

THOMAS CROMWELL¹

1490—1540²

THE death of Wolsey removed a powerful constraining force from Henry VIII's life. For twenty years the Cardinal had been his trusted friend. He heaped honours and emoluments upon Wolsey in England, demanded his appointment as Cardinal and importunately urged his election to the Papacy. When Henry came to the throne at the age of eighteen, Wolsey, who was twenty years older, gained as immediate ascendancy over the youthful king and maintained it, with many

¹ Cromwell is a place-name from the parish of Cromwell in Nottinghamshire. It was generally pronounced Crumwell, and appears in older records as Crumwell, Crommeville, Crumbville and Croumbville. These terminations exhibit "well" as a suffix equivalent to "ville" or town. "Well" is also used in English place-names as a prefix, meaning the place where water flows, e. g. Welland, which is a tidal stream. Crom's well, then, is the town or dwelling-place of some one whose name became Crum, Crumb or Croumb. The family of Oliver Cromwell were of Welsh descent, and bore the name of Williams. Though of ancient descent, they abandoned that surname at the instigation of Henry VIII, and Sir Richard Williams, the Protector's lineal ancestor, being sister's son to Thomas Cromwell, the noted Vicar-General, adopted the uncle's family name (*Pat. Brit.*, by M. A. Lower, 1860). Oliver was born more than a hundred years later, in 1599.

² It is interesting to compare the ages of certain leading persons in the sixteenth century with others in the nineteenth:—

In the sixteenth century: Henry VII, 52; Henry VIII, 56; Wolsey, 59 (at the most); Pole, 58; Warham, 82 (who is an exception); Fox of Winchester, 62; Colet, 53.

In the nineteenth: Queen Victoria, 81; Gladstone, 89; Russell, 86; Archbishop Temple, 81; Palmerston, 81; Beaconsfield, 77; Newman, 89; Melbourne, 69.

marks of personal regard and almost affection, until the storm burst in 1529 and he was cruelly driven from the Court. In the last sad year of Wolsey's life Henry's threats to call him back again, coupled with the reports of the Cardinal's popularity in his diocese, led to the successful plot for his arrest for high treason. No man succeeded to the position of influence, and henceforth Henry grew more unreasonable. He bended the aged Warham to his will, executed More and Fisher under the Act of Supremacy, and used the pliable Gardiner, whom he nominated to the Bishopric of Winchester. Pole¹ was invited to take the vacant see of York, but the King's illustrious kinsman knew too well the price he would pay for the position and refused it.

In Thomas Cromwell, one of Wolsey's household, Henry found the man he wanted as chief administrator, and for the next ten years the Church of England was humiliated through the agency of this most despised and justly abhorred servant of the Crown. Whatever view English Churchmen may take of the policy of suppressing the monasteries, or of the necessity of repudiating Papal supremacy, they are at one in the detestation of this oppressor's character and methods.

Let me sketch his career.² He was born in London in 1490 of most humble parentage. Brought up to the profession of the law, he very early became an adventurer, and after being tossed about the world, in which he learnt arts of craftiness and habits of money-making, he entered Wolsey's service, where for six years he was employed in the legal business connected with the two Colleges. He became wool-stapler, lawyer and money-lender combined, and many of the young nobility in Henry's Court were soon deeply in debt to him. His reputation for "an itching palm" was known before Wolsey's death, but by this time his gifts and powers

¹ Pole was thirty at the death of Wolsey, and therefore had just reached the canonical age for the episcopate. As a boy of seventeen the King nominated him as Prebendary of Salisbury, and soon afterwards Dean of Wimborne Minster.

² Brewer, *Henry VIII*, vol. ii., p. 392.



