

THE
HISTORY OF THE PURITANS;

OR,

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMISTS;

FROM

THE REFORMATION IN 1517, TO THE REVOLUTION IN 1688;

COMPRISING

An Account of their Principles;

THEIR ATTEMPTS FOR A FARTHER REFORMATION IN THE CHURCH, THEIR SUFFERINGS, AND
THE LIVES AND CHARACTERS OF THEIR MOST CONSIDERABLE DIVINES.

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A NEW EDITION, IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE KING'S DECLARATION OF INDULGENCE TO THE POPIISH PLOT
IN THE YEAR 1678.

1672.

THE French king having prevailed with the English court to break the triple alliance, and make war with the Dutch, published a declaration at Paris, signifying that he could not, without diminution of his glory, any longer dissemble the indignation raised in him, by the unhandsome carriage of the states-general of the United Provinces, and therefore proclaimed war against them both by sea and land. In the beginning of May, he drew together an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men, with which he took the principal places in Flanders, and with a rapid fury overran the greatest part of the Netherlands. In the beginning of July he took possession of Utrecht, a city in the heart of the United Provinces, where he held his court, and threatened to besiege Amsterdam itself. In this extremity the Dutch opened their sluices, and laid a great part of their country under water; the populace rose, and having obliged the states to elect the young prince of Orange stadtholder, they fell upon the two brothers Cornelius and John de Wit, their late pensionary, and tore them to pieces in a barbarous manner. The young prince, who was then but twenty-two years old, used all imaginable vigilance and activity to save the remainder of his country; and like a true patriot declared, he would die in the last dike rather than become tributary to any foreign power. At length their allies came to their assistance, when the young prince, like another Scipio, abandoning his own country, besieged and took the important town of Bonn, which opened a passage for the Germans into Flanders, and struck such a surprise into the French, whose enemies were now behind them, that they abandoned all their conquests in Holland, except Maestricht and Grave, with as much precipitance as they had made them.

These rapid conquests of the French opened people's mouths against the court, and raised such discontents in England, that his majesty was obliged to issue out his proclamation, to suppress all unlawful and undutiful conversation, threatening a severe prosecution of such who should spread false news, or intermeddle with affairs of state, or promote scandal against his majesty's counsellors, by their common discourse in coffee-houses, or places of public resort. He was obliged also to continue the exchequer shut up, contrary to his royal promise, and to prorogue his parliament till next year, which he foresaw would be in a flame at their meeting.

During this interval of parliament, the declaration of indulgence continued in force, and the dissenters had rest; when the Presbyterians and Inde-

pendents, to show their agreement among themselves, as well as to support the doctrines of the Reformation against the prevailing errors of Popery, Socinianism, and infidelity, set up a weekly lecture, at Pinners'-hall, in Broad-street, on Tuesday mornings, under the encouragement of the principal merchants and tradesmen of their persuasion in the city. Four Presbyterians were joined by two Independents to preach by turns, and, to give it the greater reputation, the principal ministers for learning and popularity were chosen as lecturers; as Dr. Bates, Dr. Manton, Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Collins, Jenkins, Mead, and afterward Mr. Alsop, Howe, Cole, and others; and though there were some little misunderstandings at their first setting out, about some high points of Calvinism, occasioned by one of Mr. Baxter's first sermons, yet the lecture continued in this form till the year 1695, when it split upon the same rock, occasioned by the reprinting Dr. Crisp's works. The four Presbyterians removed to Salters'-hall, and set up a lecture on the same day and hour. The two Independents remained at Pinners'-hall, and when there was no prospect of an accommodation, each party filled up their numbers out of their respective denominations, and they are both subsisting to this day.

Among the Puritan divines who died this year, bishop Wilkins deserves the first place; he was born at Fawsley in Northamptonshire, in the house of his mother's father, Mr. J. Dod the decalogist, in the year 1614, and educated in Magdalen-hall under Mr. Tombes.¹ He was some time warden of Wadham-college, Oxford, and afterward master of Trinity-college, Cambridge, of which he was deprived at the Restoration, though he conformed. He married a sister of the protector, Oliver Cromwell, and complied with all the changes of the late times, being, as Wood observes, always puritanically affected: but for his admirable abilities, and extraordinary genius, he had scarce his equal. He was made bishop of Chester 1668; and surely, says Mr. Echard, the court could not have found out a man of greater ingenuity and capacity, or of more universal knowledge and understanding in all parts of polite learning. Archbishop Tillotson, and bishop Burnet, who were his intimates, give him the highest encomium; as, that he was a pious Christian, an admirable preacher, a rare mathematician, and mechanical philosopher; and a man of as great a mind, as true judgment, as eminent virtues, and of as great a soul, as any they ever knew. He was a person of universal charity, and moderation of spirit; and was concerned in all attempts for a comprehension with the dissenters. He died of the stone in Dr. Tillotson's house in Chancery-lane, November 19, 1672, in the fifty-ninth year of his age.

¹ Athen. Oxon. p. 505.

Mr. Joseph Caryl, M. A. the ejected minister of St. Magnus, London-bridge, was born of genteel parents in London, 1602, educated in Exeter-college, and afterward preacher of Lincoln's-inn; he was a member of the assembly of divines, and afterward one of the triers for approbation of ministers; in all which stations he appeared a man of great learning, piety, and modesty. He was sent by the parliament to attend the king at Holmby-house, and was one of their commissioners in the treaty of the Isle of Wight. After his ejection in 1662, he lived privately in London, and preached to his congregation as the times would permit; he was a moderate Independent, and distinguished himself by his learned exposition upon the book of Job.¹ He died universally lamented by all his acquaintance February 7, 1672–3, and in the seventy-first year of his age.²

Mr. Philip Nye, M.A. was a divine of a warmer spirit: he was born of a genteel family 1596, and was educated in Magdalen-college,³ Oxford, where he took the degrees. In 1630 he was curate of St. Michael's, Cornhill, and three years after fled from bishop Laud's persecution into Holland, but returned about the beginning of the long-parliament, and became minister of Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire. He was one of the dissenting-brethren in the assembly, one of the triers in the protector's time, and a principal manager of the meeting of the Congregational messengers at the Savoy. He was a great politician, insomuch that it was debated in council, after the Restoration, whether he should not be excepted for life; and it was concluded, that if he should accept or exercise any office ecclesiastical or civil, he should, to all intents and purposes in law stand as if he had been totally excepted. He was ejected from St. Bartholomew behind the Exchange, and preached privately, as opportunity offered, to a congregation of dissenters till the present year, when he died in the month of September, about seventy-six years old, and lies buried in the church of St. Michael's Cornhill, leaving behind him the character of a man of uncommon depth, and of one who was seldom if ever outreached.⁴

When the king met his parliament February 4, 1673, after a recess of a year and nine months, he acquainted them with the reasonableness and necessity of the war with the Dutch, and having asked a supply, told them, "he had found the good effect of his indulgence to dissenters, but that it

¹ This work was printed in two volumes folio, consisting of upwards of six hundred sheets: and there was also an edition in twelve volumes 4to. "One just remark (says Mr. Granger) has been made on its utility, that it is a very sufficient exercise for the virtue of patience, which it was chiefly intended to inculcate and improve." Granger's History of England, vol. 3. p. 313. 8vo. note.—ED.

² Calamy, vol. 2. p. 7. Palmer's Noncon. Mem. vol. 1. p. 121.

³ Mr. Nye was entered a commoner of Brazen-nose, July 1615, aged about nineteen years; but making no long stay there, he removed to Magdalen-hall, not Magdalen-college. Dr. Grey; and Wood's Athen. Oxon. vol. 2. p. 368.—ED.

