient to foretell the bright rising which was to follow. The day of reformation had dawned; and the reformers, with the reformed, were called Lollards.

The most cursory and careless reader of history need scarcely be told that it was during the period just mentioned that the art of printing was introduced into England. The first English book ever printed was not forty years old when (in 1509) the reign of the eighth Henry commenced. The “craft and mystery” had spread, however; and though no Bibles had appeared in type—the printing of an English version of the Scripture being, indeed, expressly forbidden, under the pain of the greater excommunication—yet the gradual introduction and multiplication of books gave, undoubtedly, an impetus to knowledge; and this increased knowledge was, at any rate, favourable to the teachings and belief of those who were called Lollards,—in other words, those who were seeking at one and the same time for Divine truth, and for deliverance from the errors and the spiritual tyranny of the Romish church and her priests.

The progress of enlightenment was slow, doubtless. Even among those who embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and received the truth as it is in Jesus, there was much clinging to some of the errors which had been the growth of centuries, and an adherence to practices which a larger amount of scriptural knowledge would have rejected, but which, by long usage, had become a kind of religious second nature. It is equally certain that there was (and not without cause) a slavish dread of the terrific powers wielded by the Romish priesthood, and the thunderbolts of papal wrath which were ready to be launched with unerring aim and merciless severity against those whom she called heretics. Thus, while there was a leaven—the leaven of Divine truth—put into the

general heart and mind of the people, it was secretly working, and its full effects were not seen until after many days.

Yet it was not so secretly fermenting that no manifestations of it were made even then—so made that priests and monks and friars, and Romish ecclesiastics in general, were not only troubled, but began to furbish up their carnal weapons of cruelty. Not so secretly, either, but that some bolder spirits among the believers, more or less unshrinkingly, avowed their faith, and counted not their lives dear unto them for the love they bore to their Saviour God, and for the testimony of his word. Was there not William Sawtre, once a priest, but afterwards degraded from his office and delivered over to the arm of civil power to be dealt with favourably because he had said that he would not worship the cross on which Christ suffered, but Christ only, who suffered on the cross; and who was accordingly chained to a stake in the city of London, and there burnt to death, thus being the first English martyr who suffered death for opposing the abominations of popery? And was there not John Badby, the tailor, who, for maintaining that, after the sacramental words spoken by the priest to make the body of Christ, the material bread remains upon the altar as in the beginning, neither is it turned into the very body of Christ, for all the sacramental words that ever were spoken by priest, was placed in a barrel, and bound with chains to a stake in Smithfield, and there suffered horrible death by fire, the spirit of Christ enabling him to subdue the fury, rage, and power of the world? Were there not also John Ashton, a layman, and William Thorpe, a priest, who were put into noisome dungeons, and there died in bodily misery, but in spiritual triumph, because they contended valiantly for the faith once delivered to the saints? There, too, was Sir John Oldcastle, commonly called Lord Cobham, who was hung in chains over a slow fire, and thus perished in unutterable bodily torment for being a rank Lollard, and for declaring,

among other things, that he would worship no wooden cross, for that our salvation came by no material cross, but by Him who died thereon; and for saying also that every man is a pilgrim to bliss or to woe, and that he who knows not God, and keeps not his commandments, will be lost eternally, though he goes on all the pilgrimages in the world; while those who know the will of God, and keep it, will be saved, though they never went on any pilgrimage, as men go to Canterbury, or Rome, or other places.*

Then there were John Claydon, the furrier; and Richard Turning, the baker; and William Taylor, a priest; and William White, also a priest; and John Goose; and many others who suffered joyfully, not merely the spoiling of their goods, but the destruction of their mortal frames, "not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." And there was Joan Boughton, an honourable widow, of good family and estate, fourscore years old and upwards,—the first female martyr burned in England;—who, notwithstanding her great age and its weaknesses, wavered not from the truth, and shrunk not when she was told that she should be burned; and who, when in the midst of the flames, cried to God to take her soul into his holy hands.

* Sawtre suffered martyrdom in 1401, in the reign of Henry iv.; Badby in 1409, in the same reign; Lord Cobham in 1417, in the reign of Henry v. Cobham's nominal crime was rebellion, his real offence was Lollardism. One scene in his painfully interesting trial may be given in this note. It took place at the Dominican convent on Ludgate. After being exposed to the taunts and insults of a rabble of monks and friars, Lord Cobham was again reminded of the accusations against him, and again offered absolution if he submitted and desired it. "Nay," said he, "forsooth I will not, for I never yet trespassed against you, and therefore I will not do it." And then, kneeling down on the pavement, holding up his hands towards heaven, he said, "I confess myself here unto THEE, my eternal, living God, that in my frail youth I offended thee, O Lord, most grievously, by pride, wrath, covetousness, lust, and intemperance. Many men have I injured in mine anger, and done other horrible sins. Good Lord, I ask Thee, have mercy!" He then stood up, and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed with a loud voice, "Lo, good people, lo; for breaking of God's law and his great commandments these men never yet cursed me, but for their own laws and traditions most cruelly do they handle me and other men. Therefore both they and their laws, according to the promise of God, shall be utterly destroyed."

There was William Tylsworth, also, who was burned at the stake for what was then called heresy, but which we now know to be the gospel of Christ; and whose only daughter was compelled to set fire to the pile which consumed him. And one Roberts, a miller of Buckinghamshire, who was also put to death in like manner; and Lawrence Ghest, who was burned at Salisbury, and whose wife and seven children were brought before him and made to witness his dying agonies: and there was Thomas Chase of Amersham, who was strangled in prison after enduring much cruel treatment, and of whom his persecutors and murderers tried to make people believe that he had committed suicide.*

These are but a few of those courageous confessors of Christ and his gospel who, in the times immediately preceding those of the following narrative, were "appointed unto death," and "made spectacles unto the world, and to angels and to men," because, both by word and deed, they testified against the corruptions and idolatries and blasphemies of the church of Rome. Sufficient these worthy examples to show what our Lord meant when he said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword;" and to prove that, in those dark days of papal supremacy, there was a little band—a little band? nay, a noble army—of Christian heroes, to whom God gave grace thus to lay the foundation of our present liberties (both civil and religious) at the expense of their own liberties and lives. For Christ's sake they lost their lives, truly: but, in losing, they saved them; for—

"Their eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave:
They saw their Master in the sky,
And called on him to save.

* Many others suffered similar persecutions in the diocese of Norwich alone, between the years 1424 and 1431. Upwards of one hundred and twenty individuals are mentioned by name in the registers of the diocese, who were apprehended and examined upon suspicion of heresy. And if these things took place in one corner of England, we may be sure that similar scenes occurred elsewhere, though the particulars may be lost.

Like him, with pardon on their tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
They prayed for them that did the wrong.
— *Who follows in their train ?*

A noble army ! men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain.
O God ! to us may grace be given
To follow in their train !"

Our introduction has exceeded its prescribed limits ; but it will have answered its intended purpose if it has transported the thoughts and sympathies of the reader back to those past centuries and bygone scenes of our national history, of which in the succeeding chapters we shall be called upon to treat.

CHAPTER II

OLD LONDON ; AND SOME SCENES IN " FINSBURIE FYELDE."

IN the curious old map of London, which forms our frontispiece, is given a bird's-eye view of the merchant city as it appeared in the reign of the eighth Henry and his immediate successors, and before the great fire of 1666 had laid in ashes the whole capital from the Tower in the east to the Temple in the west. In rebuilding the city, the general outline of the streets was preserved ; but we have only a faint idea of the quaint, old-fashioned, and picturesque, but very inconvenient and awkward, houses of which those streets were generally composed. The streets, moreover, which are none too wide in the present day, were, before that catastrophe, so

narrow as to intercept the light, and to enable the dwellers in the overhanging upper stories on the opposite sides of some of the roadways to hold quiet conversation, if not to shake hands, from their respective casements. Among the larger public edifices which were destroyed by this fire was the cathedral of St. Paul's, in a part of which some of the scenes in our narrative will be laid.

The most noticeable feature in our old map, however, is the limited area of the London of three hundred years ago. As will be seen, it was bounded on the south by the Thames, and on the north by the city wall, which was then perfect; on the east, the closely packed up streets extended no farther than the Tower; and westward, the abbey of Westminster and the village of Charing were separated from London by green meadows and gardens: so that our ancestors could easily escape into the country by less than half an hour's gentle walking even from the heart of the city. What is now busy Oxford Street was then a quiet and even lonely country road; Holborn had its roadside hedges; Clerkenwell and St. Giles' were surrounded by fields; and Finsbury was a broad common.

The habits and customs of London citizens have undergone since then as important changes as the city of their habitation. We shall not, however, attempt to describe these changes by contrasting the times of Henry the Eighth with those of Victoria, except as they may be incidentally shown in the natural progress of our story, which shall suffer no further delay.

It was on a fine spring afternoon in 1510 that a young man in the holiday attire of a trader might have been seen wending his way from busy Chepeyde through the narrow pass of Mylke Street into the scarcely wider thoroughfare of Lothbury, whence, taking a sharp turn to the left, he entered Coleman Street, and walked on at a smart pace till he reached London Wall. Then, turning to the right, a score or two paces brought him to the open archway of Moorgate, which was surmounted by a fortalice

flanked by castellated towers. Passing under the Norman arch, the wayfarer was at once in the country: a broad avenue was before him, along which he proceeded until he reached a turnstile, which admitted him into a large expanse of well-trodden grass-land, then known as Finsburie Fyelde. Here he came to a pause, and surveyed for a few moments the lively scene which presented itself to his view.

It was a public holiday; one of those saints' days that, in the times of which we are writing, gave to tradesmen and artizans a breathing space in the round of their everyday employments, and, after exacting their presence at an early mass, sent them later in the day to seek recreation in any manner that best suited their means or their dispositions. A goodly number of citizens, old and young, and of both sexes, had flocked to the "fyelde," and were there occupying themselves in various ways. A number of elderly and more sedate citizens, with their wives, were quietly walking to and fro, and amusing themselves with witnessing the sports of the younger part of the community. As, for instance, in one plot of the field or common, lads and lasses were going through the mazes of a rustic dance to the music of a pipe and tabor, performed upon by a wandering minstrel; in another place, a crowd had collected round a party of jugglers and tumblers, who were exhibiting their feats of dexterity, accompanied by a great deal of vulgar and indecent buffoonery, apparently to the vast delight of numerous spectators, who rewarded their exertions by dropping small contributions of money into the wooden bowl which, from time to time, was held out to them by a little child, one of the performers. Elsewhere, a kind of miracle play was being acted on a low stage in the open air by half-a-dozen or more men and boys, who personated some Old Testament scene, in which Satan maintained a conspicuous part, and never failed to win the applause of his audience when he broke out into open profanity.

All these and other like sports, however, occupied but a portion of the ground, the other part of it being set apart for the more serious exercise of archery. Here, stationed at butts or targets, some two or three hundred yards apart, stood a score or two of young men, who were yielding obedience to the stringent law which enjoined that every boy over seven years of age, and every man under sixty, should provide himself, or be provided by his friends, with long-bow and shafts; and that on Sundays and holidays all able-bodied men should appear in the field to employ their leisure hours, "as valyant Englishmen ought to do," in the noble exercise of shooting.

Towards this archery ground the young man, whom we have accompanied in his walk through the city, presently bent his steps. He, like the rest of the company whom he joined, was armed with his six-foot bow and proper complement of arrows; and his approach was hailed with approving shouts, which denoted him to be an agreeable addition to their band of brotherhood.

"You are late, Roger Whapplot," said one who appeared to be the leader, "and the barber's apprentice has overtopped your last week's score; you will have to put out your best skill to keep your standing against him."

"He is welcome to the honour, if he can maintain it; and yet, for the credit of Chepe, I must do my best," replied the young man quietly, as he prepared to string his bow.

"Roger is himself unstrung, and needs stringing, methinks," observed one of the archers, laughingly; adding, "I fear me the fair Margaret of Watling Street has proved unkind or coy."

"And if it be so," returned the captain, "there are as good fish in the sea as were ever brought to land."

"Nay," said Whapplot, "trouble not yourselves about these matters, my masters." And saying this, he let fly a shaft which

shrilly whistled through the air, and was the next moment quivering near the centre of the target, while loud cries of "A white—a white," proclaimed the success of his first shot.

Among the spectators surrounding the butt at which the bowmen were then stationed, was a little group standing somewhat apart from the rest, the most prominent member of which was a tall, stout young man, whose age might be some twenty or one-and-twenty years, and whose countenance indicated a kind of good-humoured satisfaction with himself and all his surroundings, although a close observer might have detected, in the form of his full-featured countenance, some marks of early sensuality, and in his small, half-closed eyes an unsatisfactory sinister gleam, which might denote a tendency to pitilessness, if the spirit within should be roused. Save that he wore a broad gold coin, called a "bonnet piece," on his head-gear, this spectator was in no way distinguishable in attire from those who immediately surrounded him, and who were all somewhat more elaborately clad, according to the fashions of the day, than the archers whose skill they were witnessing. Hitherto they had attracted no especial notice; but now that the most successful hit had been made, the person we have described stepped forward, and, addressing the archer, asked permission, in smooth and courteous tones, to try his skill. The next moment the bow was in his hands.

"You use the light-flight arrows, I see," said he, as he received a feathered shaft from the young citizen; "is not this contrary to the statute?"*

"Here is a war arrow at your service, sir," returned Roger Whapplot, making the exchange; "but methinks you have a strong arm if you can send it so far."

* It was not contrary to the statute then; but subsequently it was enacted that no person above the age of twenty-four should shoot with the light-flight arrow at a distance under two hundred and twenty yards. Up to this distance, therefore, the heavy war arrow was used.

"I will try, however," said the stranger. And, fitting the heavy arrow to the string, he bent the bow, and after a momentary pause the dangerous shaft was speeding its way with so true an aim that it struck the butt a full inch nearer to the centre of the white than its predecessor.

The shouts of applause were redoubled; for albeit the successful archer was unknown to the band, they admired his skill, though used to the discomfiture of one of themselves.

"Will you be pleased to try another shot, fair sir?" said he who appeared to be their captain, as he proffered a second arrow. The stranger declined the honour, however, remarking, smilingly, that it was scarcely fair to call upon him to compete with himself, modestly adding that his was a chance hit, and that a second attempt would only show his want of skill. Saying this, he returned to his friends, and slowly walked away some little distance from the butts.

Leaving the archers to continue their practice, we also retire in an opposite direction, and bend our thoughts to another part of the field, where, at a later hour in the evening, a bare-footed begging friar was vehemently addressing an attentive auditory on the subject of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, which doctrine he vindicated against the assaults of the Black Friars of the order of St. Dominic, who, as was well known, held the opposite opinion. The main object of his present address, however, was to obtain alms for his monastery; and as an encouragement to his hearers to give largely, he exhibited, among other relics which he professed to have brought with him from some distant and painful pilgrimage, a bag or purse made, as he avouched, from the skirt of a coat once worn by Joseph of Arimathea, and which, as the speaker also declared, possessed the miraculous quality that whosoever dropped a coin therein, of whatever value, should, on the morrow, have it returned with sevenfold increase.

"And you are well assured of the truth of this, good master friar?" was uttered interrogatively by a man of rather small stature, in a dark frieze doublet and hose, with an overcoat of lighter material. He seemed to be endowed with great vivacity; and from under a pair of bushy dark eyebrows, bright twinkling eyes glanced piercingly at the friar. Judging from the smile on his upper lip, a general observer would have set him down as a pleasant good-humoured companion; but at this present time the smile bespoke more of satire and scorn than of mental enjoyment. "Are you well assured of the truth of this?" he asked again, quickly.

"It is not for a moment to be doubted; therefore bring hither your groats, good man, and receive the blessing." But the "good man" stood still in the little crowd. "Tell me," he said, "does the blessing descend alike upon all? Be there no exceptions?"

"None whatever," replied the friar, confidently. "Like the rains of heaven, it descends equally on all. Why should you doubt it?"

"Nay, I doubt not that," said the bold questioner, with a more distinct smile on his upper lip. Then he added, "But, methinks, as it is so, you yourself, master friar, have the instrument in your own hands for richly endowing your house. Put but your own groats and nobles, and those of your fellows, into the purse to-day, and to-morrow you will have sevenfold; and so go on from day to day so long as it pleases you; but spare us poor commons our hard-earned pence. And therein, too, will you set us a worthy example of faith, which, methinks, is not unneeded."

Thus far the man was permitted to proceed; and then arose a great tumult. Some around him, indeed, laughed, and seemed to approve of what he had said; but the greater number, led on by the begging friar, cried out that the man was a Lollard and a heretic and a blasphemer; and some sturdy fellows, among whom was a constable or headborough, began roughly to set upon him to drag him before the nearest magistrate, as they said, for his words



ON FINSBURIE FYELDE.

spoken against the miracles of holy church. The captured man made at first some little resistance; but seeing that this was vain, he submitted himself quietly enough to his captors, who, accompanied by a noisy throng, were some for inflicting on him a present personal chastisement and letting him go, while others held to their first declared intention of making the heretic (as they persisted in calling him) smart more effectually under the lash of the law, for his rashness and folly and evident scorn of the wonder-working rag of an old coat.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING AND THE CONSTABLE.

THE archers, having completed their evening's exercise, had already unstrung their bows, and were collecting and apportioning their arrows, when the throng which was somewhat tumultuously accompanying the captive sceptic passed by. Curiosity being excited, a few words of explanation put before those who inquired the nature of the offence the man had committed.

"A small offence surely," said the captain of the bowmen; "for methinks if all disbelievers in such like miracles are to be dealt with by law, we shall soon need more jails and whipping-posts. Let the silly man go."

"Nay, but," said the informant, "he has not only laughed at the miracle promised (which, in truth, no one believes); but he was before heard to speak bold and blasphemous words against the holy Virgin,—saying that she was a sinner like all other women, and needed a Saviour as much as any. And there are witnesses here

who can testify to this. Moreover, the man is known to one here present as being a relapsed heretic and Lollard, to whom no mercy ought to be shown."

"If that be the case, away with him;—but who is the man?"

"His name they say is John Browne, who, three years ago, was made to carry a fagot in procession at Canterbury, and so saved himself from burning. By good right he ought now to be wearing that same token on his coat; but, instead of this, he has set the law at naught, and goes about spreading the foul doctrines he once pretended to renounce."*

"Fie upon him then!" said the captain; and Roger Whapplot, who was standing by, asked, with some appearance of interest,—

"What say you, that the man's name is Browne? Is he from Ashford, in Kent?"

"Like enough, sir archer, if he be the man they tell of," answered the other, passing on.

"If it be he, I will follow and see the upshot of it," muttered Roger to himself; and then, placing his arrows securely in his belt, he mingled with the crowd, which just at that moment had come

* This bearing and wearing of the fagot was a punishment not unfrequently inflicted on persons convicted of holding erroneous or heretical opinions. From the registry of archbishop Warham (of Canterbury), we learn that on the 2nd of May, 1511, eight men and four women, mostly inhabitants of Tenterden, were summoned before that prelate, being accused of holding the following opinions:—

1. That in the sacrament of the altar there is not the body of Christ, but simple bread only. 2. That baptism and confirmation are not necessary for the salvation of the soul. 3. That confession of sins ought not to be made to a priest. 4. That there is no more power given by God to a priest than to a layman.

There were also other articles against extreme unction, pilgrimages, worshipping of images, prayers to saints, and various minor points, which the accused were charged with holding. They were compelled to abjure these doctrines, and to make oath that they would inform against all others who might hold similar opinions. They were brought before the court again on the 5th of May, and sentenced to wear the badge of a fagot in flames during their lives, or till pardoned; and in processions at Canterbury cathedral, and at their own parish churches, they were to carry a fagot on their shoulders, as an acknowledgment that they had deserved burning.

to a standstill, and was clustering round the prisoner and his captors. Pressing into the midst of the throng, the young archer found himself in the presence of the stout and tall stranger who had triumphed over him with his own weapon; and who was inquiring, with an air of some authority, what was about to be done with the man in custody, and what was his offence.

To this, the constable, who was apparently a vain fellow, elated with the dignity of his office, and not disposed to be questioned in its exercise,—though probably somewhat awed by the imposing stature and authoritative mien and superior dress of the questioner,—returned sullenly that the prisoner was a heretic who had spoken against the church; and that if more was wished to be known, the stranger had better seek elsewhere for information, as he (the constable and king's servant) did not choose to be interrupted in the execution of his office.

At this the inquirer smiled; and one who was in his train stepped up to the constable and whispered a few words in his ear. Whatever these words were, they produced a strange effect. The colour fled from the man's lips, and without more ado he fell on his knees, muttering tremblingly a prayer for pardon for his rude speech.

"Rise, knave, and let me know what the man has done," said the person thus sued to, and who seemed more amused than offended.

"May it please your highness," stammered the man, who, however, still continued kneeling;—"I am your highness' humble servant."

"So it seems," said the stranger; "but I asked you not of yourself; but of this prisoner. Good people," added he, looking round; "have none of you a tongue?"

They had tongues assuredly, for the next moment a shout was raised, of loyal greeting to King Henry, while every cap was waved

in the air. For, as soon as the word "highness" was spoken, those who heard it whispered, "He must be the king;" and wondered that they had not made the discovery without such a key. Roger Whapplot, especially—who had witnessed the coronation of Henry the Eighth and his queen in the previous year—was amazed at the stupidity which had failed at once to recognise, in his tall and athletic competitor of an hour ago, the young monarch who had gained the affection of his subjects in general, and of London citizens in particular, by his frank and jovial bearing; and by his fondness for manly sports, in the exercise of which he was known frequently to mingle almost indiscriminately with the common people.

This being the general feeling of admiration for the youthful king, no wonder that the shouts of the jubilant throng were renewed, and that they were repeated again and again by hundreds of other citizens who had flocked to the spot, and learned the cause of this peaceful tumult. No wonder, either, that the young monarch looked around him with gratified pride while he courteously acknowledged these greetings, in the first outbursts of which the captive Lollard (if Lollard he were) was forgotten. At length, however, he was brought to the young king's remembrance by his seeing the crestfallen constable still kneeling before him with a look of whimsical uncertainty on his upturned features.

"Rise, good fellow," said Henry; "and tell me, if you can, what this poor caitiff has done to place himself in your valorous custody."

"He has done naught as yet, your highness," said the constable humbly, as he slowly rose from his knees; "but he has spoken very parlous words against a holy friar, and against church miracles;—and they say he is a Lollard."

"Ho, ho! sits the wind in that quarter? A Lollard! Let me look upon him. And what have you to say for yourself, sir Lollard?" demanded the king, with mock gravity.



THE KING AND THE CONSTABLE.

"Only this, your highness," replied Browne respectfully, but boldly; "that I advised the holy man to have faith in the nostrum which he so freely commended to others.

"And not bad advice either," said Henry, who seemed disposed to good nature; "so let the man go for this time, master constable. Only be advised, you knave"—this to the liberated man—"not to let your tongue wag too freely against holy churchmen, who," he added in a somewhat lower tone, "are sometimes more ready to give advice than to take it."

Then looking around him, the young king espied Roger Whapplot, who was in the inner circle, and whose cheers had been among the loudest of the crowd; and to whom he now addressed himself:

"So, sir archer; you are here! I owe you something for the use of your bow;—take this,"—he removed his bonnet, and unlooped from it the gold coin with which it had been ornamented, and handed it to the gratified citizen,—“wear this in memory of our friendly contest; and, hark you! be body-guard to this poor varlet out of the crowd, which, methinks, looks angrily upon him; and say that it is the king's pleasure that he should pass unmolested."

Saying this, Henry turned to his companions, who made way for him through his obedient subjects. The crowd followed, however, at a respectful distance, filling the air with acclamations until the royal party, who had put on plain disguises for the occasion, were seen to mount their horses, which had been left with attendant grooms on the outskirts of the common.*

* Having ventured to introduce Henry VIII. as a sort of modern Haroun al Raschid, it may be as well to remind the reader that, in his younger days, the English king made himself extremely popular by the freedom with which he entered into the enjoyments and sports of the common people. Take the following account as an example:—"In the use of the old English long-bow, his grace shot as strong and as great a length as any of his guard. On May-day, his grace being young and willing not to be idle, rose in the morning very early to fetch may, or green boughs, himself fresh and richly apparelled.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE LONDON CITIZEN AND HIS GUEST.

"You had nearly brought yourself to sorrow by your bold speeches, Master Browne," said the younger man to the elder, when they found themselves standing alone.

"Ha! How know you that my name is Browne?" asked the other quickly.

"From having heard it said, before I saw you, that the man taken prisoner was one John Browne. And now that I see you, I remember you well, though you may have no present knowledge of me. But, as it please you, we will move towards the city. Remember I have you in charge," said the archer, with a pleasant laugh.

"I seem to have fallen into more friendly hands than those I

In these mayings, queen Catherine sometimes accompanied her active consort; and very harmless bands of archers shot their flights at the command of Robin Hood, their chief; and the courteous outlaw feasted the gallant company in green arbours, decked with flowers. When the king entered the lists to joust, and won the prize which the queen bestowed, all young persons highly praised; but the ancient fathers much doubted, considering the tender youth of the king, and divers chances of horse and armour. They fain would have him a looker-on, rather than a doer. It was not, however, in the disposition of the king to be a looker-on."

Another account tells us that Henry "zealously promoted the cultivation of archery. He instituted a guild of archers, of which he appointed a master and other officers, granting them the right of shooting in certain parts of the city and suburbs." All this is, doubtless, a little at variance with the character of Henry VIII. in his later years, who was then known and feared as a voluptuous, and selfish, and self-indulgent tyrant. But it was with him, eminently, as it is, more or less, with all who obey not the gospel of Christ, and who "wax worse and worse," as age grows upon them: so that (to use the language of one of the historians of his reign) "he fell at last into such violent courses as derogated not a little from those natural virtues which at first made him one of the most renowned princes of Christendom."—*Lord Herbert of Cherbury.*

have just escaped," remarked Master Browne, as he moved on by Roger Whapplot's side; "though, as you say, I have no present knowledge of you—no, nor past either. May I ask you when we have before met?"

"The when was ten years ago: I was but a stripling then—a poor orphan boy at Ashford college-school.* The place where was in your garden orchard, which, I grieve to say, I joined with other bad boys in robbing."

"That was no uncommon thing in those days," rejoined John Browne, with a smile; "and in that matter the times be not much mended, if any."

"I am sorry to hear it," continued Roger; "for, as you say, it was no uncommon thing then. But it was an uncommon thing which happened to me the last time I sinned in that fashion, when you, Master Browne, caught me in the act, and instead of fustigating me, as I richly deserved, you led me by the hand into your kitchen, and there filled my pocket with choice apples, after kindly talking to me about my sin—telling me, moreover, that I might call on you any holiday, and you would supply me with apples for my eating, so long as you had any in your loft."

"I remember that occurrence truly. But can it be that you, fair sir, are that whey-faced boy on whom I took compassion because of his weakness, and who pleaded that he had neither father nor mother to teach him to do right?"

"I am, indeed, that boy; and I have never forgotten your fatherly kindness, Master Browne. Nay, more; I have longed to requite it; and when I heard your name by chance mentioned just now, I said within myself that I would, if need were, hazard my

* "There was at this towne of Ashforde a faire college, consisting of a prebendarie, as head, and of certain priestes and choristes, as members; the which was founded by Sir Fogge, a knight of this shyre, and controller of the household to King Edward the Fourth."—*Lambard's History of Kent*.

safety to secure yours. Therefore I pressed into the crowd. But my poor help was not needed."

"I am none the less indebted to you for your good meaning," said Browne; "and I thank you heartily for it."

"There was another reason why I desired to do as much as in me lay on your behalf," continued Whapplot, hesitatingly, and speaking low; "if, as I judge from some few words spoken, you, Master Browne, have received the true evangel, and were even now ready to testify against the lying vanities of Rome."

A sudden radiance beamed in the countenance of the young man's companion when these words were spoken, and he grasped the speaker's hand affectionately.

"And hath that same blessed Word been thy teacher?" he asked.

"Yes, truly," was the reply; "and by it I have been led to cast all the burden of my many sins at the foot of His cross, who died for us and rose again—and that, without the interference of shaveling priests who stand between the sinner and the Saviour."

"The Lord be praised for this mercy!" ejaculated the Kentish man; and then the two walked on in silence for a little space.

And let it be remarked here, that in these our present days of gospel light and knowledge, and of freedom from bitter persecution—when, in fact, it is no disgrace in the eyes of the world for a man to be an earnest Christian—we can scarcely enter into the full feelings, nor conceive of the holy thrill of joy with which such an unexpected meeting as that described was attended. Stranger meets stranger, now; and their hearts are gladdened assuredly if they discover, in a short and constrained intercourse, or a chance conversation, that each is "a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." But, in general, little warmth of soul is expressed; and presently they part, almost as much strangers as ever, without thinking to ask, "Have either of us a joy or a sorrow

to share with his Christian brother? Can we give one another a helping hand in our pilgrimage to the better country?" It must surely have been different in those rough hard times of which our story treats!

"You will go with me, Master Browne?" said the young archer, breaking the silence; "you must be my guest. I have a home in the Chepe, and my old housekeeper, Mary Darby, will find you in good cheer. Say—shall it not be so?"

"I will go with you. I have been staying these two days past at a hostelry in the borough of Southwark; but I have put myself into disrepute there, by my tongue, so that they called me Lollard, and bade me find quarters elsewhere. I was even looking out for these when I strolled into yonder fields. It is the Lord's doings: I will go with you; but as to the good cheer you speak of, truly I seek it not. Give but a cup of cold water and a crust of bread to a disciple in the name of a disciple, and it will be richer fare than dainty meats and manchet bread and wine, unaccompanied by a Christian welcome."

"Nay," said the young citizen, "it shall go hard with me if we go not a step beyond the crust of bread and the cup of water. But I pray you, good friend, are you not over bold to venture speaking against Romish priests, as you did e'en now, where words such as you are said to have uttered are sure to be caught up?"

"It may be so; and I think that ere long I may be called upon to seal with my life the words spoken by my tongue. But I care not, so I may finish my course with joy, and in defence of the gospel. And, truly, I owe it to my Lord that that little member of mine, which did once go far, even like the apostle Peter's, to deny him, should, now that I have, as I trust, repented of that great sin, be foremost in debating with those who are his greatest enemies."

"You mean the shuffling priests who cram their falsehoods into

the people's willing ears, who like to have it so, so that it has become a proverb, 'Like priest, like people.' But you speak of having denied the Lord; and it was said of you just now, that you are a relapsed Lollard and heretic;—can this be true?"

"Alas!" said Master Browne, with a heavy sigh, and in sorrowful tones, "it is but too true that, shrinking from the pains of fiery martyrdom, I played the coward when my Master called upon me to suffer for his sake. I will tell you the story of my fall, but not here in the open street. And now I bethink me, is it not strange that I should be so freely conversing with one of whose very name I am ignorant? for though I may have known it at that time you spoke of, it hath escaped my memory; only I seem to remember that you taught me to call you Roger."

"Roger Whapplot at your service; a chorister schoolboy then, a draper now, and a citizen of London, having served my time to Master Hunne, of Watling Street."

"Richard Hunne, the merchant tailor?"

"That is his name, and such his trade. Know you aught of him?"

"I have heard of Master Hunne as a good man and true, though a stout Catholic. Is it so?"

"I would I could say no to that last part of your report; but it is near upon the truth, though methinks if Master Hunne had clearer light he would rejoice in it. As to the rest, he is of excellent repute, and a man worthy to be known and loved."

"I am glad of it, for his wife, Mistress Hunne, is a not far off kinswoman of my own; and though I have no other knowledge of her or her husband, I should be pleased to get speech with them before I return to my home in Kent."

"There need be no difficulty on that score," returned the young Londoner; "for I have entrance to his house of an evening: and if you will abide with me, we will band our steps to Watling Street

on the morrow, and I think I may promise you a kindly welcome. And here we are now at my own home," added Whapplot; "and we can talk more at our ease when we have entered."

The time taken up in these explanations and other passing confabulation had brought the archer and his companion to their halting-place in Cheapside. It was a dwelling without any pretensions to grandeur, a low house of one story, disfigured by a clumsy wooden overhanging pent or bulk-house, which extended some little distance beyond the front of the dwelling; and was so far useful that it defended the draper's wares from the weather. For, as our readers may easily conjecture, the shop of a London tradesman of those days was, in many particulars, unlike those to which we are now accustomed. It bore, in fact, a much greater resemblance to a stall or booth, than to the plate-glass windowed and mahogany-countered establishments of modern times.

Mean as Roger Whapplot's shop may seem in our eyes, it was at least as good as those of his neighbours; and he was well satisfied that his business afforded him a present maintenance, with a hope of some day wedding the daughter of his former master. But this event was yet in the rather dim and distant future; and there were certain impediments in the way, which Roger heartily desired to see removed. Concerning these impediments, however, and the incipient betrothment to which we have referred, we shall have somewhat to say in another part of our history, but not here. We return to the young draper, who, with his newly found old acquaintance, in the dusk of that summer evening, sought admittance into his own domicile, his shop having been long since closed, and secured with heavy shutters. This admittance was soon obtained, for at the householder's knock footsteps approached from within; then a heavy bolt was withdrawn and the door was slowly opened by a lad of fourteen or fifteen years of age, whose close-cut hair, narrow falling bands, coarse coat,

and other significant signs, showed him to be the draper's apprentice. Addressing the youth by his name of William, the master directed him to hasten on an errand, which probably had some relation to the good cheer to which he had invited his former acquaintance. Then he requested the guest to enter.

The guest halted on the threshold, however.

"I have been unadvised and hasty in accepting your bidding," he said; "but even now it is not too late to recall the words spoken, and it will be well for me to seek a lodging elsewhere, lest evil should come of our further companionship."

"What mean you, Master Browne?" asked the young man.

"Why, see you not that I am tainted with this same heresy of which we have been speaking?"

"Even as I am. What then? The more reason why we should consort together," said Whapplot.

"I am not so well assured of this," returned the hesitating guest, "seeing that I am a suspected man, even in this city, whither, to tell the truth, I have fled for a little space, to avoid a threatened action against me in my own town. Being persecuted there for the gospel's sake, I escaped hither, hoping to be unknown and unmolested until I might return in some degree of safety. And lo! I had not been three days in hiding, as it were, when the same hazard came upon me. There are those who seek my hurt; and if I take refuge with you, surely you will be embraced in my danger, and will have to answer to those in authority for having resettled and sustained one of the church's enemies. I put it to you, therefore, friend Roger, whether you will dare the risk. If not, I will pray you to bid me God-speed, and I will trouble you no further with my company."

"Nay, I have no mind to part with you thus, Master Browne; and if there be danger, I will share it with you. Besides, have I not the king's commands (God bless his grace!) to see you safe; and

have I not this token to prove it?" Whapplot pointed to the gold piece which he had suspended from the front of his cap. "I am warranted, thereby, to give you meat and lodging. But methinks, for a man in peril, you spoke over boldly just now in the field. Forgive me, you are much the older man; but must even the truth be at all times, and in all places, spoken? Does not our blessed Lord warn us not to cast our pearls before swine, lest they, turning, should rend us? And in your hostelry at Southwark——"

"True; I reproved a silly wench for bowing to a wooden cross set up in the inn-yard. And shall I not testify against idolatry?"

"And right welcome, if you see any within my house, Master Browne; so, once more, I bid you enter and leave to me to face the risk I may thereby run; which I account not much, being under the king's protection, and having also more friends in the ward than you wot of."

Thus re-urged, the countryman relaxed his scruples, the more readily, perhaps, that he knew not where else at that late hour of the day to obtain a night's rest; so, following his young host into the dim recesses of the ill-lighted dwelling, he uttered fervently the apostolic words, "Peace be to this house!" and was conducted to an upper room.

CHAPTER V.

MASTER JOHN BROWNE'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE BEGUN.

If the exterior of a London citizen's house in the reign of the eighth Henry was uninviting, the interior did not make amends for its want of promise. The following extracts will give the reader

some further idea of the discomforts which our ancestors were content to endure.

"London in the sixteenth century" (as described by a writer near the close of it) "presented a mean appearance, in comparison with most foreign cities. The houses were built chiefly of wood and clay, each story projecting over the other, till the opposite sides of a street in many cases left but a narrow opening for the light of day, and exhibited an aspect as poor as it was perilous. The highways were still in a deplorable condition,—very foul, and full of pits and sloughs; and the interior of the dwellings of the common people was devoid of comfort, when even the abodes of the rich and noble were scantily and clumsily furnished, and the floors of the apartments strewn with rushes,—which," as another writer avows, "were rarely renewed, fresh layers being placed over the old ones, and the whole remaining perhaps for twenty years, so as to form a solid pavement, including deposits of fish-bones, fragments of meat, and other filth not to be mentioned." A third writer tells us that there was an old proverb in England,—that no house was wholesome where a dog could not creep in under the door, or a bird fly in through the closed window. Such, with some exceptions, and possibly with a little allowance to be made for exaggeration, were the habits of our forefathers, and such the dwellings which were afterwards to be swept away in the great fire of London.

Good cheer was not wanting, however. "These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare as well as the king," said the Spaniards who, in the reign of queen Mary, were so anxious to take possession of the country. And without entering into further description, we may feel satisfied that the fare set before his guest by Roger Whapplot consisted of something more than the crust of brown bread and cup of cold water for which that guest had contended.

"Eat, eat, Master Browne," said the hospitable young tradesman, as he loaded his friend's trencher, "or I shall think that the sight of the king's countenance has taken away your appetite; instead of which, 'a king's face should give grace,' you know. Drink, sir;" and he refilled his cup from the tempting tankard of canary wine, just before brought in from the vintry; "it will do you good and not harm to partake. And do you not remember—as I forget not—the cup of Kentish cider which you compelled me to drain on that day you wot of?"

Let us suppose these compliments paid, and all hospitable urgings fitly acknowledged, and the broken victuals withdrawn from the clumsy oaken table, and the host and his guest seated by an open casement, just as the bell of old St. Paul's was chiming the hour of nine. Twilight was rapidly fading into the deeper gloom of night, and, here and there, lighted candles or lamps began to glimmer in the houses on the opposite side of the street; while below, through the dark shade of overhanging upper rooms, footsteps of unseen pedestrians were occasionally heard breaking the still quiet of the early summer night. It was then that the man of Ashford, in low, and solemn, and, as he approached the climax, in self-accusing tones, gave the sympathising listener the following history:—

"I was about thirty years of age when it pleased the Lord, by his grace and his good Spirit, to enlighten my mind to see the error of my former faith, and the danger of my condition. Until then I had lived, like almost all around me, in slavish submission to the Romish church, and in ignorance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I had heard, indeed, of the sect of the Lollards (as who had not?), and knew that many Lollards, for many years past, had submitted to fiery martyrdom rather than deny their creed: indeed, I had witnessed more than one of those burnings. But I knew nothing more of them than that the priest called them heretics, and cursed them with bell, book, and candle,

as we say in Kent. Neither did I wish to know anything of them, being contented to live a jolly life with my roystering companions, thinking nothing of religion more than that it was the business of the priest, when properly paid for his work, to make my soul clean, and the way safe for another world."

"And therein you differed nothing from others,—the noblest and highest in the land, as well as the meanest and lowest," said Whapplot.

"Alack ! it is too true. May the good Lord in his great mercy open the eyes of the king of England and the people, to see how they are being led on to the very brink of hell, and ready to be plunged therein, by the false doctrines of the corrupt church of Rome."

"Amen, with all my heart !" the young trader responded ; and then the guest resumed his personal narrative.

"Such being my condition, I one day, being in Canterbury, entered the cathedral, and knelt down at the shrine of Thomas à Becket, as was my wont, and having dropped my penny into the box, I went my way, not seeing that I was close followed by a man in priest's gown and cassock, who, when he came up to me, gave me good day, and asked me what I had been doing. Said I, 'I have been praying to Saint Thomas.'

"'Ho !' said he, 'and think you that Saint Thomas could hear you ?'

"I looked closely at the man, not knowing what to make of his question. But seeing that he seemed decent and venerable, I answered him that I verily believed that the saint could and would hear all his true worshippers, and give them what they asked for. Also more than this, that it was a meritorious work to kneel at the martyr's shrine, and would help to get me on to heaven, if it did nothing more.

"'Poor man !' said the priest (as I took him to be, and as indeed

he was, but one who had received the true light, and taught it, and thereafter came to grief for that cause,—being imprisoned for what was called his heretical teaching, and dying in a foul, loathsome dungeon, whereby he escaped the utmost malice of his enemies. Would there were more like him!)—‘Poor man!’ quoth he; ‘and know you who and what sort of man this Saint Thomas à Becket was in his lifetime?’ And when I answered that I knew but imperfectly that he was a holy archbishop, whom King Henry the Second had caused to be murdered because of his great piety; and that the holy father, the pope, had made a saint of him,—the strange priest said he would tell me the true story of the matter, if I would listen. To this I said I would be happy to hear him, but my business required me to be going homeward.

“‘Yes, to Ashford,’ he said; and then he told me that he knew my face well, being oftentimes in Ashford, as one of the priests of Fogge’s college; but that he also had a church and a home in a small village lying betwixt Ashford and Canterbury. ‘So,’ said he, ‘we are travelling the same road, and you need not fear my company.’

“I had no fear of him, so we walked on together; and when we were out of the city, this good priest opened to me the story of Saint Thomas, which showed that, instead of being a meek and persecuted man, he was in his lifetime turbulent and mischievous, and that his death was brought on by his own great notions of priestly authority. ‘That Thomas à Becket was not a converted man I will not dare to judge, for he is gone beyond all human judgment,’ said my companion: ‘but I dare affirm that he needed as much as you and I the same pardoning mercy, without which he was an undone sinner. Judge, then, if such as he can stand in the place of God to us.’

“Then the good priest opened to me that the only way of salvation was by believing on the Lord Jesus; and that no man can

merit heaven by any good deeds he has done, or any prayers prayed, or any penances or pilgrimages borne or taken. Whereat I marvelled greatly,—he being a priest.

“Then he asked me, would I step with him into his house in the village, through which we were passing, and he would give me some refreshment to help me on my way home? To this I willingly consented; and as we sat at table he asked me, ‘Can you read English?’

