

off the fire to save his hand, he could not be reasonably esteemed to have meant to sacrifice, kept his hand steady whilst the coals burnt quite through it, and so, with the incense, dropped upon the altar. At such an instance of fortitude the taunts and scoffs of the heathens were converted into admiration. God, soon after this victory, called his soldier to himself, to crown him with glory. This happened during the course of the persecution first raised by Dioclesian. See St. Basil, t. 2. p. 138. St. Chrysostom, t. 2. p. 681, in their panegyrics on this saint: his Greek acts in Lambecius, t. 8. p. 277. and a homily of Severus, patriarch of Antioch, extant in a Syriac manuscript, quoted by Jos. Assemani, t. 1. Bibl. Orient. p. 571.

NOVEMBER XX.

ST. EDMUND, KING AND MARTYR.

From his life written in 985, from the relation of St. Dunstan, by Abbo of Fleury. See also St. Edmund's life in verse, compiled by John Lydgate, the most learned professor, celebrated poet, and monk of St. Edmundsbury, who dedicated this book to Henry VI. (Lydgate was a very learned man, versed especially in every branch of polite literature: he wrote many other poems besides this, and several works in prose, especially of piety and prayers, on which see Tanner, Bibl. Britan. 489. He had travelled in France and Italy, and was a disciple of Chaucer, whom he far excelled in the article of versification. His verses were so very smooth, that it was said of him that his wit was framed and fashioned by the muses themselves. See Lives of (Engl.) Poets, (by several hands,) t. 1. See on his virtues Asserius, Annales Britan. (inter Script. Angl. per Gale) p. 159—161. Hearne, Pref. to Langtoft's Chronicle, p. 66. and S. Edmundi regis vitâ per Osbertum de Clare, Westmonasterii Priorem, in the Cottonian Library in the British Museum, MSS. Vespasiani, A. viii. 4. Also S. Edmundi regis vitâ, in the king's library, ib. 8. c. vi. 20. Leland Collect. vol. 1. p. 245.

A. D. 870.

THOUGH from the time of king Egbert, in 802, the kings of the West-Saxons were monarchs of

all England, yet several kings reigned in certain parts after that time, in some measure subordinate to them. One Offa was king of the East-Angles, who, being desirous to end his days in penance and devotion at Rome, resigned his crown to St. Edmund, at that time only fifteen years of age, but a most virtuous prince, and descended from the old English-Saxon kings of this isle.¹ The saint was placed on the throne of his ancestors, as Lydgate, Abbo, and others express themselves and was crowned by Hunbert, bishop of Elman, on Christmas-day in 855, at Burum, a royal villa on the Stour, now called Bures or Buers.² Though very young, he was by his piety, goodness, humility, and all other virtues, the model of good princes. He was a declared enemy of flatterers and informers, and would see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears, to avoid being surprised into a wrong judgment, or imposed upon by the passions or ill designs of others. The peace and happiness of his people were his whole concern, which he endeavoured to establish by an impartial administration of justice and religious regulations in his dominions. He was the father of his subjects, particularly of the poor, the protector of widows and orphans, and the support of the weak. Religion and piety were the most distinguishing part of his character. Monks and devout persons used to know the psalter without book, that they might recite the psalms at work, in travelling, and on every other occasion. To get it by heart St. Edmund lived

¹ Blomfield, in his Norfolk, pretends that St. Edmund was son to one Alemund, king of Old Saxony in Germany, and that he was adopted by his cousin Offa, in his way to Rome. But Lydgate and our best historians assure us, that he derived his pedigree from the old English-Saxon kings of the East-Angles; and tells us that he was an Englishman born. Nor does David Chytræus, in his Saxonia, name any Alemund who ever reigned there; or place St. Edmund in the list of kings which Old Saxony gave to England. See also Leland, Collect. vol. 1. p. 245.

