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## *Sir John Oldcastle*

SINCE the early days of the English Reformation Sir John Oldcastle has held a high place in the traditions of his country. Two of the chief advocates of protestantism, seeking edification in the history of their Lollard predecessors, published accounts of his sufferings; and his renown, proclaimed by Tyndale's work,<sup>1</sup> and doubtless increased by the issue of Bale's *Brefe Chronycle*,<sup>2</sup> grew higher and higher till he came to be regarded as a national hero. Early in the reign of Elizabeth, however, Foxe had to defend his eulogy of Oldcastle against the criticism of a Roman catholic historian; and a generation or so later the Lollard advocates broke a lance with the dramatists, whose traditions made Oldcastle a roystering buffoon. The sympathies of the ascendant party were on Foxe's side; his reply succeeded in silencing his opponent, and Shakespeare was driven to change the surname of a famous character from Oldcastle to Falstaff.<sup>3</sup> Oldcastle's fame has been kept alive down to modern times by fresh editions of old works and the publication of new ones. He has been associated with Wycliffe, Hus, and Latimer as one of the heroes of the Reformation,<sup>4</sup> and with Wat Tyler and John Ball as a 'popular leader' of the middle ages;<sup>5</sup> and in the hands of one writer the *Life and Times of Lord Cobham* have been made to fill two sub-

<sup>1</sup> This work, which was published in 1530, is unfortunately lost. It was a printed edition of an account of Oldcastle's trial, 'wrytten,' says Bale, 'in the Tyme of the seyde Lordes Troble, by a certen Frynde of his.' It is clear that Bale possessed no copy of Tyndale's account, and his mention of it implies that it was already very rare (*Brefe Chronycle*, ed. 1729, p. 4). This may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that the book was condemned by Archbishop Warham in 1531 (*Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, v. 769).

<sup>2</sup> *A brefe Chronycle concernynge the Examynacyon and death of the Blessed Martyr of Christ syr Johan Oldecastell the lorde Cobham, collected by Johan Bale*, 1st ed. London, 1544. A second edition appeared in 1560. It was printed by William Blackbourne, a nonjuring bishop, in 1729, and is also to be found in the *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. ii., and in the publications of the Parker Society, vol. xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> For the representation of Oldcastle on the Elizabethan stage see Halliwell's *Character of Falstaff* and Gairdner and Spedding's *Studies in English History*, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>4</sup> W. Gilpin, *Lives of the Reformers*, 1st ed. 1765.

<sup>5</sup> C. E. Maurice, *Lives of English Popular Leaders*, 1872.

stantial volumes.<sup>6</sup> Numerous other historians have dealt with Oldcastle's life ; eighteenth-century Tories sought in his career arguments against the Whigs ;<sup>7</sup> and more recently Tennyson put one of his ballads into the mouth of Oldcastle, who is made to soliloquise at length on his misfortunes.<sup>8</sup>

Thus the literature on Oldcastle is remarkable for both bulk and variety ; and were it all based on sound methods his character would by this time be clearly established. But, unfortunately, the main source for almost every account is the chronicle of Bale, whose facts are often drawn from secondhand authorities, and often, it is to be feared, from no authorities at all. It is, consequently, no wonder that recent research has added much to our knowledge of the Lollard leader, while at the same time discrediting many supposed facts. The result is seen in the most recent article on Oldcastle,<sup>9</sup> where the 'good Lord Cobham' of previous writers is scarcely recognisable, and the hero is depicted as a commonplace knight whose renown is merely due to his connexion with an unpopular sect.

Sir John Oldcastle came of a Herefordshire family of no great account, whose headquarters were at the village of Almeley, near the Wye, in the extreme west of the county. The origin of his name is obscure. It cannot have been derived from the residence of the family in Almeley Castle—a building of some defensive strength, situated on a mound close to the village church. There is no mention of such a fortification either in Domesday or the early lists of border strongholds ; so that the castle, if already built, could hardly have been considered 'old' in the days of the first Oldcastle of whom we have any record—the Lollard's great-grandfather Peter, who must have flourished early in the fourteenth century. It seems, however, that a Roman camp was at one time established on the site occupied by the medieval stronghold ; so that the name Old Castle may have been first applied to its remains, then to the family who lived on the site, then to the hamlet which grew up round their dwelling, and finally to the later fortification itself.<sup>10</sup> Since the time of Peter the Oldcastles had risen in importance. Sir John's grandfather, also called John, twice, in 1368 and 1372, represented Herefordshire in parliament.<sup>11</sup> His uncle, Thomas, was still more prominent. He was at the

<sup>6</sup> T. Gaspey, *Life and Times of Lord Cobham*, 1843.

<sup>7</sup> Matthias Earbury, *The Occasional Historian*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ballads and other Poems*, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> See Professor Tait's article 'Oldcastle' in the *Dict. of Nat. Biogr.*, which contains by far the most scholarly treatment of Oldcastle that has yet appeared.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, *Castles of Herefordshire*, 3 ff. and appendix, *Archæologia Cambrænsis*, viii. 124 : *Visitation of Herefordshire in 1569*, ed. Weaver, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> *Rot. Parl.* i. 179, 188.

parliaments of 1390 and 1393, held the office of sheriff in 1386 and again five years later, and was escheator for Gloucester, Hereford, and the adjacent march in 1389.<sup>12</sup> The Lollard's father, Richard Oldcastle, was the first of the family to be knighted.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless the family was not well off in material resources, having few, if any, possessions outside the manor of Almeley.<sup>14</sup>

The date of Sir John's birth is unknown. A late tradition<sup>15</sup> puts it at 1360 and an untrustworthy contemporary at 1378;<sup>16</sup> it was probably nearer the latter date. His name first occurs in a plea roll of 1400, where he appears as plaintiff in a suit against the prior of Wormesley concerning the advowson of Almeley Church. His grandfather had presented to the living in 1368, but since that time either he or his son Richard had granted the advowson to Wormesley Priory. When John Oldcastle's presentee resigned, about the close of the century, the grandson strove to prevent the priory from exercising its right; but we are not told how the dispute was settled.<sup>17</sup> Oldcastle is next found in Scotland, on the occasion of Henry IV's futile expedition in the autumn of 1400, as a knight in the retinue of Lord Grey of Codnor. During the operations he was sent on a mission to the king, and thenceforth was continually receiving employment in the royal service.<sup>18</sup> In the following years Oldcastle had much to do with the affairs of Wales and the southern march, which were disturbed by Glendower's rising. In May 1401 several Herefordshire gentlemen, of whom Oldcastle was one, were commissioned to raise the *posse comitatus* against certain rebels who had committed numerous misdeeds near Abergavenny.<sup>19</sup> In the autumn he was captain of

<sup>12</sup> *Rot. Parl.* i. 237, 244; *Lists of Sheriffs*, p. 60; *Foedera*, vii. 646.

<sup>13</sup> De Banco roll, Easter 1 Hen. IV, m. 199; Robinson, app.; Weaver's *Visitation*.

<sup>14</sup> De Banco roll, *loc. cit.*; *Cal. Inq. post mort.* iv. 154; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. VI, i. 547. It is not certain whether Sir John's ancestors held the lands outside the manor of Almeley mentioned in the records; the entry in the patent roll makes it possible that he was the first of the family to possess them.

<sup>15</sup> Followed by Gaspey; G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vi. 119; *Arch. Camb.* viii. 124.

<sup>16</sup> Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, 96, 166: 'Nascitur Oldcastel Jon primo schismatis anno.' From this Elmham argues that Oldcastle was the beast of Rev. xiii. 11, 18. He takes the numeral letters of the two words Jon Oldcastle: I + L + D + C + L = 701. This looks unpromising; but if Oldcastle was born in 1378 he was thirty-five in the year of his accusation, and 85 from 701 leaves 666. The date is thus of such peculiar convenience to Elmham that one is disposed to doubt its authenticity. Moreover, as Oldcastle's eldest son was born in 1394, Elmham's date is probably a year or two out.

<sup>17</sup> De Banco roll, Easter 1 Hen. IV, m. 199; Robinson, *Castles*, p. 4. After both parties had presented their pleas the case was adjourned till the following Trinity; but in the roll for that term there seems to be no mention of it.

<sup>18</sup> King's Remembrancer's Army Accounts, xlii. 38, 40.

<sup>19</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. IV, i. 518.

Builth Castle,<sup>30</sup> and was soon afterwards set over the important stronghold of Kidwelly.<sup>31</sup> In September 1403 he was on a commission empowered to pardon rebels who submitted in an extensive district of the modern Brecknockshire,<sup>32</sup> and a year later was made superintendent of the castles of Hay and Builth.<sup>33</sup> Oldcastle was also one of the commissioners appointed in October 1404 to repress trade between lukewarm loyalists and the Welsh rebels.<sup>34</sup> But Sir John did not devote all his energy to military matters. He was returned as knight of the shire for Herefordshire in the parliament which met in January 1404,<sup>35</sup> and was thus present at an important and exciting session. In 1406 he was a justice of the peace,<sup>36</sup> while two years later he followed in his uncle's footsteps and became sheriff.<sup>37</sup> January 1407 found him at Carmarthen, on business connected with the Welsh revolt.<sup>38</sup> During the following summer he accompanied the main army against Glendower, assisted in the operations against Aberystwyth, and was one of the witnesses to the agreement made on 12 Sept. between besiegers and besieged.<sup>39</sup>

The next year proved the turning point in Oldcastle's life. Sir John had been already twice a husband. His first wife, whom he married before 1394, came of a Welsh family—Katherine, daughter of Richard ap Yevan. By her he had one son, John.<sup>40</sup> Of his second wife nothing—not even her name—is known, save that she bore him another son and three daughters.<sup>41</sup> Oldcastle now married, before the middle of June 1408, Joan Cobham,<sup>42</sup> a lady who had already been thrice wedded, and had had three children, though only one, Joan, daughter of Sir Reginald Braybrooke, had survived. The death of her third husband in the autumn of 1407 was closely followed by that of her grandfather, the famous John, third Lord Cobham, who closed a long and glorious career on 10 Jan. 1408. He left no heirs male; his only daughter was long since dead; and his recently widowed granddaughter came into all his possessions.

<sup>30</sup> *Proceedings of the Privy Council*, i. 174.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 68.

<sup>32</sup> *Foedera*, viii. 331.

<sup>33</sup> *Proc. of the Privy Council*, i. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Wylie, ii. 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Rot. Parl.* i. 265.

<sup>36</sup> *Rot. Pat.* 7 Hen. IV, p. 1, m. 28 d. In the previous autumn he had been one of the commissioners appointed to deliver Hereford Gaol: *ibid.* m. 26 d.

<sup>37</sup> *Lists of Sheriffs*, p. 60. His term of office lasted from 5 Nov. 1406 to 23 Nov. 1407.

<sup>38</sup> *Rot. Pat.* 9 Hen. IV, m. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Foed.* viii. 497. In April 1406 Oldcastle's material resources were strengthened by crown grants of 40l. and 40 marks per annum, to be drawn respectively from the revenues of the duchy of Lancaster and the lordship of Monmouth: *Duc. Lanc. Records*, xi. 16, 'Concessionones et patentes de Anno septimo,' f. 23 b.

<sup>40</sup> *Rot. Claus.* 5 Hen. V, m. 14; G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vi. 119.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Rot. Claus.* 9 Hen. IV, m. 5 d., which makes her thirty years of age: as, however, she was already married in Nov. 1380 (*Rot. Parl.* v. 401), this must be incorrect. Joan was the daughter of Sir John Delapole by a daughter of John Cobham, also called Joan.

Joan at once sought a new husband to assist her in managing her property, and her choice fell upon Oldcastle.<sup>33</sup>

The marriage meant a great rise in the fortunes of Sir John. Hitherto he had been merely a Herefordshire knight, of some consideration in his own circle, and no more. Now, through his wife, he added to his scanty estates the broad domains of one of the most notable families of Kent. For two hundred years the fortunes of the Cobhams had been steadily rising; and Joan was able to bring to her husband six manors and the revenues of the hundred of Shamley, in Kent, a manor in Norfolk, two in Northamptonshire, and a like number in Wilts, with a house known as Cobham's Inn, in the parish of St. Dunstan-in-the-East, London,<sup>34</sup> not to speak of Cooling Castle, which the energy and public spirit of Joan's grandfather had made one of the most formidable strongholds in the country.<sup>35</sup> It may be noted that Lord Grey of Codnor, who had been Oldcastle's captain in Scotland, held the manors of Hoo and Halstow, bordering on the Cobham lands in Kent:<sup>36</sup> possibly through him Sir John became acquainted with his wife.

Though the centre of Oldcastle's interests was now far away from Wales, his connexion with the march was not all at once broken off. During 1409 he, together with others, was granted the wardship of the lordship of Dynas, an estate not many miles distant from Almeley.<sup>37</sup> But his time was soon engrossed by more important duties. In the autumn of 1409 the king found it necessary to call a parliament—the first since Oldcastle's marriage—and Sir John was summoned to attend as a member of the upper house.<sup>38</sup> Henceforward till his accusation in 1413 no parliament met without his receiving a similar summons. It is disputed whether Henry intended to found a new barony in Oldcastle's favour, or summoned Oldcastle merely in right of his wife.<sup>39</sup> The writs always refer to him as 'John Oldcastle chivaler,' as though his connexion with the Cobhams had nothing to do with the summons. But two other members of the house of lords—one contemporaneous with Oldcastle, the other nearly so—are regarded by Dugdale as possessing their seats *iure uxoris*, though they are summoned under their own names, with no mention of the family into which they had married.<sup>40</sup> Little significance, however, can

<sup>33</sup> *Comp. Peerage*, ii. 317; *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vii. 329, 336. For an account of Joan's husbands—Sir Robert Hemenhale, Sir Reginald Braybrooke, and Sir Nicholas Hawberk—see *Archæologia Cantiana*, xi. 87 ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Cal. Inq. post mort.* iv. 38. The list given may not be exhaustive. Cf. *ibid.* iii. 31, 179, 315; iv. 155.

<sup>35</sup> *Arch. Cant.* xi. 128 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Hasted, *History of Kent*, i. 559, 566.

<sup>37</sup> *Cal. Rot. Chart.* p. 359.

<sup>38</sup> G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, vi. 119; Dugdale, *Summit. Parl.*

<sup>39</sup> Professor Tait favours the former view, as does Dugdale, by omitting Oldcastle from his list of those summoned *iure uxoris*. G. E. C. inclines to the other theory.

<sup>40</sup> These were Hugh Stafford and Sir Lewis Robsart, each of whom in succession

be attached to the fact that the peerage was afterwards continued in the line of Cobham, not of Oldcastle; for, since condemnation for treason forfeited all rights of peerage, Oldcastle's heir had no more claim to a summons to parliament than any other gentleman in England. Moreover after Oldcastle's condemnation no representative of the Cobhams appeared in parliament for over thirty years, though either Joan's fifth husband or her son-in-law might properly have been summoned *iure uxoris*. Consequently the action of Henry VI in summoning Edward Broke as Lord Cobham practically amounted to the creation of a new barony.