⁴ Calamy, vol. 2. p. 29. Palmer, vol. 1. p. 86.

was a mistake in those who said, more liberty was given to Papists than others, because they had only freedom in their own houses, and no public assemblies; he should therefore take it ill to receive contradiction in what he had done; and to deal plainly with you (said his majesty), I am resolved to stick to my declaration.” Lord-chancellor Shaftesbury seconded the king’s speech, and having vindicated the indulgence, magnified the king’s zeal for the church of England and the Protestant religion. But the house of commons declared against the dispensing power, and argued that though the king had a power to pardon offenders, he had not a right to authorize men to break the laws, for this would infer a power to alter the government; and if the king could secure offenders by indemnifying them beforehand, it was in vain to make any laws at all, because, according to this maxim, they had no force but at the king’s discretion.—But it was objected on the other side, that a difference was to be made between penal laws in spiritual matters and others; that the king’s supremacy gave him a peculiar authority over these, as was evident by his tolerating the Jews, and the churches of foreign Protestants.—To which it was replied, that the intent of the law in asserting the supremacy was only to exclude all foreign jurisdiction, and to lodge the whole authority with the king; but that was still bounded and regulated by law; the Jews were still at mercy, and only connived at, but the foreign churches were excepted by a particular clause in the act of uniformity; and therefore, upon the whole, they came to this resolution February 10, “That tenal statutes in matters ecclesiastical cannot be suspended but by act of parliament; that no such power had ever been claimed by any of his majesty’s predecessors, and therefore his majesty’s indulgence was contrary to law, and tended to subvert the legislative power, which had always been acknowledged to reside in the king and his two houses of parliament.” Pursuant to this resolution, they addressed the king February 19, to recall his declaration. The king answered, that he was sorry they should question his power in ecclesiastics, which had not been done in the reigns of his ancestors; that he did not pretend to suspend laws, wherein the properties, rights, or liberties, of his subjects were concerned, nor to alter anything in the established religion, but only to take off the penalties inflicted on dissenters, which he believed they themselves would not wish executed according to the rigour of the law.¹ The commons, perceiving his majesty was not inclined to desist from his declaration, stopped the money-bill,²

¹ Echard, p. 889. Burnet, vol. 2. p. 72, 73.

² The remarks of Mr. Gough here are just and weighty: “The conduct of the commons in this case hath procured the general voice of our historians in their favour; and it must be acknowledged that they acted consistently with their duty in opposing the infringement of the constitution.—Yet as the king’s apparent inclination to have the dissenters exempted from penal laws would have merited praise, if it had been sincere, and attempted in a legal way, so the opposition of the parliament would have been entitled to the claim of greater

and presented a second address, insisting upon a full and satisfactory assurance, that his majesty's conduct in this affair might not be drawn into example for the future, which at length they obtained.

The parliament was now first disposed to distinguish between Protestant dissenters and Popish recusants, and to give ease to the former without including the latter, especially when the dissenters in the house disavowed the dispensing power, though it had been exercised in their favour. Alderman Love, member for the city of London, stood up, and in a handsome speech declared, "that he had rather go without his own desired liberty, than have it in a way so destructive of the liberties of his country and the Protestant interest; and that this was the sense of the main body of dissenters:" which surprised the whole house, and gave a turn to those very men, who for ten years together had been loading the Nonconformists with one penal law after another: but things were now at a crisis; Popery and slavery were at the door; the triple alliance broken; the Protestant powers ravaging one another; the exchequer shut up; the heir-presumptive of the crown an open Papist; and an army encamped near London under Popish officers ready to be transported into Holland to complete their ruin. When the dissenters, at such a time, laid aside their resentments against their persecutors, and renounced their own liberty for the safety of the Protestant religion, and the liberties of their country; all sober men began to think, it was high time to put a mark of distinction between them and the Roman Catholics.

But the king was of another mind; yet being in want of money, he was easily persuaded by his mistresses to give up his indulgence, contrary to the advice of the cabal, who told him, if he would make a bold stand for his prerogative, all would be well. But he came to the house March 8, and having pressed the commons to dispatch the money-bill, he added,—“If there be any scruple yet remaining with you, touching the suspension of the penal laws, I here faithfully promise you, that what has been done in that particular shall not for the future be drawn into example and consequence; and as I daily expect from you a bill for my supply, so I assure you I shall as willingly receive and pass any other you shall offer me, that may tend to the giving you satisfaction in all your just grievances.” Accordingly he called for the declaration, and broke the seal with his own hands, by which means

merit, if it had not originated, with many of them, in an aversion to the principles of the declaration (impunity to the Nonconformists) as much as the grounds upon which it was published; and if they had not laid the foundations for this contest in the various penal laws, which, under the influence of party pique, they had universally enacted and received; and on all occasions manifested a determined enmity to all dissenters from the established religion; for if they had not an aversion to the principles of the declaration, they had now a fair opportunity of legalizing it, by converting it into an act of parliament.” *History of the Quakers*, vol. 2. p. 374.—ED.

all the licences for meeting-houses were called in. Our historians¹ observe, that this proceeding of the king made a surprising alteration in lord Shaftesbury, who had been the soul of the cabal, and the master-builder of the scheme for making the king absolute; but that when his majesty was so unsteady as to desert him in the project of an indulgence after he had promised to stand by him, he concluded the king was not to be trusted, and appeared afterward at the head of the country party.

The Nonconformists were now in some hopes of a legal toleration by parliament, for the commons resolved, *nemine contradicente*, that a bill be brought in for the ease of his majesty's Protestant subjects, who are dissenters in matters of religion from the church of England. The substance of the bill was,

“1. That ease be given to his majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting in matters of religion, who shall subscribe the articles of the doctrine of the church of England, and shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy.² 2. That the said Protestant subjects be eased from all pains and penalties for not coming to church. 3. That the clause in the late act of uniformity, for declaring the assent and consent, be taken away by this bill. 4. That the said Protestant subjects be eased from all pains and penalties, for meeting together for performance of any religious exercises. 5. That every teacher shall give notice of the place where he intends to hold such his meetings to the quarter-sessions, where in open court he shall first make such subscription, and take such oaths as aforesaid, and receive from thence a certificate thereof, where all such proceedings shall remain upon record. 6. That any such teacher may exercise as aforesaid, until the next respective quarter-sessions, and no longer, in case he shall not first take the oaths, and make such subscription before two of the neighbouring justices of the peace, and shall first give them notice of the place of his intended meeting, and take a certificate thereof under the said justices hands, a duplicate whereof they are to return into the next quarter-sessions. 7. The doors and passages of all houses and places where the said dissenters do meet shall be always open and free during the time of such exercise. 8. If any dissenter refuses to take the churchwardens' oaths, he shall then find another fit person, who is not a dissenter, to execute that office, and shall pay him for it.” But though all agreed in bringing in a bill, there was neither time nor unanimity enough in the house this sessions to agree upon particulars; for according to bishop Burnet, it went no farther than a second reading. Mr. Echard says, it was dropped in the house of lords on account of some amendments, till the parliament was prorogued; but Mr. Coke says, more truly, that it was because

¹ Echard, p. 891. Burnet, vol. 2. p. 75.

² Echard, p. 889.

the dead weight of bishops joined with the king and the caballing party against it.¹

While this was depending the commons addressed the king against Papists and Jesuits, expressing their great concern to see such persons admitted into employments and places of great trust and profit, and especially into military commands, and therefore pray, that the laws against them may be put in execution. Upon which a proclamation was issued, though to very little purpose, enjoining all Popish priests and Jesuits to depart the realm, and the laws to be put in execution against all Popish recusants.

But his majesty making no mention of removing them from places of profit and trust, the commons, knowing where their strength lay, suspended their money-bill, and ordered a bill to be brought in, to confine all places of profit and trust to those only who are of the communion of the church of England: this is commonly called the test act, and was levelled against the duke of York and the present ministry, who were chiefly of his persuasion. When it was brought into the house, the court opposed it with all their might, and endeavoured to divide the church-party, by proposing, that some regard might be had to Protestant dissenters, hoping by this means to clog the bill, and throw it out of the house; upon which alderman Love, a dissenter, and representative for the city, stood up again and said, he hoped the clause in favour of Protestant dissenters would occasion no intemperate heats; and moved, that since it was likely to prove so considerable a barrier against Popery, the bill might pass without any alteration, and that nothing might interpose till it was finished; and then (says the alderman), we [dissenters] will try if the parliament will not distinguish us from Popish recusants, by some marks of their favour; but we are willing to lie under the severity of the laws for a time, rather than clog a more necessary work with our concerns. These being the sentiments of the leading dissenters both in the house and without doors, the bill passed the commons with little opposition; but when it came to be debated in the house of peers, in the king's presence, March 15, the whole court was against it, except the earl of Bristol; and maintained that it was his majesty's prerogative to employ whom he pleased in his service. Some were for having the king stand his ground against the parliament. The duke of Buckingham and lord Berkley² proposed bringing the army to town, and taking out of both houses the members who made opposition. Lauderdale offered to bring an army from Scotland; and lord Clifford told the king, that the people now saw through his designs, and therefore he must resolve to make himself master at once, or be for ever subject to much jealousy and contempt. But the earl of Shaftes-

¹ Detect, p. 490.

² Burnet, vol. 2. p. 75, 76.

bury, having changed sides, pressed the king to give the parliament full content, and then they would undertake to procure him the supply he wanted. This suited the king's easy temper, who, not being willing to risk a second civil war, went into these measures, and out of mere necessity for money, gave up the Papists, in hopes that he might afterward recover what in the present extremity he was forced to resign. This effectually broke the cabal, and put the Roman Catholics upon pursuing other measures to introduce their religion, which was the making way for a Popish successor of more resolute principles; and from hence we may date the beginning of the Popish plot, which did not break out till 1678, as appears by Mr. Coleman's letters. The bill received the royal assent March 25, together with the money-bill of £1,200,000, and then the parliament was prorogued to October 20, after a short session of seven weeks.

