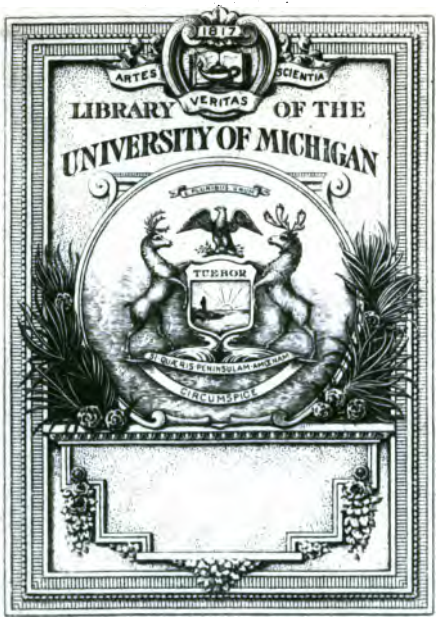

ANNALS

OF

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IN FAMILIAR CONVERSATIONS.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY MRS. PARKER,

AUTHOR OF "DECISION AND INDECISION," "FEATURES OF SOCIAL LIFE," ETC.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following work is especially composed for the use of young people. Its aim is to convey, in a familiar style, such a view of the chief occurrences in ecclesiastical history as may furnish the youthful mind with a general knowledge of the subject, and prepare the way for more extensive and careful researches. Attention is paid to the order of events, to the external forms which Christianity has assumed in different ages, and to the great principles which no time or place can change, and which must always constitute the basis of the true church of Christ. The author has used much diligence in the selection and arrangement of her materials; and she now commits the volume to the press with unaffected diffidence,—but not without a hope that, by the blessing of Almighty God, it may afford some assistance, and do some good.

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ANNALS

OF

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

CONVERSATION I.

Mrs. N. A PENNY for your thoughts, Lucy: why do you look so pensive, when your sister and cousin are so gay?

Sophia. Yes, indeed, aunt, Lucy is become so gloomy, I can hardly get her even to smile nowadays.

Mrs. N. There is a great difference between seriousness and gloom: a person may be truly serious, and yet cheerful and happy; and I hope Lucy can explain her thoughtfulness this evening so as to convince her sister that seriousness does not forbid the indulgence of pleasant looks and words. But, if I guess rightly, her mind was dwelling upon a sorrowful subject.

George. Mamma, I wonder how you can tell what cousin has been thinking of: it often puzzles me that, when I come from school, you judge by my looks how my lessons were performed. Now, Lucy, is mamma right?

Lucy. Yes, quite right. I was thinking of what is said of the holy men in the chapter that was read this morning, how "they wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

Mrs. N. I think Sophia will acknowledge that a light, trifling spirit, would ill suit such sad reflections.

S. O yes, aunt! but I wonder how Lucy can take pleasure in poring over past times. Old people, I know, are fond of doing so; but I like to look forward, instead of backward. It is of no use troubling ourselves with things that happened hundreds of years ago. We are in no danger of persecution now.

Mrs. N. I hope not; though many wiser heads than yours, Sophia, see, in the signs of the times, the presage of a coming storm. You have read what Popery did in former days, how it lighted the fires of Smithfield, and tortured with the rack those "of whom the world was not worthy:" and its increasing influence in this Protestant country augurs no good, but ill.

G. Nay, mamma, we will have no more gunpowder-plots, I promise you. But I should like to know more of the early Christians. Suppose you read us some book which tells us of them; will you, mamma?

Mrs. N. I am afraid, my dear boy, that you are scarcely old enough to understand the works that have been written on the early ages of Christianity; but, since you wish it, Lucy will fetch down Milner's "Church History" from the library.

S. O aunt, not that hard, dull book. I turned over

the leaves a few days since, and saw nothing but what was about heresies and creeds, and such-like things. It is full of doctrines and long names, which I can never remember.

Mrs. N. But there are also details of confessors and martyrs, which cannot fail to interest you, possessed as I know you are of a feeling heart.

S. Then have you not another book, which leaves out all those things that I cannot understand?

Mrs. N. I am not aware that there is a work upon the subject so written as to please young folks like you: but suppose, now that we have just finished Mrs. Markham's "History of England," I collect together a few of the most interesting particulars of church history for your pleasure and improvement.

S. O thank you, aunt: I do not deserve this kindness.

Mrs. N. Your quick perception of what is right, and your ready acknowledgment of error, is my best encouragement for the undertaking; since it gives me reason to hope that the recital of sufferings, voluntarily endured for the sake of Christ, will not only excite your sympathy, but lead you to discover those principles which afforded consolation and support under tortures the most severe: while the history of the gradual corruption of the gospel, by the mixture of pagan philosophy and superstition, will give you an insight into the cause of that darkness which obscured the middle ages; and this, in its turn, will lead us on to speak of that revival of primitive truth which has brought the church into its present cir-

cumstances. Thus to become acquainted with the leading facts of the Christian history will, I am persuaded, increase your reverence for the ordinances of Christianity, your love for its doctrines, and your determination to be influenced by its precepts.

CONVERSATION II.

CENTURY I.

Lucy. I HAVE been wondering, aunt, where you will begin with the history of the church; for, you know, there have been pious people in the world ever since the creation.

Mrs. N. The Bible is the best record of those ancient worthies who, in the early ages, formed the visible church of God. Were I disposed, I could add nothing to the lustre of that piety which shines so conspicuously in the sacred pages. But as the names of multitudes have been registered in the book of life since the Holy Scriptures were sealed, it may neither be unprofitable nor uninteresting to present to your notice some of the most eminent characters and events of the last eighteen hundred years.

L. Then you will leave the Jews, and begin with the Christians.

Mrs. N. That is my intention. Nothing can be said in favour of the Jews after their rejection of the Messiah. The same awful blindness of mind and hardness of heart which led them to crucify

the Son of God, induced some of them afterward to add this prayer to their form of synagogue worship, "O God, curse the Nazarenes!" You are, I think, so well acquainted with the particulars of our Saviour's history, as recorded by the four evangelists, that it is unnecessary for me to dwell upon that subject; but you must ever recollect that there is an infinite disparity between the sufferings of Christ and those of his disciples. The divinity of his person gave to his sufferings and death an infinitude of merit, which procured salvation for a guilty, perishing world; but no merit, save that of eternal death, can ever be claimed by a sinful, fallen creature.

George. Mamma, I have often thought it strange that our Saviour suffered so much, when he could so easily have prevented it.

Mrs. N. That suffering was a necessary part of the work of redemption, is evident from his endurance of it; for naught that he did was vain: but that he should, with the foreknowledge of it, voluntarily become the "Captain of our salvation," can only be explained by the emphatic words of the apostle, "God is love."

G. But how wonderful it seems that a few poor fishermen, like the apostles, should have been of more use in the world than kings and emperors!

Mrs. N. At the day of Pentecost they were qualified, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, to execute the divine commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." As they were thus endowed with miraculous gifts, and favoured

with divine assistance, we need not be surprised at their surpassing the great ones of the earth.

G. I suppose the apostles had no churches or chapels to preach in.

Mrs. N. They imitated their Lord and Master, and preached in fishing-boats, on the sea-shore, on mountains, in schools, in hired houses, in synagogues: in short, wherever they could get a company of hearers, there "they preached to them Jesus;" and thus, in a little while, multitudes were made to hear the tidings of salvation, and were converted. This excited every possible form of opposition. Kings, priests, magistrates, and people, were combined against the publishers of the gospel. "They put them in prison;" or "they took up stones to stone them;" or "they threatened them that they should speak no more in that name;" or "whole cities came together, contradicting and blaspheming, and drove them out;" or "they took counsel together to kill them."

Sophia. Ah, I think I could have endured any thing, if I had but been with the holy apostles!

Mrs. N. You have not yet counted the cost of your profession. The disciples were looked upon as the refuse of society; by the Jews they were called Galileans and Nazarenes; and the name of Christian, now so honourable, was then given as an epithet of reproach and scorn.

S. Well, aunt, but if I had been despised by others, the Christians would have helped and comforted me.

Mrs. N. In this you are right. The effusion of the Spirit of love was so great in the primitive church, that the most unbounded liberality was practised; so that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

G. Why, mamma, that must be the equality which the stone-mason was talking to John the gardener about. He said that he wanted equality, and that he would have equality. And John said he never would have it; for it was impossible that there should be equality.

Mrs. N. I perfectly agree with John in his opinion. The equality, if such it may be called, of the first Christians, and the equality wanted by the stone-mason, are as diverse from each other as light from darkness; for I fancy that he would be one of the last to share in the sufferings of persecution, or to give of his substance to the indigent and needy.

G. I am sure he would not give any thing away; and John says that, in charging for his work, he is as bad as a Jew.

Mrs. N. The Jews being a "proverb and a byword" among all nations, is part of the punishment inflicted upon them for rejecting the Messiah. The church of Christ has at no period had more bitter enemies than the people "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." From age to age they have shown the greatest virulence and malignity toward Christians, as the followers of that Jesus whom

they deride as a malefactor punished by Pilate with ignominy and death.

L. Then it seems they do acknowledge that our Saviour suffered and died. I thought, perhaps, as they do not believe the New Testament, that they might try to persuade people there never was such a person.

Mrs. N. That would be in vain; for there is other evidence, besides the New Testament, which would quite disprove such attempts. The Romans were particularly careful to preserve the memory of all remarkable events; and, in conformity with ancient usage, Pilate, as the Roman governor of Judea, compiled memoirs of the Jewish affairs, and sent an account of the miracles, life, and death of Christ, to Tiberius the emperor. These "Acts of Pilate," as they were called, were kept in the archives at Rome; and the primitive Christians frequently appealed to them as authentic records.

S. I should like to know what the emperor thought when he read the account which Pilate sent him.

Mrs. N. Unaffected with Jewish prejudice, he was convinced, from the miracles wrought by our Saviour, of his divinity; but, with the absurd notions of paganism, he proposed that the name of Christ should be enrolled among the Roman gods. This the senate rejected: and we ought to look upon their refusal to comply with the wish of the emperor as the effect of a divine interposition; in order that our faith in Jesus as our Saviour might not rest upon human authority, but upon the power of God.

S. Then the emperor would be kind to the Christians after that.

Mrs. N. He continued to entertain the same opinion respecting the divinity of Christ until his death; so that, for some years, the Christians were free from any general persecution. But the enmity of the Jewish priests and rulers stirred up the people in particular places to the most irregular and sanguinary deeds.

G. Will you tell us about the persecutions, mamma?

Mrs. N. The first martyr was Stephen, a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." You, no doubt, remember the particulars of his death; how the bitter Pharisees urged on the execution, and the witnesses, who, by law, were obliged to cast the first stone, laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul. As a striking contrast to these contentious zealots, the leader of the noble army of martyrs, meekly kneeling down, prayed for his murderers, and resigned his spirit into the hands of his Saviour; and then, in the midst of threats, revilings, and sufferings, "fell asleep."

S. What a touching picture!

Mrs. N. The Acts of the Apostles also record another persecution. The ambitious desire of Herod, the tributary king under the Roman emperor, induced him to seek the favour of the Jews by "vexing the church; and he killed James the brother of John with the sword." A remarkable circumstance attending the death of James is preserved in eccle-

siastical history. When the man who had drawn him before the tribunal saw his readiness to suffer, he was struck with remorse; and, by one of those sudden conversions not then unfrequent, was himself turned from the "power of Satan unto God." He also confessed Christ, and, with James, was condemned to die. Before they were led to execution, the accuser implored the apostle's forgiveness. "Peace be to thee!" was the gracious reply; and they were then joined together in martyrdom.

S. It seems strange that a man should so soon change his mind!

Mrs. N. It is a great mistake to suppose that conversion is a mere change of opinion: it is a work of the Holy Spirit, instantaneously or gradually shedding light upon the understanding, and affecting the heart with saving truth. To doubt of the genuineness of conversion because of its suddenness, is to discredit the conversion of St. Paul, who, when on a persecuting errand, was suddenly convinced of his error, and instantly confessed that Saviour whom before he had rejected and despised. So far are these instances from weakening our faith in Christianity, that they afford a strong confirmation of its truth; for what but the power of God could arrest these persecutors, and so change their purposes, views, and conduct, that they became instruments of promoting the faith which they had previously laboured to destroy.

L. I am led to think that all the conversions in those days must have been sudden; for, you

know, the eunuch and the jailer were baptized directly.

Mrs. N. The rapid spread of Christianity precludes the idea of long hesitation on the part of the converts; their acceptance of the gospel must have been prompt and decisive: for, in the short space of a few years, churches abounded not only in Judea, but even throughout the Roman empire, which then included nearly the known world.

S. How very different it must have been for the people to leave so many gods, and worship only One!

Mrs. N. The simplicity of Christianity was then its most striking feature. The Jewish religion had partially revealed the knowledge of the true God: but its rites were both showy and expensive. The numerous deities of the heathen were honoured with a splendid array of imposing ceremonies. But Christianity declared, in plain terms, the attributes of the Supreme Being; and "brought life and immortality to light," in the simplest forms of speech. It had neither sacrifices, nor images, nor oracles, nor sacerdotal garments: the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper were the significant rites which it established; while it taught the sublime and holy precepts of the religion of love in all their native purity.

G. Then, mamma, have Christians been baptized ever since our Saviour was upon earth?

Mrs. N. Yes. Baptism being of divine appointment, has ever been the rite of admission into the Christian church.

G. I have often seen children baptized, so that I know what that means; but I have never stayed at the Lord's supper: will you tell me what that is, mamma?

Mrs. N. Perhaps it may be better to describe it as it was celebrated in the early days, slight differences having been made in the manner of its observance by different Protestant churches. It appears to have originally been the concluding part of divine worship every Lord's day. In times of persecution, it was administered in caves, or other retired places; but this was only done as a matter of necessity. The communicants were required to bring oblations, or presents of bread and wine, which they presented to the minister, who deposited them upon a table. The words of the institution were always rehearsed during the consecration of the elements; which were taken from the oblations brought by the people, and were received by the communicants, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling. The bread and the cup were taken into their hands; and after the minister had pronounced the words of consecration, they said, "Amen." At the close of the communion, the people knelt down, and received the minister's blessing; after which, the assembly was dismissed with the words, "Depart in peace!"

L. Does "the sacrament" mean the same as the Lord's supper?

Mrs. N. The Lord's supper has been distinguished by various names. Thus, sacrament, the Lord's table, the communion, and the eucharist, each

signifies the Lord's supper; which has always justly been regarded as the most solemn rite of Christian worship.

S. I think you have forgotten one name, aunt;—the mass.

Mrs. N. Where have you acquired this wisdom, Sophia?

S. O, I have thought about many things since we sailed in the steam-packet with that gentleman who took so much notice of me. What he said made a deep impression on my mind: besides, I have a school-fellow who just believes the same things that he talked about.

Mrs. N. It has not been without concern that I have observed in you a leniency toward the superstitions of the Romish Church; and my adoption of the present plan of making you acquainted with church history arose from my solicitude on this subject. As the best way of dispossessing your mind of any wrong bias which it may have contracted, I shall gladly listen to your remarks, and try to solve your difficulties. The proper derivation of the word *missa*, or *mass*, is unknown. Some suppose that the Lord's supper was so called from a prevailing notion of the *mission* of an angel from God to assist at the sacrifice; others, that it arose from the deacon's *dismissal* of the assembly. But the term has always been in disrepute with Protestants, in consequence of the corrupt and superstitious practices which it associates with the sacred ordinance.

S. Then, as good Protestants, we will have no-

thing more to do with mass! Do not be grieved, aunt, at my foolish nonsense, but please to go on with the apostles and martyrs.

Mrs. N. Several of the apostles were martyrs. The next in order is James.

G. You have told us about James, mamma.

Mrs. N. There was another apostle of that name. The one now under consideration wrote the Epistle of James, and was distinguished by the title of "James the Just." He commonly resided in Jerusalem; and the name of Just was given to him on account of his strict integrity. Although he was much respected, and his holy life had secured the veneration of his countrymen, yet the increase of Christian converts by his labours determined the rulers to procure his condemnation. About the year 62, the governor of Judea died, and, before his successor arrived, Ananus, the high-priest, held the supreme power. He called a council, before which he summoned James, and accused him of breaking the law of Moses. By artifice he endeavoured to entangle him in his confession of Christ, so as to make it appear like a denial of him; and then persuaded him to mount a pinnacle of the temple, in order publicly to avow his rejection of the Messiah. James, in that elevated situation, confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, and declared that he was then sitting at the right hand of God, and would come in the clouds of heaven. Ananus, thus frustrated in his object, cried out, "Justus is seduced!" upon which, the rulers, in a tumultuous manner, threw the apos-

tle down from the pinnacle, and stoned him. In the spirit of his Master, he knelt down, and prayed for his murderers, saying, "I beseech thee, O Lord, for them; for they know not what they do!" One of the priests, moved with the scene, called out, "Cease! what do you mean? this just man is praying for you!" but another, with a club, completed his martyrdom.

G. I should like to be called "the Just," mamma, when I am a man.

Mrs. N. Try to deserve it, my dear boy: then, whether you be exposed to the wicked enmity of persecutors, or be loved and revered for the practice of social virtues, you will be one of the true witnesses of Jesus.

L. Aunt, (if it is not interrupting you,) I should be very glad if you will explain why we keep holy the *first* day of the week, instead of the *seventh*; for you know the commandment says, "The *seventh* day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God."

Mrs. N. It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus arose from the dead; and from the New Testament we learn that the first Christians met together, by apostolical appointment, upon the first day of the week, (by them named "the Lord's day,") to perform religious service, and especially to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. This practice continuing obligatory in the church, and the gospel dispensation being free from the yoke of Jewish customs, we sanctify the Lord's day as our sabbath.

G. I wonder whether they prayed and sung as we do.

Mrs. N. The custom of standing during devotional exercises obtained in the early Christian churches; kneeling was adopted only when prayer was made for forgiveness of sin. From the earliest reference to stated ordinances, we find that the minister offered up prayer and thanksgiving; upon which the people answered, "Amen." The Psalms of David were chanted or sung between the reading of the appointed portions of Scripture, with one or more of the responses, "Hallelujah!" "Praise ye the Lord!" "Lift up your hearts!"

S. Now, aunt, will you tell us about Peter and Paul?

Mrs. N. You already know enough of their characters to forbid the proposal that their histories should be blended together. With regard to St. Paul, the question may be justly asked, whether such another man ever existed? His was an extraordinary character. Not only were his talents great and various, but he excelled in every virtue. Providence opened to him an extensive field of usefulness as the apostle to the Gentiles; in labours he was more abundant; and his epistles to the different churches are a lasting testimony of his faithfulness and zeal. From his Second Epistle to Timothy, it is evident that he had been called to stand before the Roman emperor; when he feelingly complains, "All men forsook me;" but he adds, "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." No doubt, he was enabled to testify for Christ and his gospel before

Cesar, (the name assumed by the Roman emperors,) with the same eloquence and fortitude that he had done before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. He was then, to use his own words, "delivered from the mouth of the lion." Nero had not yet begun to persecute; and St. Paul's plea of being a Roman citizen most probably caused him to find favour.

G. Nero! our butcher's savage bull-dog is named Nero.

Mrs. N. A faithful representative of the emperor, whose ferocious cruelty found victims for slaughter in the bosom of his own family. He even formed the diabolical purpose of reducing Rome to ashes, that he might rebuild it and call it by his own name: but, lost as he was to all sense of goodness, he was yet studious to avoid the infamy of having set the city in flames; and the best expedient that appeared was, to lay the odium upon the Christians. This gave rise to a general persecution, which raged for three or four years with dreadful fury. Those were apprehended first who openly avowed themselves Christians; afterward, an immense multitude more remotely connected with Christianity. Their tortures were aggravated by cruel derision and sport; for they were either covered with the skins of wild beasts, and torn in pieces by devouring dogs, or wrapped up in combustible garments, fastened to crosses, and set fire to, that, when day-light failed, they might, like torches, serve to dispel the darkness of the night. For this tragical spectacle, Nero lent his own gardens; and exhibited, at the same time,

the public diversions of the circus, sometimes driving a chariot in person, and sometimes standing as a spectator; while the shrieks of women burning to ashes supplied music for his ears.

S. O, what a monster!

Mrs. N. He is justly called the "tyrant Nero," and his name is execrated by all mankind.

L. But, aunt, you have forgotten to finish the history of St. Paul.

Mrs. N. You are premature in your conclusion, Lucy. Paul returned to Rome, at the time when the persecution raged against the Christians; he now found no mercy in Nero, and, by the emperor's orders, was slain by the sword. It is conjectured that both St. Paul and St. Peter suffered martyrdom on the same day.

S. Should you not place St. Peter before St. Paul, as he was the greatest of all the apostles?

Mrs. N. That St. Peter should have the pre-eminence, is one of the superstitious errors of the Church of Rome.

S. O, but aunt, the Roman Catholics say their church was founded on St. Peter!

Mrs. N. They assert that the first church of Rome was founded *by* St. Peter; although there is no good evidence of the fact, but the evidence is rather against it.

S. But, you know, aunt, our Saviour said, "Upon thee will I build my church;" and so it must be true.

Mrs. N. In quoting texts of Scripture, you should be careful to do it correctly. We will refer to our

Saviour's commendation of St. Peter's confession, that he was the Son of God, recorded in Matt. xvi, 18. We find that our Lord said unto him, "Thou art Peter;" the simple meaning of which is, I acknowledge thee to be one of my disciples: for you will recollect that the name Peter was given to him by our Lord, when he first called him to be his disciple; (before that time he was called Simon;) the word Peter, or *petros*, signifying a stone, or piece of rock. Our Saviour employed the metaphor, with the substitution of the word *petra*, or rock, to express his meaning. "Upon this" *petra*, or "rock,"—this true confession of thine that I am the Messiah,—"will I build my church."

S. Yes; but he gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Mrs. N. That figure, employed in the same passage of Scripture, unquestionably denotes a spiritual power delegated to the ministers of the church, for the maintenance of a wholesome discipline in the admission and exclusion of its members; but that no privilege nor prerogative, except that of first preaching the gospel, was granted to Peter above the other apostles, is evident from his whole history. The pretended infallibility of that church, while it professes to build upon Peter, is destroyed by his waywardness, in so soon needing a rebuke as "an adversary and an offence" unto our Saviour; and, still further, in his denial of his Lord and Master.

S. Then, aunt, what do St. Peter's chair, and Peter's pence, and such things, mean?

Mrs. N. The association of Peter's name with these things is absurd and foolish. St. Peter's chair is an altar at Rome, upon which the pope sits when inaugurated into office. Peter-pence was a levy, by the pope, of a penny on each house throughout England; but it was prohibited in the reign of Elizabeth.

S. Well; I cannot help liking Peter!

Mrs. N. Nor do I wish to prevent you. While we disclaim all precedence for St. Peter above the other apostles, there is much to admire in the sincerity of his attachment to Christ, and in the fervour of his zeal. He was naturally a plain, honest man; frank, open, and courageous; and after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when he experienced much more of the power of religion than he had ever done before, he was rendered an instrument of the greatest good in the conversion of sinners.

S. Did he not perform miracles?

Mrs. N. I have already said that the gift of working miracles was bestowed at the institution of Christianity. It gradually ceased after the apostolic age. You cannot be ignorant of the miracles wrought by St. Peter, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The Church of Rome, ever fond of marvellous acts, ascribes many others to him; but most of them are of so ridiculous a nature as to discountenance all belief.

S. Do tell us them, aunt.

Mrs. N. The sacredness of St. Peter's character, as an apostle, forbids my relating any thing prejudicial. A degree of credit is given to one tradition

which has been preserved in ecclesiastical records. During the violence of the persecution at Rome, the brethren earnestly besought Peter to find a safer retreat; and, yielding to their entreaties, he was attempting to leave the city by night; but, coming to the gate, he saw Christ entering the city. "Lord, whither art thou going?" was the apostle's inquiry. Christ answered, "I am coming hither to be crucified again." From this vision, Peter understood that Christ was to be crucified again in his servant; and this induced him to return.

S. Pray, aunt, tell us how he died.

Mrs. N. Peter's wife was called to martyrdom a short time before himself; he saw her led to execution, and, addressing her by name, comforted her by repeating the words, "Remember the Lord!" At length, when Paul was condemned by Nero, Peter was called to suffer with him, by crucifixion, with his head downward; a posture which he himself desired, most probably from an unfeigned humility, that he might not die as his Lord had done.

S. Is not the pope Peter's successor?

Mrs. N. As the bishop of Rome, the pope claims that distinction; and it were to be wished that his other titles were as empty and inoffensive.

G. A bishop, did you say, mamma? Why, have there been bishops ever since Peter lived?

Mrs. N. As there has ever been a church upon earth, so has there ever been an order of men peculiarly devoted to the service of the sanctuary. Such were the priests of the Jewish economy. And when

the gospel dispensation superseded the altar and the temple, still there were found those who ministered before the Lord; though called by other names, and appointed to other work. All ministers of the gospel were called either bishops or deacons in the time of the apostles.

S. No archbishops, I suppose.

Mrs. N. That title was not known during the first three centuries of the Christian era. It has been a subject of controversy, whether the bishops or overseers originally differed at all from the presbyters or elders. I am not disposed to exhaust your patience, by rehearsing what has been said by contending parties; but I may observe that some maintain the opinion that episcopacy, as a distinct order, is of divine right, bishops being from apostolic times invested with superior rank and authority; while others affirm that both titles designate the same order, and that the members of the church had power to adopt that form of government which appeared to them best calculated to answer the designs of Christianity. Trifling as this subject may appear, it now constitutes the chief ground of difference between the Episcopal Church of England, and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

G. And who were the deacons, mamma?

Mrs. N. The assistants of the bishops, who were intrusted with the management of the secular affairs of the church, particularly the distribution of alms to the poor. Stephen, the first martyr, was one of the deacons at Jerusalem. The destruction of that city

by the Romans scattered the first Christian converts; but it is a circumstance worthy of being recorded, that no Christians were involved in the miseries of the siege of Jerusalem, they having profited by the words of our Saviour, and fled to Pella, a city on the other side Jordan, before the siege began. In conformity with the orders of the emperor, and as the fulfilment of prophecy, the city was destroyed to its foundations, the ruins of the temple (previously burned) were demolished, and a ploughshare was driven over the consecrated ground, as a sign of perpetual interdiction.

L. Sister, do not you remember the medal which affected you so much at the museum? Uncle said, it represented "Judea vanquished."

S. O yes; there was a female figure upon it, sitting so disconsolately under a tree, that I could not help weeping while I looked at it; and yet I felt as though I could not leave it.

Mrs. N. There are, I believe, several medals remaining like the one you saw, commemorative of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. The beautiful and touching design strikingly illustrates the language of Jeremiah: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!" The imprecation uttered at Pilate's judgment-seat, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children," fell upon the Jews with fearful vengeance. According to Josephus, the number of the prisoners and the

slain, at this memorable siege, amounted to one million four hundred and sixty thousand. Seven hundred beautiful Jewish captives were dragged at the chariot-wheels, to adorn the triumph of the conqueror at Rome; and, to cut off all hopes of a deliverance, or future Messiah, the house of Judah, with but one exception, was destroyed.

S. What was that exception, aunt?

Mrs. N. Some Christians were brought before Domitian, charged with being members of the Jewish royal family. The emperor asked them if they were of the family of David; which they acknowledged. He then demanded what money and possessions they had; when they laid open the humble nature of their circumstances, and owned that they maintained themselves by daily labour. Convinced of the truth of their statement by the hardness of their hands, and their general appearance, he next interrogated them concerning Christ and his kingdom, when and where it should appear. They answered that his kingdom was not of this world, but heavenly; and that its glory should be seen at the end of the world, when He should judge the quick and the dead, and reward every man according to his works. Domitian, satisfied that his throne was in no danger from their ambition, showed unwonted clemency, by dismissing them with the same contempt and derision that their Saviour received from Herod. It is thought, however, that this circumstance allayed the storm of persecution which the jealous fears of the emperor had raised against the

Christians, when forty thousand suffered martyrdom.

G. Those royal Christians might have learned the Belief in my catechism; for there it says, Christ shall "judge the quick and the dead."

Mrs. N. Many things are more unlikely. The creed you have committed to memory in your catechism is commonly called "the Apostles' Creed." At one time it was contended that the twelve apostles joined to compose it in its present form; but that is now generally disbelieved. It is certain, however, that the substance of it was adopted at a very early period; and it is most probable that it received the name of "the Apostles' Creed," because it was a summary of doctrine strictly conformable to what the apostles taught.

S. I do not see what use it was of, when they had the Bible and the apostles.

Mrs. N. The books of the New Testament were not collected into one volume during the days of the apostles; and though they were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the first Christians, and appealed to as of divine authority, and, therefore, conclusive in all matters of controversy, yet the various forms of error which threatened to subvert the true faith, might make it necessary to establish a form of words imbodying the doctrines of Christianity.*

* It is possible that some form of words, expressive of the Christian faith, was in use during the first and second centuries; but what it was precisely we do not now know.—Am. Ed.

L. Errors did you say, aunt?

Mrs. N. You cannot have forgotten that St. Paul, and particularly St. John, caution the different churches against them.

S. O yes, I remember; St. John writes a great deal about antichrist: what does it mean?

Mrs. N. Whatever opposes Christ's true and pure doctrine, and, at the same time, pretends his authority, is justly termed antichristian. St. John lived to a later period than any of the other apostles, and saw the Cerinthian and other heresies corrupt the vital principles of Christianity with vain and endless speculations.

S. It is strange that, when all the world was up in arms against the Christians, any false ones should be found among them.

Mrs. N. You forget that there was a Judas numbered with the apostles; and that our Saviour's parable of the wheat and the tares portrayed the mixed state of the church upon earth.

L. Pray, aunt, can you explain the errors which you have mentioned?

Mrs. N. They were speculative notions of the inherent depravity of matter, and the consequent impossibility of Christ's body being any thing but a mere phantom. Another modification of the same error was, that Jesus had a real existence, but that the Christ came upon him at baptism, and left him at death. The fundamental truths of our holy religion were thoroughly understood, and carefully held, by the faithful, who were more solicitous to avoid the

society of false Christians, than of open unbelievers. They even refused to eat with them. The heretics, on the contrary, endeavoured to unite themselves with the brethren, and were always ready to avail themselves of the seeming countenance of the apostles.

L. Judging from St. John's love of the truth, he would not be much disposed to favour them.

Mrs. N. St. John was firm and unyielding in his defence of the gospel. It is said of him that, while he resided at Ephesus, upon going to the public baths, and perceiving that the leader of heresy was within, he came out again hastily, saying, "Let us flee, lest the bath should fall, while Cerinthus, an enemy of truth, is within it."

G. Have you any thing more to tell us about him, mamma?

Mrs. N. St. John was banished by Domitian to the solitary isle of Patmos; where he was favoured with the visions recorded in the book of Revelation. After Domitian's death, he returned from the land of exile, and governed the Asiatic churches. At one place, observing a remarkably interesting youth, he brought him to the bishop, saying, "I commend this man to thy care, Christ and the church being witnesses." The young man was baptized, and, for a time, lived morally; but, being gradually corrupted by evil company, he became idle, intemperate, and dishonest, and eventually was the captain of a band of robbers. John, at his next interview with the bishop, required of him the pledge which, before Christ and the congregation, he had left in his hands.

"Ah!" was the mournful reply, "he is dead; dead to God." John, full of zeal and charity, went to the mountain which he inhabited, and exposed himself to be taken by the robbers. "Bring me," said he, "to your captain." The young man beheld him coming, and, recognising the aged and venerable apostle, he was struck with remorse, and fled. St. John followed, crying, "My son, why fliest thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not; as yet there remaineth hope of salvation. I will die for thee, if need be, believe me; Christ hath sent me." The young man stood still, trembled, and wept. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the church; nor did he leave him till he judged him fully restored by divine grace.

G. I like this account of St. John and the robber.

Mrs. N. His conduct, on that occasion, was a fine illustration of our Saviour's parable of the shepherd leaving the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and going after that which had gone astray; and it may also serve to remind us of the great Shepherd, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

L. I think I have heard that St. John lived to be very old.

Mrs. N. He was preserved to the age of a hundred years, for the benefit of the church. When unable to walk, he was carried in a chair into the Christian assemblies, where his constantly-repeated sermon was, "Children, love one another." Being asked, why he told them only one thing; he answered, "Nothing else is needed."

S. I remember he says in his Epistle, "Little children, love one another." I am sure, I shall like the writings of the apostles more than I have done, now that I know more of their history.

Mrs. N. You must value their writings as the inspired word of God; not given, as the writings of men, for us to esteem or despise, to receive or reject, as we may choose; but as the revelation of God's will, as the word which shall judge us at the last day. Having related what, to you, are the most interesting particulars now extant of the first century of the Christian era, we will resume our conversation at a future period.

G. What, nothing more in a hundred years?

Mrs. N. I am glad to find that you are not weary of the subject; but you must not expect lengthened details. Comparatively little is known of the first-fruits of Christianity. Heroes and statesmen have their reward *here*, large volumes being filled with their exploits; saints, *hereafter*. To believe, to love, and to suffer, was the emulation of the primitive church; the record of whose faith and patience is on high. In the book of life are written the names of those "who died for the testimony of Jesus;" and "blessed are they who have part in the first resurrection."

CONVERSATION III.

CENTURY II.

Mrs. N. In the beginning of the second century, there were no laws in force against the Christians, the Roman senate having annulled the cruel edicts of Nero; but a crafty priesthood and a merciless populace clamoured with rage, and many fell victims to pagan superstition and popular fury. Such were the riotous proceedings, that Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, wrote to the emperor, inquiring in what manner he should act toward the Christians. Trajan answered that Christians were not to be officiously sought after; but that such as were accused and convicted of Christianity were to be put to death, if they would not return to the religion of their ancestors.

George. That was almost as bad as if he had ordered them to be killed at once.

Mrs. N. This unrighteous edict became the law affecting the Christians. Apostacy or death was the issue of every charge preferred. Those who stood pre-eminent in the church, either for piety, talents, or wealth, were most exposed to danger, as exciting the envy or malignity of their enemies. One of the most venerable Christians at this time was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem.

Lucy. Begging pardon, aunt, for interrupting you, was not Jerusalem destroyed?

Mrs. N. It was. Jerusalem as a city was no more; but the church still existed in some part of Judea. Simeon was accused of being a Christian. He was then a hundred and twenty years old: yet neither his patriarchal age, nor his apostolic mien, subdued the fury of his persecutors; and he was punished with repeated scourging. The Roman governor was astonished at the fortitude with which he endured the ordeal; but he stood unmoved to witness the infliction of extreme torture, and then, with savage brutality, ordered him to be crucified.

Sophia. Poor old man! I wish I could have stood at the foot of the cross, and sung that beautiful hymn:—

"Happy soul, thy days are ended,
All thy mourning days below:
Go, by angel guards attended,
To the sight of Jesus go!

"Waiting to receive thy spirit,
Lo, the Saviour stands above;
Shows the purchase of his merit,
Reaches out the crown of love.

"For the joy he sets before thee,
Bear a momentary pain;
Die, to live the life of glory;
Suffer, with thy Lord to reign."

Mrs. N. I fancy you would have had no opportunity of thus indulging your sympathetic strains, supposing you had been contemporary with the venerable bishop; for, in those days of persecution, Christians were compelled to hold their assemblies

for communion, and to inter their dead, by night, in order to avoid tumultuous outrage.

G. Why, mamma, it would be worse than death to live in such times.

Mrs. N. They were perilous times, indeed. In the year 107 the emperor Trajan came to Antioch, when Ignatius, who was also called Theophorus, the bishop of that city, hoping to allay the fury of persecution, presented himself before the imperial throne. The dialogue between the emperor and the bishop you will, no doubt, consider interesting. *Trajan.* "What an impious spirit art thou, both to transgress our commands, and to inveigle others into the same folly to their ruin!" *Ignatius.* "Theophorus ought not to be called so; forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed from the servants of God. But if thou call me impious, because I am hostile to evil spirits, I own the charge in that respect; for I dissolve all their snares through the inward support of Christ the heavenly King." *Trajan.* "Pray, who is Theophorus?" *Ignatius.* "He who has Christ in his heart." *Trajan.* "And thinkest thou not that the gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies?" *Ignatius.* "You mistake, in calling the demons of this nation by the name of gods. There is only one God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion!" *Trajan.* "His kingdom, do you say, who was crucified under Pilate?" *Ignatius.* "His, who crucified my sin with its

author; and who has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry Him in their heart." *Trajan.* "Dost thou, then, carry him who was crucified within thee?" *Ignatius.* "I do; for it is written, 'I dwell in them and walk in them.'" *Trajan.* "Since Ignatius confesses that he carries within himself him that was crucified, we command that he be carried, bound by soldiers, to great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beasts, for the entertainment of the people."

G. Was there no house of parliament to prevent the emperor's doing as he liked?

Mrs. N. You must not suppose that other nations were ruled by British law. In obedience to the sentence, Ignatius was hurried to the vessel bound for Rome. When touching at the port of Smyrna, he was allowed the pleasure of visiting Polycarp, the bishop of that place: they had been fellow disciples of St. John, and the joy of their interview was great. A strong sensation was created in the churches of Asia Minor, by the journey of the condemned bishop toward the coast; deputations were sent as representatives of those communities to wait upon him, and take a solemn leave; and to several of the churches he addressed epistles, exhorting the members to continue faithful. When presented to the prefect of Rome, he was attended by a number of the brethren, who mingled their prayers and tears with his parting benediction and confession of faith. He was then led into the amphitheatre, and thrown to the wild beasts. The

beasts were his grave: a few bones only were left, which the deacons of his church gathered and buried at Antioch.

S. What shocking spectacles those must have been at Rome, for people to see others devoured by wild beasts!

Mrs. N. Shocking indeed! From the barbarous nature of these sports, we are led to form a very low estimate of human nature, destitute of the benefits of Christianity. Imperial Rome, the proudest city in the world, in her greatest glory, boasting of her literature and science, of her philosophers and statesmen, witnessing with triumph scenes of savage brutality, and persecuting unto death the inoffensive Christian, is a picture from which the heart turns appalled.

L. It was very respectful and kind of those churches, to send to the bishop when he was a prisoner.

Mrs. N. No doubt they were under great obligations to Ignatius, who, in conjunction with other fathers of the church, had laboured to extend the system of Christianity so as to meet the peculiar wants of different classes of individuals. When miraculous gifts became less general, and the effect produced by the first preaching of the gospel had ceased, it was found necessary that candidates for baptism should receive instruction preparatory to their being admitted into the church as members. These persons were called catechumens.

S. Catechumens! why, that is the very word I

have been puzzling myself about ever since I read the missionary's account of India. Pray, aunt, what does it mean?

Mrs. N. The similarity of circumstances in receiving pagan idolaters into the church, has led the missionaries to adopt the same form of discipline, and the same expressions. The original signification of the word is, "one under instruction," or "one who receives instruction by word of mouth."

S. Then, I suppose, they were taught in the same way that our Sunday scholars are.

Mrs. N. The instruction given was not confined to the sabbath-day; but your comparison is not far from being apposite. In early records we find that a separate building was appropriated to the use of schools in connection with the churches. What was taught was called *catechesis*, or "catechism," and the teacher was named catechist.

S. Well, I did not expect that I could claim so ancient a title as catechist. I think, if my scholars knew that a catechism was learned seventeen hundred years ago, they would not think it so hard, and forget it so soon.

Mrs. N. Your scholars enjoy privileges which were denied to those of ancient days. The catechumens were entitled to attend only certain services, and were instructed merely in the simple outlines of Christian belief; they were commanded to retire from the assembly when the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the nature of the sacraments were explained; and they were not permitted to recite the

Lord's prayer, it being considered as the special privilege of the faithful to claim God as "Our Father."

G. Then, mamma, how were they received into the number of the faithful?

Mrs. N. They were admitted members of the church by the ordinance of baptism.

G. But, mamma, were not little children baptized when they were named in those days?

Mrs. N. The practice of infant baptism was adopted from the beginning; Christian parents being most anxious that their children should be incorporated in the church with themselves. Though adults generally retained their former names after baptism, it was thought advisable that the name given to infants should express some virtue of the Christian religion, or should refer to some eminent Christian. On this principle, the names most commonly given were those of apostles, saints, and martyrs: of these, Peter, James, and John were especial favourites. Names expressive of Christian graces were also frequently given; such as Patience, Mercy, Charity, Prudence, Faith.

S. Why, their very names would tell that they were Christians: was it not cruel for the church to make infants likely to be martyred?

Mrs. N. I have omitted mentioning that the emperor Adrian forbade that Christians should be put to death, unless they were regularly accused and convicted of crime against the laws. This respite from persecution, which was confirmed during the reign

of his successor, proved very favourable for the spread of Christianity. A number of bishops showed, by their conduct, that the spirit which had influenced the apostles rested upon them. They distributed their substance to the poor, and travelled into regions which, as yet, had not heard the sound of the gospel; and, having planted the faith, they ordained pastors, committed to them the culture of the new ground, and then passed into other countries. By this means thousands heard the glad tidings of salvation, and were converted. "Then had the churches rest, and were edified."

G. O, I am glad to hear of liberty!

Mrs. N. The early Christians set us an example of improving the opportunity of doing good; for religious toleration was soon succeeded by violent and bitter persecution. The emperor Marcus Aurelius issued edicts against the Christians, whom he regarded as persons of a vicious and obstinate character. As a necessary consequence, judges and magistrates received accusations which even slaves and the vilest rabble preferred against them. If we except that of Nero, there was no reign in which Christians were more injuriously and cruelly treated; and yet there was no reign in which such numerous and victorious apologies were published in their behalf.

S. Apologies for Christians! more need, I think, of apologies for heathens!

Mrs. N. You understand the word in its modern sense, which is not now intended. The apologies

were rather in defence of Christianity, than excuses for it. The celebrated Justin Martyr employed his time and talents in travelling from place to place, holding conferences with opponents, and imbodying in written treatises the arguments best calculated to establish the truths of the gospel, and the pleas which might be urged in behalf of its professors.

S. Then I make my apology for not knowing the meaning of apology.

Mrs. N. Justin's bold advocacy was rewarded with imprisonment, and eventually with death. Accompanied by six of his companions, he was brought before the prefect of Rome, who undertook to persuade him to obey the gods, and comply with the emperor's edicts. Justin defended the reasonableness of his religion; upon which, the prefect inquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been educated. He told him that he was by profession a philosopher, and that he had endeavoured to understand all kinds of discipline, and had tried all methods of learning; but, finding satisfaction in none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine. "Wretch!" replied the indignant magistrate, "art thou captivated by that religion?" "I am," said Justin: "I follow the Christians; and their doctrine is right." "What is their doctrine?" inquired the prefect. "It is this," was the reply: "We believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things, visible and invisible; and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old; and that he is now the Saviour, Teacher, and

Master of all those who submit to his instructions; and that he will hereafter be the Judge of all mankind. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity: this was the business of the prophets, who, many ages ago, foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world." "Where do the Christians assemble?" was the next interrogation. Justin replied, that the God of the Christians is not confined to any particular place; but mentioning the house in which he had resided, he confessed that he had there explained Christianity. The prefect, after having severally examined his companions, again addressed Justin: "Hear thou who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in possession of the truth! If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven?" "Although I suffer what you threaten," was the confessor's answer, "yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Christians; as I know that the divine grace and favour are laid up for all such, and shall be so while the world endures." "Do you think," asked the magistrate, "that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward?" Justin replied, with holy boldness, "I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it, beyond all doubt." The prefect insisted that they should all go together and sacrifice to the gods. "No man," was the answer, "whose understanding is sound, will forsake true religion for error and impiety." The governor threatened: "Unless you comply, you shall be tormented without mercy." "We desire

nothing more sincerely," rejoined the martyrs: "despatch quickly your purpose; we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." The sentence was then pronounced: "As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them first be scourged, and then beheaded, according to the laws." The martyrs rejoiced, and blessed God, that they were counted worthy to suffer; and, being led back to prison, received the execution of their sentence.

L. What a mockery of justice those laws must have been which sanctioned the murder of the innocent! and how much we owe to Christian laws, which protect us from the violence of our enemies!

Mrs. N. It is, indeed, no small privilege to "sit under our own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid;" or, in other words, to be secure from persecution while enjoying Christian ordinances. It is almost impossible for us to conceive of the suffering state of the church when the civil power, instead of being its protector, was armed for its destruction. An apology, written by a bishop to the emperor, soon after the martyrdom of Justin, unfolds to our view the dangers of those times. It is to the following effect: "Pious persons, aggrieved by new edicts published throughout Asia, and never before practised, now suffer persecution. For men, who covet other persons' goods, take advantage of these proclamations openly to rob and spoil the innocent by night and by day. If this be done through your order, let it stand good: for a just emperor cannot act

unjustly; and we will cheerfully submit to the honour of such a death. This only we humbly crave of your majesty, that, after an impartial examination of us and our accusers, you would justly decide whether we deserve death and punishment, or life and protection. But if these proceedings be not yours, and the new edicts be not the effects of your personal judgment, in that case, we entreat you not to despise us who are thus unjustly oppressed."

G. But, mamma, does it not show a cowardly spirit to submit to such things?

Mrs. N. Cowardice, my dear boy, is no part of the Christian spirit; and the martyrs, least of all, should be charged with it.

G. I do not exactly mean cowardice; but it seems strange that, when there were so many of them, they did not try to conquer their enemies.

Mrs. N. Worldly maxims teach us to resent an injury, and to triumph over the offender; but not so the gospel of Christ: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; committing our cause unto Him that judgeth righteously."

S. So far from regarding the martyrs as cowards, I do not think Alexander, the conqueror of the world, had half so much courage.

Mrs. N. Another example of real magnanimity is found in the martyrdom of Polycarp. You will remember that he has before been mentioned, as the friend of Ignatius, and the disciple of St. John. It is thought that he was "the angel of the church of Smyrna," addressed by our Saviour in the book of

Revelation: if so, the delineation of his character by a Hand divine supersedes all that can be said in his favour. The same love of truth, and condemnation of error, which marked the character of St. John, appears in that of his disciple. Having travelled to Rome, to consult with the bishop of that see about the proper time for observing Easter, the leader of heresy in that city employed every artifice to gain the sanction of this father of the church. Meeting him one day, in the street, he called out to him, "Polycarp, own us!" "I do own thee," said the zealous bishop, "to be the first-born of Satan."

S. O, aunt, it was very uncharitable to use such strong language!

Mrs. N. The language is not stronger than the occasion warranted. Polycarp's indignation was roused, that a sect, denying the essential truths of the gospel, should assume the Christian name. That name was the only badge of the faithful; they were not called by different names, significant of peculiar tenets, as at the present day; the name of Christian was all they had to distinguish them from others. And that is a false charity which allows error to wear the garb of truth.

S. Then, did the false Christians suffer persecution?

Mrs. N. An affecting instance, though by no means a solitary one, answers your question. A heretic was brought, associated with Christians, before a persecuting magistrate; his companions boldly confessed Christ, and suffered; he was the only

one of the company who denied him. He hence obtained a distinguishing name, that of "the God-denying apostate." An awful appellation, and prophetic of his doom!

