

"The skipping king, who ambied up and down, With shallow jesters and rash bavin wita Soon kindl'd and soon burn'd."

was very extravagant in his mode of keeping Ohristmas, and is said, not only to have been prodigal in respect of his own dress and equipment, but to have borne the daily exense of ten thousand men feeding at his cost during the whole festival.

A plot, which was discovered only by accident, proved nearly fatal to Richard's supplanter, on his first Christmas after coming to the throne. The Earls of Huntingdon, Kent, Surrey and Rutland, who had been favorites of the late king, and who were, by consequence, in disfavor of Henry, conspired to seize the king at Windsor Castle, where he was to spend Christmas, and to murder him under pretence of jousting. Everything was arranged the time drew near, and the king knew nothing of the danger that threatened him, till accident revealed it to him a few days after Christmas Day. One of the conspirators wrote to the Earl of Rutconspirators wrote to the Earl of Rul-land, in London, to remind him of his en-gagement; the letter got into the hands of the Duke of York, Rutland's father, who in-stantly sent it, with his son, to the king. Henry, would not believe the news, till the Mayor of London, having got scent of the same thing, came in haste to Windsor, and prevailed upon Henry to go back with him to London. Scarcely had they got clear of the town ere the conspirators, ignorant of the Earl of Rutland's capture, came to the castle, which they occupied with four hundred men and expressed great chagrin at the king's escape. The heads of the leaders were soon garnishing the gates of the prin-cipal towns of England; but the spirit of conspiracy survived, for in a few months' time we read that "there was found in the king's bedclothes an yron with 3 sharpe pikes, slender and round, standing upright, laid there by some traytor, yt. when the king should have laid him doune, he might have

thrust himselfe upon them." It was at Christmas time, sixteen years later, that Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, was hung in chains over a slow fire, kindled on the spot where St. Giles's in the Fields now stands, and burned to death, as a punishment for the compound crimes of heresy and treason. During the Christmas holidays, too, in the year 1384, whether on the 21st or 28th December there is a little doubt, died John Wickliffe, the first bright light of the Reformation.

The last Christmas spent by one who was foremost in this country in bringing in the Reformation—that "stately lord that broke the bonds of Rome"-was an eminently carious one. It was Christmas of the year 1546. Ten years before, at the same season, Henry had received such a letter from his heartbroken Queen, Catherine, to "her most dear lord, king, and husband," as had impressed even him, and induced him to send her a message in reply which death intercepted ere it could reach her. He was now summoned himself. A fever, induced by inflammation proceeding from an obstituate ulcer in the thigh, had been hanging about him for some time, and in the early part of December had assumed a threatening aspect. He was bet-ter, however, on Christmas Day, and occu-ried bimeelt with thoughts as to how he pied himself with thoughts as to how he might make the throne more secure for his youthful son Edward, who was to succeed The result of his cogitation was that on the following day he had his will altered in sev-eral particulars, with the view to depriving the Howards of any influence over the regency, if a regency there must be; and as if he thought his will might not be respected when he was not present to enforce it, he cast about in his mind how he might more effectually prevent the interference he dreaded. To a mind like that of Henry VIII., especially when irritated by fever and by the anxiety he might naturally feel at the prospect of "shufil-ing off this mortal coil," in which he had done so many questionable deeds, an effectual way was not long in suggesting itself. The root and branch of the house of Norfolk must be destroyed before Henry's own death. With such thoughts the dying king occupied himself on his last Christmas Day. As soon as the holidays were over, the Earl of Surrey, who, with his father, the Dake of Norfolk had been already arrested, was put upon his trial on a trumpery charge of high treason, in which the principal evidence against him, and the evidence on which he was condemned, consisted in the proof that he had quartered the arms of Edward the Confessor (as he had an heraldic right to do) upon his own escutcheon. On the 19th January, 1547, the earl was beheaded. Against the duke, whose long life had been spent in the discharge of most faith-ful service of all kinds to the king, it was difficult to get even such slight evidence as had overthrown his son. Upon evidence which could not have stood a moment's investigation in a law court, a bill of attainder was framed, Henry being afraid lest the forms of a legal trial might delay his chance of shaughter till it was too late. The king was too'ill to give his assent to the bill, which was huried through Parliament with disgraceful haste, and the royal assent was given by a commission which it is doubtful if Henry ever signed. This was done on the 27th Jan-uary, when Henry was at his last gasp, and-so indecent was the behavior of those who would please the tyrant, and who feared the Howard—an order was forthwith sent to the lieutenant of the Tower to execute his prisoner next morning. Ere next morning came Henry was dead, and the lieutenant, doubting what he should do under these cir-cumstances, delayed, and the life of the poor bereaved duke was saved. The last Christmas spent by Henry's daughter Elizabeth was a sad contrast to the many happy ones which had preceded it. The great queen had outlived her popularity, and was fallen into melancholy from which nothing seemed able to rouse her. She had never been the same woman since the death of Essex; "she sate whole days by herself, indulging in the most gloomy reflections every rumor agitated her with new and im-aginary terrors;" she could hardly be persuaded to take any nourishment, and her temper became such as to render their daily service almost unbearable to her attendants. "I found her," says Sir John Harrington, who was allowed to see her at Christmas, 1602, "in a most piliable state. She bade the archbishop ask me if I had seen Tyrone. I replied with reverence that I had seen him with the lerd deputy (Essex). She looked up, with much choler and grief in her countenance, and said 'O, now it mindeth me that you was one who saw this man elsewhere. you was one who saw this man elsewhere,' and hereat she dropped a tear, and smote her bosom." The shade of the Earl of Essex seemed to haunt her perpetually, so much so, that towards the end of her last illness, which began at this time, she would not stay in bed, and she answered the entreaties of the lord admiral, that she would return to her couch, by saying that if he had seen what she saw there, he would never make the request. Recollections, too, of the sad writer of the

