

Henry VIII and the English Monasteries

By Cardinal Manning.

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De Maistre said truly that history for three hundred years has been in conspiracy against the Catholic Church. The Protestant historians of Germany, France, England and Scotland, have written a mass of falsified history and falsified biography which reigned supreme and unchallenged until our day. A reaction at last set in. In Germany, Schlegel, Hurter, Ranke, Dollinger, and many more; in France, Montalembert, Ozanam, de Broglie, Rohrbacher, and others; in England, Lingard, Tytler, Hallam, and Friedmann, have broken the spell of historical falsehood. Maitland, in his book on the Dark Ages, was the first to expose the persistent unfaithfulness of anti-Catholic historians, who handed on, with continual embellishment and exaggeration, a multitude of traditional fables. Perhaps no greater example of this immoral practice can be found than in the history of the dissolution of the monasteries in England.

We propose in this paper, following Fr. Gasquet's excellent work on Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries (from which the passages cited in these pages are taken), to give what seems to be a faithful account of the dissolution and of the character of its chief authors, commencing our task by tracing out the series of events which rendered possible the acts of Henry VIII. First amongst these was the vast change which passed upon the social state of England by the ravages of the Black Death. Though one hundred and fifty years had elapsed before Henry VIII. came to the throne, nevertheless its effects were still perceptible. In the years 1348-9 about one half of the entire population were swept away. In Norwich alone, 57,304 people, besides religious and beggars, and 863 incumbents of livings, were said to have died. Out of 799 priests in the county of Norfolk 527 died of the plague. The bishop obtained from Clement VI. power to dispense with sixty clerks who were then only twenty-one years of age, and allow them to hold livings; a thousand livings had been rendered vacant; two-thirds of the clergy of England had been carried off by the Black Death. The effect of this was to produce a crisis between the labourers and their employers. The permanent retainers of the nobles and the monasteries had disappeared, and the modern system of letting had been introduced. Peasant proprietors were greatly reduced in number, and the people were no longer bound to the lords of the land by the old ties. This destroyed the power of the nobles and exalted that of the king. The poverty and distress following upon the diminution of labour and of agriculture, and the suspension of religious care and teaching caused by the sudden removal of a great multitude of the clergy, had disastrous effects. Upon this followed all the evils of thirty-five years of warfare between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The power of the nobles was finally broken, and the power of the king became sole and supreme. Two evils followed upon this. First, the creation of new peers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who had no sympathy, by birth or training, with the traditions of the past; and secondly, the rise of a new race of men—namely, the "Officials," adventurers, ill-paid, restless, discontented and grasping. Their whole hope and dependence was in the king, and they became ready tools of his despotic will.

All these preludes made possible such a career as that of Thomas Wolsey. As the favourite of the king, and Lord High Chancellor of England, he gradually clothed himself with all the powers of the

State, and by the favour of the king he obtained all the highest powers of the Church, one only excepted. He was Archbishop of York, and held Winchester and other bishoprics in commendam, together with the Abbey of St. Albans. He was Cardinal and Legate, and, during the imprisonment of Clement VII., he obtained faculties for himself and for the King of France to confirm all kinds of ecclesiastical matters with a quasi-papal authority. For the first time in the history of England such civil and ecclesiastical powers were united in one person. The transfer of the same as a whole afterwards to Henry VIII. followed almost as a matter of course by the Statute of 1534.