It is, perhaps, impossible to arrive at any definite conclusion on the matter. The ideas concerning the qualification for a seat among the lords temporal were much less fixed in the early fifteenth century than they afterwards became, and the practice with regard to the issue of summonses was probably somewhat loose. On John Cobham's death it must have been thought inadvisable that the great Cobham interest should be unrepresented in parliament; while, doubtless, Oldcastle's previous services were not left out of account. Although Oldcastle's right to a summons may not have been derived from his wife in theory, it is probable that this was partly the case as a matter of fact. If he had not married into a great family Oldcastle would scarcely have received his summons: with the example of Richard II before his eyes Henry would never have ventured to confer such an honour on a knight of Oldcastle's standing, however great his personal regard for him. But, on the other hand, the fact that Henry V never summoned Joan's fifth husband would seem to indicate that marriage into the Cobham family was not in itself sufficient, but that proved ability was also requisite.

Although the writs had been issued on 26 Oct. 1409 it was late in the following January before parliament actually assembled. Sir John made use of the interval to cross the Channel and take part in a tournament at Lille. Three Englishmen were opposed to three Frenchmen<sup>41</sup> and Oldcastle duly fought his opponent; but how the contest went we are not told. Neither combatant can have been much hurt, for the same night they both supped with the count of Nevers, who was acting as master of the ceremonies. After three days of great magnificence and heavy expense the tilting came to an end.

Parliament met at Westminster on 27 Jan. The session was a long one, lasting till late in April, with an Easter recess of was the husband of Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Bartholomew, Lord Bourchier. Stafford's summonses were invariably addressed 'Hugoni Stafford;' Robsart's 'Lodovico Robessart Chl'r.'

<sup>41</sup> The attempts of our Burgundian authority to reproduce the English names are not very successful. Oldcastle's comrades appear to have been two esquires, Umfraville and Brembre (Petit, *Itinéraire de Jean sans Peur*, p. 373; cf. Wylie, iii. 293).

three weeks. Though everything seems to have passed quietly, this parliament afterwards acquired a certain notoriety through the apocryphal stories of chroniclers concerning the doings of the lower house. Walsingham tells us that the *milites parlamentales* (vel, ut dicamus verius, satellites Pilatales), eagerly desiring the spoliation of the church of God, presented to the king a bill, in which they sought to demonstrate that confiscation of the temporalities of the clergy would enable the king to provide for fifteen new earls, 1,500 knights, and 6,200 esquires, and to found a hundred almshouses.<sup>42</sup> A manuscript of Titus Livius's *Life of Henry V* gives us further details as to this scheme.<sup>43</sup> The figures here seem to be taken from a tract containing a list of the errors of John Purvey, who some years before had advocated confiscation on the same grounds.<sup>44</sup> Walsingham goes on to relate that when the knights were asked whence all the necessary money could be derived they broke down utterly, and thereupon the king forbade them to mention the matter again. Foiled in this plan, the *coetus execrabilis* petitioned that clerks convicted of secular offences should thenceforth be handed over to the prisons of the king and the temporal lords; and when another unfavourable answer was received they brought up a further petition, that the 'Statutum de haeretico comburendo' might be modified. But they were told that any alteration would be in the direction of greater strictness. After this rebuff the attack seems to have been abandoned.

Later chroniclers and historians have largely accepted this story, and have laid special stress on the statistics of the knights with reference to church property. Mr. Wylie himself thinks that some sweeping proposal of confiscation was brought forward, and regards Oldcastle as the ringleader in the whole affair. But a comparison between the chronicle and the official records leaves little room for doubt that Walsingham has been guilty of gross exaggeration, if not of sheer invention. There is, indeed, a stratum of truth underlying his story. It is certain that the knightly element in the lower house was decidedly anti-ecclesiastical in temper, and that the commons petitioned for a modification of the 'Statutum de haeretico,' of such a nature as virtually to abrogate it.<sup>45</sup> The members of the lower house also represented that under

<sup>42</sup> Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* ii. 283.

<sup>43</sup> Wylie, iii. 309. Mr. Wylie's statement that Livius is the first chronicler to record the statistics of the knights is misleading. The manuscript referred to is undoubtedly the first to mention the figures which were afterwards usually repeated by chroniclers, but Walsingham had already given several of them, though with less detail.

<sup>44</sup> The tract seems to have been compiled by one Richard Lavynham, a Carmelite friar, and is based on Purvey's *Ecclesiae Regimen*. It is printed in *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, p. 383 ff. Livius's statistics are not entirely identical with those in the *Fasciculi*, but the differences are unimportant.

<sup>45</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iii. 627. One of the chief points of the statute of 1401 was the



colour of acting *pro salute animarum* the ecclesiastical officials were extending their jurisdiction to matters cognisable at common law; the king was therefore requested to frame a statute to deal with these encroachments, and to enact that all contraveners thereof should suffer imprisonment, pay a fine to the king, and indemnify the injured party.<sup>46</sup> As legislation on the subject already existed, Henry refused to take further measures; but the incident seems to have alarmed the churchmen, and by the time news about parliament reached the St. Albans scriptorium a comparatively modest request had grown into a proposal that all criminous clerks should in future undergo punishment at the hands of the secular power. While there is no evidence of the introduction of such a sweeping scheme of confiscation as that mentioned by Walsingham, a petition is enrolled in which the commons begged that half the revenues of absentee incumbents and of livings which had been appropriated under false pretences should be seized into the king's hand, on the ground that the country was impoverished through the continual wars.<sup>47</sup> Walsingham's account gains little real confirmation from the work of Titus Livius, which was written later than 1437 and in which the passage in question is possibly interpolated.<sup>48</sup>

That Oldcastle had already adopted Lollard views is made clear by an incident which occurred during the Easter recess. It is indeed likely that he had long favoured the new doctrines. On the assumption that he was born about 1375 he must have lived in an atmosphere of Wycliffite teaching from his youth up. By 1390 the unstable fanatic William Swinderby and the mystical layman Walter Brute were working in Herefordshire and giving Bishop Trevenant no small trouble.<sup>49</sup> Richard Wiche too, who seems to have been intimate with Oldcastle, was originally a priest of the diocese of Hereford, though his activity afterwards extended over many parts.<sup>50</sup> Nor were the preachers the only source whence Oldcastle may have 'drunk the gall of heresy.' The west country knights were not disinclined to favour the reformers. Sir John Clanvowe, of Cusop Castle, not many miles from Almeley, is mentioned as one of the early patrons of Lollardy,<sup>51</sup> and later events suggest that the Greyndors, who had much property in the west, were on the same side.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps it power it gave to the clergy of making arrests on their own initiative. In their petition the commons asked that in future these should be made only by the officers of the crown.

<sup>46</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iii. 645.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> It does not occur in the manuscript used by Hearne in preparing his printed edition; see Wylie, iii. 810, n.

<sup>49</sup> For Swinderby and Brute see Foxe (ed. Cattley), iii. 111, 131, 196.

<sup>50</sup> Wylie, iii. 563; *Engl. Hist. Rev.* v. 530 f.; Devon, *Issues*, p. 352.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *Castles*, p. 40; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* ii. 159.

<sup>52</sup> Elmham, *Lib. Metr.* p. 148; Capgrave, *De illustr. Henricis*, p. 121.

was from the preachers that Oldcastle derived his enthusiasm for the new ideas, while the restraining influence of the knights kept him from fanaticism and taught him that even a Lollard might serve both his God and his king.

But until 1410 there is no authentic indication that Oldcastle was anything but a dutiful son of the church.<sup>53</sup> During the early months of that year the zeal of the orthodox burnt strongly. Much excitement had been caused by Arundel's conflict with the university of Oxford, where a recrudescence of Wycliffite teaching had given cause for alarm. In 1409 a provincial constitution had placed new weapons in the hands of the clergy,<sup>54</sup> and soon afterwards John Badby, the poor tailor of Evesham, was put to death. On 9 April 1410 Arundel sent a letter to the dean of Rochester, in which he stated that one John, feigning himself a chaplain and dwelling with Sir John Oldcastle, had for some time past been preaching Lollardy in the churches of Hoo, Halstow, and Cooling, especially the last; the dean was therefore to proclaim an interdict in these places, and to provide for the citation of the chaplain, who was in hiding.<sup>55</sup> Though Oldcastle is nowhere accused of instigating the chaplain's misdeeds it is likely that Arundel meant his action to be a hint to the protector quite as much as a blow at the protected. A timely accident, however, averted the threatened trouble. It so happened that a marriage between Sir John's step-daughter, Joan Braybrooke, and the heir of Sir Thomas Broke, a Somerset knight,<sup>56</sup> was to take place in Cooling Church early in April. Joan's mother and Sir Thomas, whose orthodoxy was above suspicion, were naturally anxious for the speedy removal of the interdict, and the archbishop suspended its operation for three days, in order that the wedding might be celebrated, and some time later relaxed it altogether.<sup>57</sup> The offending preacher was apparently forgotten. As for his patron, far from being moved by Arundel's hint, he identified himself more and more with the Lollard cause, and in the following summer we find him connected with the Bohemian Wycliffites.

The researches of Dr. Loserth<sup>58</sup> have made it clear that

<sup>53</sup> The tales of Oldcastle's early religious and political activity to be found in Bale and several later writers are based either on a failure to distinguish between the husband and grandfather of Joan Cobham, or else on conjecture or invention.

<sup>54</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 314 ff.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 329. Hoo and Halstow belonged to the Greys of Codnor: see above, p. 438.

<sup>56</sup> *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vii. 338. There is evidence that the marriage was largely a financial transaction; Rot. Claus. 11 Hen. VI, m. 24 d.

<sup>57</sup> Wilkins, iii. 330 f.

<sup>58</sup> In his *Wiclif and Hus*, and in an article 'Ueber die Beziehungen zwischen englischen und böhmischen Wicliften' in the *Mittheilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, xii. (1891) 254 ff. Cf. *ante*, vol. vii (1902) pp. 306 ff.

ever since the marriage of Richard II to Anne of Luxemburg intercourse between England and Bohemia had been continuous and extensive. The most important result had been the introduction of Wycliffite views among the Czechs. By 1410 heresy had become so popular among all classes that the church was striving to restore orthodoxy by force, and it was with this end in view that the archbishop of Prague, about the middle of July, had numerous works of Wycliffe burnt. The wrath of the people at his action found expression in satirical ballads and even in open disorder. The reform party in the university, too, strove to retaliate on the archbishop by organising a series of public lectures, at which the condemned books were defended by prominent theologians. News of all this was soon carried to England. On 8 Sept. two congratulatory letters were sent in reply—one to Hus from Richard Wiche, the other to Wok of Waldstein from Sir John Oldcastle.<sup>99</sup> Both are in Latin, and while Wiche probably wrote in person the form of Oldcastle's letter is evidently due to a clerk. The general tenour of the communication is, doubtless, a reflexion of Sir John's opinions, but the details of it must not be pressed too far as proofs of his knowledge or literary skill. Wok of Waldstein to whom the letter was sent was a member of the Bohemian nobility and an enthusiastic Hussite. His chief exploits belong to a later date; he was the ringleader at the burning of the papal bulls in 1412, and one of the nobles who protested against the treatment of Hus at Constance and bound themselves to maintain the freedom of the Gospel. Zdislaw of Zwierżeticz, to whom Oldcastle's letter was to be taken in the event of Wok's absence, was likewise a strong upholder of Wycliffite views. He had quite recently graduated at Prague, and had been very prominent in the attacks on the archbishop during the summer of 1410, having defended Wycliffe's treatise 'De Universalibus' in the Carolinum on 6 Aug. Shortly before he had been excommunicated. That Oldcastle should be in communication with two of the protagonists of the reform party in Bohemia shows that for some time past he must have been recognised as a leader of English Lollardy. Perhaps he had met the two Bohemians in England, though there is nothing in the letter to suggest this.

The letter begins with congratulations on the recent achievements of the Bohemians, but the greater part of it is taken up with exhortations to perseverance and endurance. The quotations from Isidore and Chrysostom are doubtless the work of the scribe, but Oldcastle himself may be responsible for the numerous references to Scripture. The letter shows clearly that he accepted fully the leading principles of Lollardy. He lays particular stress on

<sup>99</sup> Wiche's letter is printed in *Ioh. Hus Monumenta*, i. f. ci; Oldcastle's, by Loserth, *Mittheilungen*, xii. 266 f.

the duty of priests to preach the word of God and suppress nothing ; any one who strives to prevent their doing so is none other than antichrist. So anxious is he that his Bohemian brethren shall realise that he means to stand by his views that he affixes his seal to the end of the letter, *quod nunquam apponimus ad litteram que deberet in posterum cassari*.<sup>60</sup> To the Bohemians, therefore, Oldcastle's letter must have seemed a manifesto of the policy of the leader of English Lollardy.

We know from a later letter of Oldcastle's<sup>61</sup> that the correspondence between the two countries was kept up, and that Hus himself wrote to his English supporter. According to Thomas Netter of Walden, whose statement is unsupported by other evidence, Sir John, at the request of Hus, sent copies of Wycliffe's works to Bohemia.<sup>62</sup> Walden was mistaken if he believed—as his language seems to imply—that this was the means whereby the Czechs first became acquainted with Wycliffe's writings. Wycliffe's philosophical works, as Dr. Loserth has shown, were known in Prague long before the close of the fourteenth century, and in 1399 Jerome of Prague, returning home from a visit to England, took with him the *Triologus* and *Dialogus*, and so introduced the Englishman's theology to his countrymen. Before Hus obtained any great notoriety Wycliffite literature was plentiful in Prague.<sup>63</sup> It is possible, indeed, that Hus at some time asked Oldcastle to add to his library of Wycliffe's works. But it is equally likely that the story is one of the numerous legends invented to account for the wide dissemination of heterodox views among the Czechs. The Bohemians themselves soon forgot how the Lollard teaching came into their midst,<sup>64</sup> and Walden, writing as he did when both Oldcastle and Hus had been in their graves for some years, would

<sup>60</sup> The manuscript as printed by Dr. Loserth has 'cessari.'

<sup>61</sup> To King Wenceslaus. The letter is printed by Dr. Loserth and also by Mr. Wylie, (iv. 321). Oldcastle in respectful but straightforward terms congratulates the king on the support he has given to the reformers, and urges him to persevere in his course. The letter is dated 'London, 7 Sept.,' but the year is not given. Dr. Loserth (*Mittheilungen*, xii. 268), basing his conclusion on a single sentence, ascribes it to 1413. The official report of Oldcastle's trial, however, makes it almost certain that he was at Cooling on 7 Sept. of that year. The laudatory tone of the letter would have been impossible after Wenceslaus's policy during the struggle over the indulgences which distracted Prague in 1412, and after he had virtually driven Hus into exile. Oldcastle was in hiding from the ecclesiastical officials and in danger of his life, but he nowhere hints at his situation, but, on the contrary, declares himself ready to serve Wenceslaus as the latter may think fit. To me 1411 seems a much more likely date; for in the summer of that year Oldcastle may well have thought that Wenceslaus was heart and soul with the reformers. The very reference relied on by Dr. Loserth suits 1411 quite as well as 1413. Cf. Palacky, *Gesch. Böhm.* iii. 258, 261 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Walden, *Doctrinale*, lib. ii. c. 70.

<sup>63</sup> Loserth, *Mittheilungen*, xii. 258; *Wiclif and Hus*, pp. 74 ff., 84 ff.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71 ff.

naturally be led to connect the two men with the sowing of the pestiferous seed.

