



INTERESTING
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF DISTINGUISHED MEN.

Childhood is the morn of life,
And we should shun all foolish strife ;
Be ever courteous, and greet
With smiling faces those we meet,
And ever strive to gain the love
Of man below and God above,
That when our day of life shall cease,
We may resign this world in peace.



HARTFORD:
PUBLISHED BY L. STEBBINS.
1839.



INTERESTING
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF
DISTINGUISHED MEN.

FOR THE
INSTRUCTION AND AMUSEMENT
OF
CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

PART SECOND.

“The proper study of mankind is man.”—*Pope*.



“Knowledge is power.”—*Bacon*.

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GEORGE WASHINGTON was born in Virginia, Feb. 22d, 1732, and died Dec. 14th, 1799. At the age of nineteen he was appointed one of the adjutant generals of Virginia. During the war of the Revolution, he was commander-in-chief of the American forces, and refused all compensation for his services. He was eight years president of the United States, and was afterwards appointed to the chief command of the United States' armies. He was a good speaker, an excellent writer, a wise statesman, and an able general. He was dignified, benevolent, and magnanimous. His name stands engraven upon the hearts of his countrymen; and he will ever be beloved for his wisdom, patriotism, and the unsullied purity of his life.

JOHN ADAMS, the second president of the United States, was born 1735, and died July 4th, 1826. He was one of the first and most decided opposers of the tyranny of Great Britain. He was a member of the Continental Congress, and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He rendered important service to his country, by procuring loans and making treaties. He was the first ambassador from the United States to Great Britain, and the first vice-president of the United States.

THOMAS JEFFERSON was the successor of Mr. Adams, as president of the United States. He was born in 1743, and died July 4th, 1826, on the same day with Mr. Adams. He was distinguished as a sound legislator and statesman; unyielding in his determination, and a sound patriot. He is celebrated as the author of the "Declaration of Independence." In private life he was said to be benevolent, humane, and affable. He was a member of several literary societies in Europe and America. He published "Notes on Virginia," which were translated into the French language, and published in 1784.







JAMES MADISON, the fourth president of the United States, was born 1751, and died 1836. His career commenced at the close of the revolutionary war, and he participated in the discussions relative to the constitution of the United States. He ranked high among the luminaries of the day. In affairs of state, his reserve was habitual. He seldom yielded to expediency; and his honesty as a statesman, it is believed, was never doubted. During his administration, the president's house was burnt by the British.

JAMES MONROE, the fifth president of the United States, was born in 1759, and died July 4th, 1830. He took a part in the revolutionary war, and his undaunted courage was evinced on more than one occasion. He was devoted to Washington, an admirer and imitator of Jefferson, and a friend and companion of Madison. He was a successful lawyer; and was, successively, secretary of state and of war. His constancy, vigor, and firmness were conspicuous. While he was president, it will be difficult to find a real blemish in his administration.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN was born at Boston in 1706, and died in 1790. He was a self-made man, and self-taught. From a state of poverty and obscurity, he raised himself to a state of affluence and celebrity. He made many important discoveries in science, particularly in electricity; and no philosopher of the age stood on a prouder eminence. He filled several important public stations, and ever enjoyed the confidence of his fellow-citizens. His life is well worthy the perusal of every youth.

PATRICK HENRY was born in Virginia, in 1736. He was distinguished for his commanding eloquence, and was the first man who proposed to the colonies hostile measures against Great Britain. He was the first governor of Virginia after the declaration of independence, and a member of the old congress. He declined the appointments of secretary of state, under president Washington, and of minister to France, under his successor. He was one of the most eloquent men that America ever produced. He died in the year of our Lord 1799.







ROGER SHERMAN was born at Newtown, Mass., in 1721, and died in New Haven, Conn., in 1793. His father intended him for a shoemaker, but, in after life, he studied law. He was nineteen years an assistant, and twenty-three years a judge of the superior court. He was a delegate to the first congress, and signed the act of Independence. He was a member of the general convention, and of the United States' senate. Jefferson said of him, "He never said a foolish thing in his life." Mr. Macon said, "Roger Sherman has more common sense than any man I ever knew."