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were known to the King, who employed him in several pieces of business. He became Member of Parliament, Master of the Rolls, Baron, Knight of S. George, Earl of Essex, Vicar-General, with authority superior to that of the archbishops and bishops, Lord Privy Seal, Chancellor of Cambridge University, Dean of Wells, and, though a layman, the holder of other ecclesiastical benefices,¹ and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Thus did Henry VIII delight to accumulate offices in the hands of one man.² Without mentioning now the evidence of his oppressions and dishonesty, let us take the story of his fall from power. This came with all the sudden retribution in which Henry VIII delighted. His attainder contains, amongst other charges, "(He) hath acquired and obtained into his possession by oppression, bribery, extorted power and false promises" immense sums of money and treasures. He was sent to the Tower, June 10, 1540. The following day the King sent a herald through the streets of London to proclaim that Cromwell had been stripped of every title or dignity he had, and was to be known as "Thomas Cromwell, Cloth Carder." London broke forth into transports of joy, and on July 28 "The Cloth Carder" met his fate on Tower Hill.³

The Suppression of the Monasteries.

Thomas Cromwell's was the guiding hand in carrying out the Acts of Parliament for the Suppression of the

¹ Record Office, Chapter House Books, 30 Hen. VIII. "Item, Mr. Gostwyke for the firstfruits of my Lord's divers benefices." "Item, the tenths for Deanery of Wells."

² Campbell's *Lives of the English Chancellors*. "(Cromwell's career) more resembled that of a slave at once constituted grand vizier in an Eastern despotism than of a minister of state promoted in a constitutional government where law, usage and public opinion check the capricious humours of the sovereign."

³ As some set-off against these severe, yet justly deserved, words, we record two things of value which the English Church owes to Cromwell as its Vicar-General:—

a. The institution of Parish Registers in 1538.

b. The Great Bible of 1539.

Monasteries and the leader in the visitations upon which this suppression was founded.¹ Roman Catholic writers to this day speak of the English religious houses as abodes of piety and learning which were rudely visited, grossly maligned and ruthlessly destroyed.² Protestant writers have described them as homes in which unspeakable deeds of sin were secretly committed, and whose destruction was demanded in the interests of morals. Between these two views we must adopt Horace's advice, "in medio tutissimus ibis."³ In the sixteenth century the monastic life in England was more than a thousand years old. The establishment of each new order was a sincere attempt to recover the lost ideals of the older ones. In the zenith of their power the monasteries attracted the gifts of the most faithful and pious in the land. To leave a legacy to a monastery was the surest passport to Paradise. The glamour of the "religious" captivated the imaginations of men and women who regarded the "secular" parish priest and the parish church as commonplace. The Crown and bishops assisted by appropriating the greater tithes of the parish to the religious houses, thus making them rectors, whilst the vicar or deputy of the monastery subsisted on the miserable pittance left in the smaller tithes.⁴

¹ For the instruction for visitation see Burnet, *History of the Reformation, Collection of Records*, book iii., 1, 2 and 6.

² Dr. Gasquet takes a juster view in *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, chap. i. "It would be affectation to suggest that the vast regular body in England was altogether free from grosser faults and immoralities, but it is unjust to regard them as existing to any but a very limited extent. . . . Human nature in all ages of the world is the same. The religious habit, though a safeguard, gives no absolute immunity from the taint of fallen nature."

³ See *History of the English Church*, vol. iii., by Canon Capes, chaps. xiv. ("The Monastic Life") and xv. ("Friars and Pilgrims"). Also the *Coming of the Friars*, by Canon Jessopp, D.D.

⁴ Take the great Saxon parish of Dewsbury in West Yorkshire. In 1348 the rectory of Dewsbury, with all the manorial rights, passed by Royal Grant to the newly-founded College of S. Stephen, Westminster. The rector was provided for by being made a canon of the College, and all the greater tithes paid in

And now premising that the conflict of the English Church with Rome was coming to a decision, we proceed to examine the several steps whereby the Reformation was begun. England has protested for centuries against the encroachments of popes, against their shameful greed, their trafficking in benefices and holy things, and against their subsidies on the clergy for their own continental wars. The Statutes of Provisors and Praemunire have been evaded by every artifice and rendered void by the secret compliance of English bishops, who were bound by the oaths of allegiance to the Popes. The day of reckoning had come, and it remained to be seen if England was sufficiently powerful and resolute to assert and maintain its own independence as a nation. It is impossible to separate the questions of Church and State. The Papal authority had long been prejudicial to both religion and government by depriving the King and Parliament of their rights and by extracting great treasure from the country. Had Rome withdrawn her claims to intermeddle with all State affairs, it is quite possible that the spiritual authority of the Bishop of Rome would not have been denied. But the two went together, and freedom for Church and State was possible only upon the condition that both claims were refused. This was the decision of King and Convocation and Parliament, and their joint measures extinguished for ever in England the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