The letters show that Oldcastle's opinions remained unchanged during the next year or two. But he seems to have kept his Lollard proclivities in the background, and continued to serve and fight for his king as before. In September 1411 he was on a commission to examine the walls and bridges along the reaches of the Thames between Northfleet and Greenwich;<sup>65</sup> and immediately afterwards he was associated with the earl of Arundel and Robert and Gilbert Umfraville in the command of the force which was about to be sent to France for the succour of the Burgundian party.<sup>66</sup> The duke of Burgundy's application for help was not favourably received by the king, and the despatch of the force is said to have been an irregular proceeding on the part of the prince of Wales. The enterprise was, however, successful. The assistance of the English enabled the Burgundians to occupy Paris and defeat their opponents at St. Cloud, and turned the scale of war for that year in their favour. The Englishmen greatly distinguished themselves, but of Oldcastle's personal achievements we hear nothing. It is clear, however, that Sir John was on good terms with young Henry, and was regarded by him as one of his most trustworthy soldiers. About the end of the year the whole force returned to England.<sup>67</sup>

On the death of Henry IV, in March 1413, it might have been thought that his son's accession would tend towards Oldcastle's further advancement; but the Lancastrian power rested to no small extent on ecclesiastical support, and the zeal of the church had lately been fanned afresh by the council held at Rome in the early months of 1413, which had condemned many of Wycliffe's writings as unfit to be read or possessed by good Christians, and as deserving to be burnt.

Before the death of the king convocation had met, the first session having been held on 6 March. Foxe, for once independent of Bale, says that the purpose of the summoning of this assembly was the repression of the Lollards, and in particular of Oldcastle, 'as recordeth the chronicle of St. Albans.' There were, indeed, numerous reasons for holding a convocation. The king had directed it; there was a subsidy to be granted; the question of the schism had to be discussed. If there had been no heresy in England, the convocation would probably have met. But it is likely enough

<sup>65</sup> Wylie, iii. 293.

<sup>66</sup> *Gest. Henr. V*, p. 280; Otterbourne, p. 269; Walsingham, ii. 286; Gregory, *Chronicle*, in *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London* (ed. J. Gairdner), p. 106; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles* (ed. Gairdner), p. 53; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 93.

<sup>67</sup> For an account of the expedition see Wylie, iv. 57 ff.; Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, i. 130.

that, when Henry IV died, Arundel saw in the change of ruler a good opportunity for gaining the energetic support of the secular arm against heretics. Of recent years Henry IV had been loth to act vigorously. But the new king would be eager for the support of the church, and willing to pay a high price for it. Even his friend Oldcastle might be won from him by a little dexterous diplomacy. The case of Oldcastle was brought under Arundel's notice on the first day of convocation. In the afternoon the archbishop's registrar, who had just completed his examination of the credentials of the proctors, was informed that there was present in the church a chaplain strongly suspected of heresy. Summoned before the registrar, the chaplain stated that his name was John Lay, and that he came from Nottingham; he had been two days in London, and had that morning celebrated mass before the 'lord Cobham.' On this the registrar demanded his certificate of ordination and his licence to celebrate; but Lay replied that he had brought neither with him. He was therefore sworn to attend before the primate on the following Saturday, to show his credentials and do further what might be required. But we hear nothing more about him; probably he failed to appear at the time appointed.<sup>68</sup> It would be interesting to know whether this John Lay was the priest whose doings had led to the interdict on Cooling Church in 1410.

Before any real work could be done stress of parliamentary business compelled Arundel to suspend the sittings of the clerical assembly. Then came the death of the king, and afterwards parliament took up more time. Little business could be done till 6 June,<sup>69</sup> and the sessions had to be held in Lambeth Church instead of at St. Paul's. The first occurrence of importance was the presentation of the report of a commission appointed in the previous year to examine Wycliffe's works. The members of the commission now presented 267 extracts for condemnation, and suggested that after convocation had dealt with them they should be submitted to the pope.<sup>70</sup> Their proposal was accepted. The articles were condemned forthwith and then sent on to Rome. The archbishop accompanied the extracts with a letter, in which he asked for the confirmation of the sentence of convocation and for the condemnation of Wycliffe and his adherents. He also prayed that the reformer's bones might be exhumed and thrown on a dunghill.<sup>71</sup> The tractates containing the objectionable conclusions were afterwards burnt at Paul's Cross.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Wilkins, iii. 338.

<sup>69</sup> Before this convocation seems to have done nothing beyond granting a tenth to the king during May (Reg. Arundel, ii. f. 27). Wilkins has not transcribed the register very faithfully in the *Concilia*. From the text there printed it would appear that no sessions were held from 6 March to 6 June; the register, however, makes it clear that something, though very little, was attempted.

<sup>70</sup> Wilkins, iii. 339.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 350.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 351.

Convocation continued to sit till 26 June. During its closing days Arundel was absent and the bishop of London presided. Much discussion took place concerning the reform of the church. The petitions of the clergy on this point suggest that the archbishop had not, in their opinion, been strict enough. They pray for the stricter enforcement of various provincial constitutions, most of them originally laid down by Otto or Ottobon, and providing for the orderly life of the clergy. Convocation also begged that the new enactments of 1409 might be amended, with a view to increasing their efficacy. The archbishop made no demur about granting them all their requests.<sup>73</sup> In all probability, however, the internal reform of the church was only of secondary importance in the minds of the clergy, for the case of Oldcastle had again been forced upon their notice. Among the condemned books two were found which contained doctrines of peculiar depravity. One is interesting on account of its place of publication. It came from Coventry, where Swinderby had preached thirty years before, and which was still a notorious centre of Lollardy. The other work—a mere pamphlet—consisted of unbound sheets containing several short tracts. It had been found in the hands of an illuminator of Paternoster Row. The man, on being arrested, declared that the book was not his but belonged to Sir John Oldcastle.

Oldcastle's name had now been twice brought before convocation, each time in bad company. The suspected priest had given the authorities the slip, but the obnoxious book placed what seemed incontestable evidence in their hands. They determined to strike at once. On 6 June, the very day on which the Lollard articles had been formally condemned, some of the members of convocation went to the king at his manor of Kennington and read to him some of the most extreme conclusions of the book said to belong to Oldcastle. Sir John himself was present at the interview, and listened to the recital of the articles. The king was greatly shocked at the opinions put forward; they were, he said, the worst he had ever heard. He then asked Oldcastle what he thought of the condemnation of the work. Sir John unexpectedly replied that he considered the action of convocation quite right and proper. On being asked, very naturally, why he then possessed the book, he said that he never used it, and had not read more than two pages of it.<sup>74</sup> Soon afterwards the lower clergy, having made a careful inquiry into the facts of the case, drew up a formidable indictment against Oldcastle, and requested the archbishop and his suffragans to summon him before them to answer their accusations. But the prelates were in favour of proceeding with caution, and thought it advisable to consult the king before again attacking *unum de prae-carissimis ex magnis domesticis suis*. So Arundel, the bishops, and

<sup>73</sup> Wilkins, iii. 351.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 352.

a large number of clergy made another visit to Kennington, where Henry was still residing, and 'took counsel with him upon the matter.' They accused Oldcastle of being a notorious favourer of error and heresy; of holding, asserting, and defending erroneous and heretical conclusions in many dioceses; of receiving, sheltering, and protecting unlicensed preachers; of sending them out to preach, attending their 'shameful meetings,' and oppressing any who resisted them with threats and fears and the power of the sword; of declaring that no prelate might lawfully make constitutions for the regulation of preaching; and, finally, of holding heterodox views concerning the sacrament, penance, pilgrimages, image-worship, and the power of the keys.

The king thanked them for the information; but he was not the man to abandon a faithful servant without making an attempt to turn him from error. After reminding Arundel of the close friendship existing between Oldcastle and himself, and of the respect due to one of knightly rank, he asked the archbishop to delay further action till he had done what he could to turn Oldcastle from the error of his ways. If his attempts should come to nought, he promised to hand the heretic over to the church and to lend whatever aid the secular arm could afford. The clergy grumbled; but nothing was to be done but to accede to the king's request, and they had to go away and dissolve convocation with the knowledge that Oldcastle was still at large and, to all appearance, as prosperous as ever.<sup>75</sup> But through the whole affair, which must have been most disagreeable to him, Henry acted straightforwardly. He did his best to save his friend, but at the same time he felt bound to do his duty by the church. During the next two months he left no stone unturned in order to lead Oldcastle back to the 'fold of Christ.'<sup>76</sup> But persuasion proved quite useless. According to the protestant writers of the sixteenth century Oldcastle thanked the king for his efforts, and declared himself anxious to remain a faithful servant of the crown, but 'the pope and his clergy he would not obey.'<sup>77</sup> No open breach had taken place by the middle of July; for on the 20th of that month Henry undertook by letters patent to pay by Michaelmas 1414 four hundred marks which were owing to Oldcastle and others.<sup>78</sup> About a month later, however, while Henry was at Windsor, matters came to a

<sup>75</sup> Wilkins, iii. 352.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*; *Fasc. Ziz.* p. 435; *Elmham, Lib. Metr.* p. 99; *Gest. Henr. V.* p. 2; *Capgrave, De illustr. Henr.* p. 112; *Redmayne*, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> *Redmayne*, p. 16; *Bale*, pp. 24, 25.

<sup>78</sup> *Foed.* ix. 41. The four hundred marks were part of the price of a clasp, said to have belonged to Sir Lewis Clifford, who was long a supporter of Lollardy. Henry had bought it from Oldcastle and his associates, who are described as executors of Clifford's will (*Devon, Issues*, p. 328). In Clifford's will, however, printed by Dugdale, there is no mention either of Oldcastle or any of the others (*Baronage of England*, i. 841).



crisis. The king, exasperated by what he considered Oldcastle's obstinacy, broke out into fierce invectives against him—*præfatum dominum Iohannem super pertinacia sua acriter increpabat*—and Sir John, *plenus diabolo*, refusing to submit to this attack, went off without leave and shut himself up in Cooling Castle. The king promptly wrote to the archbishop, who was then near Chichester, occupied in *solemnis Assumptionis beatæ Virginis*. In his letter Henry put the whole case of Oldcastle in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>79</sup>

Events now followed one another rapidly. Henry sent writs to all the sheriffs, ordering them to provide for the arrest of unlicensed preachers and their aiders and abettors, and to see that the constitutions of 1409 were in no way infringed.<sup>80</sup> The church too lost no time in getting to work. Before long the archbishop's summoner appeared before Cooling Castle. But here Oldcastle kept the gates shut. Now Arundel, anxious apparently to maintain the dignity of the servants of the church, had ordered that his messenger should on no account enter without leave, and that, through the mediation of a certain John Butler, usher of the king's chamber, Oldcastle should be called upon either to admit the summoner or to come outside and receive the citation there. Oldcastle, as might have been expected, refused; and the summoner had to return to his master without accomplishing any part of his errand.<sup>81</sup> The archbishop at once ordered letters citatory to be publicly affixed to the doors of Rochester Cathedral. Oldcastle was summoned to appear at Leeds Castle, near Maidstone, on Monday, 11 Sept.<sup>82</sup> Of course when the 11th arrived Sir John failed to attend. It was reported to the archbishop that he was fortifying himself at Cooling. Arundel promptly pronounced him contumacious and excommunicated him. On the same day he cited him for 28 Sept., to set forth reasonable cause, if he had any, why he should not be dealt with as a public heretic, schismatic, and enemy of the catholic church.<sup>83</sup>

What happened then is far from clear. The official report proceeds at once to 28 Sept., and states that on that date Sir John was brought by the keeper of the Tower before the archbishop in the chapter house of St. Paul's; but no explanation is given as to how Oldcastle came to be in the hands of his conductor, or, indeed, how

<sup>79</sup> Wilkins, iii. 858.

<sup>80</sup> *Foed.* ix. 46.

<sup>81</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 485. Bale (p. 25 l.) says that when the summoner found Cooling Castle shut against him he at once returned to Arundel. The archbishop then sent for Butler, who went to Cooling with the summoner, gained admission to the castle by declaring that the king desired Oldcastle to obey the citation, 'and so cited him fraudulently.' But the 'Magnus Processus' makes it clear that the citation was never served at all.

<sup>82</sup> Bale tells us that some of Oldcastle's friends shortly afterwards took these letters down; when new ones were put up, on 8 Sept., they were also 'rent down and utterly consumed.'

<sup>83</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 486.

he got to London at all. In the reference to the citation for 28 Sept. nothing is said about London: as far as we can judge Leeds was still intended to be the place of trial. No order for Oldcastle's arrest appears in the close roll for the year. The archbishop himself has nothing to say about it. There is no hint as to any resistance. From the 'Magnus Processus' it would appear as if Oldcastle, who had gone away from the king without leave and twice refused to accept citation, either gave himself up or else tamely submitted to the first royal officer who came to demand his person.

It is possible, however, that Bale, of small value for the history of Oldcastle as a general rule, may furnish something like a true account of what happened. He says that, after his excommunication at Leeds, Oldcastle, 'beholding the unpeaceable fury of antichrist thus kindled against him, perceiving himself also compassed on every side with deadly dangers,' wrote out a confession of his faith, containing a reply to the chief counts in the accusation against him, and took it to the king. This confession, says Bale, opened with the Apostles' Creed; then came a more detailed exposition of the writer's views on the Trinity and the Incarnation. Proceeding further, Oldcastle declares Christ to be the only head of the church. The church on earth is divided into three classes—priests, knights, and commons. The functions of each of these sections are then defined. An apparently orthodox statement of the doctrine of the sacrament follows. Finally, he declares his belief that God asks no more of man than that he shall obey his law. Should any prelate require any other kind of obedience, he contemneth Christ, and so becometh an open antichrist.' After the confession comes a strong appeal to the king that the whole document may be examined by the most godly and learned men of the realm, who should decide upon its orthodoxy. Oldcastle, Bale goes on to say, arrived at court; but the king refused to receive his confession, ordering him to deliver it to the ecclesiastics who were to judge him. 'Then desired he in the king's presence that an hundred knights and esquires might be suffered to come in upon his purgation, which (he knew) would clear him of all heresies.' He also offered to submit his faith to trial by battle with any man living, the king and the lords of his council alone excepted, and declared himself prepared to accept any sentence founded on 'the laws of God.' The king thereupon received him 'in his own privy chamber,' where Oldcastle announced that he had appealed to the pope, and showed a copy of his appeal to Henry. The king was much displeased: Oldcastle, he said, should not pursue his appeal; whether he wished it or not, the archbishop should decide his case. The knight was thereupon arrested and committed to the Tower.<sup>84</sup> This account rests solely on Bale's authority, though he says he

<sup>84</sup> Bale, p. 28 ff.

draws his facts from the *vetus exemplar Londinensium*, a document of which we have unfortunately no trace except in the *Brefe Chronycle*. If this *vetus exemplar* was a contemporary document there may be something in the above story; and in any case it is hard to discredit entirely the statement that Oldcastle did visit the king.<sup>86</sup>

Gregory in his London Chronicle says that Oldcastle 'was a restyde at Wynsore, and sende to the Toure of London,'<sup>86</sup> and we know from the close rolls that the king was at Windsor on Monday, 18 Sept. This story is unsupported; but the compiler of the early part of the chronicle would, as a Londoner, have had better opportunities than most of hearing the truth about prisoners in the Tower: nor would this be the only time that he hit upon the truth when every one else went wrong; for instance, he alone gives a true statement of the time of Gloucester's death in 1397.<sup>87</sup> It is clear that the king's stay in Windsor was short, and it may have owed its speedy termination to his desire to take Oldcastle to London and see him safely into the Tower. This supposition would explain the absence from the rolls of any writs ordering his arrest or directing Sir Robert Morley, the keeper of the Tower, to receive him.<sup>88</sup> Possibly Henry was still anxious to deal gently with his old friend, and refrained from treating him as an ordinary prisoner. The necessary proceedings would, therefore, be carried out quietly, and this might explain the almost unanimous silence of the chroniclers. Such a conjecture seems to give the most reasonable explanation of a difficult problem.<sup>89</sup>

On 23 Sept., as mentioned above, Sir Robert Morley brought Oldcastle before Arundel, who was at St. Paul's together with the bishops of London and Winchester. The archbishop at once

<sup>86</sup> It is hard to accept some of the details of Bale's account, such as the demand for purgation by the knights and squires or the appeal to the pope. But it is touches like this which render it clear that Bale really had some authority for his statements; he would never have thought of inventing a demand for a purgation of this sort, and he was the last man in the world to tell us that his hero wished to appeal to the pope, unless some previous writer had a statement to that effect. Foxe, in his Latin edition of 1559, after describing Oldcastle's excommunication and continued disregard for the archbishop, adds, 'Regi tandem, misso ad eum proprio feciali, dicto se audientem praeibuit,' and then gives an account of the interview of Oldcastle with Henry, in which he substantially agrees with Bale. Though this edition of Foxe's work gives quite a different account of Oldcastle from that subsequently printed in English, it is unsafe to regard him as an independent authority, as he must have known the *Brefe Chronycle* well in 1559, though he followed it with reserve (*Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum Commentarii*, Basal, 1559, pp. 98-100).