It must not be forgotten that at this time the minds of men had been distracted by the great Western Schism, by the frequent subtraction of obedience, by the doubtful election of Popes, and the simultaneous existence of two or even three claimants to the Holy See, that the supreme Pontifical authority had become in many places a matter of academical discussion. Nothing but such preludes could have instigated even Gerson to write his thesis *de Auferibilitate Papæ*. This throws much light upon the singular fact attested by Sir Thomas More, in speaking to the jury and the judge by whom he was condemned, when the verdict of death was brought in against him:—"I have, by the grace of God, been always a Catholic, never out of communion with the Roman Pontiff; but I have heard it said at times that the authority of the Roman Pontiff was certainly lawful and to be respected, but still an authority derived from human law and not standing upon a divine prescription. Then, when I observed that public affairs were so ordered that the sources of the power of the Roman Pontiff would necessarily be examined, I gave myself up to a most diligent examination of that question for the space of seven years, and found that the authority of the Roman Pontiff, which you rashly — I will not use stronger language — have set aside, is not only lawful, to be respected and necessary, but also grounded on the divine law and prescription. That is my opinion; that is the belief in which by the grace of God I shall die." Already in those days the name Papist was used as a reproach.

Wolsey was the first at that time to set the example of suppressing monasteries, for the purpose of founding a college at Oxford. The king followed his example, in asking to suppress monasteries for the foundation of new cathedrals. Men were, therefore, prepared for such a policy.

Whatever faults may be charged against the career of Wolsey, there is a grandeur about it, both in his prosperity and in his fall. Few things in our history are more pathetic than the suddenness with which he fell. The tyranny of Henry VIII. was oriental. His favour was life, his displeasure death. Surrounded by enemies, watched day and night by spies, betrayed by those he trusted most, the great Cardinal and Chancellor found himself in a day stripped of all power, banished from court, and a prisoner in his own house. Mr. Brewer has written this history with a worthy compassion. The few months of Wolsey in the Archbishopric of York, visiting his churches, confirming children, and living among the poor, were a beautiful picture of Christian humility, and the best preparation for the end that awaited him at Leicester on the way to the Tower. The fall of Wolsey was the fall of an ecclesiastical period. The next Lord High Chancellor of England was Thomas More, and with him came in the lay world, which has reigned more and more until this day. It is strange that the first layman that kept the king's conscience should have died a martyr for resisting the royal lusts.

The martyrdom of Blessed Thomas More made way for a man as bad and as base as the king and the times demanded.

Thomas Cromwell is said to have been the son of a blacksmith at Putney. He was, it seems, for some offence, thrown into prison, and obliged to leave the country. Then he was a common soldier in Italy. He was, as it was believed, in the army of the Duke of Bourbon, which in 1527 sacked

Rome and imprisoned Clement VII. It is said that among those who outraged Rome was “an Englishman of low, vicious habits and infidel principles, who afterwards became of terrific importance in the Church of England.” Crumwell told Cranmer “that he had been at one time a ruffian.” Then he became a merchant, a scrivener, a money-lender, a lawyer, a member of Parliament, a courtier and dependent of Wolsey, a dealer in “Boston pardons,” and a disciple of Machiavelli, whose works he studied while he was in Italy. The history of his rise and iniquities verifies the Italian proverb — *Inglese Italianato è Diavolo Incarnato*.

Henry VIII., when at cards, if a knave was dealt to him, used to say, “I have Crumwell.”

When Wolsey fell, Crumwell had to take care of himself, for the people had already consigned him to the gallows. It was believed that he saved himself by destroying his master—that is, by stealing and delivering to the king the royal permission, under the great seal, whereby Wolsey had exercised his legatine powers. Certain it is that Wolsey, not being able to produce this document, was in *præmunire*, and compelled to throw himself on the king’s mercy. This was final and fatal. All the Cardinal’s possessions were forfeited, but Crumwell retained, by royal leave, the administration of them. In this office he made himself profitable to certain nobles; and from that time his rise was rapid. He became Master of the Jewels, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Master of the Rolls, Secretary of State, Vicar-General of the king in ecclesiastical matters, Lord Privy Seal, Dean of Wells, High Chamberlain. In 1533 he was knighted, then made Earl of Essex. In 1534 the king had made himself, by Act of Parliament, Head of the Church in all matters spiritual and temporal. In all this usurped power Thomas Crumwell was Vicar-General, and, in fact, the sole executive of this twofold supremacy, ecclesiastical and civil.

