



JOHN WYCLIFFE.

JOHN WYCLIFFE

PATRIOT AND REFORMER

"THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION"

A BIOGRAPHY

BY

JOHN LAIRD WILSON ^k

AUTHOR OF "THE BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR," ETC.

"The Truth will conquer"

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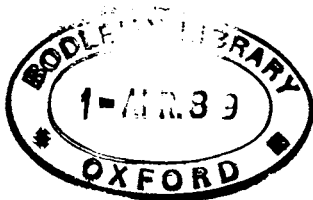
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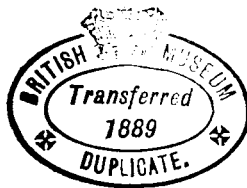
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PREFACE.

THE object of this volume is to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of John Wycliffe, the greatest of all the Reformers before the Reformation. A well-condensed biography, reflecting the character and work of the man, revealing his relations to the times in which he lived and to the times which immediately followed, and embodying the results of the latest research and the latest criticisms, might, it was thought, be the most appropriate as well as most useful tribute to the Reformer's memory. In the following pages an attempt has been made to produce such a book.

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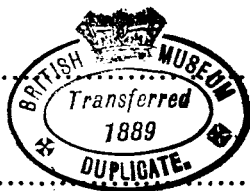
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JOHN WYCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE story of the life of John Wycliffe is not to be told here for the first time. Since the publication, in 1554, of John Foxe's "History of the Church and its Chief Persecutions in all Europe, from the Times of Wycliffe down to the Present Age," a work better known in later years as Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," the story has undoubtedly been often repeated. In Foxe's time a cloud had come over Wycliffe's reputation. It would be wrong to imagine, however, that his name or his work had been forgotten. His career was too public and too pronounced to pass soon or easily out of the popular recollection; and it is safe enough to say that during all the years which have since intervened, the Reformer has never been wholly lost sight of. At the same time, it has to be admitted that it is only in comparatively recent years his life and work have begun to receive that attention to which they have always been entitled.

It is generally conceded, outside of the pale of the

Roman Catholic Church, that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was a good thing in itself, and that it has proved a fruitful source of good to the modern world. If it is to be so regarded, then we are under a debt of gratitude to all who were in any way helpful in bringing it about. We owe much to Luther and to the Reformers of his own and later days—the men who made the Reformation a triumphant fact. But we are indebted also to the men who played the parts of Reformers before the Reformation—those men, but for whom the triumphs of the sixteenth century might not have been possible; and among those men, great and deserving as many of them were, it is no exaggeration to say John Wycliffe stands lofty and alone. In the list of English Reformers no greater name has since appeared; and among Reformers generally he is surpassed only by one. The first place is ungrudgingly given to Martin Luther; but it is given to him because he was successful in accomplishing the greater work, not because he was the greater man. It was doubtless well that these men appeared when and where they did. But if it had been otherwise—if they had been transposed, Luther appearing in England and Wycliffe in Germany, and if the order of time had been reversed, Luther appearing in the fourteenth century and Wycliffe in the sixteenth—the Reformation might not have been greatly different either in its main features or in its results. It was Wycliffe who, more than any other, sowed the seed which ripened into the Reformation harvest, both in England and in Germany. Notwithstanding the repressive measures which were adopted against his followers, and the direct and persistent efforts made to efface all traces of his work and to obliterate his memory, there was still a remnant left, and his doctrines were remembered and his influ-

ence was felt, when the great revival came.* Dr. Lozerth has convincingly shown that Wycliffe, whom he regards as one of the most original minds England ever produced, was the true intellectual and religious progenitor of Huss, and that the latter was literally the disciple of the former, to such an extent that if there had been no Wycliffe there would have been no Huss.† “John Wycliffe,” says Lechler, “appears to us to be the centre of the whole pre-Reformation history. In him meet a multitude of converging lines from the centuries which preceded him; and from him again go forth manifold influences, like wave-pulses, which spread themselves widely on every side, and with a force so persistent that we are able to follow the traces of their presence to a later date than the commencement of the German Reformation. Such a man deserves to have a historical portraiture which shall aim to do justice to the greatness of his personality and to the epochal importance of his work.” †

It is somewhat humiliating, however, to think that wellnigh four hundred years were allowed to elapse from the time of Wycliffe's death before anything like a satisfactory attempt was made to do justice to the Reformer's memory. The first regular biography of Wycliffe was the work of John Lewis, a clergyman of

* In his *Areopagitica* Milton says: “Had it not been for the obstinate perseverance of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wycliffe, to suppress him as a schismatic or innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Huss and Jerome—no, nor the name of Luther or Calvin—had ever been known: the glory of reforming all our neighbors had been completely ours.” In another place he speaks of him as one “honored by God to be the first preacher of a general Reformation to all Europe.”

† Wycliffe and Huss. Evans's translation. London, 1884.

‡ Wiclif and his Precursors, vol. 1, p. 14.

the Church of England, and an industrious student and collector of literary material. Lewis's book was not all that might have been wished. In a literary point of view it was defective; but it had special value because of the wealth of material it brought together from public archives and from manuscript sources. It had the distinctive merit of setting the example of work in the right direction. Wycliffe was to be known only through his works; and these had been buried for the better part of four centuries. Lewis is to be regarded as the parent of the modern Wycliffe revival, although over a hundred years were allowed to elapse before his example was imitated. The next laborer in the same field was Dr. Robert Vaughan (1828). The fruit of long-continued and anxious study of the Wycliffe manuscripts, particularly of the English sermons and tracts, his life of the Reformer was a great improvement upon that of Lewis. The value of Dr. Vaughan's labors in this field is not to be overestimated. To all subsequent students they have proved a help and a stimulus. His influence was immediately felt on the Continent of Europe as well as in England; and historical students of an ecclesiastical turn of mind began to feel themselves drawn, as if by an irresistible force, to the times immediately preceding the Reformation, and to the lives and labors of the men who fought in the darker days, but who nevertheless contributed to the final victory.

After an interval other works followed. Wycliffe's English Bible (Clarendon Press), edited by Mr. Forshall and Sir Frederick Madden, with some valuable additional matter by the editors, appeared in 1850. In 1853 Dr. Vaughan reappeared in the same field with "John de Wycliffe—A Monograph," in one volume. "Fasciculi

Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico" (Bundle of Tares . . . with wheat), a number of documents, supposed to have been collected by Thomas Netter, of Walden, a famous controversialist in his day, and a vigorous, but withal not unfair opponent of the doctrines of the Reformer, was issued in 1858. The "Triologus," with an amended text and supplement, by Professor Lechler, of the University of Leipzig, was published at Oxford in 1869; and during the years 1869-71 appeared "Select English Works," in three volumes, consisting of sermons and tracts of the Reformer, edited by the Rev. Thomas Arnold. In 1873, Lechler published, in German, his Life of Wycliffe, the first really satisfactory biography of the Reformer. An English translation of this work, by the late Dr. Lorimer, was published in London in 1878. Lechler comes up to his own high ideal. He gives us a historical portraiture of the man and his work—a portraiture which magnifies but not unjustly the personality of the Reformer, and which gives his work such commanding relief as to make it the distinctive work of the epoch. The English translation has a special value, on account of the translator's notes. Another volume of the "English Works," edited by F. D. Matthew, and completing the series, appeared in 1879. The new Wycliffe Society has become responsible for the publication of the Reformer's Latin works. Of these last, two volumes were published at Oxford last year, under the editorial superintendence of Dr. Rudolf Buddensieg, of Dresden, the same who has since given us that instructive little volume, "John Wiclif—Patriot and Reformer." The revived interest in Wycliffe and his work has been evinced during the present year by the publication of numerous useful works, but all of them of less pretension and of less value than those we have named.

If honors have come late to Wycliffe, it is nevertheless gratifying to know that they have come, and that they have come in satisfactory shape. That they were long deferred admits of easy explanation. Circumstances stood in Wycliffe's way. The times in which he lived were very different from ours. They were very different from those of the later Reformers. His was not the age of the newspaper, with its manifold and multiplied machinery for collecting, distributing, and preserving knowledge. It was not even the age of the printed book. The printing-press had not yet been invented. No literary revival was yet experienced in England. It is wonderful, considering the means at his disposal, that Wycliffe accomplished so much. It is even more wonderful that so many of his literary productions have been preserved to our time. It is not wonderful, however, that soon after his death—at least comparatively soon—his works disappeared to a large extent from public view. For some years before his death, as we shall see by and by, not from any fault of his, but because he was forced into the shade and practically silenced, Oxford, where he was wont to address wondering and admiring crowds, saw him no more. His labors were abundant and persevering as before, but his voice was heard only in his own church at Lutterworth. His "poor priests," reduced in numbers, and in constant and growing dread of the ecclesiastical authorities, were hindered in the discharge of their duty, and limited in the area of their operations. After his death, his followers revealed for a season both numbers and strength, under the name of Lollards; but, the enemy being strong, and they themselves not being always too wise, they were forced into disrepute; and, in the course of little more than one generation, the hand of persecu-

tion having fallen heavily upon them, and the law of England having been changed so as to make heresy punishable with death, the Wycliffites or Lollards passed almost completely out of public view. As Wycliffism became identified with heresy, now that heresy, for the first time in English history, pointed to the stake or the gallows, the productions of the Reformer would be shunned by all, except by the lingering remnant of his own disciples ; and even among them fear would suggest the propriety of concealment. In such circumstances the labors of the copyist would be discontinued ; and what remained of the Reformer's writings—his learned treatises, his tracts, and his sermons—would gradually find their way into obscure and undisturbed corners. This is, in fact, precisely what happened. The generation which knew Wycliffe passed away ; and a generation arose which knew him not. The sentiments which he had created, continued to exist ; and there was still a lingering remnant of a chosen and faithful band, which had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the sentiment was weak, and the remnant was small.

The Reformation came after the lapse of a century and a half ; but much as the Reformation owed to Wycliffe indirectly, the spirit which gave it life and energy was not evoked by the faint echoes of the departed priest of Lutterworth, but by the thundering tones of the living voice of the monk of Wittenberg ; and the line of reform adopted and followed out by the Reformers of the sixteenth century in England was not exactly the line of reform indicated by Wycliffe. Thus it came to pass that the Reformation did not lead to a revival of Wycliffism. That revival was not to come until the historical treasures, long hidden in the great national and university archives, were yielded up to the inspection of

the historical student. The revival has come at last ; and it is the object of this book to aid in giving to the revival, in this quincennial year, somewhat of meaning and force.

Many lives of Wycliffe have appeared during the present year, but they are all of them fragmentary. The story, as told by Lechler, is still the most complete and the most satisfactory. It is now and must remain for some time to come *the* life of Wycliffe for the student and the scholar. But it is burdened with critical details, and ill adapted for the general reader. Our object has been to combine fulness with simplicity ; and it is hoped that this brief life of "The Morning Star of the Reformation," while not without its use to the few, will be intelligible and attractive to the many.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY DAYS.

Birth—Parentage—The Family Seat—Local Surroundings—Educational Influences—The Family Name.

It is characteristic, to a certain extent, of the England of Wycliffe's days, and in keeping with the comparative oblivion into which, for so long a period, his name and work were consigned, that we are absolutely without any facts regarding the Reformer's earliest years. As we have no record, we are left very much to conjecture, and to the converging force of circumstantial evidence.

The evidence, bearing upon the birthplace, is fairly conclusive. For the earliest statement on the subject, we are indebted to Leland, a famous scholar in his day, and the acknowledged father of English antiquarians. Leland had special opportunities and special experience—opportunities and experience of such a character as to give value to his statement. He was commissioned by Henry VIII. to travel throughout England and Wales, to visit all the towns and cities, all the cathedrals and monasteries, all the schools and colleges, to inspect the libraries and archives, and, by these means, to collect material for a history of the kingdom. Leland spent six years in travelling and making the necessary investigations. He spent six years more in arranging his material and preparing it for publication. He died, however, before his work was accomplished ; and it was not until

1710-12 that the fruit of his labor, the "Itinerarium," was published, at Oxford. Leland's statement, which must have been recorded not later than one hundred and fifty years after Wycliffe's death, is as follows: "They say that John Wyclif, the heretic, was born at Spresswell, a good mile off from Richmond." In what are called his "Collections," Leland, in speaking of "Wyclif" in the county of York, says that "Wyclif" the heretic sprang from that place. It was for a time thought that the double statement involved a contradiction. This difficulty, however, has been abandoned, as it seems clear that, in the one case, Leland is referring to Wycliffe's birthplace, while in the other he is pointing to the seat of his family. This, however, was not the only difficulty which had to be got rid of. In the North Riding of Yorkshire, where Richmond is situated, there was no such place as Spresswell. There was a place by the name of Hipswell or Ipswell; and it was supposed that Leland might have confounded the names. It was even questioned whether Leland had ever visited the district, and whether any value was to be attached to his testimony. This difficulty has also been satisfactorily disposed of. According to evidence furnished by a Mr. W. W. Chapman, and which was first given to the general public by Dr. Vaughan, there was formerly, not far from the river Tees, which separates the North Riding from the County of Durham, a town called Richmond, of much greater antiquity than the existing Richmond; and in topographical maps of a former date the place has since been found under the name of Old Richmond. According to the same source, there was still to be found, early in the eighteenth century, a village by the name of Spresswell or Spesswell, in which the latest conspicuous feature was an old chapel. In this chapel

were married Mr. Chapman's great-grandparents, William Yarker and Penitent Johnson. They were the last couple married in the chapel, for it soon afterward fell to the ground. These facts Mr. Chapman had from the lips of his own grandfather, John Yarker. Evidence of a similar character is furnished by a Mr. Bilton, whose grandfather, he tells us, remembered the marriage of the above-named parties. It would thus seem as if Leland's accuracy in regard to Richmond and Spreswell were fully vindicated. The plough has passed over the site of the village, nor is any trace to be found of the old chapel; but Barford-on-the-Tees marks as near as may be the site of Old Richmond.

Leland undoubtedly reported from hearsay; but his report is sustained by the fact that the immediate neighborhood was the native home of the Wycliffes. Scarcely more than half a mile from what was Spreswell is the parish of Wycliffe. The old parish church, with its ruined tower and its ivy-clad walls, still stands on the banks of the Tees, and forms a conspicuous as well as an attractive feature of the landscape. On elevated ground not far from the church is the old manor-house, which was occupied by the owners of the estate, the Wycliffes of Wycliffe, down to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when it passed by marriage into the family of Tunstall. On the left bank of the Tees, in the county of Durham, and at no great distance from the Wycliffe manor-house, are to be seen the majestic ruins of Barnard Castle, the ancient home of the illustrious but unfortunate House of Balliol—a family made famous by its connection with Scotland and the Scottish crown, and whose name is honorably perpetuated in one of the noblest colleges of Oxford. At this castle, until a comparatively recent date, lived another branch of the family

of Wycliffe ; and tradition has it that John Wycliffe, the Reformer, sprang from this branch.

It amounts to a moral certainty, therefore, that Wycliffe was born at Spresswell, near Old Richmond. It is to-day a beautiful and strongly-marked country. Hill and dale, rocky highlands and fertile valleys, woods and glades, hoary ruins and donjon towers, rivers and streams, and waterfalls give variety as well as beauty to the landscape. Nor has the muse of heroic song been neglectful of the Wycliffe region. Rokeby is one of its prominent features ; and in his poem of that name Sir Walter Scott has enbalmèd the natural beauties of the entire surrounding country, and to the attractions which belong to it as the birthplace and early home of the first Reformer has added the charms of his own incomparable genius. The people are worthy of the soil and its scenery—industrious, thrifty, stout-hearted, and vigorous alike in body and in mind—good specimens of the best Anglo-Saxon stock. In its main natural features, making certain necessary allowances, the country must have been somewhat the same in Wycliffe's time ; and the better characteristics of the present inhabitants of the North Riding, it is not ungenerous to conclude, would, in those earlier days, be only more strongly pronounced. The Wycliffes are not found among the barons or great Norman lords. They belonged to the lower but older nobility, and were identified with that movement which was gradually bringing the native Englishman to the surface of affairs. The head of the family, about the time of Wycliffe's birth, was Roger de Wycliffe, a prominent man in his day, and one who had done the king good service in his wars with the Scots. An ingeniously constructed pedigree makes John Wycliffe the son of this Roger. On this, however, no reliance can be

placed. All that is certain is that he was of the Wycliffe family, and that he belonged to the older English race, which had in it a large intermixture of Teutonic elements.

Of this latter probably too much has been made. The great religious revolution of the sixteenth century was undoubtedly Teutonic in its origin, Teutonic in its main characteristics, and in its triumphs limited to the Teutonic peoples. Among no other peoples did the Reform doctrines make great or satisfactory progress ; and among them only have they found a permanent lodgment. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the movement of which Wycliffe was the very life and soul should be regarded as Teutonic, and that whatever honor or glory belonged to it should be claimed by that race. Milman properly enough attributes to the influence of the Teuton those encroachments which were being made in England on the Norman despotism of the crown and on the Latin despotism of the Church, and speaks of Wycliffe as " the harbinger, at least, if not the first apostle, of Teutonic Christianity ;" and Lechler claims for the German element of the English population the honor of the whole fourteenth century movement. It must be regarded, however, as a sort of offset to Wycliffe's own zeal in the cause of Reform, that his family in his own time, down through all the later struggles of the Reformation, and even to the last remained steadfast adherents of the Roman Church. It is a living proof of the strength of their convictions and also of the influence they wielded, that one half of the village of Wycliffe is Roman Catholic to this day, and that while the members of the Anglican Establishment claim the old church on the banks of the Tees, the Catholic descendants of those who yielded to the influence and followed the example of

their landlord worship in a chapel built for them close to the manor-house.

The date of Wycliffe's birth has been less satisfactorily determined. It is known that he died at the close of the year 1384. It was taken for granted by Lewis, his first biographer, that the Reformer at the time of his death was sixty years of age. The year 1324 was thus fixed upon as the year when Wycliffe first saw the light. The example thus set has been uninquiringly followed. But we are totally without any documentary evidence on the subject. How old Wycliffe was when he died we know not. It is quite as likely that he was sixty-five as that he was only sixty; and it is by no means inconsistent with the general facts to suppose him to have lived to a much older age. Lechler, who has made a careful study of the man and his works, is of opinion that when he died Wycliffe must have been on the verge of seventy, and that, therefore, his birth may be antedated several years. The traditional Wycliffe, toward the end of his career, is a patriarchal man, venerable for years as for character. His death was brought on by a paralytic stroke, the second from which he had suffered in two years. If he was born in 1324 he must have experienced the first stroke at the age of fifty-eight—an early but not an impossible age for such an experience. His own language seems to imply that he had reached much more than a merely ripe age. In one of his Saints' Day Sermons, which must have been delivered between the years 1378 and 1380, the Reformer takes occasion to refer to his early studies and the manner in which he prosecuted them, and prefaces the remark by saying, "When I was yet young," a phrase not commonly on the lips of a man of fifty-four or fifty-six years of age. We are inclined to the opinion that Wycliffe when he died was

well on toward seventy, and that he was born at least four or five years before 1324.

The uncertainty which attaches to the place and date of Wycliffe's birth hangs over the entire period of his boyhood. It is somewhat noteworthy that in all his voluminous writings there is nothing which can be called autobiographical. It cannot be said that there is any mystery; but there is no record. How Wycliffe spent his earliest years, and what were his immediate surroundings, we are left to conjecture. We know that the family to which he belonged were lords of the Manor of Wycliffe. Such relationship implied many important advantages. It is reasonable to conclude that such a mind as Wycliffe's was in riper years would not be dull, slow, or unimpressionable in childhood or early boyhood. His "daily teachers" would be "woods and rills, the silence that is in the starry sky, the sleep that is among the lonely hills," and all else around him. His writings abound with patriotic references; and the seeds of the patriotic sentiment are, we know, sown in tenderest infancy. The teaching of home would in time be supplemented by the story and folk-lore of the neighborhood. A teacher might be found for young Wycliffe in the parish priest. The parish or public school did not yet exist; but there were schools connected with the cathedrals and the monasteries. Egglestone Abbey, which was then in a flourishing condition, was not far distant; and destined, as he was, presumably, for the priesthood, it is not at all improbable, as Dr. Vaughan suggests, that the yet standing walls of the old abbey may be the very walls which gave back the sound of Wycliffe's voice, and that the lonely but beautiful road which leads to-day from Egglestone to Wycliffe may be the very road over which "the Reformer exercised himself as a daily

pedestrian during the 'satchel' period of his history." Nor would his native scenery be without its educating power; for scenery has its influence as well as its charms; and its influence is felt before its charms are appreciated. At no period is this influence so effective as in the days of early youth. The heaven which the youthful imagination pictures for itself is, in most cases, but the scenery of childhood idealized, expanded, glorified; and in this particular the child is but the father of the man. To this general rule we may rest assured Wycliffe would form no exception. Nor was the scenery amid which he was reared wanting in those qualities fitted to make deep and lasting impressions on a youthful and susceptible mind. Hill and dale, wooded slope and grassy mead, frowning castle-towers, streams and rural brooks and waterfalls, with their murmurings musical, the Tecs itself, embowered in deep woods, yet beautifying the landscape with its "summer vapors," its "silver mists," and its "glittering spray"—all these told upon the child and the youth; and all of them told for good. The presumption is that Wycliffe remained in his native district until he went to Oxford. His English tracts and sermons and his New Testament are easily understood by the Yorkshire rustics of the present day. Dr. Vaughan draws the inference that Wycliffe lived long enough in his native district to contract the peculiarities of Yorkshire speech, and that these peculiarities he was never able wholly to unlearn. The inference is just as natural, and probably more satisfactory, that what are called the peculiarities of Yorkshire speech are forms of the old English, which was common in Wycliffe's time, and which, obsolete elsewhere, has maintained a lingering existence in the north.

The proper spelling of Wycliffe's name has been and

still is the cause of some dispute. Vaughan had told us that he found the word in twenty different forms. Lechler discovered as many as twenty-eight varieties in the writings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and he was aware that he had not exhausted the number. Buddenseig assures us that in the manuscripts and chronicles of the same period he has found as many as fifty forms of the name.* The explanation is to be found in the wretched condition of orthography in the middle ages. Proper names were spelled and written very much at the will of the individual. No law was observed. No authority was recognized. Setting aside the great mass of spellings, the difficulty in the case of Wycliffe's name resolves itself into the two questions—whether it shall be *i* or *y* in the first syllable, and whether it shall be *clif* or *cliffe* in the second. The second question is unimportant, as it turns upon no principle. *Cliff* is used in its ordinary sense—a steep or elevated spot. *Wy* signifies little river or brook. Wycliffe thus means the “cliff by the water”—a name which aptly designates the hamlet from which the Reformer took his name. He was John of Wycliffe. “Wycliffe” is the name of the hamlet, the *Wȳ* being pronounced long. “Wycliffe Hall” in Oxford is similarly spelt and pronounced. “Wiclif,” however, is the form used in the document in which Edward III. nominates the commissioners who were to meet and negotiate with the Papal legates at Bruges—a document which bears date July 26th, 1374. The same spelling is found in a document of Oxford University, of a date eleven years earlier. This spelling, in the absence of any document bearing the Reformer's own signature, is reckoned authoritative by German scholars generally.

* Letter to *Christian World*, June 26th, 1884.

In view of the etymology of the word, the accepted name of the place, and general English usage, we prefer the form we have used hitherto ; and we shall continue to use it in these pages.

CHAPTER III.

STUDENT LIFE AT OXFORD.

Wycliffe Entered at Balliol—The Nations—North and South—The Course of Study—The Liberal Arts—Theology—Proficiency.

IN Wycliffe's days, as now, England had her two great national universities—Oxford and Cambridge. Of the two, Oxford was the more famous. Universities as yet were not numerous; and most of them, if we except Paris and Bologna, Oxford and Cambridge, were still young. In the strictly modern sense, they would hardly be called universities at all. They were rather great schools or gymnasia. In England, as we have seen already, schools, in the proper sense of the word, were scarce; and such as did exist were, for the most part, connected with the monasteries and cathedrals. If education was to be had, it must be had at one or other of the great national seats of learning.

It resulted from this state of things that the attendance at the universities was large. Compared, indeed, with present times, the attendance was something wonderful. It is claimed, on good authority, that at Oxford, before the visitation of the great plague, which thinned the population and otherwise disturbed the habits of the people, there were sometimes as many as thirty thousand scholars—"an exaggeration," says Hallam, "which seems to imply that the actual number was very great." About the same period there were thirteen thousand students

at Bologna. For this period we are without figures for Paris, but the presumption is that the attendance there was larger than that at either Oxford or Bologna; and we know that in 1453, at the death of Charles VII., the University contained twenty-five thousand students. So large a body of young men, requiring instruction in the different departments of learning, implied the presence at the University of an immense number of grown-up men, in the character of professors or teachers; and in addition to these there were then, as now, many resident members—men not wholly occupied in the work of tuition, professional scholars, engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, and concerned in the management of the corporation. Of these last we have a survival, both at Oxford and Cambridge, in the Fellows of the different colleges. The mediæval university was thus a populous hive; and in spite of the peculiarity of the occupation, it presented a lively and industrious scene.

It consists with what has been said, that of the multitude of students many of them were very young. Boys were sent to the University frequently at the early age of ten years. The practice was injurious, as it tended to keep down the standard of education. Hence we find Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, a prominent Oxonian in his day, a reformer in spirit, and warmly attached to his Alma Mater, complaining bitterly of the youth and inexperience of large numbers of the students, and asserting that many young people under fourteen years of age were considered members of the University. It was Wycliffe's good fortune to be sent to Oxford, but at what date we know not for certain. That he was sent at too early an age we have no reason to believe. Until recently, the received opinion was that his residence at Oxford began in 1340, when he was in his seventeenth

year. Lechler, who is sustained by Lorimer, concludes that he must have come to the University much earlier, probably in the year 1335, when in his fifteenth or sixteenth year. These later figures, of course, are based on the assumption that the Reformer was born in 1319 or 1320.

Important as it was as a seat of learning, Oxford was not in Wycliffe's time the pretentious place which it has since become. Its buildings were much less numerous, and its architecture was plain. Of the many colleges and halls, with their grand and imposing exteriors and their magnificent equipments, which constitute the greatest seat of learning the world has ever known, five only were yet in existence. These were Merton, founded in 1274; Balliol, 1260-82; Exeter, 1314; Oriel, 1324; and University College, 1332. It was not until 1340 that Queen's was added to the list. Queen's owes its existence to Sir Robert Eggesfield, one of the Court chaplains, under Edward III. Eggesfield was a native of Cumberland; and the college was intended for the benefit of northern students. Sir Robert was greatly encouraged and aided by Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III., who contributed largely toward the foundation; and the name of Queen's was given to it by way of compliment to her Majesty. These colleges were founded, in the first instance, for the benefit of poor scholars. It was not till afterward that they became, in addition to this, boarding-houses for students in good circumstances.

To which of the existing colleges Wycliffe attached himself when he first went up to Oxford has latterly become matter of some dispute. The old traditional story had it that he was first a student of Queen's, that he was afterward transferred to Merton, of which he became

a Fellow and office-holder in the shape of postmaster, and that later he was promoted to the Presidency of Balliol. This was the story accepted by Lewis and adhered to by Vaughan and others, up until the appearance of Lechler's work. There is positively no evidence connecting Wycliffe with Queen's as a student. The records of the college go no further back than 1347. The name of Wycliffe does not appear in them until 1363, when he figures merely as the renter of some chambers in the college, a relation, which appears to have been maintained for nearly twenty years, or as long as his connection with the University, as a corporation, lasted. This relation to the college is, no doubt, suggestive; but if Lechler's view be accepted, whatever may have been his subsequent relation to Queen's, it is impossible that Wycliffe could have been entered a student in that college when he first joined the university. When Queen's was opened, the young commoner would already be a student of five years' standing.

Claims have been advanced in favor of both Merton and Balliol; and these, it has to be admitted, are not so easily set aside. It is on record that John Wycliffe was Fellow and Postmaster of Merton in 1356. It is also on record that John Wycliffe was Warden or Master of Balliol in 1360. Were there *two* John Wycliffes or only *one*? Was the Wycliffe of Merton in 1356 and the Wycliffe of Balliol in 1360 one and the same person? or were they two separate persons? These questions cannot be answered definitely. We know that at that time at Oxford there was another John Wycliffe—John Wycliffe of Mayfield, a name which will come up again later on in this work. We know also that John Wycliffe, the Reformer, was in 1360 Master of Balliol; but we do not know for certain whether it was he or John

Wycliffe of Mayfield who, in 1356, was Fellow and Postmaster of Merton. So far as the record is concerned, and so far as we have any kind of positive evidence, the last question remains unsettled.

In determining this question, light has been sought from the character and antecedents of the colleges themselves and from the known or supposed affiliation of Wycliffe and his family. Both the colleges named had their attractions and their recommendations. Of the two, Merton, counting from the completion of the foundations, was the older—one of the oldest institutions in Oxford. It was perhaps the more famous. A long array of illustrious scholars and teachers had shed upon it the glory of their names. But Balliol was not without distinction. If second at all, it was second only to Merton; and the researches and discoveries of late years show that Balliol has a right to dispute some of the honors which for centuries have been accorded to her rival. It had been founded by the Balliols of Barnard Castle, a family, as we have seen already, directly connected with Wycliffe's own immediate neighborhood. Barnard Castle was only some five miles distant from Spresswell. It was natural that some sort of connection should have continued to exist between the college and the native seat of its founder; and that a connection of a close and intimate kind had been maintained we are not left in doubt. Presentations were made to the parish of Wycliffe in 1361, and in 1369. On both occasions the presentation was made by John Wycliffe of Wycliffe, the patron; and in each case the presentee was a Balliol man. The presentee in 1361 was William Wycliffe, a Fellow of Balliol. The presentee in 1369 was John Hugate, at the time Master of Balliol. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Balliol offered to

Wycliffe some special advantages. Up to this point the presumptive evidence in favor of Balliol is certainly not weaker than that in favor of Merton. But there is another argument which greatly strengthens the claims of the former college. It was the custom of the mediæval universities to divide themselves into what were called *nations*, according to the countries, provinces, or nationalities from which the students were drawn. In some of the British and European universities the custom remains to this day. In some cases there were as many as four nations. In Oxford, however, there were only two—the northern and the southern. The northerners were known as *Boreales*, the southerners as *Australes*. It might have been taken for granted that Wycliffe would rank himself with the northern students. But on this point there is no doubt, as it is positively stated by Walsingham that the Reformer was a *Borealis*. We have already seen that Balliol was founded by a northern man for northern students. In one of his original notes, appended to his translation of Lechler's great work, Dr. Lorimer has very conclusively proved not only that Balliol was distinctively a northern college, but that there was during Wycliffe's time at the University, as there had been often before, a strongly pronounced rivalry of sentiment—a rivalry which at one time found expression in violence and open secession; and that just as Merton was the focus of the southern sentiment, Balliol was the focus of the northern. Such being the case, is it likely that young Wycliffe, either from personal preference or through the influence of his friends, would be connected with Merton? The force of this argument is not to be gainsaid; and it is, indeed, difficult to resist Lorimer's conclusion that there is a high "degree of probability,"

not only that Wycliffe was never a student of Queen's, but that he was never connected in any capacity with Merton, and that he was all along, from the time when he first came up to the University until the date of his election to the Mastership of his college, a Balliol man.