<sup>87</sup> Gregory's *Chronicle*, p. 107.

<sup>88</sup> See Professor Tait's essay in *Owens College Historical Essays*, p. 209.

<sup>89</sup> Of course writs may have been issued and not enrolled, but orders for the arrest, and warrants to the keeper of the Tower for the committal, of prominent persons seem as a rule to have been entered in the patent or close rolls.

<sup>90</sup> Walsingham's explanation of how Oldcastle came to be in Morley's hands really tells us nothing: 'nam parum ante per regios ministros comprehensus fuerat, et in Turri clausus.'

proceeded with the prisoner's examination.<sup>90</sup> Throughout the whole trial he treated him very well. He began by a formal recitation of the events leading up to Oldcastle's excommunication, and concluded these preliminaries by offering to absolve him from the ban of the church. Oldcastle, somewhat ungraciously, took no notice of this offer, but at once announced that he was prepared to declare his faith. Permission having been obtained, he drew from his cloak an indenture, read its contents, and handed one copy of this confession to the archbishop, keeping the other himself. The document, which was written in English, lays down Oldcastle's views on the sacrament of the altar, penance, images, and pilgrimage; but, as is usual in Lollard confessions of belief, the language is vague, and the main questions at issue are eluded. On the subject of pilgrimages, indeed, Sir John states explicitly that 'he that knoweth not, nor will not know nor keep the commandments of God in his living here, albeit he go on pilgrimage to all the world, and he die so, he shall be damned.'<sup>91</sup> According to Bale Oldcastle prefaced his declaration with a protest against Arundel's statements, presumably in the citations, that his views were contrary to the determinations of the church;<sup>92</sup> but there is no notice of this in the official 'Processus.'

Arundel was a man of considerable experience in the examination of heretics. He knew that the points of view of the church and the Lollards were so far asunder that no good could arise from argument. After consulting with his assessors, therefore, he went straight to the point. Sir John's confession, he said, was on the whole sound, but a fuller reply would have to be given concerning the sacrament of the altar and penance: in the former case, did the material bread remain after consecration or not; in the latter, was confession to a priest necessary? Oldcastle at first refused to make any further statement, and was warned by the primate that a persistence in this course might lead to his being forthwith declared a heretic. The threat, however, produced no effect. Arundel, who was clearly anxious to give Sir John every chance of saving himself, then explained to him the determination of the church on the subjects in question, according to Saints Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and others of the fathers. Oldcastle replied 'that he was willing enough to believe and observe whatever holy church had determined, and whatever God wished him to believe and observe; but that our lord the pope, the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and other prelates of the church had the power of determining such things he was unwilling at that time in any wise to affirm.'<sup>93</sup> After the closing words of this remark Arundel might have spared himself further trouble. Nevertheless he told

<sup>90</sup> The 'Magnus Processus' is printed in full in the *Concilia* and the *Foedera*, as well as the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*.

<sup>91</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* pp. 437-9.

<sup>92</sup> Bale, p. 39.

<sup>93</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 440.

the prisoner that the authorised doctrines on the chief matters at issue should be written out for him, and translated into English, on account of Oldcastle's lack of learning (*pro leviori intellectu eiusdem*).<sup>94</sup> The accused would have the Sunday for consideration and on the Monday he was to make his reply. With this the session terminated, and Morley led his charge back to the Tower.<sup>95</sup>

On Monday, 25 Sept., the court was transferred to the Blackfriars—apparently a favourite place for the trial of heretics.<sup>96</sup> The primate, evidently realising the importance of the occasion, had gathered together an imposing array of ecclesiastics. The bishop of Bangor had joined his brethren of London and Winchester. The archbishop's official had been summoned, as his legal adviser; and four doctors of law were also present. Oxford was represented by two doctors of divinity, and the friars by a prominent member of each of the four orders. A multitude of clergy and people appear to have been spectators of the proceedings. All the dignitaries and notaries having been sworn to give faithful counsel and service,<sup>97</sup> Morley again brought Oldcastle before his judges.<sup>98</sup> As on the preceding Saturday the primate began by a recital of what had been done from the beginning of the case, and again closed with an offer of absolution. Oldcastle replied that he would seek absolution from none but God.<sup>99</sup> Bale makes Oldcastle go down on his knees and crave the forgiveness of God for youthful wickedness—pride, wrath, gluttony, covetousness, lechery. His version is, however, quite unsupported by the official record; nor is it on the face of it likely that Oldcastle would make such admissions just at that time: they would leave too good an opening for the churchmen to make reflexions as to the class from which Lollardy drew its supporters. The same writer's account proceeds with a description of a lengthy debate on the subject of the eucharist, leading to a heated argument on the authority of the church, interspersed with various irrelevant diatribes of Oldcastle against the existing state and manners of the clergy. Sir John, it would appear, grew more and more violent, and at last simply abusive. His invective was much better than his

<sup>94</sup> If Sir John had been able to understand Latin, Arundel would hardly have been at the pains of having the translation made for his benefit.

<sup>95</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 440 ff.

<sup>96</sup> Gregory, p. 107; Bale, p. 47; *Rot. Parl.* iv. 109. The Oxford heretics had been tried at the Blackfriars in 1382, and the first examination of Badby had been held at the same place.

<sup>97</sup> 'Tactis evangeliiis,' according to the 'Processus;' on a 'masse-boke,' according to Bale.

<sup>98</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 442. Bale (p. 47 f.) is not correct when he says that the four friars present were the heads of their respective orders in England. Walden did not become provincial of the Carmelites till the following year.

<sup>99</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 443.

dialectic, though neither side displayed any very cogent reasoning. The whole debate was futile, and Arundel showed good sense in putting an end to it and demanding an explicit answer to the articles submitted to the accused on the previous day.<sup>100</sup> While it is hard to believe that Bale's account of the session down to this point is all fiction, it is perhaps safer to regard the official report as presenting, in a condensed form, the actual course of events.

Arundel's 'Processus' has nothing of this preliminary discussion; after mentioning Oldcastle's refusal to receive absolution from the archbishop, it goes on at once to his replies to the 'determinations of the church.' This last part of the trial lasted only a short time. On the eucharist Oldcastle professed a theory much like that which Luther afterwards held: the crucial point in it was that after consecration bread did actually remain. With reference to penance he asserted that confession to a priest, though sometimes expedient, was not necessary to salvation. The cross, he held, was not to be adored; he would be willing to keep it clean and in a safe place, but that was all the honour he would pay it. As to the power of the keys, Sir John at once openly declared that the pope was the head of antichrist, the archbishops and bishops were his members, and the friars his tail: the pope and prelates were not to be obeyed, except in as far as they were imitators of Christ and Peter in life, manners, and conversation; and he alone was the true successor of Peter who was good in life and pure in manners. Then, turning to the spectators, he warned them against his judges, saying that they were the seducers of the people and would lead them to hell.<sup>101</sup>

There was no need to prolong matters further. The church had given Oldcastle a fair hearing; he had felt himself unable to make use of it for his safety, and had used language which no prelate could possibly suffer to go unpunished. So the archbishop, 'with mournful countenance,' once again exhorted him to reconsider his views and return to the unity of the church; but the prisoner remained steadfast and refused in any way to alter his former declarations. Seeing that he could not succeed in turning him from his resolution, Arundel, 'with bitterness of heart,' proceeded to pronounce sentence. Oldcastle was excommunicated and handed over to the secular arm.<sup>102</sup> All favourers, receivers, and defenders of the condemned man were likewise included in the sentence; and, that such might not plead ignorance of what had happened, the primate in a letter of 10 Oct. ordered his suffragans

<sup>100</sup> Bale, p. 50 ff.

<sup>101</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 443 ff.

<sup>102</sup> 'Iudicio seculari;' or, as Bale glosses this phrase, 'the archbishop committed Oldcastle 'to the secular jurisdiction, power, and judgment, to do him thereupon to death.'

to cause the official 'Processus' to be read before the people in every church throughout the province of Canterbury.

But Oldcastle, though formally condemned, was to receive yet another piece of favour. Instead of being led out to execution he was granted forty days' respite in the Tower,<sup>103</sup> in the hope that he might still turn from the paths of heresy. The king was probably responsible for this act of grace.<sup>104</sup> Walsingham, indeed, says that Arundel, on reporting the result of the trial, besought Henry to defer giving effect to the sentence. But this version finds no independent support.<sup>105</sup> Arundel had just condemned Oldcastle as incorrigible; to beg for a reprieve would thus have been tantamount to an admission that he had gone too far. On the other hand Henry, reluctant, no doubt, to lose a servant of proved capacity, could give Oldcastle another chance by simply putting off the issue of the writ of execution, without openly showing favour to a heretic.<sup>106</sup> Doubtless Henry consulted Arundel before deciding on his course of leniency; but the primate must have felt too much indebted to the king for his part in the proceedings against Oldcastle to raise any objection to his wishes.

W. T. WAUGH.

(To be continued.)

#### NOTE.

The abjuration of Oldcastle, found only in the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*,<sup>107</sup> is unsupported by any contemporary authority. It is consequently no wonder that protestant writers have considered it spurious. Bale unhesitatingly pronounces it a forgery, and has expressed his opinion in a marginal note in the manuscript of the *Fasciculi*.<sup>108</sup> This view is elaborated in his *Brefe Chronycle*. Oldcastle, he says, during his imprisonment in the Tower managed to keep up correspondence with his friends outside. From them he learned that damaging reports as to his steadfastness were

<sup>103</sup> *Gesta Henr. V*, p. 8; Walsingham, ii. 296; Elmham, *Lib. Metr.* p. 97; Capgrave, *De illust. Henr.* p. 113; Redmayne, p. 16. Bale, it may be noted, merely mentions that Oldcastle was kept in the Tower after his condemnation, and carefully refrains from any hint about an act of favour.

<sup>104</sup> This view is taken by the author of the *Gesta*, by Elmham, and by Capgrave, *De illust. Henr.* It is quite likely, however, that the last named in this instance, as in many others, derived his information from Elmham.

<sup>105</sup> Redmayne, very likely borrowing from Walsingham, tells us that Oldcastle was committed to the Tower 'iussu Archiepiscopi.'

<sup>106</sup> The granting of a respite was in itself an act of favour. In cases of heresy little time was usually lost between condemnation and execution. Badby, for instance, had been burnt a few hours after he was sentenced. In Sawtre's case the writ of execution had been held over, but only for four days.

<sup>107</sup> P. 414 ff.

<sup>108</sup> 'Conficta est haec abiuratio ut patet postea adhuc,' the remainder of the note being illegible (p. 414, n. 1). [The following words in the manuscript, f. 97 b, which Shirley could not read, are 'ut papiste adhuc suis succurrerent rebus periclitantibus apud multos,' written and partly rewritten by Bale over an erasure.—Ed. *E. H. R.*]

being spread abroad by the bishops' servants. To counteract the effect of these he arranged that a 'little bill,' containing a denial that he had in any way altered his opinions, should be posted up in various parts of London. After this the clergy fell into very bad odour with the laity in general, who sympathised with Sir John; and to restore their own credit, and at the same time to damage Oldcastle's reputation, they forged an abjuration in his name.<sup>109</sup> In it he recognises the authority of the pope and prelates, and their right to establish and enforce ecclesiastical constitutions, renounces all his heretical beliefs, declares himself ready to undergo any penance which Arundel may think fit to impose on him, and promises to inform the clergy of any heterodox persons he may hear of.

Oldcastle can never have made such a recantation, for if he had done so he would have been set at liberty, whereas all authorities agree that he escaped from the Tower by stealth. It is just possible that he may in a moment of weakness have signed the document, and afterwards withdrawn from it, though the absence of any reference to his action in any record of the time makes the supposition highly improbable. But, granted that the abjuration never received Oldcastle's signature, it is not necessary to accuse the prelates of deliberate forgery. It is clear that no official story of an abjuration was current. No one could conceivably have hoped to discredit Oldcastle by forging a document and then concealing it. More probably the 'confession' is a mere draft, drawn up towards the close of Oldcastle's examination, or while he was in the Tower,<sup>110</sup> and intended to be submitted to him for his signature, in case he should show any sign of relenting. After the prisoner's escape such a document would, of course, be useless; but Walden, it would appear, somehow got possession of it, and placed it among his papers. Possibly, indeed, he had composed it himself, with the idea that it might prove useful; we know that he was present at Oldcastle's second examination,<sup>111</sup> and according to Bale he played a conspicuous part in the cross-questioning to which the accused was subjected.<sup>112</sup> On Walden's death the paper was found, and inserted in the volume which has come down to us.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Bale, p. 81 ff.

<sup>110</sup> The author of the *Gesta* has an interesting statement in this connexion: 'Intra fines Octobris solutus a vinculis tergiversator ille sub promisso quod revocaret suas opiniones hereticas et staret iudicio ecclesiae, in custodia tum tentus usque ante tribunal convocandi cleri sisti posse, rupit carceres et aufugit' (p. 8).

<sup>111</sup> *Fasc. Zis.* p. 448.

<sup>112</sup> Bale, pp. 58-60.

<sup>113</sup> See *Fasc. Zis.* intr. pp. lxxvii, lxxviii.