The suppression of monasteries was, as we know, no new thing in England. Edward I. and Edward II. seized the alien priories; Edward III. re-established them, but took them into his own hand; Henry V. finally suppressed them all. William of Wykham founded New College with ecclesiastical property. Winchester, Eton, and King’s College, Cambridge, were likewise endowed by suppressed religious houses. Out of suppressed houses Chicheley endowed All Souls in Oxford; Waynfleet founded Magdalen College; Bishop Alcock founded Jesus College, in Cambridge. Bishop Fisher advised the dissolution of Brome Hall, in the diocese of Salisbury, and Lillechurch, in his own diocese of Rochester; but all these suppressions were made with the sanction of the Holy See. In like manner afterwards, Wolsey suppressed many monasteries for the purpose of founding Christ Church in Oxford and a College in Ipswich. Henry VIII. at first opposed Wolsey’s suppressions, but afterwards, to supply his own needs, followed his example; and this he carried out by the instrumentality of Thomas Crumwell. Wolsey had before employed Thomas Crumwell with Dr. Allen for the same purpose, so that the work was not new to him. But he added to it all the aggravations of corruption, cruelty, and hypocrisy. The royal treasury was empty, and no readier source for its replenishment than the robbery of the monasteries was at hand. The Vicar-General, therefore, in the year 1535, began by issuing injunctions, which it was impossible for the monasteries to accept, for the purpose of driving them either to rebellion or to surrender. The first article of these injunctions was the acknowledgment of the king’s headship over the Church. Finding the Carthusians and the Franciscans firm in refusing this act of apostacy, every form of persecution, from the intrusion of strangers into their community, the violation of rule, the sowing of dissension between subjects and superiors, and finally imprisonment with torture, the rack, and the axe, were inflicted on them.

Then for the visitation of monasteries throughout England four memorable persons were appointed by Crumwell as his agents — viz., Layton, Legh, Ap Rice, and London. The insolence, avarice, and servility of these men are proved by their own letters to Crumwell, of which sufficient proofs will be given hereafter.

When this iniquitous mockery of a visitation was drawing to a close, the Parliament was assembled to carry the Act of Suppression. The writs for the election of members were sent out with the names of the persons to be elected. In the election at Canterbury two burgesses were returned contrary to the pleasure of the king, and the mayor was compelled to cancel the election, and to send the two royal nominees. In like manner, in summoning the House of Lords, peers that were not of the king's mind were passed over. Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, was advised, on account of his age and infirmities, not to expose himself to the long journey from Durham. Nevertheless, he set out, but on his way was met by a royal letter that sent him home again. But even this packed Parliament would not do the king's pleasure:—

On Saturday in Ember week the King's Grace came in among the Burgesses of the Parliament, and delivered them a Bill, and bade them look upon it, and weigh it in conscience. He would not, he said, have them pass it nor any other thing, because his Grace giveth them the Bill, but they to see to it if it be for the common weal to his subjects, and have an eye thitherward, and on Wednesday next he will be there again to hear their minds.

The preamble of the Bill asserts that, in consideration of the evil lives of those in the smaller monasteries, "the King's Most Royal Majesty... having knowledge that the premises be true, as well as by the compertes of his late Visitation, as by sundry credible informations; considering also that divers and great solemn monasteries of this realm, wherein, thanks be to God, religion is right well kept and observed, &c...

Whereupon the said Lords and Commons, by a great deliberation finally be resolved that it is, shall be much more to the pleasure of Almighty God that the property of those Religious should be converted to better use, and the unthrifty persons so spending the same should be compelled to reform their lives;" therefore they pray the King to take all the property of monasteries having an income of under £200 a year. And even this limited submission was not obtained without threats which destroyed all liberty of action. Sir Henry Spelman tells us as follows:—

It is true the Parliament gave them (i.e., the monasteries) to him, but so unwillingly, as I have heard, that when the Bill had stuck long in the Lower House, and could get no passage, he commanded the Commons to attend him in the forenoon in his gallery, where he let them wait till late in the afternoon; and then coming out of his chamber, walking a turn or two among them, and looking angrily upon them, first on the one side and then on the other. "At last I hear," sayth he, "that my Bill will not pass, or I will have some of your heads."