S. It makes me tremble to hear of people denying Christ: I like to listen to the martyrs' confessions best.

Mrs. N. That is ever a subject more pleasing for me to dwell upon; and Polycarp's intrepidity claims our special regard. During a violent persecution of the church at Smyrna, when the multitude were astonished at the fortitude of the Christians, while they endured all kinds of torture and death, a general cry was raised, "Take away the atheist; let Polycarp be sought for." Induced by the entreaties of his friends, Polycarp retired to a village a short distance from the city, where, having a strong presentiment of his speedy martyrdom, he prophetically told his people, "I must be burnt alive!" A discovery of the place of his retreat was forced from his servant by torture, and the apprehension of so important a personage excited great tumult in the city. When brought before the tribunal, in company with eleven others, the proconsul began to exhort him: "Have pity on thy great age; swear by the fortune of Cesar; repent; say, 'Take away the atheist.'" Polycarp, with a grave aspect, waiving his hands to the multitude, and looking up to heaven, said, "Take away the atheists." The proconsul continued, "Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ." With holy indignation, the venerable bishop

replied, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me: how then can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" The governor again urged, "Swear by the fortune of Cesar." Polycarp answered, "If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Cesar, affecting an ignorance of my character, hear me frankly declaring what I am. I am a Christian; and, if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and hear." "Persuade the people," continued the governor. "I have thought proper to address you," answered the bishop; "for we are taught to pay all honour to magistrates and powers appointed by God, which is consistent with a good conscience; but I do not hold them worthy that I should apologize before them." "I have wild beasts," said the proconsul; "I will expose you to them, unless you repent." "Call them," replied the martyrs; "our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse." He again threatened: "I will tame your spirit by fire, since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent." Polycarp replied, "You threaten us with fire which burns for a moment, and shall soon be extinct; but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please." A herald was sent to proclaim thrice in the midst of the assembly, "Polycarp hath professed himself a Christian!" The multitude, with insatiate rage, shouted aloud, "This is the doctor of Asia, the father of the Chris-

tians, the subverter of our gods!" and they besought the governor that a lion might instantly be let out against him. This being refused, as the spectacles of wild beasts were finished, they entreated that he might be burnt. Polycarp, calm and unmoved by the fury of his adversaries, turned to the faithful who were with him, and reminded them of his premonition of this kind of death; repeating emphatically, "I must be burnt alive!" The usual appendages of burning were immediately placed about him; but, when going to be fastened to the stake, he said, with great composure, "Let me remain as I am: He who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me to remain unmoved without your securing me with nails." Having pronounced aloud the word "Amen," which was the signal demanded, the combustible materials were lighted, and the flames, bursting out, formed the appearance of an arch round about the martyr. The extinction of life did not satisfy the malice of his enemies, who refused to give his ashes for interment, with the bitter sarcasm, "Lest the Christians, leaving the crucified One, should begin to worship Polycarp."

S. Blessed Polycarp! I could almost wish myself a martyr!

Mrs. N. Sensibility, my dear girl, may excite enthusiasm, but it will never produce Christianity. Without divine love, as the source or spring of action, even martyrdom itself would be nothing but solemn mockery; for, "though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

L. If I am not mistaken, you mentioned that the cause of Polycarp's going to Rome was about the proper time for keeping Easter. Will you please to give us some explanation of Easter?

Mrs. N. Our English word Easter, which means "to rise," or "resurrection," has been adopted in the stead of the Hebrew name *Pascha*, which was used in the early ages of Christianity, and which was more extensive in its signification, denoting not only the resurrection, but also, and more especially, the crucifixion of our Saviour.

L. Then the *Pascha* meant Good-Friday as well as Easter?

Mrs. N. The *Pascha*, or Easter, is the most ancient festival of the Christian church, and was held in commemoration of both the death and resurrection of Christ. During the second century, a separate observance of the day of our Lord's crucifixion was established, which was called Good-Friday, with reference to the divine goodness displayed in the redemption of mankind, and in token of a resemblance to the great day of atonement, called the "good day" by the Jews.

G. I think there was no need for Polycarp to trouble himself much about that.

Mrs. N. The cause of his trouble was a controversy between the eastern and western churches about the proper time for observing this festival. It had been, for some time, usual to fast before Easter. This fast was at first voluntary for the space of forty hours, but it had now extended to the whole of the

"great week;" for so the week was called which was commemorative of that in which Christ died. The eastern churches contended that they had received authority from St. John to celebrate the festival at the time of the Jewish passover; the western churches considered it more suitable to connect the commemoration of the crucifixion with that of the resurrection upon the succeeding Lord's day, and pleaded the authority of St. Peter and St. Paul for their custom. In consequence of this difference, some of the Christians feasted while their brethren fasted; and it was thought desirable that there should be one uniform practice.

G. Of what consequence could that be? Our Saviour did not command it, did he?

Mrs. N. The practice of voluntary and occasional fasting, though neither prohibited nor enjoined by our Saviour in express terms, received the sanction of his example, and has been considered promotive of spiritual good by the wisest and best of men in all ages. But this stated and prolonged fast, (the first appointed by the church,) with the undue importance attached to it, and the secondary aid of tradition and custom admitted for its support, affords some proof that the divine simplicity of Christianity was already partially obscured with human inventions.

L. You do not mean, aunt, that they fasted for a whole week, do you?

Mrs. N. The fast commonly practised lasted until three o'clock in the afternoon of each day, and was

called "half-fast," to distinguish it from the more strict observance which some adopted of taking only a small portion of bread, salt, and water, in the evening.

G. I am very glad those fasts are done away with. I am sure I should not like to go without my breakfast for a week together.

Mrs. N. Perhaps you would be more disposed, if you had seven weeks' holyday afterward.

G. Ay, that alters the case! but had the Christians, mamma?

Mrs. N. During the apostolic age, the church was free from any superstitious opinions respecting the value or necessity of festivals; but with the fast preceding Easter was introduced the mode of celebrating the subsequent feast. Public business was suspended; slaves, under certain restrictions, were liberated; churches and private houses were decorated with branches and flowers; Christians attended public worship, attired in their best apparel; the richer entertaining the poorer, and distributing alms to the afflicted and destitute.

L. That would be quite a holyday. Did you say it lasted seven weeks?

Mrs. N. The whole space of fifty days, the period from Easter to Whitsuntide, was regarded as a special season of rejoicing; during which divine service was celebrated, and the Lord's supper administered, daily.

S. But how could the Christians keep such a feast, when they were so persecuted?

Mrs. N. I think I have mentioned a period, of several years' continuance, during which Christians were tolerated by law; and when cruel edicts were again issued, breathing threatenings and slaughter, they were rather enforced by occasional bursts of violence than by general and systematic plans; so that, in different parts of the empire, the church experienced persecution and peace, severity and clemency, at the same time.

S. This explains what I could not understand; how the Christians went to church, and had schools, and were baptized, and did just as we do, when they were so persecuted.

Mrs. N. At the very time when Christians in other parts were favoured with the use of religious ordinances, a violent persecution desolated the flourishing churches of Lyons and Vienne. It commenced with a prohibition against Christians frequenting the public buildings and markets; but this negative form of injury did not long satisfy the malice of their enemies, who proceeded with open violence to declare their hostility and murderous intentions.

L. Can you tell us more particularly about them?

Mrs. N. Christians were apprehended daily; great numbers were suffocated in prison; many died in the midst of cruel tortures, as faithful witnesses of the truth; and some who, through fear, denied Christ, were not, after apostacy, permitted to escape, but were, for their cowardice, condemned to die.

G. Then they would kill them, whether or no. It is like the wolf and the lamb in my fable-book: the

wolf was determined to kill the lamb; and so, because he had no better excuse, he killed him for things which his father or his uncle had done.

Mrs. N. And you perhaps recollect the moral at the end of the fable, which is strikingly descriptive of this persecution. "When cruelty and injustice are armed with power, and determined on oppression, the strongest pleas of innocence are preferred in vain."

G. I wonder what Mr. Wolf would say against Mr. Lamb: I guess he would find some pretence for a quarrel.

Mrs. N. Many false accusations were preferred against the Christians, particularly the unnatural crime of eating infants. They, of course, refuted these calumnies; but, like the poor innocent lamb, they found neither pity nor justice in their adversaries.

S. Pray, aunt, tell us the names of these lamb-like martyrs.

Mrs. N. I have endeavoured to avoid mentioning a multiplicity of names, lest you should consider my narration burdensome to your memory; but persons of the most eminent character call for special notice, and I shall gladly comply with your request. At the annual exhibition of the spectacles, Pothinus, the venerable bishop of Lyons, upward of ninety years of age, was dragged before the tribunal. Being insultingly asked by the governor, "Who is the God of the Christians?" he replied, "If ye be worthy, ye shall know." The governor, exasperated

by the firm, undaunted manner in which Pothinus gave this rebuke, delivered him into the hands of his enemies. Every one appeared to consider himself deficient in zeal in revenging the cause of the gods, who did not add to the sufferings of this venerable saint. Those who were near insulted him with blows, threats, and reproaches; those at a distance threw stones and other missiles. He was thrown into prison almost breathless, and in two days expired. The ungovernable fury of the populace was now directed toward Sanctus, a deacon of the church at Vienne, who sustained the most barbarous indignities with the most exemplary patience, answering to every interrogation, "I am a Christian." Nothing more could be extorted from him; for he declared that being a Christian was to him better than his name, or country, or kindred. Being led into the amphitheatre, he was, with shouts of savage exultation, exposed to be torn by the wild beasts; yet not a word did he utter, save the word of confession, "I am a Christian." Attalus, a person of great reputation, was vehemently demanded by the multitude. He advanced with cheerful serenity, and was led round the amphitheatre with a tablet before him, upon which was inscribed, "This is Attalus the Christian." The rage of the people would have despatched him instantly; but the governor, learning that he was a Roman citizen, reserved him for the emperor's decision. Cesar sent orders that the confessors of Christ should be put to death; and though, as a Roman, Attalus had the

privilege of being beheaded, the governor, willing to gratify the malice of the people, delivered him to the wild beasts. Upon the last day of the spectacles, Blandina was brought with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen. They were ordered to swear by the idols; but as they refused to do this, the mob became greatly enraged, and spared neither the sex of the one nor the tender age of the other. Their tortures were aggravated with all possible barbarity; but they endured with constancy, and with firmness confessed, "We are Christians." Ponticus first fell a victim to pagan cruelty. Blandina, having sustained stripes, the tearing of wild beasts, and the hot iron chair, was enclosed in a net, and gored by a furious bull. Even her enemies confessed that no woman ever suffered so much; but the noble example of her patience produced no feeling of pity or remorse. They exposed to public insult the bodies of the martyrs, and then, reducing them to ashes, cast them into the Rhone.

S. I hardly know which affects me most, the martyrs or the persecutors.

Mrs. N. The century we have been reviewing boasted of the light of reason, the maxims of wisdom, and the administration of justice. But the gentler feelings of humanity breathed only in the soft, pleasing flow of numbers. All was cruel, cold, and callous, both in civil and social life. Edicts and menaces, issued by a despotic power, and executed with severity, encouraged a general ferocity of manners, and ungovernable fury of the malignant pas-

sions. This miserable state of society, however, served to exhibit, in a clear light, the peculiar excellences of religion, and to fix in bold relief the passive Christian, firm, yet kind; enduring, and forgiving.

CONVERSATION IV.

CENTURY III.

Sophia. Now, aunt, the curtains are drawn, we have taken our seats, and even pussy herself looks grave before this cheerful fire; so that I hope nothing will interrupt your giving us a long account of the Christians.

Mrs. N. It is with pleasure, my dear children, that I find you thus anxious to become acquainted with the history of Christianity; but before I proceed, you must remind me of the subject which closed our last evening's conversation.

S. O, I have not forgotten that, thoughtless as I am! It was the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne. I dreamed about them last night, and have been thinking about them all the day.

Mrs. N. I think I did not mention that, after the martyrdom of the bishop of Lyons, Irenæus was elected to succeed him; in which capacity he became distinguished by his zeal in maintaining the soundness of Christian doctrine against the various errors of the age, and by his success in the conver-

sion of the heathen to the faith of the gospel. At the beginning of the third century, the persecution broke out afresh in the city of Lyons, when it is supposed Irenæus, with nearly the whole of his flock, was called to seal the truth by martyrdom.

George. The few that were left would be frightened to death, poor things!

Mrs. N. The contrary appears to have been the case; for in forty or fifty years the gospel had spread from Lyons and Vienne with such rapidity, that France in general was blessed with the light of salvation, and the neighbouring states of Germany had Christian ordinances established among them.

G. I wonder whether it came as far as England.

Mrs. N. I believe some persons think so; but the evidence is not sufficiently strong to warrant an affirmation. It is certain, however, that the northern part of Africa was thus early favoured with the light of the gospel.

S. What! the country of Moors, and pirates, and slaves, before England?

Mrs. N. Your British pride will be humbled at the fact, that this land of present barbarism, or, as you justly call it, the country of Moors, and pirates, and slaves, then as far exceeded Britain as Britain now exceeds it.

S. Why, aunt, it seems impossible.

Mrs. N. The possibility of it is proved by the fact. But it is foreign to our purpose to enter into the history of nations any further than as it throws light upon the state of the church. The whole

region of Carthagenian greatness abounded with primitive Christians; and Tertullian, in his Apology, exhibits a beautiful view of the manners and spirit of these African converts. He says, "Let the claws of wild beasts pierce us, or their feet trample upon us; let crosses suspend us; let fires consume us:—a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring any thing. Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Yet were we disposed to act the part either of secret assassins or of open enemies, should we want force and numbers? Are there not multitudes of us in every part of the world? It is true that we are but of yesterday; and yet we have filled your towns, cities, and islands, your camps, courts, and palaces. We leave you only your temples."

S. Begging Tertullian's pardon for contradicting him, there could be no Christians in America, though he says they were in every part of the world.

Mrs. N. Of course he means the then known world. As a proof of the greatness of their numbers; all the Christians of a particular state in Asia presented themselves in a body before the governor. The sight of the vast multitude had the desired effect of intimidating their persecutors: the governor ordered a few of them to be put to death, and dismissed the rest, saying, "If you wish to die, wretched men, ye may find precipices and ropes."

G. Ah! he was afraid of the trouble: that was a nice escape for the Christians.

Mrs. N. The love of life was, in a great measure, extinguished by the frequency and violence of persecution; and the practice which had become customary of reciting the names of the martyrs in the thanksgivings of the church, and commemorating the anniversary of their martyrdom, had induced so much respect to be paid to their memory, that many ardently desired the honour. The famous Origen, when young, needlessly exposed himself to danger, and was bent on suffering with his father. His mother, finding that entreaties could not check his imprudent zeal, exercised her authority by confining him to the house, and hiding all his clothes. Origen, when he could do nothing else, wrote these words to his imprisoned parent: "Father, faint not; and do not be concerned on our account."

Lucy. And did his father die?

Mrs. N. Yes; he was beheaded, as a martyr, and all his property confiscated to the emperor. His widow and seven children were often reduced to great distress. Origen undertook the charge of the Christian school at Alexandria, and lived many years a monument of industry and self-denial; but it were to be wished that his natural fortitude and commanding genius had been content with the simplicity of the gospel, instead of obscuring the light of Scripture with philosophy and vain conceit.

L. Then was he a philosopher?

Mrs. N. Origen in his youth attended the lectures

of a sect of philosophers, who, not being able to disprove the fact that Christianity, as a scheme of religion, was far purer and sublimer than the system of Plato, endeavoured to blend the two systems together; and abandoning many of their first principles, formed a new system, called "the Eclectic." Origen, too fond of speculation, was unhappily corrupted by the notions of this sect, and his after-labours may be regarded as laying the foundation of that mystical theology which so extensively prevailed, to the great detriment of Christian truth.

L. Aunt, do please tell us something more about his philosophy: I am so fond of hearing about learned men.

Mrs. N. Perhaps it may serve to explain more clearly the superstitions of after ages, if I dwell a little upon some of the errors which now, unfortunately, became mixed with sacred truth. This philosophic system taught that "we are to raise above all terrestrial things, by the efforts of a holy contemplation, those souls whose origin is celestial and divine; that we are to attenuate, by hunger and thirst, and other mortifications, the sluggish body, which confines the activity and restrains the liberty of the immortal spirit; and that thus we may in this life enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active and unencumbered, to the universal Parent, to live in his presence for ever."

G. Why, mamma, I could have told them better than that myself; for, I am sure, being hungry and thirsty does not make people good.

Mrs. N. It is equally as impossible for corporeal rigour to purify the heart as for the unassisted powers of nature to elevate the soul; but this delusive notion subsequently led many to seek, in austerities and penances, in solitude and retirement, in mental abstraction and internal quietude, the favour and enjoyment of God.

L. Ah, you are now hinting at Madame Guion, and the lady-abbess with her nuns! but you know, aunt, I am not quite one of that sort.

Mrs. N. Another philosophic tenet was, "that the souls of heroes, illustrious men, and philosophers, alone ascended after death into the mansions of felicity; while those of the generality, weighed down by their evil passions, sunk into the infernal regions, from whence they were not permitted to emerge before they were purified from their turpitude and corruptions." This doctrine was seized with avidity by the philosophizing Christians, who applied it as a commentary to the plain truth of Scripture. Hence a notion prevailed that the martyrs only entered upon a state of complete happiness after death; and that an obscure region was assigned for the rest, in which they were to be imprisoned until the second coming of Christ; or, at least, until they were purified from their pollutions.

L. And was that the beginning of purgatory?

Mrs. N. It certainly was its rise; but we will leave its windings for the present. After the introduction of these novel speculations, Christians were agreed in supposing that the soul, in its

disembodied state, did not after death enter upon its final destiny. They considered that the good and the bad were in a different state, or rather in a different place; and that the souls of the righteous, while in this abode, were anxiously looking forward to the time of release. Hence, surviving friends did not think it improper to make it a subject of prayer to God that "He would be pleased to hasten the period when those who had departed in his faith and fear might enter his heavenly kingdom." Tertullian mentions that it was the practice of a widow to pray for the soul of her deceased husband, desiring on his behalf present rest and a part in the first resurrection, and offering annually an oblation for him on the day of his death.

G. Where is the use of praying for people when they are dead, I wonder?

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, I see no use at all; but the practice may convince us of the importance of truth in doctrine: for when error once creeps in, it soon leads to folly and absurdity. The pagan philosophic notion of the influence of demons paved the way for invoking saints and angels. Even Origen says, "They see who are worthy of the divine favour; and not only are they kindly disposed toward such persons, but they assist those who desire to serve God, and procure for them his favour, mingling their prayers and wishes with their own. And, perhaps, as we have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ, some things are purchased for us by the precious blood of martyrs."

S. I would rather be a martyr than a philosopher.

Mrs. N. A bright example of your choice presents itself in Perpetua, a lady of rank and fortune, who was singled out by cruel persecutors at Carthage as an eminent and devoted Christian. The dungeon into which she, with four others, was cast, presented nothing terrible to those who had been inured to hardships; but to Perpetua, who had enjoyed all the delicacies of polished life, it was most loathsome and distressing. For a short time her mind was oppressed with the ignominy thus brought upon her family; and the endearments of home, centred as they were in a lovely infant, wrung her spirit with the deepest anguish. Yet her constancy never forsook her: by degrees she regained her composure; and, commending her child to her mother, waited with calm resignation the issue of the sentence. Her interview with her father, who came to the prison overwhelmed with grief, was most pathetic and affecting. "Have pity, my daughter," said he, "on my gray hairs; have pity on your father; if I was ever worthy of that name, if I myself have brought you up to this age, if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind; respect your father; have pity on your son; lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for, if you perish, we must shut our mouths in disgrace." The old gentleman, with much tenderness, kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his mistress,—the mistress of his fate. Perpe-

tua, with a bleeding heart, could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the divine disposal. The next day she was brought before the tribunal, and examined in the presence of a vast multitude. There the broken-hearted father, with his little grandson, appeared, to shake her constancy by the most tender and touching appeals to her sympathy and love. The *woman* suffered, but the *Christian* triumphed. Her bold and unhesitating confession of Christ procured her condemnation to the wild beasts. Perpetua, with a cheerful countenance and dignified mien, walked toward the amphitheatre, followed by her companions in tribulation. Some idolatrous garments were offered, which they rejected with holy scorn, saying, "We sacrifice our lives to avoid these things." Perpetua requested that her brothers might be called, whom she exhorted to continue firm in the faith, to love one another, and not to be either frightened or offended at her sufferings. She was then exposed to the fury of a wild cow, and afterward fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator. She herself guided his trembling hand to her throat, and, with the rest of the martyrs, fell asleep in Jesus.

L. How very interesting the Life of Perpetua would be, written as the memoirs of religious people now are! I should like to know whether the martyrs repented and believed, as we are taught to do.

Mrs. N. Your remark convinces me that I have not been sufficiently explicit in my statements; but I have pleasure in directing you to the conversion

of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, as stated by himself, which will fully answer your inquiry. The following are his words:—"When I lay in darkness, alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what divine grace had promised, namely, that a man should be born again; and that, being animated to a new life, he should strip himself of what he was before, and, though the body remain the same, he should in his mind become altogether a new creature. How can so great a change be possible, said I, that a man should put off what nature and habits have confirmed in him? These reflections passed my mind very often; for I was myself entangled in many errors, from which I did not think it possible to be cleared. But, after the filth of my former sins was washed away in the laver of regeneration, and divine light had infused itself into my heart; after, through the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the new birth had made me a new creature; immediately, and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up, dark things shone forth, and what before seemed difficult and even impossible, now appeared easy and practicable."

L. But, aunt, there seem to have been no timid, doubting Christians in those days.

Mrs. N. I think we should be in no way benefited by having a catalogue of the doubts and fears of others appended to our own. We have too much evidence that weak and nominal Christians were found in the early churches.

L. I think you have not told us of any.

Mrs. N. Origen says, "Several come to church only on solemn festivals; and then not so much for instruction as diversion; some go out again as soon as they have heard the lecture, without asking the pastor any questions; others stay not till the lecture is ended; and others hear not a single word, but entertain themselves in a corner of the church."

S. Then they were worse than we are; for though the people now-a-days go to sleep when the sermon is long, they never think of amusing themselves.

Mrs. N. Origen introduced long sermons; but his profound learning, his natural eloquence, and his revered character, failed to produce the effect which had hitherto resulted from the simple declaration of truth. There was, about the middle of the third century, a general dearth of spiritual good. Speculative theories, to a great degree, supplanted faith and love; and in proportion as true piety declined, external pomp and ceremonies increased.

L. That is what I expected would be the case, when such strange notions were believed.

Mrs. N. Several alterations were introduced in the celebration of the Lord's supper: the prayers were lengthened; superstitious reverence was attached to the consecrated bread; a splendid vestment was provided for the officiating minister; gold and silver vessels were used; and deacons stood on each side of the altar with fans, to drive away flies from the wine. The church thus sinking into formality was surprised by Decius, the emperor, who

issued an edict, compelling Christians to sacrifice to the gods.

L. Now we shall see whether such Christians would die for their religion.

Mrs. N. When the sincerity of their profession was thus tried, the number of those who fell away was awfully great. Some, through influence, procured certificates from the magistrates, testifying that they were not Christians; others screened themselves by delivering into the hands of the heathen copies of the sacred writings, baptismal registers, with other property of the church; while others, before they were accused, hastened to the forum, and sacrificed to the gods. The number of these open apostates was so great that the magistrates proposed delaying the ceremony until the following day; but they were importuned by the wretched suppliants to be allowed to prove themselves heathens that very night.

G. O what Christians! they were half-Christians, and half-heathens: surely, mamma, they would not be called Christians again.

Mrs. N. Many sought for readmission into the church after the severity of the persecution had ceased; but before they were admitted as members, they were required to perform penance.

G. Penance, mamma, what is that?

Mrs. N. It was the discipline established by the church for those who had acted inconsistently with their baptismal profession and covenant; and was especially salutary during times of persecution.

S. And what did they do, aunt?

Mrs. N. They had to seek, as a favour, for admission among the penitents, (those who, like themselves, repented of their apostacy,) whose station was in the church porch, where they lay prostrate, begging the prayers of the faithful as they went in. They were required to lay aside all ornaments of dress, to wear sackcloth, to cover their heads with ashes, and, with tears, sighs, and lamentations, to make a public confession of their sin before the congregation.

S. Well, they deserved to suffer, after having been so wicked; but I thought they would have confessed to the priest, instead of the congregation.

Mrs. N. Because of the number of the lapsed, presbyters were appointed to investigate their cases, and admit those who truly repented into the class of penitents; but any confession which might be elicited in private, did not in the least affect their confession in public. As they had sinned against the church, they confessed to the church, as the means of seeking restoration to its communion.

G. Mamma, I have heard a tale about a man doing penance by walking a long way with peas in his shoes: that is not the same penance, is it?

Mrs. N. That belongs to the absurdities of later ages; which, however, may be traced to the form of discipline I have been describing. The grant of indulgences also claims its origin in the absolution pronounced by the bishop to the penitents; which, in the early ages of the church, was considered

only in the light of reconciliation with the church; all writers of those times insisting much upon the truth, that God alone can forgive sins; and, what is more to the point, no writer belonging to the first three centuries making mention of power or authority, on the part of a priest, to forgive sins in the place of God.

L. You have not told us of any martyrs in this persecution: I hope the Christians were not all apostates.

Mrs. N. Many were still found who valued the testimony of a good conscience more than life. The bishop of Smyrna apostatized; but the glory of this church, so celebrated by the voice of infallibility, was not totally lost. Pionius, one of the presbyters, was a valiant witness for the truth, and showed his readiness to suffer by placing a chain about his neck. "It would be wiser in you," said his judge, "to submit, and avoid the torture." With fearless intrepidity, Pionius appealed to the assembled multitude: "Citizens of Smyrna, who please yourselves with the beauty of your city, and value yourselves on account of your poet Homer; and ye Jews, if there be any among you, hear me speak a few words." He then addressed the different classes of his audience, proving to the Jews that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, and placing before the pagans the solemnities of the day of judgment. He spoke long, and was attentively heard; after which, the keeper of the idol temple said, "Believe us, Pionius, your probity and wisdom make us deem you worthy to

live;—and life is pleasant." "I own," replied the martyr, "that life is pleasant; but I mean that eternal life which I aspire after. I do not, with a contemptuous spirit, reject the good things of this life; but I prefer something which is infinitely better." The well-known sincerity and virtues of the man, together with the powerful effect produced by his discourse, filled the Smyrneans with veneration for his character; and the magistrates began to fear an uproar for his preservation. "It is impossible, then, to persuade you," said the judge hastily. "I would to God I could persuade you to be a Christian," answered Pionius. To allay the tumultuous feeling of the populace, he was remanded back to prison, where he was examined by the proconsul; who, after trying both tortures and persuasions in vain, sentenced him to be burnt. After he was fastened to the wood, the executioner said to him, "Change your mind, and the nails shall be taken out." "I have felt them," replied the martyr; "but I hasten, that I may the sooner be a partaker of the resurrection." His last words were, "Lord, receive my spirit."

G. Mamma, I know what I would do, if there should be a persecution in this country: instead of staying to be burned, I would go to some island a long way off, and be another Robinson Crusoe.

Mrs. N. We must thank you, George, for securing yourself by forsaking your friends. The first Christian hermit was induced, through fear of persecution, to leave Egypt, and retire to the mountains. But I fancy you are not of the same temperament as

Paul the hermit; for you would, I have no doubt, embrace the first opportunity to return.

S. Pray, aunt, tell us something more about the hermit. Did he live in a cave?

Mrs. N. That I am unable to answer. At the time of his retirement, he was a young man, of considerable learning, mild in temper, and of an eminently devotional spirit. His contemplative turn of mind found something congenial in seclusion from the world; and solitude being thus agreeable, he preferred remaining in his retreat to again participating in the cares and anxieties which his wealth had previously occasioned. He lived to be a hundred and thirteen years old.

S. I am glad to hear that he was a good man; because people say that monks and hermits were all impostors.

Mrs. N. There can be no doubt of the genuine piety of Paul the hermit; and if we consider the circumstances in which he was placed, when neither his life nor his property was secure even for a single day, we cannot be surprised at his seeking refuge anywhere, where he could retain the testimony of a good conscience. But that he did not, with the return of peace, return to the discharge of social duties, must be regarded as the effect of those false doctrines which threw a shadowy gloom over Christianity; and induced many of the best of characters to become solitaries in deserts, or monks within prison-walls.

G. I begin to think I should be glad to return from my island; it would be so tiresome to spend a

whole life by myself: besides, I should want so many things I could not get.

S. But do not you know, cousin, that hermits lived upon herbs, and drank of the crystal brook? You might soon find parsnips and water; and then you would have nothing to do, but to sit in the sunshine all day long.

G. And in the rain too, I suppose: I should soon be tired of that.

Mrs. N. I think we shall all agree with the sentiment of the poet:—

> "O solitude! where are the charms
> That sages have seen in thy face?
> Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
> Than reign in this horrible place."

We have also the concurrent testimony of Cyprian, the renowned bishop of Carthage; who suffered banishment during the first stages of the persecution. He was permitted to return to the scene of his labours in the year 260, when, the persecution immediately breaking out afresh, his friends offered to conceal him in an unfrequented part of the country. But solitude had no charms for Cyprian: he preferred waiting the issue of the crisis to the wearisomeness of inactivity.

S. Well, I think I would rather die any kind of death than live a dull, mopish life.

Mrs. N. His life was the price of his choice. He was soon seized, and brought before the tribunal, where a vast concourse of people had assembled.

"Our princes," said the proconsul, "have ordered you to worship the gods." "That I will not do," replied Cyprian. The proconsul urged: "You would judge better to consult your safety, and not despise the gods." The bishop answered with calmness and dignity, "My safety and my strength is Christ, the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever." "I pity your case," rejoined the governor, "and could wish to consult for you." "I have no desire," returned the bishop, "that things should be otherwise with me, than that I may adore my God, and hasten to him, with all the ardour of my soul." The proconsul, assuming an air of severity, pronounced the sentence of death: "You have lived sacrilegiously a long time; you have formed a society of impious conspirators; you have shown yourself an enemy to the gods and their religion, and have not hearkened to the equitable counsel of our princes; you have ever been a father, and a ringleader of the impious sect: you shall, therefore, be an example to the rest; that, by the shedding of your blood, they may learn their duty. Let Thacius Cyprian, who refuses to sacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the sword." "God be praised!" ejaculated the martyr. Not so the people: with tears and lamentations, they bewailed the event, and followed him, crying, "Let us die with our holy bishop!" The sentence was speedily executed; and Cyprian, by a death more gentle than commonly fell to the lot of martyrs, was admitted into the number of those "who died for the testimony of Jesus."

S. The hermit's cell does not equal the martyr's crown.

Mrs. N. It is the motive which stamps the value of any sacrifice to God. Voluntary seclusion from the world can be no more acceptable to him than throwing away life. But when banishment and exile are endured for the sake of Christ, they are perfumed with the odours of grateful love; and thus partaking, in no small degree, of the spirit of martyrdom, they rise as fragrant incense from earth to heaven.

L. Aunt, will you please to fulfil the promise you made this morning, and explain the primitive love-feasts?

Mrs. N. Most gladly, my dear: and I thank you for reminding me of the subject. The feast of charity, or love-feast, was celebrated from the earliest period of the Christian church; frequent allusions being made to it in the New Testament. It was intended to denote and cherish those dispositions of humility and brotherly love which the gospel prescribes to the disciples of Jesus. At first, it was celebrated in private houses, or in other retired places; but, after the erection of churches, it was usually held, on the first day of the week, in places thus set apart for religious worship. Before eating the food, which was previously prepared by members of the church at their own houses, the guests washed their hands; and prayer was offered by the bishop or deacon. A portion of Scripture was then read; and the presiding minister proposed some ques-

tions upon it, which were answered by the persons present. After this, any accounts which had been received respecting the affairs of other churches, with letters from bishops, and other eminent Christians, together with the Acts of the Martyrs, were read, and hymns or psalms sung. At the close of the feast, money was collected for the benefit of widows and orphans; and before the meeting broke up, all the members embraced each other in token of mutual brotherly love; and then the ceremony was concluded with prayer.

G. But, mamma, how could they wash their hands?

Mrs. N. The custom of frequent washing was most probably derived from the Jews, by whom it is used to denote purity; and, no doubt, with the practice was adopted the convenience necessary for its observance. You will remember that the communicants were required to wash their hands before partaking of the Lord's supper; basins being placed in convenient positions for that purpose. A fountain, or cistern of water, was also provided outside the walls of the church, or in a separate building, for the observance of this ceremony, before entering a place of worship.

G. There is no washing of hands now!

Mrs. N. It was observed more out of compliance with Jewish customs than with the intention of being obligatory; yet the Romish Church still attends, with superstitious veneration, to the vestige of this ceremony, the sprinkling of holy water.

G. And, you said, the people embraced each other: did they shake hands?

Mrs. N. You, no doubt, remember, that, in the New Testament, we read of "greeting one another with a holy kiss." This kiss of charity, or kiss of peace, as it was called, is what is meant by embracing each other.

G. It seems very strange for people to be kissing each other in churches.

Mrs. N. Great care was taken to prevent abuses likely to arise from this practice; in the division and arrangement of the sexes; the men sitting on the left hand, and the women on the right, and, sometimes, the two parties being separated by curtains, or lattice-work: and it was laid down as a rule that the clergy should salute the bishop; and that, among the laity, the men should salute the men, and the women the women. While the church was exposed to persecution, these feasts of charity were not only conducted with propriety, but they were made subservient to Christian edification, and to the promotion of that brotherly love and union which was specially demanded by the circumstances of the times. Disorders afterward arising, it was deemed necessary to abolish the practice altogether.

G. I wonder what kind of churches those could be with curtains in them!

Mrs. N. You must not suppose that steeples, towers, and bells were found in the early churches. The buildings were exceedingly plain and simple; in shape, generally resembling a ship.

G. A ship, mamma! Why, that is the very last thing I should think of for a church.

Mrs. N. The primitive Christians adopted the figure of a ship to denote the dangers to which the church was exposed, and the safety which it offered to its members. In after ages, the form of the cross was preferred.

S. Both figures are very beautiful; the ship outriding the storm, and conquering by the cross.

Mrs. N. This is anticipating our history; we will, therefore, return to other particulars of Valerian's persecution. In pursuance of the emperor's orders, Sixtus, bishop of Rome, was seized, with several of the clergy. Laurentius, the chief deacon, followed the venerable bishop to the place of execution, saying, "Whither goest thou, father, without thy son?" Sixtus replied, "Thou shalt follow me in three days."

G. How could he tell that?

Mrs. N. Supposing that miraculous gifts had entirely ceased, the declaration was not out of the reach of common sagacity in those perilous times.

S. And did it come true?

Mrs. N. Yes; immediately after Sixtus's death, the prefect of Rome hearing a rumour of the immense riches of the Roman church, sent for Laurentius, and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, "Give me a little time to set every thing in order, and to take an account of each particular." The prefect granted him three days. In that space of time, Laurentius collected all the poor who were supported by the church; and, going to the prefect,

said, "Come, behold the riches of our God: you shall see a court full of golden vessels." The prefect followed him; but seeing only the habiliments of poverty, he turned to Laurentius with looks expressive of wrathful indignation. "What are you displeased at?" said Laurentius: "the gold you so eagerly desire is but a vile metal taken out of the ground: these are the treasures which I promised you; to which I will add precious stones,—behold those virgins and widows; they are the church's crown. Make use of these riches for the advantage of Rome, the emperor, and yourself!" "Do you mock me?" cried the prefect in a rage: "I know you value yourself for contemning death, and therefore you shall die at once." He then ordered Laurentius to be fastened to a gridiron, and in that manner broiled to death over a slow fire. The last prayer of the martyr was for the conversion of Rome.

L. The prefect must have been great in wickedness, to have invented such a kind of death.

Mrs. N. His cruelty makes us conclude that he had imbibed the notions of a celebrated philosopher of those times; who deridingly spoke of the Christians as "Galileans, indifferent to suffering,—from madness, or from habit."

S. Indifferent to suffering, indeed! I could have told him, Christians are not stoics; they have not hearts of stone, like philosophers; they can feel both pleasure and pain.

Mrs. N. An opportunity was given, by the empe-

ror's captivity in Persia, and the mild government of his successor, to indulge the pleasures of Christian feeling. For the space of thirty years, with but the exception of those in the army, Christians were tolerated in the free use of religious ordinances. They now held honourable offices; crowds attended their churches; the old buildings were no longer capable of containing the number of converts, and large and spacious edifices were erected.

S. Then they could marry, and have parties, and do just as we do: that would be a change!

Mrs. N. As it was not the object of Christianity to abolish social festivities, but to restrain them within the bounds of decency and order, I dare say Christians then enjoyed the pleasure of each other's company in a way similar to our own; but I fancy they would not wait until the time of peace for celebrating marriage, the espoused parties usually being agreed to take each other "for better or for worse."

L. Aunt, how did the Christians marry in those days?

Mrs. N. The parties about to contract marriage were required to give notice of their intention to their bishop or pastor, whose approbation or sanction was deemed necessary.

S. But suppose the bishop did not give his consent?

Mrs. N. If they proceeded under those circumstances, the offence was visited with the imposition of penance, or sentence of excommunication. Still,

the Roman law was the legal bond of union. It obliged all persons to go through certain preliminaries, which were to be attested by proper witnesses, and which went by the name of "espousals," or "betrothing:" they consisted chiefly in a mutual agreement between the parties concerning their future marriage; which was to be performed within a certain limited period, this contract being confirmed by gifts or donations, called "the earnest of marriage."

G. What sort of gifts, mamma?

Mrs. N. It was usual for the man to give the woman a ring, a solemn kiss, with the joining of hands, and a dowry; which was a stipulation given in writing of the sum to which she would be entitled after her husband's death.

S. Then did they not go to church?

Mrs. N. Christians always availed themselves of the benediction of the church, pronounced by the bishop or presbyter; after which, the customary ceremony of untying the bride's hair, covering her with a veil, and crowning her with garlands, was adopted. Lighted tapers appear to have been used, as symbols of rejoicing; but for the old Roman custom of throwing about nuts, was substituted the better practice of distributing alms.

G. I think all the Christians should have had lighted candles, and made a grand illumination, for thirty years' peace.

Mrs. N. It became them rather to rejoice with trembling; for indications of persecution were given toward the close of the century, which threatened to

lay desolate the fairest hopes of the church. Military law had ever retained its force against the Christians.

G. Then why did Christians become soldiers, mamma?

Mrs. N. Christians were obliged, like other subjects of the empire, to contribute to the general defence, and to serve in the Roman armies. At Cesarea, a soldier, whose name was Marinus, of noble family, and of great opulence, upon being promoted to the office of centurion, was declared, by a fellow-soldier, incapacitated for the situation, because he was a Christian. The charge being thus preferred, the governor gave the accused three hours for deliberation; when he must either sacrifice to the gods, or be himself sacrificed. The bishop of Cesarea called Marinus from the tribunal, took him by the hand, led him to the church, showed him the sword which hung by his side, and a New Testament which he drew from his pocket, and then bade him choose which of the two he liked best. Marinus stretched out his hand, and clasped the Scriptures. "Hold fast, then," said the bishop, "cleave to God, and Him whom you have chosen you shall enjoy." At the expiration of the three hours, Marinus appeared at the tribunal, boldly confessed himself a Christian, heard the sentence of condemnation, and was beheaded.

G. That was soldier-like. He was a brave fellow.

Mrs. N. An attempt was now made, in a more general manner, to retain the army in the service of

idolatry. It was put to the option of Christian officers, whether they would sacrifice, and enjoy their dignity, or refuse, and be deprived. Many, fearing the result of these coersive measures, were desirous of retiring into private life; others showed sincere regard to Christianity by contentedly losing their rank and station; while a few were conspicuous for their open avowal of themselves as Christians, which procured their immediate condemnation. Of this number was Marcellus, a centurion in Africa, who, at the time every one was employed in feasting and sacrificing, took off his belt, and threw down his arms, saying, "I will not fight any longer under the banner of the emperor, or serve the gods of wood and stone. If the condition of a soldier be such, that he is obliged to sacrifice to gods and emperors, I abandon the vine-branch and the belt, and quit the service." He was immediately beheaded.

S. Why, such peace as that is not worth calling peace.

Mrs. N. For the space of eighteen years, the emperor Diocletian was extremely indulgent to the Christians; his wife and daughter favoured them; the most important officers in the palace attended the churches, several members of their families openly professing the faith of the gospel. But, during this time, few marks of superior piety appeared; scarce a luminary of godliness existed; and the increasing prevalence of superstition demonstrates that the prosperity of the church is not effected by external and secular aid. After the emperor had so long favoured

the Christians, an occurrence transpired which caused him to contract a prejudice against them. While practising the rites of divination, he became persuaded that the ill success of his attempts to pry into futurity was owing to the presence of a Christian servant who had made on his forehead the sign of the cross. In great anger he immediately ordered all in his palace to sacrifice to the gods, or, in case of refusal, to be scourged. The succeeding expressions of vengeful wrath we will reserve for our next conversation.

CONVERSATION V.

CENTURY IV.

Lucy. I AM afraid we must expect another persecution, from the emperor's being so angry with the Christians.

Mrs. N. Your fears are confirmed by the cruel proceedings presented to our view at the commencement of the fourth century. But although Diocletian has gained the credit of the persecution, the Roman empire was, in fact, governed at that time by four emperors, two of whom were distinguished by the title of Augustus, and the other two by the name of Cesar.

George. Four emperors! that would be worse than none; for the people would not know which to please.

Mrs. N. The empire was divided, in order that each might freely exercise his authority. France and Britain enjoyed protection under the mild sway of Constantius; the other three were tyrants.

Sophia. Yes, I remember; Britain did belong to the Romans: you know we read, a short time ago, about their having made some of our long, straight, tiresome roads; and that a great deal of their money had been found buried in the ground. I am glad we are going to hear about our own country.

Mrs. N. Little can be said of the Christianity of Britain at this early period; we will, therefore, reserve the feelings of peculiar interest due to our native land for after ages, and proceed with the details of oppression and suffering now exhibited in the centre of the Roman empire. The credulous disposition and superstitious reverence of Diocletian, inspired the pagan priests with the hope that, by fictitious oracles, he could be induced to commence hostile measures against the Christians. Failing in their attempt, they addressed themselves to the tyrant Galerius, whose naturally fierce and warlike spirit promised greater hope of success. He cordially entered into their plans, and proposed a general massacre. To this Diocletian objected, as being impolitic and sanguinary; but importunate solicitation at length prevailed, and an edict was obtained to pull down the churches, to burn the sacred books, to deprive Christians of civil rights and privileges, and to render them incapable of honour or promotion.

L. The Christians, I fancy, would be ill disposed to submit, after having enjoyed such freedom.

Mrs. N. One had the temerity to pull down the edict, and tear it in pieces; but his conduct was punished with instant death. A fire twice breaking out in the emperor's palace, the Christians were accused of the incendiarism; and the credulous Diocletian, too easily persuaded of the truth of this charge, caused vast numbers to suffer at Nicomedia. Certain tumults and seditions, in various parts of the empire, were also attributed to the Christians, which now raised the imperial wrath to ungovernable fury. A new edict was issued, ordering all the bishops and ministers to be cast into prison, and all kinds of tortures to be employed, to compel them to renounce their profession, and sacrifice to the gods. An immense number suffered, from the execution of this command; some dying in the midst of inexpressible agony, and others, deprived of eyes, ears, and limbs, banished to the mines, to spend the residue of life in poverty and bondage. In the second year of the persecution, a third edict was published, commissioning magistrates to force Christians, without respect to rank, age, or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and empowering them to practise the greatest cruelty in order to accomplish their vile purpose. The diligence and zeal of the magistracy, in enforcing this law, had well nigh proved fatal to the cause of Christianity.

G. I know what old John, the gardener, would say: "Why, maister, it seems as if Satan had gotten loose from his pit."

Mrs. N. To carry out John's figure, Satan had great wrath, as if he foresaw that his reign of idolatry was short. At no time was there so great and systematic an effort made to extinguish the gospel of Christ. The heathen invented all manner of blasphemies against the truth; children in schools were daily taught to sound the names of Jesus and Pilate, associated with satire and falsehood; idolatrous temples were thronged; all things sold in the markets were polluted with libations; and officers were everywhere seen compelling Christians to sacrifice. To so low an ebb was Christianity reduced, that, to human appearance, it seemed quite destroyed. Two pillars were erected, as trophies of pagan victory: upon one was this inscription, "Diocletian," &c., "for having extinguished the name of Christian;" upon the other, "Diocletian," &c., "for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christians:" and a medal still remains, with this motto, "The name of Christian extinguished."

S. How surprised Diocletian would be, if he could just take a peep at the Christians now!

Mrs. N. Inspired truth would have furnished him with a more appropriate design for his medal:—"The bush burning, but unconsumed." At the restoration of peace, it was found that numbers had not "bowed the knee to Baal;" many had carefully preserved the Holy Scriptures at the risk of life; and the confessors, being released from banishment, filled the highways, singing praises to God for their return. Even persecutors were melted at the sight;

and those who had done their utmost to exterminate Christianity, confessed that a religion which had sustained such repeated and formidable attacks must be divine.

G. How was peace restored, mamma?

Mrs. N. The successive death of the emperors, and the civil commotions of the empire, united in placing Constantine upon the imperial throne, who immediately embraced the Christian faith.

S. A Christian emperor! this is a new thing in the earth.

Mrs. N. The conversion of Constantine was remarkable. He himself declared that it was produced by a miraculous appearance of a luminous cross in the heavens, with this inscription, "Conquer by this;" and that not comprehending the meaning of this sign, he was instructed the following night by a vision of Christ bearing his cross, who directed him to take a similar standard, by which he should march to victory. Accordingly, the next day he adopted the sign of the cross as the Roman standard.

L. Then, was he really a converted man?

Mrs. N. It may be truly said that he was converted from paganism to the Christian faith, although his character presents an enigma difficult for human judgment to solve. His zeal in establishing Christianity, and abolishing ancient superstitions, evinces a decided attachment to the cause of truth. He taught even his heathen soldiers a form of prayer to the true God, and was himself punctual in the per-

formance of this duty. But his conduct, on many occasions, forbids the conclusion that he was properly influenced by the precepts of the gospel; and his deferring the ordinance of baptism until within a short time before his death, leads many to suspect that political, rather than religious, motives prompted many of his best actions.

S. How different it would be for the Christians to have such an emperor, instead of those tyrants!

Mrs. N. Constantine, full of zeal for the propagation of truth, restored every thing to the church of which it had been deprived; stood up with respectful silence to hear sermons from the bishops; furnished copies of the Holy Scriptures for the people; commanded the sacred observance of the Lord's day, with the festivals of martyrs, and the fast of Friday; built and dedicated churches with great splendour and solemnity; and became the patron of bishops and other eminent Christians.

S. Then there would be no more burying the dead by night, for fear of persecutors.

Mrs. N. Funerals began now to be celebrated with great pomp. Processions were introduced, in which lighted tapers, and palm and olive branches, were carried, as tokens of victory; incense was also burned; and monuments were erected, upon which were inscribed the virtues of the deceased. All immoderate grief was considered inconsistent with Christian faith and hope; cypress, the pagan symbol of sorrow, with the Jewish sackcloth and wailing, were both rejected; the Lord's supper was cele-

brated as an intimation of the communion subsisting between the dead and the living, prayers were offered for the rest and refreshment of the deceased, and flowers (the frail emblems of mortality) were strewed liberally upon the grave.