Henry VIII argued with justice that he could not rule in his own realm so long as the popes claimed, under oath, the allegiance of the bishops and clergy.

Dewsbury went henceforth to Westminster. At the dissolution of the monasteries these, worth £1000 a year, went to the Crown, and since that time they have been held by grant, descent or purchase by various persons. The Archbishop of York joined in his share of the grant, which was made with the unanimous and express consent of his beloved sons of the Chapter of York, and was done to the praise of God, the growth of His worship, and the increase of the number of labourers in the Lord's field. All then were agreed that they were doing God service by robbing a parish in Yorkshire and endowing a collegiate church in Westminster.

Before we proceed to the details whereby the great emancipation was effected, it will be well to say something of the character of this notable ruler of men, who, with all his faults and vices, was a great Englishman and the author of a truly national spirit, which was carried to complete success by his illustrious daughter, Queen Elizabeth.

The Character of Henry VIII.

Henry VIII is one of the most notable figures in English History, both in his personal character and in the extent of the power he wielded in both Church and State. All his great achievements were carried out with the consent of Parliament, and the more important Church legislation with the concurrence of Convocation, and for this reason readers of history stand aghast at his success. We must remember, however, that limitations upon the power of the Crown had not been defined in the days of the Tudors, and resistance to the royal will was met with threats of treason and the prospect of Tower Hill. Under the Stuart Kings the prerogatives of the Crown were defined and finally limited after many years of bitter strife, which included the Civil War and the temporary destruction of the throne.

Henry's matrimonial troubles loom large in his own life and in history, and he was contemptuously called "the greatest widower in Europe." The troubles had their origin in Henry VII's penurious nature, which caused him to betroth a boy of twelve to the widow of Prince Arthur sooner than lose a handsome dowry. Prince Henry, when fourteen, made a formal protest that his marriage with Catherine of Arragon had been arranged without his consent, but upon his coming to the throne he entered into the marriage of his own free choice. A Papal dispensation was necessary and this was obtained, as many similar ones had been, to please kings and emperors. Archbishop Warham and some of the older councillors of the throne protested and questioned the propriety of marriage with a deceased

brother's wife, but all in vain, because the Pope was acting under pressure from England and Spain, which he was not politically powerful enough to resist. The dispensation was carefully worded to provide for every contingency, and, in addition to the one sent to England, a second, differently worded, was secretly given to Ferdinand of Spain to quiet his scruples.

Whatever misgivings haunted Henry VIII in the early years of his married life, and there is evidence that these did exist, nothing was done and little said on the subject until it became evident that Queen Catherine would not bear him a male heir to the throne, and still more until the unworthy and unlawful passion for Anne Boleyn had become the controlling power in all his actions.

The King expected the Pope to meet his wishes in declaring his first marriage null and void, nor was the expectation ill-founded, as the Popes of those days, so far from being the great moral rulers of Christendom, had shown themselves frequently the humble servants of kings, playing off one against another and threading their way as best they could through the intricacy of political and national intrigues. Queen Catherine was the great obstacle to success. She resolutely refused to do anything which would cast a doubt upon the validity of her marriage, and persisted in her statement that, though married to Prince Arthur, she became the wife of Henry VIII without any physical or canonical objection to their union. The Pope, through the Cardinals Campeggio and Wolsey, urged her to end the whole matter by retiring into a nunnery, but in her conscious innocence she presented an unsurmountable barrier to every suggestion of action which would incriminate her. At last Cranmer was induced to declare the marriage void. Five days later he pronounced the King's marriage with Anne Boleyn valid. In three years he was called upon to pronounce the divorce of Queen Anne, and after her death Henry declared both the princesses, Mary and Elizabeth, to be illegitimate. The next marriage with Lady Jane Seymour brought

Henry his long-desired male heir, with the death of the mother about the time of the birth.