And here we have an example of a tradition which has been handed on without hesitation and with much embellishment by anti-Catholic writers, for which no foundation in history can be found. It has been said by all writers, from Burnett to Dean Stanley, that the "Black Book," detailing the crimes of the monasteries, was laid before the Parliament in the Chapter House of Westminster. Dean Stanley tells us "that on the table of the Chapter House was placed the famous 'Black Book,' which sealed the fate of all the monasteries of England, and sent a thrill of horror through the House of Commons when they heard it." Now, no such book has ever been found, and there is not a shred of contemporary evidence to prove that such a "Black Book" ever existed. The preamble of the Act

of Suppression cites the “knowledge of the king, the compertes of the Visitation, and credible informations.” The following is the summary of the evidence against the monasteries:—

In the comperta and letters which report as to the monasteries of a considerable portion of England, scarcely 250 monks and nuns are named as guilty of incontinence. In the same districts the religious must have numbered many thousands. Of these 250, more than a third part can be identified as having subsequently received pensions upon the dissolution of their houses, a fact which even Burnett would consider as disproving the charge in their regard. Of the entire number of convents of women visited and reported upon by Layton and Legh in the North, they are able to relate very little amiss. Only some twenty-seven nuns in all are charged with vice, and of these, seventeen are known to have been afterwards pensioned. Further, in their whole visitation, extending over thirteen counties, they only report that some fifty men and two women were anxious to abandon the religious life, even under the restrictions imposed by Crumwell’s injunctions.

This summary accumulates the worst that can be found in the Reports of the Visitors. All those, who have had experience of what popular allegations are worth, will know how to estimate the figures and the charges above given. But where in all this is the “Black Book?”

The wealth of the English monasteries was undoubtedly great. It had accumulated for centuries by the gifts of the devout as their free-will offerings, and of the penitent in reparation for their sins, and for the relief of the poor. The monasteries were a thousand in number, and they possessed a third of the land in England. In the reign of Edward I. the soil of England consisted of 67,000 knights’ fees, of which ecclesiastics held about 28,000. They were as a rule good and kind landlords. It was a proverb that “it was better to be under the crosier than under the lance.” The tenants of the abbeys and priories were a contented race; and the abbey gate was ever open to the needs and the sufferings of the poor. It is a mistake to say that the poor were provided for by the doles of the monasteries, for they were to be found only in a third of the land of England. But they were a thousand centres of constant beneficence; and in the other two-thirds of the land, the palaces of the bishops, the homes of the clergy, the castles of the nobles, and the houses of the faithful, maintained all the year round the Christian law of almsgiving. There was poverty in England, because there were old age and sickness, and the vicissitudes of life and fortune. But there was everywhere the faith which honoured the poor as the brethren of Christ, and the charity which spontaneously ministered to Him in them. Then came the robbery of God and His poor. By the Act of Suppression:—

The monasteries were given to the King and his heirs only “in as ample a manner” as they were possessed by the religious superiors. These were trustees for common purposes and never regarded their property in any other light than as held for the support of religion and the poor. Further, the purpose for which the monastic property was diverted by this Act from its possessors and given to the King is stated to be “that his Highness may lawfully give, grant, and dispense them or any of them at his will or pleasure to the honour of God and the wealth of this realm.” ...It was further enacted that on the site of every dissolved religious house the new possessor should be bound, under heavy penalties, to provide hospitality and service of the poor, such as had been given them previously by the religious foundations... The repudiation of these rights of the needy by those who became possessed of the confiscated property is one of the greatest blots on our national history. It has caused the spoliation of monastery and convent to be regarded as the rising of the rich against the poor.