L. Did the Christians wear black when their friends died?

Mrs. N. We find strong disapprobation of this pagan custom in the writings of some of the fathers; but it was, nevertheless, practised, and soon became general.

G. But, mamma, how could they get flowers at Christmas to put upon the graves?

Mrs. N. You must not suppose that England's chilling frosts blighted Italian flowers, although the celebration of Christmas was now introduced.

G. Had there been no Christmas before?

Mrs. N. It was not before the original simplicity of Christian worship had become unsatisfactory, and it was deemed necessary to give splendour and external attractions to the gospel by the multiplication of festivals, that Christmas was observed. The analogy of other events in our Saviour's history, already marked by peculiar festivals, appeared to claim an additional one in commemoration of the nativity; and Christmas was distinguished from the rest by retaining the pagan custom of interchanging presents, and giving entertainments.

G. Well, I am much obliged to them for keeping that custom: for I should not like to be without Christmas boxes and Christmas holydays.

Mrs. N. A festival, called the Epiphany, was also appropriated to the various manifestations of our Saviour's divinity; such as the appearance of the star, the circumstances attending his baptism, and the performance of the first miracle in Cana of Galilee. It was sometimes called "the day of lights;" from the custom, which its observance introduced, of illuminating churches with lighted tapers.

G. Mamma, I do not see the use of so many festivals.

Mrs. N. In proof that they are not the essentials of religion, we find the greater part were unknown in the primitive church. Whitsuntide was now regarded more as a distinct festival than as the termination of the *Pascha*; and the vigil of Easter was celebrated with increased splendour and magnificence. A peculiar day was set apart for the commemoration of Stephen, the proto-martyr; and a festival in honour of all saints and martyrs was observed.

L. So many festivals must have made a great deal of work for the bishops and deacons.

Mrs. N. The bishops, so far from performing extra duties, were content with a very small part of the labours of their predecessors: hence arose the practice of inferior officers in the church administering the ordinance of baptism; reserving the seal of confirmation, which had hitherto been part of the ceremony, for the bishop's convenience.

G. The bishop confirmed thirty-six about a month ago; and the people said it was five years since there had been a confirmation before.

Mrs. N. The number of the clergy was consider-

ably increased, when Christianity became the religion of the empire. The titles of patriarch, archbishop, and archdeacon, with others, were added to the sacerdotal order; and gradual innovations were made on ecclesiastical discipline, in order to conform the church to the civil government. Its ministers were considered as occupying the places of the heathen priests; and, consequently, came into the possession of real and permanent property. By law they were entitled to receive donations and testamentary bequests; and Constantine set the example of bestowing liberal grants for their support.

G. I think the emperor should have been called arch-emperor, when there were so many arches.

Mrs. N. Constantine assumed the right of governing and modelling the church in such a manner as should be most conducive to the public good; but, with this reservation of supreme power, he judged it equitable that all questions of importance should be examined and decided by the representatives of the church: thus, when the fatal Arian controversy caused dissension, he convened a general council, in the city of Nice, for the purpose of settling the disputed points.

L. The Arian controversy! will you please to tell us something more about it?

Mrs. N. Of Arius, the author of the heresy which bears his name, it may be said, "Had he not possessed some apparent virtues, he would not have been able to do so great a mischief, nor have proved so formidable an adversary." He was a presbyter

of the church at Alexandria; and the rise of his fame was his opposition to the bishop of that city concerning the doctrine of the Trinity.

S. Excuse me, aunt, but do not puzzle us with doctrines; only just tell us how the matter ended.

Mrs. N. Since you are so fearful of being troubled with abstruse subjects, I will yield to your wish; merely remarking that Arius affirmed Jesus Christ to be inferior and subordinate to the Father. His opinions were no sooner divulged than they found a multitude of abettors; among whom were many distinguished for superiority of learning and exalted rank. The bishop of Alexandria, in a council, accused Arius of impiety, and caused him to be expelled from the communion of the church. Arius retired from the scene of contention, and wrote letters to the most eminent Christians; in which he endeavoured to demonstrate the truth of his opinions, and engage them in his cause.

G. Why did not the emperor silence him?

Mrs. N. Constantine, at first, viewed the matter with indifference, and contented himself with addressing a letter to both parties, admonishing them to put an end to their disputes; but when he saw that his admonitions were without effect, and that troubles and commotions were spreading throughout the empire, he assembled the council of Nice.

G. I guess there would be fine squabbling work among them.

Mrs. N. Before the immediate business of the synod was entered upon, the attention of the Chris-

tian fathers was arrested, by the attempts of some pagan philosophers to involve them in verbal subtleties, that they might enjoy their mutual contradictions and recriminations. One, who distinguished himself above the rest by the pomp and arrogancy of his pretensions, was coolly answered by an aged sufferer in the late persecutions, who undertook to contend with him. A laugh was raised by the scoffers; while the Christians were distressed for the issue of a contest apparently so unequal. "Hear, philosopher," said he, "there is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; who made all these things by the power of his Word, and confirmed them by the holiness of his Spirit. This Word, whom we call the Son of God, compassionating the sons of men, involved in error and wickedness, chose to be born of a woman, to converse with men, and to die for them; and he will come again, the Judge of all things which men have done in the body. That these things are so, we believe, in simplicity: do not then labour in vain, seeking to confute things which ought to be received by faith, and investigating the manner in which things may or may not be: but if thou believest, answer me, now that I ask thee." Struck with this plain, authoritative address, the philosopher said, "I do believe;" with pleasure owned himself vanquished; confessed that he embraced the same sentiments with the old man; and advised the other philosophers to do the same.

L. That was a good beginning of the council:

I hope the old man spoke to Arius in the same way.

Mrs. N. If he did, it had not the same effect. The Arian party presented their confession of faith; also a letter from Eusebius of Nicomedia, who advocated their cause. Both were rejected as heretical. The Nicene Creed, substantially as we now have it, was adopted; Constantine declaring that whoever disputed these articles of faith should be banished. Arius was deposed, excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria.

G. I am glad Constantine was not called the arch-emperor, if he had so mean a spirit as to banish people because they thought differently from himself.

Mrs. N. In this century was adopted that most pernicious maxim, that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to, are punishable with civil penalties and corporeal tortures. This, being directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel, proves that Scriptural piety was at a low ebb; and, though it forms a pleasing feature in the signs of the times, that nearly the whole catholic church bore testimony to the proper deity of the Son of God, a cloud of superstitions began to conceal the divine simplicity of truth. It may be proper to remark here, that the name "catholic" was now introduced to distinguish the true universal church from the Arian and other sects.

S. Aunt, will you tell us what you mean by superstitions?

Mrs. N. A faithful narration of church history will compel me to detail much that is offensive to Christianity; but, I trust, your minds are so furnished with correct views of the spirituality of our holy religion, that human inventions will be seen, not as adorning, but as disfiguring it. One form of superstition now introduced was that of pilgrimage to places considered sacred, from having been associated with holy deceased persons. Helena, the mother of the emperor, though advanced in years, set the example of visiting Jerusalem, the scene of our Saviour's sufferings and death.

S. Now, aunt, you must allow me to differ from you in thinking that superstition; for, if I were a rich lady, and could do as I liked, I would just do as Helena did. I would go and visit the manger at Bethlehem, and the garden of Gethsemane, and the cross on Calvary; and then the sight of those places would make me think more about our Saviour, and I should grow holier and better every day.

Mrs. N. Your enthusiasm leads you to draw wrong conclusions. I readily admit that there would be a feeling of peculiar interest excited in every Christian who might visit those places hallowed by the remembrance of our Saviour's love. The famous Gregory Nyssen, one of the first fathers of the church who undertook a pilgrimage, contemplated with delight the scenes of our Lord's abode upon earth; but he confesses that he found little of true religion at Jerusalem, and returned home sorrowful. He wrote to the ladies who had hospitably entertained

him, cautioning them against being imposed upon by those who abused their kindness. And, afterward, being asked by a friend whether he considered pilgrimage a part of religion, he answered in the negative; declaring his opinion, that a person had more reason to expect the Spirit of God where true piety prevailed than at Jerusalem, where there was little of its power. But Helena was not less zealous than yourself: she caused a temple of Venus, which had been built on the supposed site of the holy sepulchre, to be demolished, and a splendid structure to be erected in its stead. Upon taking away the rubbish, a cavern was discovered, wherein were three crosses; which immediately obtained the credit of being those upon which our Saviour and the two thieves suffered. The real cross was distinguished from the others by the virtue of its healing power; for no sooner did a sick woman touch it than she was restored to health. Instantly, the precious relic was cut in two; one half was enclosed in a silver case, and given to the bishop of Jerusalem, with the privilege of distributing small portions of it as particular favours; and the other half was transported to the emperor. This is the epoch of that memorable event in ecclesiastical history called, The Invention or Finding of the true Cross; which, in after ages, yielded daily its precious wood to the desires of an infinite number of applicants, without any diminution.

G. I should be silly, if I believed that. But, mamma, the island Bonaparte lived in is called St. Helena: has that any thing to do with it?

Mrs. N. After such expressions of zeal and liberality, Helena was sainted and highly honoured; and the island, being discovered on the supposed anniversary of her death, was called by her name. Her body is said to be in an abbey in France, and also at Rome; but the credulity of believing it to be in two places at once, is not greater than that which appears in the age we are reviewing. Frequent pilgrimages were made to the Holy Land, and to the tombs of martyrs; from which places quantities of dust were brought, and sold at enormous prices, as the never-failing antidotes of sickness and disease. Rumours were spread of prodigies and miracles to be seen at certain times and places; and tombs were found in every town, of saints, martyrs, and confessors. Pious frauds were practised with impunity; it being adopted as a maxim, that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, if by that means the interests of the church could be promoted.

S. Now, aunt, I did not think you would be so unkind as to speak of all the people's believing what only the ignorant and vulgar did.

Mrs. N. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop of Constantinople, is no mean authority; and, were it necessary, many other writers of note might be cited in proof of the assertion. He says, "A little portion of dust, a particle of bones, a little hair, part of a vestment, or the marks of the blood of the martyr, sprinkled, ought to have as much veneration as the whole body. Nay, I have known where only the name of the martyr, attributed to a place, has pro-

duced the same virtue that the martyr's whole body would have done. The memory alone of martyrs is sufficient, in my opinion, to confer health." But to return to your accusation of my uncharitableness. The ignorant and the vulgar only could not have effected the changes that were wrought. Forged writings of Dionysius, the Areopagite, (whose name occurs in the New Testament,) were published, to favour the doctrine, that communion with God was to be sought by mortifying sense, and retirement from secular affairs. These notions were received with such avidity, that, in a short time, the whole East was filled with solitaries and monks; the solitaries wore out life in the wildest deserts, in caves, or in the hollow of rocks; the monks were confined within the walls of a large building, under strict subordination to superiors, who practised and enjoined the greatest austerities and penances.

L. Well, sister, if we had lived in those days, you should have gone on pilgrimage, and I would have joined the monks. I fancy retirement would suit my taste better than yours: but perhaps there were no lady-monks or nuns?

Mrs. N. Monasteries for females were also established; and the bishop of Milan was censured by many of the citizens for his zeal in persuading their daughters to enter. He introduced the method of responsive singing into the church; also the doxology, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," in opposition to the Arian form, "Glory be to the Father, *by* the Son, *in* the Holy Ghost."

L. Then have we not done with the Arians?

Mrs. N. We left Arius in banishment: but he was again brought into public notice. A few years after the council of Nice, an Arian priest, who had been recommended to the emperor by his dying sister, persuaded Constantine that the condemnation of Arius was unjust, and rather owing to the malice of his enemies than to their zeal for truth. In consequence of this, he was recalled from banishment; the laws which had been enacted against him were repealed; and protection was granted both to him and his followers. Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, obstinately refused to restore Arius to his former rank and office: for this contumacy he was deposed and banished. The people of Alexandria also persisted in refusing Arius a place among their presbyters; upon which the emperor invited him to Constantinople, and ordered the bishop of that city to admit him to his communion. The bishop prostrated himself before the altar in the church, and gave himself to fasting and prayer. He begged that, if Arius was in the right, he himself might not live to see the day of contest; but that, if the faith was true which he professed, Arius, the author of all the evils, might suffer the punishment of his impiety. The anticipated day dawned; and it promised to be a triumphant one to the Arians. The heads of the party paraded the streets of the city with Arius in the midst; when he was suddenly taken ill, and expired.

S. It has just occurred to my mind that, most

likely, Constantinople was named after Constantine.

Mrs. N. You are correct in your supposition. Constantine transferred the imperial residence from Rome to the ancient Byzantium, which he rebuilt, and called by his own name. This circumstance operated greatly in checking the prerogatives of the bishop of Rome, whose opulence and dignity, arising from the privileges and honours conferred upon Roman citizens, had of late greatly surpassed those of his brethren, and led them to refer some important controversial matters to his decision. Constantine, enriching the new city with all the rights and splendour of the ancient capital of the world, extended his munificence also to the bishop of that see; who, thus assuming an equal degree of dignity with the Roman prelate, became a formidable rival.

L. Why did Constantine change his residence?

Mrs. N. The frequent incursions of barbarous nations, with the long-declared hostility of the Persians, made it desirable that the eastern part of the unwieldy empire should be favoured with the emperor's protection. These political measures promoted the spread of the gospel; though it were to be wished such an object had been gained in a less exceptionable manner. The Goths were permitted to pass the Danube, on condition that they should live in subjection to the Roman laws, and embrace the profession of Christianity; and in a treaty of peace made with the Persians, Constantine stipulated that the Christians in those dominions should enjoy peace

and protection. This, however, was disregarded; for three dreadful persecutions, the last of which continued for the space of forty years, desolated the Persian churches. It was not so much the religion of the Christians, but the suspicion of their treasonable designs against the state, that drew upon them this terrible calamity; the magi and the Jews having persuaded the monarch that all Christians were devoted to the interests of the Roman emperor.

G. It was very well to wish the Christians to have peace: but I do not like people to be forced to be Christians.

Mrs. N. Had Constantine experienced the power of religion, he would have known better than to suppose that coercive measures could imbue the savage mind with the benign influences of saving grace; and if his views related only to the nominal profession of Christianity, his conduct was inconsistent in enforcing upon others what he did not profess himself.

L. Did he not profess himself a Christian?

Mrs. N. He was only a catechumen until within a short time of his death, from a notion which was rapidly gaining ground, that remission of sins was received through the ordinance of baptism, and that immediately after the performance of this rite, the soul, pure and spotless, was in a fit state to enter the mansions of bliss. To this custom of delaying baptism, which now received the additional forms of anointing with oil, and tasting salt, milk, and honey, may be traced the Romish ceremony of extreme unction.

G. I wonder what sort of an emperor we shall have next?

Mrs. N. The three sons of Constantine were put in possession of the empire; and, though inferior to their father in natural genius, they followed his example in suppressing paganism and establishing Christianity. Constantius, who soon reigned sole monarch, was favourable to the Arian cause; and, for nearly thirty years, controversy was rife in the church. Peaceable spirits became absorbed in superstition, turbulent ones in ecclesiastical contentions. A venerable prelate who laboured in vain to preserve peace, significantly touched his white locks, saying, "When this snow melts, there will be much dirt." The greatest severities were inflicted upon those bishops who had been zealous for the Nicene faith; all of them being either banished or imprisoned. Even the pagans took courage, and assisted in the persecution, saying, "The Arians have embraced our religion." Athanasius, as the firm, unyielding advocate of the catholic church, suffered the greatest hardships; and it became a proverb and a byword, "All the world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the world!" Constantius endeavoured to atone for the corruptions, both of principle and practice, with which he had filled the church, by offering gold and silver vessels for the communion; carpets and curtains of gold tissue, adorned with precious stones, for the churches; and liberal donations to the clergy, virgins, and widows.

L. Gold and silver is but sorry payment for faith and love.

Mrs. N. From the canons of the councils held in these troublesome times, we cannot but form a very low estimate of the state of the church. Clergymen were ordered not to visit taverns, nor to assist at public shows, nor to practise magical enchantments; and the invocation of angels was prohibited.

G. What does the invocation of angels mean, mamma?

Mrs. N. It simply means praying to angels; which was the adoption of the well-known pagan custom of invoking demons, with but the slight difference of substituting martyrs and saints for heroes and philosophers.

G. I wonder the Christians had not more sense than to imitate pagans.

Mrs. N. This corruption of Christianity with pagan superstitions has proved most awful in its consequences. By tracing the error to its source, we find that the superstitious veneration attached to the memory of the martyrs had led to the practice of building churches over their supposed graves, or putting some of their bones or relics into the foundation of the edifices, and dedicating them to those particular saints. These churches being the usual places where prayer was offered to God, the idea became general, that any answers received to those prayers were at the suit and mediation of the martyr to whom the building was dedicated. This impression was strengthened by the miraculous cures,

revelations, and visions, which were said to be wrought at the monuments of the martyrs; and hence, by a people just emerging out of pagan credulity, the worship and honour of tutelar deities was transferred to deceased Christians.

L. Then, it seems, they really did pray to the martyrs. I thought what the council said was only to prevent them.

Mrs. N. Although the council of Laodicea denounced the invocation of angels as a secret kind of idolatry, and pronounced him that practised it to be accursed, it yet continued to gain ground. In one of the homilies we find the following passage:—"As often, dear brethren, as we do celebrate the solemnities of the holy martyrs, let us expect by their intercessions temporal benefits from the Lord, that, by imitating the martyrs themselves, we may deserve to receive eternal." The service adopted for the feast of All-Saints contained these words:—"Let their merits help us whom our own sins hinder; let their intercessions excuse us whose own actions condemn; and thou who hast bestowed upon them the palm of the heavenly triumph, deny not unto us the pardon of all our sin." Basil, the founder of monastic discipline, thus exhorted his congregation: "Be mindful of the martyr, as many as have enjoyed him by dreams; as many of you as, coming to this place, have had him a helper to your prayers; as many as to whom, being called by name, he showed himself present by his works; as many travellers as he hath brought back again; as many as he hath raised from

sickness; as many as he hath restored their children unto, having been dead; as many as have received by his means a longer life."

G. Mamma, it makes me think of what that foolish boy says for his prayers every night:—

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed which I lie on:
Cover me with watchful care,
And listen to my childish prayer.

"Four corners round my bed,
Four angels there are spread;
One to watch, two to pray,
One to bear my soul away."

Mrs. N. A faithful comment upon the beginnings of error, which yet assumed another form, that of conceding superior honour to the Virgin Mary, which, at first, was denominated "the woman's heresy."

S. Aunt, you know the Virgin Mary must have been better than other people; or else she would never have been the mother of our Lord; and the Scriptures do not forbid our thinking so.

Mrs. N. If we adhere to the Scriptures, we shall be in no danger of rendering more honour than is due.

S. But many things are good which are not exactly told in the Bible. You know, it is very good for us to have schools, and prisons, and workhouses; and we ought not to find fault with those people who established them, because the Bible did not tell them so.

Mrs. N. But supposing what our ancestors framed

are not *good*, such as theatres and gambling-houses, are we then to encourage them?

S. Nay; but what the saints and martyrs declared to be good, must have been good indeed.

Mrs. N. We have no reason to think that the first Christians yielded any degree of homage to the Virgin Mary: it was not until the third or fourth century that the subject appears to have been introduced into the church; and, even in those degenerate times, it excited the righteous indignation of several of the Christian fathers. Epiphanius asks, "What scriptures have delivered any thing concerning this? Which of the prophets hath permitted a man to be worshipped? I will not say a woman; for a choice vessel she is indeed, but yet a woman. Let Mary be in honour; but let the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be worshipped: let no man worship Mary. Go to, then, ye servants of God; let us put on a man-like mind, and beat down the madness of these women."

S. I begin to think it must be wrong; but to me there is something very beautiful in "Hail, most holy Mary, queen of heaven, and joy of the celestial world!"

Mrs. N. Such absurdity, not to say idolatry, presents nothing fascinating to me; nor did it to Julian the emperor, who in his childhood chanted her praise, but in riper years reviled our Saviour, as "the Galilean, the son of Mary."

G. Then have we another emperor?

Mrs. N. Julian the apostate succeeded to the

throne. He was educated in the principles of Christianity; but his aversion to the Constantine family, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of his father, brother, and other relatives, with the flattery of Platonic philosophers, determined him to revive paganism and overthrow Christianity. Altars were everywhere set up; and the whole machinery of heathenism was again brought into use. The act of sacrificing was the condition of preserving places of honour. The treasures of the churches were seized, with the reproachful taunt, that, "being poor here, they might be rich hereafter." Christian schoolmasters were forbidden to teach the arts and sciences; "lest," said the emperor, "being furnished with our armour, they make war upon us with our own weapons: our learning is unnecessary to Christians who are trained up to an illiterate rusticity, so that to believe is sufficient for them." Julian was meditating projects of a more hostile and formidable nature, upon his return from the Persian war; where, however, he received a mortal wound. Conscious of his approaching end, he exclaimed, "O Galilean, thou hast conquered!" and expired on the battle-field, having reigned only twenty months.

S. I fancy the Christians would not put on mourning for him.

Mrs. N. Julian's hatred to Christianity caused him to favour the Jews, whom he permitted to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. They set about the work with eagerness, but were obliged to desist before they had laid the foundation; for balls of fire, issuing

out of the ground, dispersed both the works and the workmen, and repeated earthquakes filled spectators with terror and dismay. Julian's dying testimony was equally true of his own attempts to subvert Christianity, and the design of the Jews to frustrate prophecy. His successor promoted the faith he had laboured to destroy; and he was the last Roman emperor who encouraged the rites of pagan divination.

G. Mamma, what was pagan divination?

Mrs. N. A superstitious belief that the most important events could be predicted by the flight of birds, by sacred chickens eating or refusing to eat, and by the appearance of the entrails of beasts. Eclipses, monsters, prodigies; in short, every unexpected occurrence was looked upon as lucky or unlucky, from which augurs or soothsayers drew the most inspiriting or heart-rending conclusions.

G. O how foolish, to think that birds and chickens could tell what was going to happen!

Mrs. N. The system of paganism had been supported by men of learning and genius, called sages and philosophers; and also by a most pompous and splendid ritual. The Christian emperors, in order to abrogate the worship of the gods, established Christian schools and libraries, and liberally rewarded the study of the arts and sciences; and to secure a general reception of Christianity, robes, mitres, tapers, and processions, with other pageantry, were transferred from heathenism into Christian worship. Gifts of individuals, consisting of figurative representations

of some particular benefit received, were suspended on pillars in the churches, in imitation of the custom of hanging tablets or shields in heathen temples; crosses were set up as distinguishing marks of the religion there professed; and pictures and images were introduced.

S. Then, aunt, if there had been neither pictures nor images before, how could it be told that they were like our Saviour, and the Virgin Mary, and the apostles?

Mrs. N. Any resemblance between the inventions and the originals must have been mere matter of conjecture. The introduction of pictures and images into the churches was censured by the Christian fathers, who, though acknowledged to be too superstitious, had yet discernment enough to detect the evil, and to foresee its consequences. A canon of the Eliberine council, toward the close of the fourth century, is to this effect: "It is our mind that pictures ought not to be in the church, lest that which is worshipped or adored should be painted upon the walls." Ambrose says, "The pagans worship wood, because they think it to be the image of God; but the image of the invisible God is not in that which is seen, but in that which is not seen: God would not have himself worshipped in stone." Augustus bears a decided testimony against the adoption of the practice: "It being utterly unlawful to erect any image to God in a Christian church." And the fact of Epiphanius's tearing down the representation of our Saviour in the church of Anablatha deserves to

be recorded: he says, "I found there a veil hanging at the door of the church, dyed and painted, and having the image as it were of Christ. When, therefore, I saw that, contrary to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the image of a man was hung up in the church of Christ, I cut it, and gave counsel to the keepers of the place that they should rather wrap and bury some poor dead man in it."

L. I have just been thinking how different this century is from the other three: no martyrs now-a-days.

Mrs. N. Superstition and secular prosperity obscured the glory of the church in the fourth century; but we are not to suppose that the spirit of Christianity was extinct. Monasticism, not, as afterward, corrupt and vicious, but austere and rigid, presented an asylum of repose to peaceful, humble souls; and no doubt the flower of the church

"Wasted its sweetness on the desert air."

Martin, who erected the first monasteries in France, and from his labours was called the apostle of Gaul, in crossing the Alps fell into the hands of robbers, who delivered him bound to one of the party to be plundered. When in a retired place he was asked who he was: "I am a Christian," replied the bishop. "Are you not afraid?" asked the robber. "I never was more at ease," replied Martin, "because I know the mercy of the Lord to be most present in trials: I am more concerned for you, who, by your course of life, render yourself unfit to partake of the mercy

of Christ." Seeing that the robber's attention was arrested, he preached to him the gospel: the man believed, attended his instructer to the road, afterward abandoned his profession, and became a Christian. As a proof of the rapid spread of monasticism, Martin's funeral was attended by two thousand monks, who had been under his jurisdiction in France.

G. Mamma, you have never told us who was the emperor since that apostate died.

Mrs. N. It is unnecessary to mention the names of his immediate successors; for, owing to their short reigns, their characters were not fully developed. Theodosius came into possession of the empire in the year 380. When the bishop of Iconium presented himself at court to offer his congratulations, it was observed by the emperor that he took no notice of his son, a boy about six years of age, who was standing near him; upon which he bade him salute the child. The bishop drew near, and, stroking him, said, "Save you, my child!" Theodosius, in anger, ordered the bishop to be driven from court; who replied, "You cannot bear to have your son contemned; and be assured, that God, in like manner, is offended with those who honour not his Son as himself." The emperor was struck with the justness of the remark, and immediately made a law to prohibit the assemblies of the Arians.

G. Ay, he would feel that; but, somehow, I do not like people to be forced into different religions.

Mrs. N. It was a negative kind of compulsion, if

compulsion it can be called; for they might still retain their respective opinions, without holding public assemblies. Theodosius acted in the same manner toward the pagans still remaining. In a deliberate speech to the senate, he endeavoured to persuade those who still patronized idolatry to embrace the Christian faith. They answered, that they would not give up a religion under which Rome had prospered for twelve hundred years. He then replied, that he saw no reason why he should maintain their religion, and that he should cease to furnish the customary supply out of the exchequer. The senators complained that the neglect of the rites was the cause why the empire declined so much; but the emperor was determined not to encourage idolatry; and during his reign it received a final overthrow as the religion of the state.

S. I wonder what became of all the gods!

Mrs. N. Heathenism was henceforward called "Paganism," or "village superstition," from its being long retained in smaller towns and more distant provinces; so that, probably, (to use a common expression,) the gods would die a natural death. One instance is recorded which may interest you. At Alexandria the votaries of the renowned temple of Serapis made an insurrection, and murdered a number of Christians. The emperor declared that he would not stain the glory of their martyrdom by any executions, but ordered the temple, which had been the cause of the insurrection, to be destroyed. In this temple was an image of Serapis, supposed to

possess extraordinary power: it had been confidently believed that, if any man touched it, the earth would open, the heavens be dissolved, and all things run back to a general chaos. The emperor's orders for its destruction were peremptory; and a soldier, animated by the bishop, took courage, lifted his axe, and cleft the head: an army of mice ran out of their hitherto-undisturbed retreat, and Serapis was hewed in pieces.

G. I like this emperor: he seems to have been a good man, and no coward.

Mrs. N. His clemency and liberality made him a general favourite: but anger was his besetting sin; and a barbarous act, to which the indulgence of passion led, may serve to describe both his character and that of the times. At Thessalonica, a tumult was made by the populace, and the emperor's officer murdered. Theodosius, in a rage, ordered the sword to be let loose upon them: the command was executed with great cruelty; and seven thousand were massacred in three hours without trial and without distinction. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, wrote thus to the emperor: "You discover a zeal for the faith and fear of God, I own: but your temper is warm; soon to be appeased, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not, it bears down all before it." He urged the example of David, and showed the impropriety of communicating with him at present. On these principles Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius into the church of Milan. The emperor pleaded the case of David's forgiveness. "Imitate

him," said the bishop, "in his repentance, as well as his sin." Theodosius submitted, and kept from the church eight months. On the feast of the nativity, he expressed his sorrow with sighs and tears: "I weep," said he, "that the temple of God, and consequently heaven, is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars." His chief officer undertook to persuade the bishop to admit him into the church, telling him the emperor was coming. "I will hinder him," said the bishop, "from entering the porch; yet if he will play the king, I shall offer him my throat." As the emperor approached the church, he said, "I come to offer myself to submit to what you prescribe." Ambrose enjoined him to do public penance, and to suspend the execution of warrants in future for thirty days. The emperor, pulling off his imperial robes, prostrated himself on the pavement, and with tears and prayers sought forgiveness. The robes were not resumed until the time of penance was expired; and he retained visible marks of compunction and sadness during the remainder of life. He died in the year 395; and with the termination of his life we will close our evening's conversation.

CONVERSATION VI.

CENTURIES V. AND VI.

Mrs. N. YOUR attendance at the lecture last evening, though an interruption in the pursuance of our present subject, will give you a faint idea of the manner in which the learning and eloquence of Chrysostom was received at the beginning of the fifth century. We are told that the people applauded his sermons; some by tossing their garments, others by moving their plumes, others by laying their hands upon their swords, and others by waiving their handkerchiefs, and crying out, "Thou art worthy of the priesthood, thou art the thirteenth apostle."

Sophia. O, I like those preachers that make us feel.

Mrs. N. Chrysostom's answer is worth remembering: "Applause, as soon as it is out of the mouth, is dispersed into the air and vanishes; but when the hearers grow better, this brings an immortal reward both to the speakers and hearers."

Lucy. Such an answer makes me hope that he was a good man.

Mrs. N. He was certainly one of the luminaries of the age, both for wisdom and piety; yet you must not expect to find him free from prevailing superstition. When elected to the office of a bishop, he practised a voluntary humility which had received the sanction of many of his predecessors; and,

professing himself unworthy of the dignity, he retired into solitude, and spent the prime of his life in a cave. But though thus favouring monastic piety, his spirit was roused to oppose the invocation of angels. After his appointment to the see of Constantinople, he laboured, both in public and in private, to root out this error, and frequently directed the attention of his hearers to the conduct of the woman of Canaan: "She entreateth not James, she beseecheth not John, neither doth she come to Peter; but she broke through the whole company, saying, 'I have no need of a mediator, have thou mercy upon me.' The disciples petitioning for her, she could obtain nothing, until she herself, being instant in prayer, drew forth the clemency of the Lord; showing that we do not so prevail when we entreat others, as when we ourselves come with fervour, and with vigilant minds."

S. But, aunt, do not you think that sinners would be more encouraged to ask forgiveness, if they thought some good angel was praying for them?

Mrs. N. Supposing your hypothesis to be true, that angels are allowed to plead the cause of sinners, how could sinners in different places command the attention of the same angel? Athanasius justly reasoned, "How can Peter or Paul, or any apostle or martyr, be at the same hour in many places; it being proper unto God alone to be found in the same instant in two places?" But as the invocation of angels depends only upon tradition for support, the opinions of the two principal fathers of the church

in the fifth century concerning it must be important. Augustine, in his Confessions, asks, "Whom should I find that might reconcile me unto thee? should I go to the angels? with what prayer? with what sacraments? Many endeavouring to return unto thee, (as I have heard,) have tried these things, and have fallen into the desire of curious visions: to whom else should I cry but unto thee?" Chrysostom says, "When thou hast need to sue unto men, thou art forced first to deal with door-keepers, and to entreat parasites and flatterers; but with God there is no such matter: thou mayest always and continually solicit him, and thou shalt meet with no difficulty; for thou shalt have no need of any door-keepers to bring thee in, nor stewards, nor procurators, nor keepers, nor friends; but when thou thyself comest by thyself, then will he most of all hear thee, even then, when thou entreatest none." Elsewhere he says, "This is the enchantment of devils; though an angel, though an archangel, though the cherubim, endure it not: for neither will these powers themselves admit it, but reject it, when they see their Lord dishonoured."

George. I like this Chrysostom: no wonder, I think, that people were so glad to hear him.

Mrs. N. Chrysostom proved how empty and vain is human applause. His real name was John; the surname Chrysostom, the meaning of which is "golden mouth," was given to him on account of his eloquence: and his sermons were taken down by short-hand writers for publication. But the ad-

miration of the multitude could not screen him from the treachery of enemies. When bishop of Constantinople, his boldness in reproving the follies and vices of the court excited imperial wrath, and favoured the designs of a rival bishop to effect his ruin. Both conspired to procure his banishment into an inhospitable region, where death shortly terminated his sufferings.

G. Mamma, part of my lesson this morning at school was about the Roman empire: I will repeat it to you:—"Question. Who first weakened the foundations of the Roman empire? Answer. Alaric, king of the Goths. Question. What prince was called, 'the scourge of God, the destroyer of nations?' Answer. Attila, king of the Huns, because he ravaged and destroyed the Roman empire."

Mrs. N. I am very glad that you are able to anticipate me in the narration of these events. The irruption of barbarous tribes, during the fifth century, was awful and overwhelming. It appeared a sudden and simultaneous burst of warring elements, reducing the forms of ancient greatness to ruins, and on every hand spreading confusion and dismay. Alaric, king of the Goths, besieged Rome in the year 410, took it, pillaged it, and ravaged all Italy; the Vandals made themselves masters of Africa; and Attila, king of the Huns, completed the destruction of the Roman empire in the year 442.

S. But what became of the Christians?

Mrs. N. Many of the Goths previously professed Christianity; so that their incursion did not affect

the peace of the church: indeed, it rather aided the ambition of the Roman bishop; for the conquerors, only solicitous about establishing their respective governments, and perceiving the subjection of the multitude to their bishops, and the subservience of the bishops to the Roman pontiff, secured their own interests by loading him with benefits. It was when the bishop of Rome thus rose in favour and eminence, that he thought of deriving the prerogatives of his see from the apostle Peter. He acknowledged that Antioch, as well as Rome, had been the see of Peter; but contended that it ought to yield to Rome's precedence, because Peter there accomplished what he began at Antioch.

G. Then was he the first pope?

Mrs. N. The name pope, or papa, was a title of reverence given to all the bishops, signifying, "dear and honoured father."

G. Suppose, then, that I call my papa, pope; would he be angry?

Mrs. N. Modern usage has fixed a very different idea to the meaning of the two words; but pope formerly expressed only endearment and reverence. New languages and customs were introduced by the barbarians, which caused the more ancient ones to become obsolete. Thus Latin, which had hitherto been the language commonly spoken by the Romans, now gave place to the vulgar dialects of the invaders, and henceforth became a dead language, used only to express law terms, and retained in the service of the church. New fashions were also introduced;

and the clergy, by adhering to the old Roman costume, soon acquired a peculiarity, which afterward distinguished the clergy from the laity.

S. And did the Romans sit quietly down, and let the barbarians do just what they pleased?

Mrs. N. They appear to have been overwhelmed by force and numbers. Those who yet remained pagans, attributed all the calamities which had befallen the empire to the influence of Christianity. They maintained that, before the coming of Christ, the world was blessed with peace and prosperity; but that, since his religion had become known, the gods, filled with indignation to see their worship neglected, and their altars abandoned, had visited the earth with plagues and desolations.

L. That would seem very plausible in the time of trouble.

Mrs. N. Augustine ably refuted these assertions in a work called, "The City of God;" in which he states all the objections made by the pagans, and answers them in form. He takes notice of the fact that, at the capture of Rome, all who fled to the churches, whether Christians or not, were preserved from military fury; and answers the objection, that Christians, as well as others, were led away captive, by acknowledging that they would indeed be wretched if taken where God is not; but strongly insists that the saint loses nothing by his afflictions.

G. Mamma, who was Augustine?

Mrs. N. He was bishop of Hippo in Africa, and one of the last entitled to the name of a "father of

the church." In his Confessions, he makes some beautiful allusions to the piety of his mother Monica, and also describes with great clearness his own conversion; but though it is evident that his views of Christianity were in some degree affected through prevailing superstition, he has ever been venerated for his learning and piety. To Augustine the church is indebted for having suppressed the Pelagian heresy.

S. Now, I suppose, we must patiently listen until Lucy understands the ins and outs of the Pelagian heresy.

Mrs. N. That will not exhaust your patience; for the doctrine of Pelagius, the author of the heresy, may be stated in few words: "That the sin of Adam hurt himself alone, and not mankind; and that every individual, being created pure, needs only external aid in order to be virtuous and happy."

L. Then the author of the book we were reading the other day seems to have been a disciple of Pelagius; for, if you remember, aunt, he said that an infant was like a sheet of blank paper, which you might, by education, fill with what characters you please.

Mrs. N. You are right in your conjecture. The Socinianism of the present day is, in part, a revival of the ancient Pelagianism.

S. I am glad Pelagianism meets with such a quick despatch.

Mrs. N. Although the error in its radical form was soon crushed, the controversy was productive

of others, which continue even to this day. In refutation of Pelagianism, Augustine stated his opinion concerning the necessity of divine grace, and the decrees of God respecting the salvation of men. No sooner were his sentiments divulged, than certain monks stretched his opinions far beyond their original meaning, and framed a notion, "that both the good and the bad actions of men were determined from eternity by a divine decree, and fixed by an invincible necessity."

L. They must surely have been Calvinists!

Mrs. N. The name of Calvin being then unknown, they were called predestinarians. To discuss the subject of free-will, as done by subsequent controversialists, would not only weary Sophia, but also myself; I will therefore only mention that a different modification of Augustine's sentiments was given: "That grace is not necessary for repentance, the first exercise of faith, or to form the purpose of obedience; but only for advancement in holiness." This doctrine, called Semi-Pelagianism, was so consonant with the views of the monastic orders, that it spread far and wide, and became the general belief of the church.

G. But, mamma, why did not people explain the Bible, instead of what Augustine said?

Mrs. N. Human authority was fast usurping the place of divine; the African oracle was consulted rather than the inspired word of God; and the submission of private judgment to the decision of an erring mortal paved the way for the concession of

thought, reason, and sense, to the church's infallibility.

L. Yet, aunt, to me it appears strange that none were found to think right.

Mrs. N. In taking a general survey, we are apt to overlook isolated cases; but such, no doubt, existed. In more auspicious times, Vigilantius would have stood forward as a bold reformer. He was a presbyter in Spain, and popular for his learning and eloquence, and for propagating doctrines quite opposite to the opinions and manners then commonly received. He denied that the tombs and bones of martyrs ought to be honoured with any sort of homage or worship, censured the pilgrimages that were taken to places reputed holy, turned into derision the prodigies which were said to be wrought in the temples consecrated to martyrs, condemned the custom of performing vigils in them, and treated with contempt fasting and mortification, the celibacy of the clergy, and the various austerities of the monastic life. He asserted that the custom of burning tapers at the tombs of the martyrs was borrowed from pagan superstition; that prayers addressed to departed saints were void of all efficacy; and that the conduct of those who submitted to the hardships of a voluntary poverty, by distributing their substance to the indigent, or sending it to Jerusalem, had nothing in it acceptable to God. But his efforts to restore the simplicity of Christianity were utterly ineffectual: Jerome, the great monk of the age, assailed him with such bitterness and fury, that

silence was the only preservation of his life; and the name of Vigilantius was unhesitatingly classed in the list of heretics who had attempted to subvert the true faith of the church.

G. I would rather be called a heretic than believe such foolish nonsense.

Mrs. N. An additional link was added to the chain of error in the general belief of purgatory. To quote the language of Archbishop Usher, "Augustine doth show that, in his time, not only some, but exceeding many, did, out of a humane affection, take compassion of the eternal pains of the damned, and would not believe that they should never have an end. Neither is it to be forgotten that the invention of 'All-souls' day,' wherein they most devoutly perform all their superstitious observance for the dead, was occasioned by the apprehension that the souls of the damned might not only be eased, but fully delivered, by the alms and prayers of the living."

S. But I should think, aunt, that he gives a different colouring to it.

Mrs. N. Since you are fearful of crediting the testimony of others, I will refer to the first intimations of purgatory in the writings of the fathers. Chrysostom says, when speaking of the deceased wicked, "They are not so much to be lamented as succoured with prayers, and supplications, and alms, and oblations." Augustine thus expresses himself: "The oblations and alms offered in the church for the dead having received baptism, are to be accounted thanksgivings for such as were good, propitiations

for such as were bad; and though they be no helps to the notoriously bad, yet are they some consolation to the living." To confirm the doctrine of purgatory, it was said that Jerome raised up three men from the dead, who had been in paradise, purgatory, and hell, that they might make known unto men the things which they had seen. This miracle was considered a divine attestation to the truth of the doctrine, which was afterward received as a tenet of Catholic faith.

G. O, mamma, you cannot be in earnest!

Mrs. N. The inundation of barbarism ushered in that night of darkness and ignorance in which, for so many ages, the nations of Europe were shrouded. Credulity and superstition abounded; and pious frauds, pretended miracles, affected sanctity, and monastic austerities, were proportioned to the degeneracy of the times, and were regarded by the multitude as the unquestionable evidences of Christianity.

L. But how could the three men be made to believe that they had been raised from the dead?

Mrs. N. It would be no difficult matter, I apprehend, then, any more than now, to find individuals who could be bought over to make false assertions; and others, who might accidentally become acquainted with the fact, would be intimidated by the dangers which surrounded them from exposing the fraud. Thus the prudent would be silent, the multitude believe, and the impostors triumph.

S. Well, aunt, I cannot do with any thing like deceit; but you know, there are even now many

hypocrites among us, and most likely in those times there would be many more: and so we must not charge those bad things which they did upon the Catholics any more than upon Protestants.

Mrs. N. It would be wrong to attribute any thing morally bad to Christianity: but the comparison of hypocrites in the present day with the inventors of fraud in former days, is unjust, since the voice of the Protestant church is against deception, either in character or conduct; whereas you will find that no sooner did the errors of Popery supplant the truth, than the voice of the church sanctioned artifice and injustice, falsehood and vice, in the promotion of its own interests. Thus, when Patrick, in the year 431, undertook to convert the uncivilized natives of Ireland, he had recourse to fiction, in asserting the wonderful efficacy of a staff, which he pretended to have received from a holy man, who had it immediately from our Lord.

G. And did the holy man live to be four hundred years old?

Mrs. N. The incredibility of the transmission was lost sight of in the supposed virtue of this holy relic, which was said to be our Lord's own workmanship; as also the inconsistency between the humble circumstances of the carpenter's son with the staff covered with gold, and adorned with all manner of precious stones. With this staff, it is said, Patrick cast out all the venomous beasts of the island, and performed wonderful cures. The number and importance of his pious exploits stand upon record, as

proofs of his resolution and patience, of his dexterity and address; and have procured for him the title of "The Apostle of the Irish, and the Father of the Hibernian Church." It is said that he founded three hundred and sixty-five churches, ordained the same number of bishops, and three thousand presbyters: but whether his missionary zeal was prompted by the pure feeling of benevolence, or a less hallowed principle, must be left to the decision of the Searcher of hearts.

G. Mamma, did they invent any thing else?

Mrs. N. It is not my intention to relate the foolish absurdities of a corrupt church any further than to convey a general idea of the progress of superstition. A slight glance at the intermediate centuries will serve to connect the decline of primitive Christianity with its revival at the Reformation. When Africa bowed under the yoke of the Vandals, who professed Arianism, those Christians who acknowledged the divinity of Christ were cruelly persecuted. A stupendous miracle is said to have been wrought, declarative of the divine displeasure against the Arians, and of favour toward the Catholics; several of whom, having been deprived of their tongues in order to prevent their open confession of the Trinity, retained the same power of speech as formerly, and continued to proclaim the divinity of the Saviour. The fact that they could afterward speak distinctly, appears to have been supported by creditable testimony; but whether it was or was not the effect of supernatural agency, has been disputed.

G. Well, I will not have my tongue cut out to try whether I could speak without it.

Mrs. N. Miracles are reported to have always accompanied the extension or confirmation of the Christian faith. The inhabitants of a mountainous region, much infested with wild beasts, implored the assistance of Simeon, a monk, popular for affected sanctity, to free them from the annoyance. He returned for answer, that the only effectual method was to abandon the worship of the gods, and substitute Christianity in its place. As a reward for their prompt obedience to his counsel, the savage enemies immediately forsook their habitations.

S. Aunt, you say Simeon was popular for affected sanctity:—would it not be better to give him credit for what he professed?

Mrs. N. Simeon's conduct declares him to have been a real fanatic: he introduced the order of "pillar saints," who were persons held in great veneration for standing motionless upon the tops of pillars expressly raised for the exercise of their patience. Simeon, in order to climb as near to heaven as possible, passed thirty-seven years of wretched life upon five pillars, which increased in height in proportion to the length of time spent upon them; and his example was followed by many, though not, perhaps, with equal austerity. I fancy you will not now question the justness of the term "affected sanctity," as descriptive of his character.

S. O no: I can assure you, aunt, I should never have been one of his followers. Lucy would have

been more likely; for I often tell her she is "patience on a monument."

Mrs. N. I entertain a higher opinion of Lucy's good sense than to suppose she would be influenced by such absurdity; but it shows the increasing power of superstition for such fanaticism to be tolerated, much less venerated. A singular efficacy was also now attributed to the figure of the cross, in defeating the attempts of Satan, and removing all sorts of calamities. Crosses were erected in all public places, and at the junction of streets and roads: the veneration attached to them was found to promote the interests of mendicants, who were most eager to station themselves near the holy crucifix, and beg alms in the name of Jesus. Images of the Virgin Mary, holding the child Jesus in her arms, obtained precedence in the adorning of churches, the riches and magnificence of which exceeded all former ideas of grandeur.

L. Did the church itself place the Virgin Mary first, or was it only the people?

Mrs. N. Perhaps the best answer to your question may be found in the liturgies, which must certainly be considered as the language of the church itself. In the liturgy of Constantinople we read: "We offer unto thee this reasonable service for those who are at rest in the faith; our forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, religious persons, and every spirit perfected in the faith; but especially for our most holy, immaculate, most blessed lady, the

mother of God, the Virgin Mary." In the Egyptian liturgy: "Be mindful, O Lord, of thy saints; vouchsafe to remember all thy saints which have pleased thee from the beginning; our holy fathers the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, preachers, evangelists, and all the souls of the just who have died in the faith; and especially the holy, glorious, the evermore Virgin Mary, the mother of God."

G. I think the church soon got from bad to worse.

Mrs. N. Another grievous error confirms your opinion. It had been for some time a custom that, in the first day of Lent, (or the forty days' fast before Easter,) penitents should appear publicly before the congregation in the habit of mourners, with ashes upon their heads, which caused the day to be distinguished by the name of Ash-Wednesday; but a disinclination on the part of the people to conform with this rule led to the adoption of less severe measures. We find from ancient records, that "certain in Italy did so perform their penance that they caused a writing to be publicly read, containing a confession of their several sins. Leo, who was at that time bishop of Rome, decreed, that by all means such a course should be broken off; forasmuch as it was sufficient that the guilt of men's consciences should be declared in secret confession to the priests alone. 'For although,' said he, 'the fulness of faith may seem to be laudable, which, for the fear of God, doth not fear to blush before men; yet, because all men's sins are not of that kind that they may not

fear to publish such of them as require repentance, let so inconvenient a custom be removed; lest many be driven away from the remedies of repentance, while either they are alarmed or afraid to disclose their deeds unto their enemies, whereby they may be drawn within the peril of the laws. For that confession is sufficient which is offered, first unto God, and then unto the priest, who cometh as an intercessor for the sins of the penitent; for then, at length, more may be provoked to repentance, if that the conscience of him who confesseth be not published to the ears of the people.' "

S. Yes, aunt; that is the kind of confession which the Roman Catholics have now.

Mrs. N. I am aware that this was the first general sanction of auricular confession; but it differed in one point from that which is now observed in the Roman Church: the confession of sins, even unto the priest, was entirely at the option of the offender; penance being still regarded as a voluntary act, which no one could be compelled to perform.