Hearne rather thinks Bures to be Sudbury.

in retirement a whole year in his royal tower at Hunstanton, (which he had built for a country solitude,) which place is now a village in Norfolk. The book which the saint used for that purpose was religiously kept at St. Edmundsbury till the dissolution of abbeys.¹

The holy king had reigned fifteen years when the Danes infested his dominions. The Danish Chronicle relates,² that Regner Lodbrog, king of Denmark, was taken prisoner, and put to death in Ireland, which he had invaded. Harald Klag, who had fled from his tyranny to Lewis Debonnair in Germany, and received the Christian faith, succeeded him, but relapsed into idolatry. After him Siward III. and Eric I. and II. reigned; the latter, toward the end of his life, was converted to the faith by St. Anscharius. In his time the sons of Regner Lodbrog, after having subdued Norway, laid England waste. Their names were Eric, Orebic, Godfrey, Hinguar, Hubba, Ulfo, and Biorno, who, with mighty armies which they collected in the northern kingdoms, all commenced adventurers and pirates. Hinguar and Hubba, two of these brothers, the most barbarous of all the Danish plunderers, landing in England, wintered among the East-Angles; then, having made a truce with that nation, they in summer sailed to the north, and, landing at the mouth of the Tweed, plundered with fire and sword Northumberland, and afterward Mercia, directing their march through Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, and Cambridgeshire. Out of a lust of rage and cruelty, and the most implacable aversion to the Christian name, they every where destroyed the churches and monasteries; and, as it were, in barbarous sport, massacred all priests and religious persons whom they met with. In the great monastery of Coldingham, beyond

¹ Blomfield's Norfolk; and Camden ib. vol. 1. p. 470.

² Published by Lindenbruch, with Adam Bremensis, p. 26.

Berwick, the nuns fearing not death, but insults which might be offered to their chastity, at the instigation of St. Ebba, the holy abbess, cut off their noses and upper lips, that, appearing to the barbarians frightful spectacles of horror, they might preserve their virtue from danger: the infidels accordingly were disconcerted at such a sight, and spared their virtue, but put them all to the sword. In their march, amongst other monasteries, those of Bardney, Croyland, Peterborough, Ely, and Huntingdon were levelled with the ground, and the religious inhabitants murdered. In the cathedral of Peterborough is shown a monument (removed thither from a place without the building) called Monks-Stone, on which are the effigies of an abbot and several monks. It stood over the pit in which fourscore monks of this house were interred, whom Hinguar and Hubba massacred in 870. The barbarians, reeking with blood, poured down upon St. Edmund's dominions, burning Thetford, the first town they met with, and laying waste all before them. The people, relying upon the faith of treaties, thought themselves secure, and were unprepared. However, the good king raised what forces he could, met the infidels, or at least a part of their army, near Thetford, and discomfited them. But seeing them soon after reinforced with fresh numbers, against which his small body was not able to make any stand, and being unwilling to sacrifice the lives of his soldiers in vain, and grieving for the eternal loss of the souls of his enemies, who would be slain in a fruitless engagement, he disbanded his troops, and retired himself toward his castle of Framlingham in Suffolk.¹ The barbarian had sent him proposals

¹ Framlingham castle since the Conquest has been in the hands sometimes of the dukes of Norfolk, and sometimes of the crown, till, in 1654, it was bequeathed by Sir N. Hilcham, who had purchased it of the Norfolk family, to

which were inconsistent both with religion and with the justice which he owed to his people. These the saint rejected, being resolved rather to die a victim of his faith and duty to God, than to do any thing against his conscience and religion. In his flight he was overtaken and surrounded by infidels at Oxon, upon the Waveney: he concealed himself for some short time, but, being discovered, was bound with heavy chains, and conducted to the general's tent. Terms were again offered him equally prejudicial to religion and to his people, which the holy king refused to confirm, declaring that religion was dearer to him than his life, which he would never purchase by offending God. Hinguar, exasperated at this answer, in his barbarous rage caused him to be cruelly beaten with cudgels; then to be tied to a tree, and torn a long time together with whips. All this he bore with invincible meekness and