It has been the fashion of political economists to describe the demoralization of the poor by the alms of the monasteries, and to cite in proof the statutes against “sturdy beggars” and the like; but we have it upon a high economical authority “that the fifteenth century and the first quarter of the sixteenth were the golden age of the English labourer, if we are to interpret the wages which he earned by the cost of the necessaries of life.” (“Six Centuries of Work and Wages,” p. 326, by James Thorold Rogers.) When the greater monasteries had been plundered and wrecked, and the Church had been robbed, the poverty of England began. The faith and charity, that is the Christianity, of the people had so rapidly declined as to need the intervention of public law. The bishops and clergy were commanded to stir up the charity of the rich to help the poor; but with so little result that an Act of Parliament, 5 Eliz. c. 3, made the relief of the poor compulsory, and England for the first time had a Poor Law. For two centuries this law was administered with a recognition of its natural justice, but for the last fifty years it has been the butt of all kind of denouncement. Nevertheless it has saved the land laws of England until now, and perhaps few are conscious how powerfully but surely it has guarded our social peace. The foresight of St. Thomas of Canterbury made him defend the goods of the Church as the patrimony of the poor. We see at this day the twofold poverty, temporal and spiritual, which the Tudors inflicted upon the people of England. It was not so much the Church as the poor whom they robbed of their inheritance.

Crumwell’s tyranny lasted eight years. His account book shows the immense wealth accumulated by private and public extortion. “Archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, nobles, commoners, officials, unknown laymen, towns, colleges, cathedral chapters, all sent fees and new year’s donations to propitiate the favour of the great man.” For instance, in January, 1539, £9,000 — gifts of £10, £50, and £300, £100, and £266, came from all over the country; for the elections at Fountains, Gisboro, Whitby, and many other places, large bribes are offered for nominations. If he will make a certain monk Abbot of Vale Royal, “he will be contented,” writes Sir Piers Dutton, “to give you £100 in hand, and further to do you as much pleasure as any man shall.” William Penison wishes to be Receiver at the dissolution of Reading Abbey, and presents a diamond, “set in a gold ring, meet to be set in the breast of a George.” The Abbot of Miravale writes that he learns from Dr. Legh that “Crumwell is looking for the £40 promised to you, for his trouble in my regard. I have already paid £100.” The Abbot of Pipwell “will do all that a poor man can to gratify your lordship with £200.” To avert the dissolution of Colchester he was offered £24,000. The Abbot of Leicester sends £40. His successor had to pay a yearly tax of £240—and so on for pages. As for presents: a brace of fat oxen, and a score of fat wethers; fish from Croyland; apples from King’s Langley; partridges and pheasants from Harrow; Irish hawks from Bath; and £40 from one John Hunter “towards furnishing your cellar with wine” in recompense for Crumwell’s part in a law case relating to the property of John Hunter’s wife. Then again “money in a purse,” “in a white leather purse,” “in a crimson sateen purse,” “in a handkerchief,” “in a glove,” “at Arundel in a glove,” “in a pair of gloves under a cushion in the middle window of the gallery.” “A chain melted for my lord, worth more than £5,000.” His note-book shows as follows: “Item, to remember Warren for one monastery. Mr. Gostwyke for a monastery. John Freeman for Spalding. Mr. Kingsmill for Wherwell. Myself for Lunde. Item, to remember John Godsall for something for he hath need; and Item, to remember to know the true value of the goods at Castle Acre for my part thereof.”

Then follow cups and ewers and trenchers of gold, platters and dishes and salters of silver by the dozen, and the gold cross of St. Albans, worth £106. But this is endless. Maitland writes that he was “the great patron of ribaldry, and the protector of the ribald, of the low jester, of the filthy ballad-monger, of the ale-house singers and hypocritical mockers at feasts—in short, of all the

blasphemous mocking and scoffing which disgraced the Protestant party at the time of the Reformation.”