G. Mamma, is our pretty spaniel, Leo, called after the bishop of Rome?

Mrs. N. Our faithful dog certainly bears the name of the Roman pontiff. Leo, surnamed the Great, acquired celebrity, both for his learning and his ambition; every object, every consideration, was made to yield to the aggrandizement of his see; or, in other words, to extend his power and authority. Many checks were given to his encroachments; and the council of Chalcedon enacted, that the same

rights and honours which had been conferred upon the bishop of Rome, were due to the bishop of Constantinople, on account of the equal dignity of the two cities in which these prelates exercised their authority. This canon engaged the two rival bishops in perpetual disputes about the extent and limits of their respective jurisdictions; each aspiring to supreme power.

G. I do not think it looks well for bishops to quarrel.

Mrs. N. A violent contest was raised by the election of two bishops to the Roman see, by different parties, on the same day. Each maintained the validity of his election, and they reciprocally accused each other of the most odious crimes; and, to their mutual dishonour, the charges did not appear to be false. Three different councils endeavoured, but without success, to terminate this disgraceful schism, which divided both the city and the church; a fourth was called, and by it the pontiff, favoured by the king, was acquitted of the crimes laid to his charge, and confirmed in the episcopal see. This contention belongs rather to the beginning of the sixth century than to the close of the fifth; but, as increasing ignorance and superstition produced a dearth of both information and piety, I think we may embrace the particulars of the sixth century in our evening's conversation.

S. I am very glad you are not giving over, aunt; for I begin to see how little things, which at first did not appear of much consequence, supposing they

were wrong, made the church very different from what it was in the apostles' days.

Mrs. N. As great a disparity also existed between the conversion of nations to the Christian faith, and the personal salvation which the gospel prescibes. All that was required of nations now embracing Christianity amounted to a profession of faith in Christ, a rehearsal of the creed, and the transfer of the worship formerly offered to the gods to the image of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.

G. Why, mamma, they could only be half Christians.

Mrs. N. Many nations were thus brought over to Christianity, which yet retained their former impiety, superstition, and licentiousness. The barbarians judged a religion excellent in proportion to the success in arms which crowned those who professed it; and, when they saw the Romans possessed of an empire much more extensive than that of any other people, they concluded that Christ, their God, was of all others most worthy of being worshipped. It was this principle which led Clovis, a barbarian prince who founded the kingdom of the Franks in Gaul, to implore the assistance of Christ in a battle which threatened to prove desperate to his cause. Victory decided in his favour; and, faithful to his engagement, he, with three thousand of his subjects, was baptized.

G. And was there any miracle performed?

Mrs. N. Many wonderful things are reported to

have been wrought, which are utterly unworthy of credit. The principal prodigy was a vial full of oil, said to have been brought from heaven by a milk-white dove during the ceremony of baptism, but which, no doubt, was one of the many pious frauds commonly practised in order to captivate the minds of a rude and barbarous people.

L. How wicked the priests must have been to invent such things!

Mrs. N. Their conduct has this extenuation, that they were blind leaders of the blind: the ignorance and superstition of the clergy were proportionate to that of the multitude; and a stupid zeal for a senseless round of rites and ceremonies was considered the essence of true religion. As private penance prevailed, the opinion of the divine forgiveness only through the priest gained ground; and the idea soon became general, that the remission of sins was to be purchased by gifts to the monks and clergy; and also, that prayers to deceased saints were to be bought by offerings presented to the temples dedicated unto them. Hence the wealth of the church and the clergy became great. The magnificent church of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, contained ornaments to the value of forty thousand pounds of silver; and it is said that the emperor, viewing its splendour at the time of dedication, exclaimed, "I have surpassed thee, Solomon!" In the space of two centuries after Constantine, one thousand eight hundred churches of the empire were endowed by gifts; and a council held at Orleans enacted, that,

"if any person desired to have a church on his estate, he should first be obliged to endow it, and to find an incumbent." This was the origin of church patronage.

L. Can you tell us any more rules of the council?

Mrs. N. It was decreed, that "any one who should neglect to observe the fast of Lent, should be treated as an offender against the laws of the church; and that all laymen who should not receive the communion three times a year, at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, should be looked upon as heathens."

L. I thought, aunt, that you said, all the Christians partook of the Lord's supper every Lord's day.

Mrs. N. In earlier and better times that was the custom; but the practice had been adopted for many of the members of the church to retire from the assembly before the celebration of the eucharist, which caused them to be divided into communicants and non-communicants. The canon of the mass, which was a considerable augmentation of the ancient method of celebrating the Lord's supper, was instituted during the sixth century. It appointed the canonical hour for celebrating the mass to be nine o'clock; a new and lengthened formulary was introduced; the additional expressions, "The body (or blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul," were used in the distribution; the burning of incense in token of the eucharist being a sacrifice was ordered; and the chanting of *Agnus Dei*, with Psalm cxxxix, was enjoined. Public processions during the high festivals, and on other

occasions, became common, and laws were made to protect them from interruption. Many and various ceremonies were observed in these processions: crucifixes, images, and other emblems, were carried; the clergy attended in their official capacity, sometimes taking their place at the head of the line, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes in the rear. When celebrated on occasions of joy or thanksgiving, the clergy wore their most splendid vestments, the laity were dressed in their best attire, adorned with garlands and other ornaments, and the sound of musical instruments gave hilarity to the scene; but on occasions of mourning or penitence, all this was reversed, and the procession was distinguished by coarse garments, bare feet, dejected countenances, a deep silence, or sounds of lamentation and mournful prayer, and sometimes the exercise of penitential flagellation.

G. I would never have submitted to be flogged by those monks and priests!

Mrs. N. I think it very probable that many of them merited the flagellation equally with the penitents; for one of their own writers, when speaking of the austere monks, conveys no favourable idea of either their character or conduct. He says, "While they do feed upon bread by measure; for this very thing they do glory without measure; while they use water, they are drenched in the cup of hatred; while they feed on dry meats, they use detractions; preferring fasting before charity, watching before justice, severity before humility, and man before God."

A new order of monks now arose, established by Benedict, the discipline of which was milder, and the manners more simple and regular, than the other monastic bodies. The rules required them to divide their time between prayer, reading, the education of youth, and works of charity; and though in these forms the spirit of godliness cannot be recognised, the retention of even the semblance of learning in their monasteries preserved it from total extinction during the dark ages; and it was through the labours of these Benedictine monks that England became attached to the Roman Church.

S. O then, we have got to England at last!

Mrs. N. Our history now brings us to consider the religious state of our native country. From authentic records there is reason to believe that Christianity prevailed to a great extent among our ancestors before the invasion of the Saxons; but the ferocity and idolatry of these invaders obliged the Christians to seek refuge in the mountains of Cornwall, Wales, and Scotland. A monastery at Bangor was their last retreat; and the Saxons, becoming possessed of the island, formed seven kingdoms, called the Heptarchy.

G. I think the Britons were just served right for being such cowards: for, you know, mamma, when the Romans left them to themselves, instead of driving those Picts and Scots back again, they asked the Saxons to come and fight their battles for them; and then the Saxons, instead of helping them, conquered them.

Mrs. N. It gives me pleasure to hear that you have not forgotten the particulars of English history; but perhaps you may not be acquainted with the fact, that the names now commonly used to distinguish the days of the week are remnants of idolatry, they being given in honour of the Saxon gods.

G. Then what did they call the days before?

Mrs. N. It is impossible to say what expressions were used in a state of barbarism: the Romans had different names, likewise significant of their deities; but the Jews, as you will find in the Scriptures, used only numbers, such as the first, second, or third day of the week. I may also mention that in the sixth century was introduced the custom of reckoning the years from the birth of Jesus Christ: prior to that time, different nations adopted the most remarkable epochs of their history as the eras from which they computed time. The Jews, being intrusted with the oracles of God, were able to reckon from the creation, or year of the world.

S. Now, aunt, pray tell us about the conversion of England.

Mrs. N. I question whether the word "conversion" be properly applied; but the introduction of a corrupt Christianity into England claims our attention. It was about one hundred and fifty years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, that Gregory, bishop of Rome, sent his famous mission into our island. The idea appears to have been prompted by his seeing several handsome youths exposed in the streets of Rome for sale. Asking of what country

they were, he was informed they were from Britain, and that the inhabitants of the island were pagans. "Alas!" said he, sighing, "that the prince of darkness should possess countenances so lovely!" Upon further learning that they were from the kingdom of Angli, he replied, that "they would not be Angli, but *angeli*, or 'angels,' if they were Christians." "What is the name of their king?" he inquired. "Ella," was the answer. "'Alleluia' must be sung to God in those regions," was the inference drawn from the coincidence of names; and a number of monks, with Augustine at their head, were sent as missionaries to convert the pagan Angles to Christianity.

S. And how were they received?

Mrs. N. By the direction of Gregory, they had taken with them an interpreter, who informed Ethelbert, king of Kent, that they were come from Rome, with the best tidings in the world. Ethelbert allowed them to land in the isle of Thanet; and, after some days, paid them a visit: but, being apprehensive of enchantments, he received the strangers in the open air. The missionaries met him, carrying the cross, and singing litanies; after which, Augustine preached a sermon. The king answered, "These are fine words and promises which ye bring; but because they are new, I cannot afford my assent to them. But as ye have come hither from a great distance, and are willing to communicate to us those things which ye believe to be true and most excellent, we are not willing to disturb you, but rather to

receive you in a friendly manner." He gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, with all necessary accommodations, and the license of preaching and making converts. As they approached the city, they chanted this litany: "We pray thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thine anger and thy fury may be removed from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia!"

G. I suppose the king would soon be converted after that.

Mrs. N. Ethelbert and his queen, with many of his subjects, embraced the Christian faith; and Augustine, flattered with his favourable reception, and the success of his labours, attempted to establish uniformity, by compelling the abbot of the monastery at Bangor to conform to the discipline and customs of the Roman Church. This the Britons obstinately refused. Augustine proposed to leave other points undecided, if they would agree to observe Easter at the same time as other Christians, to administer baptism after the Roman manner, and to join him in preaching to the Saxons. The Britons continuing inexorable, Augustine had recourse to the never-failing proof of divine commission, in the performance of a miracle: a blind man was introduced; the Britons had neither power to pray, nor faith to heal; but Augustine's prayers were heard, and sight restored. Still the abbot of Bangor refused to hearken to terms of reconciliation. "If you will not have peace with brethren," said Augustine, "you shall have war with enemies;" a

threatening which was soon fulfilled in their utter destruction.

L. I was hoping that Gregory and his missionaries had been better men than to have acted in such a manner.

Mrs. N. This missionary enterprise presents the most pleasing view of the state of the church during the sixth century; but we see that even its glory was obscured by arrogance and superstition. With respect to Gregory, he has been said to have been "a good but a silly man;" yet, in such an age, it is pleasing to recognise those indications of genuine piety which are found in his letters. He says, "I found my soul convinced of the necessity of securing salvation; but I delayed too long, entangled with the world. At length I threw myself into a monastery. Now I thought I had placed an insuperable bar between myself and the world. But again I am tossed on the tempestuous ocean; under colour of the bishopric, I find I am brought back to the world, in which I am enslaved to such a quantity of earthly cares, as I never remember to have been infested with in my lay capacity. I have lost the sublime joys of myself; and, sinking inwardly, rise externally. I deplore my expulson from the face of my Maker."

S. Aunt, you do not call that silly, do you?

Mrs. N. The quotation I have given, although mixed with monastic ideas, rather proves him entitled to the descriptive term "good;" but the weak part of his character led him to sanction the growth of superstition. It is true that he commended the zeal

of the bishop of Marseilles for breaking down images in the church; but the language employed conveys rather a tacit approval than a discountenancing of the increasing evil: "I certify you that it came of late to our hearing, that your brotherhood, seeing certain worshippers of images, did break the said church-images, and throw them away. And surely we commended you that you had that zeal, that nothing made with hands should be worshipped; but yet we judge that you should not have broken those images. For painting is therefore used in churches, that they which are unlearned may yet by sight read those things upon the walls which they cannot read in books. Therefore, your brotherhood ought both to preserve the images, and to restrain the people from worshipping them; that both the ignorant might have had whence to gather knowledge of the history, and the people might not sin in worshipping the picture."

S. Well, I see nothing silly even in that.

Mrs. N. During the pontificate of Gregory, the festival of the annunciation was introduced in honour of the Virgin Mary; as also the festival of St. Michael and all angels, which seems to have arisen out of several distinct commemorations of fabulous appearances of the archangel Michael at various places. The feast of lights was also established, in reference to our Saviour's being called a "Light to lighten the Gentiles," when presented at the temple. Upon the day set apart for the observance of this festival, it was adopted as a custom, to consecrate

all the tapers which should be used in the churches throughout the year; which led to its being frequently denominated Candlemas-day. But the conduct of Gregory in substantiating the doctrine of purgatory fully justifies the epithet used as descriptive of his character. Three tales were industriously circulated, illustrative of the benefit which even the souls of infidels and idolaters receive through the prayers of the faithful. The first declared that the soul of the persecuting emperor Trajan was liberated from hell by the pious prayers of Gregory; the truth of which was so confidently believed that the following expressions were introduced into the liturgy, and continue still to be used in the Greek church: "As thou didst loose Trajan from punishment by the earnest intercession of thy servant Gregory, hear us, likewise, who pray unto thee." The second tale referred to the time of the apostles, when St. Thecla, a wonder-working apostoless, prayed thus for the daughter of Tryphena: (saluted by St. Paul in Romans xvi, 12:) "O God, Son of the true God, grant unto Tryphena, according to thy will, that her daughter may live with thee time without end!" the efficacy of which prayer obtained her translation from hell to heaven. The third related to a dead man's skull uttering this speech unto Macarius, the Egyptian anchoret, who found it in the desert: "When thou dost offer up thy prayers for the dead, then do we feel some little consolation."

G. I am sure Gregory, or any body else that could believe such things, must have been silly.

Mrs. N. Gregory, however, sometimes displayed a very sound judgment. The bishop of Constantinople obtained the title of Universal Bishop. Gregory pronounced that any bishop who should assume the title of "universal," was unquestionably the precursor of antichrist; a prophecy verified in his own immediate successors.

CONVERSATION VII.

CENTURIES VII, VIII, AND IX.

George. MAMMA, does universal bishop mean a bishop over all other bishops?

Mrs. N. You have formed a tolerably correct idea of the signification of the term, which, in other words, may be rendered, "supremacy in all ecclesiastical affairs." Within the short space of five or six years after the denunciation of Gregory, his successor in the Roman see prevailed upon the emperor to deprive the bishop of Constantinople of his assumed dignity, and confer it upon himself; since which time, the title of "universal bishop" has been claimed as the prerogative of the Roman pontiff.

Lucy. The bishop of Constantinople would not like that.

Mrs. N. No doubt it would subject him to great mortification, thus to see his rival obtain the preeminence; but the Eastern empire was such a scene of terror, disquietude, and suspicion, that nothing was

more common than for a prelate to be deprived of his episcopal dignity by an imperial edict.

Sophia. Then was there war, aunt?

Mrs. N. Many nations were in a state of civil commotion, and others spread consternation and dismay, by plunder, rapine, and bloodshed. The Persians took Jerusalem, pillaged it, and carried away its most sacred relic, the wood of our Saviour's cross; but the conquerors were soon conquered by the Saracens, the followers of Mohammed, who propagated his doctrine by fire and sword.

S. O aunt, I have heard of Mohammed's being the false prophet: will you tell us something about him?

Mrs. N. It was in the year 609, and about the fortieth year of his age, that Mohammed opened his pretended mission. His bold declaration fully proves that he possessed courage of both thought and action: "If you set the sun against me on my right hand, and the moon on my left, I will not relinquish my enterprise." For every thing that is valuable in his religious system, he was indebted to Judaism and Christianity; and he adapted the Koran (the sacred book of the Mohammedans) particularly to favour the opinions, customs, and vices of the Eastern nations. The articles of faith are few and simple, the duties required neither many nor difficult: the invariable profession of Islam is, "There is only one God, and Mohammed is his prophet."

G. Mamma, what is Islam?

Mrs. N. The term Islam, or Islamism, denoting

the religion of salvation, is frequently used instead of Mohammedanism.

G. But if his people really did think him a prophet, they should have let others think as they liked.

Mrs. N. Mohammed taught otherwise. "The sword," said he, "is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer; whoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." An age of excessive ignorance favoured his cause; at the time of his death, in the year 631, he had conquered the whole of Arabia; and, notwithstanding his decease, the Mohammedan arms still proceeded with the same rapidity. Many sects of Christians which had sprung up in the earlier ages of the church, and had fixed their settlements beyond the limits of the Greek and Roman empire, with a vast number of churches in Persia, India, Armenia, Arabia, Syria, Tartary, and even the northern part of China, under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Seleucia, were now involved in that gloom of Mohammedan darkness which continues to the present day. The glory of Africa was also obscured; the region where Cyprian suffered, and Augustine taught, was shrouded in the night of death. A calculation has been made, which may give you a tolerably correct idea of the extent of Mohammedan sway: "If we divide the known

countries of the earth into thirty equal parts, five of them are Christians, six Mohammedans, and nineteen Pagans."

G. Well, I would rather have been a Christian, bad as they were, than a Mohammedan.

Mrs. N. There is nothing pleasing in the aspect of the church during the seventh century; yet the mixture of truth with superstition is undoubtedly to be preferred to utter delusion. A feast, in celebration of the Virgin Mary's death, was now instituted, as also one for her nativity, one in honour of the cross on which Christ suffered, and one in commemoration of his ascension into heaven. The famous Pantheon, or temple dedicated to all gods, was, by desire of the bishop of Rome, given by the emperor to be consecrated to all saints; the goddess Cybele was succeeded by the Virgin Mary, and the pagan deities, by Christian martyrs; it still presented the appearance of an idol-temple, the objects of idolatry being only changed.

S. I wonder how they were getting on in England?

Mrs. N. Augustine declared himself archbishop of Canterbury; more missionaries were sent, who were established in bishoprics in different parts of the kingdom, with an archbishop at York, who ceded the pre-eminence to Augustine and his successors, as the metropolitan of all England. The island's being divided into seven kingdoms, caused it to be the frequent scene of war and bloodshed; but amidst strife and opposition, the Roman Church acquired

more and more influence. Ina, king of the West Saxons, exchanged his crown for the monastic habit, and entered a convent at Rome. During the continuance of the Heptarchy, several other kings followed his example.

L. Aunt, when looking among my scraps this morning, I found the paper which I bought at Holywell, when we were in Wales last summer: and the miracle it tells us about was in the seventh century: shall I read it?

Mrs. N. I did not then think it worth perusing, much less purchasing; but as you have been to St. Winifred's shrine, and can impart to your sister and cousin any merit, real or supposed, which you may there have discovered, I have no objection to your reading it.

L. As to merit, I saw none. It is only a nice spring of clear water, which runs down the yalley, and turns several mills. There is, however, a large old stone building over the spring, like a dome; and on one side a very large trough, where the woman who sold me the paper said lame people used to bathe, and then leave their crutches behind them; she showed me some bandages and sticks that had been kept for many years, and told me that there were red spots upon the stones where the water bubbled up; but I could not see them.

G. Come, Lucy, read it: as mamma has given you leave, I should like to hear it.

L. "About the year 660 lived the glorious martyr St. Winifrida, who had her head barbarously cut

off by a young prince. Immediately in the place where her head fell to the earth, a most pure and beautiful spring gushed forth, which flows to this day, and by the holy virgin's merits gives health to a world of diseased persons. It being in the steep descent of a hill where the virgin's head was cut off, it, lightly rolling down to the bottom, slid into the church, whereas the body remained in the place where it first fell. The whole congregation, there attending to divine mysteries, were wonderfully astonished to see the head tumbling among their feet, and imprecated vengeance upon the murderer; but the parents of the virgin broke forth into tears and sad complaints. They all went out, and found the prince near the lifeless body, wiping his sword upon the grass. The holy priest of God, having in his hands the virgin's head, looked earnestly upon him, and said, 'Impious villain! hast thou no shame for the stain wherewith thou hast defiled thy high birth, and showest thou no repentance for thy crime? Thou hast disturbed the peace; thou hast polluted the church with sacrilegious murder; thou hast highly provoked almighty God; and dost thou show no sorrow for all this?' As soon as the holy father had ended these words, the young man immediately fell to the ground, and gave up the ghost; and, what was most wonderful, his body presently disappeared from the eyes of the bystanders; and many say, that it was swallowed up by the earth, and with the wicked one sunk into hell. The priest, after kissing the head which he held in his hands, could not refrain from

weeping bitterly; afterward, joining it to the body, and covering it with his mantle, he returned to the altar, where he celebrated mass; and after having offered up a prayer, and preached a sermon to the people, he returned to the virgin's body, when she presently rose up, as if from sleep, cleansing her face from dust, and filling the congregation with wonder and joy. The place where her blood was shed was formerly called Dry Vale; but afterward, and to this day, it is called St. Winifred's Well, and has given the name of Holywell to the town in which it is situated. The stones, likewise, both where the spring gushes forth, and beneath, in the current, having been sprinkled with her blood, retain the redness to these times; which colour, neither the length of so many ages, nor the continual sliding of the water over them, has been able to wash away. So great, and so frequent a concourse of people there hath been ever since to the well, that the fame of almost continual miracles, wrought by her intercession, hath caused several popes to confer special indulgences on those who visited it."

Mrs. N. From this foolish legend we may learn to estimate the character of the clergy who propagated and sanctioned such absurdities; and that the credulity of the people was imposed upon, by fictitious miracles and saints, to a very great extent, we have lasting evidence to prove. Holywell is not the only town which has derived its name from the reputed virtue of a pretended martyr: throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom we are re-

minded of the canonization of saints, and the influence which superstition, imported from the Church of Rome, gained among our ancestors. But we gaze with pleasure upon one star of light, which now illumines this dark page of English history, in the writings and character of the venerable Bede, who made a translation of the whole Bible into the Saxon language.

L. I thought, aunt, the Church of Rome did not like the Bible to be read.

Mrs. N. No prohibition had as yet been given to the circulation of the Scriptures; and the public worship of God being still celebrated by every nation in its own language, sanctioned the undertaking.

S. I am glad to hear of clever men in England.

Mrs. N. We ought in justice also to record the piety and learning of Ireland: it is spoken of as "a country filled with saints, and their schools renowned for ages." Another writer says, "The sciences abandoned the continent, and fixed their residence in Britain and Ireland." From the testimony given, we infer that the state of the British churches at the commencement of the eighth century was much superior to that of others more contiguous to the Roman see; especially as it is confirmed by the fact, that many persons travelled from England and Ireland for the purpose of introducing Christianity into Germany. And though superstition might tarnish their labours, it is but charitable to hope that Christian principle prompted the enterprise; since the hardships endured among a rude and barbarous peo-

ple could present little prospect of lucre or fame. Boniface, styled "the apostle of Germany," preserved a correspondence with friends in England, in which there appears real evidence of genuine piety: he often begged for books, particularly the Scriptures, and the writings of Bede, whom he called the lamp of the church. He had appointed a day for admitting a number of pagans into the pale of the church by baptism, and was waiting for them on the banks of a river in Friezeland, when he suddenly beheld, instead of the new converts, a troop of ferocious pagans, armed with shields and lances. His servants attempted to resist them; but Boniface, with calm intrepidity, said, "Children, forbear to fight: the Scriptures forbid us to render evil for evil. The day which I have long waited for has come: hope in God, and he will save your souls." The pagans attacked them furiously; and Boniface, with fifty others, fell victims to their rage.

S. He was worthy of being called an apostle; for he died like a martyr.

Mrs. N. In the darkest ages of the church there were found witnesses for the truth; and though the retirement of private life screened many from public view, yet may we trace the "remnant of a godly seed," who would not "bow the knee to Baal." At the time Boniface was prosecuting his labours in Germany, the bishop of Rome was laying the foundation of the future popedom.

G. Did you not say, mamma, that all the bishops were called popes?

Mrs. N. After the bishop of Rome obtained the title of "universal bishop," the name "pope" became gradually restricted to him; but Gregory II. has generally been called the first pope.

G. If he had not liked the name "pope" better than I do, he would not have cared much about it: there is something so lordly in it.

Mrs. N. It is the association of ideas that makes us connect pride and arrogance with the word; but the conduct of the pope has given us too much occasion to dislike his name.

G. What did the first pope do, mamma?

Mrs. N. There had been, for several years previously to Gregory's pontificate, disputes concerning the worship of images. The emperor, determined to check the spirit of insubordination which they had excited, issued an edict, in the year 726, ordering image worship to be abrogated, and all images, except the crucifix, to be removed from the churches. Upon his refusing to revoke this edict, which was regarded by a superstitious people as an act of apostacy, Gregory, without hesitation, excommunicated him from the church. No sooner was the sentence of excommunication made public, than the people, aided by monks and priests, raised a general insurrection. Exasperated by the conduct of his subjects, the emperor adopted severer measures, both against images and their worshippers; he deposed the bishop of Constantinople, and burnt the images found in the city. The news flew to Rome. The emperor's statues were pulled down and trodden

under feet; attempts were made to elect another emperor; Italy was thrown into confusion; and the pope fomented the rebellion.

G. That pope did deserve a chastisement!

Mrs. N. The pope appeared more disposed to inflict punishment than to submit to chastisement; and wrote to the emperor in these arrogant terms: "Because you are unlearned and ignorant, we are obliged to write to you rude discourses, but full of sense and of the word of God. We conjure you to quit your pride, and hear us with humility. You say that we adore stones, walls, and boards. It is not so, my lord; but those symbols make us recollect the persons whose names they bear, and exalt our grovelling minds. We do not look upon them as gods; but if it be the image of Jesus, we say, 'Lord, help us!' if it be the image of his mother, we say, 'Pray to your son to save us!' if it be of a martyr, we say, 'St. Stephen, pray for us!' We might, as having the power of St. Peter, pronounce punishment against you; but as you have pronounced the curse upon yourself, let it stick to you. You write to us to assemble a general council; of which there is no need. Do you cease to persecute images, and all will be quiet. We fear not your threats; for if we go a league from Rome, we are secure." As a confirmation of usurped power, Gregory, in a council held in the year 732, excommunicated all who should remove, or speak contemptuously of, images.

L. But, aunt, how was it the people did not know that it was wrong? because the commandment says,

"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image; thou shalt not bow down to it, nor worship it."

Mrs. N. Had the people been acquainted with the Scriptures, so great a sin as idolatry would never have gained admission into the church; but copies of the Scriptures were then exceedingly scarce, and chiefly confined to monasteries. The ignorance of the people also was so great that few of the clergy could read or write, and even bishops were incapable of composing the discourses they delivered. In the breviary commonly used, the second commandment was excluded from the Decalogue, under the pretence that its substance was comprehended in the first; and, in order to retain the number of ten, the tenth commandment was divided so as to form two. And to countenance the proceedings of the pope, a catechism was framed with the following question and answer, as explanatory of the first commandment: *Ques.* "Who breaketh the first commandment of God, by unreverence of God?" *Ans.* "They that do not give due reverence to God, and to his saints, or to their relics and images."

S. I think all this is very shocking indeed; but yet, if people did not worship pictures and images, they might help them to meditate and pray, just the same as my mamma's likeness makes me think of her when I see it.

Mrs. N. The express command of God forbids it; and universal history shows its danger and abuse.

G. Mamma, how did the pope and the emperor [illegible]h their quarrel?

Mrs. N. Death silenced their contentions by selecting both as his victims in the same year. It being the office of the pope, rather than the person, which I wish to bring before your notice, I will not burden your memories with a multiplicity of names, but only mention such as may be necessary to develop the true nature of the pontificate. Gregory's successor merits the character of a politician more than that of a Christian bishop. Ambassadors were sent from the meditated usurper of the throne of France for the pope's decision to the following query:—"Whether the divine law did not permit a valiant and warlike people to dethrone a weak and indolent monarch, who was incapable of discharging any of the functions of royalty, and to substitute in his place one more worthy to rule, and who had already rendered most important services to the state?" The pontiff, foreseeing the probable extension of his own interests, dared to answer in the affirmative. A verdict so imperative deposed the rightful monarch, stripped him of his royalty, and doomed him to a monastery.

G. Why, mamma, was not that what people call high-treason?

Mrs. N. Many have been accused of that crime for less daring measures against the lawful sovereign; but no event seems to have been more favourable to the aggrandizement of the pope than his promoting the advancement of the traitor to the throne of France; who, in return for the good services rendered, embarked with zeal in the cause of the

pontiff against the Lombards, obliged them, by a solemn treaty, to deliver up the territories of the Roman dukedom, and the exarchate of Ravenna, and then made a grant of them to the apostolic see of St. Peter. Thus was the bishop of Rome raised to the rank of a temporal prince.

S. Then would people say, "Your Majesty," and, "Your Royal Highness," when they spoke to them?

Mrs. N. He was addressed by the term "Holiness," which was considered more indicative of the character of his sacred office; but every mark of respectful homage toward the sovereign was retained, and his superstitious subjects exceeded their former expressions of reverence by falling down before him, and kissing his feet. To prevent this act of adoration from being censured by the judicious and prudent, crucifixes were fastened to the pope's slippers, by which artifice the adoration was pretended to be transferred to Christ. The custom thus established was afterward claimed as a religious duty, and was even practised by kings and emperors.

G. Indeed, I should be sorry to kiss the pope's feet!

Mrs. N. The veneration paid in the eighth century to the pope, and also to the bishops and clergy, is amazing; especially considering their corrupt and vicious lives. They abandoned themselves to dissipation of every kind, to the pleasures of hunting, and even to military studies. For, as bishops and heads of monasteries held many castles and lands by

feudal tenure, they were obliged, in times of war, to furnish their princes with a certain number of soldiers, and take the field themselves, at the head of their troops. Yet neither this deviation from the sacred office, nor the shocking nature of their vices, lessened the veneration of the multitude for the sacerdotal character. Riches, titles, and honours were lavishly heaped upon the holy profession, which afforded spectacles of pomp, ambition, and splendour rivalling royalty itself. As the opulence of the monks also increased, rules and austerities were laid aside; and no discipline was observed that could effectually restrain the indulgence of intemperance, voluptuousness, and sloth. This general depravity gave rise to a new order of priests, called canons, who occupied a sort of middle rank between the monks and the clergy, and who were encouraged by the emperor Charlemagne (the son and successor of the usurper) as a check upon the growing superstition and corruption.

G. And so the emperor had to turn reformer!

Mrs. N. He endeavoured to repress vice, and to promote learning, and for this purpose introduced the reading of the Gospels and Epistles into the church service; but the ignorance and indolence of his subjects gave him little encouragement to hope for improvement. The arts and sciences were more cultivated in Asia than in Europe. A Mohammedan prince sent, as a present to Charlemagne, a striking clock, with springs and wheels, the first ever seen in France; the first organ used in a church was also

received in the same way; and, shortly after, arithmetical figures were brought from Arabia into Europe by the Saracens.

G. Ay, then, there would be no long sums before that time to add up. I almost wish the Saracens had kept their figures to themselves. But was nothing found out in Europe, mamma?

Mrs. N. Superstition claimed for its service every invention of an infatuated people. Bells were introduced, which were immediately accounted sacred, formally consecrated to their use, and even baptized. It appears that towers for churches were then also built as repositories for bells, and called belfries. The ringing of bells was considered of great efficacy against the influence of demons; it being maintained by the priests that devils, affrighted by the sound of bells calling Christians to prayers, would flee away; and that destructive tempests and lightning were by the ringing of bells averted, and the spirits of the storm defeated. Evil spirits were supposed to be always hovering over the dying, in order to make a prey of departing souls; and the custom of tolling bells at deaths and funerals originated in the idea, that the sacred noise struck evil spirits with terror, and put them to flight.

S. Who would have thought that bells had ever been of so much consequence?

Mrs. N. Church-yards were also about this time introduced. The old Roman burial-places were remote from the city or town, something similar to our cemeteries; but after the monks and priests began

to offer prayers for the deceased, and receive gifts from the relations for the performance of these services, they requested that the dead might be interred near the churches and monasteries, they being nearer the places of their abode.

G. I think it would have been better if those monks and priests had prayed for themselves, and had let the dead alone.

Mrs. N. I can scarcely give them credit for saying so many prayers as they professed even for the dead. By the act of a council it was decreed, that "every one who ate flesh during the fast before Easter should be excommunicated, such offender deserving to be forbidden the use of it throughout the year;" but notwithstanding this profession of abstinence, few of the monks or clergy were found to conform to the rule, their luxury and gluttony being proverbial.

L. How strange it appears that the people should have respected and honoured such men!

Mrs. N. They gained little influence where the multitude were not nurtured in Romish superstition. Charlemagne, after having subdued the nation of the Saxons, trusted to the power of bishops and monks whom he left among them to make converts to Christianity; but this method proving unsuccessful, he had recourse to more forcible measures to draw them within the pale of the church. For this zeal in proselytism succeeding generations canonized the memory of Charlemagne, and turned a bloody warrior into an eminent saint.

G. I cannot endure the method of forcing people to be Christians!

Mrs. N. Many nations were equally opposed with yourself to compulsory methods, who nevertheless submitted, as unto a lesser evil: the Huns chose rather to be made Christians than slaves; one of the Danish kings found protection and succour from the French monarch, on the condition that he and his kingdom should embrace Christianity; and the warlike Russians, having entered into a treaty with the Greek emperor, were engaged by presents and promises to embrace the gospel.

S. Really, aunt, there seems to be nothing good!

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, you have formed a just conclusion. We are now penetrating into the regions of darkness, "a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death," and are carried by every step into scenes still more gloomy than the former; but even in this thick darkness we shall here and there discover a glimmering ray of evangelical light; and it is with pleasure we behold, at the commencement of the ninth century, such a character as Claude, bishop of Turin.

S. Well, I never was more glad to hear of something good; so much that is bad has made me quite low-spirited.

Mrs. N. The name of Claude stands first on the list of bold reformers in the church. Complaints had been made against him for having broken down images through his diocess, which drew from him an apology, of which the following is an extract:—

"Being obliged to accept the bishopric, I found all the churches, when I came to Turin, full of abominations and images; and because I began to destroy what every one adored, every one began to open his mouth against me. They say, 'We do not believe that there is any thing divine in the image; we only reverence it in honour of the person whom it represents.' I answer, If they who have quitted the worship of devils, honour the images of saints, they have not forsaken idols, they have only changed their names. For whether you paint upon a wall the pictures of St. Peter, or St. Paul, or those of Jupiter, Saturn, or Mercury, they are now neither gods, nor apostles, nor men. The name is changed, the error continues the same. If men must be adored, there would be less absurdity in adoring them when alive, while they are the image of God, than after they are dead, when they only resemble stocks and stones. And if we are not allowed to adore the works of God, much less are we allowed to adore the works of men. If the cross of Christ ought to be adored because he was nailed to it, for the same reason we ought to adore mangers because he was laid in one, and swaddling-clothes because he was wrapped in them. We have not been ordered to adore the cross, but to bear it, and to deny ourselves. As to your assertion, that I speak against the going to Rome by way of penance, it is not true; I neither approve nor disapprove such pilgrimages; to some they are not useful, to others they are not prejudicial. It is a great perversion of the words, 'Thou art Peter,' &c.,

to infer from them, that eternal life is gained by a journey to Rome, and by the intercession of St. Peter. The apostolic, that is, the pope, is not he who fills the see of the apostle, but he who discharges its duties."

L. I fear he was burnt for being a heretic.

Mrs. N. No; the Roman hierarchy had not yet learned to punish heretics with death: his writings were suppressed; but, under the protection of the court of France, Claude prosecuted his labours; and the valleys of Piedmont, belonging to his diocess, have ever since retained a portion of evangelical truth. England was also favoured with Alfred, who, even in his dark and iron age, procured the reputation of "the man most learned in the Scriptures."

G. O yes; good king Alfred; you know, mamma, he was obliged to hide himself for fear of the Danes.

Mrs. N. One of his speeches, delivered to his soldiers before a battle, displays both good sense and a spirit of religion. He told them that their sins had given their enemies the advantage; that they ought to reform their own manners, in order to engage the favour of God on their side; that in other respects they had the superiority,—Christians were fighting against heathens, and honest men against robbers; that theirs was not a war of ambition or conquest, but of necessary self-defence. Through life Alfred seems to have maintained a beautiful consistency of character: he translated books into English for the benefit of the clergy, and founded the University of Oxford with a design to their improvement. The

low state of learning may be gathered from the preface to one of his works, where he observes, when he came to the throne, there were very few south of the Humber who understood the prayers in English, or who could translate a passage of Latin into the language of their own country.

L. Aunt, how could they pray, when they did not understand their prayers?

Mrs. N. It appears from this quotation, that Latin masses had already been introduced into the English churches. I think I have before mentioned, that when the inundation of barbarous dialects caused the Latin tongue to become a dead language, it was still retained in the service of the church. We here see the effect of this absurdity, when very few south of the river Humber knew what those prayers meant, which they presented in an unknown tongue.

G. The people must indeed have been ignorant; for nearly all the boys in our school know Latin.

Mrs. N. An ancient historian says, "There were, however, to be found in various places in North Britain, and particularly among the Irish, men of acute parts and extensive knowledge, who were perfectly well entitled to the appellation of philosophers." No doubt in this class was the celebrated John Scot, the most learned man of the age, whom the emperor ordered to draw up a clear and rational explication of a doctrine which a monk, named Pascasius Radbert, had egregiously corrupted.

L. Pray, aunt, what was the doctrine?

Mrs. N. It was concerning the sacrament of the

body and blood of Christ. The treatise composed by the monk amounted to two propositions: first, that, after the consecration of the bread and wine, nothing remained of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present; and, secondly, that the body of Christ, thus present, was the same body that was born of the Virgin Mary, that suffered upon the cross, and that was raised from the dead.

L. And what did John Scot say?

Mrs. N. He maintained, that "the bread and wine were the signs and symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ." Another writer who was engaged in the controversy declared, that "there is as much difference between the bread and wine received in the sacrament and the body and blood of Christ, as between the pledge and the thing for which the pledge is delivered; as between the representation and the reality." The upstart opinion thus promptly met by the emperor Charles the Bald, assigning the refutation to one so eminent for learning, did little more than excite astonishment, until it was revived at a later date, as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

S. O, what a queer name; Charles the Bald!

Mrs. N. It was considered honourable in those days to be bald; and no doubt the word added to the emperor's name was regarded as a distinguishing title. The parade of long hair was thought to be utterly inconsistent with the profession of the re-[illegible]on of the cross; and those persons who quitted

the world to go and live in cloisters, always had their hair shaven off, to show that they bade adieu to all earthly ornaments, and made a vow of perpetual subjection to their superiors. A custom also prevailed for people of rank to have their children's hair cut the first time by persons for whom they entertained a particular regard, who in virtue of this ceremony were reputed spiritual parents, or godfathers. The tonsure, or the act of clipping the hair, was also now considered an indispensable requisite for holy orders; the first ceremony used (for which a person was qualified at seven years of age) was the bishop's giving the first degree of the ministry by cutting off part of the candidate's hair, with certain prayers and benedictions; the tonsure afterward varied in size according to the degrees conferred.

G. But if I had been the emperor, I would not have cared for such nonsense: I would sooner have worn a wig than have been bald.

Mrs. N. The situation of the emperor obliged him to pay deference to the will of the pope. At the death of his predecessor, there were several competitors for the crown, which furnished the Roman pontiff with a favourable opportunity of assuming the right of nominating the successor. By presents and promises, Charles the Bald purchased the pope's favour and interest; and when he obtained the imperial dignity, he returned such eminent services, by delivering the Roman pontiff from the obligation of waiting for the consent of the emperor, in order to his being installed into office.

L. The pope seems to want to be the king of kings.

Mrs. N. The pontifical power was now augmented, through various causes: the divisions and troubles that arose in the empire toward the close of the ninth century conspired to throw preponderance in the scale of the popedom; the emperors were divested of their former ecclesiastical authority; the power of the bishops was greatly diminished, through the opinions gaining ground, that the successor of St. Peter was constituted by Jesus Christ supreme legislator and judge of the church universal; and the authority of both provincial and general councils began to decline, from the idea, that councils could not determine any thing without the permission or consent of the pope. In proportion to the increase of power, an increase of arrogance was assumed. Stephen II., on his election to the papacy, introduced the practice of the pope's being carried upon men's shoulders to receive the homage of the clergy; and Nicholas I. obliged the emperor to perform the office of his groom, by holding the bridle of his horse, while his holiness dismounted. To support these claims of supremacy, memorials, acts of councils, and epistles were forged, purporting to be of ancient date, and descriptive of unlimited authority. The most notorious of these forgeries were the "Decretal Epistles," compiled by an obscure individual, but ascribed, in order to obtain credit, to Isidore, bishop of Seville, a man eminent for learning and piety, who had been dead three hundred years.

L. How strangely the people were imposed upon!

Mrs. N. The fictitious relics of St. Mark, James, and Bartholomew, were also conveyed, with solemn pomp, from their supposed quiet resting-places, and deposited where they could best receive the adoration of the multitude; and days of festival were appointed for each, to celebrate the translation. The festival of all saints was also added to the calendar, with that of the assumption of the Virgin Mary.

S. Aunt, now you are talking about saints' days, will you tell us what St. Swithin's means?

Mrs. N. I think I have read somewhere of the institution of this festival; but I can assure you, there is nothing in it worth repeating.

S. Nay, pray do tell us, and then we shall know whether there is any truth in what people say, that if it rains on St. Swithin's, it is sure to rain for forty days after.

Mrs. N. To satisfy your curiosity, I will endeavour to relate, as far as I can remember, the origin of St. Swithin's fame. He was, I believe, one of the wonder-working English worthies; and was so humble, that he gave strict charge to his friends, in his last sickness, that they should bury his body in some vile place out of the church, where it might be exposed to the droppings of rain, and be trampled upon by men's feet. But, a hundred and ten years after, becoming dissatisfied with the place of his interment, he appeared in a vision to a poor, ignorant man, ordering him to go to the bishop of Winchester, and have his relics removed. This was done, and

the sacred bones were taken from their despicable situation, and reverentially laid up in a shrine, to which great multitudes resorted, to offer their vows, and perform their devotions. Nor had they any reason to complain that their prayers were not heard; for it is reported that all petitions were granted, all manner of diseases cured, and an incredible number of miracles wrought, so that the memory of the translation of St. Swithin's relics was annually celebrated on the 15th of July.

S. If that is all, I shall not trouble the weather-glass again on St. Swithin's day; but I wonder how people could be so foolish as to trust in such things.

Mrs. N. The greatest proof of the credulity of the age was, the pope's invention of the superstitious trial of cold water, for the detection of crime. The person accused had the right foot and the left hand bound together, and was, in this posture, thrown naked into the water; if he sunk, he was acquitted; but if he floated upon the surface, this was considered an evidence of guilt. Other similar trials, drawn from the barbarous rites of paganism, such as single combat, or duel,—the fire ordeal, walking over red-hot ploughshares without being burnt,—and the cross, a suspension of the arms for a considerable length of time,—were encouraged by the clergy, who often went so far as to accompany the practice with the celebration of the Lord's supper, and other rites, in order to give them a Christian aspect.

G. Well, give me a judge and jury!

Mrs. N. I hope, my dear boy, your accusations

will never be of a nature to demand public trial of any kind; and for private offences, I advise the judgment of the infallible word of God.

S. How could the pope think, that the man's sinking, or not, in the water, could discover the truth?

Mrs. N. If he had any belief on the subject, it must have been an expectation of divine interference; but I rather suspect, that the trial was invented to support the idea of the pope's infallibility. If that were the case, an antidote was also given in the quarrels between himself and the bishop of Constantinople, which led to the final separation of the Greek church from the Roman.

S. They seem to have been always quarrelling.

Mrs. N. Envy of each other's dignity made continual strife between the two prelates: the cause of the fatal schism appears to have been that Photius was chosen bishop or patriarch of Constantinople by the Eastern emperor, in the stead of Ignatius, whom he drove from his see, and sent into exile. Ignatius appealed to the Roman pontiff, who espoused his interests, and excommunicated Photius and his abettors. The new patriarch, far from being terrified or dejected by this excommunication, returned the compliment; and, in a council held in the year 866, declared that the pope was utterly unworthy of either his office or Christian communion. In this state of open discord, each indulged the feelings of animosity. At length the death of Photius might have terminated the dispute, had not the Roman pontiff's vindictive zeal required the degradation of

all the bishops and clergy ordained by Photius. The Greeks were shocked at the arrogance of these unjust demands, and would not submit to such conditions. Hence the dispute between the two churches was renewed; religious and civil contests occurred; and, by adding new controversies to the old, the fatal schism took place which produced a total and permanent separation between the Greek and Latin churches.

L. And what sort of a church is the Greek church now?

Mrs. N. To answer your question would be to anticipate our history; but as our future attention will be more particularly directed to the Western churches, I may observe, that the Greek church now acknowledges, as the rule of faith, the Holy Scriptures, and the decrees of the first seven general councils; yet no person is allowed to explain for himself or others, either the declarations of Scripture, or the decisions of the councils, the patriarchs being the only persons authorized to consult these oracles, and to explain their meaning. The invocation of saints, the use of pictures, with prayers and services for the dead, are admitted; and regard is paid to the relics of saints and martyrs; but the doctrine of purgatory is disallowed. The Greek church is certainly the most ancient, retaining possession of the ground which was the scene of labour to apostles and martyrs; and, in point of extent, it is undoubtedly the largest, including within its pale the vast empire of Russia. Yet it presents the symp-

toms of a general decay: its revenues are small; its government is weak and feeble; its spiritual rulers enjoy little more than the splendid title of "patriarchs," being so fettered with ignorance and superstition, as to be unable either to extend their power, or promote the interests of the church by enterprise or reformation.

We will reserve discussion upon the state of the Roman Chuch for another opportunity.

CONVERSATION VIII.

CENTURIES X, XI, AND XII.

Sophia. AUNT, I am really growing tired of so much wickedness in the church: will it be long before we get to the Reformation?

Mrs. N. In order to form a connected history, we must pass through yet intervening centuries of gloom, ere we hail the dawn of evangelical day. The tenth century has been described by a celebrated annalist, as an "iron age, barren of all goodness; a leaden age, abounding in all wickedness; and a dark age, remarkable, above all others, for the scarcity of writers, and men of learning."

Lucy. Then there would not be many heresies, I suppose.