“‘Yes,’ said I; ‘I learnt to read, and to write also, at Fogge’s school, twenty years ago, before your time there.’

“‘Good,’ he answered; ‘then I will show you something.’ And forthwith he unlocked and opened a small press, and brought out a written book. ‘You are a soothfast man, and I can trust you,’ he went on: ‘so if I lend you this book, and you will promise to return it to me when read, you shall have it.’

“‘What is the book, master priest?’ asked I.

“‘It is the evangel of St. John, done into common everyday English, which any man may understand,’ said he.

“‘Then it is a Lollard book,’ said I, in affright.

“The priest laughed a little, then he turned grave again. ‘They are the words of eternal life,’ he answered, very solemnly; ‘and hearken to what the blessed Saviour said to the Jews.’ Then he opened the book, and read these words: ‘Seek ye Scriptures, in which ye guess to have eternal life; and though it be that they bear witnessing of me, ye wolen not come to me that ye have life.’

“‘What Jesus said to the Jews,’ the priest went on, ‘so he says to you, Seek ye Scriptures. And now I bid you take this book, and read it for your soul’s good.’

“So I took the book, and went my way homewards, promising that I would see the good priest again when I had read his book.

“Well, my good host, I did read the book once and again, and then I took it back to the priest at his village home.

“‘What think you of it?’ he asked me, when I laid it on the table before him without speaking a word.

“‘That if this be the true word of God, I am a miserable wretch,’ said I.

“‘It is the true word of God,’ he told me, with much gravity.

“‘But how am I to know this?’ I asked. ‘Surely it may be but a Lollard book, after all.’

“‘What matters whether it be a Lollard book or not, so it be a true book?’ he asked, sharply; and then he went on to tell me how that he had not only this book of St. John’s gospel, but the other gospels, and also the whole of the New Testament and the Psalms, all written with his own hand; and that he was then engaged in copying the books of the Old Testament, as they had been turned into English more than a hundred years before by John Wycliffe, the parson of Lutterworth, who was, indeed, said to be the chief and leader of the Lollards, but who was, in sooth, a holy and learned man, and a right proper priest.

“‘I know not what to think,’ said I; ‘only that this gospel, if it be gospel, goes clean against many things I have been taught to believe, and teaches many other things which I should have accounted heresy. And I would, master priest, that you had kept your book to yourself.’

“‘Poor man!’ quoth he; ‘say rather that you possessed it for your own. For see: if it be the true word of God, your ignorance would not make it the less true; and not knowing the truth, you would indeed be a miserable wretch,—whereas now, the very light which lighteth each man that cometh into the world is made known to you,—only walk you in that light.’

“Many such words said the good priest to me, and eftsoon he persuaded me to take home other parts of the New Testament, which he had fairly written out. And, not to make more words of this part of my story, the Lord was pleased to show me in that

written word how great was the error in which I had been brought up, and how plain was the way of salvation to seeking men; also that the worshipping of saints and images was against the very letter as well as the spirit of that word. Nay, more than this,—I was led to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is Way, Truth, and Life; and no man cometh to the Father but by him only.”

“In other words, you became a Lollard,” here interposed Roger Whapplot, who had listened silently, but with increasing interest, as his guest proceeded with his history.

“I cared not then, as I care not now, what men might call me, so I might find mercy to pardon my past sins, and to help me on heavenwards. And I know assuredly that such mercy was given, for which I give God hearty thanks, through his dear Son.”

“And what did you then?” asked the young citizen.

“I went again and again to the good priest, and he oftentimes called on me, and he encouraged me to do as he had done, and write out for myself the whole Scriptures; which, though it took me long time to do,* I at length accomplished; for indeed the

* Let us again remind our readers that the printing of the Scriptures was at this time forbidden. The first English entire Bible ever printed was that of Coverdale, in 1535, which was published in a folio volume, and dedicated to Henry VIII. Tyndall's English New Testament, however, was printed in 1526,—this being sixteen years after the date of our story's commencement. Wycliffe's translation was never printed for general circulation, but only as a matter of antiquarian interest,—the New Testament in 1731, and again in 1810,—the Old Testament never having been put into type. But both the Old and New Testaments of Wycliffe's translation were widely circulated in manuscript, not only before the art of printing was introduced, but afterwards. “There is reason to believe that the whole work was finished some years before the reformer's death. Some of these manuscript versions still survive, and are to be found not only in our British Museum, university and college libraries, cathedrals, and other public buildings, but in the collections of private individuals,—a clear proof this of the extent to which the task of transcription was carried, when so many copies of the work are found to exist, notwithstanding all the zeal and efforts of the popish power to repress its circulation.” Indeed, it would seem marvellous if, among those who valued the Scriptures because by them they had been made wise unto salvation, there had not been some, and perhaps many, to whom it was a “work of faith and labour of love” to multiply copies of them, in whole or

love I bare to them, as the way by which salvation had come to me, made the labour pleasant and gladsome. Nor was it without good fruit to my soul; for every day, as I went on with my work, I gained fresh light and knowledge. Ah, my good host, those were happy times with me then!"

"And since then?" said Roger Whapplot, inquiringly. But the rest of John Browne's story will better come in, in a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

MASTER BROWNE'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE CONCLUDED.

MASTER JOHN BROWNE'S voice now became more sad; and could his countenance have been seen and watched through the darkening gloom of that late hour, it would doubtless have shown signs of the emotions of his heart. He steadily persevered with his narrative however.

"It has well been written for our instruction," he continued, "'Him that guesseth himself that he standeth, see he that he fall not;,' and again, 'Temptation taketh not you but many tempta-

in part, for their own private possession, or for the benefit of others. And perhaps in those days of greater leisure (as we are apt to believe), and of written books, the task would not have seemed so formidable to those who were ready penmen as it now appears to us. For instance, a pious priest, like him of whom our story tells (and there were pious priests in those days, notwithstanding the fearful degeneracy and corruption of the church of Rome), or an educated layman, might easily have copied with care the gospel of St. John by the labour of about three weeks, working at his desk only two or three hours a day, though he might not be a very rapid scribe; and the labour of little more than six months, at the same moderate calculation, would have sufficed for the transcription of the whole of the New Testament; while the entire book of Psalms could have been completed in less than two months, and the whole Bible in about two years.

tions.' Alack! when I had found that great treasure, and the pearl of great price, in God's holy word, I went on my way rejoicing, and was like him who said, 'My mountain doth stand strong: I shall never be moved;' and I guessed not how soon the weakness of my flesh and the cowardice of my spirit would take me at unawares.

"It chanced, now some five or six years ago, that the good priest of whom I have told you, and who had long been thought of as one who held the doctrines of Wycliffe, fell under more grave suspicion, or rather of certainty, and was accused before the new archbishop, who, it may be, thought this a favourable opportunity for showing his zeal for the Romish church. It is said that he had been delated before this; but that the former archbishop was his friend, and so the matter was not proceeded with. I know not the truth of this; but however it might be, the priest was now very eagerly prosecuted by his enemies, who were many, and he was brought before the archbishop's court. In his examinations he stood up boldly for the truth, not denying the charges brought against him, but justifying them from the Scriptures, which as being a priest he was allowed to do. And it was said that he put his adversaries to silence, and might have got clear off for that time, only that, in searching his lodgings, were found not only the English Scriptures, written fairly in his own hand, but also many of the heretical writings, as they are called, of John Wycliffe. This was enough to condemn him, and he was sent to prison, as I have before said; and, to bring that sad story to an end, he there died, having been some two years in bonds and imprisonment.

"It was while this good priest was yet waiting and longing for this deliverance that I had intimation given me by a secret friend that I also was in danger, and that the best way, and indeed the only way, of escape for me was to come forward and bear witness against my kind instructor, who was well known to have been on

terms of friendship with me. I thank God I was kept from that snare. I rated my life, truly, at too great a value; but I thought then, and I think now, that I would even have parted with that, rather than have given testimony which might have hurt a hair of his head. Yet I took alarm, and hastily hid all things which might testify against me should my house be searched, especially my chiefest treasure, the Bible I had so carefully written out. Moreover, I took pains to show myself at church-services on Sundays and holidays more than before, hoping thus to drive off the accusation of being a Lollard or Gospeller. I know not if this were right, for I had lost faith in the ceremonies in which I took part, and surely 'all things that is not of faith is sin,' for so the holy apostle Paul tells us.

"My going to mass and my silence availed me for a little while, and I began to hope that the storm had blown over, when one day I heard from a sure source that my dearest friend on earth, that good priest, was dead. My heart sank within me then, for, thought I, 'there is not one godly man left, for the faithful are minished from among the children of men.' I thought me, too, of those doleful complaints of the prophet, where he said, 'Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.' And while this sorrow was heavy upon me I was cited to appear before the archbishop in secret court, to answer to charges brought against me. This put me in great and unchristian fear, I having no one to stand by me, and forgetting, in this great strait, my Maker and Saviour, who had bidden me not to dread those who could but kill the body, and after that had no more power. There was another cause also that made my faith weak: I was married and had a young family, and it seemed hard to me that I should be taken away from the duty I owed to them as a husband and father; so I

was like him who, being bidden to the gospel feast, returned answer that he had married a wife, and therefore could not come—though, indeed, it was no gospel feast to which I was bidden.

“Neither could I deny to go, for I was under compulsion; and what moved me more than all was that, ere I departed on my sad business, my fond and tender wife hung about my neck, and besought me to save myself for her sake, or if not for hers, for her children’s. Alack! I thought not then of Him who said, ‘If any man cometh to me, and hateth not his father and mother, and wife and sons, and brethren and sisters, and yet his own life, he may not be my disciple: and he that beareth not his cross, and cometh after me, may not be my disciple.’

“The archbishop spoke me fair when I was before him. He told me that he was loth to proceed to extremities against any, but that his duty put it upon him to receive such accusations as had been made; that he knew it to be true that I was inclined to the heresies which were so rife, and that he had proofs against me which would bring me to the stake; but that he wished to deal kindly with me for the sake of my wife and children. Then he and others who were with him began to examine me concerning my faith. I know not now, and hardly knew then, what they asked or what I answered; I remember only that the examination lasted some two or three or more hours, and that then, faint and weary, I was given in charge of a jailer, and taken away to be locked up in a part of the crypt under the cathedral—for my examination was held in a room near the cloisters of the cathedral—and here I remained that night and the next day and night alone, bemoaning my sad fate, and thinking I should never again see my dear wife and children, for all the fair-spoken, moderate words of the archbishop, contriving also what next I should say, when again taken before him. And herein I also showed my want of faith; for is it not said to us by our dear Lord?—‘When they take you, never ye think

how or what thing ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.'

"Do you wonder, then, that being thus cowardly and faithless, I was for that time forsaken of God, and was led on to deny many things which I held very dear as the truth of God, and to acknowledge much that I should stoutly have denied as being against the truth of Holy Scripture?

"Then, when my examination was ended, and my judges had considered, I was told that if I should sign a full recantation of all the heresies by which I had been led astray, more especially that relating to the Mother of God, as the Virgin Mary was called, and to the Sacraments of the altar, as they termed the communion of the Lord's Supper,* my only punishment would be the bearing of

* It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader of what is so well known as that one of the greatest heresies (so called) of which, in the eyes of the church of Rome, any one can be guilty, is the denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or a miraculous operation in which (by words spoken by a priest) the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are supposed to be changed into the real flesh and blood of Christ. The denial of this unscriptural, unnatural, idolatrous, and revolting opinion conducted many godly Christians to the martyr's stake in the days of which we are writing. With regard to the other matter mentioned above, it may be instructive to state here some declarations of the church of Rome, which, though directly contradictory to the whole tenour of Scripture, were and are held by that church as matters of faith. As, for instance—

1. That the blessed Virgin Mary had no need of remission of sins.
2. That though she was subject to death, and died, it was not for any penalty due for original sin, because she was free both from original and contracted guilt, but either for the sake of imitation or conformity to Christ, her son, or else because of the natural constitution of her body.
3. The universal proposition of St. Paul, which saith that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, is not intended to apply to the blessed Virgin Mary.
4. If justification be taken for reconciliation of him that was unrighteous before, and now is made righteous, then the blessed Virgin is not justified by Christ, because she was always just before God.
5. If a Saviour be he who saveth men fallen into perdition and condemnation, then Christ is not the Saviour of Mary, who had never fallen into condemnation. Neither did the Virgin Mary give thanks to God (nor ought so to do) for expiation of her sins—since she had none—but only for her being preserved from sinning. Neither did she pray to God at any time for remission of her sins—she having no sins to be pardoned;—but

the fagot, instead of being burned at the stake, which, if I refused to sign, would assuredly be my portion.

"May God forgive me! Nay, do I not know that he has forgiven me? blessed be his name! For do we not read that (if repented of sincerely) 'all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven,' so it be not against the Holy Ghost; and I thank God I was kept from that great sin which shall not be forgiven! But fear had taken hold upon me, and, wretch that I was, I signed the paper which they put before me, and then I was taken back to my dark dungeon.

"But not for long. On the next day but one a grand service was to be held at the cathedral, with a procession of priests through the city; and then I was brought out, and a fagot being put on my shoulder, I was commanded to take my place with two or three others who had likewise been condemned to this penance; which I did, the people jeering and flouting me the while. Little recked I of this, however; there was a deeper grief in my soul, namely, that I had denied the faith, and ——"

"I pray you speak no more of it," said Roger Whapplot, who, though it was now too dark for him to distinguish aught of his friend's countenance, otherwise perceived that Master Browne was deeply moved at the remembrance of his sin. "Pass over this," he repeated, "and tell me how, since then, it has fared with you."

"I have little more to tell," said the penitent, "save that after my penance was completed I was permitted to return home, where I was received with open arms and a full heart by my dear wife, who did all that lay in her power to comfort me. But, alas! what says the wise man? 'The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' But at last I learned

only for the remission of other men's sins she prayed many times, and counted their sins for hers.

These are some of the teachings of popery.

to lay my burden on the blessed Saviour, who poured into my heart the balm of his consolation, and the wound was healed.

"And now," continued the Kentish man, "I have these two years past employed myself as God has enabled me, and as time and circumstances have permitted, in testifying as far as laid in me against the teachings of that corrupt church, whereby I have made myself many enemies; and though hitherto the Lord has kept me from malice, yet methinks it will not always be so. It seems meet rather that having once denied my alone faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from any other vain and false trust, I should hereafter suffer in that cause, even as Peter, who once denied his Lord, had said to him by his Master, 'Truly, truly, I say to thee, when thou wert younger thou girdest thyself and wanderest where thou wouldest; but when thou shalt wax elder, thou shalt hold forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee whither thou wilt not.'

"It may be so," said Whapplot; "yet surely there is small wisdom and prudence, and as little call for you, Master Browne, in going about, provoking the malice of the enemies of the gospel by such onslaughts as that of this afternoon. Forgive me; I am the younger man; but may there not be a more excellent way of doing service for the Lord our Saviour?"

"I see not how," said the guest.

"Even by more privately strengthening those who are well disposed towards the pure evangel, and by instructing those who are ignorant. You have gifts of converse, and a ready knowledge of the Scriptures, having, as you say, written them down, word by word, from beginning to end. Why should you not put this knowledge to use, not by loud disputings, but by gentle teachings?"

"I would there were any to show me the way," said the guest, sadly.

"That will I do," replied the young draper, eagerly. "In this

city there are some who are seeking after the truth, and have not yet found it; and others who have an inkling of that same truth, yet are too timorous to avow it. Well, sir, you have quoted some words spoken by our Lord to his repentant apostle. Let me add to them other words, spoken also by the blessed Saviour to that same apostle: 'I have prayed for thee,' said he, 'that thy faith fail not; and thou, sometime converted, confirm thy brethren.'"

"Ah! and you, too, can quote Scripture to purpose," said Master Browne, pleasantly.

"Not as thou canst," replied Whapplot, modestly. And then he added, "You spoke of my good mistress, Margaret Hunne, my late master's wife, as your kinswoman. See her and her husband, and tell them what you, this night, have told me."

Here, or soon afterwards, the conversation ended; and after some little time spent in prayer, the young host procured a light, and conducted his guest to the bed-chamber which had been prepared for him.

CHAPTER VII.

CLEARING THE GROUND.

WE have elsewhere remarked that the annals of our country present no events more interesting to thoughtful readers than those comprised in the reign of Henry VIII. Mighty principles were then at work, which were destined to overthrow the ecclesiastical tyranny under which the people had long groaned, and from which there had seemed no hope of deliverance. The word of God,

which had theretofore been locked up in an unknown tongue, was loosed from its bonds, and was slowly entering upon the free course which has since been widening like a great and glorious river. The darkness which had so long covered England was passing away, and the true light was beginning to shine. But as in the natural world, so in the moral and spiritual, the dawn is gradual in its approach; and there were black clouds of ignorance and vice which attended its apparent progress.

The social condition of the country and the relationships of its people were affected by the political and religious commotions of the times. The faithful followers of the Divine Master,—those hidden ones who had long suffered reproach for his name, and had prayed for the rising of the Sun of righteousness,—rejoiced and were glad to see the day approaching; while those who hated the light were stirred up to bitter malignity as they saw its beams gilding the mountain tops, and descending to the lower valleys. Then, too, was seen the fulfilment of that saying of Christ, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."*

We need not conclude, however, that every house was thus stirred into intestine commotion. It is to be feared, indeed, that the great majority of the people of England were either profoundly indifferent to the changes which were taking place, or so enwrapped in the darkness of past centuries, that the light of Divine truth gained no entrance either into their dwellings or their hearts. On the other hand, we know from the records of the past that there were many entire families converted to God, and enlightened as to the true character of the corrupt church of Rome. And there were others, probably, in which a diversity of sentiment

* Introductory chapter to "The Chronicles of an Old Manor House."

had not much effect upon the general peace and harmony of the household. •

As with families, so it was with the individual members composing them. There were some, as we have seen, who came out boldly into "the valley of decision," not counting their lives dear to them in comparison with the gospel cause which they had espoused. There were others who were stirred up to bitter enmity against all who even evinced a disposition to shake off the fetters of spiritual despotism. Multitudes, again, were so satisfied with their bondage, that they would not, if they could without danger, have been free. Popery was a comfortable religion for them; for, whatever their lives might be, it gave them absolution, and promised them a safe and sure passport (after some delay perhaps in purgatory) into glory everlasting; and they stolidly determined that their faith and hope, such as they were, should not be disturbed. And there was yet another class—or indeed there were two or three other classes—of persons who formed a not unimportant part of the community. Let us subdivide them. There were those, for instance, who were convinced of the unscriptural character of the Romish church, and were inclined in their hearts to reject its puerilities in worship and its errors in doctrine, and who groaned in spirit for deliverance from its power, who yet from timidity sedulously concealed their convictions, and strove, by slavish outward conformity to the dominant church, to ward off all suspicion of their real defection from its ranks. If there had been no danger in the avowal of their sentiments, they would have avowed them, and have gloried in the avowal; but the danger made all the difference. Of course, such persons as these came very near to that condemnation which Christ pronounced against those who were ashamed of him and his doctrine,—ashamed or afraid to acknowledge him before men; and it is fearful to think of the numbers who may in that last great day find, to their un-

speakeable confusion, that for this cause the Son of Man will be ashamed of them. But let us not hastily condemn them, reader; rather let us examine ourselves, and see if any of the same spirit of cowardice be in us,—whether or not we have good reason to make the humble confession contained in the words of the Christian versifier:—

“Before the world that hates his cause
My treacherous heart has throbb'd with shame:
Loth to forego the world's applause,
I hardly dare avow his name.”

At any rate, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Returning to our analysis, however, we find another section of the people who, though they did not aspire to the crown of martyrdom, had too much honesty of mind and purpose, to conceal their real sentiments when circumstances called for their acknowledgment; so, while doing nothing to draw down upon themselves the storm of ecclesiastical tyranny, they walked abroad with an air of careless indifference and freedom which did much to disarm suspicion. Earnestly and sincerely embracing the gospel, and as earnestly and sincerely longing for deliverance from papal superstition, they did not think it necessary to proclaim from the housetop their adhesion to Lollardism (we use the term as it was then understood), while they consistently, as far as they were acquainted with the truth, followed where it led. It may seem strange, though we think it not more strange than true, that men of this class were at least as safe from persecution as the timid and time-serving. It may be that their very fearlessness, combined with what they considered to be commendable prudence, enabled them to pass unharmed through perils which would have closed in upon others. That some, and probably many of them, perished, there is no doubt, but many others were preserved; while those who drew

attention towards themselves by their very anxiety to avoid it were entrapped in the toils of informers and spies, and suffered accordingly. And thus was oftentimes brought to pass a partial fulfilment of the words of Christ: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it."

Lastly, there were many, no doubt, who were sincerely desirous of some change in the country, and yet were not influenced in their aspirations by any personally spiritual anxieties. A few words will serve to remind the reader of the political state of feeling in England in the reign of Henry VIII. respecting papal claims.

We have seen that the religious sentiments of some part of the nation had been gradually arraying themselves against the doctrines of the Romish church; and a similar process had been going on with respect to those pretensions of the papal see which affected the independence and liberties of the nation. When, in these days, we hear of the pope's "temporal power," we understand the term as applied to that narrower claim which is made by the Roman pontiff to rule as a king over his own territorial domain; but, besides this, another claim is implied in the term, and one that has always been ready when it suited the purpose of the papal see to advance it, and it is one that affects all the kingdoms of Christendom.

By this claim the pope is supreme over all kings and rulers. To him, in the last resource, is due the allegiance of all subjects; for he can excommunicate monarchs, and release the people from obedience,—thus becoming himself the chief depository of earthly power. This is the climax of a claim which has its root in the spiritual pretensions of the popedom, but extends its branches into the secular affairs of nations; and it has frequently been put forth in various forms, not only in other countries, but in England. Sometimes it has been exercised in the usurpation of all ecclesiastical appointments; sometimes in the declaration that all

questions involving religious rites are exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil law; sometimes in the assertion that no priest is amenable to the ordinary courts of justice for any crime committed, but is answerable to the spiritual court of Rome only.

It is easy to perceive that, in all such cases, the distinction between temporal and spiritual power is a delusion,—the one passes over into the other; and the bishop of Rome being always, on this theory, the arbiter as to what is temporal or spiritual, he himself becomes virtually the source of all jurisdiction. It is equally easy to see how intolerable even the lowest of these claims must have been to a people whose naturally strong instincts were towards national and individual freedom. Thus, although their desires never went beyond a change which would release them from the galling tyranny of a dominant priesthood, we can understand that there were multitudes who were ready to lend a hand (if a safe time should arrive) in pulling down the Romish superstition.

These jottings may probably be exemplified in the following chapters; and at any rate they will serve to cast some little light on the history of that period. Without apologizing unnecessarily for what may seem to be a dull chapter, we proceed with our narrative.

CHAPTER VIII.

RICHARD HUNNE AND HIS HOUSEHOLD.

AMONG the citizens of London who were not entirely unmoved by the presages of a common religious revolution in England was Richard Hunne, who has already been mentioned as a merchant-

tailor in Watling Street, and whose name, for sufficient reasons, gives the title to our story.

He was a tradesman of quiet and industrious habits; and, though those were days in which colossal fortunes were not so rapidly made (and lost) as those in which we live, Master Hunne, at middle age, was in circumstances of worldly comfort and comparative wealth.

Religiously, Hunne was a Catholic,—that is to say, he gave attention to the outward forms and ceremonies of the church; fasted on fast days, and feasted on feast days; occasionally confessed himself to a priest, or was supposed to do so, and obtained priestly absolution. Beneath all this, however, there was, even at this time, a principle, or rather an undercurrent of thought, secretly working, which was utterly inconsistent with the unreasoning faith and fawning docility required of all good Catholics. How far this undercurrent had carried him is uncertain,—probably he himself could not have told; but his father confessor would have recoiled with horror from this sheep of his fold, could he have penetrated the heart and seen how much was concealed behind the penitent submission outwardly shown to all the church's behests.

For instance, while ingenuously confessing the transgressions and slips of daily life, and acknowledging himself a sinner in relation to the "mint, anise, and cummin" required of him as a religious man, Master Hunne kept back from the knowledge of his confessor that he had by some means possessed himself of a certain tractate of Wycliffe, written in that reformer's own hand, which had unsettled his mind respecting the character and claims of the Romish church. In this manuscript brochure Hunne had read the following weighty and bold sentences: "It is known that Antichrist hath enthralled the church much more than it was under the old law, though then the service was not to be borne. New laws are now

made by Antichrist, and such as are not founded on the law of the Saviour. More ceremonies, too, are now brought in than were in the old law, and more do they tarry men in coming to heaven than did the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. One cord of this thralldom is the lordship claimed by Antichrist, as being full lord both of spirituals and temporals. Thus he turneth Christian men aside from serving Christ in Christian freedom; so much so, that they might well say as the poet saith in his fable the frogs said to the harrow, 'Cursed be so many masters.' For in this day Christian men are oppressed, now with popes, and now with bishops, now with cardinals under popes, and now with prelates under bishops, and now their head is assailed with censures,—in short, buffeted are they as men would serve a football. But certainly, if the Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of the shoe of Christ, Antichrist had no power thus to impede the freedom which Christ hath bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that they might come to the bliss of heaven with less difficulty; but Antichrist burdens them that they may give him money."

Strong and searching had these words seemed to the apprehension of our merchant-tailor; and as he read on he had found further food for reflection in such denunciations as these: "Antichrist challengeth to be fully God's fellow; for he affirms that if he judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason, whereas this is the highest point that falleth to the godhead. Popes and kings, therefore, should seek a reason above their own will. Most foul is the failure and the sin of priests in this respect. As if ashamed to appear as the servants of Christ, the pope and his bishops show the life of the emperors and of the lordly in the world, and not the living of Christ. But, since Christ hated such things, they give us no room to guess them to be the ministers of Christ."

Now all this appealed very forcibly to Master Hunne's reasoning

faculties; for he knew how true was the representation there given of the pride of the Romish priests, and of their usurped dominion over the bodies and souls of men. But, at the same time, his timidity and dread of consequences led him more sedulously to conform to the outward submission required of him by these usurpers, lest he should be suspected of holding erroneous doctrines.

But a man must be not only very reticent, but also continually on his guard, to conceal from the wife of his bosom the thoughts which are in his mind, even though ever so deeply buried. And thus it came to pass, in the natural (and proper) order of things, that Mistress Margaret Hunne had long been partly cognizant of the terribly heretical notions (according to her views) which had taken possession of her husband. Like a good wife, however, who had a very fair respect for the intellect of her husband, and of the obedient submission due to him as her head, she suffered in silence, preferring rather to seem ignorant for a time of his secret misgivings, than to scold him into an obstinate defence of them. And yet it was impossible for her to keep silence altogether; and it happening that she had a daughter approaching to years of discretion, she poured into this young damsel's ears the tale of her trouble, namely that her husband, and young Margaret's father, was a reader of Master John Wycliffe's pernicious books, or one of them, and was altogether in a fair, or rather, as she would have said, in a foul and dangerous way towards Lollardism.

This might have been all very well: that is to say, the maiden might have been very much impressed with the enormity of her father's heretical notions, and she would doubtless have shown the full sympathy expected from her, but for circumstances, with which the mother was only partially acquainted, and which it devolves upon us briefly to explain.

In Master Hunne's household was a young man—the Roger

Whapplot of our previous chapters. At the time of which we are now retrospectively writing, he was an apprentice, but nearly out of his term of servitude. He had been, from the commencement of that term, treated with more regard and consideration than in those times generally fell to the lot of young persons in that position. This was partly to be accounted for by the fact that the master was mild and good-tempered; but there were other causes which contributed to this favourable usage. The boy was fatherless and motherless, and this obtained for him the womanly compassion of Mistress Hunne. He was also a lad of gentle nurture and of good yeoman descent; this added to the interest he excited. Again, he had a good patrimony in prospect; he, therefore, was not a *poor* apprentice. Lastly, as one of the many prototypes of Hogarth's Master Goodchild, he soon won the merchant-tailor's regard, by strict punctuality and attention to business, as well as by gratitude for constant kindness received. Thus it is not to be wondered at that there gradually arose a kind of boy and girl familiarity between the favoured apprentice and the eldest daughter of the house—a child then of very tender years. This familiarity soon ripened into friendship, and before very long into a warmer sentiment or feeling of mutual affection, to which the gentle manners of the Kentish youth and the loveliness of the London maiden no doubt contributed.

Now, we are not about to tell a lengthened love-story, any more than the Bible history of Jacob and Rachel can be called by such a title; and it is only necessary to say here that, without having to pass through the ordeal appointed to that Old Testament worthy, a conditional consent was given by the child Margaret's parents to a future union with the youth Roger.

All this, of course, was patent to Mistress Hunne, when she poured into her daughter's ear the sorrow of her heart, at the supposed heretical leanings of her husband; but she little thought

that the young Margaret had herself drunk deeper draughts from the pestiferous, poisonous (as the elder Margaret would have deemed it) spring of Lollardism.

It was all owing (as Mistress Hunne then found) to Roger Whapplot, who had secretly imbibed the principles and doctrines of the approaching Reformation from the fountain-head of all spiritual knowledge, and had with equal secrecy, but with anxious diligence and prayerful earnestness, communicated this heavenly knowledge to his future wife. In other words, the young man had in his possession a copy of the New Testament, fairly written in plain English, probably by one of Wycliffe's zealous agents; and his own mind having been enlightened by its perusal, he had naturally desired that the dearest object of his earthly affections should share with him in the freedom of the gospel. And although it may be something like telling a story backwards, we may for once deviate from our usual straightonward course of quiet narrative, to explain how that precious treasure became the property of Whapplot, and to show one of the various ways in which the word of God was at that time silently pervading society and was undermining the superstitions and errors of the Romish church.

"I have been guilty of keeping back a great secret from you, Margaret," said the young man to his affianced, on one occasion of their being in each other's company not long after her parents' consent had been given to Roger's sober courtship.

"A secret! Not a perilous one, I hope?" returned the maiden lightly.

"Nay, it is past hoping for," said the youth, gravely; "for in truth it is so far perilous that were it widely known or suspected, I might soon say good-bye to my liberty and even, it may be, to my life."

"Roger! dear Roger!" exclaimed Margaret, with a sudden start of amazement.

"And though it be so perilous, I must needs have one to share it with me; and I take blame and shame to myself for having hidden it from you, mine own pearl."

"No, no; if it concern you so deeply, tell it not to me, who have only a silly wit and a girl's tongue. How know you that I should not betray you, Roger? Tell me only, is it aught that should in honour have kept us ever apart? And this I will not believe, for have not I known you now these five years?"

"I must tell you, Margaret, and then you shall judge," answered Roger; "and yet methinks you will not like me the less; but if it must be so, better so than that I should bring you into life-long trouble, or myself into a snare of guilty silence."

"You know," continued the youth, presently, after a few more passing words, "that I am an orphan. My mother died when I was but a little child, and I have no remembrance of her. Of my father I have perfect memory, for I was eight or nine years old when he was taken."

"I have heard you say this before," said the wondering girl, "and also how loving a father he was to his little motherless boy."

"Truly he was; and naught that I can say would come up to the whole truth of his gentleness; and this makes me the more remember what I have now to tell. All too soon for me, as I can but think, though God knew best, my dear father was taken ill, and lay at the point to die. One day when I was in his chamber, and knew not then how soon I should lose him, he called me to his side, and bade me sit by his couch, which I did. Then he took my hand in his, looking fondly on me, and tears were in his eyes. 'Roger,' he said, feebly, for his strength was well-nigh gone, 'it is God's will that I must die, and leave you alone in the world. I have got together some worldly gear, which is in safe hands, and I think you will be taken care of. But now listen to what I tell you. I have left a parcel, closely fastened up and sealed, which

will be given to you should God spare your life so long as to be fifteen years old. It is a great treasure, yet I dare not tell you now what it is, nor does he who has it in keeping know what it contains. But promise me that when you have it you will treat it according to its deserts, and remember that your dead father loved it.' This is what my father said to me, dear Margaret; and I gave the promise in such broken words as my great grief would suffer me to use. Soon after this my father died and was buried, and I was cast on the world, not altogether unhappily, for I think God has taken care of me.

"I grew up to be fifteen years old, and on that day—it was a year after I was made your father's apprentice—a man, whom I had never before seen, brought me the parcel my father had told me of, closely packed and sealed, as he had said. You may suppose, Margaret, that I opened it when I had good opportunity, with wonder and reverence, curious to know what this great treasure could be. And what think you it was, dear Margaret?"

"You must tell me, Roger, or I shall never know," said the maiden.

"I will show it to you," answered Whapplot; and then he disappeared for a little space of time, but shortly returned, having in his hand a manuscript volume, covered with vellum, which had evidently been preserved with great care, for by a date on the first leaf it was shown to be more than a hundred years old. Moreover it was beautifully written in a bold, clerkly hand.

"There, Margaret," said the young man; "this is the treasure my father had hoarded for me; and it is also one part of the great secret of which I told you. Wot you what the book can be?"

Margaret made no reply; but, turning over one leaf, she came to these words, as a prologue to the contents of the volume: "Here bigynnoth a newe Testament." She turned slightly pale.

"It is a Lollard book," she said.

"Ay, so I thought when I first opened it; but I remembered my



ROGER WHAPLOT'S SECRET.

promise to my dead father, and also how he had said that he loved it; and I said within myself that were it the devil's own book, as there are those among the priests who declare it so to be, I would read it.

"Margaret, I have read it secretly, and made it my chief study, hiding it meanwhile so that it has never been discovered: and it is no devil's book, but God's own true word. This, Margaret, is the other part of my secret—that I believe what this book tells me. And now I ask you, in God's sight, will you have part and lot hereafter with one whom the world would call a Lollard were his secret known, and would doubtless also burn him for a Lollard?"

What the damsel then replied to this direct appeal is of no consequence to our narrative. It is more to the purpose to tell that thenceforward the book was frequently studied jointly by the two lovers, and the result was that Margaret ere long became deeply imbued with the principles of Lollardism.

That all this had been going on in secrecy was the almost inevitable consequence of the persecuting spirit of the times; but it pressed grievously on Margaret's conscience. Her parents did not merit this concealment at her hands; and why should she keep back from them the knowledge of that eternal life and the simple way of salvation to which she had gained access?

"It shall be as you will, Margaret," Roger Whapplot had once said to her when she mentioned the matter to him; "but bethink you how they are likely to receive it. If it should be the means of separating us!"

Of course the maiden protested that such a contingency was not to be thought of, neither to be feared; and, though with some reluctance, Whapplot consented to give up his secret.

It was just at this time that Mistress Hunne poured into her daughter's ears the sad tale of her suspicions regarding her hus-

band's heretical leanings ; and then, to her horror, she discovered that Margaret was still farther and more intensely tainted with the dreaded curse of Lollardism. The discovery gave her courage, however, to appeal to her husband in moving entreaties to put a stop to the mischief which was actively at work. It was well, then, that the love and harmony which had ever characterized Richard Hunne's household served as a corrective to the polemical differences which had so unexpectedly sprung up, and so prevented the ultimate sorrow of "a mother rising against her daughter, and a daughter against her mother," and of "a man's foes" being "they of his own household." A kind of compromise was effected, by which essential forbearance was secured. Compromises, however, generally involve sacrifices, and sometimes a victim. The victim in this case was Roger Whapplot, who was given to understand that the conditional consent of Master and Mistress Hunne to his marriage with their daughter must for the present be withdrawn, the wife insisting upon this because of her dislike to Lollardism in the abstract, and the husband acquiescing in it because, notwithstanding his partial leanings to "the way called heresy," he shrank from the prospect of having for a son-in-law one who ran a fair chance of becoming a martyr. Nevertheless, the essential friendship of the worthy couple towards their protégé remained unbroken ; and when, at the expiration of his apprenticeship, Roger Whapplot left the shelter of their roof, entered into his patrimony, and bought the goodwill of a flourishing business in Cheapside, he was given to understand that he would always be received as a welcome visitor in the old house in Watling Street, though a closer connexion must, for prudential reasons, be indefinitely postponed.

With this qualified permission Roger was fain to be content ; and this was the state of affairs at the time of our history's commencement.

CHAPTER IX.

HALF AN HOUR IN MASTER HUNNE'S SHOP.

THE distance from Cheapside to Watling Street was no greater in old London than in the more modern city; and however busy a tradesman Roger Whapplot might be, he found little difficulty in abstracting half an hour from business on the morning following his adventure in Finsbury Field. His purpose was to ask permission of his old master to bring with him at evening the friend who was then sheltering beneath his roof. Before he could make his wish known, however, and almost as soon as he had stepped into the merchant-tailor's premises, he was eagerly accosted by him with—

"Tell me, Roger, what is the truth of this story about the king. They say that he and you had a shooting match yester afternoon, and that you won a gold piece of him. Is it so?"

"Not in all its circumstances," returned Whapplot. "It is indeed true that the king used my bow, and shot off one of my arrows at the butt; but it was for no wager. Had it been, mine would have been the forfeit; for the king fairly beat me."

"I am glad of it, Roger," said Hunne, rubbing his hands gleefully. "It is no dishonour to be beaten by a king,—better than if you had beaten him. You showed your wit there."

"Nay, there was no wit shown. I knew not that he was the king. Nor was there a challenge: had there been, I think I would have strained my utmost to outdo him, king or no king."

"And made him your enemy for life, Roger," said Master Hunne, gravely; "whereas now, when he remembers you, he will

think of his victory, and it will go hard with you if you gain not some advantage by it."

"It is unlikely that he will remember me at all," said the young draper.

"I know not that, seeing that sometimes 'the king's errand stands in the cadger's gate,'—asking your pardon for likening you, Roger, to a cadger, which is not a savoury comparison. But think you of the butcher's son of Ipswich, now the king's almoner, as well as a dean, and who would never have risen to that height if he had not done something to flatter his royal master."

"I have no wish to be either dean or almoner," said Whapplot; "and were I to be so foolish, it is not an arrow's flight one way or other will bring that about. I have one wish, sir," continued he, sadly, "which would give me more happiness in my worldly affairs than any king's favour, even if it could be gotten."

"You mean that your wish is to be Margaret's husband. Well, rest patient, Roger; it may be that you will have your wish yet, for all that is past and gone. It must be confessed that the poor girl mopes sadly; and her mother has of late shown signs of giving way. There is only one thing, Roger——"

"I know what you would say, sir," said Whapplot, when his old master came to a pause, as though hesitating to speak what was on his mind:—"If I would only be a traitor, like Judas,—or a coward, as Peter was, for a little space, though not for long,—I might marry your daughter."

"No, no; I wouldn't say that, Roger. But isn't there another way of putting it? Between us two, we know what priests are, and what the pope is. But then we know, too, what the religion of the land is, and the law of the land; and the law ought to be obeyed, you know."

"I am not sure that I break the law in keeping away from mass, and not going to confession; and as to reading books that are



IN THE DRAPER'S SHOP, WATLING STREET.

forbidden by law, I think I have partners in that work, Master Hunne," said Roger, with a melancholy smile.

"Hush, Roger, hush!—they say walls have ears," whispered Hunne. "By and by, perhaps things will be altered; but till then, why not be prudent? They tell me that you were near getting into trouble yesterday, by taking part with a foolish man who got disputing with a friar."

"Who says so?" demanded Whapplot.

"Well, Roger, my man Thomas Brooke tells me that he heard of one who said so."

"Thomas Brooke is but a poor hand at a true story," said Whapplot, laughing. "What would you say if you were told that it was the king who took part with the foolish man, and after he had released him from the constable, gave me a bonnet-piece from his own cap, to see the man safe out of the crowd?"

"Oh! and was it truly so?"

"Truly, Master Hunne. And it was this matter that led me to you this morning, when I ought, perchance, to be minding my own shop. The truth is, the man whom the king rescued turns out to be a sort of kinsman to Mistress Hunne; and he desires to have some acquaintance with her, and with you also. His name is Browne,—one John Browne, from Ashford, in Kent; and I so far encouraged him in his wish as to promise to bring him with me at nightfall."

"He shall be welcome, I think,—so there be no danger. But tell me, Roger, how the thing happened, and how it was that the king took part, as you say, in the broil."

It took no long time for Whapplot to give the particulars, with which we are already familiar. When he came to a pause, Master Hunne said,—

"This is the best news I have heard this many a day, Roger. Only to think that the king should have done so nobly! Had it

been his father, the late king, I warrant John Browne would have been laid up by the heels for his over-boldness, and would be in altogether a bad case; and lo! now he hath the king's protection. It tells well that our young Henry thus begins his reign, as one may say, by favouring a Lollard,—as a Lollard, I doubt not, the man is. Ah, Roger, it will be a good time for England when men can speak out all their minds, without fear of priest or prelate. And it was well said by the noble young king, that priests are more ready to give advice than to follow their own counsels."

"Well, sir, since it is so," said the young draper, "I hope I may bring with me Master Browne at eventide, Lollard or no Lollard."

The consent was given now somewhat more heartily than before. There could be no danger in keeping company with a man whom the king had befriended. "Bring Master Browne with you, and welcome,—more especially if he be my wife's cousin, as you say. And truly I have heard her speak of the Brownes of Kent as being in some way her relations, though she knows not one of them. What then? The greater reason why they should become acquainted."

Satisfied on this head, the young draper was about to take leave; but he was stayed by Master Hunne.

"What is your hurry, man?" said the merchant-tailor. "Will you not step in and give the time of day to the women-folk?"

"They may be busy," said Roger, modestly.

"You did not use to be so backward; but I see how it is,—you think it will be lost time to pay court to Mistress Hunne for Madge's sake. But I would not have you altogether despair. I told you my wife has shown signs of giving way of late. There is her good gossip Joan Baker, whom you know to be of your way, has plied her with arguments; and if so be the king should take such opinions into his favour,—and less likely things have happened,—I know naught else to hinder your courtship going on and

having a happy ending,—which will then be with my hearty goodwill. I have always loved you, Roger, as I think you know.”

Roger Whapplot did not require much urging. It is possible that he thought within himself, “The way would not have been so open to me but for my chance rencontre with the king yesterday.” But he repelled the thought. “Master Hunne has always been my good friend,” he whispered to himself; “and if he desires to be on the safe side of the hedge, he is only like a thousand others.”