WILLIAM PENN was born in London in 1664, and died in Rushcomb, in England, in 1718. He established the colony of Pennsylvania, which took its name from him. It was granted to him in consideration of debts due his father, for services done to the crown. He afterwards purchased it of the Indians, and ever treated them with perfect fairness. He resided most of the time in England, and governed his colony by the assistance of deputies. About the commencement of the Revolution, the inhabitants of the colony paid him \$370,000 for it. The character of Penn is truly amiable, benevolent, and humane; and his labors were devoted to the good of mankind.

BENJAMIN WEST was born in Pennsylvania in 1738, and died in London in 1820. When a mere boy, he displayed great talent in painting. His first efforts were made with no other color than ink, and no pencil but a pen, and *cat's hair pencils*. He went to Rome to study the works of the great masters, and afterwards to Florence, Bologna, and Venice. He spent his life in London in the confidence of George III, and was president of the Royal Academy from 1791 till his death. He ranked higher, as an historical painter, than any of his contemporaries.

DE WITT CLINTON was born in the state of New York in 1769, and died in 1828. He was a major-general in the revolutionary war, and filled various public stations in his native state, and was a senator in congress. In the great and growing state of which he was a member, his name, his genius, and his services are stamped upon many monuments of public munificence; and the promptitude, solidity, and talent exhibited in his public career, have shown that his energy was equal to any emergency. He was educated at Columbia college.

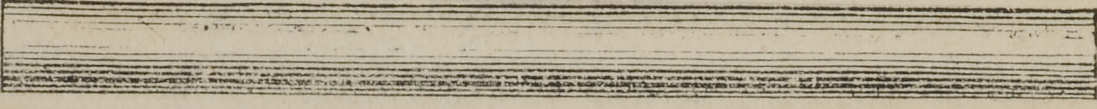



ALFRED THE GREAT, king of England, was born in 849, and died 901. This illustrious man seems almost to have lifted himself above the tyranny of circumstances, and his greatness grew out of the difficulties with which he had to contend. He lived in an age of ignorance, but possessed a genuine love of letters, and did much to elevate and enlighten England. Among kings, he is not only great, but the very greatest; and is one of the most perfect characters in history.

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE was born in 1288, and died 1305. He was a man of uncommon elegance and beauty, of great agility, and superior strength of body and mind. He roused his countrymen—the Scots—to resist the tyranny of the English. He was proclaimed regent of Scotland, put himself at the head of her armies, and bravely defended his country, obtaining many victories. He was basely betrayed, by John Monteith, into the hands of the English, by whom he was bribed. He was unjustly hung, drawn, and quartered, and his head placed on London bridge. The brave and generous William Wallace was thus cruelly betrayed and butchered, to the everlasting disgrace of England.

ROBERT BRUCE was a celebrated Scotch general, and was elected king in 1306. He was considered as the deliverer of his country, at that time in subjection to Edward I, of England, and laboring under many oppressions. In 1306 he defeated the English army, and gained the famous battle of Bannockburn. It is said there were 200,000 English, and but 30,000 Scotch. There were 50,000 slain, and 30,000 taken prisoners. He died in 1329.

WILLIAM TELL was an illustrious Swiss patriot, and one of the heroes who restored liberty to their country, in 1307. Gesler, the Austrian governor, ordered his hat to be raised on a pole, and the same homage done to it as to himself. Tell refused to do homage to the hat, and was carried before Gesler, who ordered him to shoot at an apple placed on the head of his son, or else, with his child, be dragged to immediate death. He shot the apple off his son's head, and, soon after, shot Gesler. The Swiss, roused to arms by his conduct, drove away their masters, and established their independence.

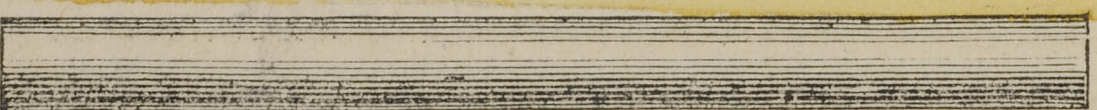





NICOLAS GABRINI DE RIENZI was a remarkable character of the 14th century. He was the son of an obscure miller, yet, by his zeal in opposing the existing vices, and by persuading his friends that he was able to restore the ancient glory of his country, he gained the supreme power, and was declared the sovereign of Rome, with the approbation of the pope. This excited the jealousy of the nobles, and he was murdered in the year of our Lord 1354.