Mrs. N. No; religious contests were reduced to silence: the divines wanted both the capacity and the inclination to attack or defend any doctrine, the

refutation or defence of which required the least degree of learning. But, notwithstanding this ignorant stupidity, they discovered a fertility of invention, attended with the utmost dexterity and artifice, in creating new ceremonies for the multiplication of festivals. Each new saintly patron had a new form of worship appropriated to his service, and a new round of imposing rites; and as the canonization of saints was of common occurrence, ingenuity was taxed to vary the festivals, so as to prevent their observance from becoming wearisome.

George. Why, mamma, what did they do?

Mrs. N. To enumerate all their foolish absurdities would be a waste both of time and patience: the mention of a few must suffice. A kind of dramatic representation of the oblations of the wise men at Bethlehem was incorporated into the services of the festival of Epiphany; our Saviour's death, and all its attending circumstances, were imitated on Good-Friday with solemn mockery; and the Sunday preceding Easter was distinguished by pompous processions, in which a priest, mounted upon an ass, amid branches of palms and loud hosannas, represented Christ's entering into Jerusalem.

G. O, how shocking!

Mrs. N. Shocking indeed! revolting to every feeling of piety and good sense. In one district in Italy an idea generally prevailed, both among the clergy and laity, that the Deity was clothed with a human form, and seated, like an earthly monarch, upon a throne of gold; and that his angelic ministers were

men, arrayed in white garments, furnished with wings to render them more expeditious in executing their sovereign's commands. The foolish belief that mass was performed in heaven every Monday by St. Michael, caused the churches dedicated to that saint to be crowded on that day. And the institution of the rosary, with new accessions of superstitious solemnity, and the custom of abstaining from meat every sabbath in honour of the Virgin Mary, put the finishing stroke to the caricature of Christianity.

S. O aunt, please, tell us about the rosary.

Mrs. N. Both the rosary and the crown denote a particular form of devotion, addressed to the Virgin: the rosary consists of fifteen repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, and a hundred and fifty salutations of the Virgin; the crown, of six or seven repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, and six or seven times ten salutations, or Ave-Marias.

S. But cannot you tell us what these Ave-Marias are?

Mrs. N. I rather think they have varied a little in the mode of expression: but soon after the institution, the rosary was the following:—"Hail, most holy Mary, the mother of God, the queen of heaven, the gate of paradise, the lady of the world. Thou art a singular and pure virgin; thou didst conceive Christ without sin; thou didst bear the Creator and Saviour of the world, in whom I do not doubt. Deliver me from all evil, and pray for my sins. Amen." The crown composed by Bonaventure is,—"O empress, and kind lady, by the authority of a mother

command thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would vouchsafe to lift up our minds from the love of earthly things unto heavenly desires."

L. Surely, aunt, it must be blasphemy.

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, it is both blasphemy and idolatry; and there cannot be a stronger feature of Popish corruption than the exaltation of a creature to usurp the prerogatives of the Deity. The use of the rosary was recommended by the following assertions:—"That a present relief is oftener found by commemorating the name of Mary, than by calling upon the Lord Jesus her Son;" and that, "as our Lord Jesus worketh greater miracles by his saints than by himself, so often he shows the force of their intercessions more than his own."

S. I thought, aunt, that some beads were counted.

Mrs. N. A chaplet, or string of beads, was introduced, in order to keep account of the number of Paternosters (our Fathers) and Ave-Marias (hail Marys) rehearsed; each repetition being concluded by the removal of a bead. Three companies of bead-makers were provided to suit the taste and condition of the purchasers, in glass or crystal, wood or horn, and amber, coral, or jet.

S. The jet beads are most used by ladies now; and some have a crucifix of jet in the middle; but I was wondering whether they chose black beads to show that they mourned for their sins.

Mrs. N. If there be any design in the choice, it would most probably be expressed at the time of the

institution of the rosary; for all Europe was then alarmed with a terrifying apprehension that the day of judgment was at hand, and that the world was approaching its final dissolution.

G. Why, mamma, what made them think that?

Mrs. N. The notion took its rise in the preceding century, by many imagining that St. John foretold, in Rev. xx, 2–4, that after a thousand years from the birth of Christ, Satan was to be let loose; antichrist was to come; and the destruction and conflagration of the world were to follow.

L. They might have known that antichrist was already come; but I hope such an expectation would have a good effect.

Mrs. N. It produced a general panic. Ordinary business was frequently suspended; and when an eclipse was visible, or a storm presented a threatening aspect, whole cities were deserted, the inhabitants fleeing for refuge to caverns, rocks, and mountains. Kings, dukes, and nobles abandoned their thrones, honours, and treasures, and shut themselves up in monasteries; and vast numbers of people, giving over to the church all their lands and possessions, repaired, with the utmost precipitation, to Palestine, where they imagined that Christ would descend from heaven to judge the world. Almost all the donations made to the church, during this century, carry evident marks of this panic; the cause of the gift being expressed in these words: "The end of the world being at hand."

G. I wonder whether the pope was frightened.

Mrs. N. It might have saved the popedom from infamy and disgrace, if fear and trembling had overwhelmed it; but we have no reason to suppose that credulity or misapprehension was blended with the open iniquity of Papal proceedings. No throne was more the object of strife and violence than was now the seat in St. Peter's chair. During the tenth century it was occupied by thirty-one popes, and was the occasion of five open ruptures, which produced schisms in the succession; eight pontiffs, conquered by contending parties, were banished into exile; and one, of infamous memory, was deposed by universal consent for the flagitiousness of his crimes.

S. And were the bishops as bad?

Mrs. N. The character of the bishops partook of the degeneracy of the times: they were no longer confined to one bishopric, but were allowed to have several; for which they were qualified at eighteen years of age. From this time, bishops and abbots were invested with titles and employments quite foreign to their sacerdotal character, such as dukes, marquises, counts, and magistrates.

G. Then was nobody good, mamma?

Mrs. N. The only intimation of piety is found in the single effort which was made to stem the torrent of Papal corruption. Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, thus spoke in a council at Rheims: "O deplorable Rome! who, in the days of our forefathers, produced so many burning and shining lights, thou hast brought forth, in our times, only dismal darkness, worthy of the detestation of posterity. What shall we do, or

what counsel shall we take? The gospel tells us of a barren fig-tree, and of the divine patience exercised toward it. Let us bear with our primates as long as we can; and in the mean time seek for spiritual food where it is to be found. Certainly there are some in this holy assembly who can testify that in Belgium and Germany there may be found real pastors, and eminent men in religion. Far better would it be, if the animosities of kings did not prevent, that we should seek, in those parts, for the judgment of bishops, than in that venal city, which weighs all decrees by the quantity of money. What think you, reverend fathers, of this man, the pope, placed on a lofty throne, shining in purple and gold? Whom do you account him? If destitute of love, and puffed up with the pride of knowledge only, he is antichrist, sitting in the temple of God."

G. Mamma, when did that St. Dunstan live that we read about, who had so many quarrels with the devil, and said, that he used to pull his nose with the tongs?

Mrs. N. Dunstan was promoted to be archbishop of Canterbury in the year 988: the ridiculous stories you appear to remember furnish a correct idea of the ignorance and superstition which then prevailed. His predecessor in the see of Canterbury advocated the errors of Pascasius Radbert concerning the real presence of Christ in the eucharist; but a doctrine so monstrous was repugnant to many of the clergy. "This their enormous infidelity," to quote an old Romish writer, "the holy archbishop Odo having a

desire to root out, on a certain day, when celebrating mass in the sight of the people, he with many tears besought almighty God in mercy to declare the truth and propriety of the divine mysteries. When, therefore, he was come to the consecration, presently the fragments of the body of Christ, which he held in his hands, began to pour forth blood into the chalice. Thereupon the holy archbishop, standing at the altar, began to shed tears of joy; by beckoning, he signified to the priests, who had wavered in their faith, to come near, and see the wonderful work of God. This, as soon as they beheld, they presently cried out aloud, 'O most happy prelate, to whom the Son of God has been pleased to reveal himself visibly in the flesh; pray for us, O holy father, that the blood here present to our eyes may be again changed, lest for our error and disbelief the divine vengeance fall on us!" He prayed therefore accordingly; after which, the blood was again changed into wine.

S. Aunt, I think you tell us many strange tales.

Mrs. N. It is from the conviction that their narration will give you a clearer insight into the spirit of the times than any description of my own. Scores of others, equally as foolish and absurd, might be adduced; for the history of the church at this period is nothing more than a succession of pious exploits and marvellous visions: but I have rather chosen one to serve as an illustration of the manner in which the doctrine of transubstantiation was promulgated, and gained abettors. The belief was

rapidly spreading, that the consecration of the priest changed the bread and wine of the eucharist into the real body and blood of Christ; and the Papacy added to other enormities the countenancing of a doctrine so unwarranted by Scripture, and so contrary to reason.

G. Well, I could as soon believe what Mohammed said, that fighting battles was the way to heaven, as I could believe such stories.

Mrs. N. The doctrine of fire and sword does not appear to have been peculiar to Mohammed; for even Christians began to entertain ideas of its efficacy and merit.

G. Christians, mamma!

Mrs. N. The want of another word obliges me to use "Christian," in its common acceptation, as descriptive of a profession of Christianity; although it is an utter perversion of the meaning, when associated with a spirit and conduct opposed to the precepts of the gospel. Nothing could be more anti-Christian than the design and the execution of the holy war.

G. Do you mean what those pictures are about in that book I like so much,—Bunyan's "Holy War?"

Mrs. N. Your knowledge of history will enable you to comprehend my meaning better, if I employ the term "crusade."

G. Ay, now I know: King Richard went from England, and took a great many soldiers with him, to drive the infidels out of Jerusalem.

Mrs. N. Yes; but we must now notice the com-

mencement, rather than the conclusion, of this enterprise. I have already mentioned that the Saracens made themselves masters of the Eastern empire. They did not long retain possession; for the Turks or Tartars, a valiant and fierce people, inhabiting the northern coast of the Caspian Sea, fell upon them in a furious manner, and drove them out of the whole extent of the Persian territory. The Christians in Europe began to consider it a reproach upon themselves, that the land in which the divine Author of their religion received his birth, and the precious wood of the cross upon which he suffered, should be in the hands of infidels; and the chivalrous spirit of the age led them to form projects for rescuing Palestine, and immortalizing their own heroism, by a holy war. At the close of the tenth century, the bloody signal was given by the pope, which was an epistle written in the name of the church at Jerusalem to the church universal throughout the world; in which the European powers were solemnly exhorted to succour and deliver the Christians in Palestine. But the calamities which now afflicted the greater part of Europe, and Italy in particular, prevented any vigorous measures from being adopted.

L. Then how was it, aunt? because I know there was a crusade.

Mrs. N. The project now meditated lay dormant for nearly a hundred years, during which time other particulars claim our attention. At the commencement of the eleventh century, when fearful apprehensions of the destruction of the world were removed,

the churches and monasteries which had been suffered to fall into ruins, from the notion that they would soon be involved in the general conflagration, were repaired; and the greatest zeal, attended with the most liberal donations, was bestowed in restoring sacred edifices to their former splendour, or rather in giving them new degrees of magnificence. The art of painting, which had been buried during the ages of barbarism, was now revived; and the first essay of the artist, in a picture of the Virgin, was received with such enthusiastic delight, that it was carried in public, joyous procession to the church dedicated to her at Florence, and the day celebrated as a general festival. Painting on glass also reappeared; and, during the eleventh century, all the European nations were diligently employed in rebuilding, repairing, and adorning churches.

S. If that time were to come over again, our old church would receive what it wants.

Mrs. N. The bishops introduced the system of remitting a third or fourth part of penance to persons who should contribute certain sums of money toward building or restoring churches. By this means vast riches were amassed, which excited the envy of the pope, who abridged the privileges of the bishops, and claimed to himself the sole prerogative of granting these indulgences. In their first signification, they referred only to the penalties imposed upon the transgressors of ecclesiastical law, having no reference to a future state of punishment; but the pontiff soon found a motive in the influence thus gained

for attempting to extend his clemency throughout eternity.

G. Mamma, I think Satan must have helped the pope to find out such things.

Mrs. N. The wisdom of the serpent is strikingly displayed in adapting the corruptions of Popery to the spirit and manner of the age, and in making every circumstance conduce to the aggrandizement and wealth of the pontiff. The election of the pope, which had hitherto been by the Roman clergy, nobility, and burgesses, was now restricted to the cardinals; it being decreed, that henceforth he should be a lawful pope who had the suffrages of two-thirds of the college of cardinals.

L. Who were the cardinals, aunt?

Mrs. N. The cardinals were previously only the principal priests and incumbents of the parishes of Rome; but they were now artfully raised, in order to pacify the inferior clergy under the abridgment of their privileges, and also to depress the bishops, to be the first rank of ecclesiastics. They are distinguished by wearing the red hat and purple: the red hat was adopted as an emblem of their readiness to shed their blood for the catholic faith; but little of the spirit of martyrdom has been manifested in these aspirants to dignity, wealth, and power.

S. But to me it appears as though they would agree better, when there were not so many to give their opinions.

Mrs. N. It was done with the pretext of avoiding the usual contentions and disturbances at the election

of a pope; and it certainly did prevent the recurrence of scenes disgraceful to humanity (setting aside Christianity) which had hitherto been practised; but at the same time it augmented the power of the Roman see, by excluding all other parties from the right of interference. The authority of the popedom was now called to support the doctrine of transubstantiation.

G. Transubstantiation! O what a long word!

Mrs. N. I have already noted the origin of this error in the notions of Pascasius Radbert, which, though at first nobly refuted by John Scot, was nevertheless gradually received as a tenet of Romish faith. In the year 1050, Berenger, an eminent ecclesiastic, avowed, in his writings, that the opinion of John Scot was catholic. For the advocacy of disapproved sentiments, he was immediately excommunicated by the pope, who called a council to sanction his proceedings. In this Scot's book was condemned; and it was decreed, that all who maintained his heresy should be prosecuted, and forced to retract, upon pain of death. Berenger, terrified by Papal fury, retracted, and declared, upon oath, that he would hold the doctrine of the church. This dissembling of conscience was but of short duration; for he again expressed his former sentiments: he was again summoned, and required to burn his own and Scot's writings, and to sign a confession of faith, in which he declared, that he believed the bread and wine upon the altar were not only, after consecration, the sacrament, but also the real body and blood

of Christ. Returning into France, and finding the king whom he feared was dead, he again ventured to maintain his real opinions; and, to supply the loss of the writings which he had burnt, he drew up a confession of faith opposed to that which he had signed. The pope wrote sharply to him to renounce his error; but Berenger, instead of obeying, continued to oppose the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. A third, a fourth, and a fifth time was he summoned to appear before councils, to abjure his opinions, and to sign the pope's decrees. Whether he died recanting or professing his real belief, has been a contested point; but nearly his last words were: "This day will my Lord Jesus Christ appear to me, either to glory by his mercy through my repentance, or, as I fear, on the account of others, to my punishment."

G. Why, he was as changeable as a weather-cock; and people did not know what he was, after all.

Mrs. N. Such vacillation is perfectly unjustifiable; yet we see in his conduct the struggles of an enlightened judgment against absurdity and arbitrary power. Better had it been for him to have sacrificed life for the truth, than to have sacrificed conscience in the acknowledged support of error. Soon after this establishment of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the eucharistic bread was called, after consecration, "the host," as being more expressive of the victim, or sacrifice, offered for the sin of the world; and, instead of the bread formerly used,

small cakes of meal and water, round and thin, in the shape of wafers, were introduced and became general.

L. I should not like to have to answer for what the popes did.

Mrs. N. One was now raised to the popedom who exceeded all others in arrogance and audacity. As Hildebrand, he had controlled the measures of two former popes; but after he was himself raised to the pontificate, under the assumed name of Gregory VII., he made the stoutest hearts in Europe tremble.

G. What did he do, mamma?

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, it would be impossible for me to tell you all he did; for, by aiming to be the sovereign monarch of the world, he had differences with nearly all the princes of Christendom. It will be necessary, however, in order that you may form some judgment of his character, to mention a few particulars. Having favoured William the Conqueror in his projected invasion of England, by blessing his host, and consecrating his banners, he seized the favourable opportunity of establishing his spiritual encroachments in this country; and instantly demanded tribute from the conqueror, as an acknowledgment of subjection to the Roman see. William declared, that he held his kingdom of God only, and his own sword; but, notwithstanding his protestations, Peter-pence were levied throughout England. The Saxon translation of the Bible was also prohibited, and none but the Latin Bible allowed. In a prolonged quarrel with the king of France concern-

ing investitures, Gregory forbad the bishops taking an oath of allegiance to princes, claiming to himself the right of delivering the crosier and the ring; and, addressing himself to the king, he recommended "an humble and obliging carriage, from the consideration that both his kingdom and his soul were under the dominion of St. Peter, who had power to bind and to loose him, both in heaven and in earth." The nature of the oath which he drew up for the emperor sufficiently demonstrates the arrogance of his pretensions: "Now, and henceforth, I will be true to the apostle Peter, and to his vicar, Pope Gregory. I will faithfully obey all his commands, as becometh a true Christian. And, as soon as I behold him, he may make me Christ's faithful soldier, and his own."

G. I did not think William the Conqueror had been so cowardly.

Mrs. N. The king of France was equally as courageous as William, and struggled hard to maintain his rights; but, on the verge of ruin, he was obliged to submit. Crossing the Alps, during the rigour of a severe winter, he arrived, in the month of February, 1077, at the fortress where Gregory resided. Here the suppliant prince stood three days in the open air at the entrance of the fortress, with his feet bare, his head uncovered, and with no other raiment than a piece of woollen cloth thrown around him. The fourth day he was admitted into the presence of the lordly pontiff; who, with considerable difficulty, granted him the absolution he required.

L. It seems he had cunning enough to forbid the

people reading the Bible, or else they would have known that such conduct was not warranted by Scripture.

Mrs. N. The Bible was longer retained in England than in other countries; but few were acquainted with its contents, or the maxims of Gregory's policy, so directly at variance with gospel precepts, would have been detected. The "Hildebrand Dictates" (the name by which they are generally known) are the following:—"That the Church of Rome was founded by our Lord alone: that the bishop of Rome only has a right to be styled the pope: that, being canonically ordained, he becomes holy by the merits of St. Peter: that all princes must kiss his feet: that from his sentence there lies no appeal: that the Church of Rome never erred, or will err: that the pope has power to absolve subjects from their allegiance to civil governors."

S. Well, aunt, I must acknowledge he carried matters sadly too far.

Mrs. N. Gregory VII. also obliged all archbishops to come in person to Rome for the pall, the receiving of which was changed from a promise of obedience into an oath of allegiance, such as vassals by the feudal laws were obliged to take to their princes.

G. Mamma, what is the pall?

Mrs. N. It was part of the imperial habit, or robe of state, which Constantine allowed the bishop of Rome to wear. The first grant of it to another was not presumed without obtaining leave of the emperor;

but in process of time it became a practice for the pope to send it to all archbishops as the confirmation of their authority.

G. And did they go all the way to Rome to fetch it?

Mrs. N. Gregory endeavoured to establish the prerogatives of the Roman see by the oath which was demanded upon the grant of the pall; but his successors in the pontificate, finding it impossible to adhere strictly to his rule, yielded to impediments which prevented the personal appearance of the claimants, and frequently sent it by their legates. He was more successful in establishing the celibacy of the clergy.

L. I have been expecting you would mention that subject for some time past, because I know Romish priests are not allowed to marry.

Mrs. N. The gradual manner in which this branch of discipline was introduced has hitherto prevented its arresting our attention. It was at first partially adopted, in compliance with the advice of zealous leaders of the church, who judged it expedient, or supposed it tended to the promotion of piety; afterward it was represented as a moral duty, and was enforced by decrees of councils; now, in the eleventh century, it was enjoined and established by Papal authority.

S. But, aunt, how could they unmarry those that were married?

Mrs. N. The conduct of the pope and the ecclesiastics on this occasion, was that of hard, unfeeling

bigots. Having no domestic ties to excite and exercise their own kindly affections, they neither cared nor felt for others; and, though it was quite necessary that the licentiousness of the clergy should be checked, such an indiscriminate measure affected most, where it was least needed. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, established this cruel decree in England, by forcing all the married clergy to put away their wives, forbidding them ever to see them again, or to suffer them to live on any lands belonging to the church, on pain of seeing them reduced to servitude, or otherwise punished.

G. If I had been king, I would never have allowed it.

Mrs. N. It appears from what Anselm said, when requested to accept the see of Canterbury, that William II. struggled against the pope's authority. He at first refused the dignity, saying, "The plough of the Church of England ought to be drawn by two oxen of equal strength, the king and the archbishop: but if you yoke me, who am but a weak old sheep, with the king, who is a mad, young bull, the plough will not go straight." Anselm is said to have been the most eminent saint of his age; but all his zeal was spent in supporting Papal authority. A canon, about this time published, importing "that such as wore long hair should be excluded coming into the church when living, and not be prayed for when dead," found in him so zealous an advocate, that his furious preaching against long hair and curls made ladies cut off their locks in the church. But even

Anselm was surpassed by the enthusiasm of Peter the Hermit, who went through all countries of Europe with a crucifix in his hand, carrying a letter, said to be written in heaven, and addressed from thence to all true Christians, to animate their zeal for the deliverance of their brethren who groaned under the burden of the Mohammedan yoke.

S. Now, then, we are coming to the crusade.

Mrs. N. You are right in your supposition. When the minds of the people were thus prepared, Pope Urban II. ascended a lofty scaffold in the market-place of Clermont, and addressed his eloquence to the members of the council, the princes' legates, and an expectant multitude. His pompous and pathetic speech was interrupted by the clamorous shouts of thousands, who with one voice exclaimed, "God wills it! God wills it!" "It is indeed the will of God," replied the pope; "and let this inspiration of the Holy Spirit be for ever adopted as your cry to battle, to animate the courage of the champions of Christ. His cross is the symbol of your salvation; wear it; a red, a bloody cross, as an external mark on your breasts and shoulders, as a pledge of your sacred and irrevocable engagement." He proclaimed a plenary indulgence to those who should enlist under the banner of the cross, the absolution of all their sins, and a full receipt of all that might be due of canonical penance; also, that their persons and effects should be taken under the protection of St. Peter; and that the anathemas of the church should be denounced against all who should molest them,

or carry on hostile measures during the time of holy service.

L. I do not much wonder at the crusade, if the people could really believe all the pope said.

Mrs. N. As the grant of indulgences was the most powerful inducement for engaging in the holy war, the subject now claimed the learning and sanctity of persons most eminent for character, to substantiate its truth. The most current testimony was: "That there actually existed an immense treasure of merit, composed of the pious deeds and virtuous actions which the saints performed, beyond what was necessary for their own salvation, and which was therefore applicable to the benefit of others; that the guardian and dispenser of this precious treasure was the Roman pontiff; and that, in consequence, he was empowered to assign to such as he thought proper a portion of this merit, suitable to their respective guilt, and sufficient to deliver them from the punishment due to their crimes."

G. Mamma, why was it called crusade?

Mrs. N. It was originally called "croisade," from the word *crois*, or "cross," all embarking in the holy war being denominated "cross-bearers;" not only because the design of the war was to wrest the cross of Christ and the Holy Land from the hands of infidels, but also on account of the consecrated cross, which every one bore on his right shoulder. These crosses were of various colours: English, white; French, red; Flemish, green; German, black; Italian, yellow. The act of taking the cross

was frequently performed with great pomp and ceremony, and the wearing of it was considered a distinguishing mark of honour; entitling the person to the privilege of having his figure placed with crossed legs upon his tomb, in order that succeeding generations might recognise him as a soldier of Christ.

G. That was a privilege I should not have cared much about.

Mrs. N. A motley assemblage of monks, artists, merchants, slaves, and soldiers, embarked in the enterprise; eight hundred thousand, in three separate bodies, bade defiance to Mohammedan insult and bravery. They were viewed as "the servants and soldiers of God; the chosen army of Christ; as men who marched under the immediate protection of the Almighty, being conducted by his hand to victory and glory." The first division, in its march through Hungary and Thrace, committed such enormities, that the incensed inhabitants rose up and massacred the greater part; the other divisions, headed by illustrious commanders, arrived more happily at the place of destination. After a siege of five weeks, the conquest of Jerusalem crowned the expedition with success: the holy sepulchre was now free: bare-headed and bare-footed, the victors ascended the hill of Calvary, amidst the loud anthems of the clergy; kissed the stone which had covered the sacred deposite; and bedewed with tears of joy the objects of their zeal. Eight days after, Godfrey was chosen king of Jerusalem; but he contented himself with the modest title of "Defender and Baron of the Holy

Sepulchre." This memorable event closes the history of the eleventh century.

G. I wonder what we shall have next.

Mrs. N. We will first take notice of some alterations in church discipline. The form of absolution which for several centuries had been commonly used, was, "Almighty God be merciful unto thee, and forgive all thy sins, past, present, and to come, visible and invisible, which thou hast committed before him and his saints; which thou hast confessed, or by some negligence, or forgetfulness, or evil will, hast concealed; God deliver thee from all evil, here and hereafter; preserve and confirm thee always in every good work; and Christ, the Son of the living God, bring thee unto the life which remaineth without end." But the indicative or imperative form was now substituted, which usually ran thus: "I absolve thee from all thy sins, &c., in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Absolution was now exalted to a high rank, and was supposed to be administered by the priests with a power delegated immediately from God. The celebrated Peter Lombard, styled the master of divinity, taught, "that there are seven sacraments in the church,—baptism, confirmation, penance, matrimony, the eucharist, holy orders, and extreme unction; and that the efficacy of every sacrament depends upon the intention of the priest by whom it is administered." The practice of elevating and adoring the host was also becoming general; and the sacramental cup began to be gradually withdrawn

from the laity, under pretence of preventing disorders, to which the use of it had given rise. This retrenchment was confirmed by Pope Paschal II., in the year 1118, who ordered the Lord's supper to be henceforth administered in one kind only. The adoration of the host was subsequently sanctioned by Gregory IX., who introduced the custom of ringing a bell, as a signal for the people to prostrate themselves.

S. Really, aunt, I never thought Popery was so bad.

Mrs. N. Popery may now be said to have reached the zenith of its power; for hereafter we shall find protestations and divisions, which weakened its force by exposing its corruptions. Indeed, a Romish writer gives testimony of there having been, during the last century, "several heretics, who openly attacked the sacraments of the church, and despised its most holy ceremonies. The severity," he continues, "used against this sect did not hinder it from increasing, so that in the twelfth century abundance of heretics appeared. Nothing was to be seen in Provence but rebaptized Christians, churches profaned, altars overturned, and crosses burnt. These disorders excited the zeal of the bishops of that country, who, with the assistance of the princes, drove away the heretics, and put a stop to the rage of their followers. Peter De Brues, one of their leaders, went from thence to Languedoc, where he published the same errors, till he was seized, and burnt alive." Another writer says, "They are

increased to great multitudes throughout all countries; their words spread like a cancer. In Germany we call them *Cathari;* in Flanders they call them *Piphles;* in French, *Tisserands*, for many of them are weavers." The persecutions of this first class of reformers caused many to retire to Albi, from whence they were called Albigenses.

S. O, I wish they had come to England!

Mrs. N. England was not then, as it is now, a refuge for the distressed, as appears from the fulfilment of your wish. Thirty men and women, who were Germans, appeared in England in the year 1159, and were brought before a council of the clergy at Oxford. Gerard, their teacher, a man of learning, said that they were Christians, and believed the doctrine of the apostles; but they expressed abhorrence of the doctrine of purgatory, of prayers for the dead, and the invocation of saints. Henry II., in conjunction with the council, ordered them to be branded with a hot iron on the forehead, to be whipped through Oxford, to have their clothes cut short, and to be turned into the open fields; he likewise forbade any person, under severe penalties, to shelter or relieve them. As it was the depth of winter, they all perished through cold and hunger.

G. Mamma, I can never like Oxford, now I know that.

Mrs. N. You will hereafter hear of similar instances of cruelty in other places; but I may now mention that Cambridge was beginning to be a seminary of learning. The arts and sciences were

reviving among the clergy, and the abbot of Croyland sent Gislebert, with three other monks, to his manor of Cottenham. They went every day to Cambridge, where they hired a barn as a convenient place for public lectures. One read grammar in the morning, a second read logic at one o'clock, and a third, at three in the afternoon, gave lectures on rhetoric; Gislebert himself preaching on Sundays and other holydays. The barn was soon found insufficient to contain the auditors, and better accommodation was therefore provided. Such is the account of the infant state of learning in the university of Cambridge.

S. Pray, aunt, tell us something more about England; for we should know more about our own country than other lands.

Mrs. N. The most important personage at this time in England was Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who, it was said, was favoured with a visit from the blessed Virgin herself, who used this speech:—"Rejoice, and be glad, and be joyful with me, because my glory doth excel the dignity and joy of all the saints, and all the blessed spirits; and I alone have greater glory than all the angels and saints together. Rejoice, because that as the sun doth enlighten the world, so doth my brightness enlighten the celestial world. Rejoice, because the whole host of heaven obeyeth me, reverenceth me, and honoureth me. Rejoice, because my Son is always obedient unto me, and my will, and all my prayers he always heareth. Rejoice, because God

doth always at my pleasure reward my servitors in this world, and in the world to come. Rejoice, because I sit next to the holy Trinity, and am clothed with my body glorified. Rejoice, because these my joys shall always stand, and never fail; and whosoever by rejoicing shall worship me in this world, at the time of the departure of his soul from the body, he shall obtain my presence, and I will deliver his soul from all malignant enemies, and present it in the sight of my Son, that it may possess joys with me for ever."

S. Now, aunt, I am quite satisfied about "Hail, Mary!" Never, never again, will I think there is no harm in it.

Mrs. N. I trusted, my dear girl, that your candour and good sense would enable you to discover the folly and wickedness of Popish corruptions of Christianity; and, my anticipations being partly realized, I am abundantly rewarded for the trouble of collecting and arranging the particulars of our history: but, as I hope the remaining part will more fully establish you in the truth, we will proceed to take some notice of the character of England's renowned saint. Henry II. promoted Becket to the archiepiscopal see, for the express purpose of seconding his own design of lessening the influence of Papal authority. But no sooner was Becket established in his new dignity, than he suddenly changed his mode of life; and, from being a gay, luxurious courtier, he became the most austere and rigid monk. He wore sackcloth next his skin, which was never

changed until it was full of vermin; he ate nothing but bread, and drank water in which fennel had been steeped to make it nauseous; he lacerated himself with continual scourging, and every day washed the feet of thirteen poor beggars. Having thus obtained the reverence of the people, he became the most strenuous supporter of church tyranny. Some of the clergy having been convicted of the basest crimes, Becket maintained that ecclesiastics were not accountable to civil magistrates. Henry asked, "if they were not, as his subjects, to observe the customs of his kingdom?" he was answered, "they were ready to do it, but without prejudice to their rights." The king was displeased with this restriction, and showed marks of indignation; upon which Becket fled to Flanders until the pope should settle the difference. The pope's decision in favour of Becket occasioned other altercations, which so exasperated Henry, that, in a moment of irritation, he exclaimed, "Is there nobody that will rid me of this turbulent priest?" Unknown to the king, four gentlemen of his household set out immediately for Canterbury, and assassinated Becket while he was at vespers in his cathedral. This event provoked the anger of the Roman pontiff. Henry was forced to undergo a severe course of penance, in order to expiate the crime of being the promoter of the murder; he walked barefoot to Becket's tomb, where he was scourged with lashes by monks as he knelt before it; the assassins went to Rome to get absolution, but spent the rest of their days in penance; and the murdered prelate was

solemnly enrolled in the highest rank of saints and martyrs; the merits of St. Thomas of Canterbury being reckoned of equal value with those of apostles.

G. Mamma, is that picture which Mr. H. has in his possession any thing about it? It is "A Pilgrimage to Canterbury."

Mrs. N. That is a representation of the manner in which pilgrims went to offer their devotions at Becket's shrine. It has been computed that in one year a hundred thousand pilgrims, from all parts of Europe, arrived in Canterbury, for the purpose of offering their prayers at his tomb, in order to obtain his intercession with heaven. Besides a coffin of gold, there were many jewels employed to decorate the remains of this saint; his shrine was enriched with presents from all parts of Christendom; and the virtue of his relics wrought marvellous cures, the transcribing of which filled two folio volumes, which were carefully preserved in the cathedral.

S. What a different martyr from Polycarp!

Mrs. N. Becket can be considered only as the victim of Papal domination; in no sense can he be said to have been a martyr. The claims of the popedom were now extended to Ireland; Henry's invasion of that country being founded on a bull granted by Pope Adrian: "You have advertised us, dear son in Christ, of your design of an expedition into Ireland, to subject the island to just laws, and to root out vice, which has long flourished there. We exhort you to do whatever you think proper to advance the honour of God, and the salvation of the

people, whom we charge to submit to your jurisdiction, and own you for their sovereign lord; provided always that the rights of the church be inviolably preserved, and the Peter-pence duly paid."

G. Ay, ay, the rights of the church and Peter-pence were every thing to the pope!

Mrs. N. The pope declared in a bull issued about this time, "that it was not fit that any man should be invested with authority, who did not obey and revere the holy see." In the year 1177 the emperor Frederic concluded a treaty of peace; when it is affirmed the haughty pontiff trod upon the neck of the suppliant monarch, while he kissed his feet, repeating at the time the words of the Psalmist, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Even the "lion-hearted Richard" was told that, "if he opposed the execution of the decrees of the apostolic see, he should soon be convinced how 'hard it was to kick against the pricks.'"

G. Was it not the "lion-hearted Richard" who went to the Holy Land?

Mrs. N. When success in arms had crowned the first crusade, vast numbers returned into Europe, bringing saintly relics as their noblest spoils, which afterward enriched the churches. The Mohammedans, seeing the number of conquerors thus wasted, resumed their courage, harassed and exhausted those that were left, and threatened to recapture the holy city. The defenders of Jerusalem earnestly implored that a new army of cross-bearers might be sent to

support the tottering cause. Bernard, celebrated for monastic piety and learning, recommended this holy expedition with such persuasive power, and declared with such assurance that he had a divine commission to foretell its glorious success, that the king and queen of France, with all their nobles, put on the military cross, and prepared to engage in the enterprise. This proved a complete failure; yet its unhappy issue did not deter another expedition, consisting of the "lion-hearted" Richard of England, the king of France, and the flower of the European nobility. It comes not within my province to enumerate the dangers, encounters, defeats, and successes of the holy wars, which proved highly prejudicial, both to the cause of religion and the civil interests of mankind: rather would I notice the reappearance of Christianity in the persecuted Albigenses and Waldenses.

L. I am sure we shall all be glad to hear of Christianity again; for we are quite tired of superstition and error.

Mrs. N. I have already mentioned, that part of the first class of reformers who retired to Albi were called Albigenses. But the *Cathari*, or "pure men," were also numerous in the valleys of Piedmont, (the scene of the pious labours of Claude, bishop of Turin, in the ninth century,) whence they were called Vaudois, or Vallences, "inhabitants of the valleys." About the year 1160 Peter Waldo, a rich merchant in Lyons, dared to oppose the adoration of the host, and translate the Latin Bible into the French lan-

guage. Thus becoming more intimately acquainted with the Scriptures, he discovered that a number of customs which he had hitherto regarded with reverence, had not only no foundation in the divine oracles, but were even condemned by them. Inflamed with zeal, he inveighed against the reigning vices, and the arrogance of the pope; and as he grew himself in the knowledge of the true faith, he taught the principles of practical godliness, and encouraged all to seek salvation by Jesus Christ. He and his followers were soon anathematized and condemned as heretics, which caused them to make their escape from Lyons; he himself retired into Dauphiny, where his tenets took deep and lasting root; and, persecuted from place to place, he at last died in Bohemia. At the dispersion of his followers, many joined themselves to the Vaudois of Piedmont; when the similar names by which they were distinguished became blended in the general name of Waldenses.

It appeared necessary for me thus to trace the history of the Waldenses, as we shall hereafter have them frequently brought before our notice; and also because the Romanists consider Waldo as their founder; whereas it is evident, from careful researches which have been made, that these churches were really ancient, having kept themselves free from all subjection to the see of Rome, even from their first establishment, which they traced back to the times of the apostles. Thus at the close of the twelfth century there were two classes of reformers, the Albigenses and the Waldenses, who openly inveighed

against the corruptions of Popery; and the last particular which now claims our attention is, that Pope Innocent III. sent two monks, with power to punish, by exile, confiscation of property, or death, the rapidly-increasing sect of the Albigenses.

CONVERSATION IX.

CENTURIES XIII, XIV, AND XV.

Sophia. AUNT, did you say the pope persecuted the Christians?

Mrs. N. Innocent III. was bent upon extirpating the Albigenses, and found a plea in the murder of one of the monks in the country of Albi, to proclaim a crusade against the heretical sect. "We promise," said he, in his bull, "to all those who take up arms to revenge the said murder, the pardon and remission of their sins. We exhort, that you would endeavour to destroy the wicked heresy of the Albigenses; and do this with more rigour than you would use toward the Saracens themselves: persecute with a strong hand; deprive them of their lands and possessions; banish them, and put Catholics in their room." The cross-bearers on this occasion wore the cross on their breasts, instead of their shoulders; and three hundred thousand, induced by the love of plunder and superstition, filled the country of Albi with carnage and confusion. The earl of Toulouse

at first afforded the outcasts favour and protection; for which he was excommunicated, his subjects absolved from their oath of allegiance, and power was given to any Catholic to take possession of his country. By this means, he was overcome, promised obedience, and sought reconciliation with the church.

S. It does look bad, for the pope to persecute as the heathen used to do!

Mrs. N. This indiscriminate butchery was superseded by the pope's sending a number of monks as heresy hunters, who were distinguished in common discourse by the name of "inquisitors." The pontiff soon became so sensible of their services, that, in a few years, a council of inquisitors, consisting of one priest and three laymen, was established in every city suspected of heresy. Hence arose that odious tribunal, the inquisition, of which we shall hereafter speak. The beginning of the thirteenth century saw thousands of persons hanged or burned by diabolic devices; and the number of the apprehended was so great, that the monks of the inquisition were desired to defer the work of imprisonment, it being found impossible to defray the charge of their subsistence, or even to provide sufficient stone and mortar to build prisons.

Lucy. Can you tell us, aunt, what the Albigenses believed?

Mrs. N. We are indebted to their enemies for nearly all we know respecting them; yet their statements will enable us to form a favourable idea of both their lives and their profession. An inquisitor

describes them as being "most formidable enemies of the church, because they have a great appearance of godliness, and live righteously before men; but their faith is incorrigible and vile; they hate and revile the Church of Rome, denominating it even 'Babylon' itself; and their accusations are easily believed by the people." Another says: "They are armed with all those passages of Holy Scripture which in any degree seem to favour their views: with these they know how to defend themselves, and to oppose the Catholic truth; though they mistake entirely the true sense of Scripture, which cannot be discovered without great judgment." Of their own writings, only one thus early has been preserved. It is a manuscript concerning Antichrist, bearing the date of 1120, and was kept by the Waldenses of the Alps with great care. A brief summary of it is as follows:—"He is called antichrist, because, being covered and adorned under the colour of Christ and his church, he opposes the salvation purchased by Christ, of which the faithful are partakers by faith, hope, and charity. He contradicts the truth by the wisdom of the world, and by counterfeit holiness. To make up a complete system of religious hypocrisy, all these things must concur,—there must be worldly-wise men; there must be religious orders, Pharisees, doctors, the secular power, and lovers of this world. Antichrist, indeed, was conceived in the apostles' times; but he was in his infancy, unformed and imperfect. He was, therefore, the more easily known and ejected, being rude, raw, and want-

ing utterance. He had then no skill in making decretals; he wanted hypocritical ministers, and the show of religious orders. He had none of those riches by which he might allure ministers to his service, and multiply his adherents; he wanted also the secular power, and could not compel men to serve him. But he grew to a full age when the lovers of the world, both in church and state, did multiply, and get all the power into their hands. Christ had never any enemy like to this, so able to pervert the way of truth into falsehood; insomuch that the church, with her true children, is trodden under foot. He robs Christ of his merits, of justification, regeneration, sanctification, and spiritual nourishment; and ascribes the same to his own authority, to a form of words, to his own works, to saints, and to the fire of purgatory. Yet he has some decent qualities which throw a veil over his other enormities; such as an external profession of Christianity, tradition, and catalogues of episcopal succession, lying wonders, external sanctity, and certain sayings of Christ himself, the administration of the sacraments, verbal preaching against vices, and the virtuous lives of some who really live to God in Babylon. These things are a cloak with which antichrist hides his wickedness, that he may not be rejected as pagan. Knowing these things, we depart from antichrist, according to express Scriptural directions. We unite ourselves to the truth of Christ and his spouse, how small soever she may appear. We describe the causes of our separation from antichrist,

that if the Lord be pleased to impart the knowledge of the same truth to others, those who receive it, together with us, may love it; but that, if they be not sufficiently enlightened, they may receive help by our ministry, and be washed by the Spirit. If any one have received more abundantly than we ourselves, we desire the more humbly to be taught, and to amend our defects."

George. Why, mamma, it is just what I think about Popery.

Mrs. N. I think none of us need be ashamed of recognising the poor, persecuted Albigenses, as our Protestant brethren.

S. I really did not think the pope would have acted so; I never thought so badly of him as I do now; that Gregory carried matters very high. But I thought some people are prouder than others, and so I excused him; but it is really shocking to turn persecutor of Christians.

Mrs. N. In addition to the cruelty of Innocent III., he was not behind Gregory in pride and arrogance. He thundered his bulls of excommunication against two emperors of Germany, and the king of France; but none so severely felt his despotic power as John, king of England.

G. O, you mean John the coward, who shut himself up in Nottingham castle.

Mrs. N. In the beginning of his reign it does not appear that John showed the cowardice of which he afterward stands accused. He opposed the pope's right of nominating Stephen Langton (who divided

the Bible, as at present, into chapters) to the see of Canterbury; and declared that, if he persisted in imposing the prelate, it would prove fatal to the Papal authority in England. Innocent immediately punished his contumacy by laying the kingdom under an interdict: a stop was put to divine service; the churches were shut; the administration of the sacraments was suspended; and the dead were buried in the highways, without the usual rites, or any funeral solemnity. The interdict not producing the effects that were expected, the pontiff proceeded further, and denounced a sentence of excommunication against the person of the English monarch. This sentence was followed by a bull, absolving all his subjects from their oath of allegiance. In 1212 he declared, in a college of cardinals, the throne of England to be vacant, deposed John, and wrote to the king of France to undertake the conquest of England; at the same time publishing a bull, exhorting all Christian princes to second Philip in the enterprise; and granted the same indulgences as to those who carried arms against the infidels. The French king was making preparations for the invasion of England, and John was putting himself in a posture of defence, when the pope's legate appeared at Dover, to propose terms of reconciliation.

G. Yes, mamma; and John gave the pope the crown of England!

Mrs. N. John should have been made of "sterner stuff" for such an emergency. He dastardly resigned his sceptre and crown to the Papal legate,

who kept it five days; and, then restoring it as a special favour, trampled upon a sum of money presented as tribute to St. Peter, and obtained the stipulation of a thousand marks yearly, in acknowledgment of the pope's supremacy and jurisdiction.

G. Somehow, I feel as if I could never forgive John for giving away the crown of England.

Mrs. N. The act excited the indignation of the English nation; but one of the most eminent writers of the day said, "We ought to hope, and most assuredly to trust, that some good works which John did in his life will plead for him before the tribunal of Jesus Christ; for he built one abbey, and, when dying, bequeathed a sum of money to another."

G. But we know better than to suppose that building abbeys will raise us to heaven.

Mrs. N. Yet ought not the abbeys, cathedrals, and churches, which we see through the length and the breadth of our land, erected by our forefathers with the delusive hope of purchasing heaven, to excite our gratitude for superior light? Most of the noble edifices were built by the money of the rich, and the labour of the poor, to cancel guilt, and to merit heaven; and Pope Innocent III. added another inducement to personal considerations, in the idea, that gifts to the church also increased the joys of the departed. In one of his bulls, he says, "Such or such an oblation may profit such or such a saint in glory; and as many repute it no indignity that the glory of the saints should be augmented, it becomes the church to wish the increase of their glorifica-

tion." He established auricular confession as compulsory and binding upon every member of the church; and introduced the term "transubstantiation," publishing it as an oracle, that the bread and wine of the eucharist were transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. A canon of the council held in the year 1229 decreed that the laity were not allowed to have either the Old or New Testament in the vulgar tongue; and it forbade men to translate the Scriptures.

L. The people were indeed to be pitied; because, when the Bible was taken from them, they had nothing to contradict what the priests said.

Mrs. N. St. Francis (the founder of one of the orders of begging friars) confirmed the reputation of the Virgin by the revelation of a vision with which he had been favoured, of two ladders reaching from earth to heaven: the one red, upon which Christ leaned, from whence many fell backward, and could not ascend: the other white, upon which the holy Virgin leaned, the help whereof such as used, were by her received with a cheerful countenance; and so, with great ease, entered into heaven.

G. Mamma, what do you mean by begging friars?

Mrs. N. When Francis, for the first time, heard those words of our Saviour, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat;" they produced such a powerful impression upon his mind as led him to suppose that the whole of religion

consisted in voluntary poverty; and he henceforth prescribed poverty as a sacred rule to himself and his followers. In addition to poverty, he submitted to the greatest austerities; he sprinkled all his food with ashes, and used to call his body "brother ass," because of the rigorous severities, continued whippings, and coarse diet with which he treated it: but after his death, his followers obtained license from the pope to modify the severity of his rules; so that though no individual of the Franciscans could possess property, yet the community could possess funds, revenues, and worldly goods; St. Peter being the proprietor.

S. And did they really go a begging?

Mrs. N. The archbishop of Armagh will best answer your question. He says, "Scarce can any great or mean man of the clergy or laity eat his meat, but such kind of beggars will be at his elbow; not like other poor folks, craving alms at the gate or door, but, without shame, intruding themselves into courts or houses, and lodging there, without any inviting at all. They eat and drink what they do find; and not content with that, they carry away with them, either wheat, or meal, or bread, or flour, or cheese, in a kind of extorting manner, there being none that can deny them, unless he would cast away all natural shame." The great inconvenience that arose from the excessive multiplication of the mendicant orders was partially remedied, by Pope Gregory X. reducing their number, and confining them to four societies: the Hermits of St. Augustine,

Dominicans or black friars, Franciscans or gray friars, and Carmelites or white friars.

S. I have often heard of gray friars and black friars; and you know, aunt, there is a bridge in London, called Blackfriars' bridge.

Mrs. N. The two fraternities of Dominicans and Franciscans were distinguished by wearing gray or black garments; and during the next three centuries, they governed both state and church with an almost universal sway. They were, before the Reformation, what the Jesuits have been since—the soul of the hierarchy, the engine of the state, the secret spring of motion, and the authors or directors of every important event. In the year 1276 the mayor and aldermen of London gave the Dominicans two whole streets by the river Thames; where they erected a very commodious convent, which accounts for the place being designated Blackfriars.

G. And, mamma, when we went to London, we passed through St. Alban's: do you know what that is called after?

Mrs. N. I believe the town is called after Alban, reported to be the first English martyr; of whom Milton says, "The story of whose martyrdom, soiled and worse martyred with the fabling zeal of idle fancies, more fond of miracles than apprehensive of truth, deserves no longer digression." Part of the hymn sung on the festival of this saint was:—

"Hail, proto-martyr of the English,
Soldier of the King of angels,
O Alban, flower of the martyrs!"

