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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

QUEEN MARY TUDOR AND THE MARTYRS OF THE REFORMATION.

BY THE REV. S. HARVEY GEM, M.A.

QUEEN MARY is the person chiefly responsible for the conversion of the English nation to Protestantism. And yet she was the most thoroughly Roman Catholic sovereign that we ever had. How are we to explain these apparently contradictory facts? The reason is simple. She had no statesmanship, no diplomacy about her. Her principles were strong, and she was ready to carry them out, cost what it might, to the bitter end. She never stopped to consider whether she might not, by ill-timed persistency, be defeating the very objects she had most at heart. That she was so little diplomatic did honour to her motives, but not to her talent. Statesmanship is often dishonest, but honest statesmanship need not be blinded by its own virtue. Even in our own small sphere it is desirable to consider before we act, what the results of our actions are likely to be. And so, in politics, if the proposed action is likely to defeat the object in view, a good statesman may allowably hold back. The great object of Mary was to restore the Roman obedience, and to extirpate heresy: but it might have occurred to her that to light bonfires all over the country and burn people in them would alienate for ever the very sympathies that she desired to win. These fires dotted about in various parts of England consumed between 200 and 300 persons, and so it began to be widely doubted whether a religion which required such human sacrifices could be the true one. There had indeed long been a Protestant party, but the Lollards and extreme Reformers had no great hold on the mass of the people. Except in London and the eastern counties the population generally was attached to the ancient faith and ritual, and did not even object to the Pope, provided he kept himself in his place. Moreover, the selfish and designing laymen, who had led the Reformation in the reign of Edward VI, had brought the reformed teaching into general odium. A conciliatory policy on the part of Mary would have quieted the adherents of Protestantism far more than the aggressive measures that she imagined to be necessary. This was pointed out by some of

her advisers. There were times when even the Emperor Charles V and her husband Philip counselled her to be moderate.¹

But in view of these terrible facts are we justified in handing on the accusing designation by which she has so long been known, and describing her as "Bloody Mary"? The epithet implies a hard heart, a cruel intention. She thought all the while that she was just simply doing her duty. She even shows by some of her words that she felt it a painful duty. She had not originated the punishment of burning. It had long prevailed on the continent, and had been introduced into England in the reign of Henry IV. It was not practised only by Roman Catholics. Reformers had been known to burn Anabaptists. Cranmer burnt Joan Boucher, Calvin burnt Servetus. In those days, errors of belief were regarded as carrying with them a deadly infection. So the differing parties burnt their opponents on principle, lest the particular infection which they dreaded should spread. You may say, if this was the case, why did the martyrdoms under Mary shock the feelings of the nation so deeply? Chiefly, I think, because they far exceeded in number those that had ever occurred before. Also because so many of the victims were persons in the humbler walks of life, whose sufferings appealed more clearly to the people than those of greater men, and who might more readily have been pardoned than they; and further, because of the widespread effect produced by so much constancy and endurance, shown in all directions under such fearful agony. We may acquit her of any cruel intention, and yet must consider that the terrible persecution which had been inaugurated by her mistaken conscience, eventually produced a hardening effect on herself. We can understand how such cruelty, even when set in motion by right motives, would gradually produce a hardening effect on the perpetrator of it, and if we assume this to have been the case with Mary it accounts for two difficulties. First,

¹ Prescott, vol. I, p. 225. He says of Queen Mary: "Her fate had been a hard one. Unimpeachable in her private life, and, however misguided, with deeply-seated religious principles, she has yet left a name held in more general execration than any other on the roll of English sovereigns. One obvious way of accounting for this, doubtless, is by the spirit of persecution which hung like a cloud over her reign. And this not merely on account of the persecution; for that was common with the line of Tudor; but it was directed against the professors of a religion which came to be the established religion of the country. Thus the blood of the martyr became the seed of a great and powerful church, ready through all time to bear testimony to the ruthless violence of its oppressor."

when she saw that the burning of the earlier martyrs did not check the Reformers' determination, why did she not stay her hand? I suggest as the answer, that she got hardened, as victim after victim perished in their agony. Secondly, why, when Cranmer had so completely recanted did she not spare him? Here was a splendid opportunity of forgiving the man who had so deeply injured her and her mother: and of showing the world that forgiveness was a virtue especially honoured by Romanists. I answer that her heart had been, in spite of the good motives that actuated her at first, becoming gradually harder. We cannot suppose she did not know perfectly well that Cranmer's judges intended to burn him in spite of his recantation—we cannot acquit her of complicity in that terrible wrong. Hence though deprecating the condemning epithet, we cannot acquit her altogether, we can only say that she began the persecution with honest though mistaken motives, and that as she went on she became hardened.