## *Sir John Oldcastle*

### PART II.

CONTEMPORARY chroniclers tell us next to nothing of Oldcastle's imprisonment. After referring to his committal to the Tower they immediately proceed to his subsequent escape. Nearly all of them are quite at a loss to account for his disappearance;<sup>1</sup> but their deficiencies are to some extent supplied by the record of a trial which occurred some three years later. On Monday, 4 Oct. 1416, one William Parchmyner of Smithfield was brought before the king's justices at Newgate, at the presentment of eight citizens of London, who swore that William 'on the 19th day of October, in the first year of the reign of King Henry . . . together with other traitors of our lord the king, whose names to the said jurors are unknown, did go privily to the Tower and break into that prison, and falsely and traitorously withdraw John Oldcastle therefrom, and take him from thence to his own dwelling-house in the parish of St. Sepulchre in Smithfield,' where he lodged him till the Wednesday after the following Epiphany, when he, with Oldcastle and others, left the city to join the assembly in St. Giles's Fields. Parchmyner, though he pleaded not guilty, was a few days later convicted of treason and executed without delay.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that about the time of Oldcastle's escape Parchmyner was a suspected person in the eyes of the royal officials. His house was not only watched, but also searched. Some heretical books were seized, but no trace of Oldcastle seems to have been found. That 'John Oldcastle now lately dwelt' with Parchmyner is, however, stated as an ascertained fact in the issue roll for this term.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the very brief notices in Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* ii. 297; Capgrave, *De Illustr. Henr.* p. 112. On the other hand Elmham (*Liber Metricus*, p. 97) is sure that the escape was effected *daemonis artis ope*. Redmayne evidently had some inkling of the truth. Oldcastle, he says, escaped *vel amicorum praesidio tectus et adiutus, vel eorum perfidia qui custodes constituebantur, quos praemiorum spe et pecuniae magnitudine corruperat* (p. 16). The account of the author of the *Gesta Henr. V.* has been quoted above (p. 456 note 110). See also Gregory, p. 107; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 96; *Short Engl. Chron.* p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Riley, *Memorials of London Life*, p. 641.

<sup>3</sup> Devon, *Issues*, pp. 330, 332.

There seems no reason for impugning the general trustworthiness of the story of Parchmyner's accusers. But it must not be inferred that Sir John's rescuers entered his prison by force and carried him off under the very eyes of his guards. A royal proclamation clearly states that the escape was effected *noctanter* and *subdole*<sup>4</sup>—a view supported by the intrinsic probabilities of the case and the vagueness of the chroniclers. A late writer<sup>5</sup> suggests that the guards had been bribed. Nor must we ignore the assertion of the author of the *Gesta Henrici V.* that Oldcastle had been released from his fetters, and so may have co-operated with the efforts of his friends.<sup>6</sup>

For some days the king tried to hush the matter up, perhaps in the hope that the operations against Parchmyner's house might result in Sir John's capture. But more than a week passed without success, and on 28 Oct. Henry admitted his defeat by issuing proclamations against receiving or harbouring the fugitive.<sup>7</sup> Next day Morley, removed from office, was imprisoned in the Tower. Fortunately for him Henry's wrath soon cooled down, and after little more than a fortnight's detention he was released.<sup>8</sup>

Then, doubtless with a view to concerting further measures against the Lollards, Arundel called together an ecclesiastical council, apparently of an informal character, which assembled on 20 Nov. and continued its deliberations for a fortnight. On the Sunday after its dissolution Arundel and some of his suffragans publicly excommunicated Oldcastle and his supporters at St. Paul's Cross.<sup>9</sup> During the closing months of the year the country

<sup>4</sup> *'Prædictus Iohannes iam tarde prisonam prædictam noctanter fregerit et extra eandem Turrim evaserit subdole.'*—*City of London Records*, Letter Book I, fol. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Redmayne, *ubi supra*.

<sup>6</sup> Under date of 10 Oct. the issue roll for this term records the payment of messengers who had been sent throughout the country with proclamations against the harbouring of John Oldcastle (Devon, *Issues*, p. 324). From this it certainly looks as if Oldcastle had escaped by the date mentioned, and it has therefore been urged that the story of Parchmyner's accusers cannot be accepted (*Dict. of Nat. Biogr.* s.v. 'Oldcastle'). The only extant writ, however, which answers to the description given in the roll bears the date of 28 Oct., and it is hard to see why two proclamations for the same end should have been necessary. Moreover it is clear that the dates of this roll are far from trustworthy. Under the same date of 10 Oct. reference is made to the 'discharge of Robert Morley, late keeper of the Tower' (Devon, *Issues*, p. 324). Another entry, however, points to Morley's having continued in office till after that date (Pell Issue Roll, Mich. 1 Hen. V, m. 17), and it is certain that his successor was not appointed till 28 Oct. (Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 8, m. 12; Pell Issue Roll, Mich. 1 Hen. V, m. 13). The same roll too mentions the writs announcing the prorogation of the parliament of Leicester three weeks before they were issued (Pell Issue Roll, Mich. 1 Hen. V, m. 8; Dugdale, *Summonit. Parl.* p. 576), and antedates by more than a month the general pardon granted to the Lollards in the following spring (m. 17; *Foed.* ix. 119).

<sup>7</sup> *City of London Records*, l.c.

<sup>8</sup> Rot. Claus. 1 Hen. V, m. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Chron. Lond.* (Nicolas), p. 98. The assembly is here called a 'gret convoc-

remained quiet on the surface ; but there was an atmosphere of unrest and suspicion. The king was evidently aware that the Lollards did not intend to submit tamely to the aggressive policy recently adopted. The issue roll, indeed, states that some of the members of the sect had risen in open revolt by the beginning of December ;<sup>10</sup> but the silence of other records and the looseness of the chronology of the roll furnish a warning against accepting this information. On 1 Dec. parliament was summoned to meet on 29 Jan. at Leicester—a strange choice of place.<sup>11</sup> Possibly Leicester was selected as a central point, to which a winter journey would be fairly convenient for all members ; but the removal of parliament from London cannot have been due to a desire to avoid the Lollards, for Leicestershire had been deeply infected with the taint of heresy ever since the days of Wycliffe. Far from giving any signs of alarm, Henry seems to have desired to lure on his enemies by giving them the impression that he was totally ignorant of the impending storm. Needful precautions were of course taken. For instance, on 5 Dec. commission was given to Sir Elias Lynet and others to arrest certain persons—very probably Lollards—and to bring them before the king in person ; the writ shows that secrecy was essential for the success of this task.<sup>12</sup> Spies, moreover, were used to worm out the details of the Lollards' plans ; one of them afterwards received 5*l.*—no small sum in those days—for his skill and diligence.<sup>13</sup>

The king spent Christmas at Eltham.<sup>14</sup> With him were many of the magnates of the realm, both spiritual and temporal.<sup>15</sup> He remained after the festivities were over, with a view to celebrating Epiphany there also. But his holiday was not destined to be completed in peace. For some time, according to the chroniclers, Oldcastle had been circulating inflammatory messages among his followers ;<sup>16</sup> and now he deemed that the time for the triumph of the elect had at last arrived. But he had reckoned without his king and without his fellow conspirators. Henry, forewarned of the Lollard plans, was ready for all emergencies, and Walsingham says that some of the conspirators, their courage failing them at the eleventh hour, revealed the existence of a plot to seize the king at

cion ;' but it was not a convocation in the technical sense of the word, as Wake points out (*State of the Church*, p. 350).

<sup>10</sup> Pell Issue Roll, Mich. 1 Hen. V, m. 9. On 11 Dec. the sum of 66*s.* 8*d.* was paid to the under-sheriff of Middlesex for the expense and trouble involved in the task of summoning juries for the trial of Lollards 'lately rebellious.'

<sup>11</sup> Dugdale, *Summonit. Parl.*

<sup>12</sup> Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 4, m. 11 dors.

<sup>13</sup> Devon, *Issues*, p. 338.

<sup>14</sup> *Gest. Henr. V*, p. 4 ; Walsingham, ii. 297 ; Redmayne, p. 22 ; Stow, p. 344.

<sup>15</sup> *Gest. Henr. V*, p. 4 ; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> *Gest. Henr. V*, p. 4 ; Walsingham, ii. 297 ; Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, p. 97 Adam of Usk, p. 121.

Eltham.<sup>17</sup> Orders for the arrest of all suspicious persons were at once despatched to William Crowmere, the mayor of London, who forthwith instructed the aldermen to exercise special vigilance in their respective wards. About ten o'clock on Twelfth Night Crowmere went in person, 'with a strong power,' to the sign of the Axe, just outside Bishopsgate, and there arrested 'certain personys called Lollers . . . the whyche Lollers had cast to have made a mommyng at Eltham, and undyr coloure of the mommyng to have distryte the king and Hooly Chyrche.' Brought before Henry, the prisoners acknowledged that they had been in league with Oldcastle, and revealed their leader's schemes for an attack on London.<sup>18</sup>

During the next few days the king played his part with consummate skill. Anxious to deal an effective blow at the monster of heresy, he sought to give no alarm to the Lollards. The raid on the Axe had happened on a Saturday night, while the conspiracy was not timed to come to a head till the following Tuesday or Wednesday. The rebel leaders must have known that one part of their scheme had come to nought, and there was ample time to notify a change of plan to the majority of their confederates. But the action of the king lulled them into a false security. Apparently quite satisfied with what had been done, he remained quietly at Eltham over the Sunday. On that day, however, he began to take measures for the ruin of the movement which his apparent inaction was encouraging. A writ was issued informing the sheriffs that many persons who had been brought before the king had confessed their intention of holding illicit meetings in divers parts of the realm, because the king opposed their designs; proclamation was therefore to be made that no one should attend any such meetings, and all found disobedient were to be arrested and brought before the council.<sup>19</sup> This mandate could not indeed reach many of the sheriffs in time to check the movement of the insurgents towards London, but it would serve to put the loyalists on their guard and to make the royal officers ready to carry out measures of repression.

On Monday, the 8th, the king, accompanied by his brothers and a numerous retinue, came to London.<sup>20</sup> He did not, however,

<sup>17</sup> Walsingham, ii. 297. On 5 Jan. Henry granted pensions of ten marks a year to John Burgh and William Kentford, apparently neither spies in the king's pay nor repentant traitors, for giving information of a Lollard plot (Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 22).

<sup>18</sup> Gregory, p. 108; Stow, *Annals* (ed. 1598), p. 344. In his account of Oldcastle Stow seems to have made extensive use of a chronicle of London now lost, and probably similar in scope and design to that ascribed to Gregory.

<sup>19</sup> Rot. Claus. 1 Hen. V, m. 6 d.

<sup>20</sup> *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 98; *Gesta Henr. V*, p. 4. The chronology of the latter is far from clear; but the author clearly regarded Henry as coming to London not earlier than the Monday.

remain in the city, but took up his quarters at Westminster, where his preparations would be less open to the scrutiny of Oldcastle's London supporters.<sup>21</sup> Tuesday night was the date chosen by the Lollards for their enterprise. The contingent from the country was to concentrate in St. Giles's Fields; there Oldcastle, his colleague Sir Roger Acton, a Shropshire knight,<sup>22</sup> and a large body of Londoners were to join them; and murder, rapine, and sacrilege were to be spread far and wide. Walsingham gives a picturesque and vivid account of the incidents of the night. Everywhere, he says, men might be seen hurrying in the direction of London—over foot-paths and along the highways. If asked the reason for their haste, they answered that they were on the way to join the Lord Cobham, who had sent for them, and would pay them at his own expense.

<sup>21</sup> Walsingham, ii. 297; T. Livius, p. 7; *Gesta Henr. V*, p. 4; Elmham, *Vita Henrici*, p. 31; Otterbourne, p. 274; Redmayne, p. 23; Stow, p. 344. In dealing with the events leading up to the king's removal to Westminster the chroniclers are much less unanimous than they afterwards become. Some of them, indeed, make no actual mention of Eltham; but the accounts of these are so meagre that the *argumentum e silentio* cannot be applied to them. Others make no mention of the arrests at the Axe, and seem to think that the king left Eltham to avoid the impending attack, and that he stole away with great precipitation as soon as the plot became known (Walsingham, ii. 297; Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, p. 98; T. Livius, p. 7). Elmham, in his *Vita Henrici* (p. 31), states that the king came to Westminster to oppose the rebels, not to avoid them. The accounts of the London chroniclers have been mainly followed above. They throw light on many obscurities and furnish a coherent story which adequately explains the subsequent development of events. The attack on the king at Eltham must have been intended to coincide in time with the assembling of the plotters at St. Giles's; otherwise the plan of campaign would have had no value whatever. Some of the chroniclers seem to have thought that the Eltham conspirators were to have struck on Twelfth Night. The accounts of Gregory and Stow, however, show that the plotters were at the Axe at 10 o'clock on that night. If they had meant to go to Eltham they would probably have already started.

<sup>22</sup> Adam of Usk, p. 121; Gregory, p. 108; Redmayne, p. 22; Stow, p. 344. Elmham, *Vita Henr.* p. 31, and Livius, p. 6, call him 'Iohannes Acton.' Only two writers tell us anything of Acton's antecedents, and their accounts are entirely contradictory. Redmayne describes him as possessing by hereditary right large possessions, to which his ability and prudence had enabled him to make considerable additions. Adam of Usk, in this case a much safer authority, says that Acton was of low birth—the son of a Shropshire weaver. His achievements in the Welsh war had won for him riches and knighthood, an honour which had been granted him by Henry IV in person. He was also on good terms with Henry V and his next brother (Adam of Usk, p. 121; Redmayne, p. 23). Adam's account is to some extent confirmed by the investigations of Blakeway, the historian of Shropshire, who cannot connect Sir Roger with the Actons of either Acton Burnell or Acton Scott, and thinks he may have been the founder of the Actons of Sutton in Worcestershire. An examination of the genealogy of this family bears out Blakeway's supposition (*Sheriffs of Shropshire*, p. 60; *Visitation of Worcestershire*, Harl. Soc., p. 4). Acton may have served in the expedition against Scotland in 1400, but this is not certain (Wylie, iv. 248; cf. 249, 243). In 1403 he seems to have been engaged in fighting the Welsh rebels (*ibid.* 243, 246), and in the same year he is mentioned as an esquire of the king's hostel (*ibid.* 204). In 1404 he was appointed sheriff of Shropshire and governor of Ludlow Castle; the former office he again held five years later, and in 1412 he was granted the wardship of certain lands in Cheshire and Shropshire (Wylie, *l.c.*). Pensions had been granted him by Richard II and Henry IV (*Lists of Sheriffs compiled at the Public Record Office*, p. 118; Blakeway, *ubi supra*; Wylie, iii. 296).

But these simple folk were to receive something very different from Oldcastle's pay. Early in the night the king had revealed his plan to his companions. He had resolved to go out and meet the rebels as they came. Some were for adopting less daring measures: the king should wait till morning, or till more troops were at his disposal. But Henry's mind was made up. The gates of the city had been shut, and an adequate guard placed at each; bodies of men were sent out to hold the chief thoroughfares leading towards St. Giles's, and shortly after midnight the king himself left the palace and drew up his main force between Westminster and St. Giles's Hospital. Oldcastle and Acton,<sup>22</sup> who were apparently awaiting their supporters somewhere near the south end of what is now Tottenham Court Road, most likely retired as soon as they saw the impossibility of help reaching them from London. Those of their followers who had already assembled at once followed their example. A detachment of the king's troops was sent in pursuit. Some of the fugitives were taken; others, attempting resistance, were slain. The leaders, however, succeeded in avoiding capture. Of the luckless countrymen who were still on their way the less punctual would in many cases hear of what had happened in time to turn back and go quietly home; but the first-comers, straggling towards the rendezvous in the late dawn of a January morning, were either stopped by the troops guarding the highways or else walked straight into the king's camp under the impression that it was Oldcastle's. There seems to have been very little fighting; by sunrise the rising was virtually crushed, and it might be left to the law to complete the work which arms had so successfully begun.<sup>23</sup>

Henry lost no time in taking measures for dealing with his prisoners, capturing the insurgents who were still at large, and providing that any who might escape should give no trouble in future. In a few hours a commission was appointed to inquire concerning all treasons, insurrections, and felonies committed in London and Middlesex, and to deal with all such cases.<sup>24</sup> Next day commissioners were appointed for a large number of counties; they were to inquire as to all who had sought to compass the death

<sup>22</sup> It seems likely that a third knight, Thomas Talbot of Davington, in Kent, was involved in the rising. He was put *in exigendis* on the same day as Oldcastle, and on a similar charge; one and the same writ ordered the escheator of Kent to make inquiry as to their possessions; and his name, we are told, figured in a roll containing a list of many of the rebels (*Escheators' Inquisitions*, Series I, file 1008, m. 29).