The abbot of St. Alban's, who died toward the close of the thirteenth century, repeated the following words, as his last act:—"O holy Alban, whom I have loved and addressed as my best aid! as I have existed and lived by thy help, so, O glorious saint, deliver me from the pains of hell!" It is said, that "in the abbey of St. Alban's, the superiors decked themselves with excess of pompous attire; they wore vestments as rich as art and money could make them; and though they changed their attire every day, they could not bring them all into use." But the pomp and magnificence of St. Alban's was totally eclipsed by the chapel which now appeared of the holy Virgin, at Loretto.

L. Will you please to tell us about it, aunt?

Mrs. N. It was a magnificent cathedral, built over the supposed chamber in which the Virgin was born, and where the angel saluted her; which was pretended to be carried by angels through the air from Galilee into Italy. On the ceiling was painted the Assumption of the Virgin; and on the west side of the window, in a niche, stood the image called the Great Madonna, or Lady, five feet high, made of cedar, said to be wrought by St. Luke. The mantle, or robe, was covered with jewels of immense value; round the statue there was a kind of rainbow formed of precious stones of various colours; and a triple crown of gold, enriched with pearls and diamonds, encircled the head; a smaller crown was held in the hand for the child Jesus. A dish or shallow bowl of glazed earthenware, out of which

the Virgin and her divine infant were said to have eaten, was always kissed by devotees; and rosaries, medals, crucifixes, and papers painted with the image of the Madonna, at Loretto, were rubbed against it, from a firm persuasion that they thus became an infallible remedy for head-aches, and other diseases. Seven golden lamps were kept continually burning before the image, and other parts of the chamber were illuminated by thirty-seven silver lamps. Five hundred thousand pilgrims have resorted to this chapel in one year, to pay their devotions before this glorious image.

L. It is as bad as the car of Juggernaut!

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, the comparison is not far from being apposite between the present idolatrous Hindoos and the superstitious Christians of the Church of Rome. To meet the rage for pilgrimage which was now at its height, the pope enacted, that the hundredth year closing each century should be kept as a year of jubilee; and that all who visited, during the year 1300, the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome, should obtain thereby the entire remission of all their sins.

G. I should think people would see through that; for what is there in churches to forgive sins?

Mrs. N. You do not sufficiently appreciate the value of the precious relics deposited in those churches, to be sensible of their supposed efficacy. In St. Peter's church was the cross of the good thief, somewhat eaten; Judas's lantern, a little scorched; the dice the soldiers played with, when they cast

lots for our Saviour's garments; the tail of Balaam's ass; Joseph's axe, saw, and hammer, with a few nails he had not driven; the image of the blessed Virgin, drawn by St. Luke, the features all visible; one of her combs; twelve combs of the apostles, all very little used; some relics of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; a part of the body of St. Mark, and a part of his Gospel, in his own handwriting, almost legible; a piece of the Virgin's veil, with large parcels of her hair. A similar enumeration might be made of the treasures of St. Paul's: but I think a sample will be more than enough to excite our pity for the deluded votaries of Romish superstition.

S. Indeed, aunt, it is more than enough: if the people then were as weary of such things as I am now, they would not trouble themselves to go either to St. Peter's or St. Paul's.

Mrs. N. The opening of the jubilee brought vast numbers of people to Rome; and the pope, to show his sovereign authority, appeared in the various ceremonies, sometimes in pontificals, and sometimes in an imperial habit. It was at this time that he adopted for his motto: *Ecce duo gladii*, "Behold two swords!"

G. What did he mean by two swords?

Mrs. N. Sovereignty in both spirituals and temporals. As an exercise of this power, he published a bull in the year 1301, addressed to the king of France, in which he says, "We would have you to know that you are subject to us, both in spirituals and temporals, and that you have no right to confer

benefices." The king, however, was not disposed to succumb to his authority; he caused the bull to be publicly burned, and answered in the like terms: "Philip, by the grace of God, king of the Franks, to Boniface, who sets up for sovereign pontiff, little or no health. Be it known to your Great Extravagance, that we are not subject to any person whatsoever, as it regards temporals; that the collations of churches and prebendships belong to us by a royal right, and that we have a power to appropriate the fruits thereof to ourself."

G. O, mamma, that is just a right name for the pope, "Your Great Extravagance:" let us always call him so.

Mrs. N. The name pope, in its common acceptation, implies more than any epithets of censure or reproach, and will better suit the narration of events.

G. Well, then, what did the pope say to the king after such a message?

Mrs. N. He rejoined with more arrogance than ever, and in the famous bull, *Unam Sanctam*, asserted that Jesus Christ had granted a twofold power to his church, or, in other words, the spiritual and temporal sword; that he had subjected the whole human race to the authority of the Roman pontiff; and that whoever dared to disbelieve it were to be deemed heretics, and stood excluded from all possibility of salvation. After which he passed a sentence of excommunication against the king and all his adherents. Philip, nothing terrified, held an assembly of the states of the kingdom, where he employed

persons of the highest rank to sit in judgment upon the pope. Charges of the foulest crimes were preferred against his holiness; and officers were despatched to depose such an execrable pontiff. He was seized as the king's prisoner, and treated in the most degrading manner; and though rescued out of the hands of his enemies, he died soon after of an illness occasioned by the rage and anguish into which these insults had thrown him.

G. And so there was an end of his Great Extravagance!

Mrs. N. Yes, not only of his person, but also of his sovereign power. His successor, learning wisdom by the things which he suffered, moderated the claims of the Papacy. It was agreed that John's donation of the English throne to the pope was null and void, it being contrary to his coronation oath, and without the concurrence of the parliament. The excommunication of the king of France was also repealed: and the intrepid French monarch afterward promoted a French pontiff, and removed the Papal residence to this side of the Alps, where it continued for the space of seventy years. The residence of the popes in France impaired the authority of the Roman see; the thundering bulls of a French pope were destitute of the force which the edicts of the Roman pontiff had acquired, so that indulgences were frequently granted to win allegiance, rather than severer measures adopted to exact obedience. The great schism which arose, when the three contending popes were continually anathematizing each

other, without any one being acknowledged as the head of the church, for upward of forty years, contributed, also, to lessen the reverence for the popedom. And the fact of inquisitors being so busily employed in searching out heretics, proves that the Papacy had reached the climax of its greatness, and was beginning to decline in general repute.

S. Aunt, I almost dread to hear about those inquisitors; and yet I want to know how the Christians suffered.

Mrs. N. The history of the inquisition is replete with horror and cruelty. The greater part of the Waldenses sought refuge in valleys, environed with mountains, in which they formed caves, to serve for retreat in times of persecution. Within the space of thirteen years, one hundred and fifty of the peaceful inhabitants of the valley of Pragela were delivered by inquisitors to the secular power to be burned; after which the persecutors took possession of their caves, and commenced a furious attack upon the valley during the severity of the winter. The inhabitants attempted to retreat to one of the highest mountains of the Alps, the mothers carrying cradles, and leading by the hand those children who were able to walk; many of them were murdered in the attempt, and those who succeeded were starved to death. A hundred and eighty children were found dead, with their dying mothers around them. In the valley of Loyse, three thousand persons were destroyed by suffocation in their caves. The dukes of Savoy were unwilling to allow

the rage of the inquisitors against their loyal, peaceable, and industrious subjects in the valleys of Piedmont; it being a fact, that a Piedmontese servant was particularly prized and preferred above all others: but the civil power at length yielded to the more ferocious spirit of Papal tyranny, and dreadful cruelties were inflicted upon these simple, inoffensive rustics; who, by their constancy in suffering, revived the memory of primitive martyrs. In Flanders, Austria, and Germany, the inquisitors oppressed the Waldenses with peculiar severity. In Paris, one hundred and fourteen persons, in one year, were burned alive, who bore the flames with the greatest constancy. The intercourse at this time subsisting between France and England caused the dissemination of the doctrines of the Waldenses in our own country.

G. Then, mamma, have we had Waldenses in England?

Mrs. N. In several parts of the continent the Waldenses were called Lollards, (a Dutch word, denoting "those who frequently sing,") and by that name they were distinguished in England; but that it was real Waldensian doctrine that was imported, appears evident from the acknowledgment, that Wickliffe (by some supposed to be the founder of the sect of the Lollards) received his superior light from the Waldenses of France.

S. O, I have heard about the Wickliffites and the Lollards: pray, aunt, tell us all about them.

Mrs. N. Wickliffe first claims our attention as

the renowned English reformer. It appears that he acquired the degree of doctor of divinity at the university of Oxford, where he read lectures, which gained him such applause, that whatever he said was regarded as an oracle. His first attack against church abuses was levelled at the begging friars, whom he described as "a public nuisance, and unworthy of being supported." He also pleaded for the right of the people to read the Scripture; exposed the prevailing corruptions of doctrine and practice; and denied the real presence of Christ in the eucharist. Hence a severe persecution was raised, and he was, by the pope's bull, in the year 1377, cited to appear before the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, on a day fixed, at St. Paul's. Wickliffe obeyed the citation, and went, accompanied by the duke of Lancaster and Lord Henry Percy. He asserted that the Church of Rome was not the head of other churches; that St. Peter was not superior to the other apostles; and that the pope, in the power of the keys, was only equal to a common priest. The bishop of London was indignant; when, angry words passing between himself and the nobles, the assembly became tumultuous, and nothing conclusive was done. Wickliffe's great learning, increasing celebrity, and powerful connections, all contributed to support his courage, and to give vigour to the resolutions he had previously made, of reforming Papal corruptions. He presented to the parliament a paper against the tyranny and usurpations of Rome; and wrote several treatises

condemning the worship of saints and images, the doctrine of indulgences, pilgrimages, and confession, and also denying the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. But his most effectual attack was his translation of the Bible into English, which he completed after retiring to his rectory at Lutterworth, where he died of paralysis, in the year 1387.

G. I guess those begging friars, and monks, and bishops, would not like the Bible to be read.

Mrs. N. The clergy universally clamoured against it; and, it being at the time when no pope was acknowledged, the bishops brought a bill into parliament to suppress Wickliffe's Bible: it was, however, thrown out by a large majority.

L. I should like to know what pretence they would make for not reading God's word.

Mrs. N. I think it is in my power to satisfy your curiosity. "Christ," said they, "committed the gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of the times, and persons' wants: but this Mr. John Wickliffe translated it out of Latin into English; and by that means laid it more open to the laity and women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine." A refutation to such reasoning of the ecclesiastics is found in Wickliffe's translation of the words of our Saviour, which will also afford a specimen of the English style in his

day: "In thilke tyme Jhesus answeride and seid, I knowleche to thee, Fadir, Lord of hevene and of earthe, for thou hast hid these thingis fro wise men and redy, and hast shewid hem to litil children. So, Fadir; for so it was plesynge to fore thee," Matt. xi, 25, 26.

S. How strange such a Bible would be thought now! but I dare say the Lollards would be very glad of it.

Mrs. N. It was to them an invaluable treasure; and contributed greatly to increase their numbers by dispelling the darkness, and exposing the corruptions, of Popery.

G. Mamma, were there many Lollards in England?

Mrs. N. The Lollards were known in England as a persecuted people for a hundred and fifty years. Many noble instances of their Christian magnanimity in suffering and martyrdom are recorded in Fox's "Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs;" but the limits we have prescribed for our history will not allow us to particularize. Protestations against church abuses were frequently heard; such as, "Christ sent apostles and presbyters, not monks and begging friars;" but the rigorous measures used to suppress the growing disaffection, by the brand of heresy and committing heretics to the flames, with the strict search made for the Lollards and their books, caused the stigmatized sect eventually to sigh in secret; and the reign of idolatry to triumph. Owing to the influence of the duke of Lancaster, who may be called the political father of the Lollards, they were, during

his life-time, screened from Papal fury. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, the royal sanction was gained for supporting the existing hierarchy by penal coercion. Twelve inquisitors were commissioned to report the progress of heresy; the issue of whose inquiries proved highly ungrateful to the clergy. They found Oxford overrun with heretics; many of the students at the university were Lollards; itinerant preachers, in various parts of the country, were supported by Lord Cobham to disperse the works of Wickliffe, and propagate opinions directly opposed to the holy mother church; and the Bible was read by the common people without reserve. This information gave rise to prompt and vigorous measures for the suppression of the growing sect. A grand convocation of nobles, and an assembly of divines, was summoned; with great solemnity a copy of each of Wickliffe's works was publicly burned; and it was determined that Lord Cobham, as the encourager of the Lollards, should be prosecuted as a heretic.

S. Do, aunt, tell us about Lord Cobham, if you leave all the rest.

Mrs. N. In consideration of the high birth, military rank, and good services of this nobleman, the king enjoined the convocation to deal favourably with him, and to stop proceedings for some days, promising, that he himself, in the mean time, would send for the honourable knight, and endeavour to persuade him to renounce his errors. The king kept his promise; and is said to have used every argu-

ment he could think of to convince him of the high offence of separating from the church; and, at last, to have pathetically exhorted him to retract and submit, as an obedient child to his holy mother. The answer of the knight is very expressive of the frankness and intrepidity which distinguished his character: "You, sire, I am always most ready to obey, because you are the appointed minister of God, and bear the sword for the punishment of evil-doers. But, as to the pope, and the spiritual dominion, I owe them no obedience, nor will I pay them any: for, as sure as God's word is true, to me it is fully evident, that the pope of Rome is the great antichrist foretold in holy writ; the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." The king was by no means disposed to relish such an answer: he immediately turned from him in visible displeasure, and gave him up to the malice of his enemies.

G. O, mamma, do not give over: I like to hear about people that have courage.

Mrs. N. Lord Cobham was soon arrested, and lodged in the tower of London. At his examination, on the day appointed, he delivered to the archbishop his confession of faith. "Sir," said the primate, "you stand here, both detected of heresies, and also excommunicated for contumacy. Notwithstanding, we have, as yet, neither shown ourselves unwilling to give you absolution, nor yet do, to this hour, provided you would meekly ask for it." "I never trespassed against you," said the intrepid

nobleman, "and, therefore, I do not feel the want of your absolution." Kneeling down upon the pavement, he added, "I confess myself unto thee, my God, that I have been a grievous sinner. Good Lord, I humbly ask thee mercy; here I need absolution." He then stood up, and, with a loud voice, cried out, "Lo, these are your guides, good people. Take notice: for the violation of God's holy law and his great commandments they never cursed me; but for their own arbitrary appointments and traditions, they most cruelly treat me and other men. Let them, however, remember that Christ's denunciations against the Pharisees shall all be fulfilled." The dignity of his manner, and the vehemence of his expression, threw the court into some confusion. After the primate had recovered himself, he proceeded to examine the prisoner respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation: "Do you believe that after the words of consecration there remains any material bread?" "The Scriptures," replied Cobham, "make no mention of material bread: I believe that Christ's body remains in the form of bread. In the sacrament there is both Christ's body and the bread; the bread is the thing that we see with our eyes; but the body of Christ is hid, and only to be seen by faith." "Heresy! Heresy!" was cried by all, as with one voice. A bishop saying vehemently, "that it was a foul heresy to call it bread," Cobham answered, "St. Paul the apostle was as wise a man as you, and perhaps as good a Christian; and yet he calls it bread: 'The bread that we

break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" I believe the Scriptures most cordially; but I have no belief in your lordly laws and idle determinations: ye are in no part Christ's holy church, as your deeds do plainly show." The prior of the Carmelites exclaimed, "What rash and desperate people these followers of Wickliffe are!" Cobham replied, "Before God and man, I solemnly profess, that, till I knew Wickliffe, whose judgment ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but after I became acquainted with that virtuous man and his despised doctrines, it hath been otherwise with me: so much grace could I never find in all your pompous instructions." At the conclusion of a long and iniquitous trial, the archbishop desired Lord Cobham to weigh well the dilemma in which he stood: "You must either submit to the ordinances of the church, or abide the dangerous consequences." Lord Cobham replied, "My faith is fixed: do with me what you please." The primate, without further delay, judged and pronounced Sir John Oldcastle, the Lord Cobham, to be an incorrigible, pernicious, and detestable heretic; and, having condemned him as such, he delivered him to the secular jurisdiction.

G. Mamma, Lord Cobham is just such a man as I should like to be; so spirited and brave.

Mrs. N. Cobham's bold defence strikingly displays his character: the intrepidity of the soldier, softened by the humility of the Christian. From the conflicting statements in the records preserved, it is impossible to say, whether the lenity of the king, or the policy of

the hierarchy, caused the delay of the execution of his sentence; but certain it is, that he remained some time in the tower, and then, by unknown means, made his escape; favoured, it is supposed, by royal clemency, since the king discovered no anxiety to have him recaptured, until jealousy (the ruling foible of the house of Lancaster) had been roused by calumny and misapprehension.

G. Well, I would not have gone away slily, if I had been he. But, mamma, how did it end?

Mrs. N. The Lollards, proscribed from holding conventicles, were in the habit of resorting in an evening to St. Giles's Fields, for the purpose of religious worship. The enemies of Lord Cobham represented these meetings to be of seditious design, promoted by the fugitive, with the intent of making himself regent of the state. The king, who could not forget that he himself was a usurper, set a thousand marks upon Cobham's head, and went in person to attack, as he supposed, the formidable number of twenty thousand men, which he found, in reality, to be only fourscore. After four years' concealment in Wales, Lord Cobham was retaken upon the charge of high treason. At his examination, he said, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment;" "and then," continues the scornful annalist, "he again proceeded to prate impertinently." His fate was soon determined. He was dragged into St. Giles's Fields with all the insult and barbarity of enraged superstition; where he exhorted the people to follow the instructions

which God had given them in the Scriptures, and to disclaim those false teachers, whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and his religion; and then, as a traitor and a heretic, he was suspended alive in chains upon a gallows, and burned to death.

S. O, aunt, it makes me feel ashamed that I had ever any liking to a church which could make martyrs of Christians.

Mrs. N. Persecution, my dear girl, is directly opposed to Christianity; and the sanguinary measures now used demonstrate the departure of the Romish Church from the mild precepts of the gospel. The religion of the Bible is the religion of love; its voice is mercy; its act is blessing; and its sway is peace. But, "Let him be accursed!" is the language of the Papacy. The inquisition stamped the imprecation with terror; and the rack, the fagots, or the gibbet, followed the anathema.

S. And, to think of such things being done in England!

Mrs. N. A long catalogue of cruelties practised against the Lollards in England might be enumerated; but I would rather direct your attention to Bohemia, the scene of suffering to two celebrated reformers, John Huss and Jerome of Prague. A young Bohemian nobleman, who had finished his studies at Oxford, put into the hands of Huss, who was in great reputation at the university of Prague, the writings of Wickliffe. Huss had before censured the vices of the clergy, and exposed their forged

miracles: but he now began to inveigh with greater freedom, and preached boldly against the corruptions of the Church of Rome. He composed a treatise "Upon the Church," and also one entitled, "The Six Errors," which he fixed upon the gates of the chapel over which he presided; and it is said that a picture, which he procured, representing our Saviour's entry into Jerusalem riding upon an ass, attended by his disciples in homely garb, and which he exhibited in striking contrast with a procession of the pope and cardinals in their pontificals, magnificently adorned with gold, silver, and jewels, greatly excited the indignation of spectators against their spiritual lords, as bearing no resemblance to the humble, unassuming men from whom they pretended to derive their high powers and prerogatives.

G. That was a nice way of showing people the difference: it would tell more than his writings upon the gates; for, you know, mamma, uncle says, "Pictures are books both for the learned and the ignorant."

Mrs. N. Huss was not allowed long to teach, either by pictures or books: an accusation was brought against him, he was excommunicated, and summoned to appear before the council of Constance, which was convened for the purpose of settling the dispute about the three popes. Having gained a safe-conduct from the emperor, he obeyed the citation, and appeared at Constance; but, by the most scandalous breach of public faith, the safe-conduct was disregarded, and he was cast into prison.

G. Mamma, what is a safe-conduct?

Mrs. N. It means an engagement in writing, that the person who obtains it should not be molested by his enemies within a given time. The emperor's grant of this safe-conduct was found to impede the designs of ecclesiastics with respect to John Huss; and the emperor was at length persuaded, that "his conscience ought not to be burdened in this matter, for that he was excused from keeping faith with a man accused of heresy; and that to acquiesce in the desires of the venerable council was the proper line of conduct for an obedient and good son of the church."

S. If promises are thought to be worth nothing, I bid good-by to Popery!

Mrs. N. It is recorded that the emperor blushed when rebuked for his perfidy, and from a sense of shame denied granting a safe-conduct to Jerome, the friend of Huss, who came to Constance as his supporter. He also was imprisoned, and Huss wrote to his friends: "I hear no news of Jerome, except that he is a prisoner, like myself, waiting the sentence of death." After repeated delays, Huss was summoned to appear before the council; his first examination was attended with so much confusion, that his reply to the charges preferred could not be heard. "In this place," said he, "I hoped to have found different treatment:" the rebuke only served to increase the clamour, which ended in complete outrage. The next day, the emperor being present for the purpose of preserving order, he was charged with

maintaining the errors of Wickliffe: he answered, "I have never held any error, knowing it to be such; and I desire nothing more than to be convinced of any error into which I may have inadvertently fallen." He was further charged with wishing his soul in the same place where Wickliffe's was: he owned having used this expression, which occasioned a burst of laughter. Upon his again appearing, forty articles were preferred against him, and he was pressed to retract his errors. "To abjure," said he, "is to renounce an error that hath been held. But as in many of those articles, errors are laid to my charge which I never thought of, how can I renounce them by oath? As to those articles which I own to be mine, I will renounce them with all my heart, if any man will teach me sounder doctrines than what I have advanced." It was agreed to allow him a month longer to give in his final answer.

L. Huss seems to have been of a milder temper than Lord Cobham.

Mrs. N. You are right. The natural temper of Huss was mild and condescending; and he had great tenderness of conscience, joined with the most unexampled fortitude. A form of recantation was sent to him, penned in equivocal and ambiguous terms: he refused to sign it, alleging, as his reason, that he would rather be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck, than acknowledge that to be true which he knew to be false. In one of his letters, he says, "The inquisitor attempts to persuade

me that I ought to abjure, because of the great advantage which will accrue to me from it. I told him, that to be condemned and burned was not so scandalous as to be guilty of falsehood."

S. Good, holy man! he is like one of the first martyrs.

Mrs. N. On the day appointed, Huss was brought before the council, in the presence of the emperor and a vast concourse of spectators. A sermon was preached from those words, "That the body of sin might be destroyed;" which were perverted to "destroy heresies and errors, especially that obstinate heretic, the prisoner." The articles alleged against him were then read, and also the sentence of condemnation: "That John Huss, being a disciple of Wickliffe, of damnable memory, whose life he had defended, and whose doctrines he had maintained, is adjudged, by the council of Constance, to be an obstinate heretic, and, as such, to be degraded from the office of a priest, and cut off from the holy church." When fully apparelled with priests' vestments, the prelates ordered him to come down from the stool upon which he stood, and pronounced these words: "O cursed Judas, who, having forsaken the council, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this chalice from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ." Huss answered, "I trust in the mercy of God, I shall drink of it this very day in his kingdom." They then took off the sacerdotal garments, repeating after the removal of each, "God the Father, who created man, curse thee! God the Son,

who suffered for us, curse thee! The Holy Ghost, who was given to us in baptism, curse thee!" Having completed the degradation, they put a paper coronet on his head, on which were painted three devils, with the inscription, "Arch-heretic;" saying, "Hereby we commit thy soul to the infernal devils." "I am glad," said the martyr, "to wear this crown of ignominy, for the sake of Him who wore a crown of thorns." He was then delivered over to the secular power, and taken to the stake, where his books were first burned. He was once more asked to retract his errors. "I have no errors to retract," he answered: "I have only endeavoured to preach Christ with plainness, and I am now ready to seal my doctrine with my blood." The fagots being lighted, he commenced singing a hymn, which he continued, until the smoke and flame suffocated him. His ashes were gathered and cast into the Rhone, that the earth might not be polluted with his guilt.

S. O aunt! I should never be tired of hearing about martyrs; but how shocking it is for people, calling themselves Christians, to murder others, because they do not happen to think just as they do!

Mrs. N. The martyrdom of Huss was quickly followed by that of Jerome, who, having also imbibed the opinions of Wickliffe, had vigorously seconded the endeavours of his friend Huss to effect a reformation in Bohemia. After an imprisonment of eleven months, he appeared before the council; and, with the greatest eloquence and boldness, pleaded in his own defence. "I came," said he, "to Constance to

defend John Huss, because I had advised him to go thither; and had promised to come to his assistance in case he should be oppressed. Nor am I ashamed here to make public confession of my own cowardice. I confess, and tremble while I think of it, that through fear of punishment by fire, I have basely consented, against my conscience, to the condemnation of the doctrine of Wickliffe and Huss. I declare, that I have nothing in my whole life of which I so bitterly repent, as this recantation. I revoke it from my very soul; and I am determined, to my latest breath, to adhere to the principles of those two men, which are as sound and pure, as their lives were holy and blameless." After some interruption, he exclaimed, "How is it that ye will not hear me? Ye have confined me three hundred and forty days in prisons, where I have been cramped with irons, almost poisoned with dirt, and pinched with the want of all necessaries. During this time, ye always gave to my enemies a hearing, but refused to hear me so much as a single hour. Prejudiced against me as a heretic, ye have judged me unheard; and ye still refuse to hear me. Here is justice! here is equity! I am condemned before I am examined. Were you Gods Omniscient, instead of fallible men, ye could not act with more sufficiency. Error is the lot of mortals; and you, exalted as you are, are subject to it. But consider, the higher you are exalted, the more dangerous are the consequences of your errors. As for me, I know I am below your notice; but at least consider, that an unjust action in such an assembly will be of dan-

gerous example. An unjust judgment from a laic is bad, from a priest worse, still worse from a college of priests, and from a general council superlatively bad." The firmness, eloquence, and zeal of Jerome sensibly affected the council. They proposed to him once more to retract. He replied, "Ye have condemned me unjustly; but after my death I shall leave a sting in your consciences, and a worm that shall never die. I appeal to the sovereign Judge of all the earth, in whose presence ye must appear." Sentence was then pronounced; and he was delivered over to the secular power, attired in a cap like that of his friend Huss, and treated with similar scorn and insult. As he went to execution, he sung the Apostles' Creed, and a paschal hymn:—

"Hail, happy day, and ever be adored,
When hell was conquer'd by great heaven's Lord!"

He kneeled at the stake, and prayed. The post to which he was chained was hewn into an uncouth figure of Huss, and grotesquely ornamented, to form a likeness of him. Jerome, observing the executioner about to set fire to the wood behind his back, cried out, "Bring thy torch hither; perform thy office before my face. Had I feared death, I might have avoided it." He was heard afterward to say, "O Lord God, have mercy upon me!" and, "Thou knowest how I have loved thy truth." It has been said, even by a Roman Catholic historian, that "John Huss and Jerome of Prague went to the stake as to a banquet; not a word fell from them which discovered the least timidity; they sung

hymns in the flames to the last gasp, without ceasing."

L. Jerome seems to have been a very clever, as well as a good, man.

Mrs. N. He is universally allowed to have been a man of very superior talents, and one of the most eminent writers of the day (the pope's secretary) says, "I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. If there be any justice in history, this man will be admired by all posterity. I call him a prodigious man; and the epithet is not extravagant." Learning was now cultivated with incredible ardour; universities were everywhere established; the family of the Medici appears to have been raised up to patronize science; and, by a surprising concurrence of circumstances, the art of printing was about this time invented, which served greatly to dispel the darkness of past ages, and to usher in the dawn of the Reformation.

S. I have been thinking that we cannot tell of how much consequence things are that we do. If Wickliffe had been quiet, like other men, perhaps there would have been no martyrs in Bohemia.

Mrs. N. Wickliffe, as supposed to be the author of the heretical sect, both in England and Bohemia, excited the vindictive fury of the Papacy; and, though he had quietly descended into the grave, his ashes were not allowed to repose undisturbed. By the pope's orders, forty-four years after his death, his remains were disinterred, burned, and cast into the river. The same pope also issued a bull, commanding

solemn processions to be made on the first Sunday of every month in all churches and church-yards, in order to draw down the vengeance of Heaven upon heretics in England and Bohemia; and promising sixty days' indulgence to all who attended these processions, or who said twenty-five paternosters, with the same pious intent. His holiness also proclaimed a crusade against the Bohemians, granting the pardon of all sin, and the happiness of heaven, to all who contributed to its success, in proportion to the value of their contributions.

G. Then, mamma, were there Lollards in Bohemia?

Mrs. N. They were known by the name of Hussites. A letter was sent to the council from Bohemia, signed by about sixty noblemen and barons. A brief extract is as follows:—"We know not from what motive ye have condemned John Huss, bachelor of divinity, and preacher of the gospel. Ye have put him to a cruel and ignominious death, though convicted of no heresy. We wrote in his vindication to the emperor, which apology of ours ought to have been communicated to your congregations; but we have been told that you burned it in contempt of us. We protest, therefore, that John Huss was a man very honest, just, and orthodox; that for many years he conversed among us with godly and blameless manners; that during all those years he explained to us and to our subjects the gospel, and the books of the Old and New Testaments, according to the exposition of holy doctors

approved by the church. Ye have not only disgraced us by his condemnation, but ye have also unmercifully imprisoned and put to death Jerome of Prague, a man of most profound learning and copious eloquence. Him ye condemned unconvicted. Notwithstanding all that has passed, we are resolved to sacrifice our lives for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and of his faithful preachers."

G. I am glad to hear that they had courage to oppose the pope and his council.

Mrs. N. Their opposition was afterward expressed in a manner utterly at variance with the spirit of Christianity. It is said that the king of Bohemia one day asked his chamberlain what he was musing upon. "I was thinking," said he, "on the affront offered to our kingdom by the death of John Huss." "It is out of your power or mine to revenge it," replied the king; "but if you know which way to do it, exert yourself." From that time the chamberlain meditated military projects against the hierarchy, and afterward assembled forty thousand men under his command, who adopted the name of Hussites, to destroy, by fire and sword, Popish abominations, and to claim the cup in the sacrament. As champions for the truth, they mistook in fighting with carnal weapons instead of spiritual; aiming at revolution rather than reformation. After a war of thirteen years, in which it was said "that the rack was their breakfast, and the flames their dinner," they gained two privileges in the mode of the administration of the Lord's supper. In the year 1480

the Hussites received a great increase of numbers from the accession of some Waldensian refugees, who sought shelter among them from the violence of persecution. The refugees, however, found their situation but little meliorated by a junction with a people who were obliged to conceal themselves in thickets and in clefts of rocks, and who, to escape detection by the smoke, made no fires except in the night. But the superior light and piety of the Waldenses contributed to the Hussites becoming better acquainted with Scripture truth; so that from this period they are recognised as a body of Christians "who feared God, and served him in the gospel of his Son;" they also maintained a stricter degree of church discipline; and, at the close of the fifteenth century, numbered two hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia.

CONVERSATION X.

CENTURY XVI.

George. MAMMA, I have been thinking the pope's downfall will be coming soon; for you said that his Great Extravagance was at the top of the ladder.

Mrs. N. I think I have already mentioned, that the long and scandalous schism in the Roman see had a great effect in diminishing the veneration previously paid to Papal dignity. Its termination in the

council of Constance claiming authority to depose and elect popes, taught the world, that there was in the church a jurisdiction superior to that which had been believed to be supremely vested in the occupier of St. Peter's chair. And the flagitious crimes of Pope Alexander VI., at the commencement of the sixteenth century, so shocked the feelings of common decency, that it was impossible to entertain the usual respect and veneration toward such a monster. His life and actions show that there was a Nero among popes as well as among emperors; for he was not only destitute of all religious and virtuous principles, but he was hardened against the feeling of shame, and terminated his career of vice by drinking in mistake the poison which he had mixed for others. The sarcastic raillery of the revivers of learning against the vices and ignorance of the clergy also contributed to produce a change in general sentiment. A representation of the public mind, drawn by Cardinal Julian, shows a restless and mutinous state of feeling against the hierarchy. He says, "These disorders among us excite the hatred of the people against the whole ecclesiastical order; and should they not be corrected, it is to be feared lest the laity should rise against the clergy, as they loudly threaten; for it will be said, that the clergy are incorrigible, and will apply no remedy to their disorders. The rancour they have imbibed against us becomes manifest: they will soon think it an agreeable sacrifice to God to abuse and rob ecclesiastics, as abandoned to extreme disorders, and hate-

ful to God and man." Thus various circumstances combined to lessen the reverence of mankind for the popedom, and to prepare the way for the great and permanent success of the Reformation.

Sophia. Did not the Waldenses and the Hussites help in the Reformation?

Mrs. N. The strength of their endeavours was spent. Such of the Waldenses as yet remained, lived content under the difficulties of extreme poverty in the valleys of Piedmont, and the Hussites had neither power nor knowledge adequate for any fresh attempt. It was reserved for Martin Luther to break the night of superstitious error which for so many ages had shrouded the church in darkness, and to usher in the dawn of evangelical day, the brightness of whose shining we enjoy, and which, we trust, will increase in splendour to the end of time.

S. I am heartily glad we have got to the Reformation; for I think goodness has been sleeping long enough.

Mrs. N. We may with propriety use the language of prophecy, and say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" In the prosecution of our history, we shall have to take notice of the struggle between light and darkness, truth and error; and the opposition of the leading doctrines of the Reformation (which are the paramount authority of Holy Scripture, the nature and terms of a sinner's

justification, and the right of private judgment) to Papal supremacy, with its attending dogmas.

G. Mamma, I think for any man to begin fighting with the pope, would be like David and Goliath.

Mrs. N. Luther's bold and daring spirit qualified him to meet such a fearful antagonist: the success depended upon the God of Israel.

Lucy. Aunt, did not Luther know any thing about the Waldenses or the Hussites?

Mrs. N. The only intimation of the kind is given in Luther's own words, and refers to the early part of his life: "When I studied at Erford, I found in the library of the convent a book entitled, 'The Sermons of John Huss.' I was anxious to know the doctrines of that arch-heretic. My astonishment in the reading of them was incredible. What, thought I, could move the council to burn so great a man, so able and so judicious an expositor of Scripture? But then, the name of Huss was held in abomination: if I mentioned him with honour, I imagined the sky would fall, and the sun be darkened; I therefore shut the book with indignation. But I comforted myself with the thought, that perhaps he had written it before he fell into heresy!"

G. I wonder, then, how Luther knew better than other people!

Mrs. N. Luther found his religion in the Bible. It appears from his writings, that, through dread and fear of future punishment, he took the monastic vow, and became an Augustine monk in the year 1505; that from the beginning of his monastic life he was

constantly sad and dejected, until, in the second year of his being in the monastery, he accidentally discovered a Latin Bible in the library, which proved to him a real treasure. The writings of the prophets and apostles were now studied with the greatest avidity: he wished to know all the will of God; to build his faith on the firmest foundation, and to cultivate an habitual reverence for the divine commands. An elderly priest whom he acquainted with the exercises of his mind, particularly directed his attention to that expression in the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins;" which he interpreted to be not merely a general belief, but that each particular person might apply this doctrine of the remission of sins to his own particular case; referring him to the sentiments of the apostle Paul, in support of what he had advanced. This conversation proved a great comfort to the mind of Luther; and by reading and comparing together different parts of the Old and New Testament, he gradually acquired more correct views of the doctrine of justification, and the plan of salvation by faith. As professor of the university of Wittemberg, he undertook to expound the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans, when he refuted the error, at that time prevalent, that men by their own works may merit the remission of their sins and be accounted righteous; and taught that forgiveness of sins is freely given for Christ's sake.

S. Aunt, I have heard it asked, "Where was the religion of Protestants before the days of Luther?"

Mrs. N. The simple answer to such a question is, "In the Bible;" the leading principle of the Reformation being, that the Bible alone contains the religion of Protestants. It was by going directly to the fountain of truth, that Luther detected the frauds commonly practised in counterfeiting religion; his spirit being first roused to attempt church reform by witnessing the shameful traffic of indulgences. "Happy times for sinners!" says a modern writer. "Then crimes were rated, and the remission of them set up by auction. The apostolic chamber taxed sins at a pretty reasonable price: it cost but a few groats to be absolved from crimes which now are punished with death." The sale of indulgences was for the alleged purpose of building St. Peter's church at Rome; and the gross declarations of Tetzel (a Dominican monk, to whom the sale of them in Germany was committed) excited the righteous indignation of Luther. He boasted that "he had saved more souls from hell by indulgences, than St. Peter had by his preaching;" and, "The moment the money tinkles in the chest, your father's soul mounts up out of purgatory."

L. Pray, aunt, can you explain these indulgences to us?

Mrs. N. Perhaps the best explanation will be given in Tetzel's usual form of absolution, the price of its purchase varying according to the heinousness of the crimes committed. It ran thus:—"I, by the authority of Jesus Christ, through the merits of his most holy passion, and by the authority of his bless-

ed apostles Peter and Paul, and of our most holy pope, delegated to me as commissioner, do absolve thee, first, from all ecclesiastical censures, however incurred; secondly, from all sins committed by thee, how enormous soever; for so far the keys of the sacred church extend; and I do this, by remitting to thee all the punishments due to thee in purgatory on account of thy crimes, and I restore thee to the sacraments of the church, and to the innocence and purity which thou hadst at thy baptism: so that, at thy death, the gates of hell shall be shut against thee, and the gates of paradise shall be opened to receive thee. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

G. I think it was high time for somebody to become reformer.

Mrs. N. Luther never did things by halves. Having examined the subject, and found that the practice derived no countenance from the Scriptures, he determined openly to protest against such scandalous impositions. In the year 1517 he attacked from the pulpit the doctrine of indulgences, and exhorted his hearers to look for salvation in the means appointed by God in his holy word. Not content with undeceiving those who crowded round his pulpit, he advanced to a higher authority, and wrote to the elector and archbishop of Mentz, entreating him to withdraw the license of Tetzel, and sending, at the same time, ninety-five theses, which he proposed as subjects of public inquiry and disputation. Luther had no sooner begun to attack the Papal supremacy,

than it seemed as if the charm which had bound mankind for so many ages was broken at once. The public mind, which had long continued tame and passive, believing whatever was taught, and bearing whatever was imposed, roused of a sudden, became inquisitive, suspicious, and disdainful of the yoke to which it had hitherto submitted. The publication of his theses was received with eagerness, and in fifteen days dispersed throughout Germany. "I was commended," says the reformer, "as an excellent doctor, who alone had the spirit to attempt so great an undertaking; but the fame which I had acquired was by no means agreeable to myself, because I feared that the task was beyond my powers and capacity."

G. O, he should not begin to fear: he should be bold as a lion.

Mrs. N. It may with truth be said of Luther that "he feared God, and he feared none besides." His courage was, however, put to the test, when, to use his own words, "at once and against me single the whole popedom rose!" But, unknown to him, the Swiss reformer, Zuingle, had been for some time undermining the system of Popery by disseminating truth in the canton of Zurich; so that, as soon as Luther dared to stand single and alone, Zuingle was prepared to come to his aid. The Saxon reformer, however, was the chief object of Papal fury: he was suddenly ordered to appear before the pope, at Rome, within sixty days. This was sufficient to alarm his friends for his safety, and to determine the elector

of Saxony to use his powerful influence for his protection. He pleaded that the case belonged to the jurisdiction of a German tribunal; and the pontiff so far yielded as to cite Luther before his legate at Augsburg. Here the haughty cardinal would not condescend to argue the matter with a person of such inferior rank, but, by mere dictate of authority, required Luther to renounce his errors, and to believe "that one drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity that was shed in the garden and upon the cross was left as a legacy to the church, to be a treasure from whence indulgences were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs." Neither the authority of Cajetan, nor the winning kindness of Miltitz, nor the disputations of Eckius, alternately employed by the pope, during the two succeeding years, to silence the reformer, could make him deviate in the least from his apprehension of truth; while the protection and favour of the elector, the learning and genius of Melancthon and Carolstadt, who became advocates of his cause, and the general diffusion of his sentiments through Germany and Switzerland, encouraged him to persevere.

G. But, mamma, how was it that the pope did not burn him, as he did John Huss?

Mrs. N. It was owing to the influence of the elector of Saxony that Luther was preserved from being the victim of Papal fury. In the year 1520 the anathema of excommunication, accompanied with the ignominious burning of his writings, was fulminated

against him; but he seemed to acquire increased energy from the very dangers to which he was exposed. "The die is cast," he exclaimed; "Papal wrath, and Papal favour, I alike despise. Let the Romanists condemn me, and burn my book; and if in return I do not publicly condemn and burn the whole mass of pontifical law, it shall be because I cannot find fire." In the presence of the professors and students, and a vast multitude of spectators, he committed to the flames the bull of his excommunication, and the decrees of the Roman pontiff: a step suited to his daring spirit, and wise as undaunted. Temporizing measures would never have effected the object he had in view.

G. I guess the pope would be angry!

Mrs. N. A second bull was soon issued, sealing the final damnation of the obstinate heretic, for having insulted the majesty, and disowned the supremacy, of the Roman pontiff; but the Germans were no longer to be intimidated by bulls, and the assistance of the emperor was craved in behalf of the Papacy. One of the first acts of the administration of Charles V. was the assembling of a diet of the empire at Worms, for the purpose of "checking the progress of those new and dangerous opinions which threatened to disturb the peace of Germany, and overthrow the religion established." At the opening of the diet, the Papal legates insisted that they were bound to condemn a man whom the pope had already excommunicated as an obstinate heretic. The elector of Saxony interposed, and pleaded that

Luther ought to have his cause tried; and, as the emperor had been raised to the imperial throne chiefly by the favour of the elector, he agreed that Luther should be summoned into the presence of the diet, and be allowed a hearing, before the final sentence was pronounced against him. A safe-conduct was granted, and he was required instantly to appear.

S. The safe-conduct did not do much for Huss.

Mrs. N. Luther's friends reminded him of that circumstance, and expressed their fears of a similar termination in his case. He replied, if there were as many devils at Worms as tiles on the houses, they should not deter him from his duty. That his reasonings should not change the minds of those who came to condemn him, cannot be a matter of surprise. When called upon to recant, he solemnly declared he would neither abandon his principles, nor materially change his conduct, unless he were previously convinced by the Scriptures, or the force of reasoning, that his sentiments were erroneous, and his conduct unlawful. Enraged at his unbending spirit, some of the ecclesiastics proposed to deliver the church at once from such a pestilent heretic. The emperor replied, "I do not choose to blush with my predecessor;" and he was permitted to depart in safety. Scarcely, however, had he left the city, when an edict was passed, threatening the most severe punishment as soon as the term of his safe-conduct expired. Luther was still, to the elector of Saxony, an object of most anxious solicitude; and

the measures which he adopted at this critical juncture effectually secured him from the coming storm. In consequence of a preconcerted plan, as Luther was on a journey, a number of horsemen in masks rushed out of a wood, and, surrounding his company, carried him off with the utmost speed to the castle of Wartenburg. Here he was supplied with every thing that he could want; but the place of his retreat was kept a profound secret. His sudden disappearance not only occasioned the most bitter disappointment to his adversaries, but rendered them doubly odious to his friends; who not knowing what was become of him, conjectured that he must have been destroyed by the fury of his enemies.

G. That was a nice way of getting him out of the pope's clutches.

Mrs. N. Luther, in his retirement, which he called his "hermitage," and the "isle of Patmos," was busily employed in translating the New Testament into the German language; he also wrote tracts in defence of his doctrines, which, as soon as they were circulated, revived the spirits of his followers. He had the satisfaction of knowing, during this period, that his opinions were gaining ground, and that they had already made some progress in almost every city in Saxony. After ten months' confinement, he again appeared publicly at Wittemberg, and published his translation of the Scriptures, which produced sudden and almost incredible effects on the people of Germany, and proved more fatal to the Church of Rome than all his other works. It was read with

the utmost avidity by persons of every rank, who with astonishment discovered how contrary the precepts of Christ are to the inventions of his pretended vicegerents; and, being in possession of the standard of faith, they conceived themselves qualified to judge of established opinions, and to pronounce when they were conformable to that standard. About this time, several imperial cities in Germany abolished the mass and other superstitious rites of Popery, and openly embraced the reformed religion. The elector of Bradenburg, the dukes of Brunswick and Lunenburg, and the prince of Anhalt, became avowed patrons of Luther's opinions, and countenanced the preaching of them in their territories. And the great council of Zurich in Switzerland, held in the year 1523, declared "that Zuingle, having been neither convicted of heresy nor refuted, should continue to preach the gospel as he had already done; that the pastors of Zurich and its territory should rest their discourses on the words of Scripture alone; and that both parties should abstain from all personal reflections."

G. Poor pope! he would be vexed.

Mrs. N. A host of authors now arose, to overwhelm the Saxon reformer with arguments or invectives; and, among these, the eminence of his station has made the king of England conspicuous. Henry VIII. undertook to write a confutation of Luther's "Babylonish Captivity," with a defence of the Romish Church, in a work entitled, "The Seven Sacraments." This royal volume was presented to

the pope with great pomp, and procured for the zealous monarch the golden perfumed rose of Papal benediction; the great and mighty title of "Defender of the Faith;" and a commendatory letter from his holiness, praising his "wisdom, learning, zeal, charity, gravity, gentleness, and meekness," most of which epithets few people seem to have less deserved.

S. What, that ill-tempered Henry, who had six wives, and could never be pleased?

Mrs. N. The same; but we will defer remarking upon Henry's quarrels, and notice a difference of sentiment which appeared among the reformers concerning the eucharist. Luther maintained that Christ was in the sacrament, after consecration, by a real presence; as heat in iron when ignited; which doctrine received the name of consubstantiation. Zuingle embraced the simpler doctrine, that the bread and wine were only signs and symbols.

L. O, it was a pity that they could not agree among themselves!

Mrs. N. They eventually agreed to differ; and the same difference of sentiment continues to mark the Lutheran and the Swiss reformed churches. The insecurity of the cause of the Reformation called rather for the strength of union than of useless divisions. The pope's legates breathed, against Luther and his adherents, threatenings and slaughter; and blamed the lenity of those princes who had neglected to enforce the decisions of the diet at Worms. A diet of the empire of Germany, held in the year

1526, separated with an agreement that every prince should order ecclesiastical matters in his own dominions as he judged best, until a general council should be assembled, to decide upon the controverted subjects. Another diet was convoked, in 1529, when the emperor rescinded former resolutions, and declared it unlawful to introduce any change in the doctrine, discipline, or worship of the established religion, before the determinations of a general council were known. This decree was exceedingly revolting to the elector of Saxony, and other princes, who favoured the cause of the Reformation; and, in a body, they entered their solemn protest against it. On this account they were distinguished by the name of "Protestants;" a name which, from this period, has been applied to all sects whatever which have separated themselves from the Roman Church. A confession of faith was presented by the Protestants at the diet of Augsburg, in 1530, the peculiar tenets of which were condemned by the emperor, who then forbade any person to protect, or even tolerate, such as taught them, enjoined a strict observance of the established rites, and prohibited any further innovation, under severe penalties. This decree was regarded as the prelude to persecution, and convinced the Protestant princes that the emperor was resolved upon the destruction of their cause. In pursuance of this opinion, they assembled at Smalcald, where they formed a solemn alliance and confederacy, to defend their religion and liberties. In this state of things, the elector palatine offered to become media-

tor; and, in a short time, negotiations were carried on, which finally produced a pacification. It was stipulated that peace should be established in Germany, until the meeting of a general council.