If Henry VIII had not himself violated every human and divine law in his married life, his experiences might be viewed as a mingled tragedy and comedy. Anne of Cleves was quite willing to be divorced, and, being liberally endowed with estates, lived on excellent terms with the King and his successors until her death in 1558. Catherine Howard was false to her marriage vow and deserved her fate, and Catherine Parr rightly succeeded in retaining her husband's confidence and affection for the four years she was his wife. Thus ends the story of Henry VIII's matrimonial troubles. If he was unfortunate, it must never be forgotten that he cruelly treated his first and best wife. The rest is largely the consequence of his own self-will and uncontrollable passions.

With regard to the great changes in the Church brought about during his reign, Henry was the originator of most of them. In the eyes of Roman Catholic writers he is a monster of lust and blood, while Queen Mary is held free of blame for the "Smithfield Fires" because they were carried out either by her ministers or were forced upon her by the inflexible obstinacy of men accessible to no force of argument or reason. Thus is history written, and thus do we judge events by our preconceived convictions. No English Churchman will call Henry VIII a hero or a saint, but he was a great king, who led the national sentiment and finally destroyed the Roman power which had been used for centuries to oppress the English Church.

Dr. Plummer (*English Church History, 1509-1575*) gives an excellent summary of Henry VIII's character and work. "He could be fickle and heartless and revengeful. But he had a sense of duty and a determined purpose as a king, and he was a man of light and leading. His work was a true and lasting expression of the needs and aspirations of his age. Like his character, it was mixed with base elements. But however much self-will and self-interest and sensuality may have

helped to urge him on, in the rupture with Rome, in the abolition of an antiquated and perfectly corrupted monasticism, and in the endeavour to establish a purified and simplified Catholicism as the religion, he was fighting on the side of truth and light and progress."

And now, leaving the character of the chief actor, we look at the resolute series of events which effected the breach with Rome. On May 15, 1532, the clergy in Convocation submitted to the claim of Royal Supremacy. This was under the presidency of Warham and not of Cranmer, and was passed in these terms, "of the English Church and clergy of which we recognize his Majesty as the singular protector, the only supreme governor, and, so far as the law of Christ permits, even the supreme head."¹ In the same year appeals to Rome in all cases were prohibited. The Act of Parliament declares that "this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head, a king, having dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same." The spirituality and temporality are both bound to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience to the King. In cases temporal the people are to be judged by temporal judges, and in cases spiritual by judges of the spirituality who are "sufficient and meet for that end." This legislation was based upon ancient claims, and the appeals to Rome were forbidden in accordance with every claim made in the past that all causes, testamentary, matrimonial, of divorces, of tithes, oblations and obventions, ought to be finally determined within the King's jurisdiction.

In 1533 Parliament transferred the payment of the firstfruits of benefices from Rome to the Crown, and in the same year Peter's-pence was abolished, and the power of issuing dispensations was taken from the Pope and vested in the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop, however, was not to grant dispensations in any case not accustomed without licence from the King or

¹ For the meaning of "Head of the Church" see Appendix C, p. 207.

Privy Council, and after being issued they were to be confirmed under the Great Seal, enrolled in Chancery, and were to be as good in law as if they had been obtained from the see of Rome.

In 1534 the Act of Supremacy was passed,¹ and two years later a further Act was passed for extinguishing the authority of the Bishop of Rome of whatever kind. The Act of Supremacy was in force for twenty years, and when renewed under Elizabeth it did not contain the phrase "Supreme Head of the Church of England." It was under this Act that the monasteries were suppressed. Henry VIII appointed Thomas Cromwell as his Vicar-General,² and the work of destruction began. I do not propose to tell again the oft-told tale. We cannot trust either the preambles of Acts of Parliament

¹ In view of the importance of this Act, I give its words—

"Albeit the King's majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognized by the clergy of this realm in their convocations, yet nevertheless for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirp all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same: be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament, that the King our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England, called Anglicana ecclesia; and shall have and enjoy, annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm, as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits and commodities to the said dignity of supreme head of the same Church belonging and appertaining; and that our said sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity and tranquillity of this realm; any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription, or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding.