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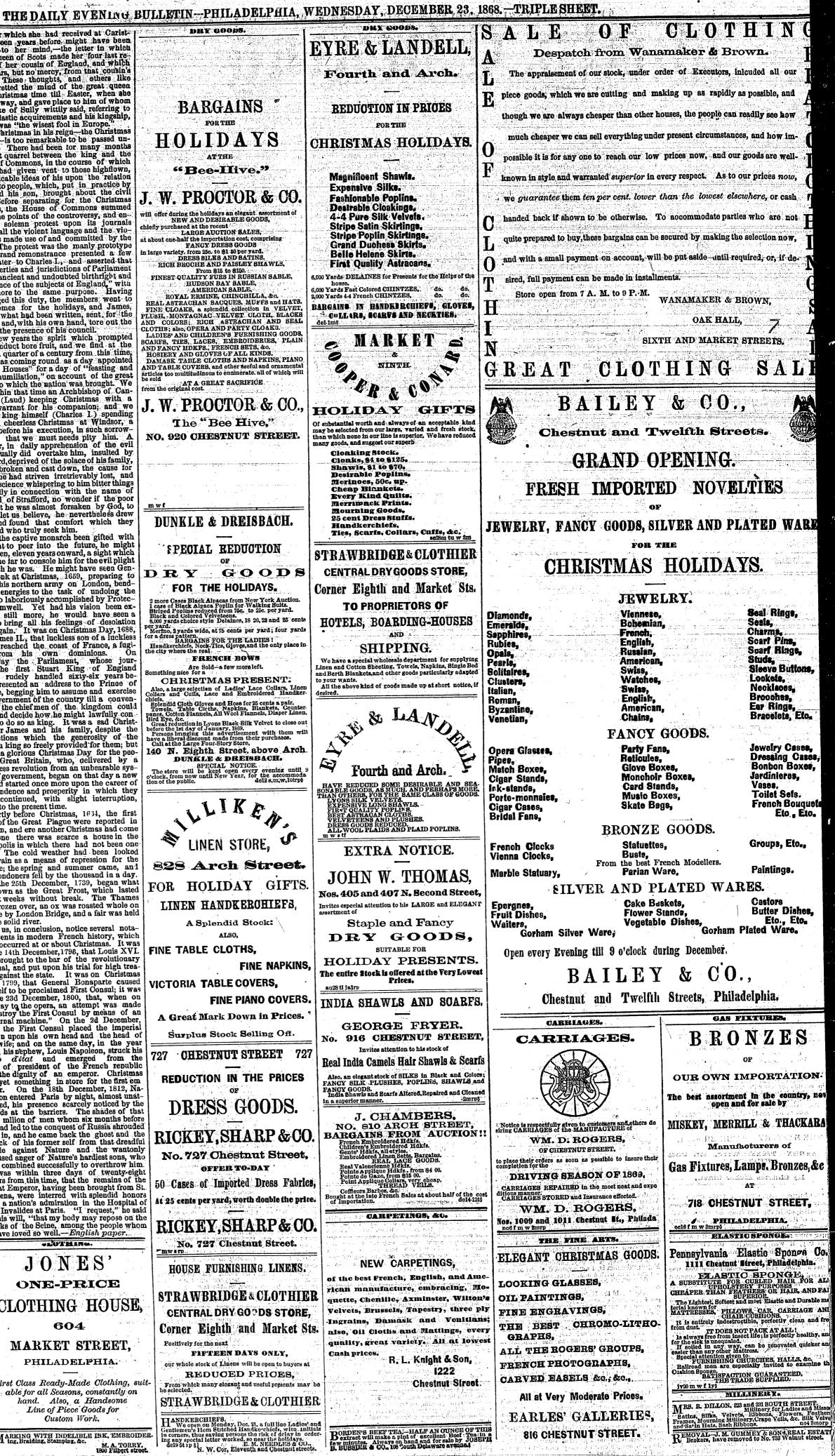
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sad letter which she had received at Caristmas sixteen years before, might have been present to her mind,-the letter in which Mary Queen of Scots made her four last requests of her cousin of England, and which drew tears, but no mercy, from that coubin's heart. These thoughts, and others like them, fretted the mind of the great queen from Christmas time till Easter, when she passed away, and gave place to him of whom the Duke of Sully wittily said, referring to his scholastic acquirements and his kingship, that he was "the wisest fool in Europe