S. Peace would be just what Luther wanted.

Mrs. N. Toleration was all that the Protestant cause needed. Luther now threw aside his monastic habit, and married: but though his followers, who had hitherto been regarded only as a religious sect, came at this time to be considered as a political body, he had no ambition but in the service of God; for other things, neither his enjoyment nor wishes ever went higher than the bare necessaries of life. The Reformation, wherever it was received, increased that bold and innovating spirit to which it owed its birth; and, in a few instances, it was accompanied with religious frenzy and tumult. Such was the case in a revolt of the oppressed peasantry in Germany, headed by leaders who boasted of inspiration, decried all authority, declaimed both against Romanists and Protestants, predicted the subjection of the world to their sway, and wasted the country with fire and sword. The celebrated Calvin (whose name is memorable for his peculiar views of predestination and election) published his most renowned work, entitled, "Institutes of the Christian Religion," partly, it is said, for the purpose of distinguishing the principles of the reformed churches from the extravagancies of the Anabaptists. But, notwithstanding this outbreak of enthusiasm, the cause of the Reformation continued to advance, in proportion to

the light shed by the circulation of the Scriptures. Some of the most considerable provinces of Europe had already withdrawn themselves from the discipline of Rome and the jurisdiction of the pope; and almost all the European states exulted in the prospect of an approaching deliverance from the yoke of spiritual despotism. In Sweden, political measures contributed to the declaration, "That the valiant and public-spirited prince Gustavus Vasa be head of the church in this kingdom." This famous edict, also, was promulged in Denmark, "That every subject is free, either to adhere to the tenets of the Church of Rome, or to embrace the doctrine of Luther; that no person shall be molested on account of his religion; and that ecclesiastics of every order shall be allowed to marry." In France, churches were formed; but the wavering and inconsistent conduct of its king rendered the situation of Protestants always precarious, often distressing. In England, the capricious Henry, enraged at the pope's refusal to divorce his wife, Catharine of Arragon, abolished the Papal power and jurisdiction, and caused himself to be declared "supreme head of the church."

G. O yes, mamma, I know Henry VIII. quarrelled with the pope; but he was such a passionate, bad-tempered man, that he would quarrel with anybody and everybody.

Mrs. N. The character and conduct of Henry VIII. merit censure and reproach; but his reign commands our attention as the era of the Reformation in England. Previously to his withdrawal from

the Roman see, the few who dared to profess themselves Lollards or Protestants were treated with the utmost rigour; refugees from persecution in England were found in various parts of Europe; and at Antwerp, in the year 1526, William Tyndal printed the New Testament in English. The whole of this edition, with the exception of a single copy, was bought up, and burned, by the bishop of London; but the quick remittance thus furnished enabled Tyndal to put forth a larger edition the following year; and afterward, the Pentateuch. For this labour of love he was apprehended, strangled, and burned, in Flanders. Indeed, after the separation of the Church of England from that of Rome, private judgment was by no means tolerated, Henry himself exercising all the tyranny of the popedom; and, but for the mild interference of Cranmer, England would have derived little benefit from a change of masters. No sooner was Cranmer promoted to the see of Canterbury, than he persuaded the king to order a translation of the Bible to be made; and, in the year 1535, Myles Coverdale published at Zurich the first entire English Protestant version of the Bible; which was the first English Bible allowed by royal authority. The following is its title-page: "Biblia. The Bible, that is, the Holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and truly translated out of the Douche and Latyn into Englishe. MDXXXV." In the dedication to Henry, Coverdale says, "The pope gave your majestie the title of 'Defender of the Faith,' only because you suffered his bishops to

burne God's word, the root of faith, and to persecute the lovers and ministers of it; but, by the righteous administration of his grace, the faith shall be so defended, that God's word, the mother of faith, should have its free course thorow all Christendome, but especially in your grace's realme." When the volume was presented to Henry, he gave it to Bishop Gardiner to examine, who kept it so long that he was commanded to deliver it up. "Well," said the king, "what is your opinion?" The bishop answered that there were many faults in it. "But are there any heresies?" asked Henry. Gardiner replied that he had not found any. "If there be no heresies," returned the king, "then, in God's name, let it go abroad among our people." In the following year, a royal injunction was issued to the clergy to "provide the whole Bible, and lay the same in the quire for every man that will to look thereon and read." A Bible was afterward placed in every church, secured by a chain to the reading desk.

S. Ay, I remember grandpapa's telling me that people used to go in crowds to church on purpose to read the Bible.

Mrs. N. Henry, as "head of the church," showed that this supremacy was not an empty title: he banished the monks out of the kingdom, confiscated their revenues, and destroyed their monasteries. Cranmer's mild and judicious conduct protected the Protestant cause through all the storms of Henry's changeful temper. He was most anxious that the public service of the church should be in English,

instead of Latin; but, knowing his royal master would violently oppose such a change, he endeavoured to effect it by degrees. When a prayer was to be composed for the king's preservation, he besought that it might be composed in English, that the people might pray with more fervour, from understanding what they uttered; his next step was, to gain permission for the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the commandments, to be read in English in the churches. Upon the accession of Edward VI., a total separation was made from the Church of Rome; articles of doctrine were drawn up; and the first English Prayer Book published.

L. The more I think of the great work which Luther did, the more I am astonished.

Mrs. N. The power by which the Reformation was effected was unquestionably divine. This is strikingly displayed in the concurrence of so many circumstances favourable to the emancipation of different nations, at the same juncture, from spiritual thraldom. But, no doubt, the heart of the pious reformer would glow with gratitude to God when contemplating the mighty work, which he, as an instrument, had accomplished. The interests of Zion were his chief, his only delight; his last service was in the church; and in his dying moments he commended the Protestant cause to the prayers of his friends; "because," said he, "the council of Trent and the pope will devise strange things against it."

S. Aunt, I have often heard of the council of Trent, but I do not know what it means.

Mrs. N. It was the general council which was to settle the controverted points in Germany; and was assembled, as was pretended, "to correct, illustrate, and fix with perspicuity the doctrines of the Roman Church, to restore the vigour of its discipline, and to reform the lives of its ministers." Amidst the din of preparations for this national and Papal convention, Luther slept in death.

L. And how did they settle matters in Germany?

Mrs. N. To mention a few of the decrees established will be sufficient to convince you that it was impossible for Protestants and Papists to coalesce: "The pope enjoys, by the institution of Jesus Christ, the primacy of honour and jurisdiction over the whole Christian church; and to refuse it to him is an act of rebellion." "It belongs to the church to judge of the sense of Scripture; and no one may presume to interpret the Scriptures contrary to the sense which mother church hath held, and doth hold." "The traditions of the church ought to be received and enjoined as the Holy Scriptures." "The power to grant indulgences has been committed to the church by Jesus Christ; and the use of them is beneficial to salvation." "An anathema to be pronounced against such as should say, that Jesus Christ did not institute the sacraments, or that they were fewer than seven." "The church took the cup from the laity for good reasons: the body and the blood of Jesus Christ being received entire in one kind; and those who receive in one kind being not deprived of any grace necessary to salvation." "The church

has a right to retain the use of celebrating the mass, in another than in the vulgar tongue." "The church doth hold belief in purgatory; and that the souls confined there are relieved by the prayers and wishes of believers, particularly by the oblation and sacrifice of the altar." "It is good and profitable to invoke saints, that they may intercede with God." "The images of Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, ought to be venerated, and the relics of saints and martyrs honoured."

S. O aunt, Protestants could never believe those things!

Mrs. N. No; the German princes protested against these decrees; which protestation, by a mutual agreement between the emperor and the pope, was to be regarded as the signal for their taking up arms to crush and destroy the Protestant cause. The princes, (among whom were the illustrious ancestors of England's present queen, and of her royal consort,) perceiving undoubted marks of a formidable union to overwhelm them by one blow, prepared to defend the cause of religious liberty. Thus commenced the war of Smalcald, which, for six years, was prosecuted with various success on both sides; until the emperor, surprised by the advance of a large army, for which he was unprepared, concluded a treaty of pacification, which received the name of "Religious Peace," securing to the Protestants the free exercise of their religion, and establishing this liberty upon the firmest foundations. During this war, when the emperor was at Wittem-

berg, he was urged to demolish the monument erected to the memory of Luther, and to disinter and burn his ashes. He instantly forbade that any insult should be offered to his tomb or his remains, upon pain of death. "I have," said he, "nothing further to do with Luther; he is henceforth subject to another Judge, whose jurisdiction it is not lawful for me to usurp. Know that I make not war with the dead, but with the living, who are still in arms against me."

G. That was noble of him!

Mrs. N. There is reason to believe that the emperor's acquaintance at this time with the Protestants gave him enlightened views of the nature of true religion; and the fact, that his future confessors and ministers were immediately after his death apprehended and destroyed by the inquisition in Spain, leads us to indulge the hope that he died a convert to the faith which he had vigorously laboured to destroy. In addition to the inquisition, which now employed its whole apparatus of torture where Popery was dominant, the order of Jesuits arose, to extend the Papal power into distant climes. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of this order, proposed "that besides the three vows of poverty, chastity, and monastic obedience, the members of his society should take a fourth vow, of obedience to the pope, binding themselves to go whithersoever he should command for the service of religion, and without requiring any thing from the holy see for their support. America, with all its wealth, had lately been discovered; and

the Roman pontiff, foreseeing that this unlimited offer of service might probably secure for him abroad the influence he had lost at home, confirmed the order under the name of the "Society of Jesus," or "Jesuits." There is not in the annals of mankind any example of such a perfect despotism exercised over men dispersed among all the nations of the earth, as the rules of this society enjoin.

S. Aunt, they say the Catholic priest in this town is a Jesuit.

Mrs. N. It is not unlikely; and we have another teacher in the town, whose sect was founded about the same time that the order of Jesuits was established, in the Socinian minister. Faustus Socinus, a gentleman of property, drew, from papers left in his possession by the decease of his uncle, (who, it appears, was the first to revive the Arian tenets,) that religious system upon which the sect of the Socinians is founded. He lived and died in Poland, where he formed a community; and the following epitaph was inscribed on his tomb:—"Luther destroyed the houses of Babylon, Calvin the walls; but Socinus subverted the foundations." If we substitute in the stead of "Babylon" (by which is meant the Church of Rome) "the true church," the remark is just, so far as Socinus's attempts have been successful; since no doctrine so effectually subverts the foundations of Christianity as that which derogates from the character and offices of our Saviour. Severe edicts were enacted at different times in Poland against the Socinians, which obliged them to dis-

perse through adjacent provinces; the greater part repairing to Holland and England, where they are still found.

L. And you mentioned Calvin, aunt; are the Calvinists true Christians?

Mrs. N. The vital truths of Christianity are firmly held by Calvinists; their peculiarity of doctrine affecting only non-essential points, distinguished as the sentiments of Calvin, who revived those of Augustine. If you remember, they were, in the fifth century, variously interpreted by different individuals; and the same diversity of opinion continues to characterize the believers in absolute predestination, election, reprobation, and final perseverance. Calvin was intent upon making the republic of Geneva the seminary of all the reformed churches, and adopted the presbyterian model of church government. His success was so great, that presbyterianism has been raised to hold a kind of divided empire with Protestant episcopacy.

L. If I recollect right, you said, some time since, that the Scotch church was presbyterian.

Mrs. N. I am glad to hear that you have not forgotten what was mentioned in the early part of our history. John Knox, rude as the bleak climate which gave him birth, was the chief instrument of establishing the Reformation in Scotland. Having received instruction from Calvin, at Geneva, he introduced the presbyterian form of church government. It appears that he was at first driven by persecution from Scotland, and his effigy publicly

burned by the bishops at Edinburgh. But, in the year 1557, many of his followers invited him back again, having previously signed an agreement, or covenant, "that they would follow forth their purpose, and commit themselves, and whatever God had given them, into his hands, rather than suffer idolatry to reign, and the subjects to be defrauded of the only food of their souls." From this period they were distinguished by the name of "The Congregation." In the short space of four years the Reformation was so completely established, that, upon the return of Mary queen of Scots from France, she only, in the kingdom, was allowed to have mass celebrated in her chapel; Knox, with his usual vehemence, declaring from the pulpit, that "one mass was more frightful than ten thousand enemies landed in any part of the realm."

S. I know Mary queen of Scots was a Roman Catholic, because there is always a crucifix to be seen in her portraits.

Mrs. N. We have now to notice the reign of another Mary, queen of England, who claimed her right to the throne after the death of Edward VI., and succeeded, to a fearful extent, in re-establishing Popery.

G. O, bloody Queen Mary!

Mrs. N. It might not perhaps occur to her, that, by her dark deeds, she was raising a name that should, to the last ages of her country. be held in abhorrence; the lisping infant in his earliest lessons learning to dread the sound of the "bloody queen."

But merciless scenes have stamped a peculiar character on her reign, and indelibly fixed upon her memory the hateful, yet well-merited, epithet of "bloody Mary."

G. Mamma, because I did not like her, I have scratched her name out of my History of England.

Mrs. N. As the daughter of the divorced Catharine, and educated in the Romish faith, Mary imbibed early prejudices against Protestantism, which her cruel and vindictive temper increased into furious bigotry, and passionate zeal for the restoration of the Romish religion. One of her first acts was to seek reconciliation with the pope; who made it somewhat difficult to receive within the pale of the church such a country of heretics as England had now become. But, assured of Mary's determination to exterminate heresy, his legate appeared, to give the nation a plenary absolution. An act was passed repealing all laws against the pope's authority, and things were formally brought back to the state in which they stood before Henry VIII. claimed supremacy. An attempt was made to introduce the inquisition; happily without success. Those bishops who had in the late reign been deprived of their sees for adherence to Popery were reinstated; a complete restoration of the Romish worship took place throughout the kingdom; and all the clergy who refused to comply with it were ejected from their livings.

S. Then what became of the archbishop of Canterbury.

Mrs. N. Cranmer was early marked for destruc-

tion. His friends advised him to fly from the storm that was gathering around him; but he replied, that he had been too much concerned in every measure of the Reformation to desert its cause. He, with Bishops Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper, was cast into prison. The tower became so crowded with prisoners committed on the charge of heresy, that the first three prelates were confined for some time in the same room, a circumstance which they greatly enjoyed. They were afterward hurried to Oxford, under pretence of a public disputation to be held there by the most eminent divines on both sides. The argument of power was the only one that, as they anticipated, would be resorted to; which occasioned Latimer to say, "I shall give them very little trouble. I shall offer them a plain account of my faith, and say but little more; for I know that any thing more will be to no purpose. They talk of free disputation; but, I am assured, their grand argument will be, 'We have a law, and by our law ye ought to die.'" When brought to trial, he was told he must dispute in refutation of the articles brought against him: he declared that he was unable, through age, to do any such thing. "I am not able to debate," said he: "I will avow my faith, and then do with me as you please." The following day he was again brought into court, was first excommunicated, and then condemned, with Ridley, to be burned. As soon as the sentence was read, Latimer, lifting up his eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "I thank God most heartily that he hath prolonged my life to this end!"

The place fixed upon for the execution was the north side of the city, near Baliol College; and, lest the bloody scene should excite a tumult, the military were in attendance to preserve peace. Many persons of distinction repaired to the spot; and the concern of the spectators, which was apparent in every countenance, was greatly augmented by the striking contrast in the appearances of the prelates. Ridley was dressed in his episcopal habit, showing what they had formerly been; and Latimer wore his prison attire, by which he exhibited the condition to which they were now reduced. Having heard a sermon by a Popish doctor, from, "If I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," they were both fastened to the same stake. The fire was speedily kindled, and, at the sight of the flames, Latimer exclaimed, "Be of good cheer, brother; for God will either assuage the fury of the flames, or else give us strength to endure them. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as, I trust, shall never be put out." They both commended their souls to God, and exhibited the most astonishing firmness and composure; dying as martyrs to the Protestant cause, with the greatest magnanimity and Christian fortitude. Hooper was sentenced to be burned in his own diocess, at Gloucester, in order to spread the terror excited by such a death. When fastened to the stake, with the fagots heaped about him, the queen's pardon was placed on a stool before him, that if he would recant, he might stretch out his hand and seize

the pardon; but he rejected it on such a condition, and died in the greatest tortures without a groan.

L. Aunt, do not you think it would have been wiser for the Protestants to have hid themselves, and so have escaped persecution? for, you know, Mary did not live long.

Mrs. N. It was impossible to foresee when the life of Mary would terminate; but, even if that had been known, it would not have become Protestants to shrink in the time of danger. Many of the clergy, deprived of their livings, fled to the reformed churches at Geneva; but others, who had been public persons, considered it would be cowardice for them to abandon a cause which they had been the chief means of promoting. If the Reformation was worth establishing, it was worth maintaining; and since that could not be done but by the loss of life, numbers were found, illustrious for their talents, and of the purest moral character, ready to seal their faith at the stake. Cranmer, the late primate of England, was, after his condemnation, reserved for a degradation worse than death. The sophistry of Jesuits was employed to flatter him that his life was so valuable to his country, that he ought to save it, if possible; and that, by subscribing only a few words, he might obtain the queen's pardon, and be reinstated in his former office. He yielded to solicitation, and signed a recantation of Protestantism, avowing belief in the pope's supremacy and in the doctrine of transubstantiation. His enemies, having thus obtained a decided victory, lost no time in print-

ing and dispersing the recantation. The promise of pardon was never meant to be kept; and preparations were made, notwithstanding his recantation, for the execution of the sentence of death. He was brought to St. Mary's Church, Oxford, to hear a discourse; when the preacher exhorted the prisoner to take his death well, comforting him with great hopes of heaven, by promising that he should have all the relief that masses and dirges could procure in another state. He was then desired to make an open profession of his faith. Cranmer avowed his belief in all that had been taught by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, and by the prophets in the Old; and added, "I now come to that which hath so much troubled my conscience more than any thing which I ever did or said in my whole life; and that is, the setting abroad a writing contrary to the truth, which I here renounce, as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart; and written for fear of death, and to save my life. And forasmuch as my hand hath offended, contrary to the dictates of my heart, my hand shall be first punished." Astonished and enraged at this unexpected declaration, his enemies dragged him to the place of martyrdom, where he was quickly fastened to the stake. Here his resolution was undaunted, and he nobly obliterated the stain which had been made upon his character by recantation. "This is the hand that wrote it," he exclaimed; "and, therefore, it shall first suffer punishment." He accordingly stretched his right hand into the flame, saying fre-

quently, "This unworthy hand! This hand has offended!" He kept it unmoved, without betraying the least symptom of pain, until it was consumed; and died repeating the words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

S. Well; Mary does really deserve the name of the "bloody queen!"

Mrs. N. In less than four years, by the lowest computation, two hundred and twenty-seven persons, of every rank, age, and sex, were committed to the flames, most of whom bore their sufferings with the greatest constancy. Our limits will not allow us further to particularize; but on another occasion we will refer to "Fox's Book of Martyrs" for the individual record of these defenders of the Protestant faith. Doctor Cole, a zealous Romanist, was empowered, by a royal commission, to spread slaughter in the sister country, Ireland; which to a considerable extent had shared with England in the struggle and blessings of the Reformation. On his journey, being waited upon by the mayor of Chester, he boasted of the charge committed to him; and, producing his roll, said, "This shall lash all the heretics in Ireland!" The hostess of the inn heard and trembled; and, feeling for a near relation who was a Protestant in Dublin, she seized the opportunity, afforded by the doctor's attending the mayor to the door, leaving his boasted roll upon the table, of displacing the commission, and substituting a pack of cards. The doctor, with all the pomp of an inquisitor, appeared before the lord-lieutenant and privy council

of Ireland, ready to enter upon his office; but the secretary, being called upon to read the commission, was as much surprised as the doctor was confounded at finding nothing but a pack of cards, with the knave of clubs uppermost. The ridicule of the scene may be easily imagined. The lord-lieutenant jocosely desired the doctor to return to England for a new commission, and hasten back, while in the interim he would shuffle the cards. Waiting for a favourable wind, Mary's death left the knave of clubs in his possession.

G. That was a good joke! But I am glad we have got to the end of Mary's reign.

Mrs. N. A brighter day now dawned upon England. When Queen Elizabeth passed from the tower to her coronation, a pageant was erected at Cheapside representing Time, an old man coming out of a cave, leading Truth, his daughter, clothed in white. Truth had the English Bible in her hand, upon which was written, *Verbum veritatis*, "The word of truth," who, respectfully addressing the queen, presented her with the book. Elizabeth kissed it, pressed it to her bosom, thanked the city for the present, and promised to read and defend it. By the accession of Elizabeth to the throne, England took the decided station among Protestant countries which it has ever since maintained. The exiled clergy now returned; but, during their absence, their acquaintance with the divines of Geneva, and other reformed churches, had raised scruples in their minds respecting the lawfulness of many rites con-

tinued in the Church of England. The queen, with those who had weathered the storm at home, was only desirous of restoring King Edward's Liturgy; but the majority of the exiles (now called Puritans, from their professing to follow the pure word of God) were in favour of the worship and discipline of the foreign churches; and refused to comply with the old establishment, declaiming loudly against what they conceived to be Popish habits and ceremonies. The queen's party however prevailed; and an act was passed for the uniformity of common prayer, service in the church, and administration of the sacraments.

G. But, mamma, were they not all Protestants?

Mrs. N. As Protestants they all agreed that the Holy Scriptures were a perfect rule of faith; they differed only in regard to discipline, or church government. The court reformers maintained that some things which are neither forbidden nor commanded in the Scriptures, such as the surplice, cathedral chanting, and different matters of the same kind, might be determined by the state; and that it was the duty of all subjects then to obey. The Puritans insisted that those things which Christ left indifferent ought not to be made compulsory by law; and that such rites and ceremonies as had been abused to idolatry, and had a manifest tendency to Popery, were no longer indifferent, but to be rejected as unlawful. Neither party was for allowing liberty of conscience, each attempting to enforce its peculiar views. The standard of uniformity, accord-

ing to the bishops, was the queen's pleasure and the law of the land; according to the Puritans, the decrees of provincial and national assemblies, allowed and enforced by the civil magistrate.

S. I fancy Elizabeth would have her own way!

Mrs. N. Elizabeth, inheriting a portion of her father's spirit, held her supremacy with a firm hand, and opposed all innovations. Neither were the strict manners of the Puritans at all congenial with her taste; she having no objection to the exterior pomp of worship. The "troublesome sect," as she denominated the Puritans, though laying the greatest stress on trifles, and bitter in their invectives against the surplice, square caps, and the sign of the cross in baptism, contributed greatly to the improvement of the manners of the age; particularly with regard to the sanctification of the sabbath, which now began to be observed with reverence, instead of being, as heretofore, a day of pastime, and often excess.

G. Mamma, somebody told me that they dance and go to theatres in France now on Sundays.

Mrs. N. A similar disregard to the sanctity of the day prevailed in England at the time we are considering. Previously to the accession of Elizabeth, France promised, equally with England, to become a Protestant nation; the Reformation having spread so widely, that it is said one-third of the inhabitants were Protestants. But, instead of the establishment of Protestantism, the hand of persecution was raised for its destruction; and, in a few years, all France was engaged to crush the Huguenots,

a name given by way of reproach to the Protestants.

L. Aunt, were there any of the Waldenses left?

Mrs. N. Of the Waldenses, though continuing to be a people severely persecuted, a remnant yet remained. At the first synod of Pretestants held in France, delegates were sent by those of Dauphiny and Provence, who made this declaration: "We consent to merge in the common cause: but we require no reformation; for our forefathers and ourselves have ever disclaimed the corruptions of the churches in connection with Rome." Some of the youths of Dauphiny, having sought a settlement in Calabria, sent to Geneva to request a supply of pastors. The pope, receiving information of their proceedings, expressed his determination to extirpate a people who had dared to plant Lutheranism so near his seat; a promise which was quickly fulfilled. Numbers of them were murdered by two companies of soldiers, headed by inquisitors: the rest, being captured, craved mercy for themselves, their wives, and their children, declaring that, if they were permitted to leave the country, they would return to it no more. But mercy was unknown to the inquisition. The most barbarous cruelties were inflicted, and the Calabrian Waldenses entirely exterminated. One of the most inhuman edicts recorded in history was pronounced against the Provencal Waldenses: "That the country of Merindol should be laid waste, and the woods cut down." Merindol, without any resistance, was taken, ransacked, burned, and laid

even with the ground. Every kind of brutal tyranny was practised toward its inhabitants: forty women were placed in a barn full of straw, which was then set on fire; and, when attempting to make their escape at the window, they were driven back by pikes and halberts. They who escaped by fleeing to the woods, or wandering over mountains, were sought out, and either sent to the galleys or slain; and others, who hid themselves in rocks and caves, died of hunger, or were suffocated with flame and smoke.

G. I could never be a Papist, if it was only for their cruelty.

Mrs. N. It is an acknowledged maxim of the Church of Rome, that it is lawful to put heretics to death. Pope Urban III. says, "They are so far from being guilty of murder that kill any who are excommunicate, that they are bound to exterminate heretics, as they would be esteemed Christians themselves;" and the learned cardinal Bellarmine, one of the greatest oracles of Popery, teaches, "that heretics are to be destroyed root and branch, if it can possibly be done: but if it appear that the Catholics are so few that they cannot, consistently with their own safety, attempt such a thing, then it is best, in such a case, to be quiet; lest, upon opposition made by the heretics, the Catholics should be worsted." The persecutions in France are a striking comment upon these principles. In the year 1562 the duke of Guise, when leading his army toward Paris, was arrested by the sound of a bell, rung, as he supposed, for assembling the Huguenots at their

meeting-house. He, with his troops, immediately entered a barn in which were about twelve hundred men, women, and children, with their minister, just commencing the service. "Kill, kill the Huguenots!" was vociferated from every quarter. The scene of carnage and bloodshed which followed it is impossible to describe. A civil war of ten years' continuance between the Catholics and the Hu enots was only exceeded, in horror and barbarity, by the atrocious sacrifice of human blood, called the "Parisian massacre," on St. Bartholomew's day. In the year 1572 numbers of the principal Protestants in the kingdom were invited to Paris, under a solemn oath of safety, to celebrate the marriage of the king of Navarre with the French king's sister. The queen dowager of Navarre, a zealous Protestant, was poisoned before the marriage was solemnized; and, upon the tolling of the palace bell on St. Bartholomew's day, which was a general signal, the massacre began. The badge of the executioners was a white handkerchief tied on their arms, and a white cross in their hats, which, they boasted, were dyed red in the blood of the Huguenots. In two days ten thousand Protestants were murdered, of every rank, age, and sex. From Paris the massacre spread throughout the kingdom; and it is computed that more than thirty thousand persons perished on this occasion. An aggravation to these scenes of distress and cruelty was given, in its being the occasion of public rejoicing at Rome. A solemn procession of the pope and cardinals to the church of St. Mark was decreed,

to give thanks to God for so great a blessing conferred upon the see of Rome; a jubilee was published throughout the Christian world to return thanks to God for the extirpation of heretics in France; the whole city was illuminated with bonfires; and the cannon of St. Angelo were fired to testify the public joy.

S. O shocking! shocking!

Mrs. N. The information was received in England in a very different manner. Elizabeth and the whole court, with the greater part of the nation, put on mourning, to testify their sympathy with their persecuted brethren. Elizabeth, as the head of the Protestant party in Europe, made a treaty of alliance with the French Huguenots, and afforded them aid; she also supported the Protestants in the Netherlands, where an attempt to establish the inquisition induced part of those provinces to throw off the Spanish yoke. Between France and Spain there was an avowed league for the extirpation of heresy; and the English queen's interference afforded a pretext for Spain's prosecuting the design of the Papacy to subjugate England again to the Roman see. The failure of various plots to effect this end caused great naval preparations to be made, and the "invincible armada" appeared, threatening to lay prostrate the fairest hopes of Protestantism, and to refix the rack, the torture, and the gibbet. Elizabeth described its total defeat less to English bravery than to the merciful interposition of Providence. She ordered a medal to be struck, which represented a fleet beaten

by a tempest, and its ships falling foul on each other, with this inscription: "He blew with his wind, and they were scattered."

G. I wish the Huguenots had had such a queen.

Mrs. N. After untold sufferings, they obtained, at the close of the sixteenth century, the famous edict of Nantes, which secured to the Protestants in France the free exercise of their religion; and with this pleasing change we will conclude our present conversation.

CONVERSATION XI.

CENTURY XVII.

George. MAMMA, I have been reading about Elizabeth; and she lived like a queen, and died like a queen; for when she was asked who should succeed her, she said, "Having held a regal sceptre, I desire no other than a royal successor; and who should that be but my nearest kinsman, the king of Scots?"

Mrs. N. By the accession of James I. to the throne, the kingdoms of England and Scotland became permanently united. A few years previously to James's crossing the Tweed, he made the following declaration in a general assembly at Edinburgh:—"I praise God that I was born in the time of the light of the gospel, and in such a place as to be the king of the purest kirk" (church) "in the

world. The kirk of Geneva keep pasche and yule" (Easter and Christmas.) "What have they for them? they have no institution. As for our neighbour-kirk of England, their service is an evil-said mass in English; they want nothing of the mass but the liftings" (the elevation of the host.) "I charge you, my good ministers, doctors, elders, nobles, gentlemen, and barons, to stand to your purity, and to exhort your people to do the same; and I, forsooth, as long as I brook my life, shall do the same." This profession of presbyterianism raised the expectations of the oppressed Puritans; many of whom, for the sake of liberty of conscience, had emigrated to the colony of New-England in North America. But no sooner did James take possession of the crown of England, than he showed a preference for episcopacy, and expressed his hatred to the Scotch kirk; the Puritans also were treated with greater rigour, which occasioned many emigrations during his reign; and settlements, formed by refugees, rapidly sprung up, extending the Genevan form of church government to transatlantic shores. When the difficulties arising from the first settlement of these pilgrim-fathers of the American states were in some measure overcome, the attention of several was drawn to the heathen natives of their adopted home: the labours of Eliot, the apostle of the Indians, deserve to be recorded in every history of the Christian church.

G. And, mamma, the gunpowder-plot was in the reign of James I.

Mrs. N. Yes; England, so long and patiently

plundered as a fief of Rome, now cut off from all communication with the holy see, was still an enviable object; and the most horrid plot known in the annals of history was meditated, in order to overthrow Protestantism, and to re-establish Popery. The heart revolts from the project of deliberate and atrocious wickedness which disclosed itself in the conspiracy to blow up the king and both houses of parliament with gunpowder, that, in the confusion which must ensue, an opportunity might occur to set up the Romish religion. When ripe for execution, a gracious Providence discovered the design, and exposed the conspirators to the righteous laws of their country. Disappointed, but not discouraged, the Jesuits pursued their object with greater caution for the time to come; and in the next reign succeeded but too well, though not to the full extent of their wishes. It is to James that we are indebted for the excellent translation of the Bible now in use. The English Bible being considered defective, James employed some of the most learned men in the kingdom to make a faithful translation from the original languages; the Old Testament from the Hebrew, and the New Testament from the Greek. Nearly fifty persons were engaged, for four years, in completing this work. The excellence of the translation is universally acknowledged; and though, in consequence of the changes which our forms of speech have since undergone, many expressions now appear homely, its general effect is far more impressive than a more polished translation would be.

Sophia. Yes; and you know, aunt, poor people would not understand it so well, if it was written in fine language.

Mrs. N. The same truth may, indeed, be differently viewed by different individuals; but so long as the doctrines of the Bible are the foundation of faith and practice, any peculiarity of sentiment will not affect the fundamental principles of Christianity. It is, however, desirable to have just and proper ideas of the extent to which gospel blessings are available, since our efforts in the promotion of good will be proportionate to our views of the designs of God with respect to the world. The sentiments of Calvin, which were entertained by all the reformed churches, limited the exercise of divine mercy to a portion of the human family, denominated the elect: but Arminius now appeared, who maintained, that the merits of Christ extended to all mankind; and that the grace of God which is necessary to salvation is attainable by all.

Lucy. There is "Arminian Magazine" printed on some of the old Methodist Magazines: were those Arminius's books?

Mrs. N. No; they were not written by Arminius; but his name was used to denote the sentiments they expressed. Arminius, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was an eminent divine in Holland, who, both in his lectures and in his writings, strenuously defended his opinions. Superior to the spirit of the times, he was a firm friend to religious toleration; considering that Christians

are accountable to God only for their religious sentiments, and that no individual can be justly punished by the civil magistrate for matters of faith, while he conducts himself as a virtuous and obedient subject, and makes no attempt to disturb the peace and order of society. His motto was, "A good conscience is itself a paradise:" his adversaries, however, were numerous; and, unable to contend with the various modes of attack by which his enemies persecuted him, he sunk under a complication of diseases, and died in the year 1609. The controversy relating to his views became more general after his death, and threatened to involve the united provinces in civil discord. The Arminian tenets gained ground under the mild and favourable treatment of the magistracy of Holland, and were adopted by several persons of merit and distinction. The Calvinists appealed to a national synod, or assembly: accordingly the synod of Dort was convened, by order of the states-general, and was composed of ecclesiastical deputies from all the reformed churches. It was at first proposed to discuss the principal subjects in dispute, and that the Arminians should be allowed to state and vindicate the grounds on which their opinions were founded: but some difference arising as to the proper mode of conducting the debate, the Arminians were excluded from the assembly; their case was tried in their absence; and they were pronounced guilty of pestilential errors, and condemned as corrupters of true religion. Scarcely had the English divines returned from the synod, and given an account of

the laws that had been enacted, and the doctrines that had been established, when the king, with the greatest part of the episcopal clergy, expressed, in the strongest terms, their dislike of these proceedings, and judged the sentiments of Arminius preferable to those of Calvin. This sudden change in the theological opinions of the court and clergy, lowered the interests of the Puritans, and exposed them anew to the animosity of their adversaries.

G. Mamma, I should have sided with Arminius; for I am a friend to toleration, I wonder how people can think of forcing others to think as they do.

Mrs. N. King James was not of your mind; for, contrary to his former promise, he attempted to carry on a conformity in matters of religion by establishing episcopacy in Scotland. "No bishop, no king," was the maxim he inculcated; but, though he set up bishops, he had no revenues for them except what he himself purchased; and the Scotch nation, exasperated by his breach of faith, opposed the hierarchy, and agreed to maintain their church free from innovation. James left to his son and successor, Charles I., the constitution of England, both civil and ecclesiastical, in a very unsettled state, languishing under disorders of various kinds.

S. It would have been better for Charles if he had never been king; for it cost him his head.

Mrs. N. Charles reigned at a critical period. The precedents of former reigns savoured strongly of arbitrary power, and the spirit of the people ran violently toward liberty. Passion for power is said

to have been Charles's predominant failing; and his habit of confiding in others led him to commit his designs to some who were but little qualified to serve the kingdom, especially in times of such difficulty. In his government of the church, Laud displayed a sad want of charity toward those who made the least opposition to the doctrines and ceremonies established by authority; and the star-chamber exercised the cruelties of an inquisition. An instance of the extreme rigour of the proceedings of the high-commission court is found in the punishment inflicted upon Dr. Leighton, a Scotch divine, for writing a book that was disapproved of. "He was severely whipped before he was set in the pillory. Being set in the pillory, he had one of his ears cut off; one side of his nose slit up; and he was branded on the cheek with a red hot iron with the letters S. S., as a sower of sedition. On that day se'nnight, the sores upon his back, ear, nose, and face, being not yet cured, he was whipped again at the pillory in Cheapside, cutting off the other ear, slitting the other side of the nose, and branding the other cheek." After Laud's elevation to the see of Canterbury, he drove out of the kingdom many Dutch and French Protestants, to whose ancestors Edward VI. had given an asylum; and either imprisoned or silenced many worthy clergymen, who refused to read the king's declaration for allowing sports on Sundays after divine service. His arbitrary measures were not confined to England, but reached to Scotland also. An attempt was made to force the Liturgy upon the

Scotch kirk: this provoked resistance, and led to the renewal of the solemn league and covenant; which bound the nation to maintain their religion free from innovation. The king raised a powerful army to reduce the Covenanters to submission; but, when he marched to the borders of Scotland, he found the preparations made to receive him were so formidable, that he was compelled to seek for a general pacification. It was soon discovered that the idea of war was not abandoned, only deferred; and that the English court was resolved to subdue the spirit of the Scotch. To raise supplies, application was made to parliament; the measure, however, was so unpopular that the commons not only refused to comply with the designs of the crown, but appointed committees to consider their own grievances. Thus commenced the open rupture between the king and the parliament, which for several years involved England in all the horrors of a civil war, and eventually brought both the king and the archbishop to die upon a scaffold.

L. It makes me think better of our own quiet, peaceable times, than I ever did.

Mrs. N. The time of England's commotion was fixed upon for a massacre of the Protestants in Ireland. The Romish priests were the first instigators of the conspiracy; and the pope expressed his approbation of their proceedings, by sending the promise of a plenary indulgence and remission of sins to all those who engaged to extirpate and destroy the whole race of Protestants in Ireland. When the

day for a general rise was fixed upon, prayer was made to God "for the success of the great design, tending to the prosperity of the kingdom, and the advancement of the Catholic cause." On the 23d of October, 1641, and the following day, above forty thousand Protestants were massacred; and it is said that not fewer than three hundred thousand suffered the most inhuman cruelties, the greater part of whom perished, either through hunger or by violence. Cromwell, at length, suppressed this rebellion, and exacted a sullen obedience.

G. Mamma, I should think Cromwell would let the Puritans alone; for, you know, he pretended to be one of them.

Mrs. N. During the time of the commonwealth, the Puritans had it in their power (a privilege which they failed not to use) to retaliate upon the bishops and clergy the ill-usage and intolerance of which they had themselves so heavily complained. Episcopalians received the most severe and iniquitous treatment. Some of the Puritans extended the Calvinistic tenets so as to allow the indulgence of sin in the predestinated heirs of salvation. These obtained the name of "Antinomians," or enemies of the law. The strictness of piety and morals which, before the war, had gained the Puritans so much reputation, began to wear off; and long sermons and long prayers came now to be the distinction of the party. This was carried to so great a length, that family prayer, attended as it was with reading and expounding the Scriptures, usually occupied about

two hours; and saying grace before and after meat was frequently lengthened to a whole hour.

G. Why, mamma, the dinner would be quite cold.

Mrs. N. The Presbyterians in Scotland even went beyound the Puritans. The administration of the sacrament was generally a lengthened service: it was customary to keep the Wednesday previous as a fast-day, with prayers and sermons for eight or ten hours; on the Saturday, two or three preparatory sermons were preached; and on the Lord's day there was a continued service for about twelve hours; which was followed by three or four sermons on Monday for thanksgiving. The discipline of the kirk of Scotland was very strict: for breaking the sabbath, for an oath, for drunkenness, or the least disorder, persons were cited before the church session, and solemnly reproved; for greater crimes, the offenders had to sit upon an elevated place in the church, called "the stool of repentance," for three sabbaths, during worship, receiving admonitions, and making professions of repentance; and for flagrant wickedness, the same place was assigned them for six months, during which time they were covered with sackcloth.

L. I have often heard of the stool of repentance; but I never knew what it meant before.

Mrs. N. A sect now arose with which you are all acquainted, known commonly by the name of Quakers, but who call themselves Friends. During the disturbed state of the English Church, many serious persons had withdrawn from the communion

of every visible church, to cultivate in retirement impressions which they attributed to the operations of the Spirit on their own minds: it is chiefly from such, when brought to recognise each other by the ministry of an individual, that the Quakers consider their society to have been originally gathered. That individual was George Fox; who, with the courage and perseverance of a reformer, travelled from place to place, preaching to large assemblies, in the face of opposition from the clergy, public abuse, and severe treatment from the magistracy.

G. Mamma, did they say *thee* and *thou* then, as they do now?

Mrs. N. Their present peculiarities were from the first strictly adhered to. They judged the plural mode of addressing one person to have originated in a spirit of flattery unbecoming Christians; and, on the same principle, they refused the customary courtesy of bowing with the head uncovered. Their refusing to pay tithes, to engage in military service, and to take oaths, prepared for them an ordeal of suffering; and their history at this time is chiefly a detail of buffetings, imprisonings, and spoiling of goods. When we consider that this was an age remarkable for religious zeal and political turbulence, the rise of a new society enjoining quietude, and nonconformity with the externals of religion, may be regarded as an interposition of Providence, to recall the Church to primitive simplicity of manners, and to the cultivation of inward piety; especially as, upon the restoration of Charles II., such a spirit of

extravagant joy spread over the nation, that the very profession of virtue and religion was thrown off, to allow the unrestrained indulgence of festivity and entertainments. The starched manners and persons of the Puritans, with the plain, honest dealing of the Quakers, though forming butts for ridicule, yet served to stem the torrent of corrupt morals which now threatened to deluge the kingdom with vice and profligacy.

S. O, that is the Charles "who never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one."

Mrs. N. In addition to the licentiousness of Charles, his mean hypocrisy during his abode with the Scotch Covenanters as a wanderer, his breach of oaths made to them, and the cruelty which he afterward inflicted upon them, with the persecutions by which he repaid the services of the English Puritans, form blemishes in his character, which will ever stain his memory in the annals of the church. One of the first acts of his reign was, the restoration of episcopacy, both in England and in Scotland, accompanied with a resolution to maintain conformity to the height. Those of the clergy who came to England from foreign churches, and had not received episcopal ordination, were incapacitated from holding any ecclesiastical benefice; more saints' days were inserted in the church calendar; also the 30th day of January, called "King Charles the Martyr," and the 29th of May, "the king's birth-day and return;" and St. Bartholomew's day was fixed upon as the day when all persons should be compelled to

subscribe an unfeigned assent and consent to every particular contained and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. The Puritans remembered what St. Bartholomew's day was to the Huguenots in France, and almost anticipated the one would be as the other. An assembly of Presbyterian ministers met at Edinburgh, to draw up a remonstrance, in which, after some cold compliments to the king upon his restoration, they reminded him of the covenant which he had so solemnly signed when among them; they lamented that, instead of establishing Presbyterianism, as he had sworn to do, he had set up Common Prayer, and the order of bishops; upon which they made terrible denunciations of heavy judgments from God, if he did not stand to the covenant, which they called the oath of God. To intimidate others, this remonstrance was, by the parliament, voted scandalous and seditious, and the divines imprisoned, and threatened with greater severities. The Act of Uniformity was proclaimed, requiring all who had their livings without presentations, and who had not subscribed to the Book of Common Prayer, to forbear preaching, or otherwise serving their cures, and to withdraw from the parishes immediately. Orders were also given to the military to pull them out of the pulpits, if they should presume to go on with their functions. On St. Bartholomew's day, more than two hundred churches were closed; one hundred and fifty clergymen in addition were turned out for not obeying: and it was computed, that not fewer than two thousand ministers fell under the deprivation.

L. Aunt, I have often read in memoirs of ministers being ejected from their livings: was this the time?

Mrs. N. Yes; this Act of Uniformity drove many of the best of the clergy into obscurity, and, it is to be feared, in many cases, into poverty. They were now designated by the name of Nonconformists; and before they had recovered from the panic into which this measure had thrown them, another act was passed, against conventicles: justices of the peace were empowered to convict offenders without juries; any meeting for religious worship at which five were present more than the family was declared a conventicle: and every person present above the age of sixteen was subject to the penalty of five pounds, or three months' imprisonment, for the first offence; twenty pounds, or six months' imprisonment, for the second offence; and for the third, one hundred pounds, or to be banished the country. Much consultation among the Nonconformists as to the best method of acting was the result of these arbitrary proceedings: many were for emigrating to Holland, others proposed New-England. But the passing of a still severer act appeared the consummation of their distress. What was called the Five-Mile Act required the silenced ministers to take an oath that they would not at any time seek to effect an alteration in church or state, and forbade such as refused to come within five miles of any city, borough, or church, where they had formerly ministered. The rigour of these laws excited a general feeling of sympathy for the

sufferers; and great prejudice was also raised by the character of some of the new incumbents.

G. Then could they not have preaching in the chapels?

Mrs. N. Informers being everywhere encouraged, most of the sects discontinued their meetings. The conduct of the Quakers was, however, bold and harassing: they met at the same hour and place as before, and, when seized, went all together to prison; there they stayed until dismissed, refusing to petition to be set at liberty, the payment of fines, or even the jail fees, which they called the "wages of unrighteousness." As soon as they regained their freedom, they went again to their meeting-houses, and, finding them closed against them, held their meetings in the streets, professing that they would never discontinue meeting together to worship God, but, in imitation of Daniel, they would do it publicly when occasion required. The celebrated John Bunyan was imprisoned as a dissenter for upward of twelve years; during which time he supported his family by making tagged laces, and improved the weariness of solitude by writing the well-known "Pilgrim's Progress."

G. Ay, then he would know how to write about Doubting-Castle and Giant Despair.

Mrs. N. Bunyan had the "key of promise" in his bosom; but Doubting-Castle and Giant Despair very stikingly illustrate the inquisitorial court which ecorder of London wished to see established in and. He expressed himself thus upon the trial

of William Penn, (a Quaker, afterward the founder of the colony of Pennsylvania,) who was committed to Newgate for holding meetings contrary to the Conventical Act: "Till now, I never understood the reason of the policy and prudence of the Spaniards, in suffering the inquisition among them. And certainly it will never be well with us until something like unto the Spanish inquisition be in England."

S. Aunt, you have never told us what the inquisition is.

Mrs. N. The inquisition by Romanists is termed "the holy office:" its standard in Spain is a piece of red damask, upon which is painted a cross with an olive branch upon one side, and a sword upon the other, with this inscription, "Arise, O Lord, and judge my cause." The professed design of the inquisition is, to extirpate heretics, to search into their number, rank, and opinions, and to transmit a faithful account thereof to Rome. In those countries where it is established, all persons are obliged, under the penalty of excommunication, to inform against any one whom they suspect of heresy. The information is given, and the seizure of the person effected, with the most profound secrecy and silence; instantly the whole world abandons him, not even the dearest friend daring to speak a word in his behalf. When captured, the criminal is brought before the table of the holy office, where, opposite to a crucifix, sits the inquisitor and the notary, or secretary of the inquisition. He is ordered to take the Missal, and swear that he will declare the truth and keep

secrecy; after which, he is interrogated in the most minute and circumstantial manner. This investigation generally closes with the sentence of torture; when the culprit is hurried into a dark room under ground, with light sufficient to make darkness visible, where the executioner is in waiting to inflict the punishment. His appearance strikes terror into the stoutest heart; for he is covered with a black garment down to the feet, tied close to the body, and the head and face are hid with a long black cowl, only two small holes being left to see through. The methods and degrees of torture are various; but all are marked with such cruelty, that each bears the impress of infernal design: gagging with an iron instrument to prevent noise is the usual accompaniment. If nothing more on the subject of heresy can be elicited, a succession of tortures is followed by the welcome messenger death.