On the subject of Wycliffe's studies at Oxford, although we have but little special information of any value, we are not wholly in the dark. We know what was the course of training followed at the time. The ordinary course of study was covered by the "liberal arts." To-day the term "arts" has the same meaning at some of the old universities that it had in mediæval times. The term includes the entire course, entitling to the degree of M.A. It does not include any of the professional courses—law, medicine, or theology. In Wycliffe's time it was divided into two parts—the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium*. The *Trivium* embraced grammar, dialectics, and rhetoric; and in the *Quadrivium* were included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The *Trivium* was sometimes also called the *Artes Sermocinales* or Logic; and the students, in this part of the general course, *Logici*. To the *Quadrivium* studies, on the other hand, were given the name "Physics," and sometimes they were called the "Mathematical Arts." The usual time allotted to these two departments of study was for the *Trivium* two years, and for the *Quadrivium* two years; but the rule was no more absolute then than now. The terms might be longer or shorter as personal likings, the desire of friends, or other causes might determine.

From what Wycliffe afterward became, it may well be taken for granted that he was a diligent student, and that both the regular departments of study had for him special attractions. His works prove him to have been a

proficient in dialectics. It was, indeed, the acuteness and brilliancy of his dialectical genius which secured for him great fame among his contemporaries. But for his admirable skill in debate, he never would have acquired the power which he wielded at Oxford. But neither was he indifferent to the value of the mathematical studies. Of his fondness for natural science he has himself told us in a passage already referred to. "When I was still young," he says, "and addicted myself to a great variety of pursuits, I made extensive collections from manuals on optics, on the properties of light, etc." His writings abound with illustrations drawn from this source. "At one time it is arithmetic or geometry which must do him service in illustrating certain truths and relations; at another time it is physical and chemical laws which he applies to illuminate moral and religious truths. And not only in scientific essays is this the case, or only in sermons preached before the University, but even in his English sermon he makes unhesitating use of such illustrations."* At the close of the *Trivium* studies the student was supposed to be qualified for the degree of Bachelor of Arts; and at the close of those of the *Quadrivium* he was entitled, if properly qualified, to the higher degree of Master of Arts.

The career of the future Reformer at the University was not to be ended by a mere course of secular study. It has already been assumed that Wycliffe came to Oxford with the view of being prepared for the work of the ministry. Of course assumption is not proof; and the youth from Spresswell may have arrived at the University, like many others both before and since, with no more definite purpose than to obtain a liberal education.

* Lechler, vol. i., p. 138.

To theology, however, he gave himself. From the seven liberal arts he passed to what was then, at least, considered a higher course of study. If theology was not the very highest of all departments of study; it is enough that it was then so regarded; and it is undeniable that it was by way of distinction the sphere in which all other studies could be turned to good account. In what other line could the accomplished scholar and the skilled dialectician find similar scope for the display of his learning, the exhibition and exercise of his powers? Nor is it to be forgotten that the priestly office was yet deemed the highest and the most honorable in human society. No other was so sure a stepping-stone to high official preferment. To the ambitious ecclesiastic, the highest offices in the State and the highest offices in the Church were equally open. It would, of course, be ungenerous to suppose that in giving himself to the study of theology Wycliffe was not acting in perfect accordance with his religious feelings. There is no evidence, however, that either religion or ambition was the dominant force in determining his mind in this direction. The impelling motive seems to have been purely intellectual. He had a passionate love of knowledge, an eager thirst for truth; he took, besides, a special delight in dialectic exercise; and as theology was looked upon as the queen of the sciences, revealing hidden sources of information and admitting into a higher sphere of intellectual activity, it could not but have for him irresistible attractions.

The theological course of the middle ages divided itself into two separate branches of study—the *Biblical* and the *Systematic*. The studies were pursued in the order named. The *Biblical* studies consisted in listening to the reading and interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible in the original, it is important to

bear in mind, was a sealed book. Greek was but little known ; Hebrew, if possible, even less. Neither was taught at the University. The Bible used was the Latin Vulgate. Interpretation, in its simplest form, took the shape of the gloss—a brief and sometimes aphoristic explanation. In its more elaborate form it ran off into sentences, and became, after a fashion, critical exposition or discourse. In the second, or higher department, the *Systematic*, of which we have a distinct survival in certain classes in our modern theological schools, the Bible, such as it was, gave place to the sentences of Peter the Lombard. These were read and expounded, at greater or less length, according to the importance of the subject. “Disputations” were frequent, and opportunity was thus given to exemplify logical training and to test dialectical skill. In this department some attention was paid to the writings of the Fathers. Nominalism and realism divided the schools ; and Aquinas or Scotus or Occam was the favorite, according to the bias of the teacher. The lecturers in the Biblical department were not necessarily bachelors of the highest degree. They were called *Biblici*. The lecturers in the Systematic department were all of them students of the highest rank. Some of them were licentiates—some of them doctors of theology. They were called *Sententiarii*, after the Sentences of the Master ; and they would have considered it beneath them to lecture on the Biblical books. From an educational standpoint, such a system had doubtless its advantages ; but from a theological standpoint it had one grand radical defect. It sharpened the wits and furnished the intellectual with weapons of defence ; but it virtually ignored the Bible. It dealt with truth at secondary sources, when the fountain itself was at hand. “Instead of Peter and Paul,” says Foxe,

truthfully enough, "men occupied their time in studying Aquinas and Scotus and the Master of Sentences." It is reasonable to conclude that to his theological studies, as, indeed, to all the studies which had preceded, Wycliffe had been duly attentive. There is evidence that at a comparatively early age he had made himself master of the principles both of Canon and of Roman law ; but whether these studies formed any essential parts of his public curriculum we can neither affirm nor deny.

Naturally enough, curiosity exists on the subject of Wycliffe's teachers. It is a curiosity, however, which cannot be fully gratified. It has been conjectured that he attended the lectures of Thomas Bradwardine and of Richard Fitzralph. He mentions the former more than once as *Doctor Profundus*. Bradwardine was a Mertonian, a proctor of the University in 1325. He was distinguished alike as a student and a lecturer. In 1338 he was in France with Edward III. in the character of confessor. In the following year he died, almost immediately after he had been consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. Fitzralph was a Fellow of Balliol. He was appointed Chancellor of the University in 1333. It was not until 1347 that he was appointed to the See of Armagh. It is certainly far from improbable that during his theological course Wycliffe had the privilege of attending the lectures of Fitzralph ; but it is extremely doubtful whether he ever came in any direct personal way under the influence of Bradwardine. There were others, however, such as John Eastwood, and William Rede, who were maintaining the reputation which Roger Bacon had won for the University ; and of some of these Wycliffe, no doubt, enjoyed the guidance in the earlier or scientific part of his academic career.

How long the future Reformer remained at the Uni-

versity in the character of a student is another of those questions to which no direct or positive answer can be given. We can only approximate the truth by considering the customs and usages of the time. The theological course in those days extended, as a rule, over seven successive sessions. It has already been shown that the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* consumed each two years. Allowing four years for the liberal arts, and granting six years to theology, we make out a decade. If we accept 1335 as the year he entered the University, we are brought down to 1345 as the probable year when his University curriculum terminated. He had taken, we have no reason to doubt, all the usual degrees. He was Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Bachelor of Theology in the highest sense. Whether he had yet become a licentiate in theology is doubtful. It is not doubtful, however, that he had come forth from the University ordeal a ripe scholar and fully equipped for the work before him. He had become a master of the scholastic philosophy. "He was famously reported," says Foxe, "for a great clerk, a deep schoolman, and no less expert in all kinds of philosophy." Walden, one of his most bitter opponents, writing to Pope Martin V. respecting Wycliffe, says that he was "wonderfully astonished" at the "vehemency and force of his reasonings" and the "places of authority" with which they were fortified. Wycliffe's own subsequent career, and the writings he left behind him, are the best proof that his Oxford opportunities were not lost upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OXFORD DON.

Promotion—Fellow and Master of Balliol—Warden of Canterbury Hall—Trouble with the Monks—The Difficulty explained.

WYCLIFFE's life at Oxford did not terminate with his regular course of studies. After the close of his academic career proper he continued to reside at the University. In what capacity, however, we are still, to a certain extent, left in the region of conjecture.

It has already been mentioned that since the publication of Lewis's life, in 1720, until within a comparatively recent period, Wycliffe was supposed to have been connected successively with Queen's College, with Merton, and with Balliol. Reasons have already been given to show that he had never any other connection with Queen's than as the renter and probable occupant of some chambers. Presumptive proof has also been furnished that he was never in any capacity connected with Merton. On this latter point, however, we felt it to be our duty to be less positive—all the more so that the question under discussion was not whether Wycliffe, the future Reformer, was, during his Oxford career, connected with Merton as well as with Balliol, but whether, on going up to the University, he was first entered a student of the former college.

It is necessary to look at this matter a little more closely. According to the old and long unquestioned account, Wycliffe became an inmate of Merton probably

about 1354, obtained a fellowship, held afterward the post of seneschal or postmaster of the college, and was thence called, in 1360 or 1361, to the Mastership of Balliol. This is the view taken not only by Lewis and Vaughan, but, with some modifications, by Lechler, Buddensieg, and Dr. Samuel G. Green. What is the evidence? In the acts of Merton College there is an entry which shows that in January, 1356, "John Wycliffe" held the office of seneschal or postmaster of the college. There is also positive proof that John Wycliffe, afterward known as the Reformer, and no other, was in 1360 the Master of Balliol. This appears from five different documents, all of which are preserved in the archives of the college. One of these, discovered since Lechler wrote, and made use of by Dr. Lorimer in his original notes, clearly establishes the fact that John Wycliffe was Master of Balliol in 1360. On the 16th of May, 1361, he was nominated by his college to the Rectory of Fillingham, a small parish in the county of Lincoln, about ten miles from London. Of the identity of the Rector of Fillingham with the Master of Balliol there is no room for any question; and a variety of circumstances has made it certain beyond any shadow of doubt that John Wycliffe, Master of Balliol, and John Wycliffe, Rector of Fillingham, were identical with John Wycliffe, the Reformer. The identity of the Wycliffe of Balliol and the Wycliffe of Merton is still a matter of dispute. The strongest argument in favor of their identity is the name. But, as it is well known that there was at that time at the University a Mertonian of the same name with the Reformer, the identity or similarity of name ought not to be allowed to outweigh other and equally weighty evidence. This, however, is just the question at issue.

Lechler, who is radical in his investigations, and who dismisses the claims of Queen's with very little ceremony, clings to the idea that the postmaster of Merton was the same with "our Wycliffe." But as he has already taken the ground that Wycliffe, in all likelihood, belonged to Balliol from the time he came up to Oxford, he has to admit the improbability of the Balliol men electing a Master from another college contrary to one of the fundamental statutes of the house, which provided that the Fellows should always choose the Principal or Master from their own number—an improbability, it should be remembered, increased also by the known antagonism of the two colleges. The improbability, however, he does not consider to be of weight in this case. He sets aside the argument of the late Professor Shirley, who took the ground that probably the Fellow and postmaster of Merton was the namesake and contemporary of the Reformer—the same who, later, became parish priest of Mayfield; and he brings forward evidence to show that at this particular time Balliol was in a condition of pecuniary embarrassment, and that the limited resources of the college made it necessary for every student to leave as soon as he obtained his arts degree. Wycliffe in leaving Balliol and joining Merton was but complying with the necessities of the situation. At Merton he became a Fellow, commanded respect and confidence, and was honored with the position of seneschal, or rent-taker. The prospects of Balliol, meanwhile, had improved; and Wycliffe, as its most distinguished alumnus, was asked to resume his connection with his original Alma Mater, and to take his place at its head.

The reasoning is plausible, but it is not satisfactory. It makes too little of the general difficulty involved—that of moving from college to college, and backward

and forward from one to another. It gets rid too easily of the namesake and contemporary, and, what is more important still, it overlooks facts. Of the general difficulty we shall say nothing. With regard to the namesake and contemporary, even according to Lechler's own showing, nothing is proved. If he was also a Wycliffe, and "as nearly related to Balliol as our Wycliffe, and to Merton no nearer than he," then, in the absence of other arguments, the presumption is quite as strong in favor of the one as of the other, and not one whit stronger in favor of either. It is a question, however, whether there were not Wycliffes of the south as well as Wycliffes of the north—Wycliffes of some southern district of England who affiliated just as naturally with Merton as the Wycliffes of Richmondshire, in the North Riding, affiliated with Balliol. There are two places in England known by the name which the Reformer has made so illustrious. The spelling is not the same in each, but the difference is suggestive. There is a village of Wycliffe, as we have seen already, on the banks of the Tees, in north-eastern Yorkshire. With this village and neighborhood Wycliffe, the Reformer, has been indissolubly associated. There is another village which bears the name of Wyclyve, or Wyclive, in the more southern county of Northampton; and it is a significant fact that the name of the namesake and contemporary, who has been so often and so much confounded with the Reformer, is in all the original documents spelt indifferently Whyteclyve, Whitelyfe, Wyclyve, or Wyclyve. It is not necessary that all the Wycliffes in England, at the time referred to, should have hailed immediately from the banks of the Tees. There may have been Wyclives of the south; and this John of Merton and afterward of Mayfield may have been one of these.

The settlement, however, of the main question at issue, whether John Wycliffe, the Reformer, was or was not Fellow and postmaster of Merton before he was made Master of Balliol, is not dependent on the spelling of a name. In one of his original notes to Lechler's work, Dr. Lorimer completely upsets Lechler's theory and explanation, based on the pecuniary difficulties of Balliol. It is admitted that Balliol had relatively, at least, been in straitened circumstances; that it had been so from the date of its foundation; that the scholars, or Fellows, had been limited to sixteen; that their weekly allowance had been inadequate; that they had been obliged, in compliance with the stringent, fundamental statute of the founder, to leave the house as soon as they had taken their Master's degree; that there had been no theological faculty nor provision to enable the students to prosecute the study of theology. But in Wycliffe's time, at least as early as 1341, this state of affairs no longer existed. In that year two magnificent bequests—one by Sir William Fenton and the other by Sir Philip de Somerville—became available; and the condition of things at Balliol was immediately changed for the better. The new joint-endowments brought up the number of scholars or Fellows to twenty-two, increased the weekly allowance by the addition of one half, and provided for the support of six Theological Fellows, who were to continue in residence till they took the degree of Bachelor in Theology. It would thus appear that whether Wycliffe came up to the University in 1335 or in 1341, he was in time to be benefited by these new endowments. In such circumstances it would certainly not be necessary for a young man of Wycliffe's mark and promise to leave his own college and go to another to obtain the means of prosecuting his studies. Lechler was aware at the time

he wrote of the benefaction of Sir William Fenton ; but he was under the impression that it did not accrue until 1361. He had no knowledge of the benefaction and accompanying statutes of Sir Philip de Somerville. His principal argument, therefore, in favor of the identity of the Master of Balliol in 1360 and the postmaster of Merton in 1356, falls to the ground.

A whole host of circumstances combine to make it almost, if not entirely, a matter of certainty that Wycliffe of Balliol was never in any capacity connected with Merton. The new and improved state of things at Balliol, the known antagonism of the two houses, the feelings to be overcome on the part of both in receiving and honoring the students or Fellows of either, the necessity that the Master of Balliol should be chosen from the Fellows of the college, the apparent incredibility that Balliol should not only welcome back a man who, as feeling then ran, would naturally be charged with treachery to his college and to his party, but should yield to him the supreme position—all these point in the same direction, and leave us little choice but to accept the conclusion of Lorimer—that “it was under the hospitable college roof of the Lord and Lady Balliol, of Barnard Castle, that the great Reformer grew up, during a long residence of a quarter of a century, to be one of the most consummate philosophers and divines of his nation and age.”*

We know that Wycliffe was Master of Balliol in 1360. How long before that date he was at the head of his college we know not. It could not be long—at least, not many years. In November, 1356, the name of Robert of Derby appears as Master ; and in the interval between

* Lechler, vol. i., p. 190.

Robert of Derby and Wycliffe the office was held by one William of Kingston. Assuming that he became Master, or Warden, of Balliol only in 1360, or late in 1359, and that he completed his curriculum about the year 1345, we have fifteen years, during which we have no actual knowledge of the whereabouts or occupation of the Reformer. It is reasonable to take it for granted that Oxford during all these years was Wycliffe's home, and that he had become a permanent resident at the University. The presumption is that Wycliffe while seeking knowledge himself was engaged in communicating knowledge to others. From the time he became a master in the faculty of arts, it would be his privilege to give disputations and lectures on logic and subjects of philosophy generally. It appears from some of his extant manuscripts that he lectured on such themes with zeal and with marked success. As he himself reached the higher grades of scholarship, his privileges would take a broader sweep. As soon as he became Bachelor of Theology he would be allowed to give lectures on the Biblical books as well ; and we are certainly at liberty to believe that, as one of the *Biblici*, Wycliffe, while explaining the sacred Scriptures to his students, was at once laying up stores of Bible knowledge and acquiring skill in the communication of the same—attainments, both of which were to be useful to him in the coming years. Not until he had obtained the highest degree of Bachelorship of Theology would he be allowed to lecture on the Sentences of the Lombard. That he was already, for some time before his promotion to the Mastership of Balliol, in possession of this honor, with its accompanying privileges, we have no reason to doubt. It is to be presumed also that he was already Licentiate of Theology. It was not, however, until some years later that

he was made a Theological Doctor. As Fellow of the College, it would be his duty, as well as his privilege, to take an active part in the management of the affairs of the society ; and it is of all things the most likely that it was his ability and usefulness as a member of the governing body, as well as his high scholastic qualifications, that marked him out as a suitable person for the Mastership, and secured for him the votes of the Fellows, his companions and associates.

At the time of which we write, Wycliffe would be, according to the calculation we have accepted from the outset, about forty years of age. Of his personal appearance at this period we have no authentic description. There is every reason to believe, however, that he commanded attention and won popularity as well by his bearing and manner as by his scholarship and practical talent. The portrait which has been preserved of him as he appeared in advanced life—the eyes black, piercing, and full of intelligence, the features generally aquiline, the lips well compressed, with the peculiarly delicate, sarcastic smile—is suggestive of a native nobility of character, and seems to imply a full courage of conviction and a quiet consciousness of strength. In middle life and early manhood his appearance, we have a right to infer, would be in his favor.

Wycliffe was now one of the leading men at the University ; and from the date of his election to the Mastership of Balliol, we never again wholly lose sight of him. It has already been seen that in 1361 he was nominated to the Rectory of Fillingham. It does not appear that he was in any immediate haste thereafter to resign the Mastership of the College, although in later years he waged a fierce warfare against pluralities. It has generally been assumed by his biographers that he resigned

the Mastership some time between 1363 and 1365. Of this, however, we have no positive proof. We know, however, that in October, 1363, he paid rent for apartments at Queen's, where it would seem he continued to reside—with possibly one brief interval—so long as he remained at the University. Of course the inference is that he had ceased to reside at Balliol. We know also that in 1366 a certain John Hngate was Master of Balliol. That Wycliffe had a preference for life at the University to a quiet life in a rural parish is proved by the fact that in 1368 he obtained from his bishop—the Bishop of Lincoln—leave of absence from his parish of Fillingham for two years, on the ostensible ground that he should be able to give his whole time to his Oxford duties. It is conjectured that similar leave of absence had been previously asked and obtained. In such circumstances, the performance of the duties connected with the Fillingham parish must have been left for the most part, if not entirely, to some curate.

In 1365 we find John Wycliffe in a new and highly honorable position—Warden, or Master, of Canterbury Hall. This Hall, which has long since been merged in the rich foundation of Christ Church, was then in its infancy. It had been founded only in 1361 by Islip, then Archbishop of Canterbury, for twelve students, of whom four, including the Master, were to be monks, and eight seculars. The attempt to combine the two classes was not successful. The first warden was a monk, by the name of Wodehall, or Woodhall. From the commencement, the new Hall presented a scene of continuous and most unedifying strife. The regulars and the seculars could not agree; and the violent temper and imperious rule of Woodhall fomented rather than checked the disturbances. Disgusted with the fruit of

his well-meant generosity, the Archbishop removed Woodhall and the three monks, replacing the latter by seculars and appointing Wycliffe, Warden. The words of the appointment have been preserved. "Simon Islip to his dear son, Master John de Wycliffe: Having regard to your praiseworthy life, honorable conversation, and the literary acquirements in which the Most High has noted you as supereminent in arts, and being assured of your truth, prudence, and carefulness, we commit to you the Wardenship." This appointment was made December 9th, 1365. Islip died April 26th, 1366; and in the following year he was succeeded by Simon Langham, who was translated from Ely. Langham was a man of a totally different stamp from his predecessor. He had been a monk; and, as was natural enough, he espoused the cause of the regulars. One of his first acts was to remove Wycliffe; and within six days after he was enthroned he had restored the displaced monks and appointed a successor to Wycliffe in the person of a monk named Redyngate. The appointment, apparently made in haste, was cancelled within a month, and the wardenship was restored to Woodhall. Wycliffe felt aggrieved. It was his conviction that a great wrong had been done him; and he appealed to the Pope. With the influence of the Archbishop opposed to him, it was a vain appeal. After long and vexatious delay, the case was given against him in 1370.*

* We have not deemed it necessary to disturb the text by any reference to the question as to the identity of the Reformer with the Warden of Canterbury Hall; and for the reason that the question which, in our judgment, should never have been raised, has been, at last, finally set at rest. For the sake of the critical reader, however, we present here, in brief outline, the leading features of the controversy. In 1841 an anonymous letter, attributed to Mr. Courthope,

Rival opinions have prevailed as to the right and the wrong in this Canterbury affair. It has never been doubted that the appointment to the wardenship was made by Archbishop Islip himself. On this head, indeed, there can be no question. At the very outset this would seem, at least, to put the right on Wycliffe's side. It is,

of the College at Arms, appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, calling attention to the fact that in the archives of Canterbury he had discovered a document, which showed that a priest by the name of John de Whytelyve was nominated July 20th, 1361, to the vicarage of Mayfield, by Archbishop Islip—the same prelate who, four years later, nominated the Warden of Canterbury. It is noted by this writer that the nomination to the wardenship is dated Mayfield, December 9th, 1365; that the Archbishop seems to have resided in the parish after the appointment of the vicar in 1361; that in the nomination to the wardenship the nominee is spoken of as a man of whom the Archbishop had ample opportunities of judging; that in both documents—the one appointing to the vicarage of Mayfield and the other appointing to the Wardenship of Canterbury—the last syllable in the name of the appointee is *clyve*, not *clif* or *cliffe*; and that in April, 1366, Islip was making arrangements to allocate the income of the parish church of Mayfield to the support of the Warden of Canterbury—arrangements which were interrupted by his death. The natural inference from all this is that it was the parish priest of Mayfield, and not our Wycliffe, who was promoted to the Wardenship of Canterbury Hall. This view, which found favor with not a few, was adopted by Professor Shirley, of Oxford, and pressed by him with keenness and energy. The opposing view was taken up by the late Prebendary Wilkinson, who, in a learned and laborious investigation, turned the tide of the argument the other way. Wilkinson showed that, wherever *t* uniformly occurs in the first syllable of the name of the priest of Mayfield, it never occurs in the name of the Reformer or in that of the Warden of Canterbury Hall. In his book “*De Ecclesia*” (Of the Church), Wycliffe makes such reference to the Canterbury Hall affair as leaves in the mind of the reader the impression that he himself was the man. But the strongest evidence is to be found in the writings of the Reformer's own contemporaries. By two of these—both of them unimpeachable witnesses—the Reformer Wycliffe is identified with the Warden of Canterbury Hall. William Woodford,

nevertheless, a fact that the right in the matter was claimed by his opponents as well as by Wycliffe himself and his friends. It was contended, on the one hand, that the appointment of Wycliffe to be Warden of Canterbury and of the three secular priests, William Selby, William Middleworth, and Richard Berger, to be members of the

the learned Franciscan Doctor of Theology, in his "Seventy-Two Queries Concerning the Sacrament of the Altar," speaks of Wycliffe as having been driven by prelates and endowed monks from his position in Canterbury Hall. This treatise was written in 1381, three years before the death of Wycliffe. Shirley's attempt to break the value of this evidence was a failure. The Monk of St. Albans, in his "Chronicle of England" (*Chronicon Angliæ*), 1328-1388, dating as far back as the last quarter of the fourteenth century, makes reference to Wycliffe and Canterbury Hall in language which absolutely settles the question. Of this document there was an English translation as early as the sixteenth century. It was published in the *Archæologia* and also in Stowe's *Chronicle*; but the original Latin document was wanting. In the absence of the original, Shirley doubted the value of this piece of evidence. Lechler, following Shirley, takes no notice of this witness. Strange to say, the original Latin chronicle has since been discovered and published under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. The old and well-known translation is found to be a faithful counterpart. Wycliffe, the Reformer, is the Wycliffe of Canterbury Hall; and he is the friend of John of Gaunt, a reference which the reader will appreciate more fully as he advances with this work. The Monk of St. Albans was no friend of Wycliffe. He speaks of him as a pseudo-theologian, as one who fought against the gods and made it his business to rail against the Church. Hence: "Juste privatus extiterat per archiepiscopum Cantuariensem quodam beneficio cui injuste incuberat in Universitate Oxoniensi situato." The old English translation to which reference has been made is: "He was justly deprived by the archbishop of Canterburye from a certayne benefice that he unjustly was incumbent upon, within the cytye of Oxforde." The discovery of this original document has settled the question as to the identity of Wycliffe, the Reformer, and Wycliffe, the Warden of Canterbury Hall.*

* Lechler, vol. i., pp. 191, 192.

same, was contrary to the principles of the foundation. The statutes, it was held, prescribed, as a fixed principle, that a Benedictine of the chapter of Canterbury should be Warden, and that three monks, in addition, from the same chapter should be members. It was claimed by Wycliffe, on the other hand, that the Archbishop had ordained that secular priests, and secular priests only, should study in the college, and that it was only after the death of the founder that the members of the archiepiscopal chapter had dared to interfere. There is here, at least, apparent contradiction. Fortunately, we are not without evidence which enables us to remove the difficulty. Relative to this Canterbury foundation, eight documents have been preserved in the archiepiscopal archives. Of these, two are of very special value as bearing upon the question at issue. They are both royal ordinances, signed by Edward III. The one bears date October 20th, 1361; the other bears date April 8th, 1372. The former contains the royal assent to the proposal of Archbishop Islip to found a Canterbury Hall in Oxford, and to attach to it the Church revenues of Pagham in Sussex. The latter deals more or less directly with the difficulty now under consideration. In this document the King confirms the Papal judgment of 1370, by which Wycliffe and his associates were excluded from the college. In both documents mention is made of two classes of members—monks and seculars; but in the second a twofold error is charged—first, that the Archbishop himself, in appointing Wycliffe and his associates, and thus setting aside the monkish members, had departed from the original statutes to which the royal assent had been given; and second, that the Papal decision was at fault in declaring that monks alone, and monks of the Benedictine order of Canterbury, should

be admitted as members of the new foundation. Very significant, too, is it that in the same edict the king is pleased to grant forgiveness for these violations of the fundamental statutes, on condition of the payment by the Prior and Convent of Canterbury of two hundred marks into the royal treasury.

There are two other documents, both of which are entitled to some consideration, in the premises. The one bears date March 13th, 1362; the other is dated April 13th, 1363. In the former the Prior and chapter of Christ Church, in Canterbury, in acknowledged compliance with the will of the founder, present a list of three names, from which the Archbishop may select a warden. In the latter the Archbishop gifts to the new hall his estate of Woodford. Importance has been attached to the fact that in this document, while there is a distinct reference to the whole number of students, no reference whatever is made to the two classes—monks and non-monks. The latter document proves nothing; but it is clear from the former that it was in accordance with the desire and arrangement of the Archbishop, in the first instance, that at least the head of his College should be a monk of the Benedictine order, and from the chapter of Christ Church at Canterbury. We have no direct evidence that provision was made in the original statutes for three monks in addition to the Warden. But we do know that, as a matter of fact, there were, in the first stage of its existence, in the College, both monks and seculars, and just such a number of each as we have mentioned above; and we have the words of the royal edict, which leave us no room for doubt as to the original character of the institution.

The conclusion is irresistible that Wycliffe's appointment was contrary to the original statutes, as approved

by the State, but in perfect accordance with a new arrangement made by the Archbishop himself. The secret of the difficulty lay in the fact that the altered statutes, at the death of the founder, were without royal sanction. It was this which gave the monks their advantage and their final victory.

Wycliffe's grievance was not the less real that the letter of the law was against him. He knew that the law, based on the original statutes, did not reflect the spirit and purpose of the founder during his later days. Why the royal assent had not been obtained admits of easy enough explanation. It may not have been deemed necessary, or the necessary step may have been prevented by the death of Islip—an event which occurred soon after the change and the new appointment.