These thoughts passed through his mind; but they were banished as soon as he was in the presence of the damsel whom he loved, even as Jacob loved Rachel, but whom he scarcely hoped to marry.

CHAPTER X.

MASTER HUNNE RECEIVES A GUEST.

THE adversaries of the gospel cannot be counted as wise in the hard service of the great adversary, when they begin to persecute its adherents. If, for instance, in apostolic times, they had let “the church which was at Jerusalem” alone, and not scattered it “throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria,” the Jerusalem church might have increased and multiplied, truly; but those who composed it would not have been scattered abroad, and would not at that time have gone “everywhere, preaching the word;” and the evangelization of the eastern world would have been probably indefinitely postponed. But as it was, every persecuted and banished believer carried with him the faith he had espoused; and the love of Christ, together with compassion for perishing souls, constrained

him to testify of the grace of God. So that, in the course of a few years, the knowledge of Christ's most precious and needed salvation was spread abroad throughout all Asia, and multitudes were added to the church of such as should be saved; while every new church formed and founded became a fresh nucleus from which the blessed tidings of the gospel were sounded forth.

It has been so in later times. In those of which we are writing, to wit, there were many persons into whose minds the light of Divine truth had penetrated, who yet were but partially enlightened, and who would have been content if they had but been permitted to work out their own convictions quietly, and silently, and leisurely, without coming to a direct and open rupture with the corrupt church of Rome. But this was not to be. A whisper against the supremacy of the pope, the inefficacy of pilgrimages and penances, the ungodly lives of the priests, the childish folly of ritualism, the unscriptural doctrine of transubstantiation, the semi-deity of the Virgin Mary, the invocation of saints,—was construed into flat and open blasphemy, and was accordingly to be punished. Above all things, the known possession of the sacred writings in the vernacular tongue, or even a suspected knowledge of them, was sufficient to subject a man to the severest penalties of priestly tyranny, backed up by secular power. That many merely philosophical and intellectual inquirers succumbed beneath the terrors of this persecution, and abandoned their hopes of eternal life, because the risk of securing it was, in their unassisted apprehension, too great, there is no doubt; but, on the other hand, it is equally certain that multitudes were stirred up by persecution to greater diligence and more prayerful efforts in seeking after the truth, and, thus stimulated, were conducted by a shorter route into "the simplicity which is in Christ."

And then the natural, inevitable, and heaven-directed consequence followed. They could but declare unto others the things which they had themselves learned; and if driven from their homes

and families by the fierceness of persecution, they carried with them into distant districts of the country, and into other homes and families, the principles they had espoused. Thus was stirred up, more universally than would otherwise have been, a general distrust of the teachings of a corrupt church and a dissolute priesthood, and a readiness to embrace the doctrines of the Reformation, then impending. Better than this, however, the Holy Spirit, who in old times caused these words to be written, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it:"—that same Almighty Spirit brought about the fulfilment of this heavenly promise when, in numerous instances (beyond at least our power of computation) the gospel of Christ, thus diffused by the scattered persecuted saints of England, became the power of God unto salvation to those who would not otherwise have heard of it. Thus God made the wrath of man to praise him; and then, when that was accomplished, the remainder of it he restrained.

These reflections naturally lead us to the introduction of Master John Browne into the household of Richard Hunne; for though our story is, in this item of it, avowedly imaginary, there were in those days many John Brownes and Richard Hunnes to whom the narrative would apply.

We must of necessity pass lightly over the introduction of her kinsman to Mistress Hunne, who, however wary and suspicious regarding Lollardism, was scrupulous in the observance of all hospitable rites, and who chanced also to be so well pleased with Master Browne that she consented to her husband's proposal for

relieving Roger Whapplot of the charge of maintaining a visitor in his bachelor establishment, by inviting her newly-found cousin to take up his abode in Watling Street during his stay in London. We take so little pleasure in finding out occult motives for the actions of people whom we meet in the world, that we scarcely like to hint that Master Browne perhaps owed this stretch of warm courtesy to the fact that the king had extended towards him no light and ineffectual protection. Let us rather suppose, therefore, that the charm of the guest's conversation, tempered as it was, for this once, with a virtuous prudence (which had been strongly urged upon him by Whapplot), prevented the excellent but prejudiced hostess from perceiving how dangerous an inmate she was thus receiving into her house. Be this as it may, the guest-chamber was prepared on the following day for the Kentish kinsman, who in the meantime had regained, without much trouble, from the hostelry in Southwark, from which he had been virtually excluded, the travelling-bag which contained, not only his changes of raiment, but also—ah, if the begging friar of Finsbury Field had but known this!—his manuscript copy of the sacred Scriptures.

CHAPTER XI.

HALF AN HOUR'S CONTROVERSY.

VERY much to the surprise of Mrs. Margaret Hunne, her Lollard guest, after several days' sojourn beneath her husband's roof, had never once in conversation approached the debateable ground of polemical or doctrinal religion. He talked very freely on other subjects; traced, with her, and to her heart's content, their separate

descents from one common ancestor, who had fought bravely, some hundred and sixty years ago or more, in the famous battle of Crecy ; gave her the history of other and remoter branches of their family ; told her anecdotes of his Kentish neighbours, and described the beauties of his neighbourhood ; entered feelingly into her account of the sorrows she had experienced in the loss of several fair promising sons and daughters, who had been cut off in infancy, so that she had only one child left—the Margaret who was so beloved by Roger Whapplot, but whom she could never consent to her marrying—no, never. All this and much more had passed between the London citizeness and her country cousin ; and her heart greatly inclined towards him, for he was not only a pleasant speaker when it pleased her to hear, but also a most excellent listener when it pleased her to speak.

Mistress Hunne was both puzzled and a little irritated by this reticence on the part of her guest, for she had thought over the excellent arguments by the which his foolish notions were to be easily put down ; and having such an armoury of offensive weapons, she desired earnestly to use them, nothing doubting of their efficacy. For, in truth, she began to look upon her kinsman as being a good sort of simple-minded man, country-born and bred, who had accidentally strayed into forbidden paths, but whom it would be easy enough for her to turn or lead back again to the safe and broad road of ecclesiastical obedience. It would be a thousand pities, thought she to herself, that such a man should be lost for time and eternity, because of the want of the sound advice and instruction which she was ready to impart.

It may be thought that Mistress Hunne was somewhat too confident in her powers of persuasion, considering that she had exercised them in vain so far as her daughter Margaret and her husband's late apprentice were concerned, and with very doubtful effect even upon Master Hunne himself. But it was easy for her

to attribute these defeats and failures to other causes than her own deficiency in argument. This she did, and she was the more eager to encounter a friendly adversary to whom those causes would not apply. There was also her old acquaintance Joan Baker (already mentioned), whom Mistress Hunne had been unable to convince; but then everybody knew that, with many estimable qualities, Joan was a most remarkably eccentric woman, who would have her own way either with or without reason; and, in fact, the good merchant-tailor's wife had given up disputing with her about Lollardism in the abstract, having had of late to defend herself pretty stoutly against her gossip's charges of a want of maternal tenderness in relation to the half-broken-off match of her daughter. There was no fear, Mistress Hunne thought, of her kinsman being affected with this womanly weakness of match-making and mending; and in short she desired a quiet passage of arms with Master John Browne.

"Kinsman," said she, one day when they were seated together but otherwise alone, "you have never told me what the differences are between you and the priests of our holy church."

"I knew not that you would care to hear of them, my good cousin," said Browne; "and methinks it would be but an ill requital of your kindness in receiving me as a guest, to din into your ears the story of those differences."

"Nay, but," said the lady, "only suppose that I have the natural curiosity of my sex; and this disposes of your doubtfulness. Besides, if I be wrong in trusting my salvation to the church, would it not be charity to put me right?"

"There is the foundation of your error, cousin," replied the man of Ashford; "for it is not the church that saves; but Jesus Christ only. Hear then to what he himself tells us when he says, 'I am Way, Truth, and Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.' And listen also to the holy apostle Peter,—'This is the stone

reproved of you in building, which is made into the head of the corner; and health is not in any other: for neither other name is given under heaven to men in which it behoveth us to be made safe.' So you see that it is Christ Jesus only who saves, and not the church."

"You are far gone in your heresy, I fear me, since you come to quoting your Wycliffe English Bible by rote," said Mistress Hunne, with a smile of complacency at having traced home her kinsman to the source of his borrowings;—"but you forget, cousin John, that there are those who can tell—that it is through the holy church that Christ saves, and through that only."

"Nay, I see not how that can be, only that those who are saved are truly in Christ's holy church, yet not of necessity in the Romish church; for did not He say, with his own mouth—'He that believeth in me shall not be doomed'? and did not another say of him—'He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; but he that is unbelieveth to the Son shall not see everlasting life'? You see, therefore, cousin Margaret, there is no mention made of the church, but only of him who believeth, and him who saveth."

"But the priests say—and sure they ought to know—that there can be no true faith but such as is found in the Romish church."

"And how then could any believe in the days of our Lord, when there was no Romish church, cousin?" demanded John Browne. "Also," continued he, "I know that they tell us that there can be no true church without his holiness the pope at the head of it. Then, say I, where was the church before ever a pope was thought of?"

"If you say such things," said Mistress Hunne, "I wonder not at your being hunted from pillar to post, as it seems you are, kinsman. Many men have burned for less than you have now uttered."

"Ay, that is ever the way;—it was so with the Master when the

Jews took up stones to stone him, because they could not answer him." So said John Browne, and then he added : " But even let it be so that I burn, as methinks I some day shall, I cannot but speak the things that I know ; and, since you will have it, my fair kinswoman, I must needs declare that (though I disown not communion altogether with the church) there is so much which needs amending that I begin to doubt if it be the true church of which the Lord Jesus is the head."

" Nay, but this is worse than heresy—sure there are those who would call it blasphemy," exclaimed Mistress Hunne, somewhat shocked, for she had never before heard such outspoken words addressed to her.

" Not if I prove what I say," responded Browne ; " and this I will do. You told me just now, cousin, that it is through the church only that Jesus Christ saves : but what if the church puts Christ's precious salvation out of sight, and tells that it is the priest who saves, or the virgin mother, or the dead saints, or our own good deeds, or our penances, or our going on pilgrimages ; or that all these boastful things put together save ; and not Christ and Christ only ? Think you that this can be pleasing to God, who will have all men to be saved, truly ; but only as he has appointed ? I will tell you of something that came to pass in our parts, some time ago, when the poorer folks were in great want of food,"—continued John Browne, who began to wax animated in his argument. " There was a worthy gentleman of good estate, who had a fine large house, and barns full of corn ready for grinding ; and, taking pity on the half-starved commons, he made it known that he would give daily doles to all who came to ask his charity,—only they were to go up to his house by a certain way which he had opened, and to a certain door at the end of that way. So the people were glad, and they flocked to the great mansion, and were sent away daily satisfied, with food for themselves and their children. But behold

you! there were certain poor folks who wanted as badly as any; and they went to get food: but either because they had not been rightly instructed, or were too dull to understand, or, it may be, because they were too proud to obey instructions,—they went to the house by some other way, and knocked at another door. And when this was done—as it was by one and another, once and again—the gentleman was angry, as he well might be; and he said that, as these poor silly folks would not go to him in his way, but in ways of their own making, they should have none of his help. Now, cousin Margaret, did he rightly?”

“I suppose so, Master Browne; for had he not a right to do as he would with his own?”

“So say I; and see, here is the pinch:—Men wanted what God only can give—help and salvation. Then he said: ‘Lo! I have laid help on one who is mighty. I give my Son. Come to me, all of you, through him; for he is the way, and the door also.’ See then, my good cousin—if we say we would be saved, but seek to be saved by saints, or priests, or pilgrimages, and set up Mary instead of Jesus—and so seek to get what we want in such forbidden ways, think you that God will hear us?”

“Methinks, cousin,” said Mistress Hunne, somewhat scornfully, yet not altogether departing from her pleasant humour: “you should set up for a priest yourself. A pity you had not been an Oxford scholar! Yet for all your fine words, I tell you, you are but wasting breath; and it is well for you that your bold speeches are not heard by those who would feel pleasure in reporting them.”

“Nay, but you challenged me, fair cousin; and I must speak. Yet will I hold my peace now and ever after, will you but look into my book which you know to be with my travelling gear in the chamber above.”

“Into your English Bible, quotha! the Lollard book that has made such a stir and so much mischief this hundred years past

and gone? When I do that, you may call me Lollard too, cousin Browne," said Mistress Hunne.

And here, for that time, the controversy ended, having the usual termination belonging to such arguments—namely, that each disputant was more wedded to his and her way of thinking than before. And thus, it may be, Master John Browne's sojourn in Watling Street would have come to an end without further result, but for an unexpected event which broke into the usual serenity of the ordinary life of the merchant-tailor's family, and which will be better told in a new chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

MISTRESS HUNNE HEARS UNPLEASANT NEWS.

LIKE all good housewives and prudent female heads of families in her day, Mistress Margaret Hunne chose to do her own marketing. Doubtless this tended to the increase of her husband's prosperity,—at least, she would have told you so; for, according to the old proverb,—“a penny saved is a penny got;” and Mistress Hunne probably saved many pennies by carrying ready money in the ample purse which hung at her girdle, along with her household keys; and also by getting many a cheap pennyworth where a careless hireling would have purchased a dear one. Whether these advantages were counterbalanced by the opportunities thus afforded for gadding abroad it is not for us to decide.

Our business, however, being with Mistress Hunne, we are bound to confess that she was rather fond of “greetings in the markets,” and the occasional gossip she looked for with her friends who were

out on the same errand did, now and then, no doubt interfere with the punctuality of her return home. But this was of the less consequence to her, as she left a good substitute for overlooking the maids in the kitchen, in her daughter Margaret, who, under her mother's tuition, had become a thrifty and very knowing manager. Moreover, Master Hunne was indulgent, and never thought of calling his wife to account, even though the eleven o'clock dinner were delayed half-an-hour in consequence of a longer absence than usual.

One morning then, during the sojourn of her kinsman Browne in her house, Mistress Hunne, having presided at the family breakfast table (the principal ingredients of which meal consisted in a cold round of salt beef, purchased at a halfpenny a pound—brown bread at the cost of three-halfpence a gallon*—a fresh meat pasty well seasoned with black pepper, salt, and onions—and a black-jack or leathern jug of thin, sour, hopless beer)—and having seen these various viands well disposed of, prepared to do her customary marketing. First of all, setting her household to their various tasks, she commanded a serving-man to follow her footsteps, provided with a basket for bringing home the results of her morning's forage: and then she slowly walked towards the Leaden-hall and Billingsgate of that day; acquiring dignity, probably, by the thought of how much the comfort of her husband and her household, and "the stranger within her gates," depended on the proper fulfilment of her wifely housekeeping duties. Meanwhile,

* "Beef and pork were a halfpenny a pound; mutton was three farthings. They were fixed at these prices by the 3rd of the 24th of Henry VIII. But this Act was unpopular both with buyers and with sellers. The old practice had been to sell in the gross, and under that arrangement the rates had been generally lower. The butchers of London sold penny pieces of beef for the relief of the poor—every piece weighing two pounds and a half, sometimes fourteen of these pieces for twelve pence. Wheat—the price of which necessarily varied—averaged, in the middle of the fourteenth century, tenpence a bushel. The wages of a day-labourer (at this time) were, on an average, fourpence a day, for the whole year."—*Froude's History of England*.

Master Hunne, busily employed in his stall-like shop, Margaret in her deputed office in the kitchen, and the above-mentioned stranger, or guest, in his chamber alone, deeply immersed in his scriptural studies—each and all quietly awaited the return of the lady, or loaf-server, of the establishment.

Two hours passed away, and Mistress Hunne was yet absent. Three hours—and then, when Hunne found that his wife had not returned, he muttered a gentle murmur of wonder as to what could keep her so long abroad, and questioned his daughter as to the probable cause of the delay. Presently he began to grow increasingly uneasy at the prolonged absence of his wife, the more so that the serving-lad had returned with his provender basket, saying that his mistress had sent him home, and desired him to announce that she would not immediately follow. More than this he could not say. At last, however, when Master Hunne was about to step out in search of his missing spouse, she made her appearance ; but with such marks of discomposure, that the anxious husband's alarm was rather augmented than diminished.

It was some little time ere Mistress Hunne could find words to explain the cause of her sorrow ; and then her tale was not very coherent, though sufficient, as her husband thought, to account for her distress. This was her story.

She had commenced her marketing, and was cheapening at her poulterer's, a brace of water-fowl snared on the marshes of Westminster, when her elbow was jogged by one who stood by, and on turning round, she found herself in close proximity with a poor old creature, well known as "mad Ursula," who frequented the streets and markets of London, and subsisted on the charity of the humane, who took compassion on her mental infirmities. Among the kindly patronesses of Ursula was Mistress Hunne, who often relieved her necessities, though at the same time she shrank with a kind of natural dread from the poor maniac. On this occasion



MISTRESS HUNNE AND MAD URSULA.

there seemed a peculiar glance of mystery and mischief combined in the ill-favoured countenance of the mad woman; and the merchant-tailor's wife, after bestowing upon her an accustomed alms, was turning away, when Ursula's hand was laid on her arm, and Ursula's voice whispered hoarsely in her ear,—

"There are to be fine doings again in Smithfield. Wot you not of what is going on, cummer?"

"I know not what you mean, Ursula, and I am even too busy to hear your cracks now," said Mistress Hunne, somewhat offended by the woman's familiarity, and not unwilling to speak ungently.

But Ursula was not disposed to be so easily rebuffed. Still grasping the other's arm, she continued, in the same tone of confidential gossip,—

"Remember you the burning of old Joan Boughton; and was it not a merry sight? And my Lady Young, too, her dainty daughter? Ho, ho! I was there, and it did me good to see them."

"For shame, Ursula," said Mrs. Hunne, quickly. "It might be right to punish those ladies for their heresy; but it is not womanly to rejoice at the remembrance of their sufferings."

"Ah, but the priests tell a different story from that; and so there are to be more burnings." And then, drawing Mistress Hunne still more close to her, and yet more lowering her voice, she whispered, "There's your dame Joan Baker,—what say you, mistress, if she were to make acquaintance with fagot, and tar-barrel, and torch? Ha, ha!" And she burst into a discordant laugh.

"Beware what you say, Ursula," exclaimed Mistress Hunne, angrily. "I know you have no liking for Joan Baker; but this slander against her passes patience. Take heed, or your back and the beadle's whip may chance to make acquaintance."

"Nay, they are old acquaintances already," said the poor crazy woman, shrugging her shoulders. "and they are not too well agreed,

I trow. But whip, or no whip, see if what I have told you be not true. And I am glad of it,—glad, glad; for did not Joan, not a week ago, refuse to give me an awmous, and bid me be packing for a mad beggar,—a beggar, quoth she! See if I be not at her burning.”

“But, Ursula, good Ursula, what mean you?” demanded Mistress Hunne, who began to fear there was something more than vague denunciation in the mad woman’s speech. Indeed, it was not unlikely that Joan Baker might be in some sort of trouble, seeing how indiscreet and outspoken she was in reference to religious matters. So, at least, Mistress Hunne thought, and she repeated the question with much earnestness. “What mean you? Hath any harm befallen Mistress Baker?”

To this anxious question, however, Mistress Hunne received no coherent reply; and, after another shrill and lunatic laugh, mad Ursula darted away, leaving her hearer in a state of great alarm. Hastily completing her purchases, therefore, and sending them home by the lad by whom she was accompanied, she put in execution her speedily-formed determination to pay a visit to her friend, and learn from her own lips if there were any foundation for Ursula’s wicked exultation.

Now Mistress Joan Baker dwelt in a pleasant house beyond the Tower of London, eastward, where town and country met together and embraced each other, the inhabitants of that district having the advantage of airy dwellings and sweet gardens. It was a long walk, therefore, and Mistress Hunne, not being a rapid pedestrian, it was some time ere she reached her destination. And, alas! when she did reach it, her worst fears were confirmed; for the damsel who waited on Mistress Baker was in sore distress, because her mistress had been visited on the previous day by certain apparitors belonging to the Bishop of London’s court, who had not only made search among her household goods for heretical writings, but

had taken her away with them to be examined. Furthermore, the maiden stated, with many tears, that her mistress bade her farewell as though they should never again meet; and gave her instructions what she should do, in case of her non-return to her home.

“And she did not return?”

No, she had not returned; and it was known among the neighbours, or guessed by them, that her mistress, after being examined by the bishop, had been put into the Lollards' Tower, close by St. Paul's, and was again to be examined concerning certain charges, made against her for heresy. So said the damsel: and a neighbour coming in confirmed all this, stating that her husband, moved partly by curiosity and partly by pity, had followed the apparitors and their prisoner to the bishop's court, and heard what had taken place. Also, that others were at the same time examined, namely, Thomas Forge, and Alice his wife, and John their son; and one Thomas Goodred, and John Calverton, with divers more. And it was thought it would go hard with all these, who were well known, or at least greatly suspected of holding Lollard sentiments, and of reading Wycliffe's English Bible, and other heretical writings.

This was the news which Mrs. Hunne learned in her journey eastward, and which, on her return to Watling Street, she poured into her husband's ears.

“And I always feared,” she sobbed, “that Joan Baker would get herself into this coil. But, alack! is it not a shame that the Bishop of London should trouble himself thus to hunt out a poor woman, whose worst fault is that she hath a tongue in her head?”

Master Hunne agreed with his wife. He thought it was more than a shame,—a grievous sin, that any one, male or female, should be punished for Bible-reading, and for holding opinions on religion contrary to those of Romish priests.

“And, husband,” exclaimed Mistress Hunne, “they told me that

Joan Baker is to be examined again on the morrow at ten o'clock ; and confronted with the witnesses against her. Would I were a man to be present, and say something on her behalf."

"Which is as much as to say, Margaret, 'Why go you not and be bail-bond for her, if need be?' Well, I care not if I do this ; for it can surely bring me into no peril ; and I would rather it should cost me five hundred marks than that Mistress Baker should come to harm. But I think me now it is long past our dinner hour, and our fasting will not advantage poor Joan."

CHAPTER XIII.

JOAN BAKER GETS INTO TROUBLE.

"AMONGST and besides the great number of the faithful martyrs and professors of Christ that constantly, in the strength of the Holy Ghost, gave their lives for the testimony of his truth" (writes Master John Foxe, in his "Acts and Monuments"), "I find recorded in the register of London, between the years of our Lord 1509 and 1527, the names of divers other persons, both men and women, who, in the fulness of that dark and misty time of ignorance, had also some portion of God's good Spirit, which induced them to the knowledge of his truth and gospel, and were diversely troubled, persecuted, and imprisoned for the same. Notwithstanding, by the proud, cruel, and bloody rage of the Catholic sect, and through the weakness and frailty of their own nature (not then fully strengthened in God), it was again in them for the time suppressed and kept under, as appeareth by their several abjurations made before Richard Fitzjames, the bishop of London (in his time a

most cruel persecutor of Christ's church), or else before his vicar-general, deputed for the same. And, forasmuch as many of the adversaries of God's truth have of late days disdainfully and braggingly cried out, and made demands in their public assemblies, and yet do, asking, 'Where this our church and religion was within these fifty or sixty years?' I have thought it not altogether vain somewhat to stop such lying crackers, both by mentioning their names, and likewise opening some of the chief and principal matters for which they were so unmercifully afflicted and molested; thereby to give to understand as well the continuance and consent of the true church of Christ in that age, touching the chief points of our faith (though not in like perfection of knowledge and constancy in all), as also, by the way, something to touch what fond and frivolous matters the ignorant prelates shamed not, in that time of blindness, to object against the poor and simple people, accounting them in heinous and great offences, yea, such as deserved death both of body and soul."

So far Master Foxe, who then proceeds to give the names of forty persons (six of them being women) who were thus persecuted and frightened into submission for a time to ecclesiastical tyranny. Of these forty, thirteen were haled before the Bishop of London, or his vicar-general, in the year of our story's commencement, being accused of heresy either by their curates or others their neighbours.

"And because," continues the historian, "I think it somewhat superfluous to make any large recital of all and every part of their several process, I mind, therefore, briefly only to touch so many of their articles as may be sufficient to induce the Christian reader to judge the source of the rest." Then the martyrologist goes on with the following account:

"The chief objections against Joan Baker were as follow:—That she would not only herself not reverence the crucifix, but had also persuaded a friend of hers, lying at the point of death, not to

put any trust or confidence in the crucifix, but in God, who is in heaven, who only worketh all the miracles that be done, and not the dead images, which be but stocks and stones; and therefore she was sorry that ever she had gone so often on pilgrimage to St. Saviour and other idols. Also, that she did hold opinion that the pope had no power to give pardons; and that the Lady Young (who was not long before that time burned) died a true martyr of God; and therefore she, Joan Baker, wished of God that she herself might do no worse than the said Lady Young had done."

The examination of Joan Baker being for that time over, comes a batch of other equally guilty culprits, named Thomas Goodred, Thomas Walker, Thomas Forge, Alice Forge his wife, John Forge their son, John Calverton, John Woodrof, Richard Woolman, and Roger Hilliar.

"Amongst the manifold and several articles objected against these persons," continues John Foxe,—“as that they should speak against pilgrimages, praying unto saints, and such like—this principally was propounded: That they all denied the carnal and corporal presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of the altar; and further, that they had concealed and consented unto their teachers and instructors in this deadly heresy, and had not, according to the laws of the church, accused and presented them unto the bishop or his ordinary.”

These historical jottings will suffice for the purpose of our story, the thread of which we again take up.

Among those who listened to the examination of some of the above-mentioned unhappy accused was Richard Hunne, who, with a courage which is highly to be commended (considering, especially, that he had a Lollard for his guest at that time), ventured within the dangerous and iniquitous court of that unholy inquisition. His full intention was to offer substantial bail, if need were, for Joan Baker, and so, for that time, to liberate her from

the clutches of ecclesiastical law. But no opportunity was afforded for this generous interference, the accused being again remanded to the Lollards' Tower, either to await another examination, or else (which was more likely) to be terrified and driven into the recantation of what the bishop and his minions were pleased to call her heretical errors. With a heavy heart and downcast countenance, therefore, Master Hunne returned to his home, where his wife and daughter, together with their guest, were anxiously awaiting his report.

"It is a shame," cried Mistress Hunne, indignantly; "for if the poor woman has spoken indiscreetly, she has a right to hold her opinions; and little it becomes the Bishop of London, or any other bishop, to be persecuting a helpless Lollard—if she be a Lollard—for saying what is on her mind. Better he should show her the error of her thoughts by mild persuasion."

"I say the same," said her husband, "if, indeed, there be error; but methinks there is more truth in Joan's words than any bishop of them all is willing to allow. For is it not folly to trust in the piece of wood of which the crucifix is made, rather than in Him who once hung upon the cross? For my part, I readily hold with one whom I heard say that he knew no cause why the cross should be worshipped, seeing that the same was a hurt and pain unto our Saviour, and not any ease or pleasure. He also said that if he had had a friend hanged or drowned, he would ever after have liked the gallows or the water by which his friend died rather worse for that than better. I think and am sure," added Master Hunne, looking round cautiously, "that we are all agreed as to this."

"You shall not be betrayed, father," said the younger Margaret, with a melancholy smile, for the thought entered her mind how frequently and how much her father's timorousness kept him back from a full acknowledgment, even to himself, of the opinions he

in reality held. It may be that she also thought how that timorousness had marred, and was still marring, not only her own, but also Roger Whapplot's earthly comfort. She said not this, however, and seeing that her mother cast a sharp, quick glance at her, as in reproof of her sad smile, the damsel retreated within herself, and said no more.

But presently Master Browne spake thus,—

"When our blessed Lord was on earth, he forewarned his disciples and friends of what should be hereafter. 'Lo,' said he, 'I send you as sheep in the middle of wolves—and they shall take you in councils, and shall beat you in their synagogues. And to mayors, and presidents, and to kings ye shall be led for me, in witnessing to them and to the heathen.—And the brother forsooth shall take the brother into death; and the father the son; and sons shall rise against father and mother; and they shall torment them by death. And ye shall be in hate to all men for my name; but he that shall dwell still unto the end, shall be safe.' Methinks," continued John Browne, "we are witnessing the fulfilment of this prophecy even now. It may be the time will come—yea, it must come—when men will marvel how these things could ever be; but that time seemeth yet far distant."

"Yet you think not that there are any now within hearing who would be so *niderling* as to betray what is here spoken in secret?" said Hunne, somewhat taken aback.

"Nay, I say not that, although it is foretold that nothing is hidden that shall not be showed and known; for the things that have been said in darkness shall be said in light, and that which is spoken in the ear in bedchambers shall be preached from houseroofs. But this is for another day; meanwhile I am troubled in thinking how my dwelling under your roof, my good cousins, may lead to your damage. As to wit, you, my kind host, have reported that one of the sore charges against some of the

accused this day is that they have helped and concealed those who think and speak as I do, instead of presenting them to the bishop or other spiritual powers, and thus delivering them up to punishment. Now, think you that you are open to this same charge, and may any day be accused of the same. Therefore, though I am free to confess that my own concerns require me to stay some little time longer in London, and though I could not desire a more pleasant abode—yet will I this day depart rather than bring you, my good host, into jeopardy. And I do confess my negligence in not having duly considered this ere now.”

“Nay, you shall not leave us on such a plea, kinsman,” said Mrs. Hunne, boldly. And so also said her husband, adding,—

“You are in a sort under the king’s protection, Master Browne; and as Roger Whapplot had it in charge to see you safe, I hold that I also am bound to keep you trustily while you remain in London, asking no questions as to why you left your home, and when it is your pleasure to return. And, be it so or not, it shall never be said of Richard Hunne that he turned a friend from his door because he sniffed danger in the distance.”

It was bravely spoken; and some honour is due to Master Hunne that, overcoming or keeping down his natural timidity or prudence, he could arrive at this conclusion. Nevertheless, in his innermost heart he was somewhat troubled (though he showed it not) at the words before quoted by John Browne; namely, that what had been said in darkness and in the secrecy of a chamber should hereafter be proclaimed in the light and on the housetop. He would have been yet more troubled could he then have known how truly those words would, ere many years had passed away, be fulfilled in his own history.

It was two or three days after this conversation that tidings were brought to Mistress Hunne that her friend Joan Baker had been

terrified into abjuring her heretical opinions, as they were called ; and so; submitting to a heavy penance as well, had been released from custody.

That same evening—her husband being abroad, and her daughter Margaret in her chamber—Mistress Hunne said to her guest,—

“You challenged me once to look into your book, kinsman, and I have a mind now to accept the challenge, if you will but trust the writings in my hands.”

“That will I do most gladly,” said Browne ; “and I will not call you Lollard either, as you gave me leave to do in such a case. But may I make bold to ask what has changed your mind concerning that book ?”

“I know not that I can tell you, cousin, only there is something within me that bids me seek this at your hands. Yet I must needs acknowledge that I think they must be in the wrong who trample down and punish poor folks as Joan Baker has been served. And I would also know what there be in the Holy Scriptures which Christ himself, as you have told me, preached to the common people, who heard him joyfully, that sets our priests so strongly against the English people reading them.”

“It would not be hard to enlighten you ; but I will rather that you find it out for yourself,” said John Browne.

That same evening, John Wycliffe's New Testament was in Mistress Hunne's safe keeping.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW MISTRESS HUNNE WAS BROUGHT TO A KNOWLEDGE OF
THE TRUTH.

AN eloquent writer once very strikingly set before his readers some of the results which would immediately follow the banishment of the Bible, with its histories, its doctrines, its moral precepts, its diction, and its general literature, from our language. If our recollection serves us, he fancied a person rising some morning as usual, and taking down his Bible from its shelf to commence the day with reading a portion of Scripture, finding, to his surprise and alarm, that the pages were all blank. Rubbing his eyes, to assure himself that the defect was not in his own imperfect vision, and to satisfy himself of being fully awake, the wonder-stricken man concluded that some trick had been played upon him, and sought out another Bible from his library: but with the same result,—its pages were also blank. Seriously affected by this most mysterious and afflictive occurrence, the devout Scripture reader hastened to collect together all the Bibles in his house, and tremblingly opened them, one after another, to see if one among them had escaped the general catastrophe. No, not one. There, indeed, were the books, with their exterior binding, and their interior full complement of paper leaves; but they were blank leaves, as though they had never been printed on,—every word and letter had disappeared, as it seemed, for ever.

It must have been a miraculous judgment (so he thought) inflicted upon himself for former neglect of the word; and he rushed from his house to tell his tale of woe to a sympathising friend. He met that friend in the street, and one glance at his countenance

was enough to show that he also was suffering from a similar infliction,—his Bible too had become blank.

Nor were these two the only sufferers. As the day wore on, a strange consternation pervaded the whole city; for not a Bible remained, save in outward semblance. And soon it became known that throughout the whole land the same stroke of trouble had been felt. Not a Bible was to be found whose pages had not become perfectly blank. In public libraries, in private collections, in booksellers' shops, in printers' warehouses, in palaces, in halls, in cottages, in hovels,—wherever there had been a Bible there was one no longer,—merely a bundle of blank leaves.

Nor was this all (so the writer went on); for, on looking *into* his library, and examining his books, the imaginary personage of the story found that scarcely a volume remained perfect. In some, whole pages had disappeared (or rather the contents of them); in others perpetual blanks occurred from beginning to end; in others, frequent paragraphs were missing. In short, in any and every book in which a Bible text, or verse, or number of verses had previously been introduced, the sacred words and sentences had disappeared. And what had happened to his books had happened to all others, so that, in one dark and dismal night, the whole land was reduced to an utter deprivation and destitution of Holy Scripture.

This, though told in other words, is the parable; and its design is obvious. We shall not dwell upon this, however, but merely observe that the calamity thus supposed represents only feebly what was the real state of England with regard to Bible truth some three or four centuries ago. “Only feebly;” for in the case imagined it was also suggested, that though the visible printed words had disappeared, they remained on the memories of the thousands and hundreds of thousands of Bible students throughout the land, who were able, conjointly, and by the exercise of memory,

to compile a new Bible,—the fac-simile of the old, and thus restore to the afflicted country the inestimably precious blessing of which it had temporarily been deprived.

But in those days of which we are writing, among the greater part of the people of England there was an almost entire ignorance of the word of God. Printed Bibles in the vulgar tongue, as we have before said, there were none; and though their coming place was feebly supplied by manuscript copies, they were in the hands of but very few, and were hunted out, wherever they were suspected of being hidden, and, if found, destroyed. Nor was there in the minds of the people in general any knowledge or remembrance of the contents of the Bible, or any possibility of obtaining this knowledge by ordinary means. The priests of the Romish church, whom to call Christian teachers would be a gross perversion of truth, misled their flocks by false doctrines, which were utterly at variance with Scripture, and amused them with imaginary, and in many instances, ridiculous and profane, legends of saints, and travesties of Bible histories. They were, in fact, blind leaders of the blind. What wonder, then, that both leaders and led fell into the ditch? It was true to the very letter, that the people were destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Under such circumstances, then, it is easy to conceive how great and almost overpowering must have been the flood of light which poured in upon the minds of those who, for the first time in their lives, became acquainted with the real facts of the gospel, by the perusal of the New Testament,—especially when those truths were conveyed to their souls by the irresistible energy of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless the effect is the same now when a sinner is first of all convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and is so shown the infinite value of Christ's precious atonement as to cause him to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope thus set before him. But there is this difference:—in the latter case, the

letter of Divine truth has not been unknown, or has, at any rate, been very near to the convert, and has thus in a certain sense prepared his mind for the reception of its spirit ; in the former everything must have been new, surprising, wonderful, and astounding.

Such, at least, was the experience of Mistress Hunne when, under the influence of strong, passionate resentment at the treatment to which her friend Joan Baker had been subjected, and of the determined contempt of priestly authority which temporarily took possession of her feelings, she first of all sat down to read the banned book. She was able to do this ; for, though only the wife of a tradesman, she had been taught to read and write, as well as to work a sampler and back-stitch and hem. Possibly, also, she had obtained a smattering of French, which she spake "full fair and fetisly, after the school at Stratford atte Bow," like Chaucer's gentle prioress ; but this needs confirmation. English she could read, however ; and the happiest use to which she had ever put, or could ever put, her attainment, was when she set about the study of Wycliffe's New Testament.

What Margaret Hunne found, and what she did not find, almost equally filled her mind with extreme surprise. To begin with the main, grand topic of all,—the glorious gospel of God,—she did not find the Christ of whom she had heard from Romish priests,—a weakling Saviour (may we be forgiven for using such a descriptive phrase, even in strong reprobation !)—one who as an intercessor could do nothing, or little, for guilty sinners, unless prompted, and urged, and assisted by the more powerful pleadings of the virgin mother ;* but she read of One mighty to save to the uttermost all

* Lest I should be charged with misrepresentation of the doctrines and belief of the Romish church, and of the current ideas of the masses of Roman Catholics respecting the merits, and dignity, and power of the Virgin Mary, I venture to give an extract or two from a modern Roman Catholic work :—"Mary is the queen of heaven and earth, and consequently has unlimited power."—"Mary is the spouse of the Holy Ghost, and has over his heart the influence of a spouse tenderly beloved ; she can soften it, move it,

who come to God by him. In the history of his life and passion, his death, and resurrection, and ascension, she found that, according to Old Testament predictions, Christ had trodden the winepress alone,—had obtained the victory, and conquered death and hell, despoiling death of its sting and the grave of its power, alone. She read of one mediator, and only one, and that one, Jesus Christ,—of one way to God, and only one, and that way, Jesus Christ only.

In her former faith, or the creed she had from childhood been taught to reverence, she had looked to angels and dead saints to help her in time of need; but she vainly sought in this new study any encouragement to such a fancy. On the contrary, she made the discovery that even the apostles of our Lord, though saints *par excellence*, were men of like passions with other men, and neither deserved nor desired any kind of religious worship to be paid to them, but would have shrunk from it with horror. Again, when Mistress Hunne sought to obtain some countenance from the book in her hand for any peculiar virtue she had attached to pilgrimages to holy places, she was met with a downright assurance that the only true worshippers were those who worshipped God in spirit and in truth; and that to these every place was alike holy and sanctified. Again, her true woman's wit going straight to the mark, showed to Mistress Hunne, without any roundabout phrases, that there was no warrant in aught she read for the favourite doctrine of bread and wine being changed into the flesh and bones and blood of Christ by the muttered charm of a priest. And, lastly, when she looked for a word about the purgatory of Romish priests,

disarm its anger, and obtain from it the greatest grace for all."—"Mary is the mother of Jesus, and has over his heart all the influence which the most amiable and most perfect of all mothers should have over such a son."—"All power is given to her in heaven and upon earth, that she may obtain whatever she wishes; she has with God the power of a mother: He cannot avoid hearing her, since in all and everything he has obeyed her. She is the queen of angels in heaven, of men upon earth, and of the devils in hell; and Christ, wishing to redeem the human race, has confided all its ransom to Mary."

she looked in vain. She read only that those who believed should be saved ; and that those who believed not—dreadful alternative, but inevitable—would be everlastingly condemned.

But, happily, the consequences of Mistress Hunne's new study did not terminate in this enlightenment of mind,—leaving the heart untouched. Very soon carried far beyond the range of mere polemics relating to the peculiar doctrines and practices of her Romish creed, and the teachings of its priests, a new and heretofore unthought of, yet infinitely important, concern sprang up in her soul, which can be expressed best in the agonizing demand of the Philipian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Plainly she saw that the dependence she had all her life placed on external forms and ceremonies (supposing even that they were, so far as they went, scriptural) fell altogether short of that faith which is needful for salvation, and left her condition in the sight of God, as a guilty sinner, unaltered. In short, after many days' secret study of the New Testament (so secret, that even her husband had no suspicion of this new occupation of her time), Mistress Hunne's serious, distressful alarm for her soul's state bore down and banished out of sight and mind all thoughts of the controversy existing between the Romish church and Lollardism. She wanted salvation, and an assurance of an interest in God's pardoning mercy, let them come how they might. She was a sinner. Unnumbered sins rose in her remembrance to condemn her; and she could yet but dimly discern the way by which she could become reconciled to God. That she had been deceived either wilfully or ignorantly by priestly confessors, who had said, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace, was the least part of her discovery, though this was important. The great thing—the one thing needful—with her now was to obtain, at all risks, a true and certain reply to the earnest cry of her spirit, "What must I do to be saved?"

CHAPTER XV.

MISTRESS HUNNE IS ENCOURAGED.

"KINSMAN, kinsman, why speak you not to me? This week past I have been looking for you to give me some word of help, and I have looked in vain."

Thus spoke Mistress Hunne to her guest one Sunday afternoon, when they were by themselves, Master Hunne having gone out to one of the city churches, and taken with him his daughter.

"I crave your pardon, cousin, but I knew not that I had been discourteously silent,—although thoughts of home may have too much occupied my mind. Yet, truly, had I thought you needed my poor help in any matter, I would have offered it."

"I need help now, and I think it is you who can give it. Yet when I need it most, you are most silent. You have not of late spoken one word to me on that great matter which has driven you from your home for a season."

"My good cousin, methought I had already said too much, even at the risk of giving offence. And, moreover, I promised that I would not utter another word, so you would but read my book,—which you afterwards borrowed."

"And therein is my great trouble," said Mistress Hunne, in sorrowful accents. "It is the book has caused it; and I wonder not now that the priests set themselves so against it."

"You wish, then, that you had not opened it?" said Master Browne.

"Nay, that do I not wish," responded the dame, earnestly; "for I think if ever I win to heaven it will be by the good teaching of the book."

"This is the joyfullest news I have heard this many a day," interposed the guest. "But why then speak you of trouble, as though the book had done you harm? And what help need you of me?"

"Alack! I see well that there is no hope for me in making my soul safe in any way I have yet tried; and I see not yet how otherwise it may be done." And hereupon Mistress Hunne shed many tears.

"These are good tears, if they be sincere, as I doubt not they be," said Browne, presently; "and I would have you to know, cousin, that many others have sorrowed even as you sorrow now, yet has their sorrow soon been turned into joy. And now bring hither the book which has wrought this trouble in you, and let us see if it does not also provide the remedy."