Pembroke-hall, in Cambridge, to which this castle and manor now belong. The fine outward old walls are now standing, but, by the consent of the college, a new work-house is erected within them. The chief palace of the kings of the East-Angles was Kanninghall, Kyning or Cing being our old name for king: at which time Thetford, on account of its neighbourhood, within twelve miles, might be esteemed the capital city; it is now filled with ruins of religious houses above all other towns in the kingdom, in part monuments of the piety of those kings. The manor of Keninghall passed from the Mowbrays to the Howards, dukes of Norfolk. Duke Thomas, in the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII. built there a stately seat, known by the name of the duke's palace, about a furlong distant from the ruins of the royal palace, where coins and other antiquities have been sometimes dug up. Upon that duke's attainder, this manor was seized by the king. The princess Mary retired hither when she was called to the crown. Queen Elizabeth afterward lived here some time; and Queen Bess's-lane and other places still retain her name. It was recovered by the Howards, and the duke of Norfolk is still possessed of this most honourable manor, though the great house was pulled down by the family in 1650. The ruins are still visible.

patience, never ceasing to call upon the name of Jesus. The infidels were the more exasperated, and as he stood bound to the tree, they made him a mark wantonly to shoot at, till his body was covered with arrows, like a porcupine. Hinguar at length, in order to put an end to the butchery, commanded his head to be struck off. Thus the saint finished his martyrdom on the 20th of November, in 870, the fifteenth of his reign, and twenty-ninth of his age; the circumstances of which St. Dunstan learned from one who was armour-bearer to the saint, and an eye-witness. The place was then called Henglesdun, now Hoxon, or Hoxne; a priory of monks was afterward built there, which bore the name of the martyr.

The saint's head was carried by the infidels into a wood, and thrown into a brake of bushes; but miraculously found by a pillar of light, and deposited with the body at Hoxon. These sacred remains were very soon after conveyed to Bedricsworth, or Kingston, since called St. Edmundsbury, because this place was St. Edmund's own town and private patrimony; not on account of his burial, for *Bury* in the English-Saxon language signified a court or palace.¹ A church of timber was erected over the place where he was interred; which was thus built, according to the fashion of those times. Trunks of large trees were sawn lengthways in the middle, and reared up with one end fixed in the ground, with the bark or rough side outermost. These trunks being made of an equal height, and set up close to one another and the interstices filled up with mud or mortar, formed the four walls, upon which was raised a thatched roof.² Nor can we

¹ See Lambert's Topographical Dictionary of England, p. 33.

² A draught of this old church may be seen in the collection of antiquities made by Mr. Martin of Palgrave, in Suffolk, together with some large pictures, manuscript books, and other curiosities relating to the abbey of St. Edmundsbury.

be surprised at the homeliness of this structure since the same was the fabric of the royal rich abbey of Glastenbury, the work of the most munificent and powerful West-Saxon kings, till in latter ages it was built in a stately manner of stone. The precious remains of St. Edmund were honoured with many miracles. In 920, for fear of the barbarians under Turkil the Dane in the reign of king Ethelred, they were conveyed to London by Alfun, bishop of that city, and the monk Egelwin, or Ailwin, the keeper of this sacred treasure, who never abandoned it. After remaining three years in the church of St. Gregory in London, it was translated again with honour to St. Edmundsbury, in 923.¹ The great church of timber-work stood till king Knute, or Canutus, to make reparation for the injuries his father Swein, or Sweno, had done to this place, and to the relics of the martyr, built and founded there, in 1020, a new most magnificent church and abbey in honour of this holy martyr.² The

¹ See Asser. Annal. Britan. ab an. 596, ad 914, cum Continuat. inter Histor. Angl. par Gal. 159, 160, 161, &c.