² For the royal injunctions of Henry VIII see *Visitations, Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, vol. ii., pp. 1 and 311, by Dr. Frere.

or the Reports of Commissioners.¹ The lesser monasteries were suppressed in 1536 "for as much as manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living is daily used and committed among the little and small abbeys, priories and other religious houses of monks, canons and nuns." The object of the Act is stated to be to suppress vice and to fill the greater monasteries, "wherein (thanks be to God) religion is right well kept and observed." Three years later the greater monasteries were legally dissolved because "divers and sundry abbots, priors, abbesses, prioresses, etc., of their own free and voluntary minds, good wills and assents, without constraint, coercion or compulsion of any manner of person or persons," had surrendered their respective religious houses and possessions into the King's hands.²

Such is history written in Acts of Parliament! Most did surrender their houses after interviews with Thomas Cromwell and his fellow-commissioners, and they were rewarded with pensions or benefices, but it is libel upon

¹ For the instructions for the general visitation of the monasteries see Burnet, *Collection of Records*, book iii., no. 1.

² A confession generally accompanied the surrender, of which the following is a specimen—

"For as much as we Richard Green, Abbot of our Monastery of our Blessed Lady S. Mary of Betlesden and the Convent of the said Monastery do profoundly consider that the whole manner and trade of living which we and our pretended religion have practised and used many days does most principally consist in certain dumb ceremonies and other certain constitutions of the Bishop of Rome and other Forinsecal Potentates as the Abbot of Cistens and therein only noseled and not taught in the true knowledge of God's laws, procuring always exemptions of the Bishop of Rome from our Ordinaries and Diocesans; submitting ourselves principally to Forinsecal Potentates and Powers which never came here to reform such disorders of living and abuses as now have been found to have reigned amongst us. And therefore now assuredly knowing that the most perfect way of living is most principally and sufficiently declared unto us by our Master Christ, His Evangelists and Apostles, and that it is most expedient for us to be governed and ordered by our Supream Head under God, the King's most noble grace, with our mutual assent and consent Submit ourselves and every one of us to the most benign mercy of the King's Majesty and by these presents do surrender," etc. (Burnet's *Collection of Records*, book iii., no. 3, section 4.)

a great system to represent its destruction as due to free and voluntary acts without compulsion of any manner of person or persons.¹

The monasteries of England in any case ceased to exist, their art treasures were stolen or dissipated, their splendid churches were stripped of their lead roofs, every article of value was removed and the walls were left to the decay of time. The great endowments of land were forfeited to the Crown, and institutions venerable with a history of centuries disappeared from the religious life of England. At the distance of three and a half centuries of time we may dispassionately try to answer the question, Was there a sufficient reason for all this? There was no good reason for the wanton destruction of historical treasures and the pulling down of houses and churches nobly planned. Had Wolsey lived and remained in power the monasteries would have met a different fate. Possibly no one could have saved them for the same purposes of the religious life, but what splendid use might have been made of them for the causes of charity and education.

This leads me to speak of their position in the educational system of England. To rightly estimate this we must first understand the position of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and realise the important part they played in mediaeval English life. They were largely independent of the monastic system. In many cases the Colleges were founded of the spoils of suppressed priories, and their whole influence was concen-

¹ In 1539 the so-called voluntary surrenders were proceeding apace when the three great Abbots, those of Glastonbury, Reading and Colchester, refused to surrender, and were indited "ob negatam Henrici pontificam potestatem." The proceedings were a mockery of justice, and Cromwell, in notes written with his own hand, records in his instructions, "item, the Abbot of Glaston to be tried at Glaston and also executed there." They had doubtless offended against the laws of their country in refusing the oath, but the circumstances of their trial are sad and humiliating reading, and they were just as much martyrs to their faith as were Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer to theirs some sixteen years later.

trated upon an education more liberal than that given in the monasteries. They were also less under the influence of Rome than the monasteries, which were the outposts and strongholds of the Papal power in passive resistance to the bishops and to every one save the heads of their own orders.