So Mistress Hunne brought forward the book, and then the conversation was resumed. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the distressed and perplexed woman needed some one to guide her: and it was well that in her kinsman she had a guide who was not only honest in his intention, but well conversant with the Scriptures, which had not only been for some years his daily study, but which he had, with his own hand, carefully transcribed, and compared with its prototype, line by line, and word by word. And herein our Christian ancestors of three or four centuries ago, amidst all their great drawbacks, had this advantage—that the very scarcity of the Scriptures, and the frequent necessity that was laid upon them of making them their own by painful and laborious penmanship, gave them an intimate acquaintance with, and a readiness to turn to, any part of their own carefully collated manuscripts.

It is not needful for us to follow in our imagination the dialogue which ensued, in which the soul-afflicted woman laid open to her counsellor her doubts and fears. It is enough to say that for every objection she raised, and every bitter word she could utter against

herself, Master Browne could readily turn to a heaven-directed answer.

“You say you are a great sinner,” said the evangelist; “and this is indeed true, for all have sinned; but what saith the blessed word? ‘Christ died for the wicked; and God commendeth his charity in us; for when we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’ Hear again what Paul says” (and he turned to the passage): “‘The grace of our Lord overaboundeth with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus: a true word and worthy all receiving; for Christ Jesus came into this world to make sinful men safe, of which,’ said he, ‘I am the first,’ or the greatest. Then you object, kinswoman, that you know not how to get this great mercy, since you find truly that priests cannot impart it, nor any goodness of your own merit it. What, then, saith the Scripture?—and these be the words of the loving Saviour himself; here are they written” (turning again to the earlier pages of his manuscript)—“‘Ask ye and it shall be given to you; seek ye and ye shall find; knock ye and it shall be opened to you. For he that asketh taketh; and he that seeketh findeth; and it shall be opened to him that knocketh. What man of you is, that if his son ask him bread, whether he will take him a stone? Or if he ask fish, whether he will give him an adder? Therefore if ye, when ye be evil, know to give good gifts to your sons, how much more your Father that is in heaven shall give good things to men that ask him?’ You tell me, Cousin Hunne, that you need to know your soul to be saved. Hear again what was said to that great persecutor the prison-keeper, who had cruelly treated Christ’s servants, Paul and Silas, but who afterwards cried out as you have done, ‘What behoveth me to do, that I be made safe?’ And this said they: ‘Believe thou in the Lord Jesu, and thou shalt be made safe.’ And so he was, and so mayest thou be, cousin—nay so art thou now, dost thou but believe on Christ Jesus with all thine heart; for listen again, God has put betwixt himself and men

an oath, 'that by two things unmoveable, by which it is impossible God can lie, we have strongest solace, we that flee together to hold the hope that is put forth to us.'"

As Mistress Hunne drank in some such consolatory and excellent instructions, even as one parched with bodily thirst drinks in pure water, time passed on without her giving a thought to its passage; nor was she awakened to a sense of its rapid flight until the door of the apartment opened, and her husband and daughter entered.

* * * * *

"I know not, neither care I, whether I be Lollard or not," said Mistress Hunne, presently, when she had explained how she had passed the afternoon, and how, for some time past, she had been diligently searching the Scriptures to see if the things told her by her kinsman were so as he had stated them or not; "but this I know, that I have done with the deceits of that church, which have well-nigh drawn me on to my soul's ruin, and will cast in my lot with those who hope to obtain salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and by that alone."

Her husband was inwardly rejoiced to hear this, for the root of the matter was doubtless in him; yet he marvelled greatly, and, in some degree, he rejoiced with trembling also; for the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, was upon him. It was not so much that his business would suffer if it were known that he or his favoured the despised and persecuted sect of Lollards, though this was a matter not to be lightly passed over; but greater inconveniences and losses would be pretty sure to follow. Persecution was rife; and though perhaps of late there had been a little lull in the outcry raised against heresy, and not so many fires had been lighted for the burning of heretics, there was no telling how soon they might again be kindled, and meanwhile there were fines and imprisonments and confiscations; and how if these engines of per-



A WISE EXPOSITOR.

secuting cruelty should be set in motion against him and his? We may be almost sure that such thoughts as these would enter the mind of any serious inquirer at that time, though with different results: and we may safely conclude that Master Richard Hunne felt their force, and shrunk from the doleful prospect thus opened before him.

Besides, although Hunne had long seen, with growing dissatisfaction, many of the doctrines and practices of the Romish church to be grievous, and misleading, and soul-destructive errors, he certainly was not prepared to go all lengths with the Lollards, or Gospellers, as pious reformers were sometimes, in those days, called. He would rather have seen a reformation commenced and carried on in the bosom of the church by those whom he would have reckoned to have had legitimate authority with sufficient power to make their efforts successful, than by those who had but little or no personal weight to back their moral influence. And since this could not be, because the ruling powers in the church ordained that what was infallible could not be convicted of error, and what was perfect could not be improved—why, then Master Hunne, with hundreds of others, preferred keeping his private opinions safely under lock and key of his mind, while surreptitiously gaining what instruction, and comfort, and so forth, he needed from the writings of Wycliffe and others, which we have seen that he studied. Meanwhile, sincerely attached, probably, to the sensuous worship and imposing forms of the Romish church, and unable to discern how anything like acceptable religion could be manifested apart from them, he would have shrunk from the reality as well as from the open charge and accusation of being any other than a good and obedient Catholic Christian.

So when he heard his wife passionately declare her intention of seeking salvation through Christ alone, while he was glad that her mind was thus brought into conformity with his own on this

matter, he was also alarmed to hear her coupling with this declaration strong denunciations of the deceits of the Romish church.

"Gently, good wife!" said he. "It is, indeed, well to have the faith firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and on him alone, for through him alone can we be saved; but what need to make a loud outcry against the church, as though it were heathen or infidel?"

"And yet, father," interposed Margaret (the daughter), timidly and softly, "I am sure I have heard you tell of the ungodly lives of the priests, and the deceptions they practise upon the poor blinded people."

"Ay; and this comes of speaking always what is uppermost in the mind for the nonce," said Master Hunne. "Even our daughters, you see, kinsman Browne, cast our words back in our teeth." He said this good-humouredly, and yet with a little vexation.

"But, father, I am sure you said, only a short time since, that there was more truth in what Joan Baker was reported to have said than any bishop is willing to allow; and she said——"

"Out upon you, child!" exclaimed Margaret's father. "What know you of such matters? And yet I need not ask, for I think Master Roger Whapplot has found in you an apt scholar."

"And what need is there for you to be taunting Maggie with Roger Whapplot, dear husband," remonstrated Mistress Hunne, compunctiously (for she knew how often she had done it), "when you know that she has promised not to marry him without our consent? And I say now that my heart misgives me that we have so long stood out against our poor child's happiness, when I have been plainly shown that Roger has the right of it, and I have been in the wrong, about this blessed gospel."

It was rather too bad—and so Hunne felt it—to have the tables turned on him thus. For had not he always been on Margaret's side in the matter, and endeavoured to abate his wife's prejudices

against the match going on? Like a wise husband, however, he did not press this view of the case, but returned to the point from which they had diverged by responding to his wife's last expression.

"It is a blessed gospel," said he; "and I think if it were but permitted to be freely read by all, one half of the troubles we now witness would be done away."

"You, then, have read it?" demanded Mistress Hunne.

"I have looked into it at by-times," said the husband, evasively.

"Have you it in the house, then?" she asked.

"What need to ask questions so closely, my good Margaret? Say that I have it not; maybe I know where it is to be seen. Ask our daughter else, and she will tell you where it may be found."

"Roger Whapplot has it," said Margaret, quietly; "and I think father has sometimes read it in his house."

"There, the mischief is out now, my wife," said Hunne; "and since we are so fairly well agreed, all of us, respecting Master Wycliffe's New Testament, there is no reason why we should not study it all together with closed doors, while Master Browne is with us, if he will give us leave, and it may be that we shall all be the better for knowing more of the true evangel than it suits the priests to make known to us."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONSPIRACY.

"WITH closed doors," then, Master Hunne and his wife, and Margaret their daughter sat themselves down daily to examine the New Testament Scriptures, just as the Bereans in former days did

those of the Old, to see if the things they had heard from their kinsman and guest were so as he had told them. Let us respect their "closed doors," for which indeed—and for bolted and locked doors also—they had abundant reason; and turn for a few minutes to another scene in our history.

There was in Paternoster Row, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and both before and afterwards, a tavern, which, for want of a more explicit identification, we may conclude to have been popularly called "The Angel and Dragon." Projecting from the front of the house into the middle of the narrow thoroughfare was a huge swinging signboard, having emblazoned on it, in blue, and red, and yellow, a gaudily-painted representation (or what was intended to pass as such) of a supposititious conflict between the Archangel Michael and the prince of darkness, and in which, of course, the latter personage was evidently getting the worst of the battle. With this emblematical painting, however, we have nothing further to do than as it directs us to the interior of the tavern, where, seated at a bench, were four strangely-assorted men in close and familiar conversation. They did not talk dry-lipped, of course; and a pewter flagon, a black-jack or leathern jug, and two hooped wooden drinking vessels of good capacity, gave evidence that they were not unmindful of what they perhaps might have called "creature-comforts."

Of this quartette, one has before been slightly introduced to our readers,—he was the barefooted friar who vaunted the virtues of Joseph of Arimathea's coat; another of the group was a sumner or summoner, or apparitor, of the Bishop of London's court, Charles Joseph by name; a third was a bellringer of St. Paul's, one John Spalding, who took but little part in the conversation—choosing rather to employ himself in persevering devotion to the hooped cup before him; the fourth was in the garb of a serving-man, which, in fact, was his occupation, he being the same menial who had, on a



A TAVERN QUARTETTE.

previous occasion, already mentioned, accompanied Mrs. Hunne on her marketing expedition : his name was Thomas Brooke.

Thomas was apparently but little at his ease in the company into which he was cast : and yet he seemed bound by a spell, not only to remain, but to reply (though unwillingly) to interrogatories occasionally addressed to him. As for instance—

“You were present then when Mistress Margaret Hunne heard of the arrest of Joan Baker?” said the sumner.

“I was assuredly standing by at the poulterer’s; but some little way behind my mistress,” replied Thomas.

“But you heard what passed. What said Mistress Hunne to Ursula Hatcher?”

“She said not much that I heard, Master Sumner, only that it was unwomanly to rejoice at the burning of heretics. Also that if she took not care of what she said, the beadle’s whip might perchance make acquaintance with her back.”

“Call you that not much?” said the friar : “I would have you to know, knave, that less sayings than that have brought dainty dames to the burning. But what followed?”

“Nothing—I mean I know no more, Master Friar: only that presently Mistress Hunne sent me home with my basket; and then, as I afterwards learned, trooped off to Joan Baker’s to learn the rights of the story she had heard, for she came back in a mighty heat.”

“Well, I care not for Mistress Hunne; let her pass; she hath never done harm to me, but has always spoken me fair when we have met——”

“So hath she me,” interposed John Spalding, staying the wooden cup which was half-way to his mouth. “Ay, I warrant she has a good ear for music, for she gave me a silver groat only last good-evening day when I waited on her, and a good measure of wine withal; and she praised our Christmas eve bellringing. So I will

have no hand in anything that may be done against Mistress Hunne, mind you."

"So I say, too," added Thomas Brooke; "for though my mistress be somewhat hasty of speech, and has slapped my cheek ere now when I have given a saucy word, I wannot say that I did not deserve it; and she is a good mistress."

"Well, well," continued the sumner, impatiently; "say I not that I care not for Mistress Hunne—the less that she is known to be right and sound in the matter of faith; so that for all you say, brother Matthias" (this to the friar), "it would be hard to prove any charge against her. But her husband's is another matter, methinks: for, for all his strict observance of the mass and of fast days, and though he wears his beads so openly, as if it prove himself to be a good catholic, he is known to speak scorn of priests, and is hugely suspected of being a Lollard at heart. And besides," added Charles Joseph, after a pause, as though he had debated whether to utter what was in his mind—"I have no love for master tailor, who has ere now worried me out of all bounds for a small matter I owed him, and had not the present convenience to pay: and made complaint of the same to master chancellor, who took me to task roundly, and stopped the debt out of the next payment due to me. And think you, brother Matthias, that I am to forget this?"

So long a speech as this, as well as the subject matter of it, demanded a solemn pause, accompanied by an appeal to the wine cup; after which, the sumner resumed the subject.

"I will have my revenge on Richard Hunne," quoth he; "and if, by doing this, I can do good service to the church as well, what shall hinder me?"

"Nay, it will be a holy work," responded brother Matthias.

"And therefore," continued Joseph, "I would have you give good heed to your answers, Thomas Brooke; for I promise you, you

may not be altogether safe, living in such a household. What was it then you told to my serving wench, Julian, concerning Master Hunne?"

"Why, what said I, Master Sumner?" asked the man, in some discomposure; adding, "What can a man remember of what he says when he confabs with a woman? But for all that, I know not that I said any harm."

"Said you not that your master, Richard Hunne, took part with Joan Baker pretty roundly—saying that he saw no harm in what she had avouched, but, contrariwise, that it was according to the truth, although the bishop himself found her guilty of heresy? Answer me that, Thomas Brooke."

"I may have said something of the sort;—a blight be upon my tongue for making and meddling," exclaimed Brooke, in vexation; "but I see not much harm in that, after all."

"You reported also that your master said he would rather lose five hundred marks in money than Joan Baker should come to harm for her opinions."

"And if I did, methinks it only proves the old saying to be true, that a fool and his money be soon parted; and I promise you I sometimes doubt if my master, wise man as he may be, and passing rich, be not somewhat of the other thing. It was but a way of boasting of his wealth, after all; for he might forfeit five hundred marks and be none the worse for it."

"It is a sin that such as he, a base mechanic, should have that said of him when so many good deeds might be wrought with his money," said friar Matthias, with a covetous leer. "There is our monastery——"

"Nay, father," said the bellringer, sniggeringly; "while you have your multiplying purse ready at hand, what need you want Master Hunne's beggarly crowns!"

"Out upon you, for an ill-timed jester," said the bare-footed friar,

angrily, and with some show of confusion ; and then, hastily dismissing this topic, he turned to the serving-man, saying—

“ Is it not true, knave, that your master has, for this month past, been harbouring and hiding in his house that blaspheming heretic, John Browne, whom the king took under his protection in Finsbury Field a month or more ago, and so saved him from his just deserts for that time ? ”

“ John Browne is assuredly lodging with my master, being kinsman to Mistress Hunne,” replied Thomas ; “ but I say not that he is in hiding, for he goes about openly enough.”

“ Ay ; and a boast is made that, being under the king’s grace’s protection while he remains in this city, no one can come at him. So Roger Whapplot affirms, and so say others in the ward ; and I have been warned by those above me not to burn my fingers in trying to touch him ; but for all that, Master Browne’s time is coming. He will not always be in this city, I trow. But say that he is safe for this present, I would fain know, Thomas Brooke, what is the nature of the communications he and your master hold together.”

“ How can I tell you that, when I am not in their company ? ”

“ But you might find out, and must do so,” said the sumner ; “ or I plainly tell you that your chance of having Julian Littell to wife is but a narrow one. It is only for me to say the word, and——”

“ Well-a-day ! See what it is when a man wants to be honest and true to his master,” ejaculated Thomas, with a compunctious groan.

“ Be honest and true to your church, knave,” said the friar, sternly, “ or see to it if the church have not something to say to you some of these days. Know you not that he who loves earthly master more than church builds on a shifty foundation ? ”

“ Well, well, I will do your bidding, and yours too, Master

Sumner, assuredly, so that I may have your good word with Julian; only I must have your more certain orders what I am to do."

"You have naught to do but to keep open ears and eyes, and advertise me from time to time what you see and hear. You know where and when to find me."

"It shall be as you say, and I will do what I can to serve you, sir," said the man, speaking, however, with some reluctance. "And now I must leave your worshipful presences, or I shall be missed from my work; and I would rather not have to encounter two questionings in one day." So saying, Thomas Brooke made a clumsy reverence, and withdrew.

"There goes a faint-hearted, double-faced knave, now," said the sumner to his chief companion. "And he thinks that by giving this half service he will gain my good-will towards his marrying my maid. But there go two words to that bargain, which will never be spoken."

Having thus delivered himself, he and the barefooted friar began to speak of other matters—prominent among which was the complaint that at that present time (as they judged by some few indications) the young king seemed to be somewhat averse from the harsher and more direct and effectual modes of putting down heresies and heretics, which had prevailed during the reign of the old king, and previously. Friar Matthias said presently, however—

"Rest content; the king is but a boy yet, and thinks more of his boyish sports than of the good of the church. See you how he was taken with his shooting bout with the young draper of Chepe, and gave him the bonnet-piece which Roger Whapplot now wears on Sundays and holidays, as much as to say, 'Who so good as I!' And, moreover, they say that the king has since then shown Master Whapplot some favour, and has even looked in at his shop. But what of all that? They who know Harry Tudor best know that he

is as uncertain in his favour as a woman ; and it is only to wait, and the good times will come round again."

Saying this, the three companions, having emptied their cups, rose to depart—the sumner paying the score ; for the friar made it a rule never to drink at his own cost, if he could creep out of it. Then they walked together into Ave Maria-lane, and thence into Crede-lane, towards the Blackfriars, where a meeting took place which Master Joseph and the friar would willingly have avoided, had it been in their power. This meeting was with none other than Doctor Colet, the dean of St. Paul's, and also a king's chaplain, whom they both hated and feared.*

Walking towards the three men, and looking at them curiously, the doctor sternly addressed the sumner.

"You have been at your cups again," said he, "and have been making a sot, as I perceive, of John bellringer. You will have much to answer for, sumner, for your abuse of liberty, and for leading others into sin."

"May it please your reverence, we have taken but a single draught, as brother Matthias also knows," responded Charles Joseph, with a thickened voice, and an unblushing cheek.

"I shall not ask brother Matthias to father your falsehood," said the dean ; "and as to you, friar, it would better become your pro-

* Dr. John Colet was born in London in 1466, and was dean of St. Paul's in 1505. He was also chaplain to Henry VIII. He introduced the practice of preaching and expounding the Scriptures ; and soon after established a perpetual divinity lecture in St. Paul's church, three times in the week,—an institution which assisted in paving the way for the Reformation. About 1508 the dean formed his plan for the foundation of St. Paul's school, which he completed in 1512. His notions of religion were so much more rational than those of his contemporary priests, that they deemed him little better than a heretic ; and on that account he was so frequently molested, that he at last determined to spend the rest of his days in peaceful retirement. He died in 1519.

"Though a papist," says a biographer, "he was an enemy to the gross superstitions of the church of Rome. He disapproved of auricular confession, the celibacy of priests, and such other ridiculous tenets and ceremonies as have ever been condemned by men of sound understanding in every age and country."

fession to set an example of sobriety, if not of absolute abstinence, than to be debasing yourself with ale. It is such as you that bring disgrace on our church by your pretended miracles and loose lives, Look you to it; for there is a storm even now brewing which will shake some of you out of your nests."* So saying, the king's chaplain walked on stately, leaving his hearers in confusion, from which, however, they soon rallied.

"And look you to it, master dean," said the friar, wrathfully, and shaking his fist behind the retiring doctor's back,—taking care, however, that his words should not reach the ears of the object of his vituperation,—“take you care that you be not shaken in your nest. It is not over secure; for there are those who say that Doctor Colet is but a few steps removed from being a Lollard in practice, as he is already one in heart.”

Having thus discharged himself of some of his superfluous spleen the friar stepped on hastily, followed by the sumner the bellringer now parting company.

“It may be as you say,” said Charles Joseph, hurriedly, when he had caught up his companion, “and that it is as you say, I doubt not; but fair and softly. The doctor is my master, inasmuch as he might, if he would, get me dismissed from my office; and then where would I be? So it needs must that I keep a quiet tongue in my head. Besides, men say that, being the king's chaplain, he hath the king's ear also. And, moreover, I now bethink me, Doctor Colet is sometimes, and not unfrequently, in Master Hunne's shop; and if anything be done hastily in the matter we were just now

* The suppression of the smaller monasteries, those nests of idleness and vice, with the demolition of shrines, “where thousands had been accustomed annually to deposit their offerings, having been deluded into making pilgrimages and contributions, by means of fraudulent representations,” was effected in 1536,—some twenty-six years later than the above warning. It may be supposed, however, that a king's chaplain, with such views as Dean Colet was known to hold, and who probably exercised some beneficial influence over the king's mind, had reason for knowing or believing that the above-mentioned work of reformation would certainly be executed at no distant period.

speaking of, it may be we shall have more irons in the fire than we have reckoned on. Nevertheless there is a good time coming, if we do but wait for it."

With this sage aphorism on his lips, and without waiting for a reply, Master Charles Joseph turned towards his own home, and the friar went his way also, not caring to halt in the neighbourhood of the Black or Dominic friars, with whom he and his brethren of the Grey Franciscan were at that time at feud.

CHAPTER XVII.

MASTER ROGER WHAPLOT OBTAINS HIS DEAREST EARTHLY WISH.

WE return to Richard Hunne and his household. Towards the end of the summer Master Hunne's guest received intelligence that the proceedings against him in his native town were for the time stayed, so that he could safely return home. John Browne accordingly bade farewell to his hospitable host and hostess, taking with him the manuscript volume on which he set so much store, and which for some time past had been in such daily request. And by this time Richard and Margaret Hunne had received so much benefit and instruction from the English Scriptures, that they determined at any cost to obtain a copy of Master John Wycliffe's New Testament, at least, for themselves. This they were enabled to accomplish, at a considerable expenditure;* and along with it they also procured some of his treatises, which were then being increas-

* Some time previous to this, one Nicholas Belward was punished for having in his possession a New Testament, for which he had paid four marks and forty pence, or 2*l.* 1*6s.* 8*d.*,—a sum equal to at least 2*l.* of our present money.

ingly circulated among the Lollards, or Gospellers, or "Known men," as enlightened and earnest Christians were variously called.

The entrance of God's word gives light and understanding. It was something, and much, that the diligent perusal of the New Testament Scriptures opened the eyes of the worthy citizen and his wife to the manifold evils, puerilities, and iniquities of the system of religion to which they had been brought up. But it was more that they were both led by those Scriptures to see their most pressing and urgent need of Divine grace and salvation, and also to seek for these inestimable necessities of spiritual life in the gospel way.

The promise of Christ to all earnest, sincere, and humble inquirers is, that those who seek shall find; and also, that if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. There is little doubt that this promise was verified in the experience, not only of Richard Hunne and his family, but of hundreds and thousands of others who at that time, dissatisfied with the dogmas and pretensions of the Romish church, sought, by the best means in their power, to obtain a better knowledge of the true doctrines of the gospel. Most of these, indeed, for the time kept in outward communion with that corrupt church; but they sighed, and prayed, and hoped for the time which should deliver them from its almost intolerable bondage.

As Richard Hunne became more and more imbued with the true spirit of Christianity, we may believe that he also became bolder in his thoughts and feelings, and intentions respecting religion. It is not given to all men, however, to be heroes, or to place themselves in the forefront of danger; and evidently Master Hunne was not one of these. He doubtless thought in his conscience that he was justified in holding aloof from the violent disputes and controversies which, in spite of most assured penalties, some ardent-minded men would hold with those in spiritual authority, and that

he was also right in maintaining that he was "a good catholic," whenever he was charged with a suspicion of Lollardism.

He was the better able to sustain this position, because there really were some good men in the Romish church, who were "the salt" which preserved it from utter corruption. Of these it might have been said, in the words of the message of Christ to the church at Sardis, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis"—oh that *even*!—"which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy." Among these few names we surely are not wrong in placing that of John Colet, the dean of St. Paul's. Nominally papist as he was, we have seen (in our antepenultimate note) that he was opposed to the lying vanities of Rome, and preached the Scriptures, when preaching them was a startling novelty, and a high crime as well. Whether or not there were (as the sumner Charles Joseph seemed to imply there was) any secret understanding or Lollarditish intercourse subsisting between Doctor Colet and Master Hunne, we may easily understand that the example of such a preacher, with his known sentiments as a reformer of abuses, would tend to reconcile the citizen to a continuance of his nominal adherence, at any rate, to the idolatrous church. We have taken pains to set this view of Master Hunne's character before our readers, because it is the only theory which can account for some part of his subsequent history.

One result of the decided change of sentiment in Mistress Hunne, and of the advance of her husband towards clearer light and knowledge, was that their consent could no longer be withholden from the marriage of their daughter with Roger Whapplot. Those were not days when serious people entered lightly on the unknown and perchance storm-threatened sea of matrimony. Yet, we know that, in spite of anticipated persecution, and even with beacon-fires of martyrdom lighted around them, our Lollard forefathers and

mothers, and the young men and maidens of their families, did not shrink from consummating the sacred tie which binds heart to heart in true affection. So, though they were put in mind of the apostolic saying, "Brethren, the time is short; and it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing it;"—yet Roger and Margaret became man and wife. It was a sober marriage, solemnized in old St. Paul's, probably, and as probably presided over by Dean Colet, who bestowed his benediction on the contracting parties.

And here ends the first part of these city chronicles, the events of which occupied but a few short summer weeks of one particular year. Our next chapter will take up the narrative some three or four years later in the course of time. These years were passed quietly and happily in the two united families, without internal troubles, though not without anxieties from without, which must, in those trying times, have been felt by all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity—anxieties not only for their own safety as his disciples, but for the wellbeing and even the continued existence of his true church. It may be that at this particular era the adversaries of the Lollards were a little kept in check by political events and circumstances; and there were some few and slight indications that the king's heart was favourably turned towards those godly but oppressed subjects of his. History informs us, however, how illusory were these tokens, if any really existed.

Certainly, however, notwithstanding his suspected Lollardism, and the league formed against him, with a spy in his household also, Master Richard Hunne conducted himself so circumspectly as to give no overt and public ground for molestation on the score of religion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LITTLE STEPHEN.

IN our old map of London, almost all the space eastward of Aldgate (then a real gate) and St. Botolph's church is shown to be green fields and pleasant hedgerows, interspersed here and there with suburban hamlets. One of these was in the neighbourhood of the White chapel, in the parish of St. Mary Matsilon. Of this parish, we may observe by the way, one Thomas Dryfield was priest.

There lived in this hamlet a young married woman, whose husband exercised the useful calling of house-thatching; and into her domicile we must take the liberty of intruding, while she, being in the act of nursing an infant a few weeks old, is also engaged in earnest conversation with an elderly personage in dark grey hood and fair linen muffler.

"It is long since I saw you, Mistress Joan," said the nursing mother, as she advanced to the door to meet her visitor, "and I take it kindly of you to come to see me now."

"I heard of your having given birth to a child, Martha, else I should not have been here; for I have but little heart for moving about," replied the other, in a tone tinged with sadness. "You know the reason why," she added.

"Eh, but you are over nice. Say that you got a combing down in the bishop's court—what matters that now-a-days? You did not stand alone, there were others with you then, and there have been others since, dosed with the same physic. Besides, that happened three years ago and more; and it is time it was forgotten."



MISTRESS BAKER AND NURSE MARTHA.

"It will never be forgotten by me, Martha, though I could live three hundred years longer."

"Now the saints forbid that," said the cottager, laughing. "Three hundred years, quotha! I hope you and I will be in paradise long before then."

"I know not that I shall ever reach;—nay, I fear I shall never reach that blessed place, Martha," exclaimed the visitor, in sorrow of heart; "for have I not denied my faith, and proved myself a very coward, and worse than a heathen?"

"The worse for those who made you deny it," said Martha. "And I call it a shame that a poor weak woman should be dragged into court for a few words spoken, and then made to say she wots not what, from very dread."

"Ay, but what saith my Lord?—'If any be ashamed of me and my teachings, of him will I be ashamed.' But I care not to speak of this. I have an errand to do with you, which may put some money into your purse, and help you the better to provide for your little treasure here."

"Which will be right welcome so it be but honest money, and none other will ever come your way, I know."

"I trust not, Martha, though I be but a castaway," said Joan Baker, mournfully. "And to the present point, which requires haste—you have not forgotten Mistress Hunne?"

"The good lady who, six years ago, took compassion on me when I was in trouble, and when all the world besides, excepting only you, turned their backs on me! No, not I; she was my very good friend then, as she has since been, though at that time she had buried two precious babes, which might fairly have taken up all her thoughts. And what of Mistress Hunne, prithee?"

"That she has another precious babe e'en now, Martha," returned the visitor, gravely.

"You say not that in earnest? A babe! another babe!" ex-

claimed Martha, in undisguised surprise. And then she added, "It is a grand-babe you mean, Mistress Joan. Well, it is what might have been looked for, these three years past."

"Nay; I speak not of Margaret Whapplot, but of Margaret Hunne."

"And she married these five and twenty years, I warrant! and a daughter four years married!"

"And nothing so uncommon in that, Martha. But common or not, it is true. And the sorrow is that the mother is too weak and ailing to nurse her babe; and that the babe itself is far from strong—a poor little puling thing, that looks as though it would fain be at rest and quiet, and cannot."

"Poor babe!" exclaimed Martha, as she looked fondly at her own healthy child, and pressed it to her bosom.

"And the short of the matter is," continued Joan Baker, "that the only hope to save the babe's life is to take it from its ailing mother, and give it in charge to some kindly and hearty nurse to bring up with her own infant, so that it may have right proper nourishment. I know not even that this will avail; but it must be tried, for Mistress Hunne's heart is set on keeping this son alive, after losing so many."

After this preface it is easy to guess what was to follow. At first the poor woman shrunk from undertaking so uncertain a charge; but, presently, sympathy and gratitude, with a little spice of self-interest, prevailed; and before Mistress Joan Baker left, Martha had promised that Mistress Hunne's infant, when brought to her, should share in all things with her own babe, and receive equal motherly kindness and attention.

So that same day the babe was brought to its new nurse. It was but a fortnight old, and was so wretched and puny and woe-begone, that Martha almost repented the bargain she had made; nevertheless, she received the child with tenderness, and reiterated her

morning promises. The babe had been already christened, she was told, and its name was Stephen.

Some babies seem as though they were born into the world to give trouble to everybody concerned. It was so with poor little unfortunate, unhappy Stephen Hunne. Like one born out of due season, he disturbed the quiet of the household of which he formed an insignificant item, and put everything out of its accustomed order. Then, in addition to this, the mother's life was endangered, and for some time hung, as it were, on the balance; and her health was afterwards much enfeebled by the circumstance of his advent. Next, when transported to his new home, and transferred to his new nurse, the little Stephen refused to be comforted, and pertinaciously persisted in being miserable, thereby breaking the peace of his foster-brother, and almost driving poor nurse Martha to her wits' end—to say nothing of Martha's much-enduring husband.

And yet, of all the children Margaret Hunne had ever borne, this was perhaps the dearest and best beloved. Was he not the child, if not of her old age, yet assuredly of the late summer of her married life? And who does not know that, from Benjamin downwards, the last-born man-child is the mother's joy, if he be not the father's darling?

Little Stephen fulfilled both these conditions, however; and it would have done your heart good, fair and feminine reader, could you have seen how tenderly and fondly Master Richard Hunne hugged this child of his to his bosom, and praised its beauty, and bestowed benedictions on its poor little body and infantine soul, when every other evening he rode over to Whitechapel, on a nag purchased for the occasion, to see after his Stephen's welfare.

Do not smile contemptuously at this picture, gentle friend, for you shall presently learn how dear a treasure to the merchant citizen and his wife was their last-born child.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOHN BROWNE'S LAST VISIT TO LONDON.

LEAVING little Stephen for a while to the fostering care of his Whitechapel nurse, we turn over the pages of history to note down some further passages in the history of Master John Browne, of Ashford, in whom, as we trust, the readers of our former chapters have felt a kindly interest.

First, however, let us say that the spirit of bitter persecution which marked that and the preceding centuries, so as to cause them to stand out in our country's chronicles in bad pre-eminence, continued to gain strength. If, at the accession of Henry the Eighth to the English throne, there was a slight abatement of its outward manifestations, owing to the joyous temperament of the young king, this slight check (if it existed) was of no long continuance. It is easy indeed to understand that Henry Tudor, in the first flush of his manhood, surrounded by everything calculated to gratify his personal desires, and disposed to enjoy the pleasures of life, liked well enough to see those around him happy, so long as their enjoyments did not curtail his own. And we may readily suppose, also, that he was naturally averse from making a shambles of the country on account of religion, or on any other plea. Except in extraordinary cases, it needs for a man to become accustomed to cruelty by degrees before he can find exquisite pleasure in inflicting it.

The young king, however, did nothing to stay permanently the thirst of Romish priests for blood; and history proves that he soon became hardened against the cries and groans of his persecuted

subjects. He had, too, instructors around him who were ready enough to point out to him that it was his religious duty to feel no compunction in doing what they called God-service, when Lollards were brought to the stake. And even had the selfish king been ever so disposed to mercy for mercy's sake (which no selfish man ever is or can be), there were persecuting laws which he could not have abolished or overridden, and sanguinary priests who did not fail to demand continual sacrifices to the Molech of intolerance. We have no need to be surprised, therefore, that persecution began, in the early years of Henry VIII., to rage again as furiously as it had done in the preceding reign; and the more so as it was known that the Holy Scriptures were spreading among the people, and that Lollardism (or reforming principles) was undoubtedly on the increase.

Just about the time to which our records have brought us, Master Hunne unexpectedly received a visit from his wife's kinsman, Browne.

"You are right welcome to London again, and to my poor house," said the merchant-tailor; "and not the less so that I am, in some sort, in trouble."

John Browne was sorry to hear this; and he said so, asking at the same time to be informed of the nature of his friend's trouble.

"I have lately had a son born to me," said the citizen.

The countryman opened his eyes wide with a little wonder, and his shrewd, sarcastic countenance beamed with a complimentary, but at the same time with a complicated smile. "I thought you had been past that trouble, kinsman," said he, "if it be indeed a trouble. I never heard such a thing called by that name before, though," he added; "but if it be so, I am in trouble too; for it is short of a month since that I also had a child born to me."

"On the which I heartily congratulate you, Master Browne."

"Thanks. But why, then, speak you of trouble? Your means are not narrow, I trow. For my part, I have a numerous family to provide for, and no great amount of gear to help them on in life; while you, Master Hunne, have but one other child, and she well provided for; and if you had more, you have a plentiful estate in this good trade of yours."

"I make no complaint on that score, my friend; rather I should thank the Lord, which I trust I do most heartily, that he has blessed me in basket and in store, so that I never stood so well in the world as at this present time. It was only last week that, in summing up my profits and losses, I found that I am worth, in money or money's worth, more than two thousand pounds,* for which the Lord be praised; for he has helped me on. But had it been otherwise, I think I have not that base mind to think another little mouth added to my household to be a trouble."

"What, then, is your trouble, if I may ask you?" demanded John Browne.

"My poor Margaret, your cousin, is in sad health, for methinks the trial has been too much for her strength; and I much fear me she may yet sink under it. And then the infant is so sickly and weakly, that though put out in the country to nurse, it is thought he will never win through another month. So, judge if I have not reason in using that word trouble."

"I pity you from my heart, Master Hunne," said Browne, from whose countenance the half-sarcastic smile had departed, to give place to a look of brotherly concern,—“I pity you; for I know not what I should do in such a strait. Yet there is hope and comfort; and I think you have so much of the spirit of our Lord as to say, ‘Father, not my will, but thine be done.’”

* As will be seen in the sequel, this was not an empty boast on the part of Richard Hunne. And it should be borne in mind that two thousand pounds in the time of Henry VIII. were equal to at least twenty thousand of our present money at its current value.

"I know not; and though I think and pray it may be even so with us, yet would I rather, if it were the Lord's will, be spared the having my small faith tried. But we spend time in talk, when I should have remembered that you are both hungry and weary, belike."

This foregoing dialogue had been held in Master Hunne's shop; but he now led the way to his upper apartment, where he caused refreshment to be set before his friend.

"And what stay make you in London, Master Browne?" asked the host, presently.

"But a short one. I came on business only yesterday, and must return to-morrow, my errand being ended; for I like not to be away long from my family at such a time as this, if it can be helped."

"Why came you not to me at first?—and where tarried you through the night? Your old chamber is ready for you, John," said Richard Hunne.

"I had my business to attend to; and I slept at an inn."

"Nay, but that must not be. You must stay with me this day and night," said the host, peremptorily; and so presently it was settled. Then the conversation was turned to other and higher matters, through a question put by the guest.

"And how fares it with your soul, kinsman Hunne?"

Richard Hunne knew not how he could better reply than by declaring that he had much and increasing pleasure in the reading of the Scriptures, and in secret communion with his God and Saviour. And for the rest, he trusted solely on the finished work of Christ for his salvation.

"That is well, for there is safety in no other; and, in spite of all the priests tell us, there is no other name given for our salvation than his most precious name," said Browne.

"I have much comfort also in the fellowship of a few chosen and hidden ones, who sometimes meet together for prayer and thanks-

giving ; but we have to do this very secretly, for we are closely watched," said Hunne. "Nevertheless, the Lord is with us, I know, even as he has promised to be."

"This also is well," rejoined John Browne ; "and that Christ Jesus is present I doubt not ; for his very word is, 'Where twain or three be gathered in my name, there am I in the middle of them.' And I think that we who have this promise do not need the prayers of dead saints or of angels."

"I think and am sure not, indeed," said the citizen.

"Nor of the Virgin Mary either."

"No, truly ; for had such an intercessor been needed, we should have been told so in the Scripture."

"And yet, kinsman, I see you wear the rosary round your neck still, as one who would say, 'See, here,—for every prayer I offer to God, I put up five or ten, as it may be, to the queen of heaven,' as the priests call the mortal mother of our Lord."

"Oh, content you, Master Browne," replied Hunne, in some little confusion. "I say no Ave-Marias, though I wear the beads, which I trust is no sin, seeing they be but harmless pieces of wood ; for I would not that my neighbours and others should think me other than a good Catholic. Yet I can but wish for the time when each man may walk according to his light, without having occasion to hide his thoughts for safety."

"That will not be in our day, kinsman ; and I like not these badges of our spiritual serfdom. Yet I will not blame you for your prudent care, seeing that were we openly to proclaim ourselves Lollards, our time would be short,—as, indeed, I still think mine is like to be."

"Still harping on that string, John ? Methinks you should change it to a more hopeful note, seeing that you have been now these four years since I first knew you kept in peace and quiet."

"Much to my own wonder," said the Kentish man ; "only that

I sometimes fear that I have been too compliant with my dear wife's fears,—ay, and even my own cowardly thoughts, too,—and so have bought my present safety at too dear a price.”

“I think you traduce yourself, John,” said Master Hunne.

“Judge if I do, when I tell you that, though I deem the worship of the church in some sort idolatrous, and in some parts a solemn mummary, yet I go once or twice in the month, and seem to join in it, lest my absence should be noted, and bring evil upon me. It is true, in doing this, I strive to fix my thoughts on some comfortable passage of Scripture, and so shut my eyes and ears against those things which I know to be contrary to Scripture; but it yet seems to me like a base and cowardly truckling to the priests.”

“You do only what others do, Master Browne; and I know not what else is to be done. It is hard that if a drunken, debauched, godless fellow absents himself from church from year's end to year's end, it is thought nothing of; but say that a good man is thought to be a Lollard, his outgoing and incoming are so strictly watched, that even if he be kept at home by a rheum or toothache, it shall be said at once of him, ‘Away with him: he is a heretic.’ I would, however, that you lived in London, kinsman; you might then, without endangering your conscience, hear the preaching of Doctor Colet at St. Paul's, who, in all but name, is as great a heretic (they say) as any. He preaches the Scriptures manfully; and you might see the church crowded with those who, I think, are fast being made Lollards by him. I marvel he is allowed to go on thus; but it may be because he is in favour with the king.”

“I would there were more like him,” said Browne; “for alack! the most of the preachers one hears now-a-days know no more of the gospel of Christ than the nags and mules they bestride: and all they do is to cry up the lying vanities of Rome, such as prayers to saints, the worship of the mass, the doctrine of purgatory, the virtue of priestly absolution, and such like. May the good Lord

have mercy on our poor country, and send that the time may come soon when the Scriptures shall be printed and spread abroad over the land, without let or hindrance from priest or ruler."

"Think you that will ever be, John?"

"Not in our time, kinsman; but it may be that our children, or our children's children, or their children after them, may see it."

Richard Hunne shook his head incredulously and monrnfully.

"The things that be impossible with men are possible to God," said the more hopeful countryman; "and I sometimes take mighty comfort from that blessed psalm of king David, 'Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed. . . . He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision.' When I think of such Scriptures as these, kinsman Hunne, I feel sure that the word of God will some day prevail, and then there will be a great downfall of popery, which may the Lord hasten on!"

In communings such as these the day passed, and after a later evening meal than ordinary, the guest was shown to his chamber,—to be aroused early in the morning by his host, in order that he might take the Gravesend sailing barge at London Bridge, on his route homeward.

"Methinks," said Browne, when he had dressed himself and descended to the living-room, and partaken of a hearty breakfast,— "methinks there is yet plenty of time to feed our souls on a portion of Scripture before we part. It may be that we shall never again meet in this world, kinsman."

And thereupon Hunne brought out his manuscript New Testament, and placed it before his wife's cousin, who, opening it, read the following words, which we give in the exact words (*litera scripta manet*) in which they were written down:—

“‘Be not your herte afrayed, ne drede it’” (read John Browne); “‘ye bileven in God, and bileeve ye in me. In the hous of my fadir ben manye dwellingis; if ony thing lasse, I hadde seid to you: for I go to make redi to you a place; and if I go and make redy to you a place, eftsoone I come, and I schal take you to my silf, that where I am, ye be. And wider I go ye witen, and ye witen the waye.’

“Thomas seith to him, ‘Lord, we witen not whidir thou goist, and how moun we wite the weye?’

“Jhesus seith to him, ‘I am weye, treuthe, and lyf: no men cometh to the fadir but by me. If ye hadden knowe me, sotheli ye hadden knowe also my fadir; and aftirward ye schulen knowe him, and ye hau seyn him.’

“Filip seith to him, ‘Lord, schewe us the fadir, and it suffisith us.’

“Jhesus seith to him, ‘So longe tyme I am with you, and hau ye not knowen me, Filip? He that seith me, seeth also the fadir; how seist thou, schewe to us the fadir? Bilevest thou not that I am in the fadir, and the fadir is in me? The wordis that I speke to you, I speke not of my silf: but the fadir himsilf dwellinge in me, doith the werkis. Bileven ye not that I am in the fadir, and the fadir is in me: ellis bileve ye for thilke werkis.