<sup>23</sup> Walsingham, p. 297 ff.; *Gesta Henrici V*, p. 4; Livius, p. 7; Elmham, *Vita Henr.* p. 31; *Liber Metricus*, p. 98; Adam of Usk, p. 121; Redmayne, p. 23; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 98; Gregory, p. 108; *Short Engl. Chron.* (Camden Soc.), p. 64; *Engl. Chron.* 1377-1461, p. 39; Stow, p. 344.

<sup>24</sup> Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 30 d. The writ of appointment is printed by Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, iii. 366. Six commissioners were appointed, the most important being William de Roos of Hamlake, Henry Scrope, and William Cromwre, the mayor of London.

of the king and the ruin of the realm; more detailed information concerning the intentions of the rebels was to be collected; and any on whom the inquiry should cast suspicion were to be arrested and kept in the county gaol until the king, with the advice of his council, should determine their punishment. The commissioners were for the most part made up of fairly prominent men—among them the earls of Arundel, Oxford, and Warwick.<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously rewards for the arrest of Oldcastle were offered. From the proclamation announcing this it is clear that the king regarded the whole rising as instigated by Oldcastle, and that he thought his capture would prevent any further trouble. His offers were certainly tempting—five hundred marks to any one giving information which should lead to Oldcastle's capture, twice that sum to the person actually arresting him, and freedom from taxes of all kinds to the city, borough, or township where the traitor should be seized. Moreover all who distinguished themselves in working towards the desired end would find the king favourably disposed towards them in time to come.<sup>27</sup> On the same day the sheriffs of London were ordered to prohibit the attempts at blackmail which might be expected in the prevalent state of unrest; the king concluded this mandate by declaring that he would deal with the prisoners according to the law and custom of the realm.<sup>28</sup>

The law and custom of the realm were already beginning to be extensively used. The judicial commission began its work on the very day it was appointed. A grand jury accused Oldcastle of conspiring to overthrow the king, church, and realm, and to make himself regent. The king called this case before himself, and the sheriff of Middlesex was commanded to arrest the fugitive and bring him before Henry on 24 Jan.<sup>29</sup> Turning their attention to the smaller fry, the commissioners sentenced several of them before ceasing work for the day.<sup>30</sup> On the following Friday, if Stowe is to be believed, no fewer than sixty-nine were condemned.<sup>31</sup> On Saturday, the 13th, thirty-eight of the conspirators were drawn on hurdles from Newgate to St. Giles's Fields, where four pair of brand-new gallows had been set up. There they were all hanged, the bodies of some who had been convicted of heresy as well as

<sup>26</sup> Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 23 d. The counties where inquiry is to be made are for the most part in the Midlands and West. Kent, Essex, and Hampshire are exceptions to the general rule. No county further north than Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire seems to have required the attention of the authorities. Surrey was apparently unimpeachably orthodox. It is noteworthy that Norfolk, afterwards a hotbed of heresy, is not mentioned.

<sup>27</sup> *Foed.* ix. 89. Redmayne, p. 17, places the offer of rewards for Oldcastle's arrest immediately after his escape from the Tower. This is to be accounted for by the writer's desire to avoid any mention of him in connexion with the St. Giles's conspiracy.

<sup>28</sup> Rot. Claus. 1 Hen. V, m. 9 d.

<sup>29</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iv. 108.

<sup>30</sup> This is clear from statements in some of the pardons which were subsequently granted.

<sup>31</sup> Stow, p. 344.

treason being afterwards publicly burnt.<sup>32</sup> On the 16th the justices turned their attention to the Tower, where a few prisoners were awaiting their fate.<sup>33</sup> The following Friday saw four more unfortunates taken off in the direction of St. Giles's, one of them being the priest John Beverley, apparently a person of weight among the conspirators.<sup>34</sup>

From this time on, however, less rigorous methods were employed. It is true that a certain John Brown, who was said to be an esquire of Oldcastle's, appears to have been executed;<sup>35</sup> and Sir Roger Acton, who was imprisoned on 8 Feb.,<sup>36</sup> paid the extreme penalty two days later, under circumstances of peculiar indignity, if we are to believe Foze's account.<sup>37</sup> But apart from these two instances the king showed a strong desire to deal leniently; probably he felt that the great scene at St. Giles's Fields had cowed his subjects sufficiently. On 23 Jan. the first pardon on record was issued in favour of William Dene, a fuller of London, who had been condemned on 11 Jan. and sentenced to the usual punishment. Why he did not accompany his fellow prisoners to the gallows does not appear.<sup>38</sup> Arrests, indeed, still continued to be made, probably as a result of the work of the commissions in the country districts. In this connexion several interesting names occur about this time in the rolls; and though there is no definite statement that the prisoners were suspected of complicity in the late rebellion it is fairly safe to infer that such was generally the case.<sup>39</sup> Thus on 18 Jan. the keeper of the Tower was ordered to receive Roger Cheyne—a name of ill omen to the orthodox—and John his son, and to hold them in custody till further orders.<sup>40</sup> Sir William Beauchamp, of Somerset, was imprisoned on the 23rd, and about

<sup>32</sup> *Gesta Henr. V.*, p. 5; Redmayne, p. 23; Gregory, p. 108; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), p. 98; *Short Engl. Chron.* (Camden Soc.), p. 54; *Engl. Chron.* 1377-1461, p. 39; Stow, p. 344. The number of those executed varies slightly in the different chronicles. Gregory's (p. 38), however, is confirmed by a writ ordering the Earl Marshal to deliver that number of prisoners to the sheriffs of London (*Rot. Claus.* 1 Hen. V, m. 1). Stow says that only seven were burnt after execution.

<sup>33</sup> *Rot. Claus.* 1 Hen. V, m. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory, p. 108; Stow, p. 344; Redmayne, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory, p. 108. On 23 Jan. one John Gybbes, of Oxford, was ordered to arrest a John Brown and bring him before the King (*Rot. Pat.* 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 25 d).

<sup>36</sup> *Rot. Claus.* 1 Hen. V, m. 2.

<sup>37</sup> The date of Acton's death is given by Stow, p. 344; see also Gregory, p. 108. Adam of Usk, p. 121, says his body remained on the gallows a month. Foze, iii. 408, states that 'a certain English chronicle,' which he had borrowed of 'one Master Bowyer,' records that Acton was drawn through London to Tyburn, naked, and there hanged. "And when certain days were past," saith the author, "a trumpeter of the king's, called Thomas Cliff, got grant of the king to take him down and bury him; and so he did.' Acton, it would appear, was condemned merely for treason.

<sup>38</sup> *Rot. Pat.* 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 16.

<sup>39</sup> The fact that all the prisoners mentioned were detained in the Tower suggests that their offences were of a political nature.

<sup>40</sup> *Rot. Claus.* 1 Hen. V, m. 2.



the same time a similar fate befell Thomas Broke, of the same county, doubtless the husband of Joan Braybrooke, Oldcastle's step-daughter.<sup>41</sup> His family connexion with the Lollard leader must have occasioned his arrest. The detention of such men seems to have been merely a precautionary measure, for they were all subsequently released. Nor was their life in the Tower surrounded with hardships. If bail could be found, a prisoner, on giving his parole not to escape, was freed from his fetters and allowed to live in an ordinary dwelling-house within the walls till his fate was decided.<sup>42</sup> It seems to have been easy to obtain bail. Beauchamp and Broke were helped by persons of high position, and respectable London citizens were not ashamed to provide security on behalf of their imprisoned friends.<sup>43</sup>

After the end of January, however, orders for the arrest and detention of suspected persons became rare. The king's leniency was having a good effect, and the country was fast quieting down. About the middle of February the issue roll contains many records of payments and rewards relating to the recent rising—to messengers, spies, jurymen, and such like.<sup>44</sup> Finally on 28 March the king offered a general pardon to all who chose to claim it, with the exception of a few arch-offenders mentioned by name, and of those who had taken sanctuary, who were then in prison or released therefrom on bail, or who had been in custody and escaped. The sole condition attached to this offer was that those who wished to benefit by the king's clemency must apply for his pardon by 24 June.<sup>45</sup>

In the foregoing description the accounts of contemporary chronicles and official records are assumed to be substantially correct. But since the Reformation several writers—notably Bale and Foxe, whom the others follow—have attempted to show that there was really no rising at all, or that, if there were, Oldcastle had nothing to do with it. They affirm that the whole story of a conspiracy was a fabrication of the royal officials or of the clergy. One cannot but think that the exigencies of sixteenth-century theological

<sup>41</sup> Rot. Claus. 1 Hen. V, m. 1 d.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* mm. 1 d. 5. In the following month the sheriff of Northants and two others were ordered to arrest one William Trussell and to bring him to the king (Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, m. 27 d.) A John Trussell, of those parts, is mentioned by Knighton as a supporter of Lollardy in the earliest days of the movement.

<sup>44</sup> Devon, *Issues*, pp. 330, 331, 333. During a brief visit to St. Albans towards the end of January Henry gave a signal instance of his generosity. Hearing of three women of Amersham who had been reduced to great straits through the confiscation of their goods consequent on the execution of their husbands for complicity in the rising, he forthwith ordered part of the property to be restored—'out of pity for their poverty' (Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. V, p. 5, m. 24).

<sup>45</sup> *Foed.* ix. 119. The list of those excluded from the pardon is rather loosely put together. Some of them were imprisoned in the Tower at the time, but we have no means of judging which these were. Oldcastle is, of course, mentioned; so is William Parchymer.

polemics produced this theory, for the version of the matter current in the days of Henry V is extremely well attested. The consensus of opinion among the chroniclers is remarkable. Prior, monk, court chaplain, lawyer, and London burgess all agree in their main facts, and their differences in matters of detail prove that they drew their information from no carefully concocted piece of fiction published by the orthodox party. Nor is their story without striking confirmation. The execution of so many persons is in itself an indication that something serious was to be apprehended from their doings. It is impossible to believe, with Foxe, that a man of Henry V's nature would butcher more than forty of his subjects merely for the purpose of discrediting a small section of the nation. Moreover, if the country was the victim of a hoax, the fraud was in truth a most elaborate one. No trouble or expense was spared; large commissions of inquiry were appointed in many parts of the realm; spies were employed and rewarded; numerous proclamations were issued and special messengers sent with them; and men were arrested, imprisoned, released on bail, and, for the most part, finally set at liberty and pardoned: and all this to cast discredit on a peaceable sect that was by no means popular and that was becoming less so every day. Foxe's argument<sup>46</sup>—the *locus classicus* of the vindicators of Lollardy—first appeared in the second edition of his *Acts and Monuments*, and was intended for the especial discomfiture of a certain Alanus Copus, who had questioned the veracity of the first edition of the martyrology, and had in particular attacked Foxe's account of Oldcastle. After making an 'impartial' examination of three official documents, and discovering misstatements and mutual contradictions in the very second-rate chronicles used by Copus, Foxe succeeded in refuting his opponent to his own satisfaction, and claimed, on grounds for the most part absurd,<sup>47</sup> to have disproved the existence of any conspiracy.

Only one of Foxe's lines of argument is worthy of serious consideration. He asserted that, as the names of only three conspirators are mentioned by Fabian, one of Copus's authorities, no others were ever known. This unwarrantable inference is then set against the 'twenty thousand men' referred to in some of the records.<sup>48</sup> But the Patent and Close Rolls mention by name

<sup>46</sup> *Acts and Monuments*, iii. 348 *seqq.*

<sup>47</sup> For instance, he considers it impossible for Henry to have crushed a rebellion and appointed a judicial commission on the same day; and as the names of the grand jury which accused Oldcastle are not mentioned he concludes that either the jury was suborned or never existed.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., the pardon printed in the *Foedera*, ix. 170. The Lollards *proposuerunt quod ipsi, simul cum quampluribus rebellibus nostris ignotis, ad numerum viginti milium hominum . . . privatim insurgerent*. Foxe found the number in the record of Oldcastle's outlawry.

upwards of a hundred persons connected with the conspiracy.<sup>49</sup> A 'hundred,' indeed, though better than 'three,' compares badly enough with 'twenty thousand.' It should be noted, however, that while the records speak of twenty thousand rebels as intending to appear at St. Giles's they nowhere state that they actually did so. Oldcastle cannot have hoped to raise a quarter of this number; but an exaggeration in a surmise as to what might have happened is much less serious than a similar error concerning what did happen. Moreover no contemporary account of any event of the middle ages must be regarded as standing or falling by the accuracy of any figures it may quote.<sup>50</sup> The chroniclers, as a matter of fact, are very modest in this instance; they are usually content with references to 'many,' 'a great multitude,' and so forth: when they do mention numbers they are surprisingly accurate.

It is impossible to determine with any degree of confidence how many men were prepared to join the rising. Of the hundred or thereabouts mentioned in the rolls we can only be certain that about sixty were at St. Giles's, or started to go there. But some few of the insurgents were killed,<sup>51</sup> many doubtless escaped, and a large contingent was expected from London.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps, if everything had gone well, Oldcastle would have found himself at the head of four or five hundred men. This number would have been sufficient for the *coup de main* by which the insurgents must have hoped to win their first successes; a larger force would, in fact, have diminished the possibility of a surprise. Nor are the chroniclers' statements about a 'great multitude' incompatible with this computation, for a force of five hundred men was of no mean importance in the warfare of the time. With good fortune the insurgents might have achieved at least a temporary success.<sup>53</sup>

But, granted that a rising of some magnitude was attempted, was Oldcastle himself implicated in it? The king, of course, officially said that he was, and all the writers of the time believed it. A version which merely involves Acton and his confederates, Brown and Beverley, appears in the history of Redmayne, who, living under the Tudor monarchy, could hardly make a hero of a traitor. Bale and Foxe, though they refuse to admit the existence of any conspiracy, note that the same three were accused of

\* The total is made up of prisoners, those who were condemned and pardoned, those who applied for the pardon offered on 28 March, and those specially excepted therefrom. The persons who applied for the pardon tacitly admitted their complicity with the rebellion. In arriving at the total only cases where special mention is made of the rising have been included.

<sup>49</sup> See the article by Sir J. H. Ramsay, *ante*, vol. xviii. 625 seqq., Oct. 1908.