The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The two great English Universities have a history reaching back into a remote past, and a great effort of the imagination is required to understand their origin. They did not spring into existence at any given time, nor were they founded by any one charter of incorporation. A "university" is merely a society or guild of men bound together in some common object. The townsmen generally of Oxford are described in formal documents of the Middle Ages as a university. The term was finally applied to those who were banded together for study. A degree was the certificate of a diploma which declared that the possessor was capable of exercising the office of a teacher. The University of Paris provided the principles upon which both Oxford and Cambridge were finally modelled. Long after the Universities were fully founded, with every officer, from the Chancellor downwards, there were no residential colleges. The student's life in the early Middle Ages was a hard and unenviable one. A boy in age, he was left, with little discipline, to spend his time in mean lodgings, and, apart from attendance at lectures, he was largely master of himself. The greatest educational reform came with the establishment of colleges in which the student lived subject to rule. Then the various expedients of hired rooms, halls, hostels and inns began to disappear, until the revival in the nineteenth century of the admission to university privileges of "unattached students." The students were generally poor boys whose education fees at the Universities were provided by kings, bishops and nobles, and this was regarded as a duty which men in high office owed to those born on their estates. Merton

(1247) and Balliol were the earliest residential colleges at Oxford,¹ and Peterhouse the first at Cambridge (1284). The Statutes of Merton exhibit an incorporated body of secular students who are not bound by the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity or obedience. They contain the restriction that *nemo religiosus*, i. e. no person belonging to any of the monastic orders shall be admitted on the foundation. To speak of the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge as monastic institutions is to display a profound ignorance of the history of education in England. With few exceptions, the colleges were founded to supplant the monasteries. Their design was to train a better educated priesthood for the charge of parishes, whilst all the education given in the monasteries was directed to the object of fitting a man mentally and spiritually to accept the life of a monk.

The Statutes of Peterhouse largely follow those of Merton, and the foundation was to be non-monastic. If any student entered a monastery he was allowed a year of grace, after which his scholarship was vacated, because the revenues of the College were designed for those who were actual students and desirous of making progress. Other colleges followed in rapid succession during the next two and a half centuries to the time of the Reformation. Before about 1300, men left their wealth to found monasteries, and afterwards their gifts were directed to the universities. The whole movement represented a rebellion against the power of the monasteries, but no hostility to the Church. Meantime the monastic schools declined in influence, and the monasteries grew only in pride and arrogance. The courses of study were wider and more liberal than in the monasteries, and whilst in some colleges the Statutes permit the study of canon law, in others it is expressly prohibited. The study of civil law, medicine, logic, arts and theology were all encouraged, and the colleges were in many cases linked with grammar schools in the country, and their privileges

¹ The claim of University College to a much older date of foundation has been disproved. See *History of the University of Oxford*, by Maxwell Lyte, pp. 243-248.

were confined to specified counties or districts or to the founder's kin.

English Grammar Schools.

The whole history of English grammar schools has now to be re-written in the light of the information recently published respecting them. The generally received idea has been that the monasteries were almost the only houses of education, and that by their dissolution an irretrievable wrong was done to the youth of England.

Mr. Leach¹ has rudely destroyed the credibility of this oft-repeated story and shown that all the facts are opposed to it. With regard to schools connected with monasteries, he says, "As ordinaries in their 'peculiars,' as rich landlords and as trustees for other people, it is certain they may have controlled or even founded and maintained some Grammar Schools. The common belief and oft-repeated assertion that all the education in the Middle Ages was done by monks is quite wrong. Whether the monks ever affected even to keep a Grammar School for any but their own novices, among whom outsiders were not admitted, is doubtful. Is there a single instance on record in the days of records of a monk teaching an ordinary Grammar School? There are divers cases recorded where a secular schoolmaster was employed to teach the novices. Certain it is that at the period with which we are concerned monks had little to do with general education and less with learning."