“‘Treuli, treuli I seye to you, if a man bileveth in me, also he schal do the werkis that I do, and he schal do grettere werkis than these; for I go to the fadir. And whatever thing ye axen the fadir in my name, I schal do this thing, that the fadir be glorified in the sone. If ye axen ony thing in my name, I schal do it. If ye loven me, kepe ye my comaundementis. And I schal preie the fadir and he schal geve to you another coumfortour, the spirit of treuthe to dwelle with you withouten eende: which spirit the world may not take, for it seeth him not, neither knowith him;

but ye schulen knowe him, for he schal dwelle with you, and he schal be in you. I schal not leve you fadirles, I schal come to you. Ghet a litil, and the world seeth not now me: but ye schulen se me, for I lyve, and ye schulen lyve. In that ye schulen knowe that I am in the fadir, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my comaundementis, and kepith hem, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me schal be loved of my fadir, and I schal love him, and I shal schewe to hym my silf.'

"Judas seith to him,—not he of Scarioth,—'Lord, what is doon that thou schalt schewe thisilf to us, and not to the world?'

"Jhesus answeride and seide to him, 'If ony man loveth me, he schal kepe my word, and my fadir schal love hym, and we schulen come to him and we schulen dwelle with him. He that loveth me not, kepith not my wordis: and the word which ghe hau herd is not myn, but the fadris that sent me. These thingis I have spoken to ghou dwellynge among ghou, but thilk Hooli Goost, the coumfortour, whom the fadir schal sende in my name, he schal teche ghou alle thingis, and schal schewe to ghou alle thingis whatever thingis I schal seie to ghou. Pees I leeve to ghou: my pees I ghyve to ghou. Be no ghoure herte afraied, ne drede it. Ghe hau herd that I seide to ghou I go and come to ghou. If ghe lovyden me, forsothe ghe schulden have ioie, for I go to the fadir, for the fadir is grettere than I. And now I have seid to ghou bifore that it be doon, that whaune it is doon ghe bileven. Now I schal not speke manye thingis with ghou, for the prynce of this world cometh, and hath not in me ony thing; but that the world knowe that I love the fadir, and as the fadir ghaf a comaundement to me so I do. Rise ghe; go we hennys.'"^{*}

^{*} An apology is scarcely needed for the insertion of the above transcript of a portion of Wycliffe's English Testament, with its literary peculiarities. To many of our readers the old version will have the charm of antiquity, as giving a correct specimen of our native language as it was written and spoken three or four centuries ago. Better than this, it will show occasion for devout gratitude and admiration on the part of the Christian

Those were solemn times (whatever may be thought now), when the disciples of Christ, subject to extreme penalties and pains, ventured to open the sacred writings, and edify themselves and each other with the sayings of their Lord and Saviour. It was then, as in still older times, that they who feared the Lord "spake often together : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."

It might be well for professed Christians if it were oftener so now : but the word of God is cheap in these days, and profession is cheap also, and sometimes profitable withal.

Thus, however, it was that Richard Hunne and John Browne parted. They were never again to meet in life. But they did not know this ; and while the former was repeating to his wife in her chamber the kindly messages left for her by her cousin, the latter was proceeding towards London Bridge and the Gravesend barge there moored.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GRAVESEND BARGE.

THE Gravesend boat, propelled by oars and sails, made but slow progress down the river, and Master John Browne had time enough for his own solitary thoughts during the passage. These thoughts

reader, in the reflection that, amidst all the fiery trials to which the Scriptures were exposed in those days of persecution, "the incorruptible word" has come down to us unaltered in its spirit and message ; and that while "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass,—withering and falling away,—the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

could not have been very merry ones, however much disposed he might have been to look on the bright side of human affairs, and to bear with courage the troubles to which he was exposed. Those were not mirthful times for the poor persecuted Lollards, who, on the contrary, had reason enough for taking up the lamentation of the prophet, in their addresses to the throne of heavenly mercy,—“Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, O Lord, so that our prayers should not pass through. Thou hast made us the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction ;”—or, if in a happier and more hopeful mood, for adopting and applying to themselves and their own circumstances the language of the apostle Paul,—“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

To us—looking back from this nineteenth century into our country’s history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—it seems marvellous how our godly forefathers could have had spirit and energy to carry on the ordinary business of life—living as they must have done in constant danger and dread of violent death for the testimony of Jesus. That they had this spirit and energy, we know ; and we can but feel persuaded that towards them were eminently and exemplarily fulfilled the many exceeding great and precious promises of God, ensuring grace and help and strength to all believers in all ages, according to their day.

Naturally, no doubt, and happily also, perhaps, those who live constantly in an atmosphere of doubt and dread, in some measure

become accustomed to it—so accustomed that in some instances they altogether cease to be affected by it. And this might have been the case with the persecuted Lollards. Still, from what we can gather or imagine concerning their lives, they were a serious, contemplative people, while at the same time they were ready and quick in expedients for avoiding discovery and evading the malice of their numerous enemies. United with this preparedness, however, was a holy boldness which generally prevented them from compromising their principles when those principles were put to the test. Sometimes, too, they were even aggressive, so as to expose themselves unnecessarily, as it may seem, to the dangers which they would naturally desire to avoid.

To return to John Browne, whom we may suppose to have been exercised with many anxious thoughts as the Gravesend barge slowly proceeded down the river. We have already shown him to have been of a free and an impulsive disposition, and, probably to get rid of the troublesome fancies which would crowd into his mind, he began to look round upon his fellow-passengers. They were numerous, and he probably might have found among this number a more pleasant and less perilous companion for the voyage than the sinister-looking man who sat near the helmsman, and whose costume denoted that he had some connexion with the church. To this person, however, of all others, Master Browne made way, entering into conversation with him, as one on equal terms. Presently he sat down by his side.

The stranger looked askance at the intruder with distaste, being already offended with the familiar tones and style in which he had been addressed, and made up his mind, probably, to put the rude, unmannerly countryman down, or, at any rate, to give him a lesson in good manners, and teach him to keep at a proper distance from his superiors in time to come.

“Pray,” said he, “do you know who you are pushing against?”

You are too near me, sir; you are even sitting on my cloak. You are a rude fellow. Do you know who I am?"

"No, sir," said Browne, "I have no knowledge of who or what you may be."

"I am a priest, sirrah," said the stranger; and the reader may easily imagine the snarling pomposity with which these important words were uttered. It may be reasonably enough imagined too that the word "priest" sounded like a war-challenge in the ears of the susceptible Lollard, to say nothing of the offensive tone in which the word was spoken.

"A priest! A priest, sir, are you?" we may suppose this to have been said with mock courtesy. "And may I ask whether your reverence be a parson, or a vicar, or a lady's chaplain?"

"Neither the one nor the other, if you must know, friend. I am a soul-priest. I sing masses for souls," said the churchman.

"Do you, sir? That is well. And pray, sir priest, where find you the soul when you go to mass?"

"A strange impudent fellow, this," thought the priest: "I wonder what he means by his impertinence. I will humour him, however, and so see what he is made up of." So he replied, "I cannot tell you, friend, I know not where the soul may be."

"Perhaps, however, you can tell me where you leave it when the mass is duly sung," said Browne, in the former tone of quiet sarcasm.

"How can I tell you that of which I am ignorant? I know not where the soul is left."

"This is wondrous strange. You sing masses for a soul, and yet you know not where it is—which is as much as to say it may already be in heaven—and you know not where you leave it when the mass is done, which does not say much for your craft. I pray you answer me one other question: How can you then save the soul for which you have been singing mass?"

"Sir," shouted the priest, in a rage, "I see you are a heretic, and if I be not even with you, may I never sing mass again." So saying, he withdrew from the bold countryman, in a mighty heat, and through the remainder of the voyage kept well aloof.

He kept his eye upon Browne, however; and, probably by inquiries of the boatmen, found out who the fellow was that had treated him with such indignity.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SORROWFUL ENDING TO A JOYOUS DAY.

THERE were guests assembled at John Browne's house three days after his return from London. It was a bright sunny day; and there was joy in the household, for Mistress Browne had that day, for the first time after the birth of her little one, crossed the threshold, and presented herself at church, that she and her babe might be publicly prayed for according to the formulas of the Romish ritual. And by this it would seem that, not only Browne himself, as he had acknowledged to his friend Hunne, so far disguised his Lollard principles as occasionally to attend the services of the Romish church, but that his family also paid attention to its formal worship.

It was a joyous day, no doubt, thus far, though it was to have a gloomy ending; for the mother was doing well, and the child was strong and healthy; and if any anxiety as to the future well-being of the newly-introduced babe crossed the father's mind, it was no doubt summarily dismissed for the time. The guests were cheerful, though there is no reason to suppose that their mirth exceeded the

bounds of proper Christian decorum, which was, indeed, unlikely to be, seeing that they were, more or less, touched with Lollardism, and it was also the Lord's-day on which they thus met.

Ere they were seated at board, John Browne gave his friends some account of his recent journey to London, and of those whom he had there met.

"I would you knew my cousin Margaret Hunne and her husband," said he to his wife.

"If I am ever to know them it must be by their coming hither, for I should be loth to trust myself in London," she replied, adding, "I have ever a dread of that great town, so full of wickedness; and the more, since you, John, so nearly got into trouble with the miracle friar."

The husband laughed. "You were ever over timid, my wife," he said. "But it is not in London only that these troubles are to be found—else why did I go there? You are right, nevertheless, in choosing rather to live in the country. For my part, I would not for all my cousin's wealth change places with him, when I think of his ailing wife, and his children dying one after another. It seems a heavy penalty to pay for getting rich, methinks."

"Is it true, friend Browne, that the king has declared himself in favour of giving more liberty of conscience to his subjects than they now have?" asked one of the guests.

"I have heard no news so good as this," replied the host, "and I fear me it is too good news to be true. Three years ago, indeed, it was thought that the king showed some signs of departing from the dark line laid down by the old king, his father; but those who speak of him now tell me that, so far as they can judge, our eighth Henry is but a chip of the old block after all, and is so wrapped up in selfishness, as well as so given over to the evil counsel of those who are the greater persecutors, that there remains no hope of a change for the better."

"And yet it is confidently affirmed that the king has been worked upon by his chaplain, the dean of St. Paul's, to promise that he will think about having the Holy Scriptures—the New Testament gospels at least—printed in English," argued the guest.*

"That, indeed, would be the best news that could be told; but I doubt much the truth of it. The priests know full well that with printed Bibles in our hands their craft would be in danger. It would be a battle then between darkness and light; and we know how that is like to end."

"Is there much persecution now going on in London?" asked another of the guests.

"More than enough," returned Browne: "the Bishop of London has been busy enough in his court; and there are, as I heard, numberless informers who make it their business to spy out any who are suspected of having Lollard books, and especially the Scriptures, in their possession; so that it seems there, as elsewhere, that our Saviour's words are brought to pass, 'A man's enemies are they that are homely with him.' And in a busy city, with so many meeting every day, no man can well judge who may be his foes and who his friends. For this cause I thank God my lot has been cast in this quiet town, where the people are so far neighbourly, that though a man's thoughts on church matters be pretty well known, no one cares to meddle with him to his hurt."

This, or conversation of a similar sort, may readily be supposed to have taken place while the board was being spread, until nothing remained to be placed on the table but a mighty bowl of pottage, of which Master Browne himself undertook to be the bearer. He was in this act of service to his guests, when the door of his house was opened, and the tramp of heavy footsteps and loud voices

* Henry VIII. did permit the printing of an edition of the whole Bible in 1535 (twenty-one years later than the date of our story); and it is possible that an advocate of the Scriptures, like Dr. Colet, may have first urged this subject on his attention.

were heard in the other room. The next minute the master of the house was beckoned from the board by a scared servant maid.

He found four men in his kitchen, one of whom he knew to be a peace officer, or bailiff, named Chilton, of the neighbouring parish of Wey; another was a man named Beare, a godless reprobate from Willesborough; the other two were in the livery of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It needed only this last item to convince John Browne that the sudden and unexpected invasion of his peaceful home boded him no good. And the first words he heard put the matter beyond doubt.

"John Browne, you are my prisoner," said the bailiff.

"Why, what have I done?" demanded he.

"A needless question, one would suppose, seeing that you are well known for a gospeller," said Beare; "but show him your warrant, bailiff." And hereupon the arrested man was shown the warrant for his capture, signed by Archbishop Warham.

"The Lord's will be done," said the poor man. "I will go with you; nevertheless, you will permit me to say good-bye to my wife and children?"

"Our orders were not to let him out of our sight when once taken," said one of the archbishop's servants. There was no need for this precaution; for Browne was not a man to flee from danger. Meanwhile, hearing the altercation, and partly judging its import, Mistress Browne, after bidding her guests secrete themselves, or otherwise secure their own safety, ran into the kitchen with her children, and was there permitted to take a hurried and agonised farewell of her husband,—the daughters clinging to him in a paroxysm of grief and fear.

"Farewell, dear Elizabeth," said he to his wife. "Be patient, and trust in the Lord. He will restore me to you, if it be his will. And you, my darling Alice,"—this to his eldest daughter,—"*comfort your mother, and obey her in all things. I shall require a*



ARREST OF JOHN BROWNE.

strict account of you when I see you again," he said, smiling. Alas! he knew what little hope there was of his ever seeing wife or children again in his own home.

While this parting scene was thus painfully gone through, the captors were not inactive. One of them had gone to John Browne's stable, and brought out his horse unsaddled, and led it round to the door, where their own horses were tied up. Then the man cried out to their prisoner that it was time to depart. So, after more fond and fervent embraces, John Browne emerged from his doorway, and mounted. But even this unresisting submission to authority did not shield him from further insult and degradation; for before his captors climbed to their saddles they procured a cord, and bound the prisoner's feet as close together as they could be made to meet under his horse's belly.

"Where am I to be taken?" asked Browne.

"You will know that soon enough, I warrant you," said the brutal bailiff; and thus they started on their journey,—leaving behind them the weeping wife and children, wellnigh distracted by this sudden and terrible sorrow, which was aggravated by the fact that they were ignorant of the extent, though not of the nature, of the charge on which the head of their family had been arrested, as well as of the place whither he was being conveyed.

Our readers must for the present remain in the same ignorance, while we return, in due chronological order, to Master Richard Hunne and his troubles.

CHAPTER XXII.

THOMAS DRYFIELD, CLERK.

IN spite of the tender care and good nursing bestowed upon little Stephen, and notwithstanding the promises of lavish reward (over and above her already liberal wage) given to the thatcher's wife in case of success, the infant evidently dwindled. "It wasn't meant to live, and there's an end of it," said nurse Martha to her now frequent visitor, Joan Baker, who was constantly proposing and suggesting some new expedient for keeping the little body and soul together. "It wasn't meant to live; and a good thing it was christened so soon," said she; for Martha shared in the strange belief that the souls of infants dying unbaptized, either become extinct, or are banished to some cheerless region in the universe, or, at best, the outermost circle of the heavenly world, being never permitted to taste of the full beatitudes of paradise.

The child did not live. Some five or six weeks after his birth, intelligence was conveyed to the father's house in Watling Street that little Stephen had been taken away from the further troubles of this mortal state.

To say that this news was altogether unexpected by the anxious Master Hunne, would be to contradict what we have before written. But who does not know that death, whenever it comes, either in infancy or age, is, in some sort, unexpected to survivors. Parents, especially, feel this to be the case. Rarely indeed can a fond mother or father be brought to believe that there is no hope of the recovery of a sick child, until death comes and ruthlessly extinguishes the fallacious expectation.

So, though Richard Hunne had told his cousin that the infant was too sickly and pining to live, yet he felt almost astonished as well as sorrowful when it died. His grief, however, though genuine, was as nothing compared with that of the poor mother, who, as soon as she heard the tidings, wept bitterly, and with equal bitterness reproached herself that she had been persuaded to let her treasure be removed from her sight and caresses.

"I am punished as I deserve," she sobbed, "for having so unnaturally put away the babe from my own arms. No wonder he refused to live, when his own mother thus dealt with him."

"But, mother," reasoned Margaret Whapplot, who was then present, and who also greatly lamented the loss of her little brother,— "but, dear mother, you know full well that your arms could not bear even his little weight, and you had no power of nourishing him. Did not the doctor say that you had your choice between two things,—either to part with the babe, and give it a chance of life, or to have two deaths; for that neither you nor little Stephen would live, were you not separated?"

"Better, then, that both had died; we should not then have been so cruelly severed," said the mother, hastily, and thoughtlessly, and murmuringly.

"Mother! oh mother, do not say this!" exclaimed the distressed daughter. "Think you that there would then have been no other cruel severance felt? What would my dear father have done had you been taken from him thus? And have I no heart to have felt such a wound?"

"It was foolishly and wickedly said by me," returned the penitent mother; "but oh, Margaret, you know not yet what it is to lose a child,—and I have lost so many, that I thought and believed this one would have been spared to me. But it was God's will, and I must needs submit."

Master Hunne's attempts at consolation were at first scarcely

more successful than those of his daughter had been. Had he been as well acquainted with the Old Testament narrative as was his kinsman Browne, he would probably have addressed his Margaret in the words of Elkanah to Hannah, "Why weepest thou? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" And failing this resource for consolation, the good man did not fail to point out to his distressed wife that the death of their last-born was a happy release to him from the cares and trials of this mortal state; and that, looking at the troubled condition of the country in relation to religion, the dead were to be envied rather than bemoaned. All this was admitted by Margaret Hunne; but nature would for a time have its way. Had she not lost a child?

It added to the weeping mother's grief that she could not even get to see her poor little dead Stephen,—so great was her weakness. She would fain have had the small corpse brought to her, that she might kiss its clay-cold lips; but even this was in kindness denied her, and it was decided that the child should be buried in the churchyard of the parish in which it died. Accordingly, the father having made dispositions to this effect, one day rode over to Whitechapel, accompanied by his son-in-law, Roger Whapplot, and his servant, Thomas Brooke. These, with Joan Baker and the nurse, were to form the funeral procession.

Upon arriving at the cottage, Hunne found already there the parish priest, Thomas Dryfield, who having scented out that the father of the dead infant was a man of substance, evidently thought it desirable to be present, that before officiating at the grave he might put in his claim for a mortuary.

These mortuaries, it should be understood, were sums of money which were either left or given, in lieu of any tythe or dues which might have remained unpaid to the church at the time of death; and the custom prevailed in some places that the clothes of the

deceased, or some portion of them, should be bestowed as a mortuary on the clergyman, or be claimed by him as his right until afterwards redeemed.

Returning from this explanatory digression to the mourning group now gathered round the little coffin, we have to tell that a solemn and silent greeting passed between the father of the dead child and the priest, who stood carefully noting the preparations for the burying,—the nurse being then engaged in bedecking the little corpse with sweet flowers. This being done, she reached from the cot on which the infant had last lain, a delicate white cloth, called a *chrisom*,* which she was about to place over the dead babe.

“Nay,” said the father, “lay that aside, Martha ; for I have promised my wife to take it home to her as a last keepsake of her Stephen,—and use this instead.” Saying which, he produced and unfolded a linen cloth, which the mother had prepared for a winding-sheet, embroidering it with her trembling fingers, and bedewing it with her tears.

“I say not so,” said priest Dryfield, stepping forward ; “for that *chrisom* is my mortuary, unless it be instantly redeemed.”

“We will speak of this presently,” returned the afflicted father ; “but meanwhile I take it in charge,—not for its value, but because of my promise.”

The priest waxed angry. If he let the *chrisom* go and buried the child, what then would become of his mortuary ? “Thou shalt not have it,” said he ; “and it is mine by right until redeemed.”

The father, however, had already taken possession of the object of this unseemly contention, and refused to give it up. “If it be

* When a child was christened, it was the custom to place a square of white cloth upon its head when anointed with the *chrism*, or consecrated oil, and this cloth was called a *chrisom*. The further practice was that the child should wear the *chrisom* for a month ; or, if it died within that time, the *chrisom* was converted into a shroud ; and such children were called “*chrisoms*,” and thus entered in the bills of *mortality*.

yours by right," he said, "you shall have the value of it in money ; but if otherwise, be sure that I will not pay you a single penny beyond your dues for burying the dead child."

"And look to it that you will have to pay dearly for your insolence," muttered the priest.

The momentary wrangling having subsided, the little coffin was presently fastened down and carried to the churchyard. And then the father and his attendants returned home. Saying nothing to Margaret of his miserable dispute with the priest, he gave her the sorrowful memento of their dead Stephen, which she stored up among the most sacred treasures of the past.*

* The story of Richard Hunne has been too much lost sight of amidst the events of the later years of the reign of Henry VIII. Short gives a very imperfect account. Burnet merely condenses the narrative from Foxe the martyrologist. Even Froude, the most recent historian of that time, dismisses it in a few lines. Yet few events more stirred the popular mind, and paved the way for the overthrow of the papal power in England. The commencement of the dispute is thus given by John Foxe :—"There was in the year of our Lord 1514 one Richard Hun, merchant-tailor, dwelling within the city of London, and freeman of the same, who was esteemed during his life, and worthily reputed, and taken not only for a man of true dealing and good substance, but also for a good Catholic man. This Richard Hun had a child at nurse in Middlesex, in the parish of St. Mary Matsilon, which died ; by the occasion whereof, one Thomas Dryfield, clerk, being parson of the said parish, sued the said Richard Hun in the spiritual court for a bearing-sheet, which the said Thomas Dryfield claimed unjustly to have of the said Hun for a mortuary for Stephen Hun, son of the said Richard Hun ; which Stephen, being at nurse in the said parish, died, being of the age of five weeks, and not above. Hun answered him again,—that forasmuch as the child had no propriety in the sheet, he therefore neither would pay it, nor the other ought to have it. Whereupon the priest, moved with a covetous desire, and loth to lose his pretended right," etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CANTERBURY PILGRIMS.

THE improvement which has taken place in the social condition of England during the last three centuries, is perhaps in no respect more conspicuous than in the greater facilities for travelling, and in the state of the highways through the country. The majority of these highways, three hundred years ago, were rugged bridle paths, that every showery season turned into quagmires, passable only by careful horsemen, which was of less consequence, however, seeing that wheel-carriages for the conveyance of travellers were unknown. But there were exceptions to this almost primitive condition of the public roads, there being certain trunk lines (as they may be called) which stretched through the kingdom, and were kept in tolerable repair for the common convenience of those whom business or pleasure compelled or incited to the labour of locomotion.

One of these exceptions was the road from London to Dover. This was the great artery both of commerce and of war between the capital and the port nearest to the Continent, through which a constant stream either of mercantile caravans or military cavalcades was kept in motion. And for more than three hundred years previous to the date of our story, the traffic on this road had been considerably augmented by the vast numbers of pilgrims who thronged from all parts of the kingdom to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. These pilgrims were of all classes and degrees, from the miserable beggar who, subsisting on alms, dragged his weary limbs to the so-called healing shrine, seeking relief from some bodily malady, to the high-born dame who,

reposing under the awning of a horse-litter, drew aside the curtains of her couch as she approached the city, to catch the first sight of the lofty towers of the far-famed cathedral. Between these two extremes of poverty and wealth, thousands of both sexes on foot, and hundreds on horseback, pilgrimaged every year to the shrine which they enriched by their contributions, and whose stone steps they abraded into deep hollows by their superstitious and bare-kneed devotions.

On the evening of a certain day in June, in the year 1514, the road a few miles out of Canterbury was lively with passengers, all hastening, as it seemed, to the same destination. It was early in the month, and the tender green, and scarcely yet full foliage of the oaks and elms that ornamented the rising slopes, and crowned the hills enclosing the beautiful valley which some of these wayfarers had left behind them, contrasted finely with the rose-tints of near sunset, as they stole across the clear grey sky, until the whole western horizon presented a scene of inimitable glory.

So, at least, thought two travellers, who drew rein at the summit of the hill they had been slowly ascending, and glanced round at the landscape behind them, while they waited patiently for a third horseman, who, being more indifferently mounted than they, seemed to have lagged behind. They scarcely spoke, however, but were satisfied with silently admiring the scene of mingled beauty.

They were men of diverse ages. The elder of the two was probably bordering on fifty years, and his looks were grave, if not sad. The younger could not have boasted more than half that number of years; and though the expression of his features was in some respects conformed in seriousness to that of his companion, there was also a hearty frankness in his open countenance, and a sparkling merriment in his dark grey eyes, which somewhat belied the sombre, or, at least, the sober, tone which seemed more consonant with the farther advanced years of the elder.

Whatever else might be the cause of the trouble which an acute observer would probably have guessed to be at the bottom of their solidity and taciturnity, it certainly was not poverty. Their dress was that of substantial citizens, and costly for that, for it was composed of the best materials to be obtained for money, and it had scarcely lost its first gloss. And on the bonnet front of the younger man was fastened, for mere ornament, a broad gold coin of some considerable value. Moreover, the nags they rode were of good breed and blood, with all their trappings duly conforming.

We have indulged in this slight description, to allow time for the laggard attendant to overtake his superiors; and this accomplished, they were once more in motion.

The yet distant towers of the cathedral were by this time visible, and gilded with the rays of the setting sun; and the elder traveller now breaking silence, took occasion to remark that this circumstance was emblematical of the state of the Christian church in those days.

"There was a time," said he, "when the full blaze of gospel light, and the light of God's countenance also, was manifest on the whole body of the visible church on earth; but the light has been gradually withdrawn, and is now so surely departing, that a few years more, and it will be shrouded in darkest night."

"To rise again brighter for being for a time obscured," returned the younger man, hopefully. "For think, Father Hunne, the sun sets in the west only for a few short hours, and then, rising again in the east, he pours out his beams over all the world; and so will it be with the Sun of righteousness. He shall rise 'to give health to his people into remission of their sins, by the inwardness of the mercy of our God, in the which he, springing up from on high, shall have visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and to dress our feet into the way of peace.' These are Scripture words," continued the speaker; "and

I wot it is true that though heaven and earth shall pass away, not one word of God shall fail."

"I think so too, and am sure of it, Roger," said the elder; "yet it would seem that a dark night is approaching for us, ere that morning of reformation is to dawn. Look you at these revellers on the road; how jauntily they travel to worship at the shrine of their idol, and that idol enthroned in the very house of God; and think what that portends. Were there ever so many on this road before bent on the same errand?"

"If it please you, master, it is near upon Whitsuntide; and they tell me that Whitsunday is a high day at Becket's shrine," said the serving-man or groom, who was near enough to his superiors to hear, and familiar enough to join in their conversation.

"It is even so," said the previous speaker, caustically; "and so the day set apart for the observance of the glorious pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles of our Lord, is to be turned into a day of doing honour to a dead sinner like ourselves; none but it. And if your informant was trustworthy,"—this he spoke in a lower tone to his more immediate companion—it is to go before and usher in the cruel murder of one of Christ's own flock. But think you, Roger, it is as he told you?"

"I fear me his story was too true in all its circumstances; for he came from Canterbury, and, as I have told you, is much employed in the archbishop's house. And he said most confidently that John Browne, of Ashford (mentioning his name in full), had been a month in prison, and had been most hardly used by his jailers, even to being tortured to make him deny his opinions; and that it was as confidently reported that, unless he changed his tone, he would most certainly be burned, either at Canterbury or at Ashford, in the coming week. Though, truly, this was but a guess."

"Yes, all this you have told me before, and nothing more nor less can be made of it than that my wife's poor cousin is in immi-



URSULA AMONG THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS.

nent danger," said the elder traveller, whom our readers will have identified as Richard Hunne. "I trust," he added, "that we may not be too late to make efforts to save him; and that those efforts may be successful. The good Lord help us, and shorten these days of tribulation, or surely all the elect will be led out as sheep for the slaughter, one by one, or by twos and threes."

"Amen! with all my soul," responded Roger Whapplot; "but who have we here? That figure and dress should be known to us both, Father Hunne."

The object who drew forth this sudden exclamation was a female, wretchedly, yet fantastically clad, who was moving slowly and wearily along the road, supported and assisted by a staff in her right hand, while in her left she carried a small wallet.

"Save you, merry gentlemen," said she, as the London citizens were passing her. In a moment they drew up.

"You here, Ursula!" said one of them.

"And wherefore not?" demanded the poor insane creature.

"Nay, we know not why; only it is a weary walk from Chepe."

"Ha! it is you, master draper, and you too, good master tailor. I knew not that I should have such choice company on the road. The blessings of Saint Thomas upon you; but have you ne'er an ambry to bestow on poor Ursula?"

The question was practically answered to the supplicant's satisfaction by each of the travellers.

"But what brings you hither, Ursula?" asked the merchant-tailor.

"I go to say my prayers at the shrine," she said, demurely. "I go every year at this season; and, thanks to the blessed martyr, he hears me too. And more reason now than ever, for I have to remember Mistress Hunne in my prayers. She must not be let to die."

"Thank you, Ursula, for your good wishes," said Hunne.

"She is too good to poor Ursula to be let to die, though she be a little——"

"A little what, Ursula?"

The poor lunatic nodded her head and simpered. "You would be none the wiser were I to tell you my secrets," said she; "but I pray you, Master Hunne, be you on the way to see the burning?"

"The burning, Ursula?"

"Oh dear, ay. Think you that poor Ursula has not her wits about her? The burning, quoth he."

"Well, but what mean you?"

"I would not lose the sight for all the world, dears; your Master Browne will make a bonny blaze, I trow." And the poor demented creature laughed an unearthly laugh.

"Master Browne! How know you that he is to be burned?" demanded Hunne, in an eager and tremulous voice, and with an internal shudder.

"Ha, ha! A little bird told me. Think of that, Master Hunne."

"But you mean not what you say, Ursula. Who told you that John Browne is to be burned?"

"Ah, love you now! Is it not known by all people on the road? And look you, Master Hunne;—take a poor fool's counsel for once, and keep you away from the bonfire, for there is mischief meant for you too. What say you, Thomas Brooke?" said Ursula, suddenly turning to the serving-man, with a knowing leer.

"May it please you, master, the woman is mad, and knows not what she says, when she talks the biggest mischief," said Brooke, under his breath, and drawing up to his master.

"I am well advised of that, Thomas, and we waste time in bandying words with her. We will ride on, Roger; but,"—putting his horse in motion as he bade the half-witted pilgrim good night—"but her story tallies strangely with yours. Pray God we be not too late to redeem our friend's life, if it may be redeemed."

They were soon out of hearing; but Thomas Brooke, who once more lagged behind, heard faintly a shrill laugh, accompanied or followed by the words—

“And how fares your suit with Julia Littell, Thomas Brooke?”

“A murrain on the witch’s tongue,” muttered he, as he put spurs to his horse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT CANTERBURY. NEAR WHITSUNTIDE.

BUT few words are needed to explain the conversations we have noted down in the preceding chapter; but it may be as well to enlarge a little.

The business of a draper and that of a mercer were, in some respects, identical in the reign of Henry VIII., even as they are now—at least, they were combined together; but they meant a different kind of trading, and in different commodities, from that, and from those which distinguish the present trade. “The mercer in those days,” we are told—and we apprehend that the same may be said of the draper—“was not a dealer in small wares generally, nor was his trade confined to silken goods. The mercer” (and draper) “of the fifteenth century was essentially a merchant. The mercers in the time of Edward III.” (and later) “were the great wool-dealers of the country. They were the merchants of the staple in the early days of our woollen manufactures; and the merchant adventurers of a later period were principally of their body.”

We might continue this quotation, but it is already long enough to show that the nature of Master Whapplot’s trade opened to him a correspondence with factors in the country from whom he bought

his commodities ; and from one of these, living in the wool-growing district around Canterbury, he had obtained the information which after being imparted to Master Hunne, seemed to be of sufficient importance to induce them both to venture on the journey in which we have met them. No doubt, while the merchant-tailor was shocked by the intelligence of his kinsman Browne's great peril, his natural timidity warned him to keep aloof from intermeddling with his cause. But his higher principles and better feelings prevailed, and, having a rather exaggerated notion of the influence of wealth, he had started from his home in Watling Street with the hope of redeeming his Christian brother, and giving a ransom for him, whatever it might cost.

But alas ! John Browne had fallen into the hands of those with whom no such arguments were likely to prevail. And before we proceed with our onward narrative, we must briefly relate what had happened to him after his arrest, merely explaining (what the reader will already have supposed) that this arrest was the consequence of those few imprudent words spoken by him to the "soul-priest" on board the Gravesend barge.

Mounted, then, on his own horse, but bound as we have described, the Ashford Lollard, guarded by his captors, was compelled to take the road to Canterbury. A modern traveller by the South-eastern Railway may think the distance trifling, when he knows by experience that it may be surmounted in a short half-hour ; but place that same traveller on a bare-backed hack, and compel him, against his will, to follow the windings of the country road which connects the two towns, at a distance of twelve miles apart, and he would find half that length of road sufficient sorely to gall his flesh, and subdue his spirit.

Happily, the spirit of John Browne, assisted doubtless by Divine strength and those promises on which he relied, enabled him to bear the pain and fatigue as well as the ignominy of his journey,

and also the further trials to which his faith was exposed ; so that when cast into the city jail of Canterbury, he was probably enabled, like Paul and Silas at Philippi, to sing praises to God. while his feet were made fast in the stocks, casting all his care upon Him whom he knew was caring for him, and whom, though invisible, he saw by faith.

John Browne had need of all the supports and encouragements which, aided and applied by sterling piety and strong faith, the gospel could give. It is not permitted to us to disclose all the secrets of the prison-house in which he was immured ; and if it were, language can scarcely describe the tortures, both of mind and body, which, in those days of persecution, were inflicted on the suffering servants of God and confessors of the Lord Jesus. Let it suffice therefore, to tell that, for the space of nearly forty days, day by day, the constant martyr was exposed first to the blandishments and solicitations of Romish priests, and these failing of their purpose, to revilings and threatenings, to hard and scanty fare, and more rigorous imprisonment and closer confinement. These also failing to make him deny his faith and recant his known sentiments respecting the idolatrous church of Rome and the misleading priests of that community, cruel torments were inflicted on the poor prisoner ; and, to render them more effectual in their proposed results, were presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rochester in person. Their names were Warham and Fisher ; * let those names live in perpetual ignominy and foul dishonour.

* Fisher was a bitter enemy to the Reformation, and a violent papist. On the promulgation of Luther's doctrines (some years after the events narrated in our story) he exerted all his influence against it ; and is supposed to have written the famous book by which Henry VIII. obtained the title of Defender of the Faith. But, in 1527, for opposing the king's divorce and denying his supremacy, he lost the royal favour ; and in 1534, he was found guilty of misprision of treason for concealing certain prophetic speeches of the notorious Maid of Kent, relative to the king's death. He was released from confinement, however, on payment of a fine ; but soon afterwards he was tried again for high treason for disputing the king's supremacy, and was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1535.

These men, we are told, "called before them the impudent fellow who doubted whether a priest's mass could save souls, and required him to retract his 'blasphemy.' But Browne, if he did not believe in the mass, believed in the gospel. 'Christ was once offered,' he said, 'to take away the sins of many. It is by this sacrifice we are saved, and not by the repetitions of the priests.' At this reply the archbishop made a sign to the executioners, one of whom took off the shoes and stockings of this pious Christian, while the other brought in a pan of burning coals, upon which they set the martyr's feet. The English laws, in truth, forbade torture to be inflicted on any subject of the crown; but the clergy thought themselves above the laws.

"'Confess the efficacy of the mass,' cried the two bishops to poor Browne.

"'If I deny my Lord upon earth,' he replied, 'he will deny me before his Father in heaven.'

"The flesh was burnt off the soles of the feet, even to the bones, and still John Browne remained unshaken. The bishops therefore ordered him to be given over to the secular arm, that he might be burnt alive." *

* * * * *

Ignorant of the extent to which the persecutions and sufferings of their friend had been carried, the travellers proceeded on their journey, and soon reached Canterbury, where they put up their horses at a caravansary-like inn, and took some hasty refreshment. Then they walked out to obtain what intelligence they could concerning the object of their journey.

It was late in the day, but the streets of the ancient city were well crowded, for pilgrims who had flocked in in great numbers, to witness the high ceremonies of the coming Sunday, were walking

* D'Aubigné's "History of the English Reformation." The "Book of Martyrs" gives a similar account.

abroad, some renewing or making acquaintance with the townsfolk, some curiously examining the old walls and towers of the city, and others seeking recreation in the various amusements which were offered to their choice. Priests, secular and regular, were also to be seen in great plenty ; and in an open space near the market stood, on a little eminence, a barefooted mendicant friar, who was loudly and energetically exhorting the rabble around him to bestow alms on his monastery. This, at any rate, was the main object of his address, though he branched off, just as our travellers got within hearing, into frantic denunciations of all heresies in general, and of Lollardism in particular, and into demoniacal exultation over the just punishment and righteous retribution (as he said) which surely overtook all scoffers at holy things ; in instance and proof of which, he referred to him who that day had been transferred from the archbishop's court, and given over to the secular power to be dealt with according to law.

"That man, John Browne," said he, "who will on the morrow" here Richard Hunne nervously grasped his son-in-law's arm, and reached forward in a listening attitude to catch the succeeding words, for they stood at the outer edge of the crowd)—"who will to-morrow present the edifying spectacle of the true mercy of the church——"

"Mercy on me!" said a voice, in a subdued tone, near to the two Londoners. "Burn a man to-death, and call that mercy!"

"Let us away, Roger," whispered Hunne in the other's ear, in deep distress. "Everything confirms it. We have heard enough."

"Wait one moment, sir. I remember to have seen that friar before. Let us hear what further he has to say."

They had lost a few words of the friar's address ; but the purport of what followed was that, on some former occasion, four years ago, this same John Browne had laughed to scorn, and mocked at the miraculous pouch which he (the friar) carried, and which he now

exhibited to the admiring gaze of the gaping folk around him, promising that whosoever dropped a contribution into its recesses, should be sevenfold enriched on the morrow.

"It is the same man, father Hunne, who had given John Browne in charge when the king caused him to be released from custody on the archery-ground. Would that Henry were near enough now. I would show him my bonnet-piece, and seek the same mercy for poor Browne that he then showed."

"You would not be so rash, Roger?"

"Yes, would I, though."

"To little purpose," said Hunne, dejectedly, "except to get yourself into trouble. The king is four years older now than he was then, and four times harder of heart they say. But see, the crowd is dispersing now that the begging is begun. Let us go hence, and see if aught can be done in a lower quarter than the king's grace, for, assuredly, time presses. Said he not that John Browne is to be burned on the morrow?"

CHAPTER XXV.

AT ASHFORD IN KENT.

LEAVING Richard Hunne and Roger Whapplot to prosecute as they best could their benevolent mission at Canterbury, we transport ourselves in imagination to the little but bustling town of Ashford, where there were heavy hearts and languid, failing hands.

"Failing hands" we have written; and yet perhaps this is not quite correct. We, in the present day of gospel privileges, of freedom from persecution,—of religious as well as civil liberty,—

firmly believe, it may be, in God's promises of help and support, and know that he is able to make all grace abound towards his suffering saints ; but we are scarcely able to tell by experience how wonderfully abundant that grace can be made in times of the darkest distress, and the most fearful straits of bloody persecution. There is no need to speak of failing hands, therefore, and perhaps not of heavy hearts. At least there were hundreds who could say with deep meaning, following the apostle's words, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so ; but we glory in tribulations also."

It is, in fact, impossible to read the various and voluminous authentic records of the persecutions of the church of Christ, without being struck with the evidences, as well as filled with admiration, of the power of faith to eliminate strength out of weakness, and valour out of timidity. However deficient in knowledge in some respects some of the martyrs might have been, they assuredly knew in whom they believed, and were satisfied that he was able to keep that which they had committed to him.

So with those who suffered through the sufferings of others,—weak women, wives, sisters, daughters, affianced lovers,—it mattered not what they were, so that the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts,—the majority of them endured as seeing Him who was invisible. If they were not themselves cruelly murdered (and how many of them were !), they were called to pass through the threefold agony of mental suspense, while the fate of those dear to them was yet uncertain,—of witnessing their martyrdom when brought to the stake,—and of future remembrances of the distracting sight so long afterwards as life lasted. And yet, blessed be God ! they triumphed, and now form part of that noble army who came out of great tribulation, and are before the throne, having

washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:—

“ A noble army, men and boys,
The matron and the maid,
Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,
In robes of light arrayed.
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,
Through peril, toil, and pain.
O God ! to us may grace be given
To follow in their train ! ”

There were Elizabeth Browne and her daughter Alice, who during the forty days succeeding the husband and father's arrest could obtain no information respecting even the place of his imprisonment ; and who, in all that time, had to endure the weight not only of this distressing ignorance, but the anticipation of immediately coming trials, and the certain conviction that, wherever the prisoner might be, he was in merciless hands. Every day that rose upon them brought with it sorrow enough in these reflections to deprive any number of women (under ordinary circumstances) of the physical power and mental energy required for the common domestic affairs of everyday life. Yet here was a mother, with an infant of but a few weeks old in her arms, and a family of many other little ones around her, and whose only or principal home-comforter and help was a tender, delicate girl, probably not out of her teens,—and yet these two females bravely bore up under their load, and were enabled to do so because they cast their care upon God, while they gave all due attention to the daily cares and wants of those who looked up to them for food and nurture. Surely a very touching and instructive diary of those forty days of struggling heroism might be faithfully penned, if one had but the grace and the skill given to do it !

Well, the fortieth day had come, and on that same evening, on which we have left our two London citizens prosecuting their benevolent and brother'y enterprise at Canterbury, these two heroic

women were quietly attending to their home duties at Ashford. They had a servant maid for a helper,—the same damsel who had, forty days before, announced the entrance of her master's enemies, and she was despatched by her young mistress on an errand into the town. Presently she returned, panting, pale, and agitated.

"Oh, mistress, I have seen him!—I have seen him!" she exclaimed, with the little breath she had left.

"Seen him!—seen whom?" said the flurried mistress.

"My master."

"What mean you? Speak—how, when, where?"