² Leland, who saw this abbey in its splendour, though then expiring, writes of it as follows: "The sun hath not seen either a city more finely seated or a godlier abbey, whether a man consider the revenues and endowments, or the largeness and the incomparable magnificence thereof. A man who saw the abbey would say verily it were a city; so many gates there are in it, and some of brass; so many towers, and a most stately church, upon which attend three other churches, also standing gloriously in the same church-yard, all of passing fine and curious workmanship." Thus the antiquarian who by order of Henry VIII. made the tour of the abbeyes and churches of England to collect antiquities, which commission, by losing his senses, he never was able to finish, nor to reduce the researches he had made into order. He went all the lengths of the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. and died in 1552. Of St. Edmundsbury abbey nothing now remains but amazing ruins, and two churches in one church-yard: that called St. James's was finished, and reduced into its present form by Edward VI.

unparalleled piety, humility, meekness, and other virtues of St. Edmund are admirably set forth by our historians.¹ This incomparable prince and holy martyr was considered by succeeding English kings as their special patron, and as an accomplished model of all royal virtues. Henry VI. who, with a weak understanding in secular matters, joined an uncommon goodness of heart, made the practice of religion the study of his whole life, and shared largely in afflictions, the portion of the elect, had a singular devotion to this saint, and enjoyed no where so much comfort, peace, and joy as in the retreats which he made in the monastery of St. Edmundsbury. The feast of St. Edmund is reckoned among the holydays of precept in this kingdom by the national council of Oxford in 1222; but is omitted in the constitutions of archbishop Simon Islep, who retrenched certain holydays in 1362.²

No Christian can be surprised that innocence

the other is the old church called St. Mary's, full of old monuments of illustrious persons there buried, as of Alan, earl of Brittany, and Richmond, nephew to the Conqueror, in 1093; of Mary, queen of France, sister to Henry VIII. &c. though few remain entire; the very brass plates and inscriptions of many having been pilfered. Henry VIII. spared Peterborough church for the sake of his queen Catharine, who was buried there. Many wish a like indulgence had been shown to St. Edmundsbury for the sake of his sister, &c. "It is pity," says Dr. Brown Willis, (*Hist. of Mitred Abbays*, vol. i, p. 142.) "that Henry VIII. did not leave the monastery of Bury for the sake of his sister Mary, the French queen, who, after the death of her first husband Lewis XII. married Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, and lies buried there." King Edmund, father to king Edgar, gave to this church the town and territory of Beodricesworth. Other kings, bishops, &c. gave other towns, and manors enumerated by Leland in several pages, *Collect.* vol. 1. p. 249, &c.

¹ See Harpsfield, *Sæc.* 9. c. 8. Capgrave and Alford's *Annals* ad an. 520. and 1010.

² N. 3.

should suffer. Prosperity is often the most grievous judgment that God exercises upon a wicked man, who by it is suffered, in punishment of his impiety, to blind and harden himself in his evil courses, and to plunge himself deeper in iniquity. On the other hand, God, in his merciful providence, conducts second causes, so that afflictions fall to the share of those souls whose sanctification he has particularly in view. By tribulation a man learns perfectly to die to the world and himself, a work which without its aid, even the severest self-denial, and the most perfect obedience, leave imperfect. By tribulation we learn the perfect exercise of humility, patience, meekness, resignation, and pure love of God; which are neither practised nor learned without such occasions. By a good use of tribulation a person becomes a saint in a very short time, and at a cheap rate. The opportunity and grace of suffering well is a mercy in favour of chosen souls; and a mercy to which every saint from Abel to the last of the elect is indebted for his crown. We meet with sufferings from ourselves, from disappointments, from friends and from enemies. We are on every side beset with crosses. But we bear them with impatience and complaints. Thus we cherish our passions, and multiply sins by the very means which are given us to crucify and overcome them. To learn to bear crosses well is one of the most essential and most important duties of a Christian life. To make a good use of the little crosses which we continually meet with, is the means of making the greatest progress in all virtue, and of obtaining strength to stand our ground under great trials. St. Edmund's whole life was a preparation for martyrdom.