We cannot wonder that Mary was embittered against the Reformed opinions: she had suffered from them in the reign of her brother Edward, and they were associated in her mind with the divorce of her mother, and the dangers she had been exposed to during her father's life. On the other hand she naturally grew up attached to the Papal party; the Pope had been on her mother's side in opposition to the wickedness of her father, her nearest friends were Romanists, her Spanish relatives were Romanists. Her cousin Charles V was ruler of Spain and Emperor of Germany, and he and his son Philip were, outwardly at least, devoted Catholics. To her Romanism seemed not only the way to heaven, but the path of true religion, and also of true conservatism, amid the disputes and factions of the day. Her people regarded her as the rightful heir, and hailed her as the representative of order and stability. No one was ever more popular on first coming to the throne, or threw so much popularity away. And this was done by obstinate adherence to opinions formed without regard to consequences. The Emperor Charles warned her to be conciliatory. "Tell her," said Charles, "not to be hasty at the beginning in altering what she may find amiss; to be conciliatory, to wait for the determinations of Parliament, preserving always her own conscience, having her Mass privately in her chamber without any demonstration, at present making no edicts contrary to those which are established

in the realm, so let her proceed by little and little to bring things into a better frame. Let her not only have for her end the good of the realm, but let her make others perceive that the good of the realm is her end." But Mary had not statesmanship enough to accept this very prudent and sensible advice; we might say she had not common sense enough to adopt it.

In her urgent desire to restore Romanism, she did not give due consideration to the fact that, on her accession, the laws bearing on religion were those that had been enacted in the Reforming days of her father and her brother Edward VI, and those who guided the councils of the latter had gone a long way in the direction of the more extreme Reformers. Was it not advisable to repeal all this, and to get Parliament to reverse the new arrangements, and restore the old, with due form of law, before interfering with the Protestants? Mary had not caution enough in her to await such measures. So she laid herself open to the obvious retort that the Reformers were simply carrying on the form of worship authorised by the existing laws. Could they be reasonably expected, they might ask, to change all these legalised doctrines and practices at once, merely because the Queen happened to be a Roman Catholic herself? Mary had indeed begun by asserting that she did not intend to compel men's conscience, but a riot which ensued when one of her preachers addressed the multitude at Paul's Cross led to her prohibiting all preaching except that on her own side. The Reformed preachers who would not keep silence were arrested and thrown into prison. They replied that the law was in their favour.

In several places the Latin Mass was illegally set up. The indignation of the maintainers of the Reformation prompted them to prosecute at the Assizes some of the priests who thus presumed on the royal countenance, and a judge who charged the jury as he was bound to do, to find according to the existing laws is said to have been rebuked by the Lord Chancellor.

A bold action on the part of the often timid Cranmer hurried on the rupture between the Queen and her opponents. He was reported to have himself set up the Mass in Canterbury Cathedral. To this he gave an indignant denial, and presently went on to offer a challenge to a disputation, that he and Peter Martyr would conduct against the doctrine of the Mass. He offered to prove that the Book of Common Prayer was more in accordance with God's

Word than that of the mediæval Church, and to show that the Reformed order of the Church was not a new invention but in harmony with that of the primitive Church 1,500 years ago.

“ Let God's Word be the Judge ; let the arguments and process be set out in writing. . . . We shall prove that the order of the Church, set out at present in the Church of England by Act of Parliament is the same that was used in the Church 1,500 years ago. And so shall they never be able to prove theirs.”

The sequel of this boldness on the part of Cranmer was that he was arraigned before the Star Chamber, and thrown into the Tower. It was not surprising, for Queen Mary had spared him, when guilty of supporting Northumberland's plot, showing thereby a noble feature of her character which appears from time to time, namely an unwillingness to avenge offences committed against herself. Then, he might not unreasonably have been executed, and when he came forward now to oppose her in religious matters (though we may wish she had allowed the disputation) we can hardly be surprised that she recalled to herself his former offence and threw him into prison.

Many of the reformers, especially the foreigners among them, were taking refuge abroad. It is to the credit of Cranmer's courage that he had remained, to defend as best he might the cause of the Reformation.

We are now speaking of the year 1553. On October 1, the Queen was crowned with the splendid rites of the Latin services which were still illegal. A general pardon was promulgated, but all the prisoners for religion were exempted from it.

The first Parliament of Queen Mary assembled on October 5. It was mainly chosen from the Catholic counties and contained no member at all from the City of London. In this Parliament all the Acts of Edward's reign, on the subject of religion, were repealed.

Mary desired the restitution of the abbey lands, but this was resisted, she never could persuade her nobles and gentry to relinquish their ill-gotten gains. Even the Pope was eventually obliged to give a definite sanction to the retention of these estates. For the noblemen and gentlemen of England were quite willing to adopt whatever religion was in turns established by the Crown, and to chance the result in the next world, provided they could keep a firm hold on the Church property which they had appropriated,

while they were here below. Whether that would send them further down eventually they did not stop to think.

The Convocation of Canterbury, which met on October 7, in conjunction with this Parliament, was one of the most memorable in the Church of England. The Catechism of Edward VI was to be disowned, and the doctrine of Transubstantiation was to be reasserted.