"It was in the market-place, mistress. I was passing along, and I saw a crowd gathering and coming near. So I waited to look, like the rest; and there was my master, tied and bound on a horse, like as when they took him away; and Master Chilton was by on another horse; so was Master Beare,—and there were others besides; but I had eyes only for my master. For, dear mistress he is so changed, he looked like a corpse; and his feet were swathed round and round with rags, and——"

"Are they bringing him home? Sure, then, they have had all their will of him, and they are now bringing him home. Alice, dear, open the door and look out. 'They will be here anon.'" So spake Mistress Browne, scarcely knowing what she said.

"Alas, mistress! not so," cried the girl, despairingly; "he will never come home more. They are taking him to the jail,—so I heard them say; and oh, mistress, mistress, dear! he is to be burned to death in the market-place to-morrow."

For one moment, it might be, the poor woman's senses seemed paralysed, while the daughter uttered a doleful, lamentable cry. But gracious help came.

"I expected no less," said Elizabeth Browne, when her power of speech returned; and, though pale, she was wondrously calm and

collected. "It has all the time been borne upon my mind that this would be the end. And now, Alice, you must take my place here for a while, and take care of your brothers and sisters, especially of this little one." And she put her baby into Alice's arms.

"Whither go you, mother?" Alice faintly asked.

"Whither should I go but to stay with your father to the end,—until death doth us part,—as I long ago promised."

"Oh, mother!—and leave us all thus? What shall we do?"

"Alice," said the mother, in a strangely quiet tone, "you have ever been an obedient wench, and loving, and I think you will not depart from your duty now. You must do as I bid you."

"I will, mother; but how—how can I? My father! my dear father!"—and hereupon Alice gave vent to her sorrow in a flood of tears.

"Be not foolish, child. Tears will do no good, else would I weep too. And God will help you, if you look to him." And hereupon, not venturing to say more, the mother hastened away, and put on her cloak and hood; then she presently reappeared, and, kissing all her children passionately, she tore herself away, leaving them in a maze of sorrowful wonderment, even those of them who were too young to understand the full import of what they had imperfectly heard.

* * * * *

Elizabeth Browne hastened to the prison, and by the connivance of the compassionate keeper was speedily admitted within its outer walls. There, in the prison-yard, she found her husband, his feet already made fast in the stocks. He was haggard and pale, as the servant maid had reported; yet had not his brave spirit been cowed; and (though it might have been fancy) there was, as his wife believed, a heavenly radiance already fastened on his countenance, so that never had he seemed so precious to her as then, when on the eve of losing him for ever as a husband.

"My own! my love!" she exclaimed, as she embraced the prisoner fondly, and rested her head for a minute on his bosom,—though even then she forbade her pent-up tears to flow, and spoke with wonderful calmness,—“and have they the heart to place you here?”

“Nay,” said John Browne, pleasantly, and he smiled withal, “see you not it is in kindness? For my feet are lifted now from the ground, on which they can no longer walk.”

“Why, what have they done to you, John?” asked Elizabeth, raising her face to his; and then looking downwards, she saw how her husband’s feet were bandaged in foul, dingy linen.

“It will do you no good to know, dear wife,” said he, and would have turned to other talk; but she would not be withheld, and she unrolled the bandages.

“Dear Elizabeth, the pain is almost departed,” said he, cheerfully, when he saw that his wife was near fainting when she perceived the fearful wounds those burning coals had made, “and at the sharpest I was enabled to endure.” And then, when she had tenderly swathed his feet again, and was seated by his side, he told how it had been done, and how the persecuting archbishop and bishop sought to compel him, by that extremity of pain, to retract what he had said about the mass and purgatory, and the like.

“But I had done this once too often before, Elizabeth,” said he, “and I was not minded that they should catch my tongue tripping again. And the good Lord stood by and strengthened me, else surely I had fainted.”

“And you did not deny the blessed Saviour by hearkening to those Romish fables and blasphemies!” said the wife, exultingly.

“No; for then would my Lord have denied me; and for this I had no mind.”

“The Lord be praised!” said she; and then she added, in a

lower and more piteous tone, "But is it true that they will burn thee, John?"

"Ay; and what better can they do? They can only kill this poor body, I trow, and thus put it out of further pain. They cannot touch the soul. And but for thee and our children, dearest, I could say,—nay, cannot I even now say?—'I have desire to be dissolved, and be with Christ; it is much more better.' 'For I am sacrificed now, and the time of my departing is nigh.'"

Then with many kind and loving words the martyr exhorted his wife to bring up these children in the fear of the Lord; and so, in their last communings, John and Elizabeth Browne sat together in the prison-yard until the morning, when the poor wife was warned that she must depart.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MASTER JOHN BROWNE'S FIERY MARTYRDOM.

THAT same evening, leaving the mendicant friar and his marvellous multiplying bag behind them, Richard Hunne and his son-in-law, more anxious than before, set about the business which had brought them from London. Their steps, according to a previously-formed decision, were directed to the house of a scrivener with whom Roger Whapplot was slightly acquainted, and who lived near the Cathedral Close. Him they found; but their distress was unspeakably augmented when he not only confirmed all they had just heard from the friar's lips, but informed them that John Browne had that day been taken to Ashford, there to await the execution of his cruel sentence.

To an eager question put to him by Hunne the scrivener replied, "Nothing will avail to save the poor wretch; his doom is already fixed. Indeed, I think it would be no mercy now to prolong his life, after the torture he has passed through."

Not satisfied with this promptly-expressed opinion, the wealthy citizen urged upon the scrivener that nothing should be accounted impossible until all earthly endeavours have been exhausted; and, in reply to his other argument, he put it to that gentleman whether he himself would not prefer to live even with crippled feet, than to die the death to which John Browne had been doomed. "Besides," added he, "flesh wounds may be healed in time, whereas life once lost can never be recovered."

"What, then, would you do, friend?" demanded the man of business.

The question was easier asked than answered; but at length it was agreed that a petition should be drawn up by the scrivener, and presented in the morning, if possible, to the archbishop, praying for the life of the doomed man, and offering bail-bond to any amount for his future good behaviour.

"You are so earnest in this business, Master Hunne," said the scrivener, "that, but for your beads, and the cross I see you wear so prominently hanging from your neck, I should take you also to be a Lollard."

"Oh, content you, sir. I trust I may have some concern for the life of a kinsman, and yet be a good catholic man," said Richard Hunne; "and if need were, I could call the dean of St. Paul's as a witness to the same."

"A sufficient guarantee, no doubt," said the other; "and I will do your bidding,—warning you, nevertheless, that the labour and expense will be wasted."

"Yet have I heard the archbishop spoken of as most charitable and gentle in his manners," said Hunne; "though I know not well

how to reconcile this with the cruel treatment received from him by my poor kinsman."

"Do you not?" said the scrivener, sarcastically; "suffer me then to enlighten you. True it is, that the right reverend primate is accounted all that you say, and more. He is of gentle, loving demeanour. It would do you good to be in his company for any length of time, and listen to his honied speech. He is full of learning, too, and mild goodness; a great patron, also, of learned men; and is, in truth, both in morals and piety, an excellent prelate.* But there is another side to the picture. This same mild and gentle priest has what he calls a most strict and strong conscience, which, where he sits as judge, makes him lay aside all notions of favour, and even of mercy. So that, while, as a man, he would shed true and natural tears at a tale of ordinary distress, and seek instantly how to give relief,—when, as an examiner, he has a heretic before him, he can, if so his conscience directs him, inflict the most fearful pains without compunction,—yea, will look on without moving a muscle. So, at least, I have been told and believe. Judge then, what are your chances of success."

"It is our only hope," sighed Hunne, dejectedly.

"I know of no other, truly," returned the scrivener; "and I will therefore do your bidding; for though it may be answered that, having delivered the heretic over to the secular arm, the spiritual judges have wiped their hands of the business, yet it cannot be doubted that the archbishop has but to pull the wires, and the puppets of the law will move accordingly. Indeed, in any case, he has power of pardon second only to the king."

Receiving this slight and very qualified encouragement, the two dejected suitors returned to their hostelry, and were seen no more that night in the streets of Canterbury. On the following morning they were early abroad, however, and exchanged a golden noble for

* So a modern historian also tells us. See Massingberd's "English Reformation."

the fairly engrossed petition, in the preparation of which the scrivener had deprived himself of a night's rest. They moreover received instructions from him as to the best method of presenting the petition. Then they departed on their errand.

* . * * * *

They were unsuccessful. It is unnecessary to record the particulars of their futile attempt to reach the archbishop's ear; and if the petition reached his eye, it was disregarded. There was no longer a hope. John Browne was a doomed man. Had he been a thief and a robber, or even an insurrectionist, who, like Barabbas, had committed murder in the insurrection, his life might have been spared. But he was a relapsed heretic, and a Lollard; and for such there was no mercy.

On the afternoon of that same day,* the two citizens, with Thomas Brooke attending them, were once more mounted, and on their way to Ashford. It was from no morbid curiosity to witness the horrible scene, that they thus extended their journey; neither were they actuated by a spirit of fool-hardy daring and bravado, leading them to expose themselves to the suspicion of being sympathizers with a condemned Lollard, when they turned their horses' heads to Ashford. They were moved by a spirit of true Christian charity.

"We can do no more than we have already done, so unsuccessfully for our unhappy kinsman," said Richard Hunne.

"Nay, do not call him unhappy, sir," interposed Whapplot;

* The day was Saturday preceding Whitsunday. Dr. M. D'Aubigné, in his History of the English Reformation, tells us that John Browne was burned on Whitsunday. He says, "On the Saturday preceding the festival of Pentecost, the martyr was led back to Ashford, where he arrived just as the day was drawing to a close. On the following morning it was Whitsunday; the brutal Chilton and his assistants led Browne to the place of execution." For Saturday and Sunday, however, we must read Friday and Saturday. The error evidently arises from a misconception of Foxe's narrative, in which it is told that Browne was taken back to Ashford on Friday, and that "on Whitsunday eve" (not the evening of Whitsunday) "this godly martyr was burned."

"his pains will soon be over, and then he will be 'for ever with the Lord.'"

"True, Roger; and I sometimes think that they are the happy ones who are soonest taken away from the evil to come, if they be but well prepared for the change, however it comes to pass. But I was about to say that though we have done all in our power to save John Browne, without success, we might do something for the relief of those who are so soon to be widow and fatherless; so, instead of remaining here any longer, or returning at once to London, it will be well for us to go on to Ashford."

"I had thought of the same thing, but I liked not to speak of it," said Roger Whapplot. And so, being agreed, they were soon on the road, as we have seen.

They reached Ashford late in the day; indeed, the shades of evening were fast coming on; but an unusual bustle for so small a town pervaded every part of it. Groups of people,—men and women, were standing at corners or house doors, eagerly talking, though in subdued tones. Others were hasting on towards the centre of the town, and when our travellers reached the market-place they found it already crowded, and were scarcely able to find one to take charge of their horses at the inn, over which swung the huge sign of a wool-pack. The cause of all this excitement was plain enough to be seen in the pile of fagots which encumbered the ground near the middle of the green, and which three or four men were even then adjusting around a heavy stake, or rather a huge log that rose some ten or more feet perpendicularly from the surface of the earth.

The sight was sickening, and the two fresh spectators turned away.

"I almost wish we had stayed away, Roger," whispered Hunne.

"Shall we seek Mistress Browne at her house?" the younger man asked; "it is well known to me," he added.



MAD URSULA'S WARNING.

He spoke low, but he was overheard by a woman who pressed closely upon his heels, and caught up his words.

"You will not find her there, master draper," said she, mockingly. "She is where all good wives ought to be."

It was mad Ursula who spoke, and who directly afterwards whispered in the ear of the elder traveller, "I warned you to keep away, Richard Hunne; but fools will never be guided."

"They can be thankful for kind meanings, nevertheless," said Hunne, and he slipped a coin into the poor creature's hand; "but what makes you here, Ursula?"

"Said I not I would be at the burning?" she asked. "They thought to cheat me of the sight, for they told me it was to be at Canterbury; but I was too many for them; and here I am now, Master Hunne. A merry sight, I ween;" and then, changing her tone, and carried away by her mental infirmity, the poor creature sang, or rather chanted, the following scrap of poetry:—

"Be merry, man, and take not sair in mind
The wavering of this wretched world of sorrow;
To God be humble, to thy friend be kind,
And with thy neighbour gladly lend or borrow;
His chance to-night; it may be thine to-morrow."

There, Master Hunne, what think you of that for a song? 'His chance to-night,'—that's Master John Browne's, you know. 'It may be thine to-morrow.' So, so! But thank you humbly for your ambry. Ursula knows how to be grateful; and she'll be at your——"

"We are wasting time, sir," said Whapplot, hurriedly interrupting the current of insanity; the more promptly, because he saw the colour leave Hunne's lips at Ursula's personal comment on her quotation; "we are wasting time; shall we seek Mistress Browne?"

"If you would find her you must seek her in jail, where she is with her husband," said the mad woman, who heard what was said

And then again she broke out into a chant, which, however, was speedily silenced by a bystander, who seemed to have some sort of municipal authority, for he carried a wand, which he laid with some weight on the shoulders of the chantress, bidding her cease her noise, and asking sternly if that were a time and place for ribald songs. Whereupon she changed her note into a lamentable cry, and slunk away, while Whapplot was saying to the officer,

"Do not hurt the poor woman, she is witless. But tell me, friend, is it true that Master Browne's wife is also imprisoned?"

"Nay, not imprisoned. She is free to come and go; nathless, she was with her husband all night in the jail-yard; and to-day she has had permission given her to be with him again to the last; and she and all her children are with the poor man, taking leave of him."

During all this time, the market-place had become more thronged, and our two citizens, against their desire, had been pressed on upon by those behind, nearer and nearer to the fagot pile, without possibility of retreat. And, just at this moment, shouts were raised that the victim and his executioners were approaching.

There was terrible confusion as the procession slowly approached; and the horror of the scene was increased by the red murky glare of smoking torches carried by the attendants. Distressing cries and frantic wails, and subdued murmurings, and "curses, not loud, but deep," and muttered prayers from hundreds of tongues and throats, blended together in inharmonious confusion, as the guards cleared a way for the doomed man, and then stationed themselves around the pile, keeping back the throng by main force, while the final preparations for the burning were made. These were soon completed; and then the martyr was seen taking a last farewell of his wife and children ere he was chained to the stake.

"Lord, how long? how long?" burst from the lips of Richard Hunne, and streams of perspiration poured down his cheeks, as he grasped the arm of his companion with a nervous clutch, and would,

at the moment, have given half his substance, could he have withdrawn from the barbarous scene. Recovering himself, however, with a mighty effort, he abided the result, and, for a moment, his attention was taken off from the principal sufferer by the piteous cries of the martyr's younger children, who, clinging to their mother and elder sister, had been rudely pushed back from the pile and were huddled together near where Hunne and Whapplot stood.

In another moment a torch was applied to the brushwood on which the fagots were stacked, and a blaze arose which lighted up the whole green, and cast a strange, strong and brilliant radiance upon the martyr's countenance, the remembrance of which lasted long as life itself in the youngest of those who then beheld it. And then arose another and another anguished shriek from the children of Browne.

"Seize them and cast them into the fire with their heretic father," shouted a hoarse, harsh voice; it was that of the brutal monster Chilton, who was the conductor of the execution—or rather, the ringleader of the murder; "toss the heretic's children into the flames; and let us see if they will rise again from his ashes," he added, rushing towards Alice; and he was about to lay hold on her when, as she shrank back in horror screaming, a hand was laid upon him.

"Wretched man," said the stranger; "it would cost but little strength, or compunction either, to cast thee into the flames; but why should your term of probation be cut short? The Lord grant thee space for repentance! Yet know that thou wert never nearer death than thou wert when my hands first grasped thee."

The shrinking, cowardly bailiff of Wey turned to see who it was had thus spoken to him; but he saw only the face of an unknown stranger, and marked only that a broad coined piece of gold glittered in his bonnet-front.

In another moment the stranger had disappeared; so also had

Elizabeth Browne and her children ; and it was remembered afterwards (what in the excitement and confusion of the burning was overlooked) that they were seen proceeding towards their desolate home, attended and supported by two strange gentlemen, one of whom wore conspicuously a gold bonnet-piece.

It has not been thought necessary to prolong the account of this martyrdom. The following, however, is the unadorned narrative of John Browne's happy ending, as given by Foxe.

"And so, the next day, on Whitsunday eve, this godly martyr was burned. Standing at the stake this prayer he made, holding up his hands :—

" ' O Lord, I yield me to thy grace,
Grant me mercy for my trespass ;
Let never the fiend my soul chase.
Lord, I will bow and thou shalt beat,
Let never my soul come in hell-heat.

" ' Into thy hands I commend my spirit ; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord of truth.'

" And so he ended."

The writer desires to add here (lest he should be charged with an anachronism), that though several histories give the date of Browne's martyrdom as 1517, this is an evident error, arising probably from some transcriber mistaking an imperfectly written figure four for seven. Foxe's account begins thus :—" Here let us now adjoin the story of one John Browne, a good martyr of the Lord, burnt at Ashford about this fourth year of king Henry VIII." Again, in the margin of the original work, is this note :—" John Browne, burned in Ashford about the fourth year of Henry VIII." And again, he sums up the story by saying, " This blessed martyr, John Browne, had borne a fagot seven years before, in the days of king Henry VII." All these quotations, with their dates, point to 1513 or 1514, as the year of Browne's martyrdom.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANTIQUARIAN JOTTINGS.

THE course of our narrative re-conducts us to London, and introduces us to certain matters connected with law and antiquity, which it is necessary for us, however briefly, to notice.

The court of Common Pleas, since the time of Magna Charta, instead of following the king from place to place, was fixed at Westminster; and every day, as soon as the court closed, which it did at noon, the lawyers who practised therein proceeded to St. Paul's, to look for clients, and to receive their instructions.

It sounds strange in our ears, and throws a curious light on the manners and customs, as well as the history of those times, that the metropolitan church should have been the general resort for all sorts of business; and that St. Paul's Walk, as the central aisle of the cathedral was called, should have been the special meeting-place of barristers and their clients.

The old cathedral stood where the present edifice now stands, but instead of the capacious dome which now crowns it, there was a massive lofty tower, which rose high above all the other buildings in the city.

The churchyard of St. Paul's was much larger than it is now, and was bounded by a wall which ran along by Ave Maria Lane, Paternoster Row, Old Change, and Creed Lane. This area was enlivened by an ancient wooden pulpit, mounted on stone steps, and covered with an awning of lead. This, for centuries past, had been the place from which all public proclamations were made, and was used as well for the delivery of political speeches as for religious instruction.

Curious affairs were sometimes transacted (under the popish regime) upon a penance scaffold erected in front of this pulpit. "Breaches of papal discipline and other offences were punished on this spot in various ways, sometimes grotesque enough: as, for example, when a man did penance for transgressing Lent, by holding two pigs ready dressed, whereof one was placed on his head." *

It was here, in times immediately succeeding the period of our story, that Protestant books (in which category was included the English Bible) were burned, while Wolsey or other great ecclesiastics looked on. It was here, also, that such persons as had been persuaded or driven to recant their (so called) Protestant errors were made to stand with a lighted taper in their hands, and a fagot on their shoulders. Here, too, the Latimers and Ridleys of that day stood up against a host of enemies, and preached the doctrines of the apostles,—the people crowding around them, and catching the fire of their heroic zeal for the gospel.

On the south-west side of the cathedral stood the Lollards' Tower. It adjoined the bishop's house, and was so called because it was chiefly used as a prison for Lollards. This prison is not to be confounded with another bearing the same name, and applied to the same vile use, attached to the archbishop's palace at Lambeth. The fact is, that in those days of papal tyranny every prelate had a prison in his palace, the horrors of which were sufficient to shake the constancy or unsettle the reason of any one accused of heresy. It was of God's mercy, and in his overruling providence, that some checks had, from time to time, been placed, in England, on the full and entire exercise of the absolute power wielded by the Romish hierarchy in other countries; but those checks had, in many instances, been disregarded, and many poor persons accused of heresy had languished in the bishops' dungeons, and suffered indescribable tortures, in utter defiance of English laws,—though those laws, as

* Knight's "London."

we now reasonably think, were sufficiently stringent on matters of religion to satisfy an ordinary persecutor. There had long been a struggle, however, between the church of Rome and the people of England with their rulers, as to which should have the preeminence in the temporal affairs of the kingdom; and, leaving our sketch of old St. Paul's, and for a little while also our story of Richard Hunne, we are called upon to show how this vital question had been contested step by step, and with varying success, by English kings and parliaments.

The degradation to which the country had been brought by the vassalage of king John, who surrendered his throne and crown to pope Innocent III., and made oath to him as lord paramount, stirred the nation's heart, and brought the papacy for the first time into collision with English liberty. A national protest then declared the ancient and inalienable right of the people. Forty-five barons in arms, and surrounded by their knights, drew up the famous indenture which recited those rights, and sent it by the hands of a deputation to the king at Oxford.

"Why do they not demand my crown?" asked the weak and exasperated monarch. "I will not grant them liberties which would make myself a slave."

The king was mistaken. It was the pope, not his subjects, who had already made him a slave.

The barons occupied London, and on the 15th June, 1215, the sovereign who had crouched to the pope's legate, was obliged to yield to the just demands of an insulted people; and Magna Charta was signed on the field of Runnymede.*

* One of the clauses in this celebrated charter, and the one which most offended the papal party, was that which incorporated the law of mortmain in its requirements. By mortmain (or dead-hand) was meant the holding of lands in perpetuity by any religious corporation, whereby the final right and fee was taken from the lords of the soil, and

Innocent thundered anathemas from the Vatican, forbade the king to observe the charter, and commanded the barons to submit to Rome. It was thus popedom greeted the first stir of national life. But the barons were not daunted; they stood by their charter, and scorned and defied the excommunications hurled against them and their country by the pope,—asking, indignantly, “Is it the business of the popes to regulate temporal matters? By what right do vile usurers and foul simoniacs domineer over our own country, and excommunicate the whole world?”

It was a noble utterance; but for a while it was silenced in blood and carnage. “Alas, poor country!” exclaimed the oppressed sons of liberty; “alas, poor England! And as for thee, O pope, a curse light upon thee!”

But from the days of John the reaction had begun. Early in the fourteenth century an Englishman brought a papal bull to London. It purported to be only a spiritual document; for it merely excommunicated a citizen. The messenger, however, was arraigned as a traitor to the crown, and narrowly escaped the higher penalty of the law. He was sentenced to perpetual banishment.

Another attempt at papal supremacy in the same reign was met with like determination. Clement iv. resolved that the next two bishoprics in England should be conferred on two of his cardinals. “France is becoming English,” said the indignant courtiers of king Edward, alluding to the recent battles of Crecy and Poitiers; “and we suppose that, by way of compensation,

transferred to the ecclesiastical body. How necessary it was to guard against this has been often seen in the history of Christendom; and even in our own day has been illustrated in the case of Sicily, where it is said that two-thirds of the entire landed property had come into possession of the church, while the inhabitants had become mere tenants of the clergy.

The Magna Charta provided, “That it shall not be lawful for any to give his lands to any religious house, and to take the same lands again to hold of the same house.”

England is becoming Italian." The sarcasm went home, and the disgrace was averted.

In 1350, parliament passed a famous statute, which made void any ecclesiastical appointment that interfered with the right of the king or patrons, and threatened imprisonment or banishment for life on the offenders.

The question of papal supremacy was gradually coming to an issue. By successive acts in the reign of Edward III., and finally by the celebrated statute of *Præmunire*, in the reign of Richard II., the political attitude of England towards the popedom was thereafter determined.

By this last enactment all bulls and excommunications from the Roman pontiff, and all appeals to him, and all acts and documents infringing on the rights of the crown were interdicted; and all persons receiving, publishing, or executing the same, were put out of the king's protection, deprived of their property, or otherwise punished as the act directs.

This important statute of *Præmunire* was the more significant as being the protest of Roman Catholic England, two hundred years before the Protestant reformation of the doctrines of the Romish church was commenced in Germany by Luther; and in various ways the statute turned to the maintenance of British liberties, down to the time when the Tudors began to reign.

The spirit of loyalty to the crown, and the resolution to uphold its prerogatives against all opposers, was never stronger than in the early years of Henry the Eighth. In him the people not only saw a monarch who, by uniting in himself the opposing claims of the rival houses of York and Lancaster, had reasonably secured them from the desolations of civil war; but his person and manners (as we have already seen) recommended him to his people's admiration. Tall, muscular, and practising a genial blandness which obtained for him the sobriquet of "Bluff Hal," combined with an

extravagant munificence which dazzled the nation, and a strong attachment to those games and exercises in which the populace delighted, he was regarded with a rapture of devotedness which was short-lived, certainly, but gratifying to vanity while it lasted.

The political events which marked the commencement of his reign increased this attachment on the part of the people. He brought the corrupt ministers of his father to justice for their exactions, and personally distinguished himself in the war with France. He took the town of Terouenne, and won the battle of Tournay, reaping worldly glory the greater in these exploits by the fact that the emperor Maximilian served under him in the campaign. He obtained a victory, too, over his Scottish foes on Flodden Field; and thus consummated his popularity as a martial king.

There were other qualities which enhanced for a time the regard of his subjects. He patronised men of letters, and joined with them in cultivating and reviving literature. "As a second son, Henry had been destined for the church during the lifetime of his elder brother, and had therefore received as liberal an education as the age could bestow, to qualify him for the primacy. He was an accomplished Latinist, spoke and wrote French, German, and Spanish, and gave encouragement to the more advanced in knowledge, by courting their society, and seeking their instructions."

Taking all these matters into consideration, it is no wonder that the people of England were ready to resent any claims which lessened their own national dignity, touched their national honour, or encroached upon their monarch's prerogative—especially if those claims ran counter to the religious convictions which were, though to some extent secretly, making such rapid progress amongst them.

There was one claim of the church of Rome which had previously been allowed in England, but which came to be questioned

in the early years of Henry's reign. This was what was called "the benefit of clergy," and it originally implied the exemption of all orders of the clergy from the action of civil tribunals, under the plea that, for all offences committed by them, they could and ought to be tried in their own spiritual courts. It was, at any rate, required that a gross offender should be first degraded and deprived of his clerical character before he could be made answerable to the laws of the country.

One consequence of this allowed claim was, that a multitude of the vilest characters, after committing heinous crimes, obtained admission into holy orders, and were thus screened from the civil courts. And this was aggravated when, in process of time, the benefit of clergy was extended to all who could read—it being taken for granted that none but the clergy were likely to have attained to this accomplishment. As learning spread, however, the number who claimed "benefit of clergy" vastly increased; and thus, while the privileges of the clerical body were enhanced, the temptations to crime were multiplied, and there arose a general outcry among the honest and well-conducted of the laity, against the preposterous claim which led to such abuses.

It was in the fourth year of Henry the Eighth's reign (being that immediately preceding the date to which our narrative has advanced) that a bill was brought into the House of Commons, to deny the benefit of clergy to all murderers and thieves. This bill passed the Commons; but, in order to make it palatable to the Lords, where the Romish influence was strong, two provisions had to be added to it—the one excepting bishops, priests, and deacons from its operation; and the other rendering the act of force only until the next parliament.

This act, however, brought many who would otherwise have escaped punishment within the compass of justice, to the great satisfaction of the nation, but to the discontent of the clergy,

who were jealous of their immunities and privileges. The abbot of Winchelcomb, for instance, publicly in a sermon, denounced the act as being contrary to the law of God, and the liberty of the church; and wrote a book to prove that all orders of the clergy were, or ought to be, exempt from the secular judge, even in criminal cases. This caused great commotion, and the temporal peers, with the concurrence of the House of Commons, called on the king to repress the insolence of the clergy; and there was a public discussion of the whole question before the king in council, all the judges being present, where Dr. Standish, guardian of the Mendicant Friars in London, opposed the abbot, and maintained, by the laws of God and the realm, that the clergy should be punished (if they deserved punishment) as other men, by the civil power.

The matter was hotly contested, and the laity, taking the side of Standish, moved the bishops to compel the abbot to recant his published opinions. This they flatly refused to do, saying that they were bound by the laws of the church to support the abbot's opinion in every point of it. The houses of parliament again interfered, and fierce debates were carried on in both of them—the majority of the Commons being on the side of Standish, the Lords on that of the abbot.

It will be seen, in the succeeding chapters, that these historical jottings are necessary to the full development of Richard Hunne's story, and will explain much which would otherwise be mysterious in its action. But besides this, it surely is not uninteresting to trace the successive steps by which, under the direction and guidance of Divine providence, our country was eventually brought out of the darkness and tyranny of popery into the light of the gospel, and the liberty which ever attends it. The pious reader rejoices, in reading these records of the past, to see the

hand of God in bringing about, by apparently unlikely or insufficient means, the purposes of his will; and when he learns what has thus been done, the eye and hand of faith are strengthened to see and lay hold of (though to carnal reason it may seem far distant) the glorious era unfolded to us in the apocalyptic vision,—“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RICHARD HUNNE AND HIS LAWYER.

ONE afternoon, late in the autumn of 1514, St. Paul's Walk manifested its usual bustle and confusion. Men in all varieties of costume, and intent on many kinds of worldly business, were passing and repassing, entering and departing. Groups stood here and there, chaffering and bargaining, exchanging friendly salutations or, it might be, lofty defiances; but all evidently intent on their own worldly interests, and carrying on their own worldly concerns; so that a caustic observer might have been tempted to apply to the moving crowd generally the emphatic condemnation of the Lord, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

Among the most prominent, though perhaps not the most active of the throng (for they were stationary under the shelter of the lofty pillars which upheld the roof of the building), were the doctors of law, to whom we have referred in the preceding chapter. For each serjeant had his own especial standing, where he waited patiently (or impatiently) for his clients.

Towards one of these, clad in his scarlet robe, white furred hood and coif, approached, at the time we have indicated, a respectable-looking citizen somewhat past middle age, whose comfortable habiliments denoted him to be a burgess of some importance, but whose countenance was, at that time, clouded over with vexation or anxiety, or both combined. To him, the gentleman learned in the law addressed himself in these or similar words :—

“This is a wonder worth noting, Master Hunne, to see you in this turmoil; a peaceable man like you! Are you not afraid to trust yourself so near to the lion’s fangs, as folks would fain make out us poor lawyers to be?” This was spoken pleasantly and jestingly, as a friend to a friend, or a good customer, not deeply in debt, to his favourite tradesman.

“I know not,” said Richard Hunne, somewhat absently. “It is true, I have ever kept, as well as I have been able, out of the meshes of the law. But it is come to me at last to have to seek your aid, master serjeant.”

“Which shall right willingly be given. But you look sad, and that becomes not a man with a good furred coat on his back, a full pouch at his girdle, and a comfortable estate to support it all. And yet I do but jest, my good friend,” added the lawyer, seeing that the shade on his client’s countenance did not remove. “And I be-think me that there are griefs which even money cannot altogether displace. I have been told that Mistress Hunne has been much indisposed. May I hope that your trouble has no relation to that malady?”

“My wife is partly recovered; and for that I give God thanks,” returned the citizen; “though she is yet weakly, for she cannot overcome the shock of that loss which befell us some time back. You know, I think, master serjeant, or may haply have forgotten, that our youngest child died, an infant not many weeks old, some time since.”

"I heard of it, Master Hunne, and sorrowed for you as an indifferent friend and well-wisher might. But that is, as you say, some time since; and I should have thought that that wound would have been skinned over, if not healed, before now."

"Nay, but it has broken out afresh, or rather it has caused another blow to be aimed at me and mine; and this brings me to you to-day. Please you to read this, sir." And the merchant-tailor placed a written parchment in the lawyer's hand. "I will walk on while you peruse it," he added.

The advocate carefully perused the document, and had re-read it, ere his client returned; and to the question, "What make you of it, master serjeant?" he briefly replied,—

"It is a writ, Master Hunne, citing you to appear before the legate's court, to answer certain charges brought against you. This far is plain; but tell me, now, the whole history of the business, holding back nothing; for we lawyers are like physicians, who must probe to the root of a malady before they can prescribe a cure."

Thus moved, Richard Hunne recounted to his lawyer the whole story, already told in a former chapter, of little Stephen's death and burial, and the quarrel with priest Dryfield almost over the grave's mouth, respecting the mortuary claim.

"And this is the whole truth of the story?" demanded the lawyer.

"So far as I know, I have told the whole truth, and nothing beyond or beside it," replied Hunne; "and I wot not what to do in the matter. Therefore I am come to you for advice, master serjeant."

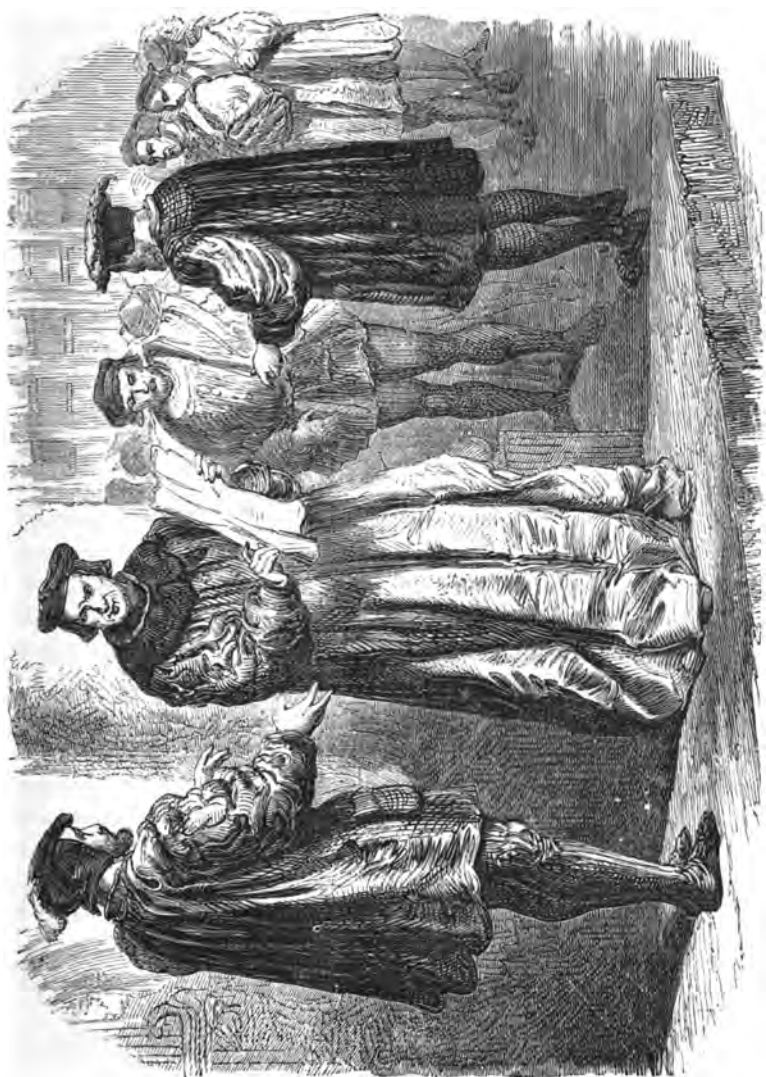
"Leave the parchment in my hands, and I will look in upon you at night. I see something in this that will shake these proud churchmen in their shoes," said the lawyer; "only it requires wary handling." And then the client departed.

A few hours later, and the lawyer fulfilled his promise. But

before we proceed to that interview, we may observe that the mind and thoughts of Richard Hunne had been strangely moved by many occurrences, and especially by the scene he had many weeks before witnessed in the market-place at Ashford.

It has been often said, and the truth of the saying was frequently made manifest in those days of violent persecution, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The people of England (whatever other bad qualities they may inherit) are not, nor have they ever been, a bloodthirsty people. Superstitious and ignorant and bigoted, the majority of the nation, no doubt, was at the time of which we are writing; but except among the higher aristocracy and the lowest rabble (for extremes often meet), there was, we think ourselves justified in saying, no love for the executions which disgraced the land,—no savage dancing around the fires kindled for the extirpation of heresy. Some gentle degree of compulsion would no doubt have been approved,—such as imprisonment, fines, and even banishment; for heresy was too dreadful a foe to be permitted to stalk abroad with impunity. But when it came to death punishments, or even torture, or both combined (as in the case of John Browne), the feelings of the people revolted; and though for two centuries, at least, these judicial murders were permitted, the nation never became reconciled to the sight. There were great rejoicings, for instance, when queen Mary, the persecutor above all others, died and was called to her account—not so much because her reign had been almost uniformly unfortunate for the country's prosperity—but because the people were sick of her cruelty towards her (so-called) heretical subjects. So also there never was a notorious persecutor removed from the scene which his presence and influence had dyed with blood and bedewed with tears, but the people rejoiced, even though they probably sympathized with his religious sentiments.

But there were others on whom these murderous exhibitions, or



IN ST. PAUL'S WALK.

the hearing of them, produced a profounder impression than that of mere disgust. Already partially enlightened, they were driven to the conclusion that a church which sanctioned and practised such cruelties must be the church of demons rather than of Christ; and though the majority of these concealed their thoughts until a favourable time arrived for avowing their convictions, and acknowledging their conversion to a milder and more scriptural faith, there were others who, boldly shaking off the trammels of former ignorance or indifference, sought for instruction from, and eventually cast in their lot with, the persecuted.

Thus it is not to be wondered at that one like Richard Hunne, who had previously been convinced of many of the doctrinal errors of the Romish church, as well as displeased with the lives and assumption of its clergy, should witness the martyrdom of a friend with the utmost horror, and should depart from the scene of martyrdom with more intense hatred of a system which countenanced such cruelties. And yet it was not to be expected of Hunne that he should breathe outward defiance against it. Probably he, like others, took a middle course, determining, as far as he could with safety, to oppose all exorbitant and unreasonable claims on his obedience, and secretly to seek salvation and instruction apart from popish mummeries, while outwardly conforming to the communion of papistry. That this was a course not unattended with danger, multitudes both then and afterwards found, as Hunne himself was to find; but it was the course most natural for a timid, yet enlightened and conscientious man to take.

This fresh and probably unlooked-for blow, however, which had fallen upon him—this citation before a spiritual court to back up a most grossly unjust and obnoxious demand,* had stirred up in him

* Froude denominates the *mortuary* as “a peculiarly hateful form of clerical impost;—the priests claiming the last dress worn in life by persons brought to them for burial.” Other writers speak of it in similar terms.

all that was manly and heroic. His heart was still very sore at the remembrance of his dead infant, and of the overbearing manner of the priest who buried it; and he determined to resist the exaction to the utmost.

Richard Hunne was in this frame of mind when his legal friend made his appearance in the evening, and informed his client that he had consulted several of his brother lawyers, who had, one and all, agreed with him, that this writ, issuing from the legate's court at the instance of Thomas Dryfield, parson of St. Mary, Matsilon, was grossly illegal, and even treasonable, subjecting every one concerned in it to the severest pains and penalties.

"These priests," said the lawyer, "aim at subverting the realm; but, by God's grace, we will have no foreign jurisdiction."

"In what way is it illegal, master serjeant?" the client ventured to ask.

"In this way, friend; it is a setting up of an authority in this country pretendedly superior to that of the king and of English law. You must have heard of the statute of *Præmunire*?"

Richard Hunne acknowledged that he had heard the word spoken of, though he was so ignorant of law as to have no precise idea of the meaning of the statute. The lawyer explained, and then added, "Here is a clear case of defiance to that law. Had this Dryfield any legal and rightful demand upon you, which, however, I do not affirm, or admit, he had his remedy in our civil courts. But instead of this, he goes to this spiritual court, the head of which is the pope of Rome, who has no temporal jurisdiction in England, and sets it in motion against an English subject, thus treating with contempt the king's authority and power."

"What then is to be done?" demanded Hunne.

"Our course is plain, and the remedy is equally plain; we have but to issue a writ of *Præmunire* against this Thomas Dryfield,

with all his accessories and abettors; and if this do not turn the tables upon them, and make them smart for their treason (for it is nothing less), there will soon be no law left for us."

"The cause is in your hands, master serjeant," said Richard Hunne; and accordingly the next day the process was commenced, and an account of it is still to be seen in the records of the English courts of law.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

THE bold action taken by Richard Hunne, in opposition to the legate's court, was soon noised abroad, and took by surprise all who heard of it. His fellow-citizens in general applauded his courage, the more so as his caution, in regard both to politics and religion, was believed, by those who thought they best knew him, to border somewhat on timidity, if not on time-servingness. On the other hand, the Romish clergy and their adherents were exasperated beyond bounds.

Already in consternation at the course of the stormy discussion respecting their long-cherished and jealously-guarded "benefit of clergy," they were indignant that a layman—and he of the trading-class—should venture to enter the arena with the highest church dignitary in the realm, and a pope's legate to boot. For, though the action was avowedly entered against the priest Dryfield, as principal, there was no doubt that the Archbishop of Canterbury was involved in its consequences.

"If this be permitted to go on," said a certain Dr. Horsey, who

was the bishop of London's chancellor, to one of the chaplains, as they paced up and down the spacious churchyard, "there is no telling where it will end. The people are saucy enough already, and too saucy, about their pretended rights; and the king himself (I have it from a sure source), though he says little, and is kept in check by my lord high chancellor, is quick to take umbrage whenever his power and prerogatives are touched by the church, ready as he is in other matters to uphold its doctrines and discipline."

"And you think, then, that Hunne has a chance of succeeding in this suit of his?" said the chaplain.

"Ay, that do I," replied the bishop's chancellor; "for, to confess the truth, he has more right on his side than I should be willing to allow openly; and the archbishop's court has clearly gone beyond its bounds to meddle in the matter."

"For all that," rejoined the other, "there is an easy way of bringing it to a swift and happy conclusion, and even making it redound to the advantage of our holy catholic church."

"I see not how," said Dr. Horsey.

"I marvel you are so dull, master chancellor. What can be easier than to attack the enemy in the very citadel while he is busy at the outposts? Why not boldly challenge this citizen Hunne's loyalty to the church, and prove him to be touched with the doctrine and practices of the Lollards? You have him then at your mercy, doctor."

"If this could be done, no doubt it would be an effectual remedy: but——"

"There is neither 'if' nor 'but' about it, doctor. It would be easy to prove the man to be a rank and pestilent heretic," said the chaplain.