The test act is entitled, An act to prevent dangers which happen from Popish recusants. It requires, "that all persons bearing any office of trust or profit shall take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance in public and open court, and shall also receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the church of England, in some parish church, on some Lord's day, immediately after divine service, and sermon, and deliver a certificate of having so received the sacrament, under the hands of the respective ministers and churchwardens, proved by two credible witnesses upon oath, and upon record in court. And that all persons taking the said oaths of supremacy and allegiance shall likewise make and subscribe this following declaration: 'I, A. B., do declare, that I believe there is no transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, or in the elements of bread and wine, at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever.' The penalty of breaking through this act, is a disability of suing in any court of law or equity, being guardian of any child, executor or administrator to any person, or of taking any legacy, or deed of gift, or of bearing any public office: besides a fine of five hundred pounds."

Mr. Echard observes well, that this act was principally, if not solely, levelled at the Roman Catholics, as appears from the title; and this is farther evident from the disposition of the house of commons at this time, to ease the Protestant dissenters of some of their burdens. If the dissenters had fallen in with the court-measures, they might have prevented the bill's passing. But they left their own liberties in a state of uncertainty, to secure those of the nation. However, though the intention was good, the act itself is, in my opinion, very unjustifiable, because it founds dominion in grace. A man cannot be an exciseman, a customhouse officer, a lieutenant in the army or navy, no not so much as a tide-waiter, without putting on the most distinguishing badge of Christianity, according to the usage of the church of England. Is not this a strong temptation to profanation and hypocrisy? Does

it not pervert one of the most solemn institutions of religion, to purposes for which it was never intended? And is it not easy to find securities of a civil nature, sufficient for the preservation both of church and state? When the act took place, the duke of York lord high-admiral of England, lord Clifford lord high-treasurer, and a great many other Popish officers, resigned their preferments; but not one Protestant dissenter, there not being one such in the administration: however, as the church party showed a noble zeal for their religion, bishop Burnet observes, that the dissenters got great reputation by their silent deportment; though the king and the court-bishops resolved to stick in their skirts.¹

This being the last penal law made against the Nonconformists in this reign, it may not be improper to put them all together, that the reader may have a full view of their distressed circumstances: for besides the penal laws of queen Elizabeth, which were confirmed by this parliament; one of which was no less than banishment; and another a mulct on every one for not coming to church;

There were in force,

1st. An act for well governing and regulating corporations, 13 Car. II. c. 1. Whereby all who bear office in any city, corporation, town, or borough, are required to take the oaths and subscribe the declaration therein mentioned, and to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper according to the rites of the church of England. This effectually turned the dissenters out of the government of all corporations.

2d. The act of uniformity, 14 Car. II. c. 4. Whereby all parsons, vicars, and ministers, who enjoyed any preferment in the church, were obliged to declare their unfeigned assent and consent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, &c. or be *ipso facto* deprived: and all schoolmasters and tutors are prohibited from teaching youth without licence from the archbishop or bishop, under pain of three months' imprisonment.

3d. An act to prevent and suppress seditious conventicles, 16 Car. II. c. 4. Whereby it is declared unlawful to be present at any meeting for religious worship, except according to the usage of the church of England, where five besides the family should be assembled; in which case the first and second offences are made subject to a certain fine, or three months' imprisonment, on conviction before a justice of the peace on the oath of a single witness; and the third offence, on conviction at the sessions, or before the justices of assize, is punishable by transportation for seven years.

4th. An act for restraining Nonconformists from inhabiting in corporations, 17 Car. II. c. 2. Whereby all dissenting ministers, who would not take an oath therein specified against the lawfulness of taking up arms against

¹ Vol. 2. p. 80.

the king on any pretence whatsoever, and that they would never attempt any alteration of government in church and state; are banished five miles from all corporation towns, and subject to a fine of £40 in case they should preach in any conventicle.

5th. Another act to prevent and suppress seditious conventicles, 22 Car. II. c. 5. Whereby any persons who teach in such conventicles, are subject to a penalty of £20 for the first, and £40 for every subsequent offence; and any person who permits such a conventicle to be held in their house, is liable to a fine of £20; and justices of peace are empowered to break open doors where they are informed such conventicles are held, and take the offenders into custody.

6th. An act for preventing dangers which may happen from Popish recusants, commonly called the test act, whereby (as afore-mentioned) every person is incapacitated from holding a place of trust under the government, without taking the sacrament according to the rites of the church of England.

By the rigorous execution of these laws, the Nonconformist ministers were separated from their congregations, from their maintenance, from their houses and families, and their people reduced to distress and misery, or obliged to worship God in a manner contrary to the dictates of their consciences, on a penalty of heavy fines, or of being shut up in a prison among thieves and robbers. Great numbers retired to the plantations; but Dr. Owen, who was shipping off his effects for New England, was forbid to leave the kingdom by express orders from king Charles himself. If there had been treason or rebellion in the case, it had been justifiable; but when it was purely for nonconformity to certain rites and ceremonies, and a form of church-government, it can deserve no better name than that of persecution.

The house of commons, from their apprehensions of the growth of Popery and of a Popish successor to the crown, petitioned the king against the duke's second marriage with the princess of Modena, an Italian Papist, but his majesty told them they were too late. Upon which the commons stopped their money-bill, voted the standing army a grievance, and were proceeding to other vigorous resolutions, when the king sent for them to the house of peers, and with a short speech prorogued them to January 7, after they had sat only nine days. In the mean time the duke's marriage was consummated, with the consent of the French king, which raised the expectation of the Roman Catholics higher than ever.

This induced the more zealous Protestants to think of a firmer union with the dissenters; accordingly Mr. Baxter, at the request of the earl of Orrery, drew up some proposals for a comprehension, agreeably to those al-

ready mentioned.¹ “He proposed that the meeting-houses of dissenters should be allowed as chapels, till there were vacancies for them in the churches—and that those who had no meeting-houses should be school-masters or lecturers till such time—that none should be obliged to read the Apocrypha—that parents might have liberty to dedicate their own children in baptism—that ministers might preach where somebody else who had the room might read the common-prayer—that ministers be not obliged to give the sacrament to such as are guilty of scandalous immoralities, nor to refuse it to those who scruple kneeling—that persons excommunicated may not be imprisoned and ruined—and that toleration be given to all conscientious dissenters.”—These proposals being communicated to the earl of Orery, were put into the hands of bishop Morley, who returned them without yielding to anything of importance. The motion was also revived in the house of commons; but the shortness of the sessions put a stop to its progress. Besides, the court-bishops seemed altogether indisposed to any concessions.²

This year put an end to the lives of two considerable Nonconformist divines; Mr. William Whitaker, the ejected minister of St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, son of Mr. Jer. Whitaker, a divine of great learning in the oriental languages. He was an elegant preacher, and a good man from his youth. While he was at Emanuel-college, he was universally beloved; and when he came to London, generally esteemed for his sweet disposition. He was first preacher at Hornchurch, and then at the place from whence he was ejected. He afterward preached to a separate congregation as the times would permit, and died in the year 1673.³

Mr. James Janeway, M. A. was born in Hertfordshire, and a student of Christ-church, Oxford. He was afterward tutor in the house of Mr. Stringer at Windsor: but not being satisfied with conformity, he opened a separate meeting at Rotherhithe, where he preached to a numerous congregation with great success.⁴ He was a zealous preacher, and fervent in prayer, but being weakly, his indefatigable labours broke his constitution, so that he died of a consumption March 16, 1673–4, in the thirty-eighth year of his age.

The revocation of the indulgence, and the displeasure of the court against the dissenters for deserting them in their designs to prevent the passing the test-act, let loose the whole tribe of informers. The Papists being excluded from places of trust, the court had no tenderness for Protestant Nonconformists; the judges therefore had orders to quicken the execution

¹ Baxter, part 3. p. 110.

² Baxter, part .3. p. 140.

³ Calamy, vol. 2. p. 25. Palmer, vol. 1. p. 127.