One Christmas in his reign—the Ohristmas of 1621—is too remarkable to be passed una violent quarrel between the king and the House of Commons, in the course of which James had given vent to those highflown, impracticable ideas of his upon the relation of king to people, which, put in practice by him and his son, brought about the civil war. Before separating for the Christmas holidays, the House of Commons summed up all the points of the controversy, and entered a solemn protest upon its journals against all the violent language and the vio-lent acts made use of and committed by the The protest was the manly prototype king. The protest was the manly prototype of the Grand remonstrance presented a few years later to Charles L, and asserted that "the liberties and jurisdictions of Parliament are the ancient and undoubted birthright and inheritance of the subjects of England," with much more to the same purpose. Having discharged this duty, the members went to their homes for the holidays, and James, hearing what had been written, sent, for the

journal, and, with his own hand, tore out the page in the presence of his council. In a few years the spirit which prompted such conduct bore fruit, and we find at the end of a quarter of a century from this time, Christmas coming round as a day appointed by "the Houses" for a day of "feasting and public humiliation," on account of the great straits to which the nation was brought. We find within that time an Archbishop of. Canterbury (Laud) keeping Christmas with a death-warrant for his companion; and we find the king himself (Charles I.) spending his last cheerless Christmas at Windsor, a month before his execution, in such sorrowful wise that we must needs pity him. A prisoner, in daily apprehension of the evil that actually did overtake him, insulted by his guard, deprived of the solace of his family, utterly broken and cast down, the cause for which he had striven irretrievably lost, and his conscience whispering to him bitter things especially in connection with the name of the Earl of Strafford, no wonder if the poor man felt he was almost forsaken by God, to whom, let us believe, he nevertheless drew near, and found that comfort which they ever find who truly seek him.

Had the captive monarch been gifted with foresight to peer into the future, he might have seen, eleven years onward, a sight which had gone far to console him for the evil plight in which he was. He might have seen General Monk at Christmas, 1659, preparing to march his northern army on London, bending his energies to the task of undoing the work so laboriously accomplished by Protector Cromwell. Yet had his vision been extended still more, he would have seen a sight to bring all his feelings of desolation back again. It was on Christmas Day, 1688, that James IL, that luckless son of a luckless father, reached the coast of France, a fugi-tive from his own dominions. On day the Parliament, whose jourthat nals the first Stuart King of England had so rudely handled sixty-six\_years before, presented an address to the Prince of Orange, begging him to assume and exercise the government of the country till a convention of the chief men of the kingdom could meet and decide how he might lawfully con-tinue to do so as king. It was a sad Christ-mas for James and his family, despite the distractions which the generosity of the French king so freely provided for them; but it was a glorious Christmas Day, for the peo-ple of Great Britain, who, delivered by a bloodless revolution from an unbearable system of government, began on that day a new life and started once more upon the career of independence and prosperity in which they have continued, with slight interruption, down to the present time. Shortly before Christmas, 1634, the first cases of the Great Plague were reported in London, and ere another Christmas had come and gone there was scarce a house in the metropolis in which there had not been one dead. The cold weather had been looked to in vain as a means of repression for the disease; the spring and summer came, and the Londoners fell by the thousand in a day. On the 25th December, 1739, began what is known as the Great Frost, which lasted for six weeks without break. The Thames was frozen over, an ox was roasted whole on the ice by London Bridge, and a fair was held on the solid river. Let us, in conclusion, notice several nota ble events in modern French history, which have occurred at or about Christmas. It was on the 14th December, 1798, that Louis XVI. was brought to the bar of the revolutionary tribunal, and put upon his trial for high treason against the state. It was on Christmas Day, 1799, that General Bonaparte caused himself to be proclaimed First Consul; it was on the 23d December, 1800, that, when on his way to the opera, an attempt was made to destroy the First Consul by means of an "infernal machine." On the 2d December, 1804, the First Consul placed the imperial crown upon his own head and the head of his wife; and on the same day, in the year 1852, his nephew, Louis Napoleon, struck his coup d'état and emerged from the rank of president of the French republic into the dignity of an emperor. Christmas had yet something in store for the first em peror. On the 18th December, 1812, Napoleon entered Paris by night, almost unattended, his presence scarcely noticed by the guards at the barriers. The shades of that half million of men whom six months before he had led to the conquest of Russia shrouded him in, and he came back the ghost and the wreck of his former self from that dreadful battle against Nature and the wantonly aroused anger of Nature's hardiest sons, who had combined successfully to overthrow him. It was within three days of twenty-eight years from this time, that the remains of the great Emperor, having been brought from St. Helena, were interred with splendid honora and a nation's admiration in the Hospital o the Invalides at Paris. "I request," he said in his will, "that my body may repose on the banks of the Seine, among the people whom I have loved so well.—English paper.



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