CHAUCER has been called the father of British poetry. He was born in 1328, and died in 1400. He is one of the greatest, as well as most ancient poetical writers of Great Britain. His distinguished accomplishments, both of body and mind, gained him the friendship of many persons of distinction. He was remarkable for the degree and variety of the qualities which he possessed—excelling equally in the comic and serious. At one time he was forced to leave England, for offending the clergy. He was buried at Westminster Abbey.

HENRY VIII, king of England, was born in 1491, and died 1547. He had six wives—two perished on the scaffold, and two of the others were divorced. He obtained the title of defender of the faith from the pope, by opposing Luther. He afterwards quarrelled with the pope, who refused to divorce him from his wife, renounced his authority, and declared himself head of the church, thus introducing the reformation in England. He must be detested for his tyranny and oppression.

FRANCIS I, king of France, was born 1494, and died at Rambouillet in 1547. He succeeded Lewis XII on the French throne in 1515. He is known as the rival of Charles V, emperor of Germany, and was a rival candidate for that throne at the time Charles was elected. He was engaged in war with him, with various success, during almost the whole of his reign; and, at one time, Charles held Francis and his two sons prisoners. He is somewhat celebrated as a patron of literature and the arts.







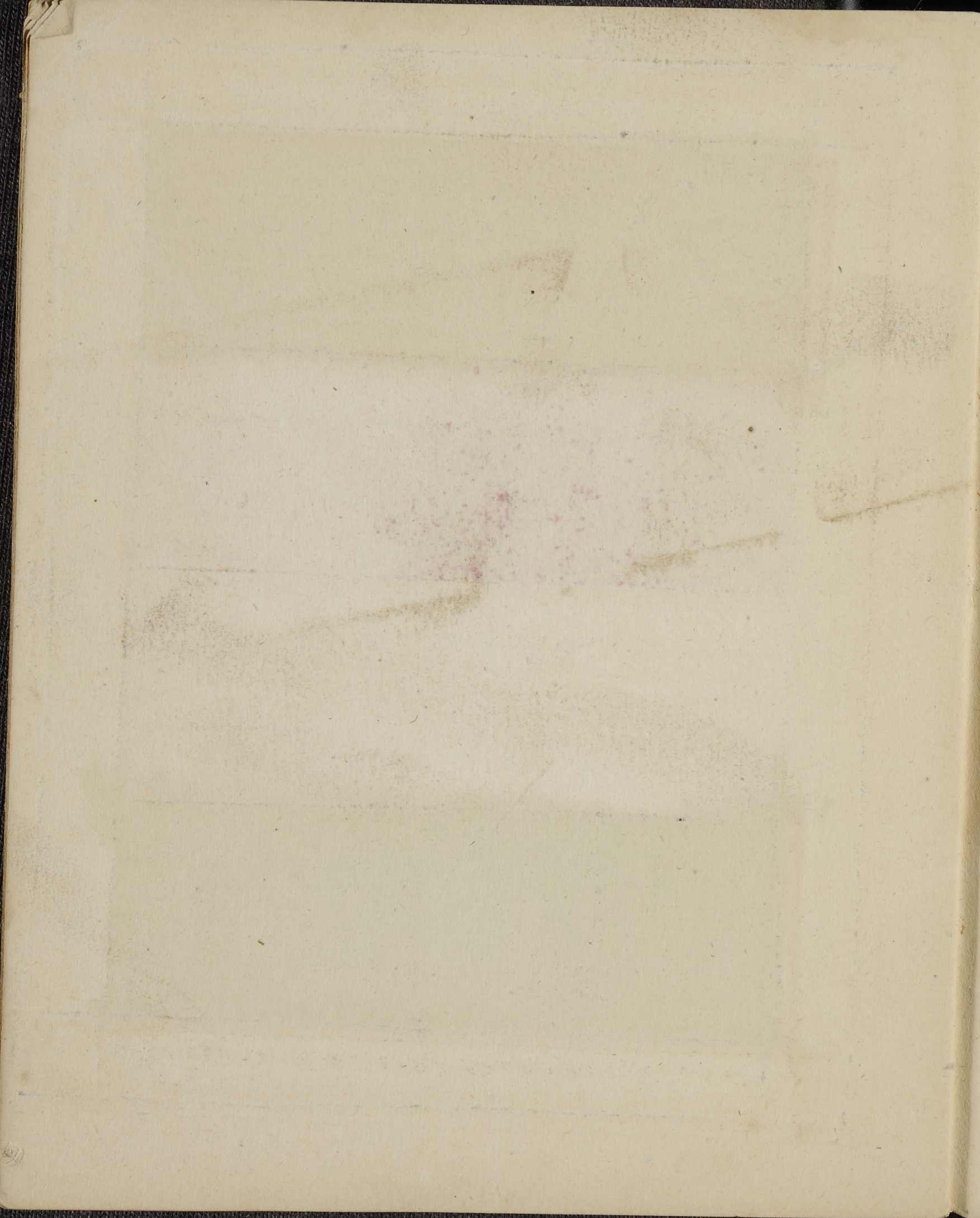
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS was born at Genoa about the year 1436, and died at Valladolid May 20th, 1506. At the age of fourteen he went to sea, and became early impressed with the idea that the earth was round, and that land might be discovered by sailing west. He applied for assistance to Portugal, England, Genoa, and finally to Spain, who furnished him with three vessels and ninety men. He sailed west and discovered America, but was doomed to end a life of toil with sad disappointments; those upon whom he had conferred so much glory repaying him with ingratitude.