⁴ Calamy, vol. 2. p. 838. Palmer, p. 684.

of the laws against them. The estates of those of the best quality in each county were ordered to be seized. The mouths of the high-church pulpiteers were encouraged to open as loud as possible; one, in his sermon before the house of commons, told them, that the Nonconformists ought not to be tolerated, but to be cured by vengeance. He urged them to set fire to the fagot, and to teach them by scourges or scorpions, and open their eyes with gall. The king himself issued out a proclamation for putting the penal laws in full execution; which had its effect.¹

Mr. Baxter was one of the first upon whom the storm fell, being apprehended as he was preaching his Thursday lecture at Mr. Turner's. He went with a constable and Keting the informer to sir William Pulteney's, who demanding the warrant, found it signed by Henry Montague, Esq. bailiff of Westminster. Sir William told the constable, that none but a city justice could give a warrant to apprehend a man for preaching in the city, whereupon he was dismissed.² Endeavours were used to surprise Dr. Manton, and send him to prison upon the Oxford or five-mile act, but Mr. Bedford preaching for him was accidentally apprehended in his stead; and though he had taken the oath in the five-mile act, was fined £20 and the place £40 which was paid by the hearers.³

The like ravages were made in most parts of England; Mr. Joseph Swaffield of Salisbury was seized preaching in his own house, and bound over to the assizes, and imprisoned in the county jail almost a year. Twenty-five persons, men and women, were indicted for a riot, that is, for a conventicle, and suffered the penalty of the law.⁴ The informers were Roman Catholics, one of whom was executed for treason in the Popish plot.—At East Salcomb, in Devonshire, lived one Joan Boston, an old blind widow, who, for a supposed conventicle held at her house, was fined £12 and for nonpayment of it threatened with a jail. After some weeks the officers broke open her doors, and carried away her goods to above the value of the fine. They sold as many goods as were worth £13 for 50s; six hogsheads valued at 40s. for 9s.; and pewter, feather-beds, &c. for 20s., besides the rent which they demanded of her tenants.—Mr. John Thompson, minister in Bristol, was apprehended, and refusing to take the Oxford oath was committed to prison, where he was seized with a fever through the noisomeness of the place: a physician being sent for, advised his removal; and a bond of £500 was offered the sheriff for his security: application was also made to the bishop without success: so he died in prison March 4, declaring, that if he had known when he came to prison that he should die there,

¹ State Tracts, vol. 3. p. 42. Baxter, part 3. p. 153.

² State Tracts, part 3. p. 155.

³ Conf. Plea, part 4. p. 75

⁴ Conf. Plea, part 4. p. 75.

he would have done no otherwise than he did. Numberless examples of the like kind might be produced during the recess of the parliament. But the king's want of money, and the discontents of his people, obliged him to put an end to the war with the Dutch, with no other advantage than a sum of £2000 or £3000 for his expenses.

His majesty was unwilling to meet his parliament, who were now full of zeal against Popery, and began to consider the Nonconformists as auxiliaries to the Protestant cause; but necessity obliged him to convene them; and as soon as they met January 7, 1674, they addressed his majesty to banish all Papists, who were not housekeepers nor menial servants to peers, ten miles from London; and to appoint a fast for the calamities of the nation. They attacked the remaining members of the Cabal, and voted an address for removing them from his majesty's council; upon which the king prorogued them for above a year, after they had sat six weeks, without giving any money, or passing one single act: which was an indication of ill blood between the king and parliament, and a certain forerunner of vengeance upon the dissenters. But to stifle the clamours of the people, his majesty republished his proclamation,¹ forbidding their meddling in state-affairs, or talking seditiously in coffee-houses; and then commanded an order to be made public, "that effectual care be taken for the suppressing of conventicles: and whereas, divers pretend old licences from his majesty, and would support themselves by that pretence, his majesty declares, that all his licences were long since recalled, and that no conventicle has any authority, allowance, or encouragement from him."²

This year put an end to the life of that great man John Milton, born in London, and educated in Christ-college, Cambridge, where he discovered an uncommon genius, which was very much improved by his travels. He was Latin secretary to the long-parliament and wrote in defence of the murder of king Charles I. against Salmasius and others, with great spirit, and in a pure and elegant Latin style. He was afterward secretary to the protector Cromwell, and lost the sight of both his eyes by hard study. At the Restoration some of his books were burnt, and himself in danger; but he was happily included in the act of indemnity, and spent the remainder of his life in retirement. He was a man of an unequalled genius, and acquired immortal fame by his incomparable poem of Paradise Lost; in which he manifested such a sublimity of thought, and such elegance of diction, as perhaps were never exceeded in any age or nation of the world. His daughters read to him, after he was blind, the Greek poets, though they understood not the

¹ Gazette, no. 883.

² Ibid. no. 962. 965.

language. He died in mean circumstances, at Bunhill-row, London, in the sixtyseventh year of his age.¹

Though the Protestant religion stood in need of the united strength of all its professors against the advances of Popery, and the parliament had moved for a toleration of Protestant dissenters, yet the bishops continued to prosecute them in common with the Papists. Archbishop Sheldon directed circular letters to the bishops of his province, enjoining them to give directions to their archdeacons and commissaries to procure particular information from the churchwardens of their several parishes on the following inquiries, and transmit them to him after the next visitation: 1. What number of persons are there, by common estimation, inhabiting within each parish subject to your jurisdiction? 2. What number of Popish recusants, or persons suspected of recusancy, are resident among the inhabitants aforesaid? 3. What number of other dissenters are there in each parish, of what sect soever, which either obstinately refuse or wholly absent themselves from the communion of the church of England, at such times as by law they are required?—Some of the clergy were grieved at these proceedings, and Dr. Tillotson and Stillingfleet met privately with Dr. Manton, Bates, Pool, and Baxter, to consider of terms of accommodation, which when they had agreed upon and communicated to the bishops, they were disallowed; so that when Tillotson saw how things were going, he cautiously withdrew from the odium, and wrote the following letter to Mr. Baxter, April 11, 1675: “That he was unwilling his name should be made public in the affair, since it was come to nothing: not but that I do heartily desire an accommodation (says he), and shall always endeavour it: but I am sure it will be a prejudice to me, and signify nothing to the effecting the thing which, as circumstances are, cannot pass in either house without the concurrence of a

¹ It is but a piece of justice to the memory and virtues of some of the most distinguished characters of the Conformists and Nonconformists of this period, to record here their pious exertions for the religious instruction of the Welsh. A subscription was opened, and an association was formed, for the distribution of Bibles, Testaments, and practical treatises, and for opening schools, in the principality of Wales. At the head of this institution was Dr. Tillotson, then dean of Canterbury. The gentlemen who were the chief contributors to this design were, Whichcote, Ford, Bates, Outram, Patrick, Durham, Stillingfleet, Meriton, Burton, Baxter, Gouge, Poole, Fowler, Newman, Reading, Griffith, Short, Gape, and the beneficent Firmin. From Midsummer 1674 to Lady-day 1675, they had distributed thirty-two Welsh Bibles, which were all that could be procured in Wales or London; two hundred and forty New Testaments, and five hundred Whole Duty of Man, in Welsh. In the preceding year eight hundred and twelve poor children had, by the charity of others, been put to school in fifty-one of the chief towns in Wales. The distribution of these books provoked others to that charitable work, so that the children placed at schools by these gentlemen, and others, from their own purse, amounted to one thousand eight hundred and fifty. It appears as if this undertaking gave birth to an edition of the Bible and liturgy in the Welsh tongue, in which Mr. Gouge had a principal concern, and to which Dr. Tillotson gave £50. The impression extended to eight thousand copies. Life of Mr. James Owen, p. 10–12; and Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin, p. 50.—ED.

considerable part of the bishops, and the countenance of his majesty, which at present I see little reason to expect.”¹

But the bishops’ conduct made them unpopular, and drew on them many mortifications. People’s compassion began to move towards their dissenting brethren, whom they frequently saw carried in great numbers to prison, and spoiled of their goods, for no other crime than a tender conscience. The very name of an informer became as odious as their behaviour was infamous. The aldermen of London often went out of the way when they heard of their coming; and some denied them their warrants, though by the act they forfeited £100. Alderman Forth bound over an informer to his good behaviour, for breaking into his chamber without leave.² When twelve or thirteen bishops came into the city to dine with sir Nathaniel Herne, one of the sheriffs of London, and exhorted him to put the laws in execution against the Nonconformists, he told them plainly, they could not trade with their fellow-citizens one day, and put them in prison the next.

The moderate churchmen showing a disposition to unite with the Nonconformists against Popery, the court resolved to take in the old ranting cavaliers, to strengthen the opposition; for this purpose Morley and some other bishops were sent for to court, and told, it was a great misfortune that the church party and dissenters were so disposed to unite, and run into one; the court was therefore willing to make the church easy, and to secure to the king the allegiance of all his subjects at the same time; for this purpose a bill was brought into the house of lords, entitled, “An act to prevent the dangers that may arise from persons disaffected to the government;” by which all such as enjoyed any beneficial office or employment, ecclesiastical, civil, or military; all who voted in elections of parliament men; all privy-counsellors, and members of parliament themselves; were under a penalty to take the following oath, being the same as was required by the five-mile act: “I A. B. do declare, that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms against the king: and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him in pursuance of such commission. And I do swear, that I will not at any time endeavour the alteration of the government either in church or state. So help me God.” The design of the bill was to enable the ministry to prosecute their destructive schemes against the constitution and the Protestant religion, without fear of opposition even from the parliament itself.³ The chief speakers for the bill were, the lord-treasurer and the lord-keeper, lord Danby and Finch, with bishop Morley and Ward; but the earl of Shaftesbury, duke of Buckingham, lord Hollis,

¹ Baxter, part 3. p. 157, 158.