CHAPTER V.

A TRANSITION PERIOD.

In a New Sphere—The General Situation—Formative Influences—
The Man and the Situation.

WE have now reached an important period in the life of Wycliffe. In 1367 he would be, according to the calculation we have adopted, about forty-seven years of age—a man in the prime of life, a ripe scholar, well versed in all the learning of the schools, and, besides, an accomplished dialectician, one who had the faculty, above most men of his time, of defending his opinions and of communicating them to others. For a period exceeding thirty years Oxford had been the scene of his studies and activities. He was still Rector of Fillingham, and his parish must undoubtedly have come in for a share of his attention; but we know that his time was chiefly spent at the University. It is very evident that up to this time, at least, he had a distinct preference for the life of the scholastic. The atmosphere of Oxford was congenial to him. If things had continued to go well with him at the University, it is not at all improbable that he would have chosen to spend there the remainder of his days. As the quiet and industrious student and as the patient and skilful teacher he was unconsciously preparing himself for a broader sphere of action. It has been well conjectured that the previous twenty years marked the most productive period of his life, and that during this

period were written many of those voluminous treatises which he has left behind him, and some of which he corrected, elaborated, and published in later years. It was in 1366, or soon afterward, that he was made Doctor of Theology, and thus acquired the highest privileges of a teacher at the University. Henceforward he had the right, in virtue of that degree, to deliver theological lectures, and that altogether independent of any special appointment of any chair or any salary. It was the privilege of the theological doctor to deliver theological lectures to the most advanced students, and to cultivate a following. Of course he might lecture on the Sentences of the Lombard ; but he was at liberty also, if he chose, to lecture on the sacred text.

It is hardly to be doubted that the Canterbury affair had a powerfully determining influence on Wycliffe's future. He was wounded in a tender part. If he had at this time any distinctive ambition, it was to shine at Oxford—to have place and power at the University. It was no small honor to be singled out by the Primate of England, and by such a man as Islip, and placed at the head of his new Hall. It was promotion in the line of his own liking. His deprivation could not but be painful to him—all the more painful that he believed it to be an act of gross injustice, in open violation of principle and in express opposition to the intention of the founder. It is not in human nature to be indifferent in such circumstances ; and Wycliffe, pious man as he was, had a perfect right to be angry. There is no evidence, however, that the opposition which he was already manifesting toward the pretensions of Rome was in any sense prompted or encouraged by a spirit of revenge. It is the fact, however, that we have now to deal with Wycliffe in an entirely new character—a character in

which, at a critical juncture, it is hardly exaggeration to say he figures as the intellectual guide of England.

Before entering upon this new field of statement and inquiry, it seems to us that we should take a rapid glance at the general situation of affairs in which Wycliffe found himself—in which he was developed, and in which also he began to play a prominent part. Time and circumstances have much to do with the character and career of most men. In early years they exercise a moulding influence ; in later years they give opportunity. The life of Wycliffe, it will be seen upon an examination of dates, ran nearly parallel with the reign of Edward III. What is known as the Middle Ages was drawing near its end. The reign of the schoolman had reached its climax ; and it was soon to reach its close. It was the period of the Babylonish Captivity, when the Papacy, overawed and held in subjection by France, kept court at Avignon. It was the period which witnessed the birth of art and the revival of letters in Italy—an age lit up by the genius of the departed Dante, and still adorned by such names as Giotto, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. It was the period which witnessed the birth of German prose ; for in the hands of the Dominican friar, John Tauler, it assumed in the rough that form to which Luther afterward gave symmetry and strength. It was the period which witnessed the larger part of the famous hundred years' war between France and England—a war which, in spite of the glory which redounded to English arms at Crecy and at Poitiers, must, nevertheless, be regarded as a blunder and a calamity. It was a period marked alike by increasing intellectual activity—a growing desire for knowledge—and loudly expressed discontent upon the part of the people. It witnessed the founding of several great universities—Pisa, in

1343 ; Heidelberg, in 1346 ; Prague, in 1348 ; and Vienna, in 1365. It witnessed the heroic and successful struggle for independence in Flanders, under Jacob Van Artevelde, the famous brewer of Ghent. It witnessed also in France the peasant revolt, in 1320, and the "Jacquerie," in 1358, and in Italy the rise and fall of Rienzi, the last of the Roman tribunes. It was a period made memorable most of all by the "Black Death," the most terrible plague which has ever visited the human family—a plague which, having come from the far East, devastated Europe from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, and at the close of 1348 swept down upon the British Isles.

This visitation has been frequently described, but never in more appropriate or graphic language than that employed by the historian John Richard Green. "The tradition of its destructiveness," says this writer, "and the panic-struck words of the statutes passed after its visitation, have been amply justified by modern research. Of the three or four millions who then formed the population, more than one half were swept away in its repeated visitations. Its ravages were fiercest in the greater towns, where filthy and undrained streets afforded a constant haunt to leprosy and fever. In the burial-ground which the piety of Sir Walter Maunay purchased for the citizens of London, a spot whose site was afterward marked by the Charter House, more than fifty thousand corpses are said to have been interred. Thousands of people perished at Norwich, while in Bristol the living were hardly able to bury the dead. But the Black Death fell on the villages almost as fiercely as on the towns. More than one half of the priests of Yorkshire are known to have perished ; in the diocese of Norwich two thirds of the parishes changed their incum-

bents. The whole organization of labor was thrown out of gear. The scarcity of hands produced by the terrible mortality made it difficult for villains to perform the service due for their lands ; and only a temporary abandonment of half the rent by the landlords induced the farmers to refrain from the abandonment of their farms. For a time cultivation became impossible. ' The sheep and cattle strayed through the fields and corn,' says a contemporary, ' and there were none left who could drive them.' Even when the first burst of panic was over, the sudden rise of wages, consequent on the enormous diminution in the supply of labor, though accompanied by a corresponding rise in the price of food, rudely disturbed the course of industrial employments. Harvests rotted on the ground, and fields were left untilled, not merely from scarcity of hands, but from the strife which now, for the first time, revealed itself between capital and labor. . . . With the ravages of the Black Death and the decrease of population labor at once became scarce and dear. There was a general rise of wages, and the farmers of the country, as well as the wealthier craftsmen of the town, saw themselves threatened with ruin by what seemed, to their eye, the extravagant demands of the laboring class. Meanwhile the country was torn with riot and disorder. An outbreak of lawless self-indulgence, which followed everywhere in the wake of the plague, told especially upon the ' landless men '—workers wandering in search of work—who found themselves, for the first time, masters of the labor market ; and the wandering laborer or artisan turned easily into the ' sturdy beggar ' or the bandit of the woods."

England had her full share of troubles from the plague ; but she had troubles also of a different kind—

troubles which were peculiarly her own. In its earlier stages the war with France had been the reverse of prosperous. Alike in diplomacy and in arms the king had been unsuccessful. His expenses were enormous; and there was, for a time at least, no satisfactory fruit. The burden, as is usual in such circumstances, fell heavily upon the people; nor was the burden lightened when the tide of victory turned. The debt remained. Discontent was followed by disorder; and the disorder was not lessened, as the war advanced, by the numbers of returned soldiers who swelled the ranks of idlers then roaming over the country. Nor did trouble arise from this source alone. The land of England at this particular juncture was literally overrun by bands of mendicant friars, who were drying up the resources of the country, and under the garb of poverty and the specious pretext of self-denial and self-sacrifice, were hoarding wealth, building palatial institutions, and rivalling the ancient aristocracy of the realm by the number and extent of their landed possessions.

There was, however, a reverse to this picture. In spite of much trouble and discontent, the nation had prospered marvellously during the previous hundred years. *Magna Charta* had brought forth good and abundant fruit. England had grown alike in unity and in strength. Norman and Saxon had become practically one. Commerce had been extended; education had become more general; and legislation was revealing a more enlightened spirit. War had brought evils in its train; but it had stirred up the national spirit. Crecy and Poitiers were both of them great battles; and in both the arms of England had been signally victorious. The victories had flattered the national heart and enhanced the national prestige. As things were, England

had become a great military power. Nor was this all. The all but completed unification of the people was proved by the discontinued use of the long-dominant French language. English speech had at last triumphed ; and it was already being used even by the nobler classes as well as by the people. It was ordered to be used in courts of law in 1362, "because the French tongue is much unknown ;" and in the following year it was employed by the Chancellor in opening Parliament. The long struggle between Teuton and Norman—a struggle which had been unintermittent since the date of the Conquest—was nearing its close. The Renaissance wave had not yet touched the shores of England ; but a ripple of the coming tide was soon to be seen in the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, who, before the close of the century, would be weaving English speech into harmonious numbers. In the hands of John Wycliffe, the same speech was soon to assume all the characteristics of clean, clear, effective prose, sufficient in all essentials for logical statement and exposition and for the communication of the higher as well as the lower forms of thought.

The situation was new and peculiar. It offered opportunity ; but it required special work, and, therefore, special qualifications. This sketch of the general situation—of the times, circumstances, opportunities, and prevailing forces—would be incomplete without a brief reference to the immediate educational influences amid which Wycliffe was developed. In a previous chapter, a passing allusion was made to this subject. It was then shown that we were without any authority as to who were Wycliffe's immediate teachers at the University. Claims, as was then stated, have been made for both Bradwardine and Fitzralph. But we have already made it plain that, while he may have attended the lectures of Fitzralph,

the presumption is that he never either saw or heard Bradwardine. At a great University, however, such as Oxford was even in those days, the potent influences—the influences that give shape to character and purpose to life—are not necessarily living men. A current of liberal and enlightened thought had long since set in at the University. It had been cultivated and encouraged by a long list of illustrious men—men whose works remained, and who, though dead, continued to speak to each successive generation—by such men as Grossetôte, Bishop of Lincoln, Roger Bacon, William of Occam, and later by Fitzralph and Bradwardine. It is not to be denied that to these men, and to the influence they left behind them, Wycliffe was largely indebted.

Of Grossetôte's earlier years not much is known. Born at Stradbrook, in Suffolk, about the year 1175, he found his way to Oxford, and in due time became Doctor of Theology and *Rector Scholarum*. At Oxford he remained until the year 1235, when he was promoted to the See of Lincoln. Prior to his appointment he had held important offices. He had occupied a Prebendal stall at Lincoln, had been Archdeacon of Leicester, and had discharged the responsible duties of Chancellor of the University. During a period extending over thirty years he had given academic lectures at Oxford on science and theology. About 1231–32 he is reported to have fallen sick and to have come under religious impressions. Among the results which followed were a conviction of the sinfulness of holding a plurality of offices, and his resignation of all of them, with the single exception of the Prebendal stall. As Bishop of Lincoln, he proved himself to be an indefatigable worker, and the uncompromising enemy of all abuses and of all irregularities. His reforms were so radical that he not unfrequently

found himself in collision with his own Cathedral Chapter, with neighboring bishops, with the King, and even with the Pope. Conscious of the right, he was not to be put down or driven from his purpose. He had a proper idea of the value and importance of the preaching of the word; and he rejoiced in the work of the mendicant preachers, then in the first stage of their career and in the zenith of their reputation. He was a true patriot as well as a righteous Churchman; and he was as indignant at the encroachments of the Holy See as he was impatient of the indolence and corruption of the clergy. In a letter of 1252, addressed to the nobles of the realm, to the citizens of London, and to the "Community" of England, he expressed himself freely on the subject of Papal pretence, and called for firm and united resistance. He was the openly-avowed enemy of pluralities, of non-residence, and of a practice, which had become common, of transferring Church property-tenures, title-rights, and glebe-lands into the possession of monasteries, knightly orders, and such like institutions, and which was called "appropriation." This practice was having a ruinous effect on the parochial clergy and upon the cause of religion. In some cases the priest was wholly unprovided for; and as a resident priest was out of the question, the parochial work was either wholly neglected or fitfully attended to by a monk from some neighboring cloister. Grossetête gave himself no rest until he obtained from the Pope an authorization enabling him to declare all such transferences null and void.

Increasing years did not diminish his energy or weaken his resolve. At the ripe age of eighty he found himself in direct personal conflict with Pope Innocent IV. on a matter which was personal to both of them. The Pope, without consulting the Bishop, had appointed one of his

grandsons, Frederick of Lavagna, to a canonry in Grossetête's own Cathedral of Lincoln; and all the necessary arrangements were made to put the young man in possession of the dignity and living, in the person of his proxy, and without the aid or recognition of the Bishop. It was to be a case of non-residence of a very offensive kind. The appointment involved a personal insult to the Bishop. Grossetête was not the man to allow his rights and his dignity thus to be trampled upon. The Pope had ignored him. He now ignored the Pope. The Pope had addressed himself exclusively to the Archdeacon of Canterbury. The Bishop followed his example. In a paper which has been preserved—a paper of singular ability and power—he denounces the whole proceeding as unapostolical and contrary to the spirit and genius of Christianity. When made aware of the opposition of Grossetête, the Pope was beside himself with rage. "Who is this crazy and foolish old man?" exclaimed the Pontiff. The Cardinals attempted to quiet him. "Grossetête is right," they said. "He is holier and more conscientious than we." There was but one conclusion possible to this difficulty. The appointment was withdrawn. It was a clear triumph for the Bishop of Lincoln—a triumph in which all ranks and classes of the English people shared. In Wycliffe's time the memory of this victory was still fresh. The Reformer often refers to Grossetête in his writings, and always with respect and reverence, as "Lincolniensis." For generations his memory was honored by the people, and he was spoken of as "Saint Robert." Of the Reformers before Wycliffe, Grossetête was the first and perhaps the greatest. He was a man of immense learning as well as of great piety. Roger Bacon, a junior contemporary and personal friend, says that "the Bishop of

Lincoln is the only man living who is in possession of all the sciences." Grossetête died in October, 1253, the same year in which he gained his great victory over the Pope. His remains were interred in the Cathedral of Lincoln. Fifty years after his death a joint request was made by the King, the University of Oxford, and the Chapter of St. Paul's that the departed Bishop should receive the honors of canonization ; but Grossetête was too independent and too pronounced a man to be honored with a place in the Calendar. The proposal found no favor at Avignon, whither the Papal headquarters had already been removed.

The spirit of independent inquiry, if not of actual reform, was greatly stimulated and advanced by Roger Bacon, who anticipated his great namesake, Francis Bacon, in the same line of work by nearly three and a half centuries. The work was taken up and carried on by such men as Bracton, the greatest lawyer in England during the Middle Ages, and by William of Occam, known to his contemporaries as *Venerable Inceptor* and *Invincible Doctor*. In the controversies which ensued after the death of Grossetête, Bracton drew the lines sharply between Church and State, pointed out the limits of secular and spiritual jurisdictions, and gave the whole weight of his influence against Papal encroachments. Occam was a representative man of his time. In the realm of philosophy he is remembered and referred to as the great Nominalist, one of the fathers of the inductive school of philosophy—that school which in after years developed such thinkers as Francis Bacon, as Thomas Hobbes, and as John Locke. But his popularity in his own day was won by his ecclesiastical writings and chiefly by his writings against Pope John XXII., whom he treated as a heretic. Occam probably looked at Christ and His

apostles too exclusively from the standpoint of the Franciscan friar ; but he had the advantage of the Pope, who made the mistake of carrying back the conditions of his own age and identifying them with those of primitive Christianity. It was a mistake, certainly, to speak of Christ and His immediate followers as a company of beggars. It was a greater mistake to find in the original company of believers anything having even the most remote resemblance to the proud and pampered Church of the fourteenth century, with its rich endowments, its stately cathedrals, its imposing services, its magnificent hierarchy, and all the gorgeous paraphernalia of the Holy See. The difference was a gain to the *Invincible Doctor*. Occam was as pronounced against the absolute power claimed by the Papacy as he was in favor of the simplicity of ecclesiastical life. He died in 1347, about the time or shortly after Wycliffe completed his college curriculum. His life was spent, for the most part, in Paris, and later in Bavaria, in the service of the Emperor Louis. It is but little likely that the Reformer, who was a Realist in philosophy, came in any way under the direct influence of Occam ; but of the work which Occam performed he was not ignorant, nor was he the less Occam's debtor for the impetus he gave to the movement of reform.

In the list of those men who helped to pave the way for the proper work of Wycliffe, honorable place must be found for Richard Fitzralph and Thomas Bradwardine. If not his teachers, they were at least his contemporaries ; and it is indisputable that Wycliffe recognized them both as his masters in theology.

Fitzralph's relation to the University and his appointment, in 1347, to the See of Armagh, have already been referred to. At the date of his appointment to the arch-

bishopric he had been Chancellor of the University for a period of fourteen years. He was thus a prominent man at Oxford during the whole of Wycliffe's student career; and until 1359, when he died at Avignon, he was one of the recognized forces of the Church. *Armachanus*, as the good Bishop is frequently named by Wycliffe and others, made himself famous by his attacks upon the mendicant orders. In this particular his teaching stands out in striking contrast to that of both Occam and Grossetête. With regard to Occam it is to be remembered that in his discussions with the Pope, he defends the Mendicant Orders as against a proud, wealthy, pampered Church, on the ground that they reflect the simplicity of apostolic times. He is not dealing with facts so much as with theory. He is certainly not dealing with things as they were in England, for he knew little of them. It is significant, however, that two such men as Grossetête and Fitzralph—men in many respects so like-minded—divided only by a century from each other, should have arrived at conclusions so opposite regarding the Mendicant Orders. The explanation is not far to seek. The difference was in the facts, not in the men. In Grossetête's time the Mendicants were doing good work. They were fulfilling their mission. Poor themselves, they were yet carrying, in plentiful supply, the bread of life to others. To the good Bishop of Lincoln, such was a gladsome light. In Fitzralph's time things were altogether different. The begging friars had become rich. They had, in consequence, lost sight of their original mission. Their hearts were set no longer on saving souls, but on amassing wealth and accumulating property. Their special delight was not, as of old, in breaking the bread of life to perishing souls, but in hearing confession, pocketing money, and granting ab-

solution. Fitzralph found the begging monks everywhere ; and they were everywhere a nuisance. Mendicancy had become a mockery ; and the judgment of the good Archbishop, loudly and emphatically pronounced, was that it "must be stopped." Fitzralph died at Avignon in December, 1359.

There is abundant evidence that Wycliffe was powerfully influenced by the writings of Bradwardine. He was a saintly-minded man, and as lecturer and Doctor of Theology he produced a deep and lasting impression at Oxford. He was born in Herefordshire, on the border of Wales, toward the end of the thirteenth century, probably about the year 1290. Finding his way to the University, he studied at Merton, like Fitzralph, and, like him, too, gave some glory to the foundation which was yet comparatively young. He was promoted to the Chancellorship of St. Paul's, London. While holding this position, and while still, it is to be presumed, lecturing at the University, he was invited at the opening of the war with France, in 1339, to accompany Edward III. in the character of chaplain. In this capacity he followed the King during several campaigns. The popularity and influence of Bradwardine are attested by the fact that he was on two separate occasions the choice of the Chapter of Canterbury for that See. He was nominated in May, 1349, the King reluctantly giving his consent to his being released from attendance on his person ; but only a few weeks after his consecration he was taken ill of the plague, and died at his palace of Lambeth. Bradwardine's great work is entitled "De Causa Dei" (Of the Cause of God). It is an elaborate treatise in vindication of the character of God as against the doctrines of Pelagius. Wycliffe makes frequent mention of him, always with respect and veneration, and styles him

Doctor Profundus (The Profound Doctor). Bradwardine's great merit as a teacher consists, *first* of all, in his earnest piety, and, *secondly*, in the insistence which he gives to the free grace of God in the work of conversion. In all his writings you see the influence of Augustine and St. Paul; and while reading him you seem to hear the echoing words of the great apostle of the Gentiles: "It is not of works lest any man should boast." To Bradwardine Wycliffe was indebted for that tendency to a "predestinarian Augustinianism," as Green puts it, which formed the ground-work of his later theological revolt. (History of England, i., p. 445.)

Twelve years had elapsed since Bradwardine's death, when the general feeling of discontent, the consciousness of a movement toward something new and strange, found expression in the vision of "Piers Plowman"—an allegorical poem consisting of a succession of dreams, and the pervading purpose of which was to recommend practical Christianity. Practical Christianity is represented as consisting in the love of our neighbor—a love inspired and sustained by the voluntary passion of Christ. The "Plowman" appears frequently upon the scene, and generally in such guise that one feels that the character is intended to represent the Christ. No attempt is made to assail the doctrines of the Church, but the sins of the clergy are unmercifully lashed, and to popular vices generally the whip is unsparingly applied. Written in the vernacular, and from the point of view of the people, it needed no interpreter. Understood by all and appreciated by all, it was read, copied, quoted, and committed to memory. "Piers Plowman" was one of the forces which helped to give vitality to the Reform movement of the fourteenth century. The poem was anonymous; but it has generally been attributed to

Robert Langland, a native of Shropshire, educated at Oxford, and latterly a monk in the Benedictine Priory of Great Malvern, Worcestershire.

Such was the situation, general and special, and such were the influences amid which the future Reformer was, unconsciously it may be, but, nevertheless, surely, finding development and acquiring fitness for the work before him. The times needed the man; and the man, as the sequel will show, was admirably fitted for the times. Wycliffe's long residence at Oxford, his experience as a teacher and master, his rich acquisitions of knowledge, the distinctions he had won, the very wrongs he had endured—all were now to be seen in their fruit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PATRIOT AND PUBLICIST.

The Feudatory Tribute and the Parliament of 1366—Wycliffe in Parliament—Decided Action of the Lords.

IN the year 1365 occurred an event which stirred the blood of the entire English people, and which, as we shall see forthwith, was to have a powerfully determining influence on the future of John Wycliffe. This was none other than the revival, by Pope Urban V., of the long-dormant claim of the Holy See against the crown and realm of England for feudatory tribute. Thirty years had elapsed since the last payment was made; and it was generally supposed that the claim had been abandoned. Its revival, therefore, was a cause of great offence alike to King and people; and public indignation had reached its height when Parliament opened in May, 1366. Wycliffe was yet Warden of Canterbury Hall; but his patron, Archbishop Islip, had just died; and it is not at all improbable that his troubles connected with the wardenship had already begun.

What was this feudatory tribute? It was a legacy of humiliation left to crown and people a century and a half before by King John, of inglorious memory. In 1205 Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, having died, the junior canons of the Cathedral met clandestinely, and, without any formal permission having been granted, proceeded to elect to the vacant See Reginald, their sub-

prior. It was the object of the canons to anticipate the action of the King. Despatch was therefore necessary. Reginald was enthroned on the same day on which he was elected ; and on the day following he was on his way to Rome to obtain the confirmation of the Pope. It was not long until the news reached the ears of the King, who, filled with indignation and ignoring the action of the canons, caused to be elected to the archiepiscopal dignity the then Bishop of Norwich. Both parties now appealed to the Pope. It was a situation in every way acceptable to Innocent III., who was an enthusiastic disciple of Gregory VII., and whose object it was to establish a universal dominion—a dominion in which kings and emperors should be puppets and which should be subject to the authority of the Vatican. Innocent annulled both elections, and, of his own authority, appointed Stephen Langton to the vacant See. The king resented the interference, and refused to recognize the appointment. The Pope placed the kingdom under interdict—a sentence which in those days implied a state of things almost too horrible to contemplate. It was a virtual shutting out of the kingdom from all the privileges of the Church and from all the favors of heaven. A people less free from superstitious fears could not have endured it—not for an hour. For two whole years this state of things was allowed to continue. The King would not yield ; and the Pope was not to be driven from his purpose. Innocent adopted a yet bolder course. He pronounced on John the sentence of excommunication, deposing him from his throne and absolving his subjects from their allegiance. To give effect to this sentence, it was necessary to employ military force. A convenient tool was found in Philip Augustus of France, to whom was offered the English crown. It

was a tempting bribe, and Philip made immediate preparations for the invasion of England. John's courage at last gave way. He made a complete submission. He consented to the election of Langton; and he promised restitution to the injured clergy. He resigned his kingdoms—England and Ireland—to God, to St. Peter, to St. Paul, to Pope Innocent III. and to his successors, pledging himself to hold these dominions as feudatory of the Holy See by the annual payment of a thousand marks—seven hundred for England and three hundred for Ireland—and giving his consent to the arrangement that forfeiture should follow the violation of this bond, unless there should be suitable repentance and satisfactory redress. The surrender was humiliating enough in itself; but it was accompanied by circumstances which were worse than humiliating. Bowing before the Papal Legate, Pandulph, John took off his crown and laid it upon the ground. The haughty Legate kicked it from him in token of contempt, and then permitted the King to lift it and replace it on his head. John offered his tribute. The Legate tossed it from him; but yielding to the wisdom which is characteristic of second thoughts, he stooped and picked it up. The money was of more immediate value than the crown. Never was England so humbled in the person of her ruler!

The barons were indignant. They had not been consulted. With their assistance the King could have saved both himself and the realm of England from dishonor. They rebelled against the arrangement. Runnymede soon followed; and the Great Charter may be regarded as, in a sense, the fruit of John's disgraceful submission to Rome. The tribute was objected to from the outset. It was looked upon as the odious symbol of an odious bond. It was irregularly and grudgingly paid. The

Papal demand was unheeded, and, therefore, discontinued. Since Edward III. mounted the throne—at least since Edward took into his own hands the reins of government—the tribute had not been paid. The revival of the claim was a sort of climax to a protracted contest between the Papacy and the realm of England, in which aggression was the characteristic feature on the one side, and resistance was the characteristic feature on the other. Offensive in itself, the demand was rendered doubly so by the language in which it was couched, and by the tone of superiority which it assumed. Call was made for payment not only of the annual tribute, but for all arrears ; and in the event of the call not being complied with, the King was to appear at Avignon and answer for his conduct to his feudal superior. Looked at from the standpoint of the England of that day, the demand was, in the last degree, insolent and offensive. Looked at from the standpoint of the Papacy, it was, in the last degree, unwise. England was a very different England under Edward III. to what it was under King John ; and the conqueror of Crecy and Poitiers was not to be intimidated by the arrogance and pretension of a French Pope. The revival of the demand for the tribute money was an exhibition of temper rather than of wisdom ; for the Pope was not ignorant of the prevailing spirit and temper of England. Resistance to the interference of the Papacy in the domestic affairs of the country had become a settled habit with the English people. We have seen what the feeling was in the days of Grossetête, and, later, in the days of Fitzralph and the author of “Piers Plowman.” The feeling had gathered strength in each successive year of Edward’s reign. On more than one occasion Parliament had uttered protests and given expression to sentiments which foreshadowed some of the

leading principles of the Reformation. The famous statute of "Provisors" was passed in 1350. According to this act, it was illegal to procure any presentations to any benefices from the Court of Rome, or to accept of any living otherwise than as the law directed, through patrons, chapters, and ordinary electors. All such presentations or appointments were null and void; all offenders in such matters were to be punished with fine and imprisonment; and all appeal was strictly prohibited. Three years later, in 1353, was passed the equally famous statute known as "Praemunire." This law was specially directed against all appeals to the Court of Rome from English tribunals, and specially forbade the procuring or receiving "any translations, processes, excommunications, bulls, instruments, or other things, touching the King, his crown and realm," on penalty of losing the King's protection and of forfeiting all lands and goods to the King's use. Offenders were further required to answer in person to the King and his Council. In view of these comparatively recent enactments, and of the known sentiments of all ranks and classes of the people, the action of the Pope was utterly foolhardy. It is difficult indeed to resist the conviction that the claim was revived in a spirit of revenge and retaliation, and that the main object was to wound and give pain.

Kind Edward acted wisely in the circumstances. Indignant as he was, he did nothing until he took counsel of the nation. As soon as Parliament met, in 1366, he laid before it the Papal demand. It was natural that the prelates should find themselves most in difficulty. They owed allegiance to the King; and they owed allegiance to the Pope. They were in a position in which it was specially difficult to serve two masters. They asked and obtained a day to themselves for private

consultation. On May 5th Parliament reassembled. The Lords Spiritual, having come to an understanding among themselves, were in their places. So also were the Lords Temporal and the Commons. The question submitted to Parliament by the King was twofold. It was to decide, in the name of the people of England, whether King John had any right thus to bind the nation, and whether, if so, the nation must then and ever continue to be so bound. Parliament was not slow to come to a conclusion; and the conclusion arrived at was not only short, sharp, and decisive, but unanimous. It read as follows: "Forasmuch as neither King John nor any other king could bring his realm and kingdom in such thralldom and subjection, but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not obtained; therefore that which he did was against his oath at his coronation, besides many other causes. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt anything against the King by process, or other matter in deed, the King, with all his subjects, should with all their force and power resist the same." The claim for tribute money was dropped, and was never again advanced.

Important enough, no doubt, was this Parliament in itself considered, and memorable enough it might have proved, because of the work it accomplished in connection with the tribute money alone. But there are many who will continue to think that its chief distinction lies in the fact that it is permanently associated with the name of John Wycliffe, the Reformer, and that the only work accomplished by it entitling it to special remembrance was accomplished partly, at least, under his auspices. It was in connection with this Parliament of 1366 and the demand for tribute money by the Pope that John Wycliffe first burst forth into public view.

Hitherto we have had only fitful visions of the student and the scholar. We have seen him, so to speak, through a glass darkly. Now we have a clean, clear, full view of the man. We see him as if face to face; and we are never again wholly to lose sight of him, until the end. "Nothing is more remarkable," says Green, in his "History of England," "than the contrast between the obscurity of John Wycliffe's earlier life and the fulness and vividness of our knowledge of him during the twenty years which preceded its close." Green had a fine appreciation of the character, scholarship, and work of the Reformer. He describes him as the "first among the schoolmen of his day." Speaking of him at this stage, he says: "The spare, emaciated frame of Wycliffe, weakened by study and asceticism, hardly promised a Reformer who would carry on the stormy work of Occam; but within this frail form lay a temper quick and restless, an immense energy, an immovable conviction, an unconquerable pride. The personal charm which ever accompanies real greatness only deepened the influence he derived from the spotless purity of his life. As yet, indeed, even Wycliffe himself can hardly have suspected the immense range of his intellectual power." Wycliffe's strength, we believe, was only revealed to him in proportion as it was needed. He was one of those men who had the courage of his own convictions, and who was always equal to the calls he made upon his own resources.