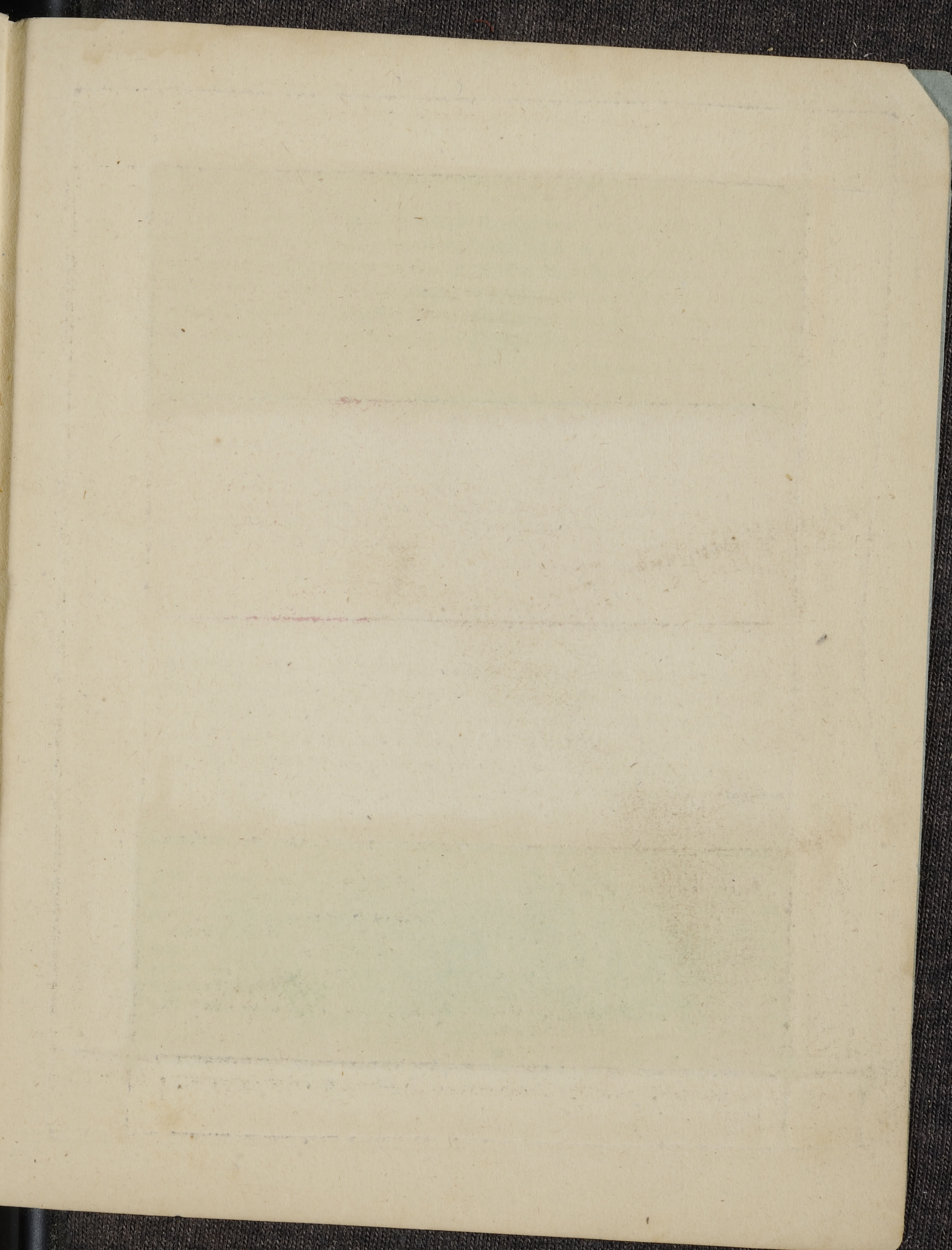
MARTIN LUTHER, an illustrious German divine, and reformer of the church, was born in 1483, and died in 1546. He engaged in the official duties of the Roman church from motives of real piety, but observing the corruption of the pontifical court, and the debauched lives of the dignitaries of the church, he became disgusted with the Roman ecclesiastical government, and openly preached against their vile practices with wonderful success, and thus begun the reformation in Germany.