² Compl. History, p. 338.

³ Baxter’s Life, part 3. p. 167. Burnet, vol. 2. p. 130–134.

and Halifax, laid open the mischievous designs and consequences of it: it was considered as disinheriting men of their birthright, to shut them out from the right of election by an insnaring oath, as well as destructive of the privilege of parliament, which was to vote freely in all cases without any previous obligation; that the peace of the nation would be best secured by making good laws; and that oaths and tests without these would be no real security; scrupulous men might be fettered by them, but that the bulk of mankind would boldly take any test, and as easily break through it, as had appeared in the late times. The bill was committed, and debated paragraph by paragraph, but the heats occasioned by it were so violent, that the king came unexpectedly to the house June 9, and prorogued the parliament;¹ so the bill was dropped; but the debates of the lords upon the intended oath being made public, were ordered to be burnt. Two proclamations were republished on this occasion; one to prevent seditious discourses in coffee-houses, the other to put a stop to the publishing seditious libels.

The court had reason to desire the passing this bill, because the oath had been already imposed upon the Nonconformists; and the court-clergy had been preaching in their churches, for several years, that passive obedience and non-resistance were the received doctrines of the church of England; the bishops had possessed the king and his brother with the belief of it, and if it had now passed into a law, the whole nation had been bound in chains, and the court might have done as they pleased. But the parliament saw through the design; and Dr. Burnet says, he opened the reserve to the duke of York, by telling him, “that there was no trusting to disputable opinions, that there were distinctions and reserves in those who had maintained these points; and that when men saw a visible danger of being first undone, and then burnt, they would be inclined to the shortest way of arguing, and save themselves the best way they could; interest and self-preservation being powerful motives.” This might be wholesome advice to the duke, but implies such a secret reserve as may cover the most wicked designs, and is not fit for the lips of a Protestant divine, nor even of an honest man.

The daring insolence of the Papists, who had their regular clergy in every corner of the town, was so great, that they not only challenged the Protestant divines to disputations, but threatened to assassinate such as

¹ The immediate occasion of the king’s breaking up the sessions, was a dispute concerning privilege between the two houses, to which another question gave birth, while the bill for the new test was pending. Of this bill it was justly said, “No conveyancer could have drawn up a dissettlement of the whole birthright of England in more compendious terms.” The debate on it lasted five several days, in the house of lords, before the bill was committed to a committee of the whole house, and eleven or twelve days afterward: and the house sat many days till eight or nine at night, and sometimes till midnight. But, through the interruption given to it, by the matter just mentioned, the bill was never reported from the committee to the house; a most happy escape! Burnet’s History, vol. 2. p. 133; and Dr. Calamy’s Historical Account of his own Life, MS. p. 63.— ED.

preached openly against their tenets; which confirmed the lords and commons in their persuasion, of the absolute necessity of entering into more moderate and healing measures with Protestant dissenters, notwithstanding the inflexible steadiness of the bishops against it. Upon this occasion the duke of Buckingham, lately commenced patriot, made the following speech in the house of lords, which is inserted in the commons' journal. "My lords, there is a thing called liberty, which, whatsoever some men may think, is that the people of England are fondest of, it is that they will never part with, and is that his majesty in his speech has promised to take particular care of. This, my lords, in my opinion, can never be done without giving an indulgence to all Protestant dissenters. It is certainly a very uneasy kind of life to any man, that has either Christian charity, humanity, or good-nature, to see his fellow-subjects daily abused, divested of their liberty and birthrights, and miserably thrown out of their possessions and freeholds, only because they cannot agree with others in some opinions and niceties of religion, which their consciences will not give them leave to consent to, and which, even by the confession of those who would impose them, are no ways necessary to salvation.

"But, my lords, besides this, and all that may be said upon it, in order to the improvement of our trade and increase of the wealth, strength, and greatness, of this nation, (which, with your leave, I shall presume to discourse of some other time,) there is, methinks, in this notion of persecution, a very gross mistake both as to the point of government and the point of religion: there is so as to the point of government, because it makes every man's safety depend upon the wrong place, not upon the governors, or man's living well towards the civil government established by law, but upon his being transported with zeal for every opinion that is held by those that have power in the church that is in fashion; and I conceive it is a mistake in religion, because it is positively against the express doctrine and example of Jesus Christ. Nay, my lords, as to our Protestant religion, there is something in it yet worse; for we Protestants maintain, that none of those opinions which Christians differ about are infallible, and therefore in us it is somewhat an inexcusable conception, that men ought to be deprived of their inheritance, and all the certain conveniences and advantages of life, because they will not agree with us in our uncertain opinions of religion.

"My humble motion therefore to your lordships is, that you will give leave to bring in a bill of indulgence to all Protestant dissenters. I know very well, that every peer in this realm has a right to bring into parliament any bill he conceives to be useful to his nation; but I thought it more respectful to your lordships to ask your leave before; and I cannot think the doing it will be any prejudice to the bill, because I am confident the reason, the prudence, and the charitableness, of it, will be able to justify it to this

house, and to the whole world.” Accordingly the house gave his grace leave to bring in a bill to this purpose; but this and some others were lost by the warm debates which arose in the house upon the impeachment of the earl of Danby, and which occasioned the sudden prorogation of the parliament June 9, without having passed one public bill; after which his majesty, upon farther discontent, prorogued them for fifteen months, which gave occasion to a question in the ensuing session, whether they were not legally dissolved.

From this time to the discovery of the Popish plot, parliaments were called and adjourned, says Mr. Coke, by order from France to French ministers and pensioners, to carry on the design of promoting the Catholic cause in masquerade.¹ The king himself was a known pensioner of Lewis XIV., who had appropriated a fund of twenty millions of livres for the service of these kingdoms, out of which the duke of York, and the prime ministers and leaders of parties, received the wages of their commission, according as the French ambassador represented their merit. The pensioners made it their business to raise the cry of the church’s danger, and of the return of forty-one. This was spread over the whole nation in a variety of pamphlets and newspapers, &c. written by their own hirelings; and if they met with opposition from the friends of the country, the authors and printers were sure to be fined and imprisoned. A reward of £50 was offered for the printer of a pamphlet, supposed to be written by Andrew Marvel, entitled, “An account of the growth of power, and a seasonable argument to all grand juries;” and £100 for the persons who conveyed it to the press. No man could publish anything on the side of liberty and the Protestant religion, but with the hazard of a prison, and a considerable fine; nor is this to be wondered at, considering that Sir Roger L’Estrange was the sole licencer of the press.

This gentleman was a pensioner of the court, and a champion for the prerogative; he was a younger son of sir Hammond L’Estrange of Norfolk, who, having conceived hopes of surprising the town of Lynn for his majesty in the year 1644, obtained a commission from the king for that purpose, but being apprehended and tried by a court-martial, for coming into the parliament’s quarters as a spy, he was condemned, and ordered to be executed in Smithfield January 2, 1644–5; but by the intercession of some powerful friends he was reprieved, and kept in Newgate several years. His sufferings made such an impression on his spirit, that on the king’s restoration, he was resolved to make reprisals on the whole party. He was master of a fine English style, and of a great deal of keen wit, which he employed, without any regard to truth or candour, in the service of Popery and arbitrary power, and

¹ Detect. p. 500.

in vilifying the best and most undoubted patriots. Never did man fight so, to force the dissenters into the church, says Coke; and when he had got them there, branded them for trimmers, and would turn them out again. He was a most mercenary writer, and had a pen at the service of those who would pay him best. *Forty-one* was his retreat against all who durst contend against him and the prerogative. Sir Roger observed no measures with his adversaries in his *Weekly Observators*, *Citt and Bumpkin*, *Foxes and Firebrands*,¹ and other pamphlets; and when the falseness of his reasoning and insolence of his sarcasm were exposed, like a second Don Quixote, he called aloud to the civil magistrate to come in to his aid. He represented the religion of the dissenters, as a medley of folly and enthusiasm; their principles and tempers as turbulent, seditious, and utterly inconsistent with the peace of the state; their pretences as frivolous and often hypocritical. He excited the government to use the utmost severities to extirpate them out of the kingdom.² He furnished the clergy with pulpit materials to rail at them, which they improved with equal eagerness and indiscretion; so that Popery was forgot, and nothing so common in their mouths as *forty-one*. L'Estrange published some of the incautious expressions of some of the dissenters in the late times, which he picked out of their writings, to excite the populace against the whole party, as if it had not been easy to make reprisals from the ranting expressions of the torics of this reign: for these exploits he was maintained by the court, and knighted: and yet when the tide turned in the reign of king James II. he forgot his raillery against the principles of the Nonconformists, and wrote as zealously for liberty of conscience, on the foot of the dispensing power, as any man in the kingdom.