The country was studded with free grammar schools. Who, then, did found them and carry on their teaching? First there were the cathedral schools, which trace their descent in the cathedrals of the old foundation from times anterior to the Norman Conquest. Next comes a large class of schools connected with the collegiate

¹ *English Schools at the Reformation, 1546-1548*, by Arthur F. Leach, M.A., F.S.A.

churches such as Beverley, Ripon, Shrewsbury, etc. College schools were founded by the orders of friars. "These men," says Mr. Leach,¹ "took the universities by storm, they gave an enormous impetus to learning, they stayed the tide of monkery, and at the same time woke up the secular clergy, who by this time were enforced celibates like the monks, to the need of combination in corporations if they were to hold their own in the duties and emoluments of Church and State. Hence a new era of collegiate churches and a marvellous new crop of colleges arose." There were also the song schools connected with cathedrals and collegiate churches, which were not merely singing schools, and which perished almost wholly under Edward VI. Here boys were taught music and organ-playing, so that before the reign of Edward VI England was the land of song and the English were described by Erasmus as the musical people.

The education of the people of England was, therefore, not in the hands of the monasteries, and so far from the Reformers founding education, they did no more than restore a miserable remnant of the property they took from the chantries and churches.²

Dr. Jessopp³ has given a fascinating picture of parish life in the Middle Ages before what he calls the Great Pillage, which was not the dissolution of the monasteries, but the robbery of the parish churches under Edward VI, when they were despoiled of their local endowments and of their wealth of furniture and valuables. "It is nonsense," he says, "to say that it was owing to the suppression of the monasteries that new devices were resorted to to save the poor from starving. Pauperism came in, not by the suppression of the monasteries, but by the disendowment of the parishes."

There were also schools connected with hospitals, guilds and chantries. Independent schools came to be

¹ *English Schools at the Reformation*, p. 20.

² See Appendix D. Sedbergh and Giggleswick.

³ Dr. Jessopp, *Before the Great Pillage*.

founded, some in direct connection with their own universities, and others with more limited local aspirations. In some cases men in Holy Orders were not necessarily chosen as head masters, or were expressly excluded by the Statutes. Three successive head masters of York Cathedral Grammar School in the fifteenth century were laymen, and the head master of Winchester in 1535 was also one. Dean Colet, in founding S. Paul's School, London, provided that the head master was to be a layman, a wedded man or a single man, or a priest that hath no benefice with cure. At Manchester the head master was to be "a single man, priest or not priest, so that he be no religious man," *i. e.* not a monk. Archbishop Holgate of York founded three schools in Yorkshire, and provided for one of them that the head master might be married and a layman. Here we have evidence of a distinct desire to exclude the monasteries from a share in education. When the monasteries, therefore, fell, much less harm was done to education than has been supposed, though the ministry of the Church suffered for many years because students had been supported at the Universities by the monasteries out of their funds and promoted to benefices in their own gift, and, as Bishop Latimer laments, there were few in his days who would help poor scholars. "In those days (before the Dissolution) what did they when they helped the scholars? Marry! they maintained and gave them ways that were very Papist and professed the Pope's doctrine; and now that the knowledge of God's Word is brought to light, and many earnestly study and labour to set it forth, now almost no man helpeth to maintain them."

In one particular the loss of the nunnery and convent schools meant an untold harm. Such education as the girls of England had was received almost wholly in the convent schools, and until the nineteenth century no systematic scheme of higher education for women was established. To pursue the subject a moment or two longer, Mr. Leach shows that the reputation of Edward VI as the founder of schools and patron saint of industrious schoolboys can no longer be sustained. He—or rather the

Protector—and others were the despoilers of schools, and did no more than re-establish some of the older grammar schools with a small portion of the great wealth which came to them from the suppression of the chantries.