"Why, but he has the reputation of being not only an honourable and well-to-do man (which makes it the easier for him to carry on

this suit), but also a good catholic;* and there is not a man round St. Paul's more constant, as it is told me, at his public devotions, or more frequent at the new-fangled preaching of the dean."

"And none the less likely to be a Lollard for that," said the chaplain, who was one of those priests who, in that day, answered faithfully to the description given by the prophet Isaiah of the priests in his—"His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough; and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." The more likely was he, therefore, to find fault with one who put his own idleness to the blush.

"You mean, I suppose," said Horsey, "that being half a Lollard and three-fourths a heretic himself, Dr. Colet is followed after by those who are altogether both. That may be; but we cannot charge a man with heresy on the bare ground that he sucks in the doctrine of one whom our church tolerates as her teacher."

"Content you for that, doctor. The time will soon come when the cathedral will be too hot to hold the dean in his pulpit. But if all be true that I was told by an impudent begging friar only yesterday (and if it be not all true, it may easily be made so), it would be no hard matter to clap Master Hunne up in yonder tower till he comes to his senses, and makes humble submission, even to the parting with some few score of his superfluous nobles." The chaplain looked up significantly to the Lollards' Tower, as he said this; then he added—"And it rests not wholly with the friar I was speaking of; for your sumner, Charles Joseph, can let you into some secrets as well, if it were worth while to moot the question."

* So Foxe, in the "Book of Martyrs," records of him:—"The same was esteemed during his life, and worthily reputed, and taken not only for a man of true dealing and good substance, but also for a good catholic man."

"And is it not worth while?" quoth the doctor, with mock religious fervour.* "Shall not the enemies of the church be sought out, even though they be of our own households? What saith the Vulgate?—'Make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.'" This he quoted in Latin.

"Amen, with all my heart," rejoined the chaplain. "But I knew not, doctor, that you were so apt at quoting the Scriptures."

The chancellor might have retorted that the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so; he only said, however—

"I am obliged to carry many things in my memory, master chaplain; and when I hear an apt text I store it up for future use. But, setting this aside, what light can Charles Joseph give in this matter of Richard Hunne?"

"Do, you, then, purpose mixing yourself up in the controversy?" asked the other.

"I have little to do at present, and it will keep my hand in for future work," said the chancellor, evasively. "So let me know, if it please you, what the sumner may have to say."

"Nay, had you not better see him yourself, doctor? I promise you he has a budget full. And should you be intent on pursuing the matter to Hunne's damage, there is Ursula Hatcher—Mad Ursula, as she is called—who will confirm anything that Joseph may say, if you can lay hold on her, and she be dealt with warily. But Ursula must not know that anything is purposed against Master Hunne, who has ever been her very good friend."

"I care not for the testimony of a mad wench, which would not

* Foxe writes of this Dr. Horsey, that he was "a man more ready to prefer the clergy's cruel tyranny than the truth of Christ's gospel."

tell for much," said Horsey; "but the sumner—I will search him out, assuredly."

"Not mentioning my name in the business, however," added the chaplain, who, in addition to the character we have already given him, was one of those (are there none such to be found now?) who are fair-speaking and false-hearted. He had that morning met Richard Hunne, and, almost with tears in his eyes, had lamented the quarrel which was then forward, greatly blaming the priest Dryfield for his greed, and thirst for revenge; and hoping that good "Master Hunne" would prosper in his cause, which he could but acknowledge was a righteous one. Thus did this courtly chaplain tread in the steps of David's bitter enemy,—“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.”

Presently, the chaplain and the chancellor parted; and that same evening the sumner Charles Joseph was closeted with his superior, in the doctor's own house, for the space of an hour or more.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

A RICH tradesman has his troubles and vexations. "Was ever man plagued as I am?" was the testy exclamation of Richard Hunne, one sharp, cold November day, when, entering his son-in-law's shop in Cheapside, he sat himself down on a bench, and, removing his square citizen cap, wiped his moist forehead with his kerchief.

Roger Whapplot looked up from his account-book, which at that moment he was studying, and then, after courteously greeting his unexpected visitor, he asked what troubled him.

"I know not why I should not leave business altogether, Roger," said the elder citizen, without directly replying to the question. "I have enough to maintain me and my Margaret in quiet; and I find I am older now than I was some score of years ago."

"I think we may all make that complaint, father Hunne," said the young draper.

"Ay, but not to the same effect, nor leading to the same conclusion. You, Roger, have youth on your side, and a prosperous course before you, as I may earnestly hope; while I——" Here he paused.

"While you, father?"

"While I am, as it seems to me, almost worn out. The times are getting before me, Roger, and I am vainly trying to keep up with them. It should be left to younger men, I think, such as you, to keep on apace."

"Nay, I have heard you say all this before; and yet, methinks, you are showing proof to the contrary. Your business, as you yourself showed me in plain figures not long since, has never been more profitable than through the past year. Does not that content you?"

"I speak not altogether of profit and loss, son Roger," said the disturbed merchant-tailor; "but trading and its cares weigh more heavily on me than they were wont to do formerly; and I would fain take wings and fly, if I might, to take some rest before I am called away. These daily chafferings are too much for my patience, which, God help me, is getting more and more infirm."

"And what should hinder you from taking your rest, if you so desire it?" demanded the younger man. "There are those who would be willing to step into your shoes, I trow; and there are

pleasant retreats to be found, in which you might enjoy for many years the quiet you have so well earned. But I trust you have no greater cause for trouble than your ordinary business cares."

"Nay, I know not that I have; but a weight is pressing on me, I know not why."

"I think the better way to cure that ill will be to have an hour's gossip with your daughter,—you will find her in her room above, father Hunne; and I know by good experience that my Margaret has a rare gift in raising the spirits when they are down-cast."

Master Hunne, however, declined availing himself of this solace. "I should only infect your Margaret with my present melancholy, even as I have already distressed her mother; and, with your good leave, I will wait here awhile till the humour is blown off," said he.

The humour took long to blow off; for, instead of listening to Master Whapplot's cheering words of encouragement, Hunne began to enlarge more particularly on some of the causes of his chagrin, which resolved themselves, as it appeared, into much the same sort of annoyances as those which his successors in trade of the present day probably labour under. It is not necessary, therefore, to follow the worthy citizen through his multifarious complaints, until he came to the last of them, which was this:—

"And there is my man Thomas Brooke, too. I know not what has come to him of late; for his demeanour has been altogether strange and unaccountable. Day after day he has absented himself at improper hours; and when I have reproved him for his negligence, he has made such paltry excuses, that I know not what to think of him."

"I have always avowed to my Margaret that you have placed too much confidence in Thomas Brooke, father," said Roger; "but I have been loth to interfere between master and servant."

"Yet you know no harm of Thomas?" said Hunne, with a sudden start of fear, as it might have seemed.

"I know no other harm of him than that I have ever deemed him to be unworthy of too much trust, and thought he needed more sharply looking after. But this may be speedily amended. There are other serving-men in London, who would be only too desirous of being your knave. Why not dismiss Thomas Brooke, if he ceases to serve you faithfully?"

"Your advice comes too late, son Roger; for Thomas hath already dismissed himself," said Master Hunne, lugubriously.

"He has?"

"Yes, truly. It was only last night that he came to me and said, that as he had ceased to please me, he should beg to withdraw from my service forthwith, and demanded payment of what was due to him; which, in truth, was very little."

"But you suffered him not to depart from you thus?" exclaimed the young draper. "He dared not do this by law. He was your bounden servant until his term should be out; and you might have laid him by the heels, and given him a taste of prison comfort for his rebellion."

"So I told him; but the poor knave pleaded so earnestly, saying that he had a better service in view, though he told me not what or where, that I could but relent, especially when he said that he was about shortly to take a wife, for whom he had been waiting these many years."

"I knew not that Thomas Brooke was thus inclined," said Whapplot. "Did he tell you whom the damsel might be?"

"Ay, marry, did he; and who should it be but a serving wench of that Charles Joseph, the bishop's sumner, who some years ago, as you may remember, owed me some moneys, which I had a hard matter to recover. He told me the damsel's name, too, but I have forgotten it."

"The sumner has only one servant ; her name is Julian Littell, and strange stories have been told round St. Paul's ;—but that may be nothing more than spite. Yet I like not this ; for Master Joseph has no goodwill towards you, father Hunne ; and Thomas Brooke is but a weak, uncertain man. I trust he has no power of doing you mischief."

"I know of none, Roger. You yourself know, I think, that there are none of my dealings in trade that will not bear the light of day. I should be sorry to think otherwise ; and even my greatest enemies, if I have any worth mentioning, must grant me this."

"You are right, sir ; and I am sure that Thomas Brooke has no hold on you there. I was thinking of other matters apart from trade. Your man was our joint lackey, you know, on our journey into Kent, some weeks back ; and I perceived at that time that he contrived as much as he could to keep within earshot of us on the road. But this is only a fancy ; and I trust, as you say, that he has no power of doing harm ; though the conjunction of his name with that of Master Joseph seemed somewhat ominous when you first mentioned them in the same breath. But get you another man, and think no more of it."

Richard Hunne evidently did think more of it, however, for he sat some time in moody silence ; and though the day was cold, and the shrill blasts blew keenly into Whapplot's open shop, great beads of perspiration started from his forehead. At last he spoke again :

"My trust is in God," he said, piously ; "and I would I could say, like David, 'I fear not what man can do unto me.' But I have had many and strange misgivings, Roger, since that terrible sight came before me at Ashford ; for, truly, in these days no man is safe from slanderous tongues ; and he who strives to live in the fear of God, and to serve his generation, is accounted as only stubble fit for the burning."

"It may be so, father; yet cheer up," said the younger man, with more show of confidence than perchance he felt. "These are times," he added, "which doubtless crave wary walking; but you have ever kept an even pace and a middle course,—avoiding, on one hand, the extremes of popery, such as image-worship, and other gross perversions of Christ's gospel; and, on the other, you have carefully kept from mixing yourself up with secret conventicles and close communication with what they are pleased to call the heresy of Lollardism. So surely you are safe."

"John Browne had not departed from the Church of Rome; yet see what they did with him," said Hunne, sorrowfully.

"Browne was imprudent with his tongue, and so invited and provoked suspicion," said the encourager. "But as for you,—why, think, sir, how you have often told me that I go much too far; and it is indeed true that I have openly gone farther than you, being younger, and hotter also, as I suppose,—yet they meddle not with me; why then trouble yourself with unreal fears? You are far too well accounted of in the city to be touched. Think you how all men are praising you even now, for your boldness in this suit of yours with parson Dryfield, and you a good catholic man, as every one is bold to affirm. You see there is no question in any man's mouth of the soundness of your faith in the church."

The mention of his suit with the covetous priest momentarily roused Hunne's flagging spirits. "Yes," said he, "I will, by God's help, carry that on to the end; and it shall be seen that a true son of the church has courage to resist the imposition of these meddling priests. It is the priests who have done all the mischief, son Roger," continued he, still warming more and more. "It is they who, lest their misdeeds should be brought to light, forbid the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, as they call our good English. But for all they can say or do, Roger, the time will come when, like as it was in the day of Pentecost, when each man

then present heard the apostles speak the gospel in the language in which he had been born,—so the Holy Scriptures of God will be spread abroad through the whole world in all spoken languages.”

“So say I, and trust it may be soon,” said the young draper. “Yet methinks you said not always so, father Hunne.”

“Ay; but the more I read the Word, the more I see that it must be so, Roger. It was but this morning that, on opening my New Testament, I came upon the words of Jesus himself, saying that it behoved for the gospel to be preached among all folk. And the word he spoke must needs come to pass.”

“Truly it must; and therefore we who love that Word should rejoice, and not suffer our souls to be vexed by present dark days,” said Whapplot, cheerily.

“It may be so, Roger,” observed the elder citizen, relapsing into his tone of care and his look of gloom. “But I read something else; and as surely we are told that before those bright times dawn on the world there shall be such troubles as were never before known. The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father shall do the same to his son, and sons also to their fathers, and no man shall be safe. And we are furthermore warned that when these things come to pass (and are they not coming to pass now?), those who are wise and understand these things shall flee to the hills, and they who are in the country shall not return to their houses to take away their cloth. Think you I did not read this as said to me and to you also, Roger, seeing that the word ‘cloth’ was there?”

“It was this, then, that put it into your mind to leave your trading, and find some quiet place for rest?”

“I think it was. But where is that quiet place to be found? If I knew but this, it should not be long ere I fixed my nest there.”

It was all in vain to make further attempts to raise the dejected

spirits of Richard Hunne; and, seeing this, Whapplot wisely desisted; but once more, and with better success than before, he urged his father-in-law to step up-stairs into his daughter's apartment.

"Margaret will be vexed with me," said he, "if she knows her father to have been so long with me to-day, and she not to see him."

So Master Hunne went in, to bid his little Margaret, as he fondly called her, good-day. But even then the evil spirit (as it might have seemed) was upon him, so that his evident sorrow brought tears to the daughter's eyes; and when they parted, it was with so much tenderness of feeling on both sides as was remembered by Margaret Whapplot with agony of heart for many many years after.

* * * * *

Richard Hunne's way homeward was by the conduit in Cheap-side, and down Friday Street. The wind blew so sharply that when he left his son-in-law's shop, he pulled his cap tighter over his brow, and muffled himself in his furred cloak, so that his face was almost hidden. Not so concealed, however, that two men who were lounging on the steps of the conduit did not immediately recognise him; for one said cautiously to the other, as he passed, himself unobservant, "Yonder is our man." And then they exchanged their attitude for a brisk walk, following the merchant-tailor, at some score yards behind, however.

But Master Hunne had scarcely reached his shop, and resettled himself to his business occupation there, than the two men entered, and one of them, who seemed to be the chief, unceremoniously walked up to the tradesman, and displaying a silver-tipped staff and a badge on his jerkin, declared him to be his prisoner. At the same time two other men stepped in from the opposite side of the street, and produced a search-warrant, authorising and commanding

inquisition to be made (in the king's name) among the goods and chattels of Richard Hunne, merchant-tailor, of Watling Street, for illegal and heretical books and papers.

Astounded by this sudden stroke, poor Richard Hunne looked almost mechanically at the parchment which was exhibited before his eyes. He only saw that it was signed, or countersigned, he knew not which, by Richard Fitzjames, the Bishop of London; and then a mist came before him, and he could see no more. Indeed, he would have fallen, but that one of his captors caught him as he was beginning to sink, and eased him gently to the ground. When he came to himself he found the strange men still around him; impatiently waiting, as it seemed, to conduct him away; but he begged so piteously to be permitted to take leave of his Margaret, that, hard-hearted as their occupation had made them, they could not refuse the request. They took care, however, that he did not go out of their sight.

Meanwhile the search for prohibited books was made, and the written Bible was found, with many of John Wycliffe's books besides, concealed in a secret closet. These being packed in a cloth, were taken away by the searchers; and then the officer who had Hunne in charge told him gruffly that it was time to depart.

We shall not attempt to describe, nor even to imagine, the tender scene which then ensued, nor dwell upon the sorrowful character of the change which fell upon the merchant's house, nor on the melancholy aggravation of Mistress Margaret Hunne's sickness that followed on this crushing trial. Let it pass: it was the beginning of the end.

And so they were parted. It was wisely and mercifully concealed from them that they should never meet again; and Hunne strove to infuse hope into Margaret's heart.

"It is but for a short season, dear wife, and I have friends who will not——" He began to say something like this, but he broke

down, and could only whisper a broken prayer. And so they parted.

One link, indeed, there was between these sundered hearts—the link of deep-seated, holy faith, which had grown up almost imperceptibly within them during those quiet hours in which they had read together that Word which, though now taken from them, was still hidden in their hearts as the imperishable seed of a perfect and happy life hereafter.

That night Richard Hunne committed himself to God's keeping, and laid himself down to sleep (if sleep would come to him) in the Lollards' Tower close by St. Paul's cathedral.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ROUND THE CONDUIT IN CHEAPSIDE.

THE news was not long in reaching Cheapside that Master Hunne had been arrested and taken away to the Lollards' Tower. The news, indeed, very soon spread rapidly through the city; and little business could have been done that afternoon, or with slight care and attention, by the principal merchants round St. Paul's; for little was spoken of in comparison with this gross infraction, as it seemed, of the privileges and immunities and prerogatives of a London freeman. For it was discovered that no notice had been given, nor plaint laid against Hunne before any civil magistrate, and that, indeed, no warrant had been issued from any civil court directing his arrest. And it was in all men's mouths that this proceeding was a piece of priestly spite and revenge against a fellow-

citizen who had dared to enter the lists in opposition to the encroachments of the hierarchy.

"If these things are to be permitted," said one of a little group of notables who were congregated near the conduit of Chepe, "we might as well be in France, or in Spain or Italy, where the priests rule with so high a hand ; but, by God's mercy, it shall never be so in England."

"And what is become of our rights as citizens," asked another, "if a reputable burgess——"

"Not a better or more responsible man in London," interposed a third, who probably believed (as some even now seem to believe) that money and goodness are synonymous ; "a man who always pays his way, and has funds in store as well. No one ever asked Richard Hunne twice for moneys owing, I'll warrant," he added.

"I say," continued the second speaker, not much heeding this interpolation, "what is become of our rights if a reputable burgess, as all men must but know Master Hunne to be, is to be dragged from his home at the will of a proud priest, be he bishop or no, and thrust into a filthy jail as though he were a thief or a murderer, and with as little ceremony ?"

"And where is our Magna Charta ?" chimed in a fourth speaker. "Little use was it to make King John sign it if our liberties are to be played with in this fashion !"

"Would it not be well to let the king know something of our thoughts on this matter ?" asked another of the group. "I warrant he would give a hearing."

"I know not that," rejoined one of the former speakers. "King Henry knows that it is no safe thing to try to put a bridle on the church."

"Neither is it a safe thing to put a bridle on the liberties of the people," replied his fellow-citizen. "Other kings have found this out before now, as King Henry must know."

"Hush!" interposed one who had not yet spoken. "This sort of speech is not safe, and so many within earshot. The king is a very good king, and a religious; and the bishop is an excellent prelate, who has warrant, doubtless, for what he does; and if he have shut up Master Hunne in yonder tower——"

"If! Why, do we not know that he has done it?" said another impatiently.

"Truly, so we have been told; and, since he has done this, be sure it is on sufficient warrant. How know we, friends, what Richard Hunne may have done to draw down this upon him? Let me tell you that there are shrewd suspicions abroad. They say that there are plots hatching for overturning the church and bringing in the heresy of Lollardism: and then down would go the king's government, and his crown as well. And who knows but something may have been found out which has made this sudden arrest a mere necessity?"

"Then let the man have a fair and open trial," exclaimed one of Hunne's advocates, angrily. "And since, master goldsmith, you speak of overturning the church, I would ask if this is to be prevented by overturning the law?"

They were in the midst of this animated discussion when one of them cried, "Here comes Roger Whapplot. Let us hear what he has to say."

The young draper, who had just come from Watling Street, where he had left his wife to be company and comfort (if that might be) to her mother, had not much to tell more than was otherwise known. That there had been a violent infraction both of law and of justice was certain; and Whapplot was then on his way to Hunne's lawyer to see what remedy might be devised.

"But what was charged against Richard Hunne in the warrant?" demanded the more lukewarm of the citizens—the goldsmith just

mentioned; "or what reason gave the men who executed it for such a hasty proceeding?"

"I saw not the warrant, therefore I cannot tell; and so far as I can learn, the men gave no reason, save that they were but in the execution of their office."

"But is it not true that they searched the house, and took away some treasonable wares?" further inquired the prudent man.

"Verily yes, if God's holy Scriptures be treasonable wares," said Roger, bitterly. "But, good neighbours, I waste time which is precious, for I have much to do ere night, and much to think of before morning; so, asking your forgiveness for my lack of courtesy, I bid you good-night. It may be that I may need your counsel to-morrow. Your good wishes I know I have." Thus saying, Whapplot hastened towards Paul's Walk, and was seen no more by them that afternoon.

"Said I not so?" whispered the goldsmith. "See you not that this is a question of heresy? God's holy Scriptures, forsooth! And what business hath such an one as Richard Hunne with these same Scriptures, seeing they are forbidden? I pity him from my heart; but if a man will meddle with edge-tools, it is his own fault if he be cut. My advice, friends, is to stand by and say nothing."

Prudent advice, no doubt. Even Solomon tells us that "the prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself;" and if master goldsmith had ever studied the book of Proverbs he would probably have quoted this text, as many others since his time have done, to cover gross cowardice, or timidity, or indifference,—which was very far from what Solomon would have inculcated. But let this pass. There always have been, and always will be, those who go to the Bible, not for spiritual instruction, but for pretexts and self-justification, thus wresting the Scriptures to their own hurt, and sometimes to their own destruction. The goldsmith's prudent advice had its effect for that time, however.

"I think," said one of the others, "that Roger Whapplot is himself not a little tarred with that same brush; and master goldsmith counsels well. If it were only a matter of paying tythes or church dues, or mortuaries, as we thought, it would have become us, as friends and neighbours, to have taken up the cudgels for Richard Hunne; but this is another matter. I guessed not that the man was a Lollard."

So they all seemed to think; for though the rest said but little, they soon dispersed; for be it known that in some respectable circles, in those days, the word "Lollard" was as complete a sedative on sympathy and compassion, and affection also, as the term "Methodist" came to be three centuries later in our world's history, or as the name "Christian" had been fifteen centuries earlier. Blessed be God, those stamps of reproach have become signs and seals of honour now, while those who inflicted the stigma have said within themselves, "These are they whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how are they numbered among the children of God; and their lot is among the saints."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LOLLARDS' TOWER.

SEVERAL days passed away, and brought no comfort or encouragement either to the prisoner in the Lollards' Tower, or to his friends without. Comfort and encouragement indeed! There was poor Hunne, shut up in that dismal prison, not knowing why he was a

prisoner, nor guessing what was to be the next scene in this dreary drama. Twice a day the sumner's boy brought him meals, but could or would answer no questions put to him; and all the rest of the time the prisoner had to amuse himself as he best could. There was not much amusement for him, alas! It may be, and very likely was, that a stray mouse, rendered bold by former impunity, came out of its hole in the wall, to pick up the crumbs which had fallen from the prisoner's table. But this was all. No, not all; for there were inscriptions on the bare walls, scratched by former inhabitants of that dismal dungeon, telling of their sorrows and their fears, or their faith and their hopes. From these "sermons in stones" Richard Hunne might obtain gleams of hope, or incentives to his somewhat feeble faith. "We count them happy which endure," said the apostle James; and others who were once confined within those four walls had endured—endured, "as seeing him who is invisible,"—and they were, doubtless, now happy. But how much had they passed through, how long had they endured, before the full, perfect happiness came! Richard Hunne probably thought all this, and fingered his beads (for he had his beads with him, still hanging round his neck) meaninglessly; and he wondered how much *he* could endure.

We can imagine all this to have passed through and through Richard Hunne's thoughts, again and again, during those short winter days and long uneasy nights spent in the Lollards' Tower, until bending on his knees (his beads forgotten), he went to the Strong for strength, and prayed for more strength, and more and more, to bear this heavy trial. And then he thought of Him (we may be sure of this) who bore the contradiction of sinners against himself; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously; thought of Him whose words he had often read and pondered on,—“Blessed ben thei that suffer persecucioun for righteosnesse; for the kyngdom of

hevenes is hern. Ye schul be blessed whanne men schul curse you, and schul pursue you; and schul saye al yvel agens you lynges for me. Joie ye and be ye glad; for meede is plenteous in hevenes; for so thei han pursued also prophetis that weren bfore you." Old-world and barbarous these oddly spelt words may look to us, with our refined English; but they were spirit and life to Richard Hunne, when they came into his mind.

He had other things to trouble him. There was his business going to wreck and ruin; or, if not that, it was being neglected. But this was nothing compared with the thoughts of his sickly wife at home,—the dear Margaret of his younger married life, but never dearer than now, in her life's decline! And why had none of his friends visited him in his prison? Where was his daughter Margaret, and where was her husband, Roger Whapplot? Had they proved themselves false, and deserted him in his trouble? And where was his friendly lawyer, who had prompted him to that suit at law which had no doubt led to this doleful incarceration? Not one of these had come near him.

And yet, perhaps, it was not their fault; for Hunne could but remember how that John Browne, of Ashford, had been snatched away from his home, and for forty days was in prison, no one knowing where he was to be found, nor suffered to come near him, until that last day of his life. And it was natural that, as a man, our prisoner in the Lollards' Tower should gather dismal auguries from his remembrance,—natural too, that, as a Christian, the memory should send him anew to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in this time of need. Let us leave him there, for surely a better place under heaven cannot be desired for him, while we turn to those outside of the prison.

For these there was as little comfort or encouragement as for the poor prisoner. Margaret Hunne, weak and pining as she had before been, was prostrated by the terrible blow which had fallen

on her and her household, and was unable to take active means, even if active means could successfully have been taken, for her husband's deliverance. All she could do was to cast her care upon One who cared for her and for him, and whose word to every believer is, "My grace is sufficient for thee." There was comfort and encouragement here, truly; but it did not not alter the fact that Richard Hunne was a prisoner.

Margaret Whapplot did all that she could to inspire hope in her mother's breast; but verily this was not much; for her own hopes for her father's deliverance were faint and feeble. She knew, indeed, more than she dared tell her mother, namely, not only that Roger and the lawyer had both been refused admittance to Hunne in prison, but that the lawyer had given but gloomy prognostications as to the issue of this trial.

"Look you, friend Whapplot," this gentleman had said to Roger, on the case being laid before him; "Master Hunne is in a sore strait now, in which the common law is worth him next to nothing. When it was a matter of mere moneys, and of undeniable trespass upon the civil rights of an Englishman, we had law as well as right on our side; and in the present temper of the parliament,—ay, and of the king too,—we should have gotten justice, even had the inferior courts been overawed by the greatness of our adversaries. But now that my client has laid himself open, as it appears, to spiritual censure by being found in possession of these Lollard books, he is amenable to the spiritual courts, and must abide the consequences. Much, therefore, as I desire to help him, I can do no more than watch the course that may be taken, and see that no favourable turn be lost sight of."

The lawyer's reasoning was so manifestly correct, and so convincing to Roger Whapplot, who was no lawyer, that he had nothing further to urge, only to beg the serjeant to visit the prisoner, which he promised to do; but, as we have just said, he was

not permitted to get sight or speech of him. All this doubtless seems strange and cruel to us in the present day; but three hundred years ago our ancestors were more accustomed to such arbitrary and unjust proceedings, and had no law of Habeas Corpus* to check the tyranny of tyrants, either temporal or spiritual. And it would be a profitable source of reflection for those who have no love towards the gospel, and would, if they could, willingly banish the Bible from the soil where it has taken so deep a root, that it is to the despised volume, and those who loved it, we owe much of our present precious freedom. A free gospel—it cannot be repeated too often—makes a free people; and the greatest patriots are those whose highest love and devotion is given to God and his Word. Our readers must pardon this short digression.

“You can then do nothing in this case for my father Hunne?” said Whapplot, dejectedly. “But you said e’en now something about the king’s present temper, and his desire to do justice.”

“Yes; I am bold to say this of the king, from many things which have come to my knowledge,” said the lawyer; “and I do not doubt, if his own princely disposition had full sway, we should hear less of failures in justice, and even of the tyranny of the Romish priests.” †

* The Habeas Corpus Act, which is justly esteemed as the most valuable prerogative enjoyed by British subjects, was not passed till Charles the Second’s reign (in the year 1679). It would take too long here to explain, even briefly, the provisions of this law. All that need be said is, that by it a fair and open trial is secured to every accused person; and prolonged imprisonment before trial forbidden.

† It will do no harm to repeat that the early-years of Henry VIII. gave no sign of the despotism which afterwards disgraced both his reign and his personal character. On the contrary, he seemed in many respects to be in advance of his times in mildness and generosity. “In private,” writes Froude, in the summing up of those earlier years, “he was good-humoured and good-natured. . . . He seems to have been always kind and considerate. . . . It is certain that if he had died before the divorce [from his first queen] was mooted, Henry VIII. would have been considered by posterity as formed by Providence for the conduct of the Reformation; and his loss would have been

"Then to the king I will go," exclaimed Roger Whapplot, energetically and resolutely.

"Nay, I do not counsel this," said the lawyer.

"True; and therefore you will be absolved from blame if the suit miscarries. For once, come what may, I will take my own counsel. See you, sir; I have spoken face to face with the king before now; and the bonnet-piece which I sometimes wear on holidays was given to me by his own hands, and in defence of a heretic too. I will see therefore if he remembers me, and whether he has as merciful a mind as he had then."

The lawyer thought for a little space before he replied; and then he said,—

"It is a bold thought of yours, master draper, and it will be a bolder action if executed. Nevertheless, it may succeed, and I do not altogether disadvise the attempt. The king is now at Windsor, and may be easily reached; but what will you say if admitted to his presence?"

"When the first disciples of our Lord were taken before kings and rulers, they were previously forewarned not to study beforehand what to speak," said Whapplot.

The lawyer shook his head. "This might do well for them, and I do not deny it: but I doubt if you have the same warrant. So, by your leave, I will draw up a short memorial, which, when you have it, you may use or not, at your pleasure."

deplored as a perpetual calamity. We must allow him, therefore, the benefit of his past career, and be careful to remember it when interpreting his later actions. Not many men would have borne themselves through the same trials with the same integrity; but the circumstances of those trials had not tested the true defects in his moral constitution." We need not continue this quotation, which will probably remind the reader of a certain man named Hazael. Had a prophet forewarned the young king Henry of what he would become in after years, his thoughts, and perhaps his indignant language, would have been, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?" Nevertheless, he did them. Let the reader remember this, and make this his earnest prayer, "Hold thou me up; and I shall be safe."

"I will be guided by you in the matter," replied the citizen, "and give you many thanks beside." And so, for that time, they parted.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DEAN AND THE DRAPER.

It was not without some natural trepidation that Roger Whapplot contemplated the adventure to which, by a generous impulse, he had bound himself. He knew perfectly well that it would not be unattended with some personal peril to himself; and it was not impossible that his appeal to the king might even damage the position and prospects of the prisoner in the Lollards' Tower.

For Whapplot was himself a Lollard: he knew this, and he was not ashamed of it. With prudence enough—worldly prudence it might have been—to avoid any defiant attitude towards the Romish church, he had so far compromised himself with all who knew him as to be looked upon as far gone in heretical notions. It was a wonder to himself that he had never been meddled with, for he had never concealed his religious principles. It may be that his immunity was traceable to more sources than one; but he knew full well that he was liable any day to be haled before the spiritual courts to defend himself, if he could, against any spiteful or bigoted accuser. To ordinary reasoners, therefore, it might have seemed an act of madness thus to thrust himself into notice as an intercessor antagonistic to such powerful and merciless enemies as the Romish priests were known to be.

On the other hand, however, setting aside the natural affection

and the family ties which pledged him to do all in his power for the unfortunate prisoner, there was something chivalric, and therefore inciting, to a person of Whapplot's temperament in the thought of pleading before the king—not for any advantage to himself, but for the life and liberty of another. But besides this, the religion of the Bible had taught him that self-denial which leads (or should lead) every Christian man, woman, or child to forget self-interest or self-preservation, when treading the path of duty, as well as inspired him with courage in the face of danger.

But courage—even Christian courage—degenerates into foolhardiness when unaccompanied by discretion. And though Roger Whapplot had spoken of not studying beforehand what he should say, he was none the less glad that the friendly serjeant-at-law had engaged to put words into his mouth, or rather into his hand. For he remembered in good time that the promise was to those who were forcibly taken without their own free consent before rulers and kings, not to those who went of their own accord. And this thought so impressed itself on the mind of our young citizen, that he looked around to see if, by any other means, he might either obtain help or strengthen his cause.

Naturally enough Whapplot remembered that his father-in-law had been not only a constant attendant on the preaching of the dean of St. Paul's, and a great admirer of his evangelical doctrine, but had also, at different times, held friendly converse with him. True, this dignitary was in many respects a strict papist, and therefore, theoretically at least, could be expected to have but little sympathy with one charged with heresy. But, on the other hand, he was a good man, and an advocate for the Scriptures—adverse also to many of the grosser abuses and superstitions which had crept into the church; so far, then, he was likely to look favourably upon a layman whose principles accorded pretty nearly with his own; and who had not, at all events, committed the unpardonable

sin of what was called schism,—that is to say, he had not openly separated himself from the communion of Rome.

“I will go to Doctor Colet,” said Roger Whapplot to his wife, with whom he was discussing the best way of carrying out his project: “it may be he will give me some assistance.”

He found the dean nervous and agitated, yet withal not unwilling to listen to him.

“I have heard,” he said, “of this disaster. It is a cruel business, and I would willingly lend a helping hand to get good Master Hunne out of his trouble; but I know not how this is to be done, for I fear he has many and powerful enemies, who will leave no stone unturned to compass his downfall.”

“I know not why any should so set upon him, sir,” said Whapplot.

“The why is not far to seek,” returned the dean. “The suit he has instituted against the parson at Whitechapel is, especially in the present posture of affairs, distasteful to the higher authorities in our church. For myself—I care not who knows it—I am sure that Master Hunne is in the right; but yet I regret that he carried matters to such a pitch. Better to submit to a wrong than, by resisting, to bring down the hatred of those who have the power of revenge.”

“I will not argue that point, doctor; but the imprudence of that act makes not my father Hunne to be a heretic; and on no other charge has the legate’s court or the Bishop of London power to deprive him of his liberty.”

“Ay, but his having in possession the English Scriptures, and John Wycliffe’s writings to boot, goes far to establish that charge. I deal only honestly with you, master draper, when I tell you, what you must already know, that many have burned at the stake for no further heresy than that.”

“And yet, may it please you, doctor, if one may judge by more

than hearsay, you would have the Scriptures known and read by all; and yet men call you not a heretic, and you walk abroad in freedom."

"You judge only according to appearances," said the dean. "It is true I have present liberty; but I know not how long it may last: for I have enemies who would fain make me out to be as bad as the rankest Lollard that ever was burnt in Smithfield. And so wearied am I with these turmoils, that it is in my mind to throw up all my preferments, and retire into such privacy as God may be pleased to grant me during the short remainder of my days."*

"I grieve to hear it, doctor," rejoined the young citizen, with much concern; "for the loss to hundreds of hungry and thirsty souls will not easily be made up. But this being so, I dare not urge you more. You can give me no help."

"I said not that I would not try; and I am the more free to it that I neither look for nor desire further favour from king or subject. Look you, as king's chaplain, I have access to his presence: and though he likes not my doctrine at all times, yet I may have influence with him in some matters. Now, as you speak of laying your complaint before him, I will, if it so please you, accompany you on your journey, and make the way as easy for you as I can."

Overcome by this unexpected kindness, Roger could give only broken thanks; and (to shorten this part of our narrative) at dawn of the following day, or the day after, the dean and the draper mounted their horses, and were soon quietly riding between tall, though then leafless, hedgerows which bordered the broad road out of London, marked on our old map as "The Waye to Redynge."

* It was shortly after this that the dean of St. Paul's carried his intention into effect. He did not long enjoy his retirement, however, for he died in 1519.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DAY AT WINDSOR.

UNTIL a comparatively modern period the proud keep of Windsor Castle stood in solitary magnificence, with a vast extent of hunting-ground lying for miles before it, stretching from the south bank of the Thames. There were then no distinctions of park or forest. The great oaks grew up to the castle walls, and stretched away till they reached the sandy deserts of Surrey, and the chalk hills beyond the Kennet. But we must not consider that Windsor Forest, even three or four centuries ago, was nothing but heath and woodland. Fertile spots had been enclosed; solitary farms were growing into villages, and villages into towns. This was the character of the "Windsor Forest" of the reign of Henry the Eighth, through the glades of which, on that cheerless day in December, 1514, we have to represent our two travellers, the Dean of London and his humble companion, Roger Whapplot, as making way towards the still distant castle, though now in sight.

Their three long hours' journey from London had not been a joyous one, for each of the cavaliers was burdened with his own pressing anxieties, either personal or relative. The dean, for instance, had recently stirred up, more fiercely than ever, the enmity and malice of the extreme Romanists (who were the great majority of the church) by his stern denunciations, in the pulpit of St. Paul's, of some of the grosser abuses which disgraced the name of Christianity. It was said of him, as was said afterwards of his contemporary, Hugh Latimer, then select preacher in the royal chapel, that while he discoursed generally on sin, and godliness, and

virtue, it was very well ; but when he advanced to what was disrespectful to established beliefs, and condemned candles and pilgrimages—calling men unto the works that God had commanded in his holy Scripture, all dreams and unprofitable glosses being set aside and utterly despised—it was very ill:—so ill that swarms of doctors and friars flocked against him on every side. Thus molested and hindered in his work, and obnoxious to the charge of heresy, which he knew to hang over him, while, at the same time, he shrank from coming out from the tainted communion of Rome, and taking his stand among the advocates for a free, unfettered, and simple gospel church, no wonder that Doctor Colet was nervously anxious for the future, and doubtful as to the reception he might meet with from his royal master, into whose presence he was about to intrude. Especially he must have felt this if he considered that the object of his commiseration and intended intercession was, in effect, self-convicted of Lollardism by having had the Scriptures in his private and hidden keeping.

His companion had also great reason for the gloom which oppressed him. His father-in-law was in imminent peril. The persecuting spirit which raged abroad, so far from being satiated with the carnage and mortal sufferings which it had already inflicted, demanded fresh victims. Great numbers of honest and reputable men and women of the humbler classes, with many of the middle and some of the higher, had perished at the stake for smaller offences committed against the (so-called) infallible church of Rome than those which had brought Richard Hunne into his present trouble ; and, from the temper already displayed by the Bishop of London and others, there was no hope that mercy would be shown in this case. In addition to this, there was no guessing where the next blow would fall ; and though Roger Whapplot was sincere and ardent in his attachment to the gospel, we are not to wonder that he had a natural desire rather to show that attachment

by quietly living up to its principles, than by dying in defence of them.

The two travellers, however, had endeavoured to shake off their despondency, and even to forget its causes, as they journeyed on; and though in some important particulars they held opposite views, they were able to occupy their thoughts and tongues more profitably and comfortably in discoursing about matters on which, as partakers of a common faith, they were agreed, than by discussing those on which they differed. The love of Christ and the great mysteries of human redemption are subjects sufficient to warm the hearts and knit together in brotherly affection all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and to break down any factitious barriers, either of social position, or of denominational, or ecclesiastical, or sectarian predilections. And so, in this case, it came to pass that the Roman Catholic dean and the Lollard draper (for "Protestant" was a word not then adopted) rode on in Christian amity and with friendly talk on the best subjects. Thus lightening both the bodily toils of their twenty miles' journey, and their individual mental conflict, John Colet, doctor of divinity, and Roger Whapplot, citizen-draper, entered, as we have said, the glades of Windsor Forest.

Their concocted plan was to pass on to the town of Windsor, and put up at a hostelry there (known afterwards by the sign of the "Order of the Garter"), whence they intended, after due rest and refreshment, to proceed on foot to the royal castle. But this intention was frustrated when they were within a mile or two of the castle, by an adventure which we shall endeavour briefly to describe.

The somewhat weary travellers were quietly jogging on at an even pace, when their ears (and the ears of their horses also) were greeted with the distant sound of the baying of stag-hounds, accompanied by the winding of a bugle-horn indicating that a

hunt was in progress. Presently these sounds ceased, and were succeeded by the previous stillness of the woods. But the stillness was not of long continuance; for the upstir was renewed, accompanied by the hallooing of huntsmen and the sharp and rapid ringing of many horses' hoofs on the hard ground beneath the forest-trees, faint at first, but rapidly increasing in power, evidently proving that the hunt was approaching very near to them. They drew up their horses, therefore, to await the result, and had scarcely succeeded in quieting down the aroused spirit of their steeds (which, like the horse described by Job, smelt the excitement afar off, and began to paw the ground), when a fine stag, breaking through a thicket at their rear, swept close by, followed a few seconds afterwards by a pack of eager hounds, open-mouthed, and in full cry. Huntsmen followed apace, and these, by the quality of their attire and of their horses' housings, were, some of them at least, manifestly gentlemen of rank and importance. Foremost among them was one who especially attracted the notice of the two involuntary spectators, or would have done so, had they not been preoccupied in curbing in and coaxing their own horses, which, fagged as they were, seemed determined to join in the sport. This foremost rider was a gentleman of considerable bulk and stature, and, being mounted on a powerful grey Flemish horse of at least seventeen hands, he was the more conspicuous among his brethren of the hunt. He was richly clad, also, though in sylvan garb, and in his close-fitting cap or bonnet of purple velvet he wore a plume of heron's feathers, which added dignity to the wearer.

Our two travellers, however, had neither time nor leisure to note all these peculiarities; for their jaded steeds, forgetting their former weariness, began to curvet high, and to show by other unmistakable signs that they had no mind to be quiet spectators of the scene. That which the dean bestrode was especially lively, and

before the hindmost of the hunters had passed by, he had evidently determined on his own proceedings; for, taking the bit between his teeth, and scorning the efforts of his rider to restrain him, he plunged into the thickest of the hunt.

Probably the learned and evangelical divine in his younger days would have had no objection to join in a sport which has always been a favourite one with English country gentlemen of every degree; but neither his later habits nor his clerical character altogether agreed with such an exhibition of his present horsemanship. It was in vain, however, that he pulled at the bridle; his horse and he were evidently at variance, and the stronger animal was determined for once to have his way. Like a very quiet and un-Nimrod-like gentleman and Christian brother of our acquaintance, who once riding on his gray pony in one of our quiet Kentish lanes, with no more thought of hunting than of flying to the moon, suddenly found himself, without any desire or volition of his own, hurried along, in company with a score of red-coated gentlemen, following the hounds in chase of a fox, and supplied with ample occupation in his endeavours to keep his seat during this violent and perfectly involuntary exercise; so the reverend dean was presently reduced to the necessity of submitting to his horse's determined caprice, and of attending meanwhile to his own safety.