But in answer to the invectives of this venal tribe, a pamphlet was published with the approbation of several ministers, entitled, *The Principles and Practices of several Nonconformists*, showing that their religion is no other than what is professed in the church of England. The authors declare,³

¹ Dr. Grey says, that sir Roger L'Estrange was not the author of this work; that the first part was written by Dr. Nalson, and the other parts, if he mistook not, by Mr. Ware, the son of sir James Ware, the great antiquarian. The most valuable of sir Roger L'Estrange's publications is reckoned to be his translation of Josephus. His style, which Mr. Neal commends, has been severely censured by other writers. Mr. Gordon says, that "his productions are not fit to be read by any who have taste and good-breeding: they are full of technical terms, of phrases picked up in the streets, from apprentices and porters, and nothing can be more low and nauseous." Mr. Granger observes, that L'Estrange was one of the great corrupters of our language, by excluding vowels and other letters commonly pronounced, and introducing "pert and affected phrases." He was licenser of the press to Charles and James II., and died 11th of December, 1704, aetat. eighty-eight. Queen Mary, we are told, made this anagram on his name: Roger L'Estrange, "Lying Strange Roger." *British Biography*, vol. 6. p. 317. *Granger's History of England*, vol. 1. p. 70.—ED.

² Burnet, vol. 2. p. 252. Rapin.

³ To discredit Mr. Corbet's piece, Dr. Grey refers to Anthony Wood's character of him, as a preacher of sedition, and a vilifier of the king and his party. But with such writers eve-

that they heartily own the Protestant reformation in doctrine, as contained in the articles of the church of England—that they are willing to embrace bishop Usher’s model of church-government, which king Charles I. admitted — they hold it unlawful, by the constitution and laws of this kingdom, for subjects to take arms against the king, his office, authority, or person, or those legally commissioned and authorized by him; nor will they endeavour any alteration in church or state by any other means than by prayer to God, and by petitioning their superiors—they acknowledge the king’s supremacy over all persons, &c. within his dominions—they declare that their doctrine tends to no unquietness or confusion, any more than the doctrine of the church of England. And they think it not fair dealing in their adversaries, to repeat and aggravate all intemperate passages vented in the late times, when impetuous actings hurried men into extremities; and they apprehend it would not tend to the advantage of the conforming clergy, if collections should be published of all their imprudences and weaknesses, as has been done on the other side—they abhor seditious conventicles, and affirm, that insurrections were never contrived in their meetings, nor in any whereof they are conscious. Experience, say they, hath witnessed our peaceableness, and that disloyalty or sedition is not to be found among us, by the most inquisitive of our adversaries. They desire the church of England to take notice, that they have no mind to promote Popish designs; that they are aware of the advantage that Papists make of the divisions of Protestants—that the invectives thrown out against them are made up only of big and swelling words, or of the indiscretions of the few, with which they are not chargeable—they do not pretend to be courtiers or philosophers, but they teach their people to fear God and honour the king; to love the brotherhood, to bridle their tongues, to be meek and lowly, and do their own work with quietness.¹

Though the persecution continued very fierce, the Nonconformists ventured to assemble in private, and several pamphlets were published about this time [1676] in their defence; as, “The peaceable design; or, an account of the Nonconformist meetings:” by some London ministers: designed, says Dr. Stillingfleet, to be presented to parliament. “Reasons which prevailed with the dissenters in Bristol to continue their meetings, however prosecut-

ry sentiment that does not breathe the spirit of passive obedience is seditious. Besides, Mr. Corbat’s vindication turned on notorious facts.—ED.

¹ On the 15th of January, 1675–6, died Dorothy the wife of Richard Cromwell, in the forty-ninth year of her age; who, it is thought, never saw her husband after he retired into France. She was the daughter of Richard Major, esq. of Hursly in Hampshire, where she was married on the 1st of May 1649. The character given of her is, “that she was a prudent, godly, practical Christian.” So far, it is observed, this lady has been happy that, amongst the illiberal things that have been levelled against the protectoral house of Cromwell, her character is almost the only one that scandal has left untouched.” *Biographia Britan.*, second edition, vol. 4. p. 538-

ed or disturbed”—“Separation no schism”— “A rebuke to informers; with a plea for the ministers of the gospel called Nonconformists, and their meetings; with advice to those to whom the informers apply for assistance in their undertaking.”

Informers were now become the terror of the Nonconformists, and the reproach of a civilized nation.¹ They went about in disguise, and, like wandering strollers, lived upon the plunder of industrious families. They are a select company (says the Conformists’ Plea for the Nonconformists) whom the long-suffering of God permits for a time; they are of no good reputation; they do not so much as know the names or persons in the country whom they molest, but go by report of their under-servants and accomplices. They come from two or three counties off, to set up this new trade; whether they are Papists or nominal Protestants, who can tell? They never go to their parish-churches, nor any other, but lie in wait and ambush for their prey; their estate is invisible, their country unknown to many, and their morals are as bad as the very dregs of the age: these are the men who direct and rule many of the magistrates; who live upon the spoil of better Christians and subjects than themselves, and go away with honest men’s goods honestly gotten.²—They are generally poor, says another writer, as are many of the justices, so that they shared the booty belonging to the king as well as the poor among themselves: by which means the king and the poor got but little.³

Their practice was to insinuate themselves into an acquaintance with some under-servants, or lodgers in a Nonconformist’s family, under the cloak of religion, in order to discover the place of their meeting. They walked the streets on the Lord’s day, to observe which way any suspected persons went. They frequently sat down in coffee-houses, and places of public resort, to listen to conversation. They could turn themselves into any shape, and counterfeit any principles, to obtain their ends. When they had discovered a conventicle, they immediately got a warrant from some who were called confiding justices, to break open the house. If the minister was in the midst of his sermon or prayer, they commanded him in the king’s name to come down from his pulpit; and if he did not immediately obey, a file of musketeers was usually sent up to pull him down by force, and to take him into custody; the congregation was broke up, and the people guarded along the street to a magistrate, and from him to a prison, unless

¹ Conform. Plea, part 3. p. 8-10.

² Sewel, p. 493.

³ Dr. Grey is angry with Mr. Neal for not quoting the remainder of the paragraph from Sewel: in which that writer owns that some honest justices discouraged the practices of the informers, and availed themselves of any defect or failure in their evidence, to clear those against whom they informed.—ED.

they immediately paid their fines: the goods of the house were rifled, and frequently carried off, as a security for the large fine set upon it.

This was a new way of raising contributions, but it seldom or never prospered; that which was ill gotten was as ill spent, upon lewd women, or in taverns and alehouses, in gaming, or some kind of debauchery. An informer was but one degree above a beggar; there was a remarkable blast of Providence upon their persons and substance: most of them died in poverty and extreme misery; and as they lived in disgrace, they seemed to die by a remarkable hand of God. Stroud and Marshal, with all their plunder, could not keep out of prison: and when Keting, another informer, was confined for debt, he wrote to Mr. Baxter to endeavour his deliverance, confessing he believed God had sent that calamity upon him, for giving him so much trouble. Another died in the Compter for debt; and great numbers by their vices came to miserable and untimely ends.

But as some died off others succeeded, who by the instigation of the court disturbed all the meetings they could find. The king commanded the judges and justices of London to put the penal laws in strict execution; and sir Jos. Sheldon, lord-mayor, and kinsman to the archbishop, did not fail to do his part. Sir Tho. Davies issued a warrant to distrain on Mr. Baxter for £50 on account of his lecture in New-street; and when he had built a little chapel in Oxenden-street, the doors were shut up after he had preached in it once. In April this year [1676] he was disturbed by a company of constables and officers, as he was preaching in Swallow-street, who beat drums under the windows, to interrupt the service, because they had not a warrant to break open the house.