In some capacity—in what is not so clear—Wycliffe had a place in the Parliament of 1366; and he seems to have been largely influential in bringing about the decision arrived at. Singularly enough, we have reports of the leading speeches delivered on the subject of the tribute money; and it is to the pen of Wycliffe we are

indebted for those reports. An anonymous Doctor of Theology, belonging to the Mendicant Orders, displeased with the action of Parliament, laid down the fundamental proposition that the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, is the feudal superior of monarchs and the lord paramount of their kingdoms. From this he found it easy enough to draw such conclusions as the following:—that all sovereigns owe the Pope obedience and tribute; that England was especially in a state of vassalage, in consequence of the surrender of King John; that Edward had forfeited his throne by the non-payment of the annual tribute, according to the terms of the original compact; and that all ecclesiastics, regulars and seculars, were exempt from civil jurisdiction, and under no obligation to obey the citation, or answer before the tribunal of a magistrate. Mentioning Wycliffe by name, he challenged him to disprove what he had thus advanced. The singling out of Wycliffe, as the proper person to justify the action of Parliament, is an admission of the importance he had already acquired as a public man, and points to him very unmistakably as a controlling force in framing the late Parliamentary decision.

Of course, Wycliffe accepted the challenge. The tract containing the reply has happily been preserved. It is generally agreed that it was written and published in the latter half of 1366, or in the early months of 1367. Wycliffe begins by assuring his readers that he, as an humble and obedient son of the Church, would put forth nothing injurious to the Church or offensive to pious ears. He then points his adversary to the opinions expressed by the barons in council, reproducing in brief seven of the most important speeches. The first who rose to speak, we are told, was a valiant soldier. His words were few, but they were plain and to the point.

“The kingdom of England,” he said, “was of old conquered by the sword of its nobles, and with the same sword has it ever been defended against hostile attacks. And even so does the matter stand in regard to the Church of Rome. Therefore, my counsel is, let this demand of the Pope be absolutely refused, unless he is able to compel payment by force. Should he attempt that, it will be my business to withstand him in defence of our right.”

The second peer said: “A tax or a tribute may only be paid to a person authorized to receive it; now the Pope has no authority to be the receiver of this payment, and therefore any such claim coming from him must be repudiated. For it is the duty of the Pope to be a prominent follower of Christ; but Christ refused to be a possessor of worldly dominion. The Pope, therefore, is bound to make the same refusal. As, therefore, we should hold the Pope to the observance of his holy duty, it follows that it is incumbent upon us to withstand him in his present demand.”

The third peer spoke as follows: “It seems to me that the ground upon which this demand is rested admits of being turned against the Pope; for as the Pope is ‘the servant of the servants of God,’ it follows that he should take no tribute from England except for services rendered. But now he builds up our land in no sense whatever, either spiritual or corporeal, but his whole aim is to turn its temporalities to his own personal use and that of his courtiers, while assisting the enemies of the country with gold and counsel. We must, therefore, as a matter of common prudence, refuse his demand. That Pope and Cardinals leave us without any help either in body or soul, is a fact which we know by experience well enough.”

The fourth peer was equally philosophical. "My mind," said he, "is, that it is a duty we owe to our country to resist the Pope in this matter. For according to his principles, he is owner in chief of all the property which is given to the Church, or alienated to her in mortmain. Now, as one third of the kingdom at least is so held in mortmain, the Pope is head over the whole of that third. But in the domain of civil lordship, there cannot be two lords of equal right, but there must be one lord paramount, and the other must be a vassal; from which it follows that during the vacancy of a church, either the Pope must be the vassal of the King of England, or *vice versâ*. But to make our King the inferior of any other man in this respect, we have no mind, for every donor in mortmain reserves to the King the right of feudal superiority. During that interval, therefore, the Pope behooves to be the inferior or vassal of the King; but the Pope has always neglected his duty as the King's vassal, and therefore by this neglect he has forfeited his right."

The fifth peer considered the question more at length. "What was the original ground upon which that undertaking was entered into? Was that annual payment the condition of the King's absolution, and his reinstatement in the hereditary right to the crown? For a pure gift, and a mere beneficence for all coming times, it could not in any case have been. On the former supposition, the agreement was invalid, on account of the simony which was committed therein; for it is not allowable to bestow a spiritual benefit, in consideration of the temporal gains to be bestowed. 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' If the Pope imposed the tax upon the King as a penitential penalty, he ought not to have applied this alms-gift to his own uses, but should

have given it to the Church of England, which the King had wronged, as a compensation for the wrong. But it is not in accordance with the spirit of religion to say, I absolve thee, on condition that thou payest me so much in all time coming. When a man in this way breaks faith with Christ, other men may also break faith with him, in the matter of an immoral treaty. In all reason a punishment should fall on the guilty, not upon the innocent; but as such an annual payment falls not upon the guilty king, but upon the poor innocent people, it bears more the character of avarice than of a wholesome penalty. If, on the other hand, the second case be supposed—that the Pope, in virtue of his concordat with King John, became feudal superior of the royal House, it would then logically follow that the Pope would have power, at his will and pleasure, to dethrone a king of England under pretext of having forfeited his throne rightly, and to appoint at his discretion a representative of his own person upon the throne. Is it not, then, our duty to resist principles like these?”

The sixth speaker followed in a similar strain.

“It appears to me that the act of the Pope admits of being turned against himself. For if the Pope made over England to our King as a feudal fief, and if, in so doing, he did not usurp a superiority which did not belong to him, then the Pope, at the time of that transaction with King John, was the lord of our country. But as it is not allowable to alienate Church property without a corresponding compensation, the Pope had no power to alienate a kingdom possessed of revenues so rich for an annual sum so trifling; yea, he might at his pleasure demand our country back again, under the pretence that the Church had been defrauded of more than the fifth part of the value. It is necessary, therefore, to

oppose the first beginnings of this mischief. Christ Himself is the Lord Paramount, and the Pope is a fallible man, who, in the event of his falling into mortal sin, loses his lordship in the judgment of theologians, and therefore cannot make good any right to the possession of England. It is enough, therefore, that we hold our kingdom as of old, immediately from Christ in fief, because He is the Lord Paramount who alone and by Himself authorizes, in a way absolutely sufficient, every right of property allowed to created beings."

The boldest note of all, perhaps, was struck by the last speaker. He said: "I cannot but greatly wonder that you have not touched upon the overhastiness of the King (*i.e.* John), and upon the rights of the kingdom. And yet it stands fast that a hasty, ill-considered treaty, brought on by the King's fault without the country's consent, can never, with competency and right, be allowed to operate to its permanent mischief. According to the custom of the realm, it is necessary, before a tax of this kind is imposed, that every individual in the country, either directly or by his lord-superior, should give his consent. Although the King and some few misguided persons gave their consent to the treaty, they had no warrant to do so, in the absence of the authority of the kingdom and of the full number of consenting votes."

In addition to the speeches of the lords, Wycliffe, in the same pamphlet, furnishes a brief statement of his own personal objections to the pretensions of the Papacy in regard to the exercise of temporal sovereignty in England. In these there is nothing essentially different from that which had been already advanced in the reported speeches. Upon careful examination, it will be found that the speeches are in singular agreement with the

decision of Parliament, and that, while they meet the arguments of the Papal party at every imaginable point, they reveal, amid much variety of view and expression, a common determination, on the part of the Barons, that

“ no Italian priest
Should tithe or toll in their dominion.”

The question has naturally enough been raised whether these speeches are the mere product of Wycliffe's imagination, and gotten up for the convenience of argument, or whether they are substantially a report of the utterances made in Parliament by the different speakers. That they are not the mere product of imagination may, we think, be at once taken for granted. Considering the heated state of the public mind and the natural dislike of proud-spirited men to be misrepresented, it is too much to suppose that Wycliffe, on the strength of mere hearsay, would, within a few months, at most, after they were uttered, venture to reproduce, even in outline, the speeches of the barons. We have really no choice but to admit that Wycliffe was present in some capacity in the Parliament of 1366. He could not be present as an auditor or spectator, for such were not allowed. In what capacity was he present? It is known that six Masters of Arts were summoned to it by royal order. Wycliffe may have been one of these, summoned for his special knowledge and known skill in debate. In the pamphlet from which we have been quoting, he makes the following statement in reply to a direct charge made against him: “ Had I spoken such things against my King, they would have been inquired into before now, in the Parliament of the English Lords.” It is not easy to account for such language, except on the supposition that Wycliffe was personally present in Parliament, and

that he delivered there a powerful and impressive speech. He also speaks of himself as "the King's peculiar clerk" (*peculiaris regis clericus*); and for this reason he the more willingly undertakes the work of defence. Lewis and Vaughan both take this to mean that Edward III. had nominated Wycliffe to the office of King's chaplain; and their inference is that he was present in this capacity, and heard the debate. Wycliffe, however, is never at any time mentioned as King's chaplain; and Lechler very properly comes to the conclusion that the Reformer was an active member of the Parliament of 1366, and that he had been summoned thither as a clerical expert, or Royal Commissioner.

Wycliffe is now fairly launched as a public man, and on a great public career. This much is certain beyond all dispute; and it is this which most concerns us, looking at the man from the biographical standpoint. The liberal and independent principles which he had long been inculcating, at Oxford, in the hearing of crowds of admiring students, it is now his privilege and his duty to see enforced. He has taken his place in the front rank of the foremost men of his age; and he stands before his country in the character of a true, enlightened, and fearless patriot, with much work before him, but already crowned with victory.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISSION TO BRUGES.

Wycliffe's Increasing Popularity and Power—The Old Flemish City—
The Two Conferences—Nothing Settled.

It would have been strange if the course which Wycliffe had taken in the matter of the tribute-money had not had the effect of making him obnoxious to the Holy See and to the friends of the Holy See in England. It would have been equally strange if it had failed to commend him to the National party throughout the country, and particularly to the King and his advisers. To the former he had proved a powerful and dangerous foe. To the latter he had rendered signal service—service which was not likely soon to be forgotten, and which might again, and at no distant day, be needed. The reforming spirit in Wycliffe, however, was now fairly aroused; and its manifestation in the future was not to be hindered by Papal opposition or to be entirely dependent upon opportunity offered by the crown.

In order to a proper understanding of what is to follow, it is necessary that we should have a clear conception of Wycliffe's position and of his relations to his surroundings at this particular juncture. It is important to bear in mind that in 1366, and while the tribute-money question was before the country, Wycliffe was one of the most prominent officials at the University of Oxford. He was still Warden or Master

of Canterbury Hall. For the sake of the continuity of the narrative, we have anticipated, in a previous chapter, the story of his removal from that position. Wycliffe as was then stated, was nominated to the wardenship by Archbishop Islip, in December, 1365. In 1366, and just a few days before the opening of Parliament, Islip died. His successor was not enthroned until March 25th, 1367. Six days thereafter Archbishop Langham nominated John Redyngate to the wardenship. During the course of these six days Wycliffe was displaced, but certainly not before the date of the enthronement. It is thus clear that in the Parliament of 1366 he figured as the Warden of Canterbury Hall, and enjoyed all the honor and distinction which belonged to that high office. Wycliffe, so far as we know, had as yet experienced no wrong at the hands of the clerical party. We are not, therefore, permitted to think that his action in that Parliament or subsequently in regard to the tribute-money was, in any sense, the result of a feeling of animosity toward the Church or toward its leaders. On the contrary, we are shut up to the conclusion that he was influenced by the purest and noblest of motives, and that he acted from a high sense of patriotic duty. It was not against the Papacy, as such, but against the abuses of Papal authority that his opposition was directed. It does not even appear that his feelings of loyalty and respect to the Papacy, as a true son of the Church, were in any way affected by his removal from office—an office which gave him distinction and power, and of which he was justly proud—and when he was thus made to experience what he considered to be a great personal wrong; for we find him appealing his case to the Pope as the proper authority and the rightful arbiter in the premises. This steadiness of purpose—this resolution to preserve a

distinction between the abuses of a system and the system itself—is the more remarkable that Wycliffe himself could not be ignorant of the fact that he had incurred the enmity of the ecclesiastical leaders, and especially of those of them who were most in sympathy with the Papal Court at Avignon.

It has never been claimed by any of Wycliffe's biographers that his action in connection with the tribute-money had anything to do with his removal from the wardenship. The accepted ground of his removal was altogether different ; and the presumption is that even if the Papal demand for the tribute-money had never been made, and there had been no controversy, either on the part of Parliament or people, on the subject of its payment, Wycliffe would have lost his wardenship all the same. But we are not precluded from the supposition, or even from the belief, that the assistance which he rendered the government in resisting the Pope's demand, and the prominence which he acquired in the controversy, inflamed the opposition of his enemies and hastened, if it did not determine, the action of the new archbishop. As the result proved, he had not much to expect from the Pope. In 1368, the year after his enthronization, Langham was raised to the dignity of cardinal, and went to reside at Avignon. If Wycliffe had been indulging any hopes of receiving justice at the hands of the Papal Government, he must now have regarded these hopes as utterly extinguished. Langham was not the man to prejudice his own case when he could do otherwise. It could hardly, therefore, be matter of surprise, when, two years later, in 1370, the Papal decision was given, confirming the action of the archbishop, and permanently excluding Wycliffe and his fellow-appellants from Canterbury Hall.

Surprise has often been expressed that Wycliffe, in the circumstances, should have submitted his case to the Pope. Nor is this much to be wondered at. In view of the course taken in the matter of the tribute-money, and in view, especially, of his own published opinions in defence of the action of Parliament, his appeal to the Papal Court, it must be admitted, seems to expose him to the charge of inconsistency. The views expressed in the pamphlet in which he reproduces the speeches of the Lords are not certainly, all of them, easily reconcilable with the principle involved in Wycliffe's appeal. Much, however, must be allowed for times, circumstances, and surroundings. It is always much more easy to push a principle than to get rid of facts. Wycliffe, as we shall see more and more as we advance with this narrative, did not come forth all at once a full-fledged reformer. In the initial stages of his resistance to Rome, he did not feel the full force of the principles he had adopted, nor did he perceive to what length they were destined ultimately to lead him. He was honest in resisting what he believed to be an unjust demand. He was equally honest now in recognizing what he believed to be not only existing and properly constituted authority, but the rightful court of appeal in the circumstances in which he found himself. He was yielding to established custom. He was following the general example. He was doing what all others did in like circumstances. He was doing what he could not help doing, so long as he remained an obedient son of the Church. He was doing what by and by he would not condescend to do ; but Wycliffe had not yet called the Papal authority Antichrist, nor refused to recognize it as supreme in its own legitimate sphere. The charge of inconsistency, therefore, which is based more upon appearance than upon reality, cannot be well

sustained. In this Wycliffe was not singular. It was not otherwise with Luther and with other religious reformers in later times. Truth, in all its full-orbed grandeur and in all its bearings, is not to be taken in at a glance. The utmost that has ever been claimed for Wycliffe is that he was the Morning Star of the Reformation. It was not permitted him to see even the day-dawn of that more glorious time. It seems unreasonable, therefore, to expect to find in him, at the very commencement of his public and reforming career, all those highest and grandest manifestations of character which are compatible only with a fuller and brighter light, and with more sympathetic surroundings.

As already stated, it was about this time that Wycliffe added to his other academic honors that of Doctor of Theology. The exact date is unknown. Bale, an early writer on Wycliffe, suggests 1372. Shirley suggests 1363. But in neither case is the evidence produced satisfactory. We know that Wycliffe was only Master of Arts in 1365, when he received the appointment to Canterbury Hall. We know that he was Doctor of Theology when he was nominated as Royal Commissioner to Bruges in 1374. But we do not know at what particular point of time during the interval the higher degree was obtained. Lechler suggests 1366, but in support of his suggestion he offers no evidence. We incline to the last-mentioned date for two reasons: *first*, because we think that, as the head of Canterbury Hall, Wycliffe would naturally be desirous of the title of Theological Doctor; and, *second*, because it is unlikely that the challenge which came to him after the decision of Parliament, in regard to the tribute-money, would have been offered to other than a Theological Doctor. It is admitted that the challenger was a Doctor of

Theology of the Monastic Orders ; and we do not think he would condescend to challenge a scholar of a grade lower than his own. The presumption is that Wycliffe became Doctor of Theology while he was Warden of Canterbury Hall, and that, if he was not already Doctor while Parliament was in session, in 1366, he was advanced to the dignity very soon afterward.

It does not appear that the loss of the wardenship lessened Wycliffe's love either for Oxford work or for residence at the University. In 1368, we know, he obtained the consent of his bishop to leave of absence for two years from his parish church of Fillingham, and for the avowed purpose that he might be able to give undivided attention to his Oxford duties. Later in the same year he exchanged his parish of Fillingham for that of Ludgershall, in Buckinghamshire, and for the reason that it was nearer Oxford, and that he might be able to combine in some measure parochial with University work. We have no reason to believe that Wycliffe's mode of life was in any way radically affected by the exchange of parishes. Ludgershall probably enjoyed somewhat more of his presence than Fillingham had done ; but his heart and his home remained at Oxford, as before. If he was no longer at the head of a college, he was at least the most popular and successful teacher at the University. He had been so for many years as a Master of Arts. But as such, he had been limited as to his sphere of action and choice of subjects. He might lecture on the sciences and on the text of Scripture, but he might not presume to lecture on the Summa of the Master, or what was the same thing in the higher department of Systematic Theology. Now he was Doctor of Theology, and practically unrestrained as to his choice of subjects and the range of his speculation. If his work as public teacher

was in any way suspended by his temporary possession of the wardenship—a supposition which is doubtful—he now fell back upon that work, and took full advantage of his rights and privileges as a Theological Doctor or Professor of Divinity. This, as has been explained before, did not imply a special chair or special emolument, as it does in our days. The right to teach the higher branches of theological science was a right vested in Doctors of Divinity as such, who were much less numerous then than now. It is reasonable to conclude that Wycliffe's energy had not been diminished nor his popularity lessened by what had taken place in connection either with the tribute-money or with Canterbury Hall. His disciples would naturally take pride in his victory, and they would just as naturally sympathize with him in his fall. It was the custom in the days of the schoolmen to apply to the popular Doctors of the day distinguishing epithets. The names have come down to us with these qualifications. Thus, for example, Duns Scotus was the "Subtle Doctor;" Bradwardine was the "Profound Doctor;" and others, according to their skill in debate or their sweetness of disposition, acquired the titles of "Irrefragable" or "Angelic." Wycliffe was not allowed to be an exception; and it was probably about this time that he began to be spoken of as "The Evangelical Doctor"—*Doctor Evangelicus*. As applied to his teaching, it was singularly appropriate; and in this distinction, as has been said, he was the greatest of the schoolmen, as he was the last.

The character of Wycliffe's teaching at this period is to be gathered from his works, published at a later date; for the rapidity with which these were given to the public in his closing years, and the large number which were

never published at all, leave us no room to doubt that his greater treatises were elaborated before his more serious public troubles began, and, for the most part, delivered to his students in the form of lectures. We may take it for granted that he was already expressing himself very freely—and alike with fulness and force—on the prevailing evils of the day, both in public and in private life; that he was drawing clean, clear, and distinct the boundary lines between Church and State, showing the character and limits of ecclesiastical authority on the one hand and the character and limits of civil authority on the other; that he was emphasizing with energy the great truth that the Word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and not the teaching of the Fathers, not the finding of Councils, not the decisions of Popes, was the law—the infallible law—in all matters of faith, and the highest of all authority in all things, whether civil or religious; that he was denouncing corruption in high places, and especially among the higher clergy, who, clothed in purple and fine linen, living in gorgeous palaces, feasting at sumptuous tables, and in full command of everything which wealth could secure, had lost sight of their Master and of the trust of which they were supposed to be in charge; and that it was his custom to dwell earnestly on the importance of the preaching of the Word—the breaking of the bread of life to the people—and to lament bitterly the low ebb to which the ministry generally had fallen. “John Wycliffe,” says an unknown writer, “the singular ornament of his time, began at Oxford, in the year of our Lord, 1360, in his public lectures, to correct the abuses of the clergy and their open wickedness, King Edward III. being living, and continued secure a most

valiant champion of the truth among the tyrants of Sodom." * It was long the belief—a belief encouraged by the early literary historians Leland and Bale, and greatly strengthened by the labors of Lewis and Vaughan—that Wycliffe commenced his exertions for a reform of the Church, with attacks upon the Monastic System, and especially upon the Mendicant Orders. But this view of the case has been completely set aside by Lechler and by Lorimer, who show alike from the Reformer's unpublished writings and from other equally unimpeachable sources, that, between the years 1360 and 1381, he continued to speak of the Begging Orders, with all respectful recognition, and that it was not until after the latter date, when he had published his views on Transubstantiation, and when they had come forward as his antagonists on that fundamental question, that his language toward these orders assumes an unfriendly tone.† Up to this date, Wycliffe's denunciation, when not general, seems to have pointed rather to the Regular Clergy than to the Monastic Orders.

It was while thus employed that Wycliffe, in July, 1374, was summoned again to the King's aid and appointed a Royal Commissioner to an ecclesiastical convention to be held at Bruges. Seven years had elapsed since the date of his removal from Canterbury Hall. Four years had elapsed since that removal had been confirmed and rendered final by Papal authority. During all those years, as we have just seen, Wycliffe had not been idle or spending his time to no purpose. On the contrary, from his chair at Oxford he was pouring forth floods of fresh knowledge, setting forth religion in a new and attractive

* Lewis's *Life of Wycliffe*, p. 9.

† Lechler, pp. 197, 198. See also Lorimer's note, pp. 250, 251.

light, commending personal piety, claiming liberty for human thought, sowing the seed of sound and liberal principles, scornfully denouncing tyranny and corruption, and inspiring a hatred of wrong and injustice ; and the crowds of eager and admiring disciples who hung upon his lips carried his winged words over the length and breadth of the land. Public sentiment, as a consequence, had been advancing in the right direction ; and Wycliffe, it is manifest, had not lost in public favor or in public influence. That he should have been singled out for the purpose of being sent as a Commissioner to Bruges was proof of his growing importance ; and it showed that he had won the esteem and confidence of the King or of some person all-powerful at court.

What was the nature of this Conference at Bruges and what was its object ? In answering these questions, it is necessary that we briefly retrace the course of events for a few years. It will be remembered that in 1350 and 1353 important statutes were passed by Parliament, restraining the influence of the Papal power in the realm of England. Both had failed of their purpose. The Pope habitually neglected the statute of "Provisors," and persisted in making appointments to vacant benefices ; and so loosely was the law enforced, or so much had it fallen into disuse, that we find even Wycliffe violating the statute of "Præmunire," which forbade appeal to Rome. It was believed by many that the rebuke which was given to the Papacy in 1366 would have had a wholesome effect for some time to come, and that England would be left to enjoy its own resources. But it was not so. Papal pretension was as self-asserting as before, although no longer in the direction in which the rebuke was received ; and, the demand for money con-

tinuing, the wealth of England was being poured out in exhaustive abundance year by year, to increase the luxuries and to add to the splendors of Avignon. This state of things might have been allowed to remain undisturbed for some time longer but for the financial pressure brought on the country by the war. The expenses of the war had been ruinously heavy from the outset. But so long as the tide of victory rolled in England's favor, the burden was borne, if not without murmuring, at least without loud complaint. The tide, now turned, was rolling in the opposite direction. High-water mark had been reached at Bretigny. The Black Prince was at home in England, sick with a sickness which was to end only in death. His place on the battle-field had been but poorly supplied by his brother, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The city of Rochelle, originally part of the dowry of the Queen of Henry II., captured by the French in 1224, and restored to England in 1360, was again in French hands. The English power was broken on the continent; and the English coasts were comparatively defenceless. In these circumstances the Parliament met in 1371. Edward made a demand for a subsidy of fifty thousand silver marks. It could not be had, said the barons, unless the clergy gave up part of their possessions. Even as it was, their money was leaving the country, but it was going out to help their enemies. It was more reasonable that it should be given to sustain the national honor and to provide for the country's defence. The clergy had no choice but yield. A war tax was imposed on every benefice, even the smallest; and upon all lands which had become Church property by mortmain during the last hundred years heavy sums were levied.

The barons, having felt their strength, made a further

demand in the same Parliament. For some time past the ecclesiastical had been steadily encroaching upon the civil power. All the highest and most responsible offices in the State were held by Churchmen. The Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, the Keeper of the Privy Seal, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls were all Church dignitaries. One priest was Treasurer for Ireland, and another was Treasurer for the Marshes of Calais. The parson of Oundle was Surveyor of the King's buildings; and the parson of Harwich was Superintendent of the royal wardrobes. Against all this Wycliffe has left behind him an energetic protest. "Neither prelates," he writes, "nor doctors, priests, nor deacons should hold secular offices—that is, those of Chancery, Treasury, Privy Seal, and other such secular offices in the Exchequer; neither be stewards of lands, nor stewards of the hall, nor clerks of the kitchen, nor clerks of accounts; neither be occupied in any secular office in lords' courts, more especially while secular men are sufficient to do such offices." The result was that the Churchmen were displaced, and their offices given to laymen.

To add to the sorrows of the clergy, and as if to give fresh point to the anti-Roman sentiment which prevailed among all classes, a Papal agent named Arnold Garnier appeared in England in February, 1372, armed with a commission from the new Pope, Gregory XI., to collect all moneys due to the Papal treasury. He travelled with much pomp, having a train of servants and half a dozen horses. In the Parliament of 1373 a loud outcry was again made, but this time by both clergy and laity. The King, however, had already taken the matter in hand, and sent a commission to the Pope. It consisted of John Gilbert, a monk, and two laymen. Their request

was modest enough. It was that "the Pontiff should desist in future from the reservation of benefices in the Anglican Church; that the clergy should henceforth freely enjoy their election to episcopal dignities; and that in the case of electing a bishop, it should be enough that his appointment should be confirmed by his metropolitan, as was the ancient custom." The Pope made conciliatory promises, but gave no decisive answer. He would consult with the King of England, and give judgment at a later date.

Dissatisfaction became more pronounced than ever. It was not possible that such a state of things could be allowed to continue. Negotiations were resumed in 1374, and it was agreed that the questions at issue should be submitted to a joint Papal and English commission, which should meet at the city of Bruges, in Flanders. On the part of the Holy See, the commissioners appointed were Bernard, Bishop of Pampelona; Ralph, Bishop of Sinigaglia; and Egedius Sancho, Provost of the Archiepiscopal chapter of Valencia. On the part of England, the commissioners were, *first*, as in the former mission to Avignon, John Gilbert, Bishop of Bangor, and, *second*, John Wycliffe, Doctor of Theology, with Magister John Guter, Dean of Segovia and Doctor of Laws, Simon of Multon, William of Burton, Knight, Robert of Belknap, and John of Kenyngton. It is noteworthy that Wycliffe occupies the second place of distinction on the commission, and it is to be regarded as proof of the importance now attached to Wycliffe's name, of the position he filled in the public eye, of the reputation he had acquired as a patriot and a publicist, and of the confidence reposed in his courage, his energy, his wisdom, and his integrity, that he was singled out

and authorized to uphold and defend the rights of his Church, his King, and his country, in such an emergency, and in such circumstances. Wycliffe embarked for Flanders July 27th, 1374, the day after he had received his commission. It was the first time he had been out of the country.

On his arrival in Bruges, he found another important conference already in session. John of Gaunt, now that the King was old and infirm, and that the Prince of Wales was laid aside with sickness, the most important and the most influential man in England—for although he had shown no great skill on the battle-field, he had proved himself to be an energetic and capable administrator of civil affairs—with Simon Sudbury, Bishop of London, and other magnates, was there on the part of the English King; and the dukes of Anjou and Burgundy, with other nobles and bishops, were there on the part of the French monarch, to negotiate terms of peace between the two countries. It has been conjectured that it was at Bruges John of Gaunt and Wycliffe met for the first time. There can be no doubt that while in that city they met often and took counsel together; and it was there, in all likelihood, that were formed those bonds of friendship which were sundered only by death. There is strong reason to believe, however, that the beginning of their friendship dated from an earlier period, probably, at least, as far back as 1366; and the presumption is that it was to the influence of “John of Gaunt, time-honored Lancaster,” Wycliffe owed his position on the Ecclesiastical Commission and that the Conference was held at Bruges. John of Gaunt might be of some service to Wycliffe and his associates, and Wycliffe, from his extensive knowledge of civil as well as ecclesiastical

law, might be of some service to John of Gaunt and the peace commission.*

Bruges to-day is a decayed and rapidly decaying city. But its poor and thinly-scattered population, its silent streets and squares, its moss-covered canals, its public buildings, stately in decay, its grand old churches, weather-marked and scarred by the corroding fingers of time, even its historic belfry, with its hoarse-resounding peal—all remind you of a former prosperity and grandeur. Bruges was a great and prosperous city as far back as the seventh century. Its commercial importance had been established before the Normans set foot on English soil. In the early days of the Hanseatic League, it was one of the principal centres of trade, and throughout the thirteenth century it added greatly alike to its wealth and to its population. At the time of which we write it was in the zenith of its glory. It was the chief seat of the last line of Burgundian dukes; and it had become, in a sense, the commercial metropolis of the world. It could boast of a population of two hun-

* Lancaster came to be known as John of Gaunt from a custom peculiar to the times—that of attaching to the names of princes the places where they happened to be born. Thus his father, Edward III., was Edward of Windsor; his nephew, Richard II., was Richard of Bordeaux; and his own son, Henry IV., was Henry of Bolingbroke. The fourth son of Edward III., John, was born at Ghent, during his father's campaign in Flanders; hence the name. At the time of which we now write, he was the second living son, his second brother, William, having died in 1335, and his third brother, Lionel, Duke of Clarence, having died in 1368. He was married first to Blanche, daughter and heiress of the Duke of Lancaster; and at the Duke's death he came into the possession of the title and estates. Becoming a widower in 1369, he married again, in 1372, Constance, the daughter of Peter the Cruel, of Castille and Leon. It was through this second marriage, he acquired his shadowy title of "King of Castille."

dred thousand, of commercial agents from seventeen different kingdoms, and of at least twenty embassies constantly within its walls, and representing as many foreign States. The seat of two conferences—the majesty and splendor of France and England represented by the one, and the majesty of the Papacy and England represented by the other—Bruges in those days must have presented a lively and sometimes picturesque aspect. To Wycliffe the scenes and circumstances were new; and some of them were, no doubt, imposing enough. For the first time in his life he found himself in direct personal contact with the men who moved the world, with the springs of civil and ecclesiastical government, the great motive forces in Church and State. Wycliffe, as we shall see by and by, was most impressed by what he saw and heard in his own department. It was the Church with which he was most concerned; and it was with ecclesiastics he was most brought into contact. Bruges was not Rome; but Lechler is not beside the point when he says that the impressions produced on Wycliffe in Bruges, in 1374, were not dissimilar to those produced on Luther, in Rome, in 1510.