<sup>51</sup> Walsingham, ii. 298; T. Livius, p. 7; Redmayne, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> Walsingham, *l.c.*; *Gesta Henr. V.*, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> For instance, the battle of Homildon Hill was won by a force of archers 600 strong, while at Shrewsbury a charge by some thirty men was a notable incident of the fight.

treason and condemned, but make no mention of Oldcastle in this connexion. The evidence, however, is all in favour of the official view. The king, it is clear, was well acquainted with the details of the schemes of the rebels, and his official statement about Oldcastle certainly expressed a sincere conviction. This is not merely gathered from the references to him in proclamations or pardons; these might be accounted for by a desire to cast odium on his reputation. But why, if Henry really thought that Oldcastle was hiding in some remote part, should he suddenly become so anxious to take him as to offer large rewards for his capture, and have them proclaimed throughout the land? Nothing of the sort had been done on Oldcastle's escape from the Tower. Plainly Henry knew of some fresh move on his part, knew that he was in the neighbourhood of London,<sup>54</sup> and so resolved to make a great effort to arrest him before he could reach a safe retreat. Corroborative evidence is supplied by the story told at Parchmyner's trial, which makes Oldcastle stay in London from his escape till the night of the rising.<sup>55</sup> There is nothing incredible in this. Daring though it may seem, to hide in a centre of population was probably Oldcastle's safest course. Moreover the importance attached by the Lollards to the help expected from London looks as if some influential agitator had been at work in the city.

There is, indeed, nothing intrinsically improbable in the idea of Oldcastle conspiring against Henry. No tenet of his creed would forbid him in certain cases to do so, for he was certainly not one of those Lollards to whom all war was criminal. He was a high-spirited warrior, who would hardly hesitate to take up arms in what he felt to be a just cause. He had, too, a precedent in his treason; for one of the staunchest of Lollards, the earl of Salisbury, John Montagu, had perished in a conspiracy against Henry IV. There is, indeed, evidence that Oldcastle came to take up Montagu's position on the subject of the crown; we are told that at his last trial he asserted that King Richard, and not King Henry, was his lawful monarch.<sup>56</sup>

The question next arises, what were the objects of this abortive conspiracy? Some of the official documents—notably the pardons granted to condemned prisoners—attribute to the insurgents projects of the most radical kind. The Lollards, it would appear, were goaded into action by the impossibility of putting their theories into practice as long as king and prelates remained prosperous. The existing organisation of state and church was to be destroyed root and branch. The king, his brothers, the higher

<sup>54</sup> When Henry called the case of Oldcastle before him the sheriff of Middlesex was ordered to arrest the fugitive (*Rot. Parl.* iv. 108).

<sup>55</sup> Riley, *Memorials*, p. 641 ff.

<sup>56</sup> Walsingham, ii. 327.

clergy, and the lay lords were to be slain. It was, furthermore, intended to despoil all churches and religious houses of their possessions and to level them with the ground; members of the religious orders were to earn their living by trade or manual labour. And, finally, Oldcastle was to be made regent, and the kingdom divided into a number of small principalities.<sup>57</sup> This seems to have been the sum of the charges on which those captured were condemned. The chroniclers all agree that violent action was to be taken. The general opinion seems to have been that the death of the king, the subversion of all law and order, and the destruction of the church were the salient points of the Lollard designs. Walsingham gives a hint of constructive measures in a story he tells about one William Morley, a wealthy citizen of Dunstable, long suspected of heterodoxy. In Morley's possession were found a pair of golden spurs and two war horses with gilt trappings, from which it was inferred that he had expected to be knighted by Oldcastle in the event of the king's discomfiture. It was also rumoured that he was to have obtained Hertfordshire as a fief, to be held presumably of Oldcastle. This looks like a trace of the 'regimina' of which the records speak.<sup>58</sup>

On the whole the accounts just noticed must be taken with great reserve. However much Oldcastle's beliefs may have disturbed his mental balance, he remained to the end a practical man in worldly matters, quite able to look after himself. His early life had been spent among personages of prominence in the higher ranks of society, and his life's work had been concerned with matters of state importance. Such a man must have had some idea of the possibilities of a rising such as he had organised. He can hardly have hoped for a success so complete and so agreeable to the country at large as to enable him to set up a rule of his own; nor is it likely that wholesale massacre formed a part of his scheme, for such a course would have drawn upon him and his followers the instant wrath of the nation, which was by no means

<sup>57</sup> The Lollards are stated to have risen *falso et proditorie machinando tam statum regni, quam statum et officium praelatorum, necnon ordinis religiosorum infra dictum regnum Angliæ, penitus adnullare. Ac nos, fratres nostros, praelatos et alios magnates eiusdem regni interficere, necnon viros religiosos, relictis cultibus et divinis et religiosis observantiis, ad occupationes mundanas provocare, et tam ecclesias cathedrales, quam alias ecclesias et domos religiosas de reliquiis et aliis bonis ecclesiasticis totaliter spoliare ac funditus ad terram prosternere, et Iohannem Oldcastell, de Couling in comitatu Kantiae, chivaler, regentem eiusdem regni constituere, et quamplura regimina, secundum eorum voluntatem infra regnum praedictum, quasi gens sine capite, in finalem destructionem, tam fidei catholicae et cleri, quam status et maiestatis dignitatis nostrae, infra idem regnum, ordinare* (Foed. ix. 170). These accusations are mentioned in most of the pardons of condemned prisoners and in the record of Oldcastle's outlawry. A shorter account appears in proclamations, in the writs appointing commissions of inquiry, in the offer of a general pardon, and in pardons granted to those who had not been condemned.

<sup>58</sup> Walsingham, ii. 299.

enamoured of Lollardy, and with which the royal house was popular rather than the contrary. Nevertheless the summoning of supporters from long distances shows that strong measures were to be taken.<sup>59</sup> We may safely assume that the king would have been seized; and with such a prize in his power Oldcastle could have dictated his own terms. In the light of his political experience he would have refrained from asking too much: a promise of toleration for his sect, an amnesty to his followers in revolt, and some limitations in the power of the clergy might have satisfied him. But it is questionable whether Henry would not afterwards have revoked any concessions extorted under pressure.

According to the original plan of the rebels the capture of the king was to be effected at Eltham, while the bulk of the insurgents diverted the attention of the Londoners by an assault on the city from the west. It follows that the leaders of the rising were prepared to sanction a considerable amount of violence. Perhaps, indeed, after Henry's removal from Eltham, Oldcastle intended to use his main force as a mere screen for an attempt on Westminster, and had decided that an attack on London was unnecessary. Such a scheme would have greatly diminished the amount of fighting. But it is doubtful whether Oldcastle's supporters would have suffered its execution. The men who tried to assemble round St. Giles's on that January morning seem to have been a very mixed crew. To the man in the street or the monk in the scriptorium they were 'Lollards.' But the official statements, while they represent the Lollards as the exciting cause of all the mischief, almost invariably take care to mention 'others' who were implicated.<sup>60</sup> The larger number of those executed seem to have suffered the death of simple traitors; they were merely hanged, that is, not burnt.<sup>61</sup> When the

<sup>59</sup> Of those who subsequently sued for pardons many came from the Midlands—some from as far away as Leicestershire—while one Yorkshire man appears in the lists (*Foedera*, ix. 129). Prisoners were taken whose homes were in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and even in Derbyshire and Cheshire (*ibid.* ix. 194).

<sup>60</sup> The speech of the chancellor at the beginning of the parliament at Leicester refers to the recent attempt to destroy the church, made by *certains gens . . . infects d'Eresies appellez Lollardes . . . et autres de leur covyn, procurement, et confederacie* (*Rot. Parl.* iv. 15).

<sup>61</sup> Many, in fact most, of the chroniclers draw no distinction between the fates suffered by the prisoners. It is, however, easy to account for the origin of loose generalisations; while, had all the rebels been treated alike, it is difficult to understand how the idea of a differentiation of punishments could have arisen. The distinction was recognised by the author of the *Gesta Henrici V: Quidam disudicabantur suspendio et ignibus, et quidam solo suspendio iuxta reperti unius vel utriusque laesae maiestatis et blasphemiae criminis qualitatem* (p. 5). Gregory seems to have been aware that all the prisoners were not punished alike, though his language is not clear: 'There was a knyghte take that was namyd Sir Roger of Acton, and he was drawe and hanggyd be syde Syn Gylly . . . Al so a preste that hyghte Sir John Beverlay, and a squyer that hyghte John Browne . . . they were hanggyd; and many moo were hanggyd and brent, to the nombre of xxviii personys and moo.' Stow is very precise, telling us that only seven were burnt (p. 344).

king issued his pardons to condemned men he of course simply pardoned the treason towards himself; with treason towards God he had nothing to do. But, though everybody knew that these men had been involved in the St. Giles's rising, the church, as far as we know, never proceeded against one of them as a heretic. The conclusion seems forced upon us that people with other than religious grievances were among the rebels. Nor need this occasion any surprise. Oldcastle, keen on vindicating what he thought the rights of his sect, was not likely to be particular as to the antecedents of his followers; that they were willing to fight in a just cause would be enough for him. And malcontents of the lower classes, among whom the ideas of 1381 may still have lingered, were doubtless only too ready to join a movement directed against a part of the existing order of things. But it is improbable that this section of Oldcastle's followers would have been content with making a mere demonstration outside the walls of London, where there was no chance of murdering a few of the wealthy or gathering any plunder. It is conceivable, too, that many of the real Lollards were anxious to play havoc with some of the available churches and monastic houses. The official description of the objects of the rising to some extent bears out these conjectures. It is just what was likely to be deduced from the incoherent statements of ignorant rustics, who had come up to London with vague visions in their minds of the destruction of the sources of all official authority, or with dreams of a coming millennium, when the men of 'God's law' should live at peace, unmolested by summoner or sheriff.<sup>62</sup> In short, it was probably Henry's promptitude alone that saved London from at least a partial repetition of the scenes of the Peasants' Revolt.

Cowed by the suppression of the revolt and by the new legislation against them sanctioned by the parliament of Leicester,<sup>63</sup> the Lollards remained very quiet during the remainder of 1414. On 14 June Oldcastle was formally outlawed at Brentford county court: he had been summoned at the four preceding courts, and had, of course, failed to appear.<sup>64</sup> There is evidence that certain

<sup>62</sup> Some writers, while admitting that there was an assembly of some sort in St. Giles's Fields, think that it was for purely peaceful purposes—probably to hear Beverley preach. Not only is evidence for this view wholly lacking, but both the inherent probabilities of the case and the actual facts render it quite untenable.

<sup>63</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, ii. 181 ff.

<sup>64</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iv. 108. Oldcastle's outlawry of course involved the forfeiture of his lands, most of which, indeed, had already been seized into the king's hand (*Escheators' Inquisitions*, series I. files 1008, mm. 7-11, 29, and 1278, m. 10). During the summer, however, Henry granted to Richard Cliderowe, a Kentish esquire and probably Oldcastle's son-in-law (*Hasted's History of Kent*, iii. 677, 692; but cf. James, *Poems*, p. 187), and Thomas Broke, Joan Braybrooke's husband, the custody of all the possessions held by Sir John in right of, or conjointly with, his wife (*Each. Inq.*, series I. file 1008, m. 18; cf. *Rot. Pat.* 2 Hen. V, p. 2,

of the rebels were still in custody till late in the autumn, and pardons to such were issued from time to time.<sup>65</sup> Towards the end of the year some of Oldcastle's former friends became very importunate in urging the king to relent towards him; and about Christmas Henry, anxious to pacify all domestic discord in view of the approaching struggle with France, generously offered to pardon all his misdeeds on condition of his coming out of hiding and submitting himself to his sovereign. As Oldcastle was quite ignorant of the efforts made on his behalf, letters patent, setting forth the king's offer, were given to some of his friends, who, it was hoped, would succeed in opening communication with him. As weeks passed by and Oldcastle gave no sign, Henry ordered proclamation to be made that he might still receive the proffered grace, provided he submitted by 14 April. But, possibly through fear of a trap, Oldcastle steadfastly refused to be moved, and Henry had to prepare for his French expedition with misgivings as to the intentions of his domestic foes.<sup>66</sup>

If Walsingham is to be believed, Oldcastle became active even before the English army sailed. On the strength of a false report of the king's departure he came out of his hiding-place, at that time somewhere near Malvern, and sent a threatening letter to Richard Beauchamp, Lord Abergavenny, against whom he apparently bore an old grudge. Beauchamp at once assembled a force of archers and men-at-arms from his Worcestershire estates, led them against Oldcastle, and, though the leader escaped, managed to seize several of his confederates. These under pressure revealed the secret hiding-place where Oldcastle kept his arms, money, and banners. After this reverse he judged it wise to remain in his mountain refuges. Walsingham says he was the more disposed to keep quiet through hearing of the discovery of the plot to murder Henry at Southampton, since he was, almost as a matter of course, assumed to be in league with the plotters.<sup>67</sup> Sinister rumours were abroad in the army at Southampton as to the intentions of the

m. 16). Joan Cobham seems to have been joint proprietor of most of the original Oldcastle lands in Herefordshire; but Cliderowe and Broke apparently did not regard these as falling within the king's grant, nor were they seized by the escheator. For some years the revenues of these western estates were drawn by a certain John ap Harry, an old friend of Oldcastle's and a comrade of his in the Welsh wars, who doubtless shared his receipts with the fugitive. This state of things was not terminated till March 1416 (*Esch. Inq.*, series I. file 959, m. 3; *Foed.* viii. 331; *Rot. Claus.* 5 Hen. V, m. 15 d.)

<sup>65</sup> *Foed.* ix. 170; *Rot. Pat.* 2 Hen. V, p. 1, m. 17; *ibid.* p. 2, mm. 1, 13, 27.

<sup>66</sup> *City of London Records*, Letter Book I. fol. 147. Henry's offer to Oldcastle was proclaimed in London on 4 March (*Chron. Lond.*, ed. Nicolas).

<sup>67</sup> Walsingham, ii. 306 *seq.* On one of the banners were depicted the cup and host of the Eucharist, on others the cross with the scourge, spear, and nails. These emblems, it was supposed, had been chosen to attract the common people.



Lollards. Hocceve was inspired to write his celebrated address to Oldcastle, in which he bitterly upbraids him for his falling away from grace, and offers his advice and exhortation.<sup>68</sup> Many urged the king to stay at home;<sup>69</sup> but Henry refused to listen to them, and on 11 Aug. he put to sea. The Lollards were supposed to be highly delighted at the departure of the 'prince of priests,' and were expected to attempt vengeance for their recent misfortunes. But even Walsingham can accuse them of nothing more wicked than distributing pamphlets and affixing bills to the church doors of London. Perhaps they were alarmed at the burst of energy shown by the civic authorities of the capital in the arrest of two notorious Lollards, William Turmyne and John Claydon, both of whom were shortly afterwards burnt.<sup>70</sup>

The outburst of loyalty which followed the battle of Agincourt must have warned the Lollards against attempting any activity during the autumn of 1415. The next year was even more inopportune, for Henry was only absent from England for a few weeks. During the summer heretical pamphlets were scattered up and down the country, and one Henry Greyndor, called a *praeco* of Oldcastle, is said to have presented to the king a petition for the confiscation of all the temporalities of the church, a piece of impudence for which he was promptly imprisoned.<sup>71</sup> On Michaelmas Day Bennett Woolman, described by Capgrave as a 'grete Lollarde,' was hanged for advocating the claims of the pseudo-Richard, Thomas Trumpington,<sup>72</sup> and on 8 Oct. a similar fate befell William Parchmyner, Oldcastle's former rescuer and protector.<sup>73</sup> In the meantime Archbishop Chicheley, in a provincial constitution concerning heresy, introduced several new measures, the most important of which provided for the appointment of inquisitorial commissions in every parish supposed to be tainted with the new views.<sup>74</sup> In the convocation in which the new enactment was promulgated two heretical priests—one of whom had been chaplain to Oldcastle—were brought up for trial. Both apparently soon recanted.<sup>75</sup>

According to Walsingham a plot against Henry was formed about the close of the year; the prime mover in it seems to

<sup>68</sup> James, *Poems*, p. 139 ff.