The court-bishops, as has been observed more than once, pushed on the informers to do all the mischief they could to the Nonconformists; “The prelates will not suffer them to be quiet in their families¹ (says a considerable writer of these times,) though they have given large and ample testimonies, that they are willing to live quietly by their church neighbours—“The dissenting Protestants have been reputed the only enemies of the nation, and therefore only persecuted, says a noble writer, while the Papists remain undisturbed, being by the court thought loyal, and by our great bishops not dangerous. Mr. Locke, bishop Burnet, and others, have set a mark upon the names of archbishop Sheldon, bishop Morley, Gunning, Henchman, Ward, &c. which will not be easily erased; but I mention no more, because there were others of a better spirit, who resided in their dioceses, and had no concern with the court.

Among these we may reckon Dr. Edward Reynolds, bishop of Norwich, born in Southampton 1599, and educated in Merton-college, Oxford; he

¹ State Tracts, vol. 2. p. 51, 55; vol. 3. p. 42, &c.

was preacher to the society of Lincoln's-inn, and reckoned one of the most eloquent preachers of his age, though he had some hoarseness in his voice.¹ In the time of the civil wars he took part with the parliament, and was one of the assembly of divines. In the year 1646, he was appointed one of the preachers to the university of Oxford, and afterward a visitor. Upon the reform of the university, he was made dean of Christ-church, and vice-chancellor. After the king's death, he lost his deanery for refusing the engagement, but complied with all the other changes till the king's restoration, when he appeared with the Presbyterians, but was prevailed with to accept a bishopric on the terms of the king's declaration, which never took place. He was a person of singular affability, meekness, and humility, and a frequent preacher.² He was a constant resident in his diocese, and a good old Puritan, who never concerned himself with the politics of the court. He died at Norwich January 16, 1676, ætatis seventy-six.

[On May the 22nd, 1676, died, aged seventy-three, the pious and learned Mr. John Tombes, B. D. ejected from the living of Leominster in Herefordshire. He was born in 1603 at Bewdley in Worcestershire. At fifteen years of age, having made a good proficiency in grammar-learning, he was sent to Magdalen-hall, Oxford, where he studied under the celebrated Mr. William Pemble, upon whose decease he was chosen, though but twenty-one years of age, such was the reputation of his parts and learning, to succeed him in the catechetical lecture in that hall. He held this lecture about seven years, and then removed first to Worcester, and then to Leominster; in both places he had the name of a very popular preacher; and of the latter living he was, soon after, possessed; and as the emolument of it was small, lord viscount Scudamore, out of respect to Mr. Tombes, made an addition to it. In 1641 he was, through the spirit of the church-party, obliged to leave this town, and fled to Bristol, where general Fiennes gave him the living of All-Saints. The city being taken by the king's party, his wife and children being plundered, and a special warrant being out to apprehend him, he escaped with difficulty, and got to London with his family, September 22, 1643. Here he was some time minister of Fenchurch, till his stipend was taken away for not practising the baptism of infants. He was then chosen preacher to the honourable societies at the Temple, on condition that he would not touch on the controversy about it in the pulpit. Here he continued four years, and was then dismissed for having published a treatise on the subject. He was, after this, chosen minister in the town of his

¹ Wood's Athen. Oxon. vol. 2. p. 420.

² "He was universally allowed (says Mr. Granger) to be a man of extraordinary parts, and discovers in his writings a richness of fancy as well as a solidity of judgment." He was buried in the new chapel belonging to his palace, which he built at his own expense. History of England, vol. 3. p. 241.

nativity, and had also the parsonage of Ross given him, but he gave up his interest in the latter, to accept the mastership of the hospital at Ledbury. When the affections of the people at Bewdley were alienated from him, on account of his sentiments on baptism, he was restored to his living at Leominster. In 1653, he was appointed a trier for candidates for the ministry. After the Restoration he quitted his places, and laid down the ministry, and went to reside at Salisbury; from whence he had not long before married a rich widow, and conformed to the church as a lay-communicant. He was held in great respect by lord-chancellor Hyde, bishop Sanderson, bishop Barlow, and Dr. Ward, bishop of Salisbury, whom, during his residence in the city, he often visited. Mr. Wood says, "that there were few better disputants in his age than he was." Mr. Wall speaks of him as "a man of the best parts in our nation, and perhaps in any." Dr. Calamy represents him as one, "whom all the world must own to have been a very considerable man and an excellent scholar." And it perpetuates his memory with honour, that the lords, in their conference with the commons, in 1702, on the bill to prevent occasional conformity, supported their argument, that receiving the sacrament in church did not necessarily import an entire conformity, by an appeal to his example: "There was a very learned and famous man (they said), that lived at Salisbury, Mr. Tombes, who was a very zealous conformist in all points but in one, infant baptism." Mr. Tombes was one of the first of his day, who attempted a reformation in the church, and to remove all human inventions in the worship of God: with this view he preached a sermon, which he was commanded by the house of commons to print. So early as the year 1627, being led in the course of his lectures to discuss the subject of baptism, he was brought into doubts concerning the authority for that of infants, which for some years he continued to practise only on the ground of the apostle's words, 1 Cor. vii. 14. But the answer he received to that argument from an ingenious Baptist at Bristol put him to stand as to that text. When he was in London, he consulted some of the learned ministers there on the question, and at a particular conference debated the matters with them; but it broke up without obviating his objections. He afterward laid his reasons for doubting the lawfulness of the common practice in Latin before the Westminster assembly: after waiting many months, though he had been informed that a committee was to be appointed to consider the point, he could obtain no answer, nor hear that it was so much as admitted to a debate; but his papers were tossed up and down from one to another to expose him. On being dismissed from the Temple, he printed his Apology; of which Mr. Batchiler says, "Having perused this mild Apology, I conceive that the ingenuity, learning, and piety, therein contained, deserve the press." He repeatedly took up his pen in this controversy, of which he was judged to be a perfect master, and he was often drawn into public disputa-

tions on it, particularly with Mr. Baxter, at Bewdley. “The victory, as usual (says Mr. Nelson), was claimed on both sides: but some of the learned, who were far from approving his cause, yielded the advantage both of learning and argument to Mr. Tombes.¹ He wrote more books on the subject than any one man in England; and, continuing minister of the parish of Bewdley, he gathered a separate church of those of his own persuasion; which, though not large, consisted of some members distinguished for their piety and solid judgment; and three, who were afterward eminent ministers of that persuasion, were trained up in it, viz. Mr. Richard Adams, Mr. John Eccles, and captain Boylston. It continued till about the time of the king’s restoration. Crosby’s History of the Baptists, vol. 1. p. 278–293. Palmer’s Nonconformists’ Memorial, vol. 2. p. 33–37; and Nelson’s Life of Bishop Bull, p. 249–253.—ED.]

The murmurs of the people against the government, increased rather than diminished. When the parliament met, they addressed the king to enter into an alliance with the Dutch, and other confederates, for preserving the Spanish Netherlands, as the only means to save Great Britain from Popery and slavery.² But his majesty declared, he would not suffer his prerogative of making war and peace to be invaded, nor be prescribed to as to his alliances. However, he consented to a separate peace with the Dutch, and then prorogued the parliament to the middle of July, by which time the French had almost completed their conquests of the Spanish Flanders. The chief thing the parliament could obtain, was the repeal of the Popish act *de hæretico comburendo*.³

But when the campaign was over, his majesty did one of the most popular actions of his reign, which was marrying the princess Mary, eldest daughter of the duke of York, to the prince of Orange. The king imagined

¹ Nelson’s Life of Bishop Bull, p. 251.

² Notwithstanding this alarm, on a calculation that was made, in the preceding year, the Nonconformists of all sorts, and Papists included, were found to be in proportion to the members of the church of England, as one to twenty; “which was a number (says bishop Sherlock) too small to hurt the constitution.” His Test Act vindicated, as quoted by Dr. Calamy: Own Life, p. 63. MS.—ED.

³ This writ was taken away, on the principle of the wisdom of prevention, under the apprehension of Popery, “to preclude the risk of being burnt themselves, not to exempt others from the possibility of being burnt.” The conduct of administration, in this instance, “was the effect of fear, not of general and enlarged principles.” Hobhouse’s Treatise on Heresy, p. 29, note.

Another modern writer observes, that “though the state, in this instance, showed some moderation, neither then, nor at any subsequent time, has any alteration been made in the constitution of the church.” It still assumes exclusively to itself all truth, and may persecute some sectaries as heretics, and punish them by “excommunication, degradation, and other ecclesiastical censures, not extending to death.” It is not clear, that ecclesiastical judges may not, even now, doom them to the flames, though the civil power will not execute the sentence. High-church Politics, p. 64—ED.

he could oblige the Dutch, by this family alliance, to submit to a disadvantageous peace with the French; but when the prince declared roundly that he would not sacrifice his honour, nor the liberties of Europe for a wife, his majesty said he was an honest man, and gave him the princess without any conditions, to the great joy of all the true friends of their country, who had now a Protestant heir to the crown in view, though at some distance. The nuptials were solemnized November 4, 1677, and the royal pair soon after embarked privately for Holland.