Little disposition as Roger Whapplot had to make one of the hunting party, he was bound in duty to keep by the side of his fellow-traveller; he therefore gave his horse bridle, and also followed the hounds. Happily for the credit both of the dean and the draper, as well as for that of their blown roadsters, the run was a short one; and when the hunt was concluded they found themselves, very much against their wishes, in the midst of the mount, which was composed, as our readers may have surmised, of the king and a few of his attendant lords, who now had some leisure to bestow on the intruders. These intruders also were

quick to perceive the difficulty into which they had been hurried by the ardour of their steeds, and were retiring with as much haste and as quietly as was consistent with due reverence, when they were brought to a stand by the loud and jovial voice of the king, who uncereemoniously addressed the dean, whom he at once recognised.

"You have done us an unexpected honour, doctor," said he; "though I knew not till now that you were addicted to hunting. Had it been my lord bishop of Lincoln, I should not have greatly marvelled; but I shall esteem you better henceforth, master chaplain, that you can keep your seat so well in the chase."

Very humbly did the dean and his companion uncover their heads, while the former in courtly tones explained to his royal master the accident which had thus hurried him into his presence.

"We must esteem it a lucky accident, since it gives us the earlier benefit of your company," said the monarch; "for we presume it was your purpose in leaving London behind you to pay your duty to us."

The dean replied that such indeed was his desire, and that he had brought with him a petition for his grace's clemency; but that their intention had been to proceed to the town, and await the king's commands.

"Nay," said the young Henry, "this shall not be. As you have joined in our sport, so you will be pleased, master dean, to partake of our hospitality,—you and yonder citizen, whom, to the best of my belief," he added, fixing his eyes on Whapplot, "I have seen before now, though I remember not where."

A few words brought to the king's remembrance the scene in Finsbury Field. "I mind it well," he said; "and the more so, since I gained a victory. Methinks I took a feather out of your cap then, friend," said he.

"And replaced it with this golden token of your grace's favour,"

said Whapplot, respectfully, though not cringingly, as he pointed to the bonnet-piece on the cap which he held in his hand. The matter and the manner seemed to increase the king's good humour.

"And what became of the poor varlet I committed to your care?" he asked.

The citizen replied humbly, that he protected him in safety through the throng, in obedience to the king's commands, and lodged him that night. Furthermore, he knew that for that time he was no further molested, but returned to his house. Nevertheless, since then, and no longer ago than six months, the poor man had been burnt as a heretic.

"How know you this?" Henry demanded.

He had witnessed the execution, Whapplot said (he did not call it martyrdom), his concerns having taken him into Kent at that particular time.

The king bit his under lip with apparent vexation, and then, using a strong expletive, expressed a wish—probably a sincere one for the time—that his subjects either were of one way of thinking, or that the priests were not so sharp to catch up those who differed from them. "I like not these burnings," said he; "but since the man was simple enough to put himself in the way of the fire, there is an end of it. We cannot bring him to life again."

"May it please your grace," interposed the dean, "though this cannot be done, it is in your grace's power to prevent a like exhibition, of which there seems some danger; and therefore we have ventured——"

He paused, for a dark shade of displeasure covered the king's face. Like most of the princes of the Plantagenet blood, he was a person of most intense and imperious will, and he little liked to be approached either with remonstrances or with petitions which seemed to dictate any line of conduct.

"Harkye, master chaplain," he said, abruptly, "we have no need to be reminded of our duty. But," he added, reluctantly, "your meaning is good: and I owe you and this good fellow something for causing you to risk your necks, as you have done, in coming up with me. So hie you both to the castle after us, and to-morrow we will attend to this business of yours, whatever it may be." So saying, he put spurs to his horse, and rode away, followed by his numerous attendants, leaving the two suppliants to take their way to the castle, where, the king's chaplain being known by those in charge, they were suitably accommodated according to their rank and station.

On the next day at noon the dean and citizen had departed from the castle, and were on their way homeward. Their success in the morning's audience which Henry had granted them had not been very great. He heard their story of Hunne's incarceration without form of law patiently, however, and read the memorial which the lawyer had drawn up. He also expressed his regret that a worthy citizen, as no doubt Hunne was, should be in peril from such a cause. But he bitterly railed at Lollardism and Lollards, declaring that it appertained to those in power to see right religion and true doctrine maintained and taught; although he admitted that fatherly pity should be showed to offenders, rather than extreme severity. As to the spiritual courts, he had, so he said, no control over them at that time, though the time might come for taking that power into his own hands. Finally, however, he dictated a missive to Richard Fitzjames, Bishop of London, which he signed and sealed, commending the prisoner Hunne to his lordship's favourable consideration and mercy. Then the audience closed. Of this missive the dean was bearer, and he engaged to his companion that on the following day it should be in the bishop's hands.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN THE BISHOP OF LONDON'S PALACE, AT FULHAM

WITH such crumbs of comfort as Roger Whapplot had to bestow, on his return from Windsor, he hastened to Mistress Hunne, whom he found in company with Joan Baker and his own Margaret, plunged into a new paroxysm of distress. They had heard, through the channel of the ill-omened Ursula Hatcher, that Richard Hunne had that morning been taken from the Lollards' Tower in safe custody, and put into a boat at Broken Wharf,* to be conveyed by water to the bishop's palace at Fulham, there to be examined for heresy. Ursula herself (who was ever on the watch for such sights), with many others, had witnessed this departure, and had seen also that the prisoner was ironed, lest he should by any means make his escape.

This information had produced the gloomiest effect upon those who heard it; for all who knew aught of the Bishop of London, knew also that little mercy was to be hoped for from his hands or lips. The drooping spirits of the weeping wife were a little raised, however, by being assured that the king had graciously recommended Hunne to the bishop's favourable consideration; and with this encouragement we must leave her and her sympathising friends, while we transport ourselves in imagination, for a brief space, to the chapel of Fulham palace.

It was a chill, winterly morning (the day was the second day of December), and no chamber of a Spanish Inquisition could be more gloomy and unpromising in its aspect to a hapless prisoner,

* So called in our old map.

than was that small chapel to Richard Hunne. We shall not dwell on its fancied accessories, however, but pass on to the proceedings of that day.

As the prisoner entered, shivering with the cold and damp blasts which had penetrated to his very marrow, during his passage up the river, his eyes revealed to him that none but foes were there. The judgment-seat (temporarily placed in the chapel) was indeed empty, for the bishop had awaited in a warmer apartment the arrival of the prisoner; but he could gather from the scowling countenances of the bishop's chancellor and sumner, from the malignant triumphant look of Thomas Dryfield, vicar of St. Mary, Matsilon, from the soft, sleeky, cat-like, sidelong glances of two of the bishop's chaplains—all of whom were present—that evil was already determined against him. Besides these, there were clerks at a table with writing materials before them; and at a little distance from the others stood a bare-footed friar, whom Hunne remembered to have seen frequently of late, as it were hanging about his house in Watling Street; and the thought suddenly struck him at this moment that this very friar was he who, at Canterbury, had vaunted the virtues of the Arimathean coat. What could have brought him there? There was a ready answer to this question in the downright and undisguised fanatical hatred expressed in the friar's forbidding face.

But the spite and mischief thus manifested against him conveyed not so deep and painful a stab to Hunne's heart, as the spectacle of his old servant Thomas Brooke, who, pale and agitated, stood crouching behind a pillar in the chapel. Verily, if he had gained the promise of a wife by treachery to his benefactor, he was not to be envied his infamous bargain. But Hunne had no thought for this, and presently his pain of heart merged into soft and Christian compassion for the conscience-stricken sinner.

He had time for these various emotions; but at length the

bishop, duly robed, entered and seated himself. Then a crier proclaimed silence, and the ceremonies of the court commenced.

These were the charges made in a bill of indictment against the prisoner, and read by one of the clerks :—

Firstly,—That he had read, taught, preached, published, and obstinately defended, against the laws of Almighty God, that tithes, or paying of tithes, were never ordained to be due, saving only by the covetousness of priests.

Secondly,—That he had read, taught, preached, published, and obstinately defended, that bishops and priests be like the scribes and pharisees that did crucify Christ, and condemned him to death.

Thirdly,—That he had read, taught, preached, published, and defended, that bishops and priests be teachers and preachers, but no doers, neither fulfillers of the law of God ; but catching, ravening, and all things taking, and nothing ministering, neither giving.

Fourthly,—Where and when Joan Baker was detected, and abjured of many great heresies (as it appeareth by her abjuration), the said Richard Hunne said, published, taught, preached, and obstinately took upon him, saying that he would defend her and her opinions, if it cost him five hundred marks.

Fifthly,—Afterwards, where and when the said Joan Baker, after her abjuration, was enjoined open penance, according to her demerits, the said Richard Hunne said, published, taught, and obstinately did defend her, saying, “The Bishop of London and his officers have done open wrong to the same Joan Baker, in punishing her for heresy ; for her sayings and opinions be according to the laws of God ; wherefore the bishop and his officers are more worthy to be punished than she is.”

Sixthly,—That the said Richard Hunne hath, in his keeping, divers English books prohibited and damned by the law ; as the Apocalypse in English, Epistles and Gospels in English, Wycliffe's damnable works, and other books, containing infinite errors, in

which he hath been a long time accustomed to read, teach, and study daily.

These were the charges to which, being duly read, the prisoner was directed to plead, which he did, in the following, or similar, words :—

“My lord bishop, and all others who now hear me : As touching these articles, I have not spoken them as they be here laid ; howbeit, if I have spoken words somewhat sounding to the same, I ask God's mercy, and submit me to my lord's favourable correction.”

Having thus pleaded, a brief and low conversation was held between the bishop and his assessors, and then witnesses were called in confirmation of the charges.

The first of these was Thomas Brooke, who tremblingly came forward, and testified to having at various times heard his master speak words to the effect stated. He gave this evidence so unwillingly, as to call upon him the sharp rebuke of the bishop.

The next witness was the friar, known by the name of brother Matthias, who averred that for some time past he had taken auricular confession from one Bridget White, a maidservant of the prisoner ; and that being loosened, by authority of his superiors, from the secrecy of his office, he was now free to declare that all particulars of the above charges had been confided to him by the said Bridget White. Being asked whether he was known by the prisoner as the spiritual adviser of the damsel, and how long he had sustained that office, brother Matthias replied that he had for some three or four years attended at the confessional in a neighbouring church, by which means he had thus obtained the confessions of Richard Hunne's servant ; that Hunne knew naught of this, the servant being enjoined to tell neither her master nor mistress, to whom or when she confessed. And he added that he was moved to this secret espionage by zeal for the glory of God and the weal of holy church.

Following brother Matthias as witnesses were the two officers who had made search in Hunne's house for heretical books, and who gave evidence of finding them where they had been hidden. These books were now brought forward, causing a shudder of horror to pass over some of the spectators, as they were placed on the table. Especially was this effect produced by the sight of the English Bible, the bishop himself making the sign of the cross hurriedly in the air, probably to keep away the evil demons whom the presence of that fearful book might otherwise invite and invoke.

When the commotion caused by these proofs of Hunne's heresy had a little subsided, the bishop said solemnly, "We have no need of other witnesses; these be enough." And so presently the court broke up, the prisoner being remanded back to the Lollards' Tower, to await there the judgment to be pronounced upon him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE THIRD OF DECEMBER, 1514.

THERE was high mass at St. Paul's on Sunday, the third of December, 1514; and when this was concluded, and the congregation had departed, two persons who had taken part in the service lingered behind, and paced the otherwise deserted area of Paul's Walk.

"Your prisoner had not much to say for himself, then, master chancellor?" said the treacherous chaplain; for he it was who first spoke.

"Marry no, what could he say, when his heretical books were staring him in the face?"

"And the end of it—what will the end of it be? Will he not recant, think you?"

"It matters little whether he recant or no; his doom is fixed," said Horsey. "There is need of some notable example to overawe the proud citizens who cock their caps so high, and think, who so good as they? We have had nothing above the rabble, of late, to deal with; and it is time to show that the church is no respecter of persons."

"True."

"Moreover, in striking down Hunne we shall deal a heavy blow at Dean Colet, who must speedily be got rid of."

"A most desirable consummation, truly; and I see the advantage which will thus be gained. Hunne is a Lollard, say we; and he has learned his lessons of the dean, whose great admirer not only Hunne is, but all of the pestilent sect are. *Ergo*, Dr. Colet must also be a Lollard and a heretic—a good device; and it will be a pity should it miscarry."

"It will not miscarry. My lord bishop signified as much to me yesterday after the examination. 'It is time,' said he, 'that an example were made; and Hunne comes clearly within the statute.'"

"But how, master chancellor, if the bishop's evening and morning thoughts disagree?"

"There is no fear of that," said Horsey. "Fitzjames of London is not the man to be stirred by any foolish and weak-minded qualms."

"Granted; but if cause should have been shown him, or force put upon him, for exercising ill-judged lenity, what then?" suggested the chaplain, meaningly.

"You say not that such is the case, I trust," rejoined the other in alarm. "But it cannot be. The only party to show cause are the lawyers; and Hunne is beyond their protection. And the only force which can be applied is by the citizens of London, who are, I

grant, upstart and rebellious enough for any madness. But I trow, if it should come to force, the king has force enough, too, to satisfy them, with a vengeance."

"But supposing the arguments and the force should come from the opposite quarter—I mean from the king himself?" said the chaplain.

"You suppose a most unlikely thing, sir chaplain," replied Horsey, sharply.

"Nevertheless, doctor, unlikely things come to pass at times; and even this has come to pass. Look you, while you and my lord bishop were yesterday at Fulham, who should be with the king at Windsor, but the dean of St. Paul's and Roger Whapplot? and by what means I know not, but certain it is they brought back with them a rescript, or something of that nature, from his grace, in favour of the prisoner; and this, having been delivered to the bishop this morning, has thrown him into a violent rage; for it is certain that the king has required that Hunne's life be spared, and that the bishop must needs obey."

"If that be so——"

"Nay, it is so," said the chaplain.

"It is a violent interference with the church, which is above all king's edicts or what not," exclaimed the bishop's chancellor, in a passion of rage.

"It may be so; but best not let such words reach the king's ear," said the politic priest, softly.

"I care not if they do. The bill for restricting the benefit of clergy has not yet passed. Besides, I speak only what every true churchman is bound to acknowledge. But this is nothing to the argument; and, good master chaplain, I bid you good day, for I have that before me which must be done quickly, if it be to be done at all," said Horsey, as he abruptly broke from his companion, and strode out of the cathedral.

The chaplain looked after him with a curious gaze till he was lost to sight, and then he also departed to the bishop's house, close by.

Much, indeed, had to be done between this early noon and the morrow's rising sun. But they were deeds demanding secrecy; and we can but indicate some of the leading incidents without descending to particulars, or attempting to explain all the motives by which the actors were urged.

First, then, on leaving the cathedral, we have reason to imagine that the bishop's chancellor proceeded straightway to the house of Charles Joseph, the sumner, demanding instant speech with him. Much to the disappointment of his impatience, however, he found that the sumner was not at home; and, after some trouble expended, he extracted from the maid Julian, or Juliana, that her master sometimes at that hour of the day, and especially on Sundays, was to be found at his favourite alehouse in Paternoster Row, whither he went to refresh himself after the fatigues of his religious exertions in the foregone service. The young woman added that she would fetch her master if the chancellor so pleased; but the offer was declined, and the disturbed official himself went in quest of his inferior.

At the Angel and Dragon, Dr. Horsey found the sumner regaling himself after the manner formerly mentioned in our history, though this time he was alone. Somewhat confused at being caught in the act of tippling thus early in the day, the sumner began to make the ordinary excuses which are ever ready to the mouth of a habitual tippler; but he was cut short by the chancellor, who, after closing the door carefully behind him, sat down by the sumner's side, and requested his attention to what he was about to unfold.

The conference was not very protracted; but whatever were its purport, it had evidently a disturbing influence on either party. Horsey was the first to leave the hostelry, and it was noted of him

by the vintner's lad that he looked flushed and angry, also that he bare in his hand a bunch of keys which the same lad knew to belong to the custody of the sumner, who was the head keeper of the Lollards' Tower, and who had sometimes boastingly exhibited them to the company in the house as the keys of that ill-omened prison.

The chancellor had not been five minutes gone ere the sumner made his appearance below, and hastily discharged his reckoning. And it was noted of him that his countenance was pale, that his voice was changed huskily, and that his hands so trembled as to be almost unable to finger the small money given him in change.

Was he unwell? the tapster asked; and to this the sumner replied shortly, that he had heard unpleasant news, and must that day ride out of London on urgent business.

The next trace we have of the sumner is at his own house immediately after leaving Paternoster Row. Here the servant Julian Littel also noticed tokens of disturbance in her master, and received to her inquiries the same answer as had been given to the tapster, with the additional information that he, the sumner, was going forthwith to his cousin Barrington's, who lived at a place called Neckhill, a little way out of London. Then he departed to the stable where his horse was kept, and saddling it himself, he rode off towards Bishopsgate.

Meanwhile, bending his way towards the cathedral, Horsey sought the bell-ringer, Spalding—whom we have once before met—and delivered up to him the keys of the Lollards' Tower, telling him to keep them safely, and to look to the prisoner in the sumner's absence. Then the chancellor went to his own official apartments in the basement of the tower.

In all this time, Richard Hunne, the solitary prisoner, was pondering over the events of yesterday, and was looking forward (he must have been) to the almost certainty of a martyr's death. What that death had been to others he well knew, for had he not wit-

nessed the torments they had borne; and had he not also seen how, by grace, they had been supported in the fiery trial, "not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection"? Would the same grace be granted to him? We may easily imagine this to have been the current of his thoughts:—Was he worthy to be enrolled in that noble army of martyrs of whom he had read in the Apocalypse, who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? And not to dream of worthiness, was he prepared for the change of death, whenever or however it might come? Had not his heart been too much set upon the world, and the things of the world, to the neglect, if not the exclusion, of the things which are above at God's right hand? And even in matters relating to God and eternity, when he opened his heart to receive them, had he not been timeserving and cowardly and unfaithful to his convictions? Had he not again and again, with most persevering reiteration, avowed himself to be "a good catholic," meaning by this a papist and a member of a communion concerning which his conscience had told him that it was anti-Christian and opposed to the very essence of the gospel? And here was the end of it: he had sought to save his life; and he had lost it. And what could he expect or hope for, unfaithful as he had been, but that his Lord should say of him, "Take the unprofitable servant, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness"?

But brighter and more hopeful thoughts succeeded to these. The poor tried and tempted believer knew where it is written, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Notwithstanding all his shortcomings, his fearfulness, his too much worldliness, and whatever else the devil might lay to his charge, and with too much truth, Richard Hunne could lay claim to the promises of God in Jesus Christ, and he knew it. "I do love my blessed Saviour,"—such may justly be supposed to have been his

further reflections—"I do love him more than all beside in this world or the world to come. He has redeemed me, and I am his ; and who, then, shall depart me from the charity of Christ? Tribulation or anguish, or hunger or nakedness, or persecution, or peril, or sword? but in all these things we overcome for him that loved us. But I am certain that neither death, neither life, neither angels, neither principalities, neither virtues, neither present things, neither things to coming, neither strength, neither heighth, neither deepness, neither none other creature, may depart us from the charity of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

And, following these cheering thoughts, we may suppose the tried soul of Hunne to have vented its warm affections and aspirations in words akin to those of the following lines :—

"How full of anguish is the thought,
How it distracts and tears my heart,
If God, at last, my sovereign Judge,
Should frown, and bid my soul depart !

"Lord, when I quit this earthly stage,
Where shall I fly but to thy breast
For I have sought no other home ;
For I have learned no other rest.

"I cannot live contented here
Without some glimpses of thy face ;
And heaven, without thy presence there,
Would be a dark and tiresome place.

"This flesh of mine might learn as soon
To live,—yet part with all my blood ;—
To breathe when vital air is gone,
Or thrive and grow without its food !

"The strings that twine about my heart,
Tortures and flames their strength may prove ;
But they can never, never part,
With their dear hold of Christ, my love.

"My God ! and can an humble child,
That loves thee with a flame so high,
Be ever from thy face exiled,
Without the pity of thine eye !

"IMPOSSIBLE. For thine own hands
Have tied my heart so fast to thee ;
And in thy book the promise stands,
That where Thou art, thy friends shall be."

No, it is not to be believed that that dark December day in the Lollards' Tower was an altogether unhappy day to Richard Hunne. Some glimpses of Divine love must have gleamed in upon his soul through the chinks of his fleshy tabernacle, causing him to feel—

"'Tis paradise while Thou art here."

And then, he strengthened his faith by prayer, and remembered at the throne of grace both his friends and his foes.

Then there came an unlocking of the door of his prison ; and on looking up, the prisoner dimly perceived through the dismal gloom, that one of the foes for whom he had just been praying, probably in the words of the Great Master,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”—stood before him. The visitor, indeed, was none other than Doctor Horsey, whose strange proceedings on this day we have already recorded, and who now arrived, as it may seem to the reader, at the climax of his singularity or eccentricity, by bending on his knees before Hunne, after the manner of a penitent at the feet of his ghostly adviser, and begging of him to forgive all the evil he had done unto him, and all that he must still further do.

Whereupon, the prisoner being moved to tender compassion by this trembling and dread, and by the terms of this petition, and believing the compunction of his jailor to be sincere, on account of the hardships of the prison which Horsey had been, by the duties of his office, compelled to inflict, took the kneeling man by the hand and gently raised him.

“Good master chancellor,” said he, “I forgive you from my heart, for you do only what is commanded ; and I also desire to forgive all my enemies who have hitherto persecuted me. And I

pray God to forgive you and them, as he has, for Christ's sake, forgiven me."

And at this the chancellor trembled still more, seeming as though his limbs would fail him; then, uttering a few half-connected words, he turned and departed, locking the door after him, and leaving Hunne in wonderment at what had occurred.

Some little time after this, the prisoner was once more disturbed. This time it was by a penitentiary or inferior priest of the cathedral, whom Doctor Horsey had sent to read to Hunne a gospel from the common service book, and to administer to him some consecrated bread and holy water. For all of which Richard Hunne gave thanks, and then he was again left alone.

We must now follow, as closely as we can, the sumner, Charles Joseph, in the further proceedings of that Sunday in December. That he went out of London to his cousin's house at Neckhill was afterwards sufficiently clear; and, by his own account, he made cheer there, staying till late in the evening. Then, re-saddling his horse, he rode back towards London. But before he reached the walls, he put up his nag at a hostelry in Shoreditch, called "The Bell," kept by a man named Johnson, desiring that the animal might stand in the stable ready saddled, as he knew not how soon he might return. Leaving his horse thus, he proceeded on foot through Bishopsgate into the city, passing along stealthily through silent and dark back lanes, where he was not likely to be seen, or if seen, to be recognised, until he arrived at the cathedral. His own house was near at hand, but instead of going thither, he entered the cathedral by an obscure postern door, of which he had the key, and went direct to the chancellor's apartment. Here he was admitted by Horsey, who was on the watch for him; and then the two conspirators, as we must call them, spent some time in consultation, the door being fast closed upon them.

Presently they reappeared in the body of the church, and proceeded up a narrow and steep turret stair of the complicated building, to a small dormitory where Spalding, the bell-ringer, was fast asleep. Him they roused, and commanded to dress and follow them.

Again they were at the foot of the Lollards' Tower, and in the chancellor's apartment; but they did not remain there very long; for before the clock had struck eleven, the three officials were again on foot, and ascending the stairs which led to the Lollards' prison. The bell-ringer and temporary turnkey went first, bearing the key of the prison in one hand, and in the other carrying a wax candle. Following him closely was Charles Joseph, the sumner, with an iron chain hanging upon his arm, and a heavy hammer and iron staple in his hand. Last of the three came the bishop's chancellor, wrapped in a murrey-coloured cloak (for the night was cold), and with his square cap of black cloth pulled down over his brow.

When they reached the prison door, they paused for one moment to take breath; and then the key grated in the lock, the door was pushed open, the men entered and closed the door after them.

An hour passed away—perhaps more—and then the door was reopened. All was dark within and without, for the light they had carried with them was extinguished; and the three men had to grope their way downwards, as they were able, not, however, until the door had been carefully closed and locked.

They had reached the chancellor's room below, where a fire burned, when Horsey suddenly turned to his companions, and, with a sudden exclamation of terror and vexation, said, in a low tremulous voice, that he had left his cloak up above, and desired the bell-ringer to return for it and bring it down.

"I dare not," said the fellow, in a fit of trembling.

"Fool! what ails you?" demanded Horsey.

"Nothing, good doctor, only I would not, for all the world, go into that chamber again to-night."

"And you, sumner—you are not such a coward, I think?"

Coward or not, however, the sumner refused to do his master's bidding.

"It matters not, I can go myself if need be," said the chancellor. He did not go, however, but brought forward wine. Let us draw a veil over the later proceedings of that night.

Early on the following morning, before break of day, Charles Joseph was on the way to the Shoreditch inn, which he reached about eight o'clock, and asked if his horse was saddled. Being answered in the affirmative, he went at once to the stable and mounted, praying to be let out of the yard by a back gate, that he might make a shorter cut to his cousin's at Neckhill. And this being complied with, he departed.

John, the bell-ringer, was up betimes also, for he was near the conduit in Gracious Street * as soon as it was light, where he was met by one John Enderby, a barber, who asked him,—

"And how fares Master Hunne, whom you have clapped up in the Lollards' Tower?"

"Wondrous well," replied John; "only, let me tell you as a secret, there be ordained for him such a grievous penance, that when men hear of it they shall greatly marvel."

* Now Gracechurch Street.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO SCENES IN OLD LONDON.

THE fourth of December, 1514, was a day long afterwards remembered by the citizens of London, as having brought to them the first knowledge of a crime which, while it filled them with horror, demanded from them strict judicial investigation, and stern retribution.

Those of our readers who have followed our chronicles to the conclusion of the previous chapter, will have anticipated the full revelation now to be made, that Richard Hunne, the merchant-tailor of Watling Street, and convicted Lollard, had been foully murdered in his prison-house. The immediate motives which prompted this deed of darkness and cruelty can only be conjectured. We have seen, indeed, that there was personal hatred and spite on the part of one or more of the murderers, in addition to the fanatical belief indulged in, more or less, by almost all papists of that day, that they were doing God righteous and acceptable service in ridding the world of heresy and heretics—the end justifying whatever means were used for securing it. In general, it may be, the persecutors were content (as they well might be) to let the ordinary proceedings of their spiritual courts take their course with the accused, being satisfied that punishment would be assuredly meted out to them if convicted of heretical leanings. In the case of Richard Hunne, however, there was some reason to apprehend that he might escape, and this was sufficient to expose him to the secret malice of his enemies while yet in their power.

It is easy to imagine the indignation of the populace when the news spread through streets and lanes, and was carried to public

markets and private warehouses and shops, that Hunne had been found dead in the Lollards' Tower; and this feeling reached its culminating point when it was told that the keepers of that vile prison boldly declared that the prisoner had died by his own hand. "Hereof," wrote the martyrologist, in his account of this lamentable affair, "arose great contention; for the Bishop of London, on the one side, taking his clergy's part, affirmed stoutly that Hunne had hanged himself. The citizens again, on the other side, vehemently suspecting some secret murder, caused the coroner of London, according to law, to choose an inquest, and to take good view of the dead body, and so to try the truth of the matter; whereby the bishop and his chaplains were then driven to extremity of shifts; and therefore, minding by some subtle show of justice to stop the mouths of the people, they determined that in the meanwhile, as the inquest was occupied about this charge, the bishop should for his part proceed in case of heresy against the dead person, supposing, most likely, that if the party were once condemned of heresy, the inquest durst not then but find him guilty of his own death, and so clearly acquit them from all the former suspicion of privy murder. This determination of theirs they did immediately put in practice."

The trustworthy historian then goes on to tell how that besides the articles or charges which were brought against Hunne in his lifetime, and which we have already given, a certain doctor Hed did now, after the merchant-tailor's death, collect certain others out of the prologue of his English Bible, remaining then in the bishop's hands, and "which (adds Master Foxe, sarcastically) he diligently perused, not to learn any good thing therein, but to get thereout such matter as he thought might best serve their cursed purpose." He then adds these new articles of accusation against the lifeless body of the murdered man; and we also note them down, earnestly requesting you, respected reader, who have accompanied us thus far

through our narrative, to study them attentively, that you may see what crimes they were which, three hundred and fifty years ago, were accounted worthy of death in England ; and that, while you read, you may thank God that "the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places," and that, in our immunity from persecuting laws, we have "a goodly heritage,"—a heritage bought for us with the sufferings and lives of early Protestant martyrs.

These, then, are "The new Articles commenced against Hunne after his death:—

"First:—The said book [the written prologue to Hunne's English Bible] condemneth all holy canons, calling them ceremonies and statutes of sinful men, and calleth the pope Satan and Antichrist.

"Second:—It condemneth the pope's pardons, saying they be but leasing.

"Third:—The said book of Hunne saith that kings and lords, called Christian in name, and heathen in conditions, defile the sanctuary of God, bringing clerks full of covetousness, heresy, and malice, to stop God's law, that it cannot be known, kept, and freely preached.

"Fourth:—The said book saith, that lords and prelates pursue full cruelly them that would teach truly and freely the law of God, and cherish them that preach sinful men's traditions and statutes ; by which he meaneth the holy canons of Christ's church.

"Fifth:—That poor men and idiots have the truth of the holy Scriptures more than a thousand prelates and religious men and clerks of the school.

"Sixth:—That Christian kings and lords set up idols in God's house, and excite the people to idolatry.

"Seventh:—That princes, lords, and prelates, so doing, be worse than Herod that pursued Christ, and worse than Jews and heathen men that crucified Christ.

"Eighth:—That every man swearing by our lady, or any other

saint or creature, giveth more honour to the saints than to the Holy Trinity; and so he saith they be idolaters.

“Ninth:—He saith that saints ought not to be honoured.

“Tenth:—He condemneth adoration, prayer, kneeling, and offering to images, which he calleth stocks and stones.

“Eleventh:—He saith that the very body of the Lord is not contained in the sacrament of the altar; but that men receiving it shall thereby keep in mind that Christ’s flesh was wounded and crucified for us.

“Twelfth:—He condemneth the university of Oxford, with all degrees and faculties in it, as art, civil, canon, and divinity; saying that they hinder the true way to come to the knowledge of the laws of God and holy Scripture.

“Thirteenth:—He defendeth the translation of the Bible and the holy Scriptures into the English tongue, which is prohibited by the laws of our mother, holy church.”

These, reader, are the charges: what do you think of them? You may perhaps say that if Master Hunne did indeed write these things in his prologue to his English Bible, he did well. But remember that had you lived in the good old times (as they are called) of which we have been writing, for saying less than this you would have run great risk of being burned as a blasphemous heretic.

And now we introduce you to two scenes in old London.

Scene the First.

It is the tenth of December, 1514: a cold day, no doubt, and probably cheerless and comfortless, for we know that the roads out of London not many days ago were muddy with recent rain. The streets are muddy now, you witness, and a thick mist hangs in the air, so that we, taking our stand in St. Paul’s churchyard, can

scarcely discern the high battlemented square tower of the cathedral at its highest.

Nevertheless, a crowd is gathered, and is still gathering and increasing around us. There are citizens of all degrees: comfortable merchantmen and shopkeepers (their shops and places of business being now closed, for it is Sunday); serving-men and apprentices; sturdy labourers and mechanics, with a slight sprinkling of river boatmen and bargemen. All these are in their holiday attire,—the better sort in their warm cloaks trimmed with fur, and their felt caps drawn closely over their foreheads; the poorer, some of them in coarse jerkins and bare-headed; but each pressing on and clustering around the great wooden pulpit with its leaden canopy, which stood in the churchyard, near the western door of the church. There are some there also who are neither traders nor citizens; there are red or black gowned lawyers from their chambers, grey, white, and black frocked monks and friars from their monasteries, and a few gay-garbed courtiers from Westminster. Mingling with these are not a few women in hoods and green kirtles, drawn hither, some by curiosity, some by devotion, perhaps, and some by very scorn and contempt of that which is to follow.

Presently, while the crowd is surging to and fro, and the murmuring of many voices fills the air, a full-robed priest issues from the door of the cathedral, and slowly ascends the steps of the pulpit, having in his hand a parchment or paper covered with writing, which he deliberately opens; and, when the noises of the crowd are hushed, from which he reads, in a loud sonorous voice, as follows:—

“Masters and friends, for certain causes and considerations, I have in commandment to rehearse, show, and publish here unto you, the articles of heresy upon which Richard Hunne was detected and examined; and also other great articles and damnable points and opinions of heresy contained in some of his books, which be come to light and knowledge here ready to be shown.”

Then the priest reads both sets of accusations already given,—concluding with these words,—

“And, masters, if there be any man desirous to see the speciality of these articles, or doubt whether they be contained in this book or not, for satisfying of his mind let him come to my lord of London, and he shall see it with good will.

“Moreover, here I counsel and admonish, that if there be any persons that of their simpleness have been familiar and acquainted with the said Richard Hunne in these articles, or have heard him read upon this book, or any other, sounding to heresy, or have any like books themselves, let them come unto my lord of London betwixt this and Candlemas next, and acknowledge their fault; and they shall be charitably treated and dealt withal, so that both their goods and honesty shall be saved; and if they will not come of their own offer, but abide the process of the law, then at their own peril be it, if the rigour of the law be executed against them.”

Having delivered this harangue, the priest descends from the pulpit, and the people gradually disperse, some saying one thing and some another; but all agreeing in this, that for all the bishop and the priest can say to the contrary, Richard Hunne was foully and cruelly murdered in the Lollards' Tower.

Scene the Second.

We are in Smithfield,—the day is Wednesday, the twentieth day of December, in the same year of 1514. Again we are in a great crowd, and many of the citizens whom we encountered only ten days ago are once more to be seen. There is a procession of monks, one of them bearing a high wooden cross, and it is at our peril if we do not bow down to it. But we worship not the cross, but Him who hung thereon; so we risk the peril, and the procession passes by unheeded by us.

A woman passes near to us,—for she, with hundreds of others, are gathering round a mighty pile of fagots near the middle of the open space,—and in that woman, fantastically clad, we recognise a well-known acquaintance. We gently lay our hand on her arm, therefore, and ask, “What is forward now, Ursula?”

“As if you did not know,” says the poor mind-disordered woman, looking on us suspiciously.

“Nay—we have not heard. Tell us, good Ursula.”

“There is to be another burning,” says she, in a tone between exultation and grief. “Know you not that they are going to burn Master Richard Hunne, the merchant-tailor of Watling Street?”

“Master Richard Hunne! Why, he is dead, Ursula. He was found dead in the Lollards’ Tower sixteen days ago.”

“Dead or alive, he is to be burned,” says she. “Have you not heard that he has been tried for a Lollard since he died, and has been found guilty? And, do you know, they have kept his carcase to put into yonder fire? See, it is blazing now; so let me go, good people. I must see the last of Master Hunne.” And so breaking away with a hideous shriek, which may be either a laugh or a cry, she hurries to the fire.*

We follow; and there, standing in the thick of the crowd, we feel the fierce heat of the great bonfire, and are half choked with the volumes of smoke which it vomits forth. Soon, however, the newly-lighted wood, well saturated with oil and pitch, sends up more clear and brilliant flames, while the smoke mounts upwards.

And now we hear distant shoutings, intermingled with nearer groans and some execrations; and in a little time way is made

* The curious in London antiquities are perhaps aware that the spot in Smithfield where Hunne’s dead body was burned, and where so many before and after that time suffered martyrdom for Christ and his gospel, is now marked by an iron pillar letter-box. In removing the dark stones which covered the place of martyrdom, and in removing the soil beneath, burnt earth, wood-ashes, fragments of charcoal, charred bones, and parts of iron staples and chains were exposed to the light of day.

through the crowd for a bier borne by six men. They pass close by, and we see on the bier a dead man, with hands crossed on his breast. His eyes are only half closed, but there is no speculation in them; his lips are a little way parted, but no speech nor breath issues forth. His cheeks and brow are leaden-hued, and black, broken rings half encircle his eyes. We can make no further observations, for the woeful spectacle has passed on; and now the bier is set down near the outer circle of the fire, and the men who have carried it now for one moment take breath; and then grasping the stiff corpse, and dividing its weight among them, they make one mighty effort, and heave it into the very midst of the burning fuel, as they would a heavy log of wood. The flames divide,—the half-burnt wood crackles,—sparks fly upwards, and scatter themselves around,—the people start back for fear of being scorched,—the senseless corpse sinks into the fire,—the flames reunite, and a cry from many an over-full heart at that moment ascends to heaven: “How long, Lord, how long shall they afflict thine heritage? Even our carcasses are become as dung!”

Two or three hours later the fire has died away, and when the half-consumed embers and fragments of fagots are drawn away with long-handled prongs, a little heap of dark ashes is all that remains of the mortal body of Richard Hunne.

And presently the spectators depart, some silent, some noisy, some saying one thing and some another; but all agreeing in this, that were he Lollard or no Lollard, Richard Hunne was foully and cruelly murdered in the Lollards’ Tower.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AND LAST.

"NOTWITHSTANDING all this tragical and cruel handling of the dead body," thus writes John Foxe, "and their fair and colourable show of justice, yet the inquest no whit stayed their diligent searching out of the true cause and means of Hunne's death. Insomuch that when they had been divers times called both before the king's privy council (his majesty himself being sometimes present), and also before the chief judges and justices of this realm, and that the matter being by him thoroughly examined, and perceived to be much bolstered and borne withal by the clergy, was again wholly remitted unto their determination and ending, they found, by good proof and sufficient evidence, that doctor Horsey the chancellor, Charles Joseph the sumner, and John Spalding the bell-ringer, had privily and maliciously committed this murder; and therefore indicted them all three as wilful murderers."

Then follow, in the plain and true narrative on which our tale is founded, the depositions of a great number of witnesses given at the inquest, and the verdict of the jury; all of which must needs be omitted here. Then the historian proceeds thus:—

"After that the twenty-four jurymen had given up their verdict, sealed and signed with the coroner's seal, the cause was then brought into the parliament-house, where the truth was laid so plain before all men's faces, and the fact so notorious, that immediately some of the bloody murderers were committed to prison, and should no doubt have suffered what they deserved, had not the cardinal (Wolsey) by his authority practised for his Catholic children at the suit of the Bishop of London. Whereupon the chancellor

(Horsey), by the king's pardon and secret shifting, rather than by God's pardon, and his deserving, escaped, and went, as is said, to Exeter; and durst never after, for shame, come again to London.

"Nevertheless, though justice took no place where favour did save, yet because the innocent cause of Hunne should take no wrong, the parliament became suitors unto the king's majesty, that whereas the goods of the said Hunne were confiscated into the king's hands, it would please his grace to make restitution of all the said goods unto the children of the said Hunne. Upon which motion the king, of his gracious disposition, did not only give all the aforesaid goods unto the aforesaid children, under his broad seal, yet to be seen; but also did send out his warrants to those that were the cruel murderers, commanding them, upon his high displeasure, to re-deliver all the said goods, and make restitution for the death of the said Richard Hunne; all which goods came to the sum of fifteen hundred pounds sterling, besides the plate and other jewels."

Thus far, then, was justice done to the memory of Richard Hunne. Still the murderers escaped,—the bishop's chancellor, as we have seen, first obtaining the king's pardon; and then the other two,—the sumner, for having confessed the deed, and expressed contrition; and the bell-ringer, because he was but half-witted, and led on by the others.

But the city of London was dissatisfied, and cried out that the king was more careful of his prerogative than of justice; and the whole nation was moved with indignation against the Romish priests. So that, whereas it was hoped by them that if Hunne were found an heretic, no one would appear on his behalf any more, the contrary was the case; and from that time forward the citizens of London, as a body, were never well affected towards the papacy, but became ardent in the Protestant reformation. And soon all came to look upon Hunne's case as one in which every man had a common concern.

And one important point was determined by the inquest, and the action of parliament which followed; namely, that the clergy had no exemption from the powers of the civil law. For Hunne's case gave vast interest to this question, and led to its being ruled in favour of the royal authority against the claims of the popedom,—king Henry himself uttering these memorable words, which give us the key to all his future policy, and which briefly assert the “royal supremacy:”—

“By the permission and ordinance of God we are king of England; and the kings of England in times past had never any superior but God only. Therefore know you well that we will maintain the rights of our crown, and of our temporal jurisdiction, as well in this as in all other points, in as ample a manner as any of our progenitors have done before us.”

But though Henry VIII. thus claimed his rightful supremacy as king, and threw off the yoke of the popedom, he never ceased to hold Romish doctrines, but still held fast to the superstitions and manifold fatal errors of that corrupt church,—a church “drunk with the blood of God's saints.” Thus he continued to persecute those who opposed them; and the fires of Smithfield still blazed, by his consent, to consume the “heretics” who denied transubstantiation, and who read the Scriptures in their own tongue; while in his last will and testament he bequeathed money to the Romish church, to pay the price of masses for his soul. The fact is, the king never comprehended the real principles which were at stake, nor the deep current of public opinion which he had helped (as an instrument in God's hand) to form.

It was a great political question that was settled in the reign of Henry VIII.; but far more momentous principles lay beneath, and were working in the hearts of a great and earnest people. These were the principles of an open Bible, and a free and full salvation through the finished sacrifice of Christ. To these king Henry

contributed nothing except the broad platform which he cleared for their discussion. The truths of God's eternal Word, quickened into life by his own Holy Spirit in the souls of believers,—these were the authors of the English Reformation.

Let us prize, then, the privileges both civil and religious which cost our fathers such a price. If they were worth dying for, they are worth living for. Calmly and resolutely, therefore, let us hand them down to our posterity as the best inheritance we can bequeath.

It remains only to add, that in the scanty records and traditions remaining of the family of Richard Hunne we have no further mention of his wife,—his beloved Margaret. The almost certainty is that she did not long survive the stroke of his tragical death,—probably she died even before his memory was vindicated, as we have seen that it was.

Of Roger Whapplot and his wife we know only that they lived peacefully, and we also hope prosperously, some time afterwards. We have no reason to think that they were ever molested on the score of religion during the reign of Henry, or that of his next successor but one,—the persecuting queen Mary. That they gradually surmounted the grief caused by their father's tragic death there is some evidence; and dying, they left behind them a son, named Dunstan, to whose custody they bequeathed the special records from which these chronicles are taken, or on which the narrative of the writer has been founded.

Whether or not Thomas Brooke eventually obtained the hand of Julian Littel is a matter of so little consequence to the reader, that it must be left in uncertainty.

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