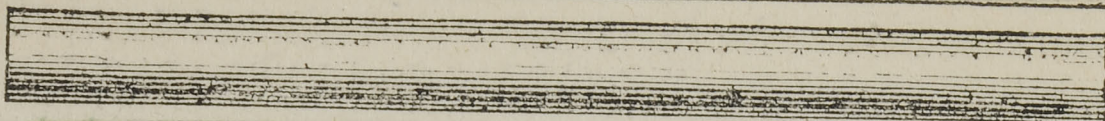

THOMAS WOLSEY was born in 1471, and died in 1530. He was the son of a poor butcher at Ipswich, but rose to be archbishop of York, chancellor of England, and cardinal of St. Cicely. He was prime minister to Henry VIII, and exercised a great influence over him. He was haughty and ambitious, and aspired to be the pope of Rome. Some of his schemes, going counter to the wishes of Henry, were discovered.

JOHN CALVIN, one of the chief reformers of the church in the 16th century, was born in 1509, and died in 1564. He was a man whom God had endowed with very eminent talents—a solid judgment, clear understanding, and a happy memory. He was a judicious, elegant, and indefatigable writer, and possessed of very extensive learning, and a great zeal for truth. His extreme rigor procured him many enemies. Indeed, it very ill became a reformer to burn heretics.










SAAVEDRA CERVANTES was born at Madrid in 1549. He was the author of Don Quixotte, the hero of La Mancha—the masterpiece of Spanish literature. This celebrated work is a strong and pleasant satire on the books of knight-errantry, which were then so fashionable in Spain. It met with universal approbation, and, though written to ridicule the follies of a particular age, it is still read and admired throughout the civilized world. It was written in a dungeon.



GALILEO, an Italian astronomer, was born in 1567. Having constructed a telescope, he made such discoveries in the science of astronomy, that it convinced him of the truth of the Copernician system. At that period, a belief of this system was considered as heretical, and as contrary to the word of God. No sooner was it known that he had embraced this system, than he was summoned before the Inquisition, and was twice confined in its dungeons, where he spent four years.

CHARLES V was born in 1500, and died in 1558. He was the eldest son of Philip of Austria, and ascended the throne of Spain in 1516. He was elected emperor of Germany in 1518. He was a prince of great note in Europe, and was engaged, a great part of his reign, in war with his rival, Francis I, of France. Three years before his death, he resigned his possessions and retired to a cloister.

FRANCIS BACON, an English philosopher and statesman, was born in 1561, and died in 1626. He was one of the greatest geniuses that any age or country has produced. He laid down those principles upon which Newton demonstrated the whole law of nature. He was chosen lord high chancellor of England, but was legally convicted of bribery and corruption, and accused of the most gross and profligate flattery. He spent the last years of his life in study and retirement. He is an example of the height to which man may rise—of the depth to which he may fall. Pope calls him “The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.”