This year died archbishop Sheldon, one of the most inveterate enemies of the Nonconformists, a man of persecuting principles and a tool of the prerogative, who made a jest of religion, any farther than it was a political engine of state.¹ He was succeeded by Dr. Soncroft, who was deprived for jacobitism at the Revolution.² Dr. Compton was promoted to the see of London, in the room of Dr. Henchman, a man of weak but arbitrary principles, till it came to his turn to be a sufferer.³ Many of the bishops waited on

¹ "I scarce believe (says Dr. Grey), that the moderate, the impartial, the peaceable Mr. Neal, could write down so many untruths, in one paragraph, without blushing." The doctor expresses himself in another place, vol. 2. p. 320, displeased with Mr. Neal for saying, that Dr. Sheldon "never gave any great specimens of his piety or learning to the world," vol. 3. p. 388. In reply to this he quotes bishop Burnet, who allows that Sheldon "was esteemed a learned man before the wars." Here the doctor refers to bishop Kennet, who says that Sheldon "withdrew from all state-affairs some years before his death; and to Echard, who extols his learning and piety, as well as his munificent benefactions, which we have specified, vol. 3. p. 388, note. Dr. Samuel Parker, who had been his chaplain, says, "he was a man of undoubted piety; but though he was very assiduous at prayers, yet he did not set so great a value upon them as others did, nor regarded so much worship as the use of worship, placing the chief point of religion in the practice of a good life." Mr. Granger represents him as "meriting, by his benevolent heart, public spirit, prudent conduct, and exemplary piety, the highest and most conspicuous station in the church." These characters of his grace appear to contradict Mr. Neal. On the other hand, he is supported by the testimony of bishop Burnet, who says, "He seemed not to have a deep sense of religion, if any at all, and spoke of it most commonly as of an engine of government, and a matter of policy:" and the facts adduced above, show his intolerant spirit. But all agree in describing him as a man whose generous and munificent deeds displayed a benevolent and liberal mind, and whose pleasantness and affability of manner were truly ingratiating. "His conversation (as Dr. Parker draws his character) was easy; he never sent any man away discontented; among his domestics he was both pleasant and grave, and governed his family with authority and courtesy." His advice to young noblemen and gentlemen, who, by the order of their parents, daily resorted to him, deserves to be mentioned. It was always this: "Let it be your principal care to become honest men, and afterward be as devout and religious as you will. No piety will be of any advantage to yourselves or anybody else, unless you are honest and moral men." Granger, vol. 3. p. 230. British Biography, vol. 5. p. 25, 26, note; and Burnet, vol. 1. p. 257.—ED.

² "The bare mention of this is sufficient to expose Mr. Neal's sneer upon one of the greatest, the best, and most conscientious prelates." Dr. Grey, vol. 3. p. 376—ED.

³ Dr. Grey affects to doubt, whether Mr. Neal designed this character for bishop Henchman or bishop Compton; though Henchman is the immediate antecedent whose character more properly follows the mention of his death. The doctor appeals from Mr. Neal to Mr. Echard, who commends bishop Henchman's wisdom and prudence, and his admirable management of the king's escape after the battle of Worcester. Mr. Neal, in speaking of his arbitrary principles, till he was pinched, undoubtedly refers to his conduct,

the king this summer, for his commands to put the penal laws into execution, which they did with so much diligence that Mr. Baxter says he was so weary of keeping his doors shut against persons who came to distrain his goods for preaching, that he was forced to leave his house, to sell his goods, and part with his very books.¹ About twelve years, says he, I have been driven one hundred miles from them, and when I had paid dear for the carriage, after two or three years I was forced to sell them. This was the case of many others, who, being separated from their families and friends, and having no way of subsistence, were forced to sell their books and household furniture, to keep them from starving.

This year [1677] died the Rev. Dr. Tho. Manton, ejected from Covent-garden: he was born in Somersetshire 1620, educated at Tiverton-school, and from thence placed at Wadham-college, Oxon. He was ordained by Dr. Hall, bishop of Exeter, when he was not more than twenty years of age: his first settlement was at Stoke-Newington, near London, where he continued seven years, being generally esteemed an excellent preacher, and a learned expositor of Scripture. Upon the death or resignation of Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick, he was presented to the living of Covent-garden by the Duke of Bedford, and preached to a numerous congregation. The doctor was appointed one of the protector's chaplains, and one of the triers of persons' qualifications for the ministry; which service he constantly attended. In the year 1660, he was very forward, in concert with the Presbyterian ministers, to accomplish the king's restoration, and was one of the commissioners at the Savoy conference; he was then created doctor of divinity, and offered the deanery of Rochester, but declined it. After he was turned out of his living in 1662, he held a private meeting in his own house, but was imprisoned, and met with several disturbances in his ministerial work. He was consulted in all the treaties for a comprehension with the established church, and was high in the esteem of the duke of Bedford, earl of Manchester, and other noble persons. At length, finding his constitution breaking, he resigned himself to God's wise disposal, and being seized with a kind of lethargy, he died October 18, 1677, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and was buried in the chancel of the church of Stoke-Newington. Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon, says, he was a divine of a rich fancy, a strong memory, and happy elocution, improved by diligent study. He was an excellent Christian, a fervent preacher, and every way a

when the declaration for liberty of conscience was published. On this occasion he was much alarmed, and strictly enjoined his clergy to preach against Popery, though it offended the king. This prelate was lord-almoner, and he was the editor of *Gentleman's Calling*, supposed to be written by the author of the "Whole Duty of Man." Granger, vol. 3. p. 233. Bishop Compton's character will appear in the succeeding part of this history.—ED.

¹ Baxter, part 3. p. 171, 172.

blessing to the church of God.¹ His practical works were published in five volumes in folio, at several times after his death, and are in great esteem among the dissenters to this day.²

About the same time died Mr. John Rowe, M.A., born in the year 1626, and educated for some time at Cambridge, but translated to Oxford about the time of the visitation in the year 1648. Here he was admitted M. A. and fellow of Corpus-Christi-college. He was first lecturer at Witney, in Oxfordshire; afterward preacher at Tiverton, in Devonshire, and one of the commissioners for ejecting ignorant and insufficient ministers in that county. Upon the death of Mr. William Strong, in the year 1654, he was called to succeed him in the abbey-church of Westminster; at which place, as in all others, his sermons were very much attended to by persons of all persuasions.³ On the 14th of March, 1659, he was appointed one of the approvers of ministers by act of parliament; but on the king's restoration he gave way to the change of the times, and was silenced with his brethren by the act of uniformity. He was a divine of great gravity and piety; his sermons were judicious and well studied, fit for the audience of men of the best quality in those times. After the Bartholomew act, he continued with his people, and preached to them in Bartholomew-close, and elsewhere, as the times would permit, till his death, which happened October 12, 1677, in the fifty-second year of his age. He lies buried in Bunhill-fields, under an altar monument of a brick foundation.⁴ The words with which he concluded his last sermon were these: "We should not desire to continue longer in this world than to glorify God, to finish our work, and to be ready to say, Farewell, time; welcome, blessed eternity; even so; come, Lord Jesus!"

¹ Calamy, vol. 2. p. 42; and Palmer's Noncon. Mem. vol. 1. p. 138.

² Dr. Manton was also in great estimation for his activity and address in the management of public affairs, and was generally in the chair in meetings of the dissenting ministers in the city. Dr. Grey questions the truth of Mr. Neal's assertion, that he was ordained at the age of twenty years, especially as he gives no authority for it. "Bishop Hall (he says) was too canonical a man to admit any person into deacon's orders at that age." If the fact be mis-stated, he must be destitute of all candour who can impute this to a wilful falsification. Archbishop Usher used to call Dr. Manton a voluminous preacher, meaning, that he had the art of reducing the substance of volumes of divinity into a narrow compass. But it was true, in the literal sense, he was voluminous as an author: for his sermons run into several folios, one of which contains one hundred and ninety sermons on the one hundred and nineteenth psalm. The task of reading these, when he was a youth, to his aunt, had an unhappy effect on the mind of lord Bolingbroke. In a letter to Dr. Swift, he writes, "My next shall be as long as one of Dr. Manton's sermons, who taught my youth to yawn, and prepared me to be a high churchman, that I might never hear him read, nor read him more." Granger's History, vol. 3. p. 304, note.—ED.

³ Mr. Rowe was a good scholar, and well read in the fathers; and had such a knowledge of Greek, that he began very young to keep a diary in that language; which he continued till his death; but he burnt most of it in his last illness. Palmer.—ED.

⁴ Calamy, vol. 2. p. 39. Palmer's Noncon. Mem. vol. 1. p. 142.