Let us pursue a little further the story of English Church schools in pre-Reformation days. The Chancellor of the Cathedral—a different person from the Chancellor of the Diocese, a high legal functionary, who was originally the custodian of the bishop's seal—was the head of the faculty of divinity whose duty it was to lecture publicly in divinity.¹ Next there was the cathedral grammar school, and when in the eight cathedrals of the new foundation the conventual chapters were replaced by new Statutes appointing a dean and chapter, this necessary adjunct was provided. These grammar schools, attached to the nine cathedrals of the old foundation, trace their descent from the very beginning of the churches themselves. The music of the cathedral was taught in the choir or song schools, so that every cathedral provided its own complete educational system.

The great collegiate churches whose names are mentioned in the Domesday Book were amongst the most important ecclesiastical institutions of the country, and were largely engaged in educational work, and the maintenance of a grammar school was their primary duty. I name some only of the best known, the Colleges of Beverley, Chester, Crediton, Ripon, Shrewsbury, Southwell, Stafford, Tamworth, Warwick and Wimborne. In these great schools a large proportion of the youth of England was educated.

The hospitals in different parts of England were established for the benefit of the poor rather than for the sick, and so a school for the use of the poor was a part of their equipment. Every one is familiar with the City Guilds and Companies. They were the equivalent of the modern trade unions and were established to protect a given industry. In addition, however, they were both

¹ See the Statutes of S. Paul's, London, and Report of Cathedral Commission, 1880.

charitable and educational in their aims, and then, as now, great schools belonged to the City Guilds. The Merchants' Guilds at York had as many as twenty-eight grammar schools.

But the largest class of humbler schools was that connected with the chantries. A chantry was an endowment for a priest to sing for the repose of the soul of some dead person, but we are not to think of the poor despised chantry priests as the poverty-stricken and greedy persons history has called them. There were chantries everywhere connected with cathedrals and parish churches, and the chantry priests, besides saying chantry masses and assisting in the other services, were engaged in charitable work for the poor and in providing free elementary education in most of the chief parishes. Latimer's Injunctions for Worcester Diocese (1537) say, "That ye and every one of you that be chantry priests do instruct and teach the children of your parish such as will come to you, at the least to read English."¹ This was no new injunction, but a reminder of the duty belonging to the office of chantry priest.

In addition to all the above provision, England had also, though of more recent foundation, independent schools connected with neither cathedral nor monastery, and founded for the sole purpose of promoting education.

It is seen, then, how unjust is the statement which attributes all education in the Middle Ages to the monasteries. The monasteries were always more or less of an exotic in English Church life, the age-long opponents of the parish priest and the plunderers of his endowments. In government they were monarchical, and in marked contrast to the full and free corporate Church life of the parishes.² They were self-centred and imperious, and the life of the parishes in both worship and education proceeded on its own way without any help from the monasteries, and generally with definite hindrance and opposition from them.

¹ For further evidence see *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, by Dr. Frere, vol. ii., pp. 17, 56, 63, 85, 129.

² See *Parish Priests and their People* (S.P.C.K.).

In closing this lecture I pass no judgment in detail upon the suppression of the monasteries except this, that it followed almost inevitably from the breach with Rome, and it fell upon institutions which had largely outlived their social and religious value. The accumulation of wealth which thus passed into lay hands had much to do with the stability of the Reformation progress, for not even Queen Mary and her Roman Catholic Parliament dared to touch these possessions or claim them again for the Church. The Act for repealing all articles and provisions made against the see of Rome was also for the establishment of all spiritual and ecclesiastical possessions and hereditaments conveyed to the laity. Convocation petitioned the Crown, stating that the clergy resigned all rights to those possessions of which the clergy had been deprived, and their readiness to acquiesce in every arrangement made by Cardinal Pole. The Cardinal in reply decreed that "the possessors of Church property should not, either now or hereafter, be molested under pretence of any canons or councils, decreeing of popes or censures of the Church, for which purpose in virtue of the authority vested in him he took from all spiritual courts and judges the cognisance of these matters, and pronounced beforehand all such processes and judgments invalid and of no effect."