Of what took place in the two conferences we know little. But we know the result. In neither did England rise to the dignity of the occasion. In the one conference too much dependence seems to have been placed on John of Gaunt; and in the other Wycliffe seems to have found himself in a hopeless minority. The peace conference was broken off without “the conclusion of peace,” and the ecclesiastical conference was hardly less a failure. The Pope made some concessions, but the concessions were more apparent than real. Wycliffe returned to England September 14th, 1374; and in the following year, September 1st, 1375, the Pope directed to the

King of England six bulls, in which he had embodied his decisions. They simply recognized accomplished facts, and left the *status quo* untouched. Those now in possession of benefices were not to be disturbed by the intervention of the Pope. In the case of those whose right to an office had been disputed by Urban V., the right of confirmation was no longer to be reserved. Benefices actually reserved by the late Pope, and disposed of by anticipation, were to be left in the hands of their patrons. All annates and first fruits unpaid were to be remitted. As a concession to England, it was ordered that the revenues of the cardinals who held livings in England, but who were, of course, absentees, should be taxed for the maintenance of the church edifices belonging to their livings. It was a poor result; it affected no principle; and, of course, it failed to give satisfaction.

Gilbert, it is believed, had played into the hands of the Papal party; and it is a significant circumstance that almost immediately after the above bulls had been drawn up he was promoted by Papal "provision" to the See of Hereford. The vacancy had been occasioned by the death of Archbishop Langham, Sudbury having been promoted to Canterbury, and Courtenay of Hereford having been promoted to London. The natural inference is that Pope Gregory had not been ill pleased by the course pursued by Gilbert at the conference. No Papal favors came to Wycliffe. But he was not without evidence that he retained the esteem of those whose good-will and friendship he valued more highly than any favor of Rome. He had made a fast friend of John of Gaunt. Nor had he lost the confidence of the King. A short time before he set out for Bruges Edward had testified his esteem for Wycliffe by

appointing him to the rectory of Lutterworth ; that he had not forfeited that esteem was now proved by an appointment from the same to a prebendal stall at Aust, in the Collegiate Church of Westbury, at that time in the Diocese of Worcester. What was of greater importance to the Church and the world was that Wycliffe's eyes were opened as to the true character of the Papacy. Direct personal contact with its leaders had given a new character to his thoughts and feelings and a new and more decided bent to his purpose.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOOD PARLIAMENT.

The Commons to the Front—Political and Ecclesiastical Grievances
—The Influence of Wycliffe—Change of Government.

JOHN WYCLIFFE came back from Bruges a considerably disappointed man. His mission had been a failure, so far as its main purpose was concerned. He had doubtless acquired some useful practical knowledge, but what he had learned had not added to his satisfaction with things as they were. Of a proud and sensitive nature, he must have felt also the humiliation of defeat. Able as he was, John of Gaunt seems to have been outwitted in the appointment of the English commissioners. Mr. Matthew touches the difficulty neatly when he says: "Even then the trick was known of putting a popular man on a commission and neutralizing his efforts by associating him with obstructions."

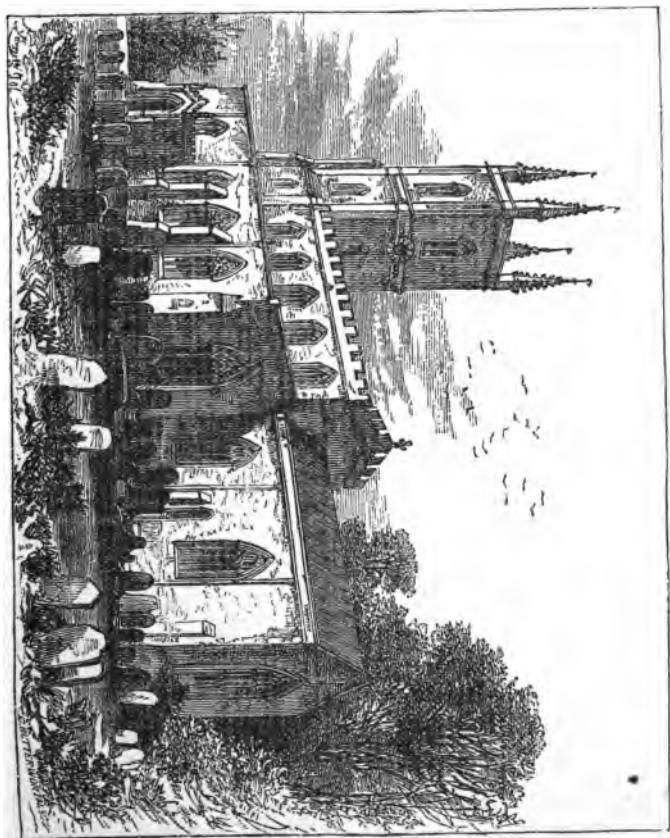
Wycliffe, it would appear, betook himself immediately on his return to the quietude of his new parish of Lutterworth. This appointment, as has been mentioned, he owed to the King. Lutterworth was not what could be called a crown parish. The patronage was vested in the noble family of Ferrars, of Groby; but the then Lord Ferrars being a minor, the right of collating to the vacancy devolved on the crown. The presentation was made on April 7th, 1374. Wycliffe's name having been connected with different livings at different periods, the

charge was at one time preferred against him that while he denounced the principle of pluralities, he was a pluralist himself. The charge was never made by Wycliffe's contemporaries, who knew better. When he accepted the parish of Ludgershall, he ceased to have charge of Fillingham. It was an exchange, as we have seen, made for purposes of convenience, and mainly because Ludgershall was nearer the University. In 1375, the year after his return from Bruges, occurred his appointment to the prebendal stall at Aust, a charming spot on the south bank of the Severn. It was to all intents and purposes a sinecure. This position he seems to have resigned almost immediately after obtaining it; for in November of the same year the prebend was bestowed upon a certain Robert of Farrington. We have no record of the date of Wycliffe's resignation of Ludgershall, but we have no reason to doubt that it took place soon after his appointment to Lutterworth; and we know that in May, 1376, a William Newbold is named as the parish priest of the former place. In an age when pluralities was a crying evil, when it was made the subject of denunciation in Papal bulls, when, however, the offence was so winked at by the ecclesiastical authorities, and was so common that William of Wykeham, afterward Bishop of Winchester, at one time before his appointment to that See, held not fewer than twelve livings, it says much for the honor and integrity of Wycliffe that he made sacrifices and set a noble example in this particular. *

Henceforward and forever his name is to be associated with the parish and church of Lutterworth. As yet, however, and for years to come, he is to be a prominent figure at Oxford, and Lutterworth is only to be a place of occasional retreat. Wycliffe, however, has done for Lutterworth what Shakespeare has done for Stratford-

upon-Avon. He has made it immortal. His name is the one glory of the place. It was here he found, during his stormy Oxford career, regularly recurring periods of relaxation and repose. It was here, when Oxford had turned its back upon him, and when his former friends had deserted him, he found refuge and sympathy. It was here, when standing before the altar, the fatal stroke was dealt him ; and it was in the parsonage close by, three days later, his tired but hopeful spirit took its final flight. It was here, in this quiet graveyard, his mortal remains rested for a period of forty-one years. It was here also where these same remains were ruthlessly disturbed, and where, in obedience to the unchristian command of a so-called Christian council, they were tossed into the neighboring river. The very dust of the place is dear. It is dear because it was trodden by the feet of John Wycliffe, a worthy representative and follower of the Man of Nazareth, and whose teaching has been well described as the echo of that of the apostles, and the prelude to that of the Protestant Reformation.

Lutterworth is a small market-town to-day, as it was in the days of the Reformer. The ground on which it is built is gently elevated above the surrounding country, which is rich pasture land, and is watered by a small river called the Swift. The bridge of Wycliffe's time remains. The church is that in which Wycliffe ministered. It was built toward the close of the thirteenth century. The aisles had been added only about thirty years before Wycliffe became rector. The church originally possessed a spire, which was blown down in 1703. It is now ornamented with a handsome square tower. The pulpit, a large and rather elegant structure, is believed to be, in the upper part at least, as old as the days of Wycliffe. The communion chair is, according



ADYFARWORTH CHURCH.



to the traditions of the place, that in which he sat and administered the sacrament. In the church also is an old oaken table, at which he is said to have fed his poor parishioners. The chair and table, however, are of doubtful antiquity. From their style and structure, their authenticity has been questioned. The font used in Wycliffe's time is to be seen in the Museum at Leicester—an arrangement which seems a little absurd. On the face of the chancel arch, above the altar screen, is a curious mediæval fresco of the Day of Judgment. On this, which has only recently been uncovered, the eyes of the Reformer must have often rested. The old vestry is there ; and in it are to be seen reverently preserved fragments of his robe, and also his most characteristic portrait. There is a marble monument which represents him in the act of preaching ; and arrangements have been made to put a fresco on the arch opposite, exhibiting him in his habit, as he was wont to be seen within the same walls. It is said that the church has undergone two separate restorations since the days of the Reformer ; and we may take it for granted that in this, as in most other cases, the work of destruction has kept pace with that of restoration. The memory, however, is there ; and it is the memory, not the relic, which consecrates the place.

It is not long until we find Wycliffe again at Oxford and involved in all the activities of the time. No good had come from the conference at Bruges. The Papal bulls had irritated rather than quieted the public mind. Ecclesiastically and politically the realm of England was ill at ease. The Parliament of 1373 had revealed increasing courage on the part of the Commons. Before granting fresh subsidies for the payment of the expenses of the late fruitless campaign, they had asked and ob-

tained a conference with the Lords. It was the first time such a request had been presented; and the grants were made on the understanding that the money should be spent only on the war. The aggressive disposition thus unmistakably manifested was the reverse of well pleasing to those in power; and two years were allowed to elapse before Parliament was again convened. They were years marked by great disasters both at home and abroad. The armies of England on the continent continued to suffer defeat. The plague returned and aggravated the public distress. There was strife over what was called the Statute of Laborers—a statute which bound the serfs to the soil; and there was strife over the statutes of Provisors and Præmunire. The public mind, roused to the highest pitch of excitement, sought and found expression in two directions. It went out against the abuse of civil authority on the one hand and against the abuse of ecclesiastical authority on the other.

In these circumstances, at the end of April, 1376, met at Westminster what came afterward to be known as the Good Parliament. For the first time in English history the Commons came boldly to the front and took the lead in public affairs. Their petitions were numerous; and their demands were imperious. In 1371, as recorded in the previous chapter, the anti-clerical party had been successful in effecting a revolution in the government. The clericals were driven from power; and the seals of all the more important offices of State were intrusted to the hands of leading laymen. In the interval which had elapsed, the laymen had given even less satisfaction than the clericals. At the head of this administration was John of Gaunt. His father was in his dotage and wholly under the influence of the Lady Alice Perrers. His brother, the Black Prince, whom the English

people idolized, was on his death-bed. It was the earnest desire of the Black Prince that in the event of his death happening before that of his father, the King, his son, Richard of Bordeaux, should be recognized as heir-apparent. He was suspicious of the designs of his younger brother, John of Gaunt, who, it was popularly believed, was making use of his own vast influence, and turning to account that of the Lady Alice Perrers, in order to have himself recognized as the Prince Royal and next in succession. It was also generally believed that the lay ministers had lent themselves to gigantic frauds; and Lord Latimer, the King's treasurer, was openly charged with buying up the royal debts and embezzling the public revenues. Sir Peter de la Mare, the newly-elected Speaker of the Commons, and Chamberlain of the Earl of March, made special charges of maladministration, publicly named Lord Treasurer Latimer and Alice Perrers as the guilty parties, and demanded an account of the public expenditures. John of Gaunt was indignant. "What do these base and ignoble knights attempt? Do they think they be kings or princes of the land?" But the Commons were not to be bullied; and Lancaster found it convenient to adopt a milder mood. It was himself that was aimed at; and he knew it. But the most that his enemies could do was to strike him through his friends and subordinates; and he was contented for the present to submit. Lords Latimer and Neville, with certain of the Commons, were impeached. Latimer was thrown into prison; and the royal favorite, Alice Perrers, was banished from the Court. On June 8th, 1376, while Parliament was in session, the Black Prince died; and the aged King, yielding to the request of the Commons, who promptly espoused the cause of the youthful Prince, was pleased, on the 29th

of the same month, to present to Parliament his grandson, Richard of Bordeaux, as heir-apparent to the throne.

In this movement against the government the Commons had the active assistance of the Prelates ; and it was no doubt partly as a proof of common sympathy and partly by way of compliment to the clergy that they coupled their demand for the dismissal of the offending ministers, with the request that the King should summon to his Council ten or twelve prelates, and peers whom they named, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London and Winchester being at the head of the list.

But it was not toward the correction of civil abuses alone that the energies of this Parliament were directed. The condition of the Church called for reform and the removal of abuses quite as much, if not more so, than the condition of the State. In a lengthened memorial Parliament represented to the King how persistent, in spite of all past legislation, were the encroachments of the Papal See, and how these encroachments, coupled as they were with extortionate demands for money, were bringing about the impoverishment of the kingdom. The revenue drawn from the country by the Pope, in the shape of ecclesiastical dues, it was declared, amounted to five times as much as was paid to the King from the whole produce of the realm. The Church brokers in the sinful city of Avignon made a bad use of their money and their influence, promoting, as they did, illiterate and worthless caitiffs to livings which brought one thousand marks a year, while learned doctors had to be contented with a salary of twenty marks. It was no wonder that education was at a low ebb throughout the land. But this was not all. It was the custom of these brokers to

present to livings, as they became vacant, foreigners, who never saw or cared to see their parishioners; who neglected or despised God's service; and who, worse than Jews or Saracens, did nothing but carry away the treasure of the realm. "God gave His sheep to the Pope to be pastured, not to be shorn or shaven." The example set by the Pope was in the last degree injurious. It demoralized the lay patrons, who were encouraged "to sell their benefices to mere brutes, no otherwise than as Christ was sold to the Jews." Special attention was called to the Papal agent and other foreigners, who are described as "enemies" and "spies," not fit to be allowed to remain in the kingdom. Arnold Garnier, of whom mention has already been made, was again in England. After two and a half years' residence in the kingdom, he had gone to Avignon with one haul. He was now back for another. This man was collector of Peter's Pence, as well as Papal Receiver; and it was claimed that he was sending money to the Pope to the amount of at least twenty thousand marks a year. He lived in London in great style; and his house, with its clerks and other officials, had the appearance of the custom-house of a great prince. This year he had rendered himself especially obnoxious by presenting a new and unexampled claim. He demanded the first-fruits of all newly-conferred livings. As a further grievance, it was set forth that not a few of the best livings in England were held by cardinals and other dignitaries, some of whom were Englishmen, but most of whom were foreigners, and all of whom were resident at Avignon. One cardinal was Dean of York, another was Dean of Lincoln, and another was Dean of Salisbury. In addition, the archdeacons of Canterbury, Durham, Suffolk, and York were all foreign cardinals. The same was true

of the Prebendary of Thames and Mussington, and of the Prebendary of York. As a specimen of the Papal method of raising money, it was stated that it had latterly become the custom, when a bishopric became vacant, to translate four or five bishops, and to exact from each of them the first year's revenue.

Such, in substance, was the long series of grievances presented by Parliament to the King. It was the year of the King's jubilee. It was becoming that it should be a year of grace and joy, and it was all the more earnestly hoped that his Majesty would provide a prompt and suitable remedy.

Some practical suggestions were offered as to how the desired end could be brought about. It was advised that two letters be sent to the Pope—one by the King and one by the nobles—pressing for redress in regard to the matters mentioned ; that the Statute of Provisors should be re-enacted and enforced with the utmost vigor ; that it should be forbidden, on pain of imprisonment, to carry money out of the country by exchange or otherwise ; that no Papal receiver or agent should be allowed, upon pain of life or limb, to take up his residence in England ; and that, upon a like penalty, no Englishman should become such a receiver or agent on behalf of persons resident in Rome.

The King's reply was not so encouraging as might have been expected. He had already, he said, made provision by legislation for the remedy of the evils complained of. He was even now in communication with the Papal See on the subject ; and he would continue to make such communications as circumstances might suggest until a satisfactory remedy was provided. This was not the only sign given by the venerable monarch that in those, his closing days, he was unwilling to force matters

to a crisis with the Holy See. He valued the friendship of the Church ; and he was not above the fears and superstitions of his time. Notwithstanding the comparative failure of its movement in this direction, the Parliament of 1376 did really good and effective work. It was a people's Parliament—a Parliament in which popular sentiment found free and full expression, and in which, in certain directions, the demand of the people was respected and obeyed. It is not wonderful, therefore, that it acquired, by way of distinction, the name of "The Good Parliament."

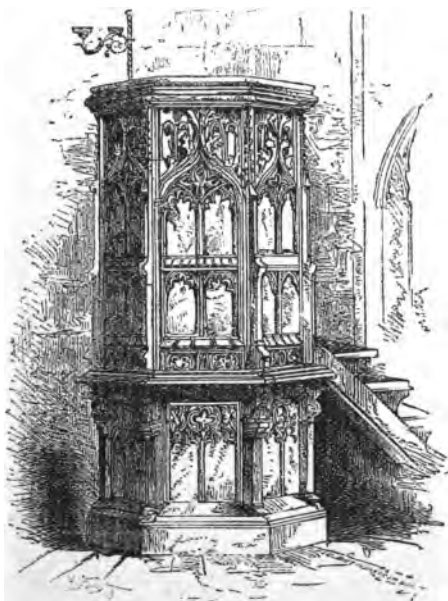
It is claimed, and on what seems fairly satisfactory authority, that Wycliffe was a member of the Good Parliament. Even if there had been nothing in the shape of direct or positive evidence on the subject, it would have been reasonable to take it for granted that he had a seat in this Parliament with all a member's rights and privileges. If he was a member of the Parliament of 1366—and we have given our reasons in a previous chapter for believing that he was—then he was surely a member of the Parliament of 1377. It was the custom of the King, in certain emergencies, to exercise his royal prerogative and to summon experts to the national Legislature ; and it has already been shown that to the Parliament of 1366 the King had summoned, in the above-named capacity, six masters of arts, the presumption being that Wycliffe was one of these. The situation in 1377 was certainly not less complicated and beset with difficulty than it was in 1366 ; and the questions to be considered and disposed of were not only precisely of a kind to render his services specially necessary, but the very importance acquired by many of them, by those especially of a politico-ecclesiastical character, was due to his individual influence. By his lectures at Oxford,

by his preaching at Lutterworth, and by the pamphlets and treatises of various kinds which he was now publishing, he was exercising a leavening influence. It was a people's Parliament, as we have seen; and it was his teaching and the force of his individual character which had stirred up the popular mind and made it clamant for the redress of wrongs. Nor was this all. There was general dissatisfaction with the result of the Conference at Bruges. By none was this dissatisfaction more keenly experienced than by Wycliffe himself. Through none did it find more forceful expression. He was, in fact, its very embodiment and personification. It would have been strange indeed if the man who was singled out for his special knowledge and ability to serve in the Parliament of 1366, who was again singled out for his special knowledge and ability, and honored with the first place but one on the commission which was sent to Bruges, and who was even now smarting under the disappointment there experienced, had not been again, in this fresh emergency, summoned to the King's aid. It would have been otherwise if Wycliffe had lost the King's confidence or had in any way fallen out of favor with those high in power near the throne. But it was not so. Before going to Bruges, he was honored with the appointment to the Rectory of Lutterworth. After his return from Bruges he was honored with the appointment to the prebendal stall at Aust. Both appointments he owed directly to the King. He was, besides, as we shall soon hereafter see, on the most friendly terms with John of Gaunt, who was, in fact, to be numbered on the list of his disciples.

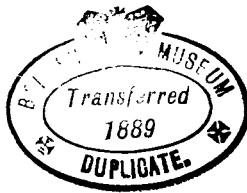
We are not, however, left to mere presumptive evidence in the determination of this question. It is noteworthy that among the grievances complained of in the



WYCLIFFE'S CHAIR.



WYCLIFFE'S PULPIT. (AT LUTTERWORTH CHURCH.)



Parliament of 1377 particular prominence is given to the proceedings of the Papal Collector. It is also noteworthy that among the Vienna manuscripts attributed to Wycliffe Lechler discovered a tract in which the sentiments expressed in Parliament are reproduced and emphasized. According to Lechler, this tract must have been written in 1377. It thus bears a somewhat similar relation to the Parliament of the previous year that the polemical tract of an earlier date, in which are found reported the speeches of the Lords, bears to the Parliament of 1366. Arnold Garnier was still in England in 1377, as he had been in 1376 and previous years; and it is the object of Wycliffe, in the tract referred to, to show how Garnier had conducted himself, and how he had kept the oath by which he became bound when he established himself in England as the Nuncio and Receiver of the Pope. On February 13th, 1372, Garnier, in the royal palace of Westminster and in presence of the councillors and great officers of the crown, came under a solemn bond to do nothing which would in any way infringe upon the rights and interests of the crown and kingdom of England. Wycliffe shows that the habitual practice—the recognized business—of this man, who was sending annually out of the country two hundred thousand pounds of English money, was in direct violation of the oath under which he had come and by which he was permitted to act—nay, that between the recognized business of this man and the rights and interests of the crown and kingdom of England there was an irreconcilable contradiction. Was this merely the echo of the voice of the Parliament? Was it not rather the original, inspiring voice—the voice which gave energy and direction to Parliament—returning again to the charge, and, through this new channel, appealing to the educated

common-sense of England, and calling for united action in favor of reform? From the great similarity of the views expressed by Parliament, and the views known to be entertained by Wycliffe and embodied in this and others of his writings, and also from the close resemblance of the forms of thought and modes of expression in both cases, Lechler comes to the conclusion that Wycliffe was not only a member of the Parliament of 1376, but its inspiring and directing genius.

There is another argument which Lechler turns to good account in this same direction. In one of Wycliffe's yet unpublished manuscripts, the book "De Ecclesia," the Reformer takes occasion to remark that the Bishop of Rochester, in a wrathful mood, had told him, in open sitting of Parliament, that the conclusions which he had set forth in controversy had been condemned by the Pope.* From this statement we are justified in inferring that Wycliffe had rendered himself obnoxious to the hierarchy and to the Holy See, not only by his public lectures from the professor's chair, but by certain written statements which he had given to the world; that those statements, or the substance of them, had been sent to Avignon by his enemies to be pronounced upon by the Roman Curia; and, further, that the Pope had already taken action upon those conclusions and condemned them. But these are not the points in which we are immediately interested. The question is as to the time when this incident took place. The words, we are told, were spoken in public or open Parliament. What Parliament? Lechler conjectures, and, we think, with reason, that the incident referred to must have occurred some time before the condemnation of Wycliffe's propo-

* Lechler, vol. i., pp. 211 and 241.

sitions by Pope Gregory XI. was publicly or generally known, but not earlier than the Parliament of 1366. The object of the speaker evidently was to wound Wycliffe by giving publicity to a fact which was still a secret or known only to a very few. But the Papal censure was not signed until May 22d, 1377. Parliament had assembled again as early as January 27th of that year. If Wycliffe were a member of the Parliament of 1377, as well as of that of 1366, might not the incident have happened in the Parliament of the later year? This is rendered extremely improbable by the fact that Wycliffe received a summons to appear before the English prelates as early as February 19th, 1377. Lechler argues, and, we think, fairly, that the words attributed to the Bishop of Rochester could not well have been spoken after the summons to Convocation had been issued. The summons must have been issued some time before the date of his appearance before the prelates. The presumption, therefore, is very slight, whatever may have been his rights and privileges, that Wycliffe took any part in the Parliament of 1377. The inference is that the incident occurred in 1376. The argument in favor of Wycliffe's being a member of the Parliament of 1376 is thus fairly, if not absolutely, conclusive. It amounts to the highest probability—almost to moral certainty. The truth is, it is next to impossible to understand what is to follow, on any other supposition than that the Reformer was not only an active and efficient member, but the moving spirit of the Good Parliament.

Assuming this to be the case, we can have no difficulty in understanding the course he would adopt in regard to the purely ecclesiastical questions which came up for consideration. He must have experienced some inconvenience, however, in connection with the more purely

political part of the Parliamentary programme. He was the friend of the party in power. John of Gaunt, Lord Latimer, and the Lady Alice Perrers were all tinged with Lollardry, and were, in a sense, his disciples. In the matter of ecclesiastical reform they were all of one mind. But the Reformer must have been greatly embarrassed by the vote on the succession to the throne ; and we conclude that he would take no part in the removal and punishment of his friends. What we know for certain is : he did not lose the favor or friendship of John of Gaunt.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVOCAATION AT ST. PAUL'S.

John of Gaunt Attacks the Temporalities of the Church—Dispossession of the Bishop of Winchester—Scene in the Cathedral—Rising of the Citizens.

THE Good Parliament marks the culminating point in Wycliffe's career. Great work was yet to be accomplished. Great success was yet to be achieved. But the direct, personal influence of the Reformer, in the councils of the nation, never reached a higher point than it had reached in 1376. It did not, however, immediately decline, as we shall soon have occasion to show. And when it does begin to decline, we shall find it is rather in width of range than in intensity of force. Wycliffe, in fact, is soon to take a new departure; and if he is to stand out less prominently before the nation, and to have less influence with those in high places, he is to become a more important personage with the people, and to exercise a more potent influence over the national heart. But that time is not yet.

As a patriot and publicist, full of courage, far-sighted, and of proved ability, Wycliffe commanded, in the highest sense, the confidence of the general public, and enjoyed the favor of the King. His standing at the court of Edward III. may be gathered from the fact that almost all the leading personages near the King were more or less under the influence of the new doctrines.

John of Gaunt sustained to Wycliffe the twofold relation of disciple and patron. It has been already mentioned that Lord Treasurer Latimer and Lady Alice Perrers were tinged with Lollardry. The same was true of John de Salesbury, squire of the chamber ; of Sir Simon Burley, tutor of the young Prince Richard ; of Sir Lewis Clifford, squire of the body to the Princess of Wales ; of Lady Anne Latimer, of the Princess's bed-chamber ; and of John Worth, high steward of her lands. The confessor of the Duke of Lancaster, Walter Disse, was a pronounced Wycliffite. Sir William Neville stood high in the party, so also did his sister, Euphemia de Heselarton, the same who had been keeper of the jewels to Queen Philippa ; and their brother, the Archbishop of York, was known to be friendly. If the change of ministry effected by the Good Parliament had been enduring, it is not improbable that Wycliffe might have suffered some inconvenience, although in the person of the Princess's mother a friend would still have remained at Court. But it was not enduring. Scarcely was Parliament dissolved, when John of Gaunt seized the reins of power, and made himself again complete master of the situation. Lord Latimer was pardoned. Lady Alice Perrers was permitted to return to Eltham and to resume her place by the bedside of the once mighty Edward, now in the last stage of decay, and King only in name. De la Mare was imprisoned at Nottingham, where he remained for the space of two years. The Earl of March, the Earl Marshal of the realm, was got rid of by appointing him Surveyor of the Castle and Town of Calais. His place was given to Lord Henry Percy, one of the members of the Council, whose influence was thus secured to the party of Lancaster. William of Wykeham, now Bishop of Winchester, who had for

some reason become obnoxious to Lancaster, and who had been a member of the late short-lived government, was treated with especial severity. He was charged with maladministration, and impeached on eight different articles. He was specially excepted from the act of grace which signalized the jubilee of King Edward's reign. And as a further indignity, when the writs were issued for the new Parliament, he was passed over and ignored as a peer of the realm.

This treatment of the Bishop of Winchester was well fitted to inspire the clergy with alarm. How far Lancaster was disposed to go in the same direction it is difficult to say ; but it was a blow aimed at Church property, which it was undoubtedly intended all the clergy should feel. Wykeham was a representative man and a representative Churchman. He had already, for a quarter of a century at least, been a conspicuous figure in English society, holding prominent and responsible positions both in Church and State. He owed much to the royal favor ; but he owed not a little also to his own ability. He was a thoroughly capable man ; and in every office to which he was called his fitness was fully revealed. He was a money-making man, and had the greed of place and power ; and although, in the years to come, he was to make displays of his taste and of his munificence on a scale of almost unparalleled grandeur, he had been known in the past chiefly as the seeker and hoarder of money. At one time, as we have seen already, he was in receipt of the revenues of no fewer than twelve livings. He had been a pluralist of the most pronounced type ; and his wealth was known to be enormous. As proof of the extent of his resources, it is stated that when the dying Edward promised him forgiveness and restitution, it was upon condition that he

should furnish three ships of war, with fifty men at arms, and fifty archers, for a quarter of a year, at the wages paid by the King. Should the expedition not be necessary, the money which it would have cost was to be paid into the Royal Treasury.*

The spoliation of the Church had for some time been loudly talked of. Before the meeting of the Good Parliament, it is known, John of Gaunt, to win over the lesser gentry and the burgesses who together formed the Commons, promised to pillage the Church and divide the spoils. The bait did not take. It was reform, not destruction, which was wanted—reform not so much inside the Church of England itself as in those relations which existed between the Church of England and the Holy See. On this platform all sections united—barons, prelates, and commons. Does the Duke of Lancaster cling to his purpose? Is he resolved to give it effect without any regard to the will of Parliament? Is this seizure of the temporalities of Winchester but the first of a meditated series of confiscations by which the Church of England is to be denuded of its property? Such questions Churchmen very naturally asked themselves and their friends. They were the more encouraged to ask such questions of themselves and of each other that they knew that Lancaster was the sworn friend of Wycliffe, and that the denuding of the Church of her temporal possessions, as a means of reform, was one of Wycliffe's pet doctrines. Their anxiety or indignation would not be less if they had credible information that Wycliffe was again on the scene.