<sup>69</sup> *Gesta Henr. V.*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Walsingham, ii. 307; Wilkins, iii. 373; Riley, *Memorials*, p. 617; Gregory, p. 108.

<sup>71</sup> Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, p. 148; Capgrave, *De Illustr. Henr.* p. 121. The story is poorly attested, especially as Capgrave may have drawn from Elmham.

<sup>72</sup> Riley, *Memorials*, p. 638 ff.; Walsingham, ii. 317; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolaas), p. 105; Stow, p. 852.

<sup>73</sup> Riley, p. 641; *Chron. Lond., l.c.*; Stow, *l.c.* Cf. Rot. Claus. 4 Hen. V, m. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Wilkins, iii. 378.

<sup>75</sup> Reg. Chicheley, ii. ff. 46, 56, 320. Oldcastle's former chaplain certainly abjured. Probably his companion did the same, for we hear of no condemnation being issued against him.

have been a 'certain squire' of Oldcastle's, who hoped to achieve something substantial while the king was celebrating Christmas at Kenilworth. We are, however, not told precisely what the squire meant to do, or why the conspiracy failed.<sup>76</sup> Henry was clearly somewhat perturbed, and thought it advisable to revive popular zeal for orthodoxy by proclamations ordering Oldcastle's arrest and reminding all loyal subjects of the rewards to be gained through assiduity in this cause.<sup>77</sup> The king's departure for France in July 1417 was signalled by the reappearance of Lollard tracts.<sup>78</sup> In the early autumn the Scots laid siege to Berwick and Roxburgh, but a force raised by the regent Bedford from the country north of the Trent easily repulsed the invaders. Of course Oldcastle was assumed to have instigated all the trouble. He was believed to have had an interview with some Scottish magnate at Pontefract; opinions differ as to whether he met the duke of Albany or Sir William Douglas. He failed, it would appear, to induce the Scots to bring the pseudo-Richard into England, but succeeded in bribing them to attack the eastern march. It was also rumoured that indentures containing an agreement between Oldcastle and Albany had been seized. But the notices of the chroniclers are so vague, and their accounts so inconsistent, that little credence can be attached to the accusations.<sup>79</sup>

Soon afterwards the abbot of St. Albans received information that Oldcastle had arrived in the neighbourhood, and had taken up his quarters in the house of a serf of the abbey. A nocturnal raid by some of the abbot's servants failed to effect Sir John's capture, but led to the arrest of certain of his closest companions and the discovery in the serf's house of several English books 'full of blasphemy against the blessed Mary,' and of a few devotional works, out of which Sir John's reforming zeal had erased everything tending to the honour of the Virgin or the saints.<sup>80</sup> Oldcastle now made his way back to the Welsh march. His refuge

<sup>76</sup> Walsingham, ii. 317.

<sup>77</sup> Rot. Claus. 4 Hen. V, m. 7 d. The English form of the proclamation is printed in the appendix to Hearne's edition of Livius's *History*. The rewards differ slightly from those offered after the St. Giles's rising. The list of counties where the proclamation was published connects Oldcastle chiefly with the Midlands and the West.

<sup>78</sup> Otterbourne, p. 378; Elmham, *Lib. Metr.* p. 150.

<sup>79</sup> Walsingham, ii. 325; Otterbourne, p. 278; Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, p. 151. According to Elmham the Lollards used much strange talk about this time.

'Fingitur Helias Oldcastel, Rexque Ricardus  
Ennoc fertur, et est mortuus absque metu.'

<sup>80</sup> Walsingham, ii. 326. Walsingham was of course a St. Albans monk. Redmayne, p. 18, also gives the story, but has clearly derived it from Walsingham. He inserts it in quite a wrong place—immediately after his account of Oldcastle's escape from the Tower.

on this occasion was in the lonely district of Broniarth, near Welshpool, where he seems to have been sheltered at a farm house.<sup>81</sup> His knowledge of the district enabled him to reach his destination without mishap. But rumours of his arrival reached the ears of Sir Griffith Vaughan, lord of Burgedin, only a few miles away. Vaughan accordingly despatched two of his sons with a fairly large following to do their best to secure the outlaw. This time the attempt was successful. But 'babbling the Bible day and night' had apparently in no wise diminished Oldcastle's aptitude for martial exercises: he made 'gret defens,' handled some of his assailants very roughly, and was only taken prisoner when himself severely wounded. His captors led him off in triumph to Pool Castle, the seat of Edward Charleton, lord of Powys.<sup>82</sup>

Oldcastle's capture must have occurred towards the end of November 1417. On the 16th of that month parliament met.<sup>83</sup> News soon arrived of the apprehension of the long sought miscreant, and Bedford was asked to have him brought before the house.<sup>84</sup> The regent agreed. On 1 Dec. Charleton was ordered to bring his prisoner from Pool Castle to London,<sup>85</sup> but so severe were his wounds that he had to make the journey in a 'whirlicote' or horse-litter.<sup>86</sup> On 14 Dec. Oldcastle was brought before parliament. The record of his outlawry was read before him, and he was then asked if he had anything to say for himself.<sup>87</sup> According to Walsingham he forthwith began 'to preach concerning the mercy of God,' and to exhort his judges to prefer mercy to judgment, leaving vengeance to God alone. The chief justice, growing impatient; advised Bedford to put an end to Sir John's remarks, and he was accordingly told to give some adequate defence if he had any. After some thought the prisoner said that it really mattered very little to him whether he was condemned by any human agency, and used this remark as a peg on which to hang another discourse,

<sup>81</sup> *Arch. Camb.* 1st series, i. 47; *Montgomeryshire Collections*, p. 290.

<sup>82</sup> Walsingham, ii. 327; Capgrave, *De Illustr. Henr.* p. 122; Adam of Usk, p. 131; Redmayne, p. 18; *Arch. Camb. l. c.*; *Montgomeryshire Coll.* pp. 290, 294; *Engl. Chron.* 1377-1461, p. 46. Elmham (*Liber Metricus*, p. 158) gives a terrific account of the struggle, emanating largely from his own imagination. He says that Oldcastle fought like 'Behemoth,' but was finally brought to the ground by a woman, who broke his shin with a stool. Capgrave tells the same story, but appears to be drawing from Elmham.

<sup>83</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iv. 107.

<sup>84</sup> Walsingham, ii. 327.

<sup>85</sup> *Rot. Pat.* 5 Hen. V, m. 10 d. The writ is printed in the appendices to Blackburne's edition of Bale and Hearne's edition of Livius. Charleton was at parliament as a member of the upper house. He was ordered to convey the prisoner from Pool Castle in person. There seems to be no contemporary evidence for the statement in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* that Sir John Grey, Charleton's son-in-law, was sent for Oldcastle.

<sup>86</sup> *Engl. Chron.* 1377-1461, p. 46. Cf. Gregory.

<sup>87</sup> *Rot. Parl.* iv. 108; Walsingham, ii. 327.

also brought to an untimely end by the chief justice. Then Oldcastle, with a sudden flash of rage, declared that not one of those present was competent to judge him as long as his liege lord King Richard was alive in Scotland.<sup>88</sup> After this there was no need to prolong matters. At the request of the commons the members of the upper house condemned Oldcastle to be taken to the Tower, and thence to be drawn through London to St. Giles's Fields, where he was to be hanged and burnt hanging, as a traitor to king and God.<sup>89</sup> Without any delay the sentence was carried into effect. Oldcastle was hanged 'by a strong chain' on the new gallows near St. Giles's; a fire was kindled underneath, and his body was burnt, 'gallows and all.' Bedford, Exeter, and other lords are said to have been present, to satisfy themselves that their inveterate enemy had at last come to his end. A strange story was circulated that Oldcastle expected to rise again after three days; and his last words were supposed to have been addressed to Sir Thomas Erpingham, asking him to strive to procure toleration for the Lollards should this miracle actually come to pass. And so, without showing any fear or uttering any cry of pain, died Sir John Oldcastle, 'which in his dayes was heed of heretykes and Lollers.'<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Walsingham, ii. 328.

<sup>89</sup> *Rot. Parl.* and Walsingham, *l.c.* Elmham (*Liber Metricus*), p. 158, says that Bedford advised Oldcastle to repent and be confessed, promising him for this purpose any priest he might choose, an offer which he rejected with scorn. The long dissertation which Redmayne (p. 19 *seqq.*) puts into the mouth of Oldcastle is clearly the invention of the author.

<sup>90</sup> Walsingham, ii. 328; Otterbourne, p. 280; Elmham, *Liber Metricus*, p. 159; Adam of Usk, p. 181; Capgrave, *De Illustr. Henr.* p. 123; Redmayne, p. 22; Gregory, p. 116; *Chron. Lond.* (ed. Nicolas), pp. 106, 160; *Short Engl. Chron.* p. 56. It has often been stated that Oldcastle was suspended in chains and burnt alive; but the evidence renders it probable that he was hanged in the usual way, only his dead body being afterwards burnt. One or two additional facts may be mentioned here. Sir John's wife, who had for some reason been committed to the Tower when her husband's arrest became known, was set at liberty four days after his death, three knights—one of them Sir Thomas Erpingham—having given security that she would appear before the council if summoned (*Rot. Claus.* 5 Hen. V, m. 7). Her lands for the most part were soon restored to her (*Rot. Pat.* 5 Hen. V, m. 1 d.; but cf. *Rot. Parl.* v. 401). Before long she married her fifth husband, Sir Richard Harpeden, of Oxfordshire. As there was no issue of the union Joan Broke came into her mother's possessions on the latter's death in 1434 (*Inq. Post Mort.* 12 Hen. VI, no. 37). Oldcastle's eldest son, John, died before his father. Henry, Sir John's son by his second wife, made strenuous efforts to recover the family estates in Herefordshire, under the plea that they were held in fee tail. He was ultimately successful, but it took him long years to attain his end (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. VI, i. 547; *Rot. Pat.* 10 Hen. VI, m. 17; *Cal. Feudal Aids*, ii. 416). His son Henry was in parliament as knight of the shire for Herefordshire in 1437, 1442, and 1453 (*Return Parl.* i. 329, 333, 347). On his death without male heirs the Milbournes came into possession of his lands, which since then have passed to various families of no great importance (Robinson, *Castles*, p. 5). Of Oldcastle's daughters nothing is known, save that one of them married into the Kentish family of the Cliderowes, her husband being either the Richard Cliderowe mentioned above (p. 651 n. 64) or his son Roger (*Hasted, History of Kent*, iii. 677, 692; James, *Poems*, p. 187).

Little weight can be attached to the estimates of Oldcastle made by contemporary foes or later apologists: neither side was in a position to judge impartially of the facts. For the most part materials for an authentic portrait of the man must be gleaned from those passages of documents and chronicles where a plain tale is being told and the narrator has no immediate intention of pointing a moral. Friend and foe are agreed that Oldcastle was a 'manly knight,' *fortis viribus, operi martio satis idoneus*,<sup>91</sup> while Hoccleve lays special stress on his renown in the world of chivalry. His moral character was on the whole high. He was, it would seem, free from the grosser vices. His honesty was unquestioned by his most orthodox contemporaries.<sup>92</sup> That he was capable of evoking affection as well as respect is shown by Henry V's reluctance to surrender him to the clergy, and more clearly still by the efforts of his friends on his behalf even after he had been outlawed. On the other hand he had a violent temper, which was liable to burst out on occasions of crucial importance, and undoubtedly had something to do with the rapidity and completeness of his ruin. The report of his trial shows him discourteous, unconciliatory, and tactless. It might be urged that his conspiracy proves him to have been treacherous and callous—willing to shed the blood of his opponents and risk the lives of his followers in a hare-brained enterprise. But it is unjust to apply the moral standards of later ages to an act of rebellion at a time when revolts were common, when the reigning house had seized the throne a few years before by means of questionable tactics, and when success would give the rebels liberty of worship and the chance of a fair hearing.

Oldcastle's intellectual abilities were in no way remarkable. His learning, as far as we can judge, was small. His social position rather than any peculiar fitness made him the leader of the Lollard party. He undoubtedly encouraged and protected the members of the sect to the best of his ability; and his correspondence with Bohemian Wycliffites shows that his interests were not merely insular. But he seems to have formulated no systematic scheme for the propagation of the new doctrines, though his wide recognition

<sup>91</sup> Hoccleve, *op. cit.*; Walsingham, ii. 291.

<sup>92</sup> Walsingham, *l.c.*: *Erat iste Iohannes . . . regi, propter probitatem, carus et acceptus*. The second stanza of Hoccleve's poem shows what Oldcastle's former friends thought of his career:—

'Allas that thou that were a manly knight  
 And shoon full clear in famous worthynesse,  
 Standing in the favour of every wight,  
 Haast lost the style of Christenly prowesse  
 Among alle hem that stand in the cleernesse  
 Of good byleeue, and no man with the holdith  
 Saif cursid caitifs, heires of dirknesse.  
 For verray routhe of thee myn herte coldith.'

as leader of English Lollardy might have enabled him to put one into execution. In politics authentic traces of Oldcastle's influence are sought in vain. Nor can it be established that his judgment was of more weight in war than in council. His appointment as one of the leaders of the expedition of 1411 may indicate that he was of some repute as a captain. But he took no prominent share in the operations, and his presence in the force may simply have been due to his renown as a good fighting man. The tasks allotted to him during the Welsh rising were seldom of a nature to make many demands on his intellectual powers; all that was needed for their successful execution was common sense and integrity. The faulty nature of Oldcastle's dispositions in the St. Giles's rising is perhaps a fair evidence of his powers as a strategist. In connexion with this point it is worth noting that he never acquired the right of hoisting a banneret's pennon, but remained a simple knight bachelor to the end of his days.<sup>93</sup>

Sir John's mind was probably one of those slow to grasp new ideas, but tenacious of anything once assimilated. Once a Lollard he was always a Lollard. During his wanderings he seems to have become somewhat of a fanatic; and it is possible that towards the end of his life he was a victim of religious mania. At his examination before parliament, if Walsingham is to be believed, he could do nothing but preach; he is said to have talked wildly of some relation between himself and Elijah;<sup>94</sup> and it is unlikely that his prophecy concerning his resurrection was invented by his enemies. Yet at a time when lofty ideals were in little favour he strove to live uprightly and serve his God and king. Destiny placed him in a position for which nature had but poorly fitted him, and bade him fight an uphill battle on behalf of a decaying cause. In his endeavour he ruined his career and ultimately lost his life; and by his attempt to restore the waning hopes of his sect he did more to discredit its teaching than any one before or after him.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Rot. Pat. 2 Hen. V, p. 1, m. 17.

<sup>94</sup> The Lollards, however, were fond of mystical language, and some of their favourite formulas may have been misinterpreted by their opponents.

<sup>95</sup> The following addenda to the first part of this article may be given. In November 1405 Oldcastle, with Lord Grey of Codnor, and others, was commissioned to check the conveyance of supplies by disloyal Englishmen to the Welsh rebels (Rot. Pat. 7 Hen. IV, p. 1, m. 80 d.) In the same year, as well as in 1406, he was a justice of the peace for Herefordshire (Rot. Pat. 6 Hen. IV, p. 1, m. 33 d; cf. *ante*, p. 437, where, for 'two years later,' 'towards the close of that year' should be read.