

church, God turned upon them, and punished them terribly for their fiendish assaults upon the followers of Christ.

After these protracted onsets upon the church came the hour of her prosperity, and Constantine proclaimed Christianity to be the religion of the empire. But though Religion could flourish and spread when the powers of earth were arrayed against her, she could not endure success, and she sank into the embraces of the world, and an almost total eclipse came over her glories. For many a long century did the darkness deepen, until at last, when the punishment of apostasy and worldliness had been long and severe enough, God prepared other instruments for the revival of true religion. He chose, as a leading agent in this work, an Augustinian monk; or rather, he so ordered matters that this man, after receiving a thorough education, should choose a monastic life, and become a zealous advocate of Papacy, and a strict observer of its forms, in order that he might learn its corruptions, and how to expose its perversions. It was providential, also, that Luther should come in contact with an infamous vender of indulgences, that he might be roused to put his shoulder to the great work of the reformation. Around him there also sprang up other eminent men, admirably fitted for the various posts which must be occupied and sustained in such a long-drawn and bitter conflict. That contest is not indeed yet ended. But many a splendid triumph has been already witnessed over bigotry, intolerance, ignorance, and clerical corruption; enough to insure final and glorious success.

If we turn our attention away for a moment from affairs more strictly religious, we shall find in uninspired secular history illustrations of my subject of no doubtful character. In ancient times, and before the introduction of the gospel, it