G. O mamma! it makes one frightened to think about it.

Mrs. N. It is owing to the terror of the inquisition that Spain is still wrapped in Popish darkness, cruelty, and superstition. Protestantism penetrated its gloom; but no sooner did a glimmering ray appear than it was extinguished by the hand of death. And, that the chains of despotic thraldom to the Roman pontiff might be more closely riveted, six hundred thousand Jews and Mohammedans were banished from its fertile provinces to the coast of Barbary. France also was again enslaved. In the year 1684 Louis XIV. revoked the edict of Nantes, under

which Protestants, for nearly the last century, had enjoyed security: their churches were now razed to the ground, their persons insulted by the soldiery, and, after the loss of innumerable lives, fifty thousand valuable members of society were banished the kingdom. Saurin, in one of his sermons, makes the following fine apostrophe to the tyrant monarch: —"And thou, dreadful prince, whom I once honoured as my king, and whom I yet respect as a scourge in the hand of almighty God, thou also shalt have a part in my good wishes! These provinces" (Netherlands) "which thou threatenest, but which the arm of the Lord protects; this country, which thou fillest with refugees, but fugitives animated with love; these walls which contain a thousand martys of thy making, but whom religion renders victorious;—all these yet resound benedictions in thy favour. God grant the fatal bandage that hides the truth from thine eyes may fall off! May God forget the rivers of blood with which thou hast deluged the earth, and which thy reign hath caused to be shed! May God blot out of his book the injuries which thou hast done us; and while he rewards the sufferers, may he pardon those who exposed us to suffer! O may God, who hath made thee to us, and to the whole church, a minister of his judgments, make thee a dispenser of his favours, an administrator of his mercies!"

S. How very different from the bloody inquisition!

Mrs. N. Popery was again trying to gain the ascendency in England. Charles II. is said to have

received the host and extreme unction when dying; and his successor, James II., began his career of government by going openly to mass, though it was an illegal meeting. His next step was to issue a proclamation, suspending all penal laws against Papists and Nonconformists: Papists were no more to be prosecuted for their worship, and Nonconformists were allowed to have open meeting-houses, for which they were to take out a license. Universal toleration was now the royal maxim, urged from the consideration that nothing was more reasonable, more Christian, or more politic; with reflections upon the Establishment for the severity with which dissenters had been treated. When this declaration was published, much influence was used by the court to persuade the Nonconformists to compliment the king for his lenity; but, though they presented themselves in a body to return thanks, they possessed too much foresight not to see that the re-establishment of Popery was the design at which the king aimed.

L. Is it not so now-a-days, aunt? I have heard uncle say that the Romanists plead for toleration for the dissenters only that they may get it themselves.

Mrs. N. Happily, we have not now such a monarch! James was a faithful and zealous son of the Church of Rome; and, the better to secure his object in promoting the interests of the holy see, he hoped to lull apprehension by granting to all parties liberty of conscience; but his impolitic haste roused the zeal of the general body of Protestants, and

brought their united force into action. Suspicion was confirmed by the interception of letters from Jesuits in England to those of their fraternity in other countries, declaring that "the king of England was received into a communication of the merits of their order; that he expressed great joy at becoming a son of the society, and was more concerned in their interests than his own; that he besought for a number of priests to assist him in the conversion of the nation, which he was resolved to effect, or else die a martyr in the attempt; choosing rather to suffer death engaged in promoting the faith, than to live supinely in the splendours of royalty." It was added that when it was lamented that the next heir to the throne was a heretic, the king replied, "God will provide an heir." The nation perceiving that the ruin of their religion was meditated, deposed the Jesuit king, and invited the prince of Orange, who had married his daughter, to maintain and defend the Protestant faith.

S. It was strange for a king to turn Jesuit. I thought Jesuits were all priests.

Mrs. N. Jesuits were any thing that served their purpose. Their numbers had so considerably increased, that at this time they reckoned upward of twenty thousand, scattered, for the propagation of the faith, all over the world. In Japan, where severity and cruelty toward the aged and afflicted prevailed, they insinuated themselves into favour by becoming venders of medicine, raising hospitals, and by showing the greatest tenderness toward every

form of human suffering. In Abyssinia, where there still remained a vestige of truth in a dead church, originally belonging to the patriarchate of Alexandria, the Roman pontiff's authority and jurisdiction were strenuously maintained. In America, the Jesuits engaged in extensive and lucrative commerce, obtained settlements and provinces, and reigned as sovereigns over hundreds of thousands, subjects and slaves. In India, they were versed in all the subtlety of Hindoo philosophy; and, assuming the character of Brahmins, forged documents to prove that the Brahmins of Rome were more ancient than those of India, and that they descended in a direct line from the god Brahma. In China, they met national prejudice and the love of antiquity by asserting that the doctrines of Confucius differed little from those of the gospel, and that Christianity was the primitive religion of the empire. In Europe, they paid particular attention to the instruction of youth, excelling in the study of the arts and sciences, commanding a soft and winning address, and gaining influence by intrigue, flattery, and a readiness to assist in political movements. In England, they had laboured to subvert the established religion in a greater or less degree, more or less openly, according to the circumstances of the times, from the period of the restoration, until, in the reign of James II., they were found in the cabinet, were the confessors of many persons eminent for rank and power, and were secretly dispersed through every part of the kingdom, disguised as Episcopalians, maintaining the

high prerogatives of the clergy, or as dissenters, disputing harshly about election and reprobation, or as Quakers, holding with tenacity their peculiarities, in order to bring odium upon all, and to erect the superstructure of Papacy upon the ruins of Protestantism, occasioned by conflicting opinions.

G. Then they tried all they could to get the pope as much power as he had before the Reformation.

Mrs. N. That was their specific object; an object at which they invariably aimed, though they pursued it by different means. When this design became fully developed, several nations, in which they had gained great influence, expressed their indignation at being thus enslaved: the Japanese, roused to fury by the impressions of seditious projects against the government, slaughtered and banished, with inhuman cruelty, all who adhered to the Catholic faith; issuing also a severe edict, forbidding Europeans to approach the Japanese dominions upon pain of death. The monarch of Abyssinia engaged to force his subjects by the power of arms to yield submission to the Roman see; but he was thus addressed by his warriors in the field of battle: "Behold the many thousands who lie slain! they are neither Mohammedans nor heathens; but your vassals, and our blood and relations. Whether you vanquish or are overcome, you will thrust a dagger into your own bosom. Those who have taken up arms have nothing to object to your majesty; but they cannot be satisfied with the faith which you would force upon them. How much blood has been spilt on occasion of this change

of religion! The Ethiopians do not like the Romish faith: leave them, therefore, in possession of that of their ancestors; otherwise, you will lose your kingdom, and we our quiet." He acknowledged the justice of the remonstrance, and issued a proclamation for liberty of conscience. A triumphal song was sung on the occasion:—

"Sweet freedom now the Ethiopian lambs enjoy,
Snatch'd from the jaws of the fell western wolves
By holy Cyril, and th' apostle Mark.
Exult with mirth, and hallelujahs sing;"

and the monarch afterward excused his lenity and breach of promise by saying, "You established your faith by violence and tyranny, not by arguments." The Romish interest in Abyssinia declined daily; and the names of "Catholic" and "Jesuit" were soon held in utter detestation. In China, success, for some time, crowned their efforts: a vast number of converts embraced the Catholic faith, and the emperor, from a strong attachment to the Jesuits, issued an edict that the Christian religion was in nowise detrimental to the interests of monarchy. Permission was granted for the Chinese to embrace the gospel; and a magnificent church was built within the precincts of the imperial palace. And, though the sudden reverse is especially attributable to the jealousy of the Chinese government, which was excited by the political movements of the Jesuits, sanguinary measures were enforced, and expulsion and prohibition, similar to those of the Japanese, were decreed, both against Catholics and Europeans.

G. It is not to be wondered at, that the nations drove the Jesuits out. I hope they did so in England.

Mrs. N. Upon the accession of William and Mary to the English throne, the Catholics were laid under great disabilities; but the liberty granted by James to Nonconformists and dissenters was confirmed by the Act of Toleration, which revoked all penalties for attending meeting-houses. The Quakers were also allowed to make declarations instead of taking oaths. Presbyterianism became the established form of religion in Scotland.

S. Then, aunt, they were just as we are.

Mrs. N. The liberty we now enjoy of sitting under our own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make us afraid, is to be traced to this period; the Act of Toleration being the Magna Charta of religious freedom: but with regard to the internal state of the church, a wide difference existed betwen this and present times, the causes of which will form the subject of our next conversation. Unhappy contests had proved unfavourable to the cultivation of true piety; and a general declension of experimental religion marked the close of the seventeenth century. Episcopalians were divided among themselves: many who stretched the prerogatives of the Church to the utmost, refused to acknowledge any king but James, which occasioned the distinguishing appellations of high-Church and low-Church parties. Dissenters were characterized by a particular sensitive ness upon controverted points, with such a tenacity

for what they considered orthodoxy that it was impossible for a person varying in sentiment from another to converse freely upon any spiritual subject. Those who were more moderate sunk into a cold formality, not having either example or precept immediately before them to stimulate to high attainments. The low state of religion among its professors was a more melancholy index of the decay of Christianity than either the general dissoluteness of manners, or the infidel publications which were in circulation. Writers of learning, talent, and genius employed their pens to scoff at piety. It was a common part of discourse to treat the mysteries of religion as the contrivance of priests; priestcraft became a fashionable and a popular word; and a disbelief in revealed religion was openly and scandalously avowed. Royal orders were given to execute laws against drunkenness, swearing, and the profanation of the sabbath: yet the reformation of manners went slowly on; many of the magistrates were themselves faulty, and did all they could to discourage the suppression of vice; and the conduct of many of the clergy (to use the words of Bishop Burnet) "gave infidels no small advantage; they would swear and pray against their consciences, rather than lose their benefices." It was unquestionably the most unevangelical period that had ever occurred in the country since the establishment of the Reformation; and, but for the revival of true piety in the next century, Protestantism would now have been little more than a name.

CONVERSATION XII.

CENTURY XVIII.

Mrs. N. The first object which claims our attention in the eighteenth century was one of the last acts of the monarch, invited to be the defender of English Protestantism, which was, the establishment of a "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," designed to stem the torrent of infidelity, to raise schools in distant colonies, and to send clergymen to newly formed settlements. His queen aided the pious intent, by encouraging the formation of the "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge;" the object of which was, to raise charity schools, and to distribute moral and religious books. The Lutheran church also seconded this expression of benevolent zeal, by sending ministers from the kingdom of Denmark to convey to the inhospitable shores of Greenland the light of the gospel; and a Danish mission was formed, in the year 1705, on the coast of Malabar, which will ever be memorable through the pious and successful labours of Schwartz.

Lucy. I read lately a very interesting account of a missionary in Greenland: he suffered such hardships, but was so much beloved by the people. I should like you to see it, aunt: I am sure you would be pleased with it.

Mrs. N. He would doubtless belong to the church

of the Moravians, or United Brethren; the icy shores of Greenland being at that time the scene of their self-denying labours exclusively. This church was founded, or rather framed according to its present establishment, in the early part of this century. Three or four poor families migrated from Moravia into Upper Lusatia, in search of some sequestered spot, where they might enjoy religious toleration free from the persecuting hand of Popery. This was a remnant of the ancient Hussites, who, after the dawn of the Reformation, maintained a friendly communication with both the Lutheran and reformed churches, and bade fair to be a flourishing branch of Protestantism. Subsequent civil war and violent persecution scattered their ministers and reduced their numbers. Count Zinzendorf afforded protection to these poor wandering exiles, who being joined by others of their brethren, a new village arose called Hernhuth. Under the patronage of the count, the infant colony continued to prosper, and the Moravian brethren are now known in every quarter of the world.

Sophia. Those poor Hussites seem to have been like sheep for the slaughter; but I am glad to hear of them again.

Mrs. N. The few that remained were driven into the enclosure of peace about the same time that the Protestant religion and the blessings of civil liberty were established in Great Britain and Ireland, by the accession of the house of Brunswick to the throne. Another pleasing feature in the history of

the British Church was, an attempt in the Boyle Lecture to oppose infidelity, and in the Lady Moyer Lecture to defend the doctrine of the Trinity: as also the honourable exception to prevailing indifference and degeneracy of a few, both in the Church and among dissenters, whose piety and talents command respect. In this small circle of the godly, Dr. Watts holds a conspicuous place; to whom you are indebted for your lispings of "Divine Songs."

George. Mamma, I do not think I should ever forget "How doth the little busy bee," if I lived to be a hundred years old!

Mrs. N. Dr. Watts, in his writings and ministerial labours, acted upon the principle which he recommended to others: "It cannot be amiss for every one to use all just and proper efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world." Nor was the presage of the decay of Christianity without foundation. Profaneness and impiety had grown bold and open. The manners of high life were not, indeed, so profligate as in the days of Charles II.: but there was a greater degree of general coarseness; drunkenness had become a national vice; and the habits of society were brutalized by the indulgence of rude sports, bad morals, and infidelity. In addition to which, a Christless gospel was commonly preached; the vital truths of Christianity were thrown into the back-ground; ministers and people were at ease in Zion; and, to quote the language of Southey, "there never was less religious feeling, either within the Establishment

or without, than when Wesley blew his trumpet, and awakened those who slept."

S. Now, then, come the Methodists!

Mrs. N. The name of Methodists was given as a term of reproach to a few students at the University of Oxford, as applicable to the exactness and regularity by which they ordered their lives: the rule of their conduct being "to fear God, and to keep his commandments." Afterward it more particularly identified the followers of the leaders of this little band, Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield, who, as the revivers of a purer religion, will be memorable as long as the Christian temple which they contributed to raise shall endure.

S. Aunt, what is the difference between their religion and other people's?

Mrs. N. As that is a point which I wish you fully to understand, it may be necessary to treat of several particulars connected with their history. In the first place, I would observe that at this time there was an evident departure from some of the most important theological principles of the Reformation. Many quotations might be given from the writings of clergymen and dissenters, which would sufficiently demonstrate the fact; but I would rather direct your attention to the early life of John and Charles Wesley, as affording one of the best specimens of this period in private life. The sons of a clergyman of the high-Church party, and a mother of extraordinary sense and piety, (the daughter of an eminent Nonconformist minister,) who, at the age of womanhood,

quitted the "Presbyterian faith," from a decided preference to the Establishment, the two brothers were early imbued with a strong attachment to episcopacy, and became the strictest of strict Churchmen. Their notions of religion, however, were vague and unsatisfactory. Mrs. Wesley, (upon whom devolved their early training,) though herself educated among dissenters, confessed "that she had scarce ever heard such a thing mentioned, as the experience of the forgiveness of sins in this life, much less did she imagine that it was the common privilege of believers." The tone of piety in the Church, depending upon the character and ministrations of the clergy, was exceedingly low and feeble; so that, serving God from a principle of servile fear was the sum total of that religion which procured for the sincere youths at Oxford the reproachful term of Methodists; while, in the mystical writings of Mr. Law, they perceived a spirituality they knew not how to attain, and a purity which condemned their best performances, without making them acquainted with the faith by which they might be justified. For the rekindling of that evangelical light which had gone out in England, we are indebted to the Moravian church. Scarcely did the society number six hundred members before its exertions were used to benefit the heathen world. Two brethren were sent to labour for the conversion of the Negroes in the West Indies: the mission was commenced in Greenland; and, in the year 1734, the first brethren were sent to America. The following year, with the most

upright intentions, but with imperfect religious views, John and Charles Wesley sailed for the colony of Georgia, as clergymen of the Church of England, in company with several members of the Moravian church. The holy calm of these Germans in the time of danger was unaccountable to the Wesleys; theirs was a religion of fear and mortification rather than of peace and joy; but subsequent intercourse served to discover to them the true nature of Christianity. Upon their arrival in Georgia, Mr. John Wesley was introduced to their pastor, who asked, "My brother, have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Mr. Wesley says, "I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and continued, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused, and said, 'I know he is the Saviour of the world.' 'True,' replied he, 'but do you know he has saved you?' I answered, 'I hope he has died to save me.'" Circumstances conspired to render the stay of the Wesleys short in Georgia. On the voyage home, Mr. John Wesley's attention was especially directed to the state of his own heart; and the conclusion of his reflections, to use his own words, was, "I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity: but what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why, (what I least of all expected,) that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God." These convictions were strengthened and confirmed by his intercourse

with Peter Böhler, a minister of the Moravian church, who arrived in England at this time. Mr. Wesley's Journal will best express the exercises of his mind: "March 23d. I saw Peter Böhler again, who amazed me more and more by the account he gave me of the fruits of this living faith, the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by the law and the testimony; and being confident that God would hereby show me whether the doctrine was of God." "April 22d. I met Peter Böhler once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) 'a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.' Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described as fruits of this living faith. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God,' and, 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself,' fully convinced me of the former: as, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,' and, 'Whosoever believeth is born of God,' did of the latter. But I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment; how a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles: but, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any

instances there of other than instantaneous conversions; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth. I had but one retreat left; namely, 'Thus I grant God wrought in the first ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe he works in the same manner now?' But on the 23d I was beat out of this retreat also, by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses, who testified, God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of his Son, as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could only cry out, 'Lord, help my unbelief!'"

L. We often hear people talking in that way; but it seems to have been quite new to Mr. Wesley.

Mrs. N. When the plan of salvation was thus clearly perceived, the Rev. John and Charles Wesley, with other ministers and members of the established Church, who had heretofore been sincere seekers of salvation, shortly became the happy partakers of pardoning mercy. Mr. John Wesley thus describes the manner in which his own conversion took place: "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone,

for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

S. It was rather singular that what Luther wrote should do Mr. Wesley so much good; because they seem to have been brother reformers.

Mrs. N. Wesley had not, like Luther, to protest against the established errors of a corrupt church: he had only to appeal to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England, to prove that it was no new doctrine which declared the necessity of inward religion, as distinguished from mere forms of worship and moral duties. Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley laid a true foundation in the establishment of the Reformation in England: nothing more was wanted than to draw the attention of the people to these first principles, and to build upon them a spiritual temple unto the Lord.

S. But, you know, aunt, many of the Church people fancy themselves so good, that they despise every body else.

Mrs. N. It was this spirit which caused the doors of churches to be closed against the Wesleys and Whitefield. Having found, what they had long sought, the peace and holiness consequent upon true Christian faith, they began to exert themselves to effect a revival of religion in the nation, and adopted a mode of preaching adapted to this end. They laid aside the practice of reading sermons, and addressed the people from the fulness of their hearts: salvation by faith was their only theme; what they had

felt, that made they known to others. The maintenance of such doctrine led to their exclusion from the churches; and, as rooms could not contain a tenth part of the people desirous to hear, field-preaching was the only expedient. Whitefield led the way, and the Wesleys followed with equal steps, in addressing listening thousands under the broad canopy of heaven. Nor should the name of Howell Harris be forgotten, who, fired with the same spirit, erected the standard of the cross in South Wales, and was the honoured instrument of turning multitudes from darkness to light.

G. Mamma, did not Mr. Wesley appoint class-meetings?

Mrs. N. The formation of societies was the consequence of field-preaching. Many of the people, impressed with the truth which they heard, became alarmed on account of sin, and desired further instruction in the way of salvation. Mr. Wesley appointed a fixed hour when they might all come together, which they did thenceforward every week: twelve came the first night, forty the next, and soon after a hundred: the number continuing to increase, they were divided into small companies, with one appointed as leader, who was to give to each member suitable advice, and conclude the meeting with singing and prayer.

G. I wonder whether they sung Wesley's hymns!

Mrs. N. Undoubtedly. In the leaders of Methodism there was a happy combination of talent. Charles Wesley was pre-eminently the man of feeling; and

from the time of his conversion until his fires were quenched in death, he thought and breathed in sacred verse. The strong, nervous diction of John Wesley carried conviction of truth into the most prejudiced mind: "How forcible are right words!" was the response given by tens of thousands to his successive Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion; he was "the man of one business, and of one book;" the "world was his parish;" "what others called Methodism, he denominated the work of God;" and his aim was "to spread Scriptural holiness through the land." Mr. Whitefield's eloquence riveted the attention of the careless, and alarmed the inconsiderate; his ministrations were attended with such overwhelming power, that he has been known to receive upward of a thousand notes from persons convinced of sin during one sermon; persons of every rank and talent, from the polite Chesterfield, the infidel Bolingbroke, and the dramatic Garrick, have crowded to witness the natural force of genius, in the copious flow of eloquence, declaring "words whereby they might be saved." By the labours of these men, a flood of gospel light broke upon the nation. The revival thus becoming extensive, the services of lay-preachers were accepted; the force of early prejudice gave way, and the highways and hedges were made to resound with the tidings of salvation from the lips of those, who, untaught in the schools of men, were yet empowered of God to convey light and conviction to the consciences of the careless, and to awe into silence and attention the

noisy and unwieldy crowds by whom they were surrounded.

S. Well, aunt, I think this is much more like the times of the apostles, than any of the other centuries.

Mrs. N. The resemblance between primitive Christians and the Methodists has been confessed by a competent and disinterested witness: Archdeacon Paley says, "After men first became Christians, much of their time was spent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourse with one another, and correspondence with other societies. Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and habit, was not very unlike the United Brethren, or the modern Methodists."

L. I suppose he meant the Moravians by the United Brethren?

Mrs. N. Unquestionably. Mr. Wesley retained some connection with their society a few months after the formation of the Methodist societies; but the vast accession of numbers who claimed him as their spiritual father, rendered it expedient that he should altogether withdraw from the Moravians, and confine his attention to his own followers. Hitherto Messrs. Wesley and Whitefield were joint labourers in the great common cause: a difference of sentiment, however, respecting the views of Calvin and Arminius, caused a separation. They parted like Paul and Barnabas; which has occasioned the name

of Wesley to be attached to his followers, in order to distinguish them from the Calvinistic Methodists. The love-feasts introduced by Mr. Wesley among his followers were derived, with some modification, from the Moravians, who revived the primitive feasts of charity. Your acquaintance with Methodism makes it almost superfluous for me to say, that these love-feasts are held once in every quarter of a year, that in them the members of society relate their Christian experience, that they are enlivened by hymns sung at intervals, that a little bread and water is taken in token of brotherly love, and that a collection is made for the benefit of the poor members of the society.

G. I did not know before that Mr. Wesley was a Moravian: I always thought he was a Churchman!

Mrs. N. Mr. Wesley's having received superior light from the Moravians led him to have frequent intercourse with that society; but I am not aware that he was ever called a Moravian. That he was a Churchman, admits of no dispute. From childhood to old age he expressed a decided attachment to the Establishment. Nothing but a clear conviction of duty would have overcome his scruples about the alleged irregularities of Methodism; it was not until the pulpits of churches were denied, that he preached elsewhere; to his societies he enjoined the receiving of the sacraments at the church; and, when separate places of worship were erected, preaching was fixed at the time least likely to interfere with Church service. Several of the more

devout, zealous, and influential of the clergy were avowedly in close connection with Methodism. Thus, when the first conference was held, it consisted of six clergymen, without any travelling preachers; and the closest intimacy afterward subsisted between some of the best ministers in the Church and the Wesleys.

G. Ay, but clergymen would not like to be mobbed, and to have rotten eggs thrown at them, as the Methodist preachers had.

Mrs. N. In the enforcement of hated truth, and the exposure of sin and error, the Methodist preachers were frequently assailed by riotous mobs, and exposed to great personal danger: the Wesleys also shared in the hostility of which our Saviour forewarned his disciples, when he said, "I came not to bring peace upon earth, but a sword." Mr. Charles Wesley says, in one of his journals, "My brother came, delivered out of the mouth of the lions! His clothes were torn to tatters. He looked like a soldier of Christ. The mob of Wednesbury, Darlaston, and Walsal were permitted to take and carry him about for several hours, with a full intent to murder him; but his work is not yet finished, or he had now been with the souls under the altar."

S. Aunt, were they not chiefly poor people who were converted?

Mrs. N. As Methodism was most successful in populous, manufacturing districts, the bulk of its members moved in the lower walks of life; but it was no disparagement to the doctrines of our Saviour,

that "unto the poor the gospel was preached." The spiritual wants and necessities of the poor have been more efficiently met by Methodism, than by any other section of the Christian church; and though connectional boasting is excluded, we cannot doubt that the redeemed spirits of thousands of the ignorant and vicious are joining in a noble song of gratitude to God for the doctrines, discipline, and founder of Wesleyan Methodism. One in the higher walks of life now contributed to enlarge the pale of Calvinistic Methodism. Within the circle of the court, as a peeress of the realm, the countess of Huntingdon recommended, both by her counsel and example, the cause she had espoused. Mr. Whitefield became her ladyship's chaplain; and many of the great and the noble were by this means made acquainted with the truths of the gospel.

G. Mamma, where are the Calvinistic Methodists now?

Mrs. N. The labours of Mr. Whitefield were principally merged in those of Lady Huntingdon's connection, and in the dissenting churches. This eminent lady commenced her singular and active course by building in sea-ports, and in Bath, the resort of fashion, elegant and commodious places of worship, designed for the evangelical clergy: but her zeal enlarging with her success, she purchased, built, or hired chapels in most of the large towns in the kingdom; and as this opened a sphere of action beyond her power of supplying with regularly ordained ministers, she erected a college at Trevecka, in Wales,

for training up young men to the ministry. Mr. Whitefield, no doubt, would have presided over this college, had not death removed him from the church militant to the church triumphant.

G. Well, I think Mr. Wesley's was the wisest plan of keeping his people all together.

Mrs. N. It appears from a remark of Mr. Whitefield, that he at length thought so: he said, "My brother Wesley acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruits of his labour. This I neglected; and my people are a rope of sand." But though there is no spiritual succession of Whitefield's ministry, his doctrines are preached in several of the largest chapels in London, and also among the revived body of Independents; who, stimulated by the planting of other churches resembling them in many particulars, yet going far beyond them in faith and love, shook off the lethargic slumber of former years, and co-operated with the newly formed kindred societies in extending the dissenting interest.

S. I wonder whether Rowland Hill's chapel is one of them?

Mrs. N. Indirectly, the chapel called by that name may be considered so. Rowland Hill, when a stripling in years, seconded his brother and other polemic writers in repudiating the doctrine of general redemption; the sainted Fletcher, vicar of Madeley, threw the mantle of love over bitterness and aspersion, and by his "Checks to Antinomianism,"

and other works, triumphantly vindicated the principles of Arminius. Love, not controversy, was the element he delighted to breathe; yet he possessed the power to disarm his antagonists of any unsanctified or unlawful weapons which they might use, and to leave them vanquished in the field. The rancour, which for a few years was indulged in by opponents to the doctrine of a free and full salvation, happily died away; a better spirit succeeded; and Rowland Hill, with others, honourably and usefully employed their talents in promoting the cause of true religion.

G. It is a pity that Christians should not find something better to do than to quarrel with each other.

Mrs. N. An important field of labour was now presented for the Methodists to occupy. Several members of the Wesleyan society, having emigrated to North America, urgently requested to be supplied with English preachers. Two were accordingly sent by Mr. Wesley, and they were quickly followed by several others; but the breaking out of the revolutionary war suspended these missionary operations. That success attended this enterprise is confirmed by the testimony of a native preacher, who says, "Amidst the clash of war, God, in a glorious manner, prospered his work, in awakening and converting thousands of souls; so that in process of time the peninsula became comparatively as the garden of the Lord. There was a blessed work among the African slaves; and in no part of my labours

have I had more delightful seasons than I had in preaching to them." During the war, Mr. Wesley was a zealous advocate for the measures of government, and inculcated the duty of submission upon the transatlantic Methodists. Mr. Fletcher also wrote with ability on the same subject; and when questioned by the administrator of affairs in England what could be done for him, as an acknowledgment for his services, he replied, that the only thing he wanted was that which his lordship could not give,—more grace. When the contest terminated in American independence, it became a matter of some importance to determine what kind of connection should subsist between the American Methodists and their British brethren. Mr. Wesley, foreseeing the growing prosperity of the United States, gave to his societies there the form and character of an entire church, having in itself all the ordinances of Christianity; a measure as benevolent as politic, and as successful as beneficial.

G. Good old King George could not forget that he had lost America.

Mrs. N. During the American war, Dr. Coke, a clergyman of the Church of England, resigned his curacy, and connected himself with Mr. Wesley, to serve him as a son in the gospel. His union with the Methodist body was most seasonable and advantageous. Under the direction of Mr. Wesley, he took the superintendence of the foreign work; and for many years was such an example of missionary zeal and enterprise as the Christian church has

rarely seen. He, attended by three missionaries, embarked for Nova-Scotia. The voyage was most afflicting and calamitous: the ship, more than half a wreck on the banks of Newfoundland, appeared utterly unable to reach the destined port. The hope of landing where they at first intended being abandoned, they steered for the West Indies. Scarcely had they given a new direction to the vessel, when, to use the doctor's own expression, "it seemed as if angels blew the gale," and they were carried directly to Antigua. Here a Methodist society, consisting of two thousand members, had been raised by the exertions of Nathaniel Gilbert, Esq., speaker of the house of assembly in Antigua, who had heard Mr. Wesley preach in London, and was truly converted to God; and a pious shipwright, who had been a class-leader and local preacher previously to his leaving England. Thus commenced the Methodist mission in the West Indies.

S. That was a happy storm for the poor negroes! How wonderful that so little a thing as this should be the means of doing so much good!

Mrs. N. Another successful branch of missionary operations also arose from very small beginnings. About the time of Dr. Coke's first visit to the West Indies, a small company of Baptist ministers met at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, with the intention of forming a missionary society. A mission to the east was contemplated; but the insuperable difficulties that presented themselves caused one to exclaim, "You might as well attempt to make a high-road to

the moon!" This presage of failure did not, however, extinguish the spirit of missionary zeal; a subscription was made, which amounted to thirteen pounds, two shillings, and sixpence; and Carey, Marshman, and Ward, names of deep interest to every lover of Zion, effected an entrance into India.

G. Ay, but the Methodist missionaries were first.

Mrs. N. "The world is my parish," was the motto of Mr. Wesley; and this expansive benevolence has ever characterized Methodism. Mr. Wesley himself made several visits to Ireland, where Protestantism had fallen into a profound sleep, and Popery was rapidly leading back the body of the population into superstition. Romish mobs resisted all religious and moral innovation; and once Mr. Charles Wesley had the honour of being presented, by the grand jury of Cork, as a "rogue and vagabond." Yet much good was manifestly done: an efficient native ministry was raised up; and a distinct, though not an independent, connection was formed. While Mr. Wesley called the people to repentance, he adopted rather a singular method of reproving the supineness of the Protestant clergy. He published a small tract entitled, "A short Method of converting all the Roman Catholics in the Kingdom of Ireland; humbly proposed to the Bishops and Clergy of that Kingdom." The "method" was indeed "short" and simple; the detail of the plan occupying only a few pages. Its concluding paragraph will enable you to form an idea of the plan proposed: "It is observed, that the grand difficulty

of the work lies in the strong attachment of the Papists to their clergy. Here, therefore, we are to begin; we are to strike at the root; and if this bigotry be but removed, whatever error or superstition is built upon it will fall to the ground. Now, this may be effectually done thus: The Papists themselves allow, that one set of clergy were holier and wiser even than their own, namely, the apostles. They allow these both to have lived and preached better than the present clergy even of the Romish Church. Here, therefore, is the short and sure method. Let all the clergy of the Church of Ireland only live like the apostles, and preach like the apostles, and the thing is done. The Romans, on the same ground that they prefer the apostles before their own clergy, will then prefer ours before them; and when they once do this, when we have carried this point, when their attachment to our clergy is stronger than that to their own, they will be convinced by hundreds, till there is not a Roman left in the kingdom of Ireland."

L. That was a short and simple way indeed! Did you say, aunt, that it was in the form of a tract? Then there have been tracts ever since, I suppose?

Mrs. N. One of the most important and successful means adopted by Mr. Wesley for promoting the interests of religion, was the publication of pamphlets and tracts, with interesting and instructive books, in a cheap and popular form. In providing cheap literature, he anticipated the movements of more modern times by many years; and in that province

of service he laboured alone for nearly half a century. The increasing demand for this kind of reading, effected by the establishment of Sunday schools, which now became general, rendered it necessary for Christians of other denominations to co-operate; and thus the streams of religious knowledge became accessible to the poor.

G. O, mamma, you will tell us about Sunday schools, please.

Mrs. N. The original founder of Sunday schools was Robert Raikes, Esq., who first tried the practicability of his scheme in Gloucestershire. The success of the undertaking recommended its introduction into the city of Gloucester; and from thence it was quickly extended to every part of the kingdom. The plan of hiring teachers to instruct the children was first adopted, which caused a partial decline of the project when novelty ceased; a fostering hand, and more vigorous measures, were needed. This led to the formation of the "Sunday School Society," and to the adoption of the present voluntary system of imparting instruction. The benefits resulting from the institution of Sunday schools can never be estimated; and that they are found in nearly every hamlet, village, and district of the kingdom, is the highest meed of praise.

G. Mamma, I should so like to have seen Mr. Wesley.

Mrs. N. You are by no means singular in the expression of such a wish. Persons flocked from all parts to catch a glimpse of the man of God; his

smile, the stroke of his hand upon the heads of children, and especially his blessing, were highly prized, and treasured up in the seat of memory for years; mildness and cheerfulness were blended with gravity in his countenance and mien, and in old age he was singularly venerable. Few men have been more honoured upon earth than the founder of Methodism. The name, the image of Wesley seem to be imperishable. He closed his long and useful career, three years after his brother Charles, with all the serenity and splendour of a setting sun; exclaiming in death, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

S. I remember grandpapa saying, that is the watchword of Methodism, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

Mrs. N. Howard, the celebrated philanthropist, died about the same time as Mr. Wesley: of him it is said, "He visited all Europe, to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten; to attend to the neglected; to visit the forsaken; and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries. His plan was original; and it was as full of genius as it was of humanity. It was a voyage of discovery; a circumnavigation of charity."

G. Howard! why, there is his monument in St. Paul's church, in London!

Mrs. N. Hannah More has also gained a good report in the Christian church. Her "Practical

Piety," and her attempts to "Reform the Manners of the Great," testify her worth, and tell to future ages the capabilities, the excellence, and the influence of the female character.

S. Yes, aunt, I like to think of Mrs. Hannah More: she was such a Christian lady.

Mrs. N. The dying bequest of another Christian lady led to the formation of the London Missionary Society; and also the splendid mission of twenty-nine missionaries in the ship Duff for the islands imbosomed in the Pacific Ocean. The extended scale of this enterprise gave missionary operations a degree of public notoriety, and excited a more general concern for the salvation of the heathen world. The same society commenced a mission, under the superintendence of Doctor Vanderkemp, among the Hottentots in South Africa, at the time when "Hottentots and dogs" were classed together by Dutch colonists, and forbidden to enter a church. And Sierra Leone (that grave of Europeans) became the scene of missionary labour also.

L. I have just been thinking, aunt, what a change there is since the beginning of this century.

Mrs. N. Change, indeed, since only a few stars of godliness were seen in a dense mass of moral and spiritual darkness! At the close of the century, persons, eminent for piety, whose names are worthy of perpetual remembrance, form a vast constellation! Churches that were dim, and others that were not, are shining resplendent in the beams of truth; and efforts have been combined, by the formation of

societies, for the chasing of error, the destruction of vice, and the emancipation of the slave. To what, I ask, is the change, humanly speaking, attributable? I anticipate your answer,—To the revival of religion in the form of Methodism.

CONVERSATION XIII.

CENTURY XIX.

George. MAMMA, this is the best century, because it is our own.

Mrs. N. The nineteenth century opened with the most favourable auspices to the church: the clergy of the Establishment were renouncing the Pharisaism and supineness of former years, many of them being led to embrace evangelical views, and to receive the truth in the love thereof. A spirit of Christian enterprise was excited. The spiritual wants of mankind led to the formation of the Church Missionary Society. The Religious Tract Society was also circulating its small and useful publications; Benevolent, or Strangers' Friend Societies were becoming general; and, to crown the whole, in the year 1804 the Bible Society was established.

Sophia. Aunt, which do you think has done the most good, the Bible Society or missionary societies?

Mrs. N. Indeed, my dear, it is impossible to say: each has been signally owned of God; and, acting in concert with each other, the benefit which they

yield is vast and incalculable. The Bible Society rolls a noble stream of truth through the earth; and the missionaries stand upon its banks and cry, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!*" The object of the Bible Society is to promote the circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, both at home and abroad; and it may be considered as possessing a larger sphere of operation than was ever acquired by any other institution for charitable purposes; having correspondents and agents actively engaged in dispersing the sacred oracles to men of every nation under heaven.

G. How glad Luther would have been of such a society!

Mrs. N. Luther prepared the way for its establishment; and the same hostility that was expressed by the popedom against Luther, has been manifested toward the Bible Society in Roman Catholic countries. Numerous instances might be given; but one will be sufficient to convince you that Popery remains the same. Pope Pius VII. issued a bull against Bible societies, addressed to the primate of Poland, in which he says, "You are aware that a certain society, called the Bible Society, strolls with effrontery throughout the world; which society labours to translate, or rather to pervert, the Holy Bible into the vulgar languages of every nation; from which proceeding, it is greatly to be feared that, by a perverse interpretation, the gospel of Christ should be turned into a human gospel, or, what is still worse, into the gospel of the devil ..... The power

of temporal princes will, we trust in the Lord, come to your assistance, whose interest, as reason and experience show, is concerned when the authority of the church is questioned."

G. Yes; the pope would like to have us kiss his foot again: but he will be disappointed.

Mrs. N. Britain, rescued from spiritual despotism, forbade tyranny in her sons. A bill passed the parliament, "that no vessel should clear out for slaves from any port of the British dominions after May 1st, 1807; and, that no slave should be landed in the British colonies after March 1st, 1808." The abolition of the slave-trade was followed by the settlement of Sierra Leone for the reception of negroes recaptured from smugglers in that accursed traffic; and here missionaries entered upon a trying but interesting field of labour.

S. Aunt, this really does deserve your favourite air, "Rule Britannia;" but not to interrupt you now, I will sing and play it after.

Mrs. N. A bill was soon after brought into the House of Lords, called Lord Sidmouth's bill, of a very different description: its professed object was to amend the Act of Toleration; but its design was, in fact, to repeal the most important and beneficial provisions of that act. The Methodist and dissenting bodies called upon their respective communities throughout the kingdom to petition the legislature against a measure which threatened to abridge their religious liberties. In a few days the nation was in a ferment; and petitions, in unexampled numbers,

were poured into parliament. Some eminent personages in the Establishment, with a most honourable liberality, expressed their disapprobation of the bill; and the archbishop of Canterbury delivered an admirable speech in favour of religious toleration. Opposition thus becoming general, the authors of the obnoxious measure were glad to withdraw it, alleging that their designs were misunderstood. This injudicious attempt, by leading to subsequent alterations in the Act of Toleration, suited to the exigencies of the times, actually aided the cause which it had laboured to suppress.

G. No, no: we hope to have no more Conventicle Acts, or such like things.

Mrs. N. The spirit of Christian liberality had now become too widely diffused to be again enclosed within the narrow bounds of sect or country. The world presented a vast field for moral and religious cultivation; and the Christian church was roused by a sense of duty to employ its energies and talents, that the wilderness might become as the garden of the Lord. Even the walls of China were scaled by missionary enterprise; and a noble band of Wesleyans, headed by Dr. Coke, sailed for India.

Lucy. Yes, and the good old doctor died before he reached India. I should think, aunt, he was very much missed in England.

Mrs. N. As the zealous patron of missions, his labours were indefatigable and unceasing; but the cause depended not upon an earthly arm for support. Ministers, eminent for piety and learning, were left

in the connection; and when, by Dr. Coke's death, the mission cause was threatened with loss, the Wesleyan Missionary Society was organized, and the gifted Watson appointed secretary; of whom it has been truly said, that, as his "Catechisms" instruct our children, his "Conversations" direct our youth, and his "Institutes" imbody the theology of our pulpits, his writings influence the entire Wesleyan connection.

S. Yes, aunt, we know both the "Catechisms" and the "Conversations;" and it just reminds me of what I saw in a book yesterday, that the princess Charlotte, when a little girl, learned Watts's Hymns.

Mrs. N. Perhaps it was from this pure and simple source that the illustrious heir to the crown of England derived the first impressions of that piety which still throws a ray of glory over her early grave. The connection of pious instruction with royalty brings before our notice the princesses of the Russian empire, who, during the time when the emperor encouraged the operations of the Bible Society in his dominions, were instructed by the agent of that society in the English language. It was usual for the empress to be present on these occasions, seated with great dignity upon an elevated throne at the upper end of the apartment. With the design of imparting religious as well as mental instruction, the agent introduced Legh Richmond's incomparable tract of the "Dairyman's Daughter" for translation; the reading of which so interested the empress that she unconsciously left her throne

of state, and seated herself as a listener beside the English teacher. At this time great anticipations were indulged that the emperor's expressions of kindness toward the operations of the Bible Society would prove favourable to the extensive circulation of the Scriptures in that vast empire, and also to the revival of religion in the Greek church. Unhappily, the imperial sanction, for a short time given, was subsequently withdrawn, and the reformation in the Greek church in Russia deferred to a more remote period.

S. But Christians will not cease to labour for the spread of the Bible among the ignorant and superstitious.

Mrs. N. The state of Ireland also claimed a share of Christian sympathy. Its spiritual destitution, and the declared hostility of its priesthood to the light of truth, perpetuated the reign of spiritual despotism, and called loudly for Protestant aid to rescue its enslaved population from Popish delusion. Often have Catholic priests stood in the roads leading to Methodist chapels with horsewhips in their hands, to drive away such members of their congregations as might stray in that direction; and, to meet the spiritual necessities of a people thus tyrannically oppressed, often have Methodist ministers preached on horseback in the fairs, and in the markets. The venerable Gideon Ouseley spent a long life in this benevolent and holy service. The extensive circulation of the Scriptures also excited determined resistance in the Papal Church; and, in several

instances, the priests attended the meetings of Bible societies for the purpose of creating disturbance. In a few cases they were unhappily successful, the Protestant speakers being compelled to flee for their lives. Challenges to public discussions were the consequence of these proceedings; and immense crowds assembled to hear the tenets and claims of their respective churches canvassed by rival disputants. The results of these conferences were most satisfactory; many a votary of Rome being convinced of his error, and joining the Protestant communities. The Popish bishops, fearing the light of investigation, laid their priests under an interdict with regard to public disputations.

G. Mamma, if the clergymen in Ireland had taken Mr. Wesley's advice, that would have been the best way of conquering those Popish bishops and priests.

Mrs. N. What was called the "Popish controversy" was somewhat warmly agitated at this period in England. The Roman Catholics were loud and clamorous in their demands for political power; and several Protestants, both in the Church and among the sects, contended that their claims ought to be conceded; while others were apprehensive that this measure would be ultimately fatal to British liberty and independence. After much conflict of opinion upon the subject, the "Catholic Emancipation Bill" was passed, allowing Catholics equal liberty in the affairs of the government with Protestants: a measure, it is to be feared, fraught with future evils.

S. What more can you tell us about the Methodists?

Mrs. N. The last particular of church history which claims our attention is within the recollection of all,—the celebration of the centenary of Wesleyan Methodism.

G. Yes, when we all gave a sovereign, and you and papa a great deal more.

Mrs. N. The Lutheran church in Germany, and the reformed church in Switzerland, have observed a religious celebration of each returning centenary, or hundred years, since the Reformation. Urged by such precedents, as well as influenced by motives of piety, the Wesleyan conference proposed that the Methodist societies should commemorate, at the close of the hundredth year, the revival of religion in the formation of the Methodist societies; and that, for the further extension of the work of God, a voluntary pecuniary offering should accompany the expressions of thanksgiving for benefits conferred. The response given by a willing people excited the astonishment of the whole Christian church; no less a sum than upward of two hundred thousand pounds being placed at the disposal of the committee for benevolent purposes; while the various meetings which were held contributed, in no ordinary degree, to fan the flame of holy love, and to unite in brotherly affection the members of this large connection.

G. Mamma, I think the Methodists just stand half-way between the Church and dissenters.*

* In this country, where there is no religious Establishment, no denominations are properly called dissenters.—Am. Ed.

Mrs. N. One fundamental principle of Wesleyan Methodism is its catholic spirit. The general improvement in the established Church is a pleasing feature in the signs of the times: within her pale is recognised a great increase of spiritual religion, and of active, laborious zeal: the efforts to provide evangelical instruction in neglected districts, in extending the benefits of education, and in the distribution of the Holy Scriptures, promise much for the future welfare of Britain.

S. But, aunt, you know there is America.

Mrs. N. Free, enlightened, liberal America, has closely followed the movements of the British churches: her vast wilds have been the scene of missionary toil; and a Newell and a Judson have crossed the briny ocean, and found a grave in heathen climes: but the world looks to Britain for the gospel.

S. But, aunt, do you really think the whole world will be converted?

Mrs. N. As a Christian I am bound to believe the prophecies and the promises of Scripture, which declare that "the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and, as a consistent Christian, I am bound to add exertion to the prayer, "Thy kingdom come!"

S. But does it not seem almost impossible that Jews, and Catholics, and Mohammedans, and heathens, should all become Christians?

Mrs. N. No difficulty presents itself in the accomplishment of this, which has not already been over-

come. A living church was raised, at the reformation from Popery, by means of the Bible; and we may reasonably anticipate that the same effect will follow the dissemination of the word of God in the Roman and Greek Churches. We have not now to speculate upon the probability of missionary operations being effectual to civilize the savage, to abolish heathenism, and to plant the Christian faith in the most untutored breast. The tomahawk of the Indian has been exchanged for prayer to the "Great Spirit;" Greenlanders, amid perpetual snows, have experienced the kindlings of divine love; and New-Zealanders have forsaken cannibalism, and have received the truth as it is in Jesus. South-Sea idols have been sent as trophies of the cross of Christ; British slavery has been abolished; the caste of India has been broken; the yellow robe of the Brahmin has been laid aside; barbarous dialects have been acquired; and the Scriptures have been translated into nearly all the languages of this babbling earth. Heber, Jowett, Martyn, Morrison, Ellis, Williams, Kay, and Shaw, have, in their "Researches," brought samples of the goodly fruit grown in torrid climes, on sterile soil, and amid noxious weeds; but it has been as the cluster of grapes from Eshcol, the earnest of future blessedness. And it is worthy of being recorded that the remnant of the persecuted Waldenses have been gathered into the fold of a missionary church, and now form a part of the Wesleyan Methodist society.

S. Well, I am so glad to hear of the poor Wal-

denses again: I thought Popery must have destroyed them all.

Mrs. N. Popery is now making greater efforts to revive its former influence and power than at any period since the Reformation. Missionary stations have excited the envy of the Jesuits; many of whom, in the ends of the earth, are attempting to supplant the true faith by Romish errors. In Britain the number of Romanists directing the affairs of the nation, opens avenues for extended sway; and Popish chapels, erected by foreign aid, are rising in almost every part of the land.*

S. O aunt! you need not tell us any more about Popery; we have had enough of that to give us a perfect dislike to it for ever. Protestantism for me!

G. And Methodism for me!

L. And Christianity for me!

Mrs. N. Let the Bible, my dear children, form the standard of your religion: then, whether you denominate yourselves Protestants, Methodists, or Christians, it will be immaterial, since the true church, by whatever name called, derives its doctrines, precepts, and comforts, from the infallible word of God.

* The doctrines of Popery are revived in Oxford—and it is to be feared, find but too ready a reception with Churchmen both in England and America.—Am. Ed.

THE END.