There is no mistaking Wycliffe's views on this subject. His theory regarding Church and State had long

* Lowth's "Life of William of Wykeham."

since led him to contend that the property of the Church was its curse ; that it had drawn it away from its primitive simplicity and made it forgetful of its proper mission ; that reform was the one thing needful, and that reform could best be accomplished by freeing it from all unnecessary and cumbrous worldly entanglements ; and that the property of the clergy might be seized and employed, like other property, for national purposes. "Innumerable times," says Lechler, "and almost from every conceivable point of view, Wycliffe returns to this thought, either in the form of calling for the withdrawal and secularization of the Church's endowments, if need be by force, or in the form of suggesting thought of a voluntary renunciation by the bishops, abbots, and others of all their worldly lordships, in conformity with the example of Christ and the standard of His word." Wycliffe, it is probable, deceived himself as to the reforming power of the mere secularization of the Church's endowments, especially in those times. Complete and immediate secularization of ecclesiastical property might have been disastrous to the Church, while it is extremely doubtful if it would have been in any sense a gain to the people, on whom the disendowed clergy of all ranks would have become mainly dependent. Such a revolution in those early days could hardly have failed to prove a gain to the crown and the barons, who would have found it convenient and easy to possess themselves of the confiscated property. But allowance must be made for Wycliffe as well as for the times. He did not see those difficulties, in the light of experience, as we do. He was doing pioneer work, without any examples to guide him. He simply saw a great and ever-growing evil ; and, like all reformers, in similar circumstances, whose hearts are in the work, he called for the uprooting of the

same. In practical statesmanship compromise is often—very often—a necessity, and suggested by highest wisdom; but Wycliffe could make no truce with that which he believed to be the enemy of the Church and of Christianity. His principles were fundamental, and were thoroughly sound. “It is impossible,” he says, “that the Lord should forsake the priest, or suffer him to want for food or clothing; and therewith, according to the Apostle’s rule, should he be content.” The question is not as to the soundness of the principles, but as to their application in certain times and circumstances. The important thing, however, to bear in mind, in the present relation, is that they were Wycliffe’s principles, and that they were not held in secret or under any disguise, but openly, repeatedly, and persistently avowed.

In these circumstances—January 27th, 1377—met the last Parliament of Edward III. It was opened by the youthful heir-apparent, Richard of Bordeaux, now Prince of Wales. A few days later—February 3d—Convocation or, as it has been called, the Clerical Parliament, met in St. Paul’s. Of this assembly William Courtenaye, Bishop of London, was the leading spirit. The first place was, of course, occupied by Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury; but of the two Courtenaye was not only the prouder and more imperious, but the abler and more energetic man. He was now in his forty-fifth or forty-sixth year. A younger son of Hugh, first Earl of Devon, and of the Lady Margaret de Bohun, a granddaughter of Edward I., he was the second cousin of the King, and an aristocrat of the aristocrats. A Churchman by choice, already in high position, and ambitious and hopeful of the highest, he was jealous and conservative of the interests of his order.

Lancaster had done his best to pack Parliament with

his adherents. It was sufficiently compliant with his wishes. The work of the Good Parliament was undone; and the Commons petitioned for the restoration of all those who had been impeached by their predecessors. The old taxes were renewed without difficulty; and some novel measures of raising revenue were resorted to, in order to meet the requirements of the realm. Convocation was in a very different mood. Wykeham, who was not summoned to Parliament, but who was summoned to Convocation, appeared and took his seat among the Bishops in the Lady's Chapel. Scarcely were the opening ceremonies concluded, when Courtenaye sprang to his feet and moved that no subsidy be granted until justice was done to the Bishop of Winchester. The subject was taken up warmly by the assembled prelates. The treatment of Wykeham was declared to be an infringement of the jurisdiction of Holy Church. Immediately but little apparent heed was paid to the action of the prelates; but it must have had its effect, for, as we shall see, it was not long until justice was done to the dispossessed and dishonored spiritual peer. This, however, was not the only work on which the bishops were resolute. One of the first things done, after the opening of Convocation, was to summon John Wycliffe before its tribunal. He was to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London at St. Paul's to answer for certain openly pronounced opinions, declared to be deserving of ecclesiastical censure. The day fixed was February 19th. The trial, which was to be an unusual event, was looked forward to with intense interest and excitement. At the appointed time Wycliffe made his appearance; but he was not alone. At his side was John of Gaunt, brave as a lion and fearless of the haughty Courtenaye. So also was Lord Henry Percy, the Grand

Marshal of England. Following were a band of armed men and several friends of the accused, among whom were five Bachelors of Divinity, of the five Mendicant Orders. These last, at the Duke's request, had agreed to stand forth, in case of need, as the advocates of Wycliffe.

It is plain enough from the attitude assumed by the Duke of Lancaster at this time, in relation to Wycliffe, that he was fully alive to the real meaning of the action of the prelates. The attack upon Wycliffe was a blow aimed at himself. He had incurred their enmity by his treatment of the Bishop of Winchester, and by his ill-concealed purpose to weaken their political influence as a body. For the moment, however, they were no match for him in the political arena; and on this account, as Lechler well puts it, they all the more readily "seized the opportunity of indirectly humbling him in the ecclesiastical province, in the person of a theologian, who stood in intimate relations to his person." There can be no doubt that Lancaster's sympathy with Wycliffe was more political than religious; but this does not detract from the honest bravery of the man, especially when we consider his position near the throne, in coming forward, in this emergency, to stand by the side of his friend.

St. Paul's, as was natural on such an occasion, was crowded to excess. It was with the utmost difficulty that Wycliffe and the ducal party could make their way through the crowd. The Lord Marshal, Henry Percy, led the way. Wycliffe, it would seem, had the sympathy of the multitude. "Dread not the bishops," said the people, as the Reformer and his friends pressed through the outer throng. "Dread not the bishops, for they be all unlearned in respect of you." But it was necessary

for Lord Percy to make some vigorous use of his authority so as to force a passage. There was some commotion, in consequence, in the sacred building. Courtenaye was indignant at the show of authority which was made by the Secular Power. As soon as Wycliffe and his friends found their way into the Lady's Chapel, where the bishops and some barons were assembled, he gave way to the violence of his temper. "If I had known, Lord Percy," he said, "what maisteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopped you out from coming in hither." The Duke, indignant at the assumption of authority, and, as he thought, uncalled-for manifestation of temper, on the part of the bishop, broke in, exclaiming, "He shall keep such maisteries here, though you say Nay." It was an ominous beginning.

Here, then, Wycliffe is standing face to face with his judges, the angry Lord and his attendants by his side. It is at this moment that Dr. Lechler takes occasion to sketch the Reformer's portrait. It is confessedly taken from certain undoubted originals, which have been preserved. It, nevertheless, reveals a thorough study and a proper conception of the man. "A tall, thin figure, covered with a long light gown of black color, with a girdle about his body; the head, adorned with a full, flowing beard, exhibiting features keen and sharply cut; the eye clear and penetrating; the lips firmly closed in token of resolution—the whole man wearing an aspect of lofty earnestness, and replete with dignity and character." * Such is Dr. Lechler's description of the Reformer as he stood before his accusers and judges in the Lady's Chapel of St. Paul's, on this 19th of February,

* Lechler, i., p. 256

1377. It is a good specimen of condensed word painting, and worthy of reproduction.

Wycliffe as yet had not uttered a word. The Lord Percy, turning to him, bade him be seated. "Sit down, Dr. Wycliffe," he said, "for you have many things to answer to, and you need to repose yourself on a soft seat." This was too much for the still irate bishop. "He shall not sit!" he exclaimed. "Nor is it lawful, nor is it becoming, that one cited before his Ordinary should sit down during his answer. He must and shall stand." The dispute had become keen, when Lancaster again struck in. "The Lord Percy's motion for Wycliffe," he said, "is but reasonable. And as for you, my lord bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will bring down the pride not of you alone, but of all the prelacy in England." "Do your worst, sir," said the bishop, scornfully. Lancaster, hurried forward by his rage, exclaimed: "Thou bearest thyself so *brag* upon thy parents, who shall not be able to help thee; they shall have enough to do to help themselves." Lancaster had gone too far. He had uttered a threat. His temper had overmastered him. Courtenaye, not insensible to the advantage he had won, assumed a milder tone, something like cool sarcasm taking the place of rage. "My confidence," he said, "is not in my parents, nor in any man else, but only in God, in whom I trust, and by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth." The Duke, unable or unwilling to continue the wordy war, said, in a low tone, to one of his attendants who was close at hand: "Rather than I will take these words at his hands, I will pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church." The words were overheard. Lancaster had aggravated his first mistake: he had threatened personal violence. It was too much for the crowd to bear.

Courtenaye, with all his faults, was a popular favorite. "We will not have our bishop thus shamefully handled," was the instant and unanimous cry. A violent tumult ensued. Dreading a riot inside the walls of the cathedral, Archbishop Sudbury dissolved the assembly. Thus ended the first attempt of the hierarchy to silence John Wycliffe. It was not yet nine o'clock. Wycliffe had not spoken, nor from anything which had been said could he have learned anything regarding the charges preferred against him.

Lancaster, Wycliffe, and the others managed to get away from the incensed multitude in safety. But the troubles of the day did not end with the closing of the court and the dispersion of the crowd from the cathedral and its precincts. From St. Paul's the Duke and Lord Percy had hurried to Parliament. At their instance a motion was made by Lord Thomas of Woodstock, the King's youngest son, to suppress the mayoralty and to intrust the government of the city to a royal commissioner—Lord Latimer, a well-known creature of John of Gaunt, being named for the post. The member for the city, John Philpot, was indignant, and resisted the measure with "words of stoutness." The news spread like wildfire. It was felt that this was adding insult to insult—wrong to wrong. The populace rose in a body. They rushed first to St. Martin's Lane, where was the house of Lord Percy; and, failing to find his lordship there they proceeded to the Savoy, and surrounded the palace of the Duke of Lancaster. But the Duke and Lord Percy had gone to dine with a rich Flemish merchant in the city. It is not said whether Wycliffe was with them. The presumption is that he was not, and that he had sought some more quiet and more congenial retreat. On hearing of this fresh out-

burst of popular fury, and divining well its object, the Duke and Lord Percy fled, with precipitate haste, to Kennington, where were the young Prince of Wales and his mother. It is said to have been the only time that John of Gaunt showed any signs of fear. The Princess took the matter in hand. A messenger was promptly sent to Courtenaye, instructing him to use his influence at once to preserve the peace. Such a message from such a quarter was not to be disobeyed. The bishop appeared upon the scene of the disturbance not a moment too soon. The citizens were already making preparations to storm the Savoy Palace. Courtenaye was an accomplished man. He could assume the gentleness of the dove as easily as the fury of the lion. He reminded the citizens that this was the blessed season of Lent, when peaceful thoughts should prevail, and urged them to cease from strife, and to return to their homes quietly, like good Catholic Christians. The Princess had not been mistaken as to the influence of Courtenaye. His words were eagerly listened to, and obeyed. The crowds dispersed, and quiet was restored.

Wycliffe returned to his peaceful duties, dividing his time between Oxford and Lutterworth ; and for a season there was comparative quiet, although it was no secret that another storm was brewing.

CHAPTER X.

THE PAPAL BULLS.

Death of Edward III.—Richard II.—Papal Exactions—Wycliffe Consulted—The Bulls—The Lambeth Synod—The Propositions—The Defence—Interference of the Princess of Wales.

THE year 1377, on which our narrative has entered, was to be a year of more than ordinary importance in the history of England and also in the experience of John Wycliffe. Reference has already been made to the fact that certain opinions and statements of the learned Doctor had been submitted to the judgment of the Holy See. The Papal judgment was embodied in five bulls, which were signed on May 22d. These bulls, for reasons which we shall afterward explain, were not immediately acted upon. On June 21st the aged monarch, Edward III., breathed his last, at his palace of Shene. Richard II., a fair-haired, beautiful boy, in the eleventh year of his age, ascended the throne. Funeral ceremonies and coronation ceremonies occupied a considerable part of the year. Historians have found it difficult to penetrate beneath the surface and to comprehend the undercurrents of political life in those times. Whatever the cause, there was an immediate change on the accession of Richard to the throne. New men came to the front; and the tide of political sentiment rolled in a new direction.

The accession of Richard II. had the effect of break-

ing the power and humbling the pride of John of Gaunt. During the later years of the reign of Edward III. this man wielded the power of an almost absolute sovereign. He would submit to no rival in council; and the decrees of Parliament he deliberately trampled under foot. We have already seen how he set at nought the acts of the Good Parliament, and, as soon as it was dissolved, repossessed himself of the reins of government, restoring his satellites to place and power. He had been humbled by the rising of the citizens of London, consequent upon his attempt to supplant the municipal by a military government, on the day of Wycliffe's appearance at St. Paul's. It was almost as inconvenient, however, for the city of London to be without the friendship of John of Gaunt as it was for John of Gaunt to be without the friendship of the city of London. A compromise friendship, as the result of mutual concessions and of the kindly interference of the Princess of Wales, the mother of Richard, was patched up almost immediately after the disturbance. By his marriage with Constance, the daughter of Peter the Cruel of Castille and Leon, as we have mentioned in an earlier part of this work, he took the style, by hereditary right, of "King of Castille." Latterly, although he never wore a crown, he began to be designated by this title at Court. It is not at all improbable that Lancaster was under the impression that he would be allowed to return and exercise, during the minority of the young King, the same authority which he had exercised during the declining years of his predecessor. If he was under such an impression, we can readily understand his disappointment and vexation, when he was made aware that the King in Parliament had been graciously pleased to approve of the arrangement, by which it was proposed to nominate

twelve lords, with the King of Castille at their head, to be a council of regency, to assist the King in the management of the affairs of the realm. Lancaster indignantly rejected the proposal, regarding it as a fresh attempt of his enemies to diminish his power by a process of dilution. Nine counsellors of regency were chosen for a year; and Lancaster surlily retired to Kenilworth, promising to return to Court if the King should need his help. No matter in what light we may regard John of Gaunt, his retirement at this juncture is to be regarded as a misfortune for Wycliffe, all the more so that the ecclesiastical hierarchy was represented, in the council of the regency, not by the gentle Sudbury of Canterbury, nor by the Lollard Neville of York, but by Courtenaye, Bishop of London, and by Arundel, Bishop of Ely, both of them avowed enemies of the Reformer, and both of them destined to win unenviable distinction as the opponents of his doctrines and the persecutors of his followers.

Parliament met in October. Peter de la Mare, who had made so grand a figure in the Good Parliament of 1376, had been released from his imprisonment at Nottingham Castle, and had resumed his place as Chairman or Speaker of the House of Commons. Generally speaking, the men of the Good Parliament had reappeared, and rallied around the young King; and the sentiments which prevailed in that Parliament were again in the ascendant.

One of the first acts of the new reign was to give a liberal interpretation to the dying wishes of the late King in regard to the Bishop of Winchester. Wykeham received a full pardon; and he was reinstated in his temporalities and in all his other rights and privileges as a Spiritual Peer. The condition of the country and the

impoverished state of the exchequer encouraged and justified the Commons in assuming a bold attitude and in the reassertion of their old demands. The war which had so long raged on French soil had been carried across the Channel; and attacks were, being made on the southern coasts of the kingdom. The Scots, too, were up in battle array, and were making threatening movements on the northern border. Money was wanted; but Parliament was resolute in its determination that subsidies could only be had on condition that the wishes of the people be respected and their representations and remonstrances attended to. Petitions to the young King were numerous; and imperious demands were made for the recognition and confirmation of old and legitimate rights, and for the removal of modern abuses both in Church and State.

The relations of the English Church and people to the Holy See came in for a large share of attention. Notwithstanding the very decided action of the Parliament of 1366, and the Concordat signed by Pope Gregory and Edward after the Conference at Bruges in 1374, the Papal Court had neither lowered its pretensions nor abated its demands. Papal appointments, on the old basis of provisions and reservations, were as common as ever; and the aggravating facts in the case were that English gold was flowing in too rich abundance into foreign hands. The income of the French clergy alone from English sources was estimated at six thousand pounds a year. As a partial remedy for the evil, it was proposed that from January 2d of the ensuing year all foreigners alike, whether monks or seculars, should leave the kingdom, and that while the war lasted all their lands and properties, in the country, should be applied to war purposes. Large sums of money thus levied on the

realm, it was known to the King's Ministers and to Parliament, were in the hands of the Pope's agents or bankers. Why should this money be allowed to leave the country? Why should it not be seized at once and appropriated to the public service? Legal advice on the subject was courted. All things considered, it was very natural that Wycliffe should have been appealed to in the premises. The suggestion has been thrown out that probably the young King and his Council appealed to the University of Oxford, and that Wycliffe, as her most learned Doctor, became the mouthpiece of the University, on the subject. To us it seems much more likely that Wycliffe's services were directly called into requisition by the King and his Council. He was well known as an expert in such matters; and his special knowledge had on more than one occasion already been advantageously put in requisition by royal command. It was surely not wonderful that the man who had figured as Wycliffe had figured, in the Parliament of 1366, in the Conference at Bruges, and again, in the Parliament of 1376, should have been asked to give his opinion on a question belonging to a province of thought and investigation which he had made distinctively his own.

However it may have been brought about, it is certain that Wycliffe's opinion was asked as to the disposition of those moneys. The question formulated and submitted for his consideration was, "Whether the Kingdom of England, in case of need, for the purposes of self-defence, is not competent in law to restrain the treasure of the land from being carried off to foreign parts, although the Pope should demand this export of gold, in virtue of the obedience due to him, and under the threat of Church censures." Wycliffe's answer was scholarly and able. It was just such an answer as might

have been expected. He looks at the question submitted to him from three different standpoints, after the logical custom of the time—from the standpoint of nature, from the standpoint of Scripture, and from the standpoint of conscience ; and the law of nature, the law of the gospel, and the law of conscience yield but one answer, which is that such treasure may be lawfully retained for the uses of the kingdom. The law of nature gave precedence to self-preservation and self-defence. The money was England's own. It was in her own option whether to give or to retain. If she gave, she gave as a free-will offering—not as a tribute, but as alms. But the law of the gospel favored the giving of alms only in cases of necessity. The necessity in this case was on the part of England, not on the part of the Holy See. The money, if given, would go to strengthen England's enemies. To give in such circumstances would be not only wrong, but ridiculous. The law of conscience could not sanction such a proceeding. Referring to the danger which might result from resistance to the Papal demands, and especially to the possibility that the Pope might lay the realm under interdict, Wycliffe gave play to that sarcasm, of which, it is evident, he was abundantly possessed, although he never wantonly made use of it. "The Holy Father," he said, "would not thus treat his children, especially considering the piety of England ;" and even if he should allow himself to be tempted to go so far, "it is one comfort that such censures carry with them no divine authority, and another comfort that God does not desert those who trust in Him, and who, keeping His law, fear God rather than man." In the course of his remarks Wycliffe made good use of the all-venerated name of St. Bernard, and was not sorry to have the opportunity of reviving the opinion of that saint that the

successor of St. Peter could not pretend to secular dominion.

Such a judgment, we may rest assured, did not improve his relations with the English hierarchy and with the Papal party generally ; but it must have commended him to the Court and to the people of England.

Parliament was prorogued without any decision having been come to on the question thus raised. It had become evident, however, that the anti-Papal sentiment in England was becoming stronger ; nor was there any room to doubt that the very existence as well as the growing strength of this sentiment were mainly due to the influence of John Wycliffe. It was, therefore, deemed high time to take decided action against him. It might have been dangerous to take such action while Parliament was in session ; but now that Parliament was prorogued, the danger was in delay.

The Papal bulls, as we have seen, were signed on May 22d. They were five in all. The first was addressed to Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, and to Courtenaye, Bishop of London. It conveyed to the two prelates apostolic commission and plenary power to ascertain whether the propositions contained in a schedule appended to the bull had been actually put forth by John Wycliffe ; and, if so, to cause him to be apprehended and imprisoned until they should receive further instructions—such instructions to follow upon the report, which they might send to the Pope of their proceedings. A second bull recognized the difficulty of carrying out such a programme, and authorized the commissioners to issue a public citation, calling upon Wycliffe to present himself in person before Gregory XI. within the space of three months from the date of said citation. A third bull enjoins the commissioners to take proper measures to in-

struct the English King, all the members of the royal family, the Privy Councillors, and all the other great personages of the realm as to the character of Wycliffe's doctrines, and to require their assistance in the extirpation of the same. A fourth bull, addressed to King Edward himself, informed him of the commission which had been appointed, and, after sundry compliments, common on such occasions, and in which reference was made to the commendable zeal displayed by him and by his predecessors on the throne, earnestly invoked his assistance to the commissioners in the execution of the task assigned them. The fifth bull was addressed to the Chancellor and the University of Oxford. It expressed regrets for the negligence which had allowed tares to spring up among the wheat, spoke of Wycliffe's "detestable madness" in teaching such soul-ruining doctrines, and demanded that the heretic be apprehended and delivered into the custody of the commissioners. It was a deep, broad-laid, comprehensive scheme. The coils were gathered tightly around the Reformer. It seemed impossible that he should be able any longer to avoid the wrath of his enemies. It is very manifest that the object of the Roman Court was to get Wycliffe into its own power. Final action was reserved for the Pope himself.

Circumstances of various kinds had brought about delay in the execution of the instructions contained in those Papal missives. It is quite possible, as has been suggested, that they had been detained on their way from Rome. Other and sufficiently satisfactory explanations, however, are at hand. When the Papal bulls arrived in England King Edward was rapidly approaching his end; and, as we have seen, he passed away, on June 21st, one month, all but one day, from the time the bulls were

signed. The bull addressed to the King was rendered invalid by his death. Time was consumed by the Court ceremonies, consequent on the death and connected with the funeral of the monarch. The entry of the boy-king into London, and the coronation ceremonies followed. Then again the time and attention of the people were largely occupied with the proceedings of Parliament, so long as Parliament was in session. Parliament was not prorogued until November 25th. As soon thereafter as possible, on December 18th, the two commissioners issued a mandate to the Chancellor of the University of Oxford, requiring him in the *first* place to call to his aid learned and orthodox divines, and with their help to ascertain whether John Wycliffe had set forth the obnoxious propositions, a schedule of which was appended to the mandate ; and in the *second* place to cite Wycliffe to appear within thirty days after the date of the summons before the commissioners or their delegates at St. Paul's Church, in London, to answer to the charges. It is a point not unworthy of notice that the mandate is much milder in its tone and much more moderate in its demands than was the Papal bull. The bull demanded that the person of the Reformer be seized, held, and delivered over to the Pope. From what followed, we are justified in drawing the inference that the commissioners knew Oxford and the state of feeling which prevailed there, at the time, too well to make any such demand. Nor could they be indifferent to the sympathy which Wycliffe was known to command, in Court circles, or to the widespread influence of his doctrines, among the common people. Courtenaye, who was, beyond all question, the moving spirit in this whole affair, was too knowing a man to be deceived by the demonstrations, at St. Paul's, and in the city in the early part of the year.

He could see well enough that however much Wycliffe may have been for the time confounded with his patron, it was not against Wycliffe or his doctrines, but against John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, these demonstrations were made. The commissioners were evidently well aware that they were more likely to gain the end they had in view by means of cautious and courteous language, than by leaving the Papal bull to speak for itself.

We know from Thomas Walsingham, known as the monk of St. Alban's, a contemporary chronicler, that the leading men at Oxford were highly incensed by the arrogance and presumption manifested in the Papal missive, and that the question was seriously discussed whether the bull should not be rejected with contempt. The chronicler, imbued with a deep reverence for ecclesiastical authority, laments the degradation into which the University had fallen. Addressing the University in the form of apostrophe, he speaks of her regretfully as being under a cloud of ignorance, and as entertaining doubts where Christian laymen had none. The bull, it would seem, was fiercely resisted; but the University, not being disposed to trample upon authority, yielded some sort of obedience to the gentler demands of the mandate.

Wycliffe was finally appointed to appear before the Pope's commissioners. For some cause or other, there would seem to have been a certain amount of delay; and Lambeth Palace, for some unassigned reason, was substituted for St. Paul's. It was for a time believed that this second trial scene was witnessed, some time in the month of April, 1378. Lewis is the sole authority for making the date so late; but even he hesitates to make a positive statement. The presumption is that it was

somewhat earlier. Walsingham, the chronicler above referred to, in his account of the trial, writes as if Gregory XI. were still alive. But Gregory died March 27th, 1378. If Gregory were alive when the trial took place, then the trial must have been in the earlier part of March or late in February.

The Reformer was prompt to obey the summons. Nor did he go up to London unprepared. As he approached the old historic palace, he must have been forcibly reminded of the scene he witnessed, and of which he formed a part, as he entered St. Paul's, just a year before. There was the same surging crowd—eager, anxious, sympathetic—more sympathetic, if possible, than on the previous occasion. But there was a difference—a difference which Wycliffe could not but keenly feel. There was no John of Gaunt, proud and defiant in his mien, and casting over his friend the shield of his protection. There was no Lord Percy, with his band of armed men. There were no Mendicant Friars, learned in all the learning of the schools, ready to use all their knowledge and all their dialectic skill in his defence. He remembered in what confusion, disorder, and even danger, the former affair ended. How this might end, he knew not. He knew only that he was alone; and he had a full sense of that loneliness. In such circumstances it required a stout heart and strong faith to preserve even the semblance of coolness and self-possession. But Wycliffe was not found wanting. If there was no John of Gaunt at hand, there was a Mightier than he at his side; and, as he was fighting in his Master's cause, he had confidence in his Master's strength. Wycliffe, however, was not allowed to muse long on his loneliness. As he neared the gates the crowd reverently parted and permitted him to pass in, encouraging him, meanwhile,

with look and word and gesture. As the people pressed in behind him and filled the chapel, it was evident, at a glance, that the Reformer was among his friends, and that he had nothing to fear. The fear, it was soon to be made manifest, was on the other side.

There was no delay in proceeding with the trial. Wycliffe was called upon to defend or explain the condemned propositions, which were read aloud. They were nineteen in all, and were as follows :

I. "The whole human race concurring without Christ, have not power absolutely to ordain that Peter and all his descendants should rule over the world politically forever.

II. "God cannot give civil dominion to any man for himself and his heirs forever.

III. "Charters of human invention, concerning perpetual civil inheritance, are impossible.

IV. "Every one being in justifying grace not only hath a right to all the things of God, but hath them in possession.

V. "A man can give dominion to his own or his adopted son only ministerially, whether that dominion be temporal or eternal.

VI. "If God be, temporal lords can lawfully and meritoriously take away property from a delinquent Church.

VII. "Whether the Church be in such a state or not is not my business to examine, but the business of temporal lords ; who, if they find it in such a state, are to act boldly, and, on the penalty of damnation, to take away its temporalities.

VIII. "It is not possible that the Vicar of Christ, merely by his bulls, or by them with his own will and consent and that of his college of cardinals, can qualify or disqualify any man.

IX. "It is not possible that a man should be excommunicated to his damage, unless he be excommunicated first and principally by himself.

X. "Nobody ought to excommunicate, suspend, or interdict any, or proceed to punish according to ecclesiastical censure, except in the cause of God.

XI. "Cursing or excommunication does not bind, except in so far as it is used against an adversary of the law of Christ.

XII. "There is no power granted by Christ to His disciples of excommunicating a subject for denying temporalities, but the contrary.

XIII. "The disciples of Christ have no power co-actively to exact temporalities by censure.

XIV. "It is not possible by the absolute power of God that if the Pope or any other Christian pretend that he bindeth or looseth as he will, he does, therefore, actually bind or loose.

XV. "We ought to believe that the Vicar of Christ either binds or looses, only when he obeys the law of Christ.

XVI. "Every priest rightly ordained, according to the law of grace, hath a power according to which he may minister all the sacraments, and by consequence may absolve any contrite person confessing to him from any sin.

XVII. "It is lawful for kings, in cases limited by law, to take away the temporalities from clergy who habitually abuse them.

XVIII. "If the Pope, or temporal lords, or any other person, have endowed the Church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take them away in certain cases—namely, when the act is by way of medicine to cure or prevent certain sins; and that notwithstanding excommunication or any other Church censure, since these endowments were not given but under a condition implied.

XIX. "An ecclesiastic, even the Roman Pontiff himself, may lawfully be rebuked by his subjects for the benefit of the Church, and may be impleaded by both clergy and laity."

These were bold statements—very bold, when considered in relation to those times. They were drawn up by Wycliffe's enemies; but we have no reason to doubt that they reflected his opinions with a reasonable amount of fidelity. If they had been drawn up by Wycliffe himself they would, in all probability, have been differently worded and differently arranged. They had, in all likelihood, as Milman suggests, been sent from England to the Pope, and from the Pope back again to England. Wycliffe, it would seem, must have known what the charges were before he came to the court, for he is said to have drawn up three different replies—one which he handed to the Papal commissioners, and which he intended should be sent to the Pope; one for private circulation; and a third couched in fierce, recriminative

language, and striking at some person whom he calls the "motley doctor." The first is that in which attention centres. Circumstances permitting, the commissioners would, in all likelihood, have made some reply. The reply, we may take it for granted, would not have been favorable. But circumstances did not permit. The citizens were already noisy and demonstrative. "The Pope's brief," they cried, "shall have no effect in England without the King's consent." "Every man is master in his own house." A tumult seemed imminent when Sir Lewis Clifford, an officer attached to the Court of the Princess of Wales, himself a disciple of Wycliffe, entered the chapel and demanded, in the name of the Princess, that they should abstain from pronouncing any final judgment in the case. They were not "to presume to pass anything in the form of a sentence against the said John Wycliffe." What with this peremptory message from the Princess, and with the tumultuous crowd inside and outside the chapel, the commissioners had no choice but to yield; and the Archbishop had to content himself with a sort of injunction, prohibiting Wycliffe from preaching or teaching the obnoxious doctrines, and for the reason that such doctrines would give offence to the laity. It was a meaningless injunction, given without proper authority, and not intended to be obeyed. Wycliffe left Lambeth master of the situation, and returned to Oxford a stronger man than ever, and free to preach and teach as before. The Papal party were everywhere filled with rage at this second failure to silence the arch-heretic, as Wycliffe was now called by his enemies. Walsingham, on whom we are dependent for these historical details, breaks out into fierce wrath against the commissioners. They had, it appears, been loud and boastful as to what they would do, before the

trial began. "But now, at the sound of the wind that shakes the reeds, their speech became as soft as oil." "At the sight of a certain knight of the Court of Princess Joan, one would have supposed they had no horns on their mitres more. . . . They were 'as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.'"