The fall of Wolsey was full of dignity, and moved men to compassion. The fall of Crumwell had no sign of dignity, and no man wept for him. We have it in all its details. “By a Nemesis of fate he passed to the scaffold suddenly and almost untried, and certainly unheard in his own defence.” This was probably by an Act devised or obtained by himself.

On June 11, 1540, the French Ambassador wrote that he had heard, an hour before sending his despatch, that Crumwell had been sent to the Tower. On June 23 he gave full information. He says that Crumwell was altogether unprepared for his downfall. When the Lieutenant of the Tower entered the Council Chamber at Westminster, and informed him that he was ordered to take him prisoner, Crumwell, moved with indignation, threw his hat on the floor. Some one of the Council called out that he was a traitor, and must be judged by the laws he had himself made. The Duke of Norfolk tore the Order of St. George from his neck, and the Garter was also taken from him. Before the news spread he was already in the Tower, and the people knew of his arrest by seeing the king’s officers enter to search his house. By the next day the king had already begun to distribute his fallen favourite’s offices, and sent an officer through the streets of London, publicly forbidding any man to call him Lord Privy Seal, or by any other title or dignity, but simply Thomas Crumwell, cloth carder; saying that the king had taken from him every privilege and title of nobility which he had ever granted him. His attainder declares him to be a false and corrupt traitor, selling for manifold sums of money various grants, even to foreigners and aliens. And further, that as Vicegerent under the Great Seal, he licensed divers persons, detected and suspected of heresy, openly to preach and teach, saying that he would fight even against the king to maintain these heresies. His arrest was so sudden that he could destroy no papers. On the morning of June 10, 1540, he was supreme in England; in the evening he was in the Tower. On June 28 he was brought to the scaffold on Tower Hill.

Such was the end of the master; it only remains to give the end of the minions. They had not even the dignity of the axe. These were Dr. Richard Layton, Thomas Legh, John Ap Rice, and Dr. John London. “It is not impossible,” says Mr. Blunt, a Protestant, in his ‘History of the Reformation,’ “that even such bad men may have told the truth in this matter. But the character of witnesses must always form an important element in estimating the value of their testimony, and the character of such obscene, profligate, and perjured witnesses as Layton and London, could not well be worse. These men were not just Louts, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, but filthy dreamers, who defiled the flesh, despised ecclesiastical dominion, and spake evil of dignitaries in the very spirit of the Evil One.”

Dr. Layton was a pluralist by the favour of Crumwell. Crumwell was invited by him to his rectory at Harrow in these words: “Surely, Simeon was never so glad to see Christ, his Master, as I shall be to see your lordship.” He offered Crumwell £100 to make him Chancellor of the Diocese of Salisbury; and when made Dean of York, he pawned the plate belonging to the Minster.

It is evident from Layton’s letters to Crumwell that he had made up his mind beforehand what he intended to find in the monasteries that he visited. Moreover, it was absolutely impossible, in the time given by the visitors, to hold any inquiry, worthy of the name, in the numberless monasteries, especially in the North, which were visited in the most hurried way. The insolence, violence, and

falsehood of Layton and Legh made the Pilgrims of Grace demand their instant and condign punishment.

Next we find Dr. Layton scampering over Sussex, and writing to Crumwell as follows: “On Friday night I came into Sussex to an abbey called Durtford, it might better be called Dirtyford. Then to an abbey... towards Chichester, because of their poverty not able to lodge. These two poor priories we will dispatch on Monday by the way. And so on Monday at night we shall be at Chichester.” He then describes his treatment of the Abbot of Waverley. He took away the keys of office from all the monks, and made new officers, “perchance as stark knaves as the others. It shall be expedient for you to give the Abbot a lesson, and tell the poor fool what he should do amongst the monks.”