Among the Deans and Archdeacons, there were five or six bold men who held to the Reformation, and now stood forth to defend it—Philpot Archdeacon of Winchester, Cheney of Hereford, Aylmer of Stow, Philips Dean of Rochester, James Haddon Dean of Exeter, and Young the chanter of St. David's. On Monday, October 23, many nobles and gentlemen of the Court and of the City came to witness the expected contest in the Chapel of St. Paul's. It lasted several days. The Reformers appear to have had by far the best of the argument. (See Parker Society: *Philpot's Examinations*, pp. 199-202, and the Harleian Library MS. 422, vol. 38.) Canon Dixon, himself a High Churchman, says (p. 88) "those who were arguing on the Roman side were reduced to palpably absurd asseverations as to the Holy Communion."

In the Upper House four articles were framed and passed, for Communion in one kind, for Transubstantiation, for the adoration and reservation of the Eucharist, and concerning its institution and intention.

The disturbances about religious matters had already begun to diminish the popularity of the Queen. Her accession had been welcomed by the loyalty that the English are always ready to show to a rightful superior. She had been the object of popular sympathy during the wrongs she had suffered from her father, and the troubles of her brother's reign, but the dictatorial line she soon took up on matters of controversy, and before any formal reconciliation to Rome had been attempted, had given offence, and now she was about to adopt a course that tended at once to place her in opposition to the feelings of her people, both Catholic and Protestant. She was intending to marry a foreigner and a Spaniard. Though in the time of Henry VIII, the nation had deeply sympathised with the wrongs of Queen Catherine, and had then gladly passed on the allegiance of their hearts to her daughter Mary, yet the Spaniards were not liked, and the prospect of a Spanish consort and king in

England filled the people with horror. The French ambassador fomented the discontent by holding over them the prospect of a Spanish army and of the Spanish Inquisition.

Mary's choice was highly impolitic, but it was not unnatural.

The two great sovereigns of Europe were the King of France and the Emperor of Germany. It happened also that Charles V was King of Spain, and ruler of the Neapolitan states in the South, and of the Netherlands in the North. He was Mary's cousin, he and his ambassador had befriended her in her long years of danger and misery, and now she was on the throne, he continued to exercise his thoughtful statesmanship by advising her how to act with prudence. He had dissuaded her, though in vain, from any hasty steps in matters of religion. She was grateful to him even when she did not follow his advice, and he was almost her only friend. He indeed was not so simple and honest as herself; and his own European policy came before his regard, genuine as far as it went, for her. He wanted to outweigh the King of France, and he thought that to marry his son Philip to Mary would complete the preponderance that he had striven to attain. So Renard his ambassador, not badly named for a diplomatist, laid himself out to persuade her into the marriage. She was no longer young, and it would have been far better had she remained single. So thought her cousin, Cardinal Pole. At any rate her people hoped she would marry an Englishman.

It might have weighed with her that to marry a Spaniard would injure the cause she had most at heart and which she valued more than any happiness of her own, namely the restoration of the Roman obedience. To marry Philip was to excite prejudice against the reconciliation of England to Rome. With her usual bluntness she disregarded all considerations of policy. Her wisest statesman, Gardiner, was much opposed to the match, but she would have her way, and he was obliged to content himself with making careful provisions against the legal dangers that might arise with a foreign husband on the throne.

The House of Commons did not omit an effort to save the country from the impending misfortune. The Speaker with a deputation of members waited on the Queen, and in earnest terms, but with respectful circumlocution, he prayed the Queen to marry, but not to choose a husband from among foreigners, expatiating

on the advantages she would derive from a union with a member of the English nobility. This language, respectful though it might be, was not such as to be acceptable to Tudor ears ; her reply was short and characteristic :

“ For that you desire to see us married, we thank you. Your desire to dictate to us the consort whom we shall choose we consider superfluous. The English Parliament has not been wont to use such language [to its sovereigns, and when private persons on such matters suit their own tastes, sovereigns may reasonably be allowed to choose whom they prefer.”

Herewith she dismissed them, and a few days afterwards Parliament was dissolved. The year 1554 witnessed the well-known rebellion of Wyatt and the attempted rebellion of Suffolk. Lady Jane Grey, spared before, was now brought to the block, though guiltless of any connivance with the rebels.

The popular dislike to the Queen's marriage had given occasion to these risings. Elizabeth, supposed to be privy to them, was sent to the Tower. Gardiner however was wise enough to shield her, the English nobles were in her favour, and though Mary has been accused of wishing for her execution, which the Emperor Charles was constantly suggesting, there is no evidence that she treated her sister with cruelty. Philip, after his marriage, saw that it would be good policy to befriend and to conciliate Elizabeth. It was fortunate that a mistake, which would have changed the history of England, was not added to the many others of the reign.

S. HARVEY GEM.

(To be continued.)