Wycliffe's defence, which has been preserved, has been differently judged by different persons. Dean Milner charges Wycliffe with "sophistical methods of argument" and of "evasive modes of speech incompatible with a pious reformer." This seems ungenerous. Wycliffe was admittedly subtle, and a master of dialectics. In fighting schoolmen acute and able as himself, he had surely a perfect right to use scholastic weapons; and before a tribunal where his liberty and probably his very life were in danger he was certainly not bound to play into the hands of his opponents, by expounding his own case to his own disadvantage. Dean Milman is much more generous. Of the reply which was handed to the commissioners—the fullest of the three—he says "it is calm, cautious, guarded, yet on some of the more important questions significant enough."* Wycliffe repeats and emphasizes the points made in the theses. In regard to the first five articles the reply reveals the schoolman—the subtle dialectician. But with regard to the later articles, there is plain speaking enough. The property of the Church is not inalienable or indefeasible; it may be forfeited, if improperly used; and it is for the temporal power to enforce the forfeiture. Powers of censure, excommunication, absolution are not absolute and unconditional; they depend for their validity on the divine ratification, and, therefore, on their being uttered

* "Latin Christianity," vol. vii., p. 382.

or promulgated in strict conformity with the law of God. Wycliffe confesses himself a sincere Churchman, and not opposed to the jurisdiction of the Church. He is willing to deliver his opinions, in writing, and ready to defend them to the death. He is indebted for them to the Holy Scriptures and to the writings and teachings of pious and learned doctors ; but if they are proved to be adverse to the faith, he is ready and willing to retract them. "God forbid," he concludes, "that truth should be condemned by the Church of Christ because it soundeth ill in the ears of sinners and ignorant persons ; for then the whole faith of Scripture would be liable to be condemned."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PAPAL SCHISM.

Death of Gregory XI.—Election of Urban VI.—Clement VII.—Rival Popes—Disaster to the Church—Effect upon Wycliffe—A Progressive Man—Responsibility Assumed.

Soon after the Lambeth Palace affair occurred an event which immediately affected the whole of Christendom, and which, in its ultimate consequences, exercised a mightily transforming influence on the modern world. On March 27th, 1378, Pope Gregory XI. died in Rome. It was the first time in seventy years that a Roman Pontiff had breathed his last in the Holy City, and at the headquarters established by St. Peter. In January of the previous year Gregory, yielding to an influence which had proved equally irresistible in the case of his predecessor, Urban V., had left Avignon, and fixed his abode in Rome. It seemed to many as if the inglorious seventy years' captivity were ended, and as if a new era of splendor and prosperity had dawned not only upon Rome, but upon the Church. But the fates had willed it otherwise. Gregory was received with every outward demonstration of joy and every sign of willing submission. It was not long, however, until he found himself in a hotbed of trouble and discontent, and until he was sighing for the quiet and comfort of Avignon. Sick and weary as he was, he was meditating a return thither when death came, securing him a more effective and a

more enduring relief. His death left everything in confusion. The Babylonish captivity of the Popedom was ended; but it was probably not unnatural that the disgrace and scandal of the captivity should have been succeeded by the greater disgrace and greater scandal of the Papal schism—a schism which threatened to divide Western Christendom permanently into two hostile communities, and to exhibit to the world the strange spectacle of two rival successors of St. Peter. Among the many causes which contributed to bring about the great Reformation about a century and a half later, there can be no doubt that one of the most potent was the unseemly division of the Christian Church, which ensued on the death of Gregory XI.

Never, perhaps, before or since, was there a more stormy election than that which raised Bartholomew of Prignano, Archbishop of Bari, to the chair of St. Peter, as Urban VI. The cry was loud and imperious on the part of the Roman people for a Roman Pope. “A Roman Pope! A Roman Pope!” they exclaimed; “we will have none but a Roman for our Holy Father.” For seventy years they had been without a pastor. They would endure such a state of things no longer. Rome was literally in the hands of the rabble multitude. One body of men entered the building where the Conclave was in session and terrorized the cardinals; another body penetrated the Papal cellar and pierced the rich wine casks; yet another party burst into the belfry of St. Peter’s and increased the general tumult by the ringing of the bells; and loud amid the din was heard the cry, “If we have not a Roman Pope, we will hew these cardinals and Frenchmen in pieces!” It was only after long-continued and bitter wrangling that the cardinals were able to agree. The Cardinal of St. Peter’s was

declared to be too old ; the Cardinal of Florence was of a city which was at war with the Holy See ; the Cardinal of Milan was a subject of the Visconti, the deadly enemy of the Church. It seemed for a time as if they would never be able to come to a decision. When, however, the name of Prignano was mentioned, all was acclamation. Orsini alone stood out ; but it was too late. The Archbishop of Bari was elected and hastily installed. He was an Italian, but not a Roman.

The new Pope was fully aware of the necessity for reform, and he began his work with energy and determination. He was wanting, however, in suavity of manner ; and he took no pains to carry conviction with him in the radical changes which he attempted to introduce. "He did the harshest things in the harshest manner." It was not long until the high-born prelates began to find that they had, of their own act, subjected themselves to a severe and uncompromising master. Urban VI., it appears, was of lowly origin, and owed his elevation to what may be called the virtues of the monk. His enemies, who soon became numerous, twitted him on the meanness of his birth. "None is so insolent," they said, "as a low man suddenly raised to power." In July, 1378, the French cardinals who had assembled at Avignon drew up a letter to Pope Urban, declaring his election "illegal, because brought about by the compulsion of the Roman mob, and asking him to step down and to retire from a position and from honors to which he was not rightly entitled. They addressed themselves also to their brother cardinals, inviting them to take part in their counsels, and to lend the weight of their wisdom and their influence in the solution of the difficulty. The four Italian cardinals, who had hitherto adhered to the cause of Pope Urban, might have re-

mained indifferent to the entreaties of their brethren but for the high-handed, imperious, and unreasoning policy which the Pope persisted in pursuing, and especially for the slight which he put upon them by creating, without their knowledge or consent, twenty-six new cardinals. They had now no choice but join the ranks of the opposition. On September 20th, therefore, at Fondi, in Neapolitan territory, all the cardinals (the Cardinal of St. Peter's alone excepted) who took part in the election of Urban being present, a rival Pope was elected in the person of the Cardinal Bishop Robert of Cambray, Count of Geneva. This second Pope took the name of Clement VII.

Of all these proceedings Wycliffe had, as was most natural, been duly watchful. At first, as we learn from one of his own writings ("De Ecclesia"), the Reformer was disposed to take a hopeful view of the election of Urban VI. It was something to Wycliffe that a man imbued with the spirit of reform was, at last, the occupant of the Chair of St. Peter. He had immense power for good, just as he had immense power for evil. It remained to be seen how the power was to be exercised. Wycliffe had not long to wait. The difficulties which immediately arose between the Pope and the cardinals were fitted to inspire alarm. They were certainly not in any high sense encouraging. The election, at Fondi, and the consequent division of Christendom left little room for hope; and finally the unseemly contentions and the unholy wars which broke out between the rival parties were sufficient to fill the most sanguine minds with despair. It is difficult for us in these times to enter into the feelings with which the men and women of that period would view the division of Christendom. The spectacle is no longer a novelty. We view it as a matter

of course. It is not associated in our minds with anything supposed to be necessarily wrong. Ecclesiastical division, if in some senses unfortunate, is looked upon as a proof of liberty—as an evidence of the triumph of right. It was quite otherwise in those days. The Church was a unit—one and indivisible. Its unity was symbolized and illustrated by the one-man power at Rome—a power to the guardianship of which that Church was intrusted, which was invested with the highest and holiest of sanctions, and which was the visible embodiment of divine and celestial authority. It was something awful—something entirely new to human experience—to witness the Holy Catholic Church, which was but another name for Christendom, rent asunder into two antagonistic parts—to see that power divided and made a means of its own destruction, and to hear the sacred name of Heaven's Eternal King invoked by two rival Popes, each of them claiming to have from the same exalted source a viceregal commission, with plenary authority to bind and to loose, to save and to destroy. It was as if the all-controlling hand of Infinite Wisdom had been withdrawn from the affairs of the universe, as if heaven and earth were about to commingle in dire confusion, as if the end of all things was at hand.

The effect of the schism was immediately visible in the different attitudes assumed by the different nations. Infallibility was nowhere; and the governments, as natural preference or force of circumstances determined, adopted the banner of one or other of the ecclesiastical chiefs. Italy, Portugal, England, Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Hungary acknowledged the headship of Urban, who held possession of the Vatican; while France, Scotland, Savoy, Lorraine, Castille, and Aragon espoused the cause of Clement, who installed himself at Avignon.

Half a century was to elapse before this state of things was to be healed ; and it was to be half a century of sin and shame and cruelty, of unholy and unbridled temper, and of deeds of blood. Out of the ordeal the Roman Church was to come not purified, sweetened, and healed of her disorders, but with features marred by evil passions, with garments stained with blood, and pregnant with future trouble to herself and the world.

On Wycliffe the schism produced a deep and lasting impression. The hope, which he had indulged on the election of Urban, and which had been encouraged by the work of reform, on which the new Pope so promptly entered, was completely blasted. In place of a well-organized central government, seeking the Church's good, he saw two rival governments, each seeking the other's destruction, and involving the Church in the common ruin. It was not only not growing order which he saw—it was chaos. For a time he seemed loathe to abandon Pope Urban. It was not long, however, until Pope and antipope were denouncing each other as pretenders, damning each other to the extent of their ability, and exchanging excommunicatory compliments in a manner so lively that it would have been amusing, if it had not been horrible. Wycliffe soon arrived at the conclusion that both Popes were right in their judgment of each other—that they were both pretenders, “apostates and limbs of the devil, and not members of the body of Christ.” He issued a tract on the subject some time during 1378.* “Now,” he said, “is the head of Antichrist cloven in twain, and one priest contendeth against the other.” He had already said: “If Urban departs from

* “On the Schism of the Roman Pontiffs,” *English Works*, v. iii., p. 242.

the right way, then is his election a mistaken one ; and in that case, it would be not a little for the good of the Church to want both Popes alike." That the schism largely occupied his mind is evident from numerous expressions in his published and unpublished writings. In his lectures to the students, and in his sermons, both Latin and English, he speaks freely of the violent behavior of both Popes ; and the term Antichrist, as applied to the Papacy, begins from this date to be of frequent use. The conviction seems to grow stronger, day by day, that no good was to come from the Popedom, neither at Rome nor at Avignon, neither as a unit nor as divided—that the Papacy itself is the Antichrist, and that the whole institution is from the wicked one. Two years later this judgment is freely and repeatedly expressed.

It is simple truth to say that from this time henceforth Wycliffe's career as a Reformer is marked by a higher aim, and becomes at once more radical and more pronounced. Hitherto the reforms he has aimed at have been of a politico-ecclesiastical character. Henceforth they are to be of a more purely religious character. In the past he has been laboring, and not unsuccessfully, to break the fetters in which the Papacy held the State and Church of England. In the future he is to be more interested in the spiritual welfare of his countrymen, and his efforts are to be directed to the destruction of those fetters by which, as he thought, they were held in spiritual bondage. He had risen to a higher conception of Christian truth ; and his remaining days were to be spent in proclaiming the gospel of salvation, and in striving to build up the kingdom of God upon the earth. It was as if he had said, "The reform of the Church is hopeless. Why waste time and strength in vain

endeavors to improve the government and organization of the Church, when we can give ourselves directly to the work which the Church was called into existence to accomplish, but which it persistently neglects? Let us give heed to the work, and let the Church take care of itself."

There is nothing more interesting in Wycliffe's life than its progressive character. The opinion was long held that the Reformer began his public career with all his views matured and fixed—with what Lechler calls "a complete and unified system of thoughts"—and that his successive movements were not the result of fresh light or of new convictions, but the outcome of old and settled views of men and things, and made as circumstances suggested or opportunity offered. A more thorough study of his character, as revealed in his writings, has exploded this opinion, and has shown that Wycliffe, quite as much as Luther, was a progressive man; that the earlier as well as the later Reformer groped his way from darkness into light, and was promptly obedient to the light as it brightened and beckoned him forward; and that in the one case, as in the other, the bonds of error were only gradually loosened. In his work on "The Sense and Truth of Holy Scripture," published about this time, he makes a very candid admission. He has been speaking of the literal, almost childish, views which at one time he entertained regarding the meaning of the Bible. "At last," he says, "the Lord, by the power of His grace, opened my mind to understand the Scriptures;" and then he adds: "I acknowledge that oftentimes, for the sake of vainglory, I departed from the teaching of Scripture, both in what I maintained and what I opposed, when my double aim was to acquire a dazzling fame among the people and to

lay bare the pride of the sophists.'” Humiliating as this confession is, it is, nevertheless, manly talk ; and while it justifies the view we have just presented of his character, it reveals the characteristics of a true man. How many have similarly rioted in the pride of intellect ! How few have had the manhood to abandon the practice or the honesty to confess it !

At the time of which we write, Wycliffe had not published much. His views and opinions, however, were well and widely known. The extent to which these views and opinions had spread, and the influence which they exerted, were out of all proportion to the small number of tracts or treatises he had yet published. Why was this ? To what cause was it due ? It was due to Wycliffe’s teaching at Oxford. Almost all those works which he afterward elaborated in his retirement at Lutterworth, and of which not a few were copied and put in circulation, were the direct fruit of Oxford study ; and they had, doubtless, in some form or other, been made use of in the Professor’s chair. That vast work of the Reformer, the “*Summa in Theologia*”—a system of theology—still in manuscript, consists of a series of learned treatises, each of which, in whole or in part, must have done service as an Oxford lecture. It was the custom of the Professors, then as now, to repeat different sections of their lectures to different classes in successive years. It was the custom also of the students, then as now, to take notes of the lectures as delivered. Year after year, therefore, in greater or less abundance, what Wycliffe taught was carried away in the memories or note-books of the students ; and by these means his opinions were scattered broad and wide over the land. As these opinions were novel, or striking, or peculiar, or in conflict with popular sentiment, or in any way revolu-

tionary, so would they be remembered, repeated, put in writing, and communicated from one to another. Thus it came to pass that the Reformer's most pronounced opinions were known to large numbers of all ranks and classes before he had himself made any formal publication of them, and long before he appeared as a publicist and Parliamentary adviser, or was put upon his defence in an ecclesiastical court. His views regarding dominion—government generally—long since developed and expounded at Oxford, and constituting the basis and, in a sense, the kernel of his whole theological system, had found practical illustration in the Parliament of 1366 in connection with the tribute-money; in the Parliament of 1376 in connection with Papal jurisdiction; and in the following year, when his opinion was asked and given in connection with the disposal of certain moneys, which had been collected in England for the Holy See, but which had not yet been transmitted. Of these views and opinions, thus openly expressed, few persons in the kingdom could be ignorant. From the existing works of Wycliffe we have the best of reasons for believing that, on many subjects—some of them relating to the Church's faith, others of them relating to the Church's practice—he held and advocated opinions of a radical and revolutionary character. On the profligacy and indolence of the clergy, on the degeneracy of worship, on the neglect of preaching, on the worship of saints, on the veneration of relics, on indulgences, and other kindred subjects which called for reform, he had not been wholly silent; and although Wycliffe was not so open-mouthed as yet on these themes, probably not pronouncing himself beyond the walls of his lecture-room, we may well rest assured that through the medium of his students the Professor's views would find a fair amount of circulation.

There can be no doubt that we know with a tolerable certainty what views Wycliffe had held and advocated up to the date of the Papal Schism. His views had undoubtedly been steadily ripening; and an intimate and close observer of the man, we may well suppose, would have had no difficulty, from their character and tendency, in divining the final result. He had not been silent regarding doctrine; but his efforts had been mainly directed against abuses, and whatever attacks he had yet made upon the doctrines of the Church had been limited to those which related to the externals of the ecclesiastical system. Hitherto he had, so to speak, been putting forth his strength against the outworks; now he has resolved to take advantage of the opening he had made, and to attack the citadel itself.

We can hardly wonder that Wycliffe had come to such a determination. He had escaped from two trials—one at the instance of the English hierarchy, the other at the instance of the Pope. But although he had escaped so far, he had effected reconciliation with neither. His enemies had been baffled rather than defeated. They would return to the attack when opportunity offered. From the hierarchy he had nothing to expect but persistent and relentless opposition. And as to the Popedom—its present condition made it a laughing-stock. What could he expect from the Church, as the Church now was? What was there in the Papacy, as the Papacy now presented itself, to command his respect or his allegiance? He had done his best to remove abuses. Why struggle further in a direction in which reform seemed impossible? There was other and pressing work to be done. He would do it—do it in his own way and on his own responsibility. From this period Wycliffe stands out in the character of a Reformer, in the highest

and noblest sense in which the term can be used ; and we have to note, at the same time, the commencement of four great movements, all of them pointing in the same direction, and each of them having this persecuted and disappointed, yet resolute and undaunted Oxford professor for its soul and centre. These were the carrying of the gospel to the people ; the assault upon the popular and accepted view of the Eucharist ; the war upon the Mendicant Orders, and the translation of the Bible. These various manifestations of a revived activity, developing itself in new channels, were for the most part simultaneous ; but we shall have to content ourselves with looking at them separately and in the order named.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

Preaching and Preachers—Wycliffe as a Preacher—His Poor Priests—Wesley Anticipated—Transubstantiation—The Theses—The Oxford Council—The Mandate.

At a very early period in his academic career Wycliffe set a high value on the sacred Scriptures. He had them only in the Latin Vulgate ; but of the Vulgate he soon made himself master. It was natural, therefore, that he should attach importance to the sacred office of the ministry and to the preaching of the Word. Like the saintly and venerated Grossetête, he seems to have taken a special delight in the work of the preaching friars, who were carrying the good news and the glad tidings of salvation to the homes and the hearts of the people. He lamented the degenerate condition of the pulpit ; and he was grieved with the endowed clergy for their habitual neglect of what he considered the principal part of the ministerial work. It was a common belief of the time that there was more virtue in prayer and contemplation than in preaching ; and in this prevailing conviction the indolent clergy found a convenient argument. Wycliffe gave no quarter to any such opinions or beliefs. " True men," he says, " say boldly that true preaching is better than praying by monks, yea, though it come of heart and clean devotion ; and it edifieth more the people ; and, therefore, Christ commanded specially His apostles

and disciples to preach the gospel, and not to close them in cloisters, nor churches, nor stones to pray thus. And therefore Isaiah said, '*Woe is to me, for I was still ;*' and Paul saith, '*Woe is to me, for I preach not the gospel.*' And God saith to the prophet, '*If he shew not to the sinful man his sins, he shall be damned therefore.*' And Gregory saith that men of great cunning and virtuous life, that choose stillness, and desert for love of contemplation, be guilty of as many souls as they might save by teaching and dwelling in the world ; and thus preaching is alwayes (always) best ; nethless devout prayer of men of good life is good in certain time ; but it is against charity for priests to pray evermore, and no time to preach, saith Christ chargeth priests more for to preach the gospel than to say mass or matins." Wycliffe concludes his argument thus : " Lord ! what charity is it to a cunning man to choose his own contemplation in rest, and suffer other men to go to hell for breaking of God's hests (commands), when he may lightly teach them, and yet more think of God in little teaching, than by long time in such prayers. Therefore, priests should study Holy Writ, and keep it in their own life, and teach it other men truly and freely, and that is best and most charity ; and in certain times pray devoutly, and have sorrow for their sins, and other men's, and then they shall be as the firmament over little stars, in comparison of other saints in heaven. God bring us all to that glorious bliss for His endless mercy." *

In another place, where he addresses himself very directly to the work of pulpit instruction, he declares the preaching of the Word to be the highest service to which man can attain, and points to the example of

* "English Works by Matthew," pp. 111-113.

Christ and His apostles. It was Christ's special command to all the disciples, that they should go into all the world preaching the gospel. It was His special injunction to Peter that he should feed His sheep. It was to qualify them for the preaching of the gospel that the Spirit was poured forth on the day of Pentecost. "If our bishops," he says, "preach not in their own persons, and hinder true priests from preaching, they are in the sin of the bishops who killed the Lord Jesus Christ."

Wycliffe did not content himself with laying down the law; nor did he leave the work of preaching wholly to others. He took a special pleasure in breaking the bread of life to others; and he magnified the preacher's office. The sermons which he has left behind him are numerous, and are divided into two great groups—Latin and English. The Latin sermons, from their structure, substance, and style, were evidently prepared and delivered at Oxford, before the University, and probably at St. Mary's, the scene of many a great effort since. The method of reasoning, the illustrations, the authorities cited, and the peculiar character of the quotations—all imply that they were delivered to a cultivated audience—an audience composed of people of scholarly tastes and scholastic habits of thought. They are just such sermons as would, in those times, be delivered to students and professors. In some of them the preacher denounces the false style of the time as the evil practice of not setting forth God's Word, but substituting stories, fables, and poems, which were altogether foreign to the Bible. The object of preaching is to edify Christians and to save the ungodly. Speaking of the phrase, "The seed is the Word of God," he exclaims: "O marvellous power of the Divine seed, which overpowers strong men, softens hard hearts, and renews and changes into divine, men who had been

brutalized by sins, and had departed far from God! Such a change could never be brought about by the word of a priest, if the Spirit of Life and the Eternal Word did not, above all things else, work with it." He insists on the adaptation of the preaching to the state and needs of the people, and the presence of devout feeling in the preacher. "If the soul is not in tune with the words, how can the words have power? If thou hast no love, thou art sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." The preacher must not only speak from the heart; he must speak to the heart. "In every proclamation of the gospel, the true preacher must address himself to the heart, so as to flash the light into the spirit of the hearer, and to bend his will into obedience to the truth." The Latin sermons are not always in harmony with Wycliffe's own standard and rules. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that he was not wholly free from the surroundings of his time, and that he had, to a certain extent, to conform to the tastes and requirements of his audience. Nor are they, from first to last, characterized by the same theological views. Lechler notes a marked difference between the earlier productions; but the difference is in the line of progress. Latterly there seems to be a sort of leap into a noonday light, and a full consciousness of strength, as well as a pressing sense of duty. The English sermons are much more simple in their character, just such sermons as he may have delivered in his parish church at Lutterworth. Some of them are evidently outlines, prepared as models for the use of the itinerant preachers of his school. There can be no doubt that Wycliffe was a diligent pastor at Lutterworth, as he was an industrious Professor at Oxford, and that he set an example which was then much needed.

In these circumstances, and with these convictions, he

set himself to the task of providing preachers for the people, apart from and independent of the Church. That Wycliffe did organize and send forth a body of itinerant preachers has from an early period been a well-recognized fact. Uncertainty, however, exists as to the date of their organization. What we do know for certain is that the preaching itinerancy was in May, 1382, as Lechler puts it, "already in full swing." In a mandate of that date, addressed to the Bishop of London by the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Courtenaye, the same who, as Bishop of London, had proved himself so bitter and determined an enemy of Wycliffe, special attention is called to "certain unauthorized itinerant preachers who set forth erroneous, yea, heretical assertions in public sermons, not only in churches, but also in public squares and other profane places." "This they do," the Archbishop adds, "under the great guise of holiness, but without any episcopal or papal authorization." About the same time Wycliffe published certain tracts in defence of the itinerants. It was not in a day that the itinerants burst into such force as to command the attention and excite the fears of the Archbishop. There is evidence that they were already strong in 1380; and it is hardly unreasonable to presume that the organization took place some time in 1378. The original cradle was Oxford; Lutterworth also was a centre; and in later years, when the Reformer was shut out of Oxford, the town of Leicester became one of the headquarters.

It is quite reasonable to suppose that Wycliffe, from his long residence at Oxford, and from his great popularity and power, had among the students of the University, and even among the graduates, a large personal following, that the persecutions to which he was subjected drew them more closely to him, and that as devoted and

enthusiastic disciples, and fired with his spirit, they soon became as anxious as himself to propagate the new doctrines. It is evident, from the class of men who gave them welcome, that they were young men of good family, as well as of excellent character and training. The first itinerants were undoubtedly ordained priests, among whom were such men as John Aston, Nicholas Hereford, John Purvey, and, later, William Thorpe, to whose evidence, given before Archbishop Arundel, we are indebted for much useful information on the general subject. Thorpe tells us that by permission of his parents he was in the habit of meeting Wycliffe and the others, and receiving instruction from them. Wycliffe's conversation and teaching he prized the most; and he speaks of the Reformer "as the most virtuous and most godly wise man whom I ever heard of, or whom I ever in my life became acquainted with." The work begun, there would grow up a sort of training-school or Priest Seminary, of which Wycliffe would be the head. In the first instance, therefore, there was regular clerical training. Later, however, after Wycliffe's death, the school being no more, and the controlling head being absent, it became necessary to make use of capable laymen. At first the itinerant preachers were forbidden to accept pastoral charges. At a later period a virtue was made of necessity; but the principle was held that a charge was an incumbrance rather than otherwise. In his tract, which he published after the itineracy was fairly established, and even a pronounced success, entitled "Why Poor Priests have no Benefice," Wycliffe took the ground that benefices were generally obtained through simony, that the income beyond the priests' necessities, which ought to be given to the poor, had to be yielded up to his ecclesiastical superiors, and that a beneficed priest

was bound to his parish, whereas, without benefice, he was free to go where he could be most useful, and if persecuted in one city could flee to another. It was not intended that the itinerants should, in any way, act in opposition to the parochial clergy, or even against the Mendicants, with whom he was not yet at open war, although it is difficult to believe that at this stage he had any very high opinion of either. Of the former he already speaks as "dumb dogs that cannot bark;" and of the latter he is soon to be using much harsher language. The Order of Poor Priests, from the outset, were the rivals of the Mendicants, whom in externals they closely resembled.

The itinerants made their appeal to "Goddis Worde" and "Goddis Lawe." The law of God was not only their text; it was their theme. To this as a test everything was subjected. Their language was simple, but intelligible and sometimes strong. They had no pardons to dispense, no spiritual authority to assert. The prevailing sins of the time, in high places and low, were freely spoken of and sternly denounced. The men were in dead earnest; and they spoke as they felt. Clothed in long garments of coarse red woollen cloth, barefoot and staff in hand, they, pilgrim-like, "wandered from village to village, from town to town, and from county to county, without stop or rest, preaching, teaching, exhorting, warning wherever they could find willing hearers—sometimes in church or chapel, wherever any such stood open for prayer and quiet devotion; sometimes in the churchyard, when they found the church itself closed; and sometimes in the public street or market-place." * Wycliffe anticipated Wesley. His

* Lechler, vol. i., p. 310.

itinerants, or "poor priests," as they were popularly named, were the Methodists of the fourteenth century.

It was natural enough that the plain speaking of these men should provoke ill feeling and even opposition. Wycliffe was not slow to come to the aid of disciples and fellow-workers; and in several tracts which still exist, some of them in Latin and some of them in English, he vindicates them from the charges preferred against them. In one, "The Deserts of Satan and his Priests," he writes: "Almighty God, who is full of love, gave commandment to His prophets to cry aloud, to spare not, and to show to the people their great sins. The sin of the common people is great; the sin of the lords, the mighty, and the wise is greater; but greatest of all is the sin of the prelates, and most blinding to the people. And, therefore, are true men, by God's commandment, bound to cry out the loudest against the sin of the prelates, because it is in itself the greatest, and to the people of greatest mischief."

It was during this same period of mental activity, and while, in consequence of the schism and the persecutions to which he was so persistently subjected, he was feeling himself released from all obligations to a system, which, from top to bottom, was a mass of chaotic confusion, that Wycliffe abandoned the so-called orthodox doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper. It was held by the Roman Catholic Church then, as it is held by the Roman Catholic Church now, that after the sacramental words have been pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine upon the altar are transubstantiated or substantially converted into the true body and blood of Christ; that "after consecration there is not in that venerable sacrament the material bread and wine which before existed, considered in their own substances or natures, but only the species of the

same, under which are contained the true body of Christ and His blood, not figuratively nor tropically, but essentially, substantially, and corporally, so that Christ is verily there in His own proper bodily presence." Of the history of this doctrine Wycliffe, of course, was not ignorant. It was not a doctrine of the early Church. For the first eight centuries it does not appear to have been much a subject of dispute ; and the real presence certainly formed no essential part of the creed. The first controversy regarding transubstantiation took place in the ninth century, when the doctrine of the real presence was advanced, in the year 831, by Paschasius Radbertus, the Abbot of Corbie, and when the opposite view was stoutly maintained by Ratramnus (Bertram), a monk of the same place. The next great controversy was carried on between the years 1040 and 1050, when Berengarius, of Tours, attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation, and declared it to be contrary to reason, to Scripture, to the teaching of the early Fathers, and especially to that of St. Augustine. Berengarius, however, had no chance of success when opposed by the famous Hildebrand ; and after this period the doctrine of transubstantiation triumphed completely in the Western Church. Its introduction into England was due to William the Conqueror and his Norman priests ; Lanfrance, whom William made Archbishop of Canterbury, being one of its most zealous supporters. At the fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, the term transubstantiation was first used in a decree of the Church, and the doctrine of the real presence was formally incorporated with the creed. It was inevitable that Wycliffe should find himself sooner or later in conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities on this subject. His mind was essentially practical ; and all his reforms tended in the direction of common sense.