Of the monastery of Lewes, Layton reports: “At Lewes found the monks morally bad and traitors, and having intimidated the Prior on his knees with the worst words I could devise, I ordered him to appear before you, and you will be able to do what you like with him.”

From Lewes he went to Battle. He writes as follows: “The Abbot of Battle is the varast hayne, bette, and buserde, and the arants chorle that ever I see. In all other places whereat I come, especially the black sort of devilish monks, I am sorry to know as I do. Surely, I thynk they be past amendment, and that God hath utterly withdrawn his grace from them.”

Dr. Layton sums up his own worth: “Praying God that rather I may be buried quick than to be the occasion why the King’s Highness should diminish any part of the affiance of your proved mind towards His Grace.”

So much for Dr. Layton—by his own showing, a bad, insolent, and unjust man.

We come next to Dr. Legh.

Ap Rice will save us trouble. He wrote Crumwell a full indictment against his fellow commissioner: “First, in his going he is too insolent and pompatique... Then he handleth the Fathers when he cometh very roughly... The man is young and of an intolerable elation... For the election of the Prior of Coventry he took £15—at Revel £20, besides his costs, which is, in my opinion, too much... He maketh them to send after him such rewards as may please him.” He went about with twelve men in livery besides his brother. After sending this letter, Ap Rice was frightened, and wrote next day to Crumwell, begging him not to tell Dr. Legh. “Forasmuch as the said Mr. Doctor is of such acquaintance and familiarity with many rufflers and serving men, and I have commonly no great assistance with me when I go abroad, might take perchance irrecoverable harm of him or of his ere I were aware. Please keep secret what I have said.”

Sanders, writing almost at that time, says: “Lee (Legh), indeed, in order to discharge correctly the duties laid upon him, tempted the religious to sin, and he was more ready to inquire into, and to speak about, uncleanness of living than anything else.”

No wonder the nuns were terrified at “Mr. Doctor Legh,” the familiar of rufflers, a prurient talker, an accuser, if not also a tempter, of the innocent.

As to Ap Rice, little need be said. He had the reputation of an unfrocked priest. Legh accused him of some discreditable acts, and it appears that he never received any spiritual promotion for his services.

Dr. John London’s case may be speedily summed up. Even Cranmer called him “the stout and filthy prebendary of Windsor.” He and one Simons, a lawyer, “that set traps for others, were caught at

length themselves.” They were condemned to ride through Windsor, Reading, and Newbury, their faces to the tails of their horses, and to stand in the pillory on a market-day with a paper on their heads proclaiming their offence.

Once more Mr. Blunt, with his usual justice, says: “A dean, twice detected in immorality and put to open penance for it, and afterwards convicted of perjury, is not the stuff of which credible witnesses are made.”

We have learned the worth of this precious quaternion from two safe sources—first, from their own words; and next, from what they said of each other.

Fuller says that the Catholics accused the visitors of employing profligate young men to tempt the nuns to sin, and tells a story of two young men going to a convent near Cambridge, but without success.

Mr. Blunt says again (‘Reformation,’ i. 316):

“The story has too much vraisemblance to be set aside. And in addition to this, the tone of Layton’s letters to Crumwell are of such a kind, as to make one fear that some nuns were, indeed, wickedly seduced, and others not less wickedly accused falsely. Those, however, who duly appreciate the character of their country-women, will believe that among these evil-entreated innocents there were not a few who passed through the scorching fire of temptation scathless, under the protection of their heavenly bridegroom. For the English daughters of the nineteenth century, whom we see around us, are sisters to the English nuns of the sixteenth, of whom we know only by vague tradition.”

Such then is the impeachment of Thomas Crumwell and his associates. If ever men were self-condemned, they are. Yet it was upon the evidence of such wretches that the highest sanctity and the noblest intellects of England were blackened and martyred. But upon the oaths of such men no just man would take even the life of a dog.