How long his mind was seriously occupied with the question we have no means of knowing. Lechler, who has investigated this subject very thoroughly, comes to the conclusion that Wycliffe, as late as 1378, when he composed his work, "De Dominio Civili," continued to speak and write as if his views concerning the Eucharist were in perfect harmony with the acknowledged creed of the Church. The work of inquiry once begun in this direction, it is very evident that its progress was at once rapid and thorough. In the "Trialogus," a work composed in 1382, and in which his opinions were reflected with considerable fulness, we find the Reformer using strong language regarding transubstantiation. "I maintain," he says, "that among all the heresies which have ever appeared in the Church, there never was one which was more cunningly smuggled in by hypocrites than this, or which in more ways deceives the people; for it plunders the people, leads them astray into idolatry, denies the teaching of Scripture, and by this unbelief provokes the Truth Himself oftentimes to anger." Wycliffe appeals to Scripture, to the traditions of the early Church, to reason, to common-sense; and the answer which comes from every one of these separate sources is that the bread in the communion service is bread after consecration, as it was before. He protests loudly against the delusion that the priest *makes* the body of Christ by his actions in the Mass. It is a horrible delusion, dishonoring to God, and implying, on the part of the priest, scandalous presumption.

These thoughts, which have been preserved for us in the "Trialogus" and some other works written about the same period, Wycliffe was already, as early as 1379 or 1380, expressing without reserve, alike in the pulpit and in the Professor's chair. This new teaching was

already the fruitful cause of excitement at the University, when, in the spring of 1381, he anticipated the famous act of Luther—the act which rung the tocsin of the Reformation in the sixteenth century—by the publication of twelve short theses, which he undertook to defend against the world. These were :

I. “The consecrated host which we see on the altar is neither Christ nor any part of Him, but the efficacious sign of Him.

II. “No pilgrim upon earth is able to see Christ in the consecrated host with the bodily eye, but by faith.

III. “Formerly the faith of the Roman Church was expressed in the confession of Berenger—viz., that the bread and wine, which continue after the benediction, are the consecrated host.

IV. “The Lord’s Supper, in virtue of the sacramental words, contains both the body and the blood of Christ, truly and really, at every point.

V. “Transubstantiation, Identification, and Impanation—terms made use of by those who have given names to the signs employed in the Lord’s Supper—cannot be shown to have any foundation in the Word of God.

VI. “It is contrary to the opinions of the saints to assert that in the true host there is an accident without a subject.

VII. “The sacrament of the Eucharist is in its own nature bread and wine, having, by virtue of the sacramental words, the true body and blood of Christ at every point of it.

VIII. “The sacrament of the Eucharist is in a figure the body and blood of Christ, into which the bread and wine are transubstantiated, of which latter the nature remains the same after consecration, although in the contemplation of believers it is thrown into the background.

IX. “That an accident can exist without a subject is what cannot be proved to be well grounded ; but if this be so, God is annihilated, and every article of the Christian faith perishes.

X. “Every person or sect is heretical in the extreme which obstinately maintains that the sacrament of the altar is bread of a kind *per se*—of an infinitely lower and more imperfect kind even than horses’ bread.

XI. “Whoever shall obstinately maintain that the said sacrament is an accident, a quality, a quantity, or an aggregate of these things, falls into the before-mentioned heresy.

XII. "Wheaten bread, in which alone it is lawful to consecrate, is in its nature infinitely more perfect than bread of bean flour or of bran, and both of these are in their nature more perfect than an accident."

These theses were bold — bold beyond precedent. Nothing so daring had been done in the entire history of the mediæval Church. The boldness of the attack can only be understood and appreciated, when it is borne in mind that the real presence was then, as it is now, regarded as the cardinal doctrine of the Church. It was the very centre and citadel of the faith. The blow fell like a thunderbolt. If there was commotion before, it now gave place to the wildest kind of excitement. The Church was attacked in its very life centre; the honor of the University was imperilled; pious people were shocked; and the ungodly found encouragement in their waywardness and rebellion. Something must be done at once. The Chancellor of the University, William de Berton, summoned around him a council of learned men of the University. Among the twenty there were two doctors of law and ten doctors of theology. Of the latter there were only two who did not belong to the monastic orders. As for the rest, they were all members of the Mendicant Orders but two—one of these being a Benedictine and the other a Cistercian. Such was the council which was summoned to give the Chancellor the benefit of their judgment in regard to the theses, and to decide upon what should be done in the premises. The council was not slow in coming to a decision; and the judgment was just such as might have been expected. The theses were declared to be in substance erroneous and heretical; and the advice was that the public teaching of the same should be positively prohibited. The Chancellor drew up a mandate in harmony

with the finding of the council. In the mandate, strange to say, the name of Wycliffe is not mentioned ; and the theses, in place of being cited as written, are compressed into two articles, in which the essence of the original is well preserved. They are as follows :

I. " That in the sacrament of the altar the substance of material bread and wine do remain the same after consecration that they were before.

II. " That in that venerable sacrament the body and blood of Christ are not *essentially*, nor *substantially*, nor even *bodily*, but *figuratively* or *tropically* ; so that Christ is not there truly or verily in His own proper bodily person."

These doctrines were, of course, pronounced heretical ; and the mandate prohibited the public teaching of said doctrines in the University on pain of suspension from every function of teaching, of the greater excommunication, and of imprisonment. The prohibition extended to all members of the University, who were forbidden, on pain of the greater excommunication, to be present at the public reading or defence of the condemned articles.

Wycliffe seems to have been unaware of the action of the Chancellor and his council. In those days there stood between Trinity College and the present site of Wadham the Augustinian Monastery—an attractive building, and provided with some splendid lecture-rooms. One of those rooms, it would appear, was occupied by the Reformer and his students. Wycliffe, it is said, was in the Professor's chair, lecturing to his assembled students, on the subject of the Lord's Supper, when the officer charged with the publication of the mandate entered the class-room. The lecturer, we are told, was taken by surprise. He had doubtless expected to be summoned before the University authorities, and called upon to give an account of his conduct. He was willing and ready to

defend his theses. But to be virtually condemned without being heard—to be thus effectually silenced without ever being named or having his theses referred to—this he did not look for. Wycliffe saw at a glance how completely he had been outwitted. The mandate had all the force of a decree of the University. He had no choice but obey it. It seemed to him unfair—unjust. Recovering himself from his first surprise, he is said to have finished his lecture, to have defied the Chancellor or any of his assessors to refute his opinions, and to have declared his intention to appeal—not to the Pope, or Bishop, or ecclesiastical ordinary, but—to King Richard himself and to the Parliament of England; “showing himself in this,” as the chronicler adds, “a pernicious heretic.”

For the present, at least, Wycliffe was well aware that his influence was crippled at Oxford. On all those subjects on which he cared to speak he was under the necessity of keeping silence. But it was not necessary that his pen should be idle. He retired, therefore, to Lutterworth; and from his quiet rectory there he soon sent forth a large Latin treatise which he called his “Confession,” and the most famous of all his English tracts or sermons, the “Wicket,” in both of which he vindicated himself and pressed his views on the subject of the Sacrament of the Supper. Wycliffe concludes his “Confession” with the proud and memorable words, “I know that in the end Truth will conquer.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MENDICANTS.

Wycliffe's Activity and Resources—His Change of Attitude toward the Friars—Corruption of the Monks—The New Fraternities—Their Sinful Declension.

WYCLIFFE, as the reader must by this time be fully convinced, was fondly attached to Oxford. He had spent in it the best part of his life. Within its walls he had wielded great power and won many substantial victories. He had been the idol of several generations of students; and as a popular teacher he had reigned without a rival. It was full of lively and pleasant memories. Its very dust was dear to him. To be silenced in this field of his triumph and his fame must have been painful to him in the extreme—painful as only few can imagine. But Wycliffe possessed a brave spirit; and he was not to be discouraged or driven from his work. Nor was he allowed to sit idly and mope over his troubles. The work he had already undertaken was enough to test the endurance and to break down the strength of many a stronger man. His poor priests needed his counsel and instructions. He was busy with one or two of his trusted associates at the translation of the Scriptures. In both departments, the work must be continued with unflagging zeal, if success was to be achieved. Then, again, he knew well that his enemies were little likely to give him rest and peace, even at

Lutterworth. He was not the man, however, to retract his words or to retrace his steps. He had put his hand to the plough : he could not look back. As the result, we find him prosecuting his work with more indefatigable zeal than ever. His energy is restless and irresistible ; and his inventive powers more and more command our wonder and admiration. Since his attack upon the Eucharist, he has found himself more and more alone, and, consequently, more dependent upon his own resources. John of Gaunt, his friend so long as he was attacking such obvious abuses as the aggrandizement of the clergy, at the expense of the laity, and the impoverishment of the kingdom for the benefit of the Pope, had no longer any personal interest in the chosen work of the Reformer. Wycliffe had gone into depths which the soldier-statesman could not fathom, and become involved in logical and metaphysical subtleties, which he must have considered as unprofitable as they were to him incomprehensible. The change which had passed over Lancaster had passed over many of Wycliffe's great friends. They had not lost their respect for the man ; but they thought he was going too far, and making use of dangerous weapons. Wycliffe, however, discovered a new source of strength. He ventured upon a step which had not been attempted by any political or intellectual leader in the whole previous history of England.

“ He appealed,” as Green eloquently puts it, “ and the appeal is memorable as the first of such a kind in our history, to England at large. With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry, syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers, were suddenly flung aside ; and by a transition which marks the wonderful genius of the

man, the schoolman was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wycliffe is the father of our later English prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the ploughman and the trader of the day, though colored with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible, is, in its literary use, as distinct a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it—the terse, vehement sentences, the stinging sarcasms, the hard antitheses—which roused the dullest mind like a whip. Once fairly freed from the trammels of unquestioning belief, Wycliffe's mind worked fast in its career of scepticism. Pardons, indulgences, absolutions, pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints, worship of their images, worship of the saints themselves, were successively denied." The Bible was the one ground of faith; and it was the right of every instructed man to examine the Bible for himself. "Nor were these daring denials confined to the small circle of scholars who still clung to him. The Simple Priests were active in the diffusion of their master's doctrines, and how rapid their progress must have been, we may see from the panic-stricken exaggerations of their opponents. A few years later they complained that the followers of Wycliffe abounded everywhere and in all classes—among the baronage, in the cities, among the peasantry of the country-side, even in the monastic cell itself. 'Every second man one meets is a Lollard.' " *

It has been seen that the council which condemned Wycliffe's theses was largely composed of monks, and that several of them were of the Mendicant Orders. The publication of the mandate did not satisfy these

* "History of the English People," vol. i., pp. 489, 490.

men. They pursued the Reformer with torrents of denunciation ; and pamphlet after pamphlet, each more rancorous than the other, issued from their pens. Wycliffe, of course, was irritated ; but so also were his friends, the seculars who espoused his cause at the University. One result was that at the next election the seculars put forth their strength, and carried all the more important offices—that of Chancellor included. Another result was that Wycliffe let himself loose upon the Mendicant Orders, and began a war which he maintained with not a little bitterness, and with much energy to the close of his life.

It was an opinion advanced by all Wycliffe's earlier biographers that his controversy with the Mendicant Friars began at the very commencement of his public career—as early as 1360. As Lechler first, and Lorimer afterward, have very conclusively shown, this controversy did not begin until a much later date. Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, as has been shown in an earlier part of this work, was a very violent and uncompromising foe of the Mendicants. It was long taken for granted that Wycliffe had imbibed his dislike of those Orders from Fitzralph, and that after the death of the latter, in 1360, he had accepted the task of the Archbishop, as an inheritance, and carried on his work. Lechler says that as a matter of fact there is no truth in this tradition. On the contrary, he finds evidence, in his earlier writings, that Wycliffe cherished toward the Mendicants feelings of sympathy and esteem. In the earlier stages of his public career at Oxford, his opposition seems to have been directed more against the endowed orders than against the Begging Friars. This position is sustained by references to Wycliffe's books, "The Truth of Scripture" and "Civil Dominion," both of which, it is contended,

were written in 1378. In the former work, Wycliffe has some hard things to say regarding the "modern theologians," "the monks of the endowed orders," and the "Canonists;" but he is silent regarding the Mendicants. In the latter work, on the other hand, he has something to say concerning the Mendicants; but it is complimentary. He bestows high praise on St. Francis of Assisi, placing him and his mendicancy side by side with the apostles Peter and Paul, and exhibiting them in their poverty and work as a contrast to the worldly-minded, indolent, and pampered clergy of the time. He even speaks of St. Francis and St. Dominic as separately initiating a species of Reformation. This, it has to be admitted, is rather negative than positive proof; for Wycliffe may have had a very high opinion of the object and work of the founders of the Mendicant Orders, and even of the object and work of their first disciples, without having any very high admiration either of the persons or of the work of their degenerate representatives, of a later age.* Dr. Lorimer, however, furnishes us with a quotation from the Chronicle of the Monk of St. Alban's, in which Wycliffe is represented as having no intercourse with the endowed monks, but being on friendly terms with the Mendicants, whose poverty he commended, and the excellency of whose lives he held up to admiration.

It is certain that whatever Wycliffe may have thought of the Begging Friars, he became the reverse of friendly toward them, after the publication and especially after the condemnation of his theses of 1381. He was undoubtedly roused against them for the part which they had taken in the denunciation of his views regarding the

* Lechler, vol. ii., pp. 142, 143.

dogma of Transubstantiation. The presumption, however, is that, although this was perhaps the immediate and instigating cause, it was not the main cause of Wycliffe's very pronounced, resolute, and persistent opposition to the Mendicant Orders. Our theory is that he was at one time well disposed toward them. They commended themselves to him, as they had at an earlier and less sophisticated period of their history, commended themselves to Grossetête, Bishop of Lincoln, by the preaching of the Word ; and even after they had ceased to be the objects of his admiration, they suggested, if they did not form, the model for his own organization of " Poor Priests." His eyes having been opened by their treatment of him in the matter of the theses, their true character began to reveal itself more fully. In no way disposed any longer to look at them, their principles, or their conduct, except in the light of truth, he soon came to recognize in them all the worst features of the Papal system—absolutism, assumption of divine authority, grasping avarice, falsehood, and wilful deception. Here, as we have found him at every former stage of his career, Wycliffe is true to himself. New light has burst in upon his soul : he does not reject it. Fresh convictions have taken hold upon him : he does not attempt to stifle them. He sees the Mendicant Friars in this new light, he entertains toward them different feelings ; and he speaks and acts accordingly. For the first time we find the man as he is revealed to us in the " Trialogus." No matter on what subject he is engaged, the Mendicants are never wholly out of his mind ; and he ever and anon returns to them, as if with a fresh purpose, dealing them heavy blows. As they do not spare him, he is kept up, so to speak, at white heat ; and he proves himself a capable and dangerous antagonist. Parallels and compari-

sons are sought everywhere ; and they are acceptable according to their strength. In the person of Cain he finds the Bible original of the orders ; and in Cain's terrible crime he discovers the type of their wickedness. They live in " Cain's Castles ;" and the names of the four orders—the Carmelites, the Augustinians, the Jacobites (Dominicans), and the Minorites (Franciscans)—are so arranged that the initial letters make out the word Caim, a common spelling of the word in those times.

There can be no doubt that Wycliffe was justified in his opposition to the Begging Friars. The history of the Mendicant Orders belongs to the field of general history. A brief reference, however, to their origin and progress seems necessary in order to throw light on Wycliffe's position. The Mendicants, or Begging Friars, were a very natural outcome of the Monastic orders, which had an early origin, which made wonderful progress, and which undoubtedly, up to a certain point, tended for good. The description given of those Orders—their homes, their habits, their pure lives, their self-denial, their fasting, their vigils, their tender and sympathetic humanity—constitute one of the principal charms of ecclesiastical history, for some centuries. As monasteries of the earlier and simpler sort grow up around them, and they break the bread of spiritual life and nourish perishing souls with the one hand, and minister to the wants of the body with the other—the halt, the blind, and the deaf, with others of the afflicted gathering around them, as they were wont to gather around the Master—they seem to exhibit to us in reality the highest ideal of Christianized humanity. Even in later times, when the endowments of the State and the pious benefactions of the wealthy had increased their means, and

improved their homes, and when as yet they had neither forgotten nor begun to neglect their sacred duties or their proper offices of beneficence and charity, the monastery seems to us a sweet and attractive retreat, presenting, with its holy quiet, disturbed only by the occasional chimes and the soft, subdued strains of the morning and evening hymn, a striking contrast to the neighboring castle, with its noise and its often warlike tumult. But beautiful as in many respects this state of things was, it was not wholly natural; and it tended to foster a false conception of life and its duties. It was not, therefore, destined to last. Wealth bred corruption; and corruption bred decay. As early as the twelfth century the monasteries had become rich; the abbots had become the rivals not only of the neighboring gentry, but of the great lords, and even of the princes; and the monks lived in luxury and idleness. Some of the pictures of mediæval times drawn by contemporaries are as amusing as they are instructive. The Abbot of Cluny describes the brethren as "despising God," as "past all shame," and as "eating flesh all the days of the week." Not contented with the best food which the farm could produce, they must have the choicest of delicacies; and "one must beat the bushes for them with a great number of hunters; and by the help of birds of prey they chase the pheasants, and partridges, and ring-doves, for fear these servants of God should perish with hunger." St. Bernard is equally caustic. "What occasions men, who in their lives ought to be examples of humility, by their practice to give instructions and examples of vanity? To pass by many other things, what a proof of humility is it to see a vast retinue of horses, with their equipage, and a confused train of varlets and footmen? May I be thought a liar, if it be not true, that I have

seen one single abbot attended by above sixty horse ! Who could take these men for the fathers of monks and the shepherds of souls ?”

The monasteries, in truth, so long the ornament, had become the scandal of Christendom. They were the same in all lands. The Church was in danger. In these circumstances the Begging Hermits of St. Augustine, called Austin Friars, began to assume some importance. In 1256 they were placed under the control of a general by Pope Innocent IV. ; but they had existed in a semi-organized fashion, and had houses both in England and Scotland, as well as on the continent, early in the previous century. Another poor or begging order had sprung into existence about the same period. They were known as Carmelites. They are supposed to have been an association of hermits, on Mount Carmel, founded by Berthold, Count of Limoges. Driven out of their original home by the Saracens, in the thirteenth century, they wandered over Europe, and, about the year 1247, were changed into a Mendicant Order by their general, Simon Stock. But the two new orders which commanded most attention, and which came into existence also at this period, were the Franciscans and the Dominicans, both named after their respective founders—St. Francis and St. Dominic. They were both Predicant or Preaching, as well as Begging Orders. The Franciscans were instituted by Pope Innocent III. in 1215 ; and the Dominicans were sanctioned by his successor, Honorius III., in 1218. Beginning about the same time, making use of the same means, and having the same end in view, both had great success. In the middle of the thirteenth century the Franciscans had already eight thousand monasteries and two hundred thousand friars. The Dominicans were not less prosperous. The members of both

orders found their way into university chairs, both in France and England ; and by this means they exercised vast influence, at all the great seats of learning. At first their preaching, combined with their humility, poverty, and general self-denial, had all the effect of a genuine revival. Wherever they went, they were followed by admiring crowds ; and in the market-place, at the street corners, in the churchyard, in the church—on week days as well as on Sundays—wherever and whenever they could find an audience, they proclaimed their message.

If they had been limited to preaching the Word, their labors might have been lastingly beneficial. But they had Papal permission to hear confession and to grant absolution ; and this brought about a multitude of evil consequences. It was easier and more lucrative to hear confession and grant absolution than it was to preach the gospel. Preaching, therefore, was neglected. The greed of money was begotten of the getting, and all the more so that the getting was easy. The Mendicants soon fell into most of the evil ways into which the monks had fallen before them. According to the vows by which they had become bound, they could not hold property as owners. They could not alter the constitutions of their respective orders. But neither could they refuse the gold and other property which was daily pressed upon their acceptance. What was to be done ? It was agreed that, although they could not consistently with their rules be *proprietors*, there was no reason why they should not be *stewards*, and in the latter capacity hold and dispense wealth in any shape and to any amount for the ends and uses of their order. As a natural and necessary consequence, their wealth became enormous. Field was added to field and estate to estate ; and for the use of the friars costly churches and magnificent monasteries arose

in all lands. "It is," says Matthew Paris, "a matter of melancholy presage, that, within the four and twenty years of their establishment in England, these friars have piled up their mansions to a royal altitude. Impudently transgressing the bounds of poverty, the very basis of their profession, they fulfil to the letter the ancient prophecies of Hildegarda, and exhibit inestimable treasures within their spacious edifices and lofty walls. They beset the dying bed of the noble and the wealthy in order to extort secret bequests from the fears of guilt or superstition. No one now has any hope of salvation but through the ministry of the *preachers* or the Minorites. They are found, at the Court, in the character of councillors, and chamberlains, and treasurers, and negotiators of marriage. As the agents of Papal extortion, they are incessantly applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke or the terrors of confession." It was natural that the parochial clergy should take umbrage at the work of the Mendicants. "I have in my diocese of Armagh," says Fitzralph, "two thousand persons who stand condemned by the censures of the Church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which number scarce fourteen have applied to me or to my clergy for absolution; yet they all receive as others do, because they are absolved by friars."

Such had the Mendicants become; and such they were when Wycliffe knew them. There were the four orders—the Augustines, the Carmelites, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans. The two latter, as has been shown, were the most active, the most generally diffused, the most prosperous, and, of course, the most powerful. Both orders wore the gown of coarse woollen cloth—that of the Dominicans being white and girded with a

broad sash ; and that of the Franciscans being brown and tied with a cord of three knots. The Dominicans wore over their robe a black cloak ; they wore also a cap of the same color ; they were hence called Black Friars. The Franciscans were Gray Friars ; the Carmelites, White Friars ; and the Augustines, Austin Friars. Whatever may have been the reason for Wycliffe's silence so long regarding them, it is quite evident that, since the days of Fitzralph, they had not greatly mended their ways. As soon as he does speak out against them, we find the same old characteristics. They are still hearing confessions and granting absolutions ; and the Reformer is emphatic in his denunciation of their conduct. " Many," he says, " think, if they give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of all the commandments of God, and, therefore, they take no heed how they keep them. But I say this for certain, though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou each day hear many Masses, and found churches and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners, this will not bring thy soul to heaven." He denounces the friars as the cause of all the evils in Christendom, and he declares that there shall be no amendment until they shall be " brought to the freedom of the gospel and clear knowledge of Jesus Christ." Chaucer has given us a picture of the Mendicant pardoner of the Wycliffe period :

“ A Frere there was, a wanton and a merry,
A Limitour, a full solempnè man.
In all the Orders Four is none that can
So much of dalliance and fair language.
For he had power of confession,
As said himselfè, more than a curate,
For of his Order he was licentiate.

Full swetely heard he confession,
And pleasant was his absolution.
He was an easy man to give penance,
There as he wist to have a good pittance ;
For unto a poor Order for to give
Is signè that a man is well yshrive.
For if he gave, he durstè make avaunt,
He wistè that a man was repentant.
For many a man so hard is of his heart
He may not weep although him sorè smart ;
Therefore, insteadè of weeping and prayers,
Men might give silver to the poorè friars.''

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REVOLT OF THE PEASANTS.

The Causes—Misery in England—John Ball—The Poll-tax—Wat Tyler—The Insurrection—Murder of the Archbishop—Glory and Shame—Wycliffe and the Revolt.

It was while Wycliffe was smarting under the treatment he had received, at the hands of the University authorities, and while his restless and unwearied as well as undaunted spirit was finding something like solace, if not compensation, in numerous and varied activities—in his literary war with the Mendicants, in the translation of the Scriptures into English, and in the superintendence and direction of his Poor Priests—that the peasant classes of England broke out in fierce revolt against the constituted authorities. It was an unfortunate and disastrous affair in many ways ; but it was especially unfortunate and disastrous to Wycliffe and to his cause.

The details of this revolt belong rather to general history than to a biographical sketch. It is simply impossible, however, to do justice to the memory of Wycliffe without looking at the movement and some of its immediate consequences with at least a certain degree of minuteness and care. The outbreak which took place almost simultaneously, in no fewer than six counties, and which was undoubtedly, in a sense, unexpected, was nevertheless the result of causes which had long been in active and visible operation. Some of these

causes were immediate ; some of them were more remote. Among the latter, prominence must be given to the war, which had had been so long in progress between England and France. In an earlier chapter of this work attention was called to the state of things which, traceable to the war, began to exist in an aggravated form after the Black Death. Year after year the war burden increased. Directly or indirectly it pressed more heavily upon all ranks and classes of the people. It had done much to dry up the resources of the country ; and England had long been experiencing the inconveniences resulting from the incompatibility of a constantly decreasing income and a constantly increasing expenditure. To raise revenue every conceivable device was resorted to. Subsidies on leather and subsidies on wool were demanded and obtained from Parliament. The King repudiated his pledge to refrain from arbitrary taxation. He sold monopolies to the merchants in exchange for increased customs. He wrested supplies from the clergy by arrangements with the Bishops or the Pope. Dues were collected from the poorer orders of tradespeople ; and the tendency had become more and more pronounced toward personal taxation, universal and direct. Parliament was, for a time, induced or compelled to stultify itself by granting supplies three years ahead ; for by this means the annual assemblies were rendered unnecessary. The situation brought about by the war was, as we have said, aggravated by the plague, which thinned the population and gave labor the advantage over capital. The laborer, in fact, became master of the situation. He claimed his freedom from the old historic bondage to the soil and his master, and would work only at will. It became necessary for Parliament to interfere. The result was the " Statute of Laborers," and other measures,

which fixed the price of labor and tied the laboring class again to the soil. These laws were applicable to male and female alike ; and disobedience rendered the offender a fugitive, and subject to imprisonment at the hands of any justice of the peace. Fines and forfeitures were numerous ; but the obnoxious laws were still stubbornly resisted. Branding was even resorted to, but with no better success. As a necessary consequence of all this, the gulf was widened between the peasants and their masters ; and in addition to plague and famine there was bitter social strife in the land.

Years had elapsed ; but the state of things thus described, in its principal features, remained the same. If there was a change, it was for the worse. Time had embittered feeling ; and continued oppression had begotten the spirit of resistance. It was at this time, when the misery of the English people seemed to be pointing to utter ruin, when men believed the world to be ending and the Judgment Day to be near, that the voice of John Ball, the so-called "mad priest of Kent," began to be more potent with the peasant class than the voice of Parliament or peer. Mad as the landowners thought him, he gave expression to the sorrows of the humbler classes, and pointed to the cure. "Good people," cried the preacher, "things will never be well in England so long as goods be not in common, and so long as there be villeins and gentlemen. By what right are they whom we call lords greater folk than we ? On what grounds have they deserved it ? Why do they hold us in serfage ? If we all came of the same father and mother, of Adam and Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we, if it be not that they make us gain for them by our toil what they spend in their pride ? They are clothed in their velvet and warm in their furs and

their ermines, while we are covered with rags. They have wine and spices and fair bread ; and we eat oatcake and straw, and water to drink. They have leisure and fine houses ; we have pain and labor, the rain and the wind in the fields. And yet it is of us and of our toil that these men hold their state." His tenets were well expressed in the popular rhyme :

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman ? ”

The lines are not so graceful as those in which Tennyson has embodied the same thought. But they are hardly less expressive ; and it is doubtful whether the later and more polished lines would have so effectually served their purpose. They have the advantage of simplicity ; and they have in them much of that eternal truth which renders them applicable to all time. As it was, they proved the watchword and the rallying cry of the non-represented classes, and particularly of the rural workingmen of England. John Ball's principles were perhaps too levelling ; and the probability is that if they had been put in practice they would have proved a disastrous failure. But to the peasant class they bore the character of a revelation from heaven ; and in the peculiar condition of the England of that day, such teaching had a rousing effect upon the public mind. Ball became a special object of dislike to Courtenaye, Bishop of London, as he had been, indeed, for some years to the ecclesiastical authorities generally ; but in spite of fines and imprisonments he kept at his work, and wherever he appeared he was followed by applauding crowds, who generally carried banners inscribed with some suitable device, and who made the streets and lanes of the rural villages resound with the popular ditty. As the “ mad

priest'' was not without his disciples and imitators, and as the misery of the lower orders was extreme, it can readily be imagined that the social life of England was in a sufficiently combustible condition, and that it required but the application of the match to beget a great conflagration.

An accident kindled the flame. In the Parliament of 1377 an obnoxious tax of a novel kind had been imposed upon the people. It was known as the Poll-tax ; and it required every person in the realm, male and female alike, above a certain age, to pay one groat (four pence) annually into the King's treasury. John of Gaunt, as the reader has already been made aware, was compelled to retire from Court on the accession of the boy-king, Richard II. His retirement was brief. He was at the front again, if not in power, in 1378, when the Houses, for the greater security, met at Gloucester. The Poll-tax was not repealed. Under the same influence the tax was renewed in 1379 and again in 1380. In the latter year it was raised to triple the amount. Public feeling was now fanned into a white heat ; and the name of John of Gaunt was execrated throughout the land. The excitement spread from the eastern and midland counties to all England south of the Thames. Cases of resistance had become common ; and the collectors had become insolent and offensive. There had been collisions between the local justices and the courts on the one hand, and the people on the other ; and in one instance the latter had taken a somewhat cruel revenge. It was not, however, until June 5th, 1381, that the fatal blow was struck. On that day, in the town of Dartford, in Kent, one of the tax-gatherers, under the pretext of ascertaining her age, committed a gross outrage on the daughter of a local tradesman, one Walter, a tiler—a man, as the sequel

proved, of courage and capacity. On hearing of what had happened, the indignant father rushed upon the collector and felled him to the ground, killing him with one of his tools. The match had been applied. The conflagration was immediate. Walter, the tiler, or Wat Tyler, as the name has since been fixed, rose from the fatal stroke a popular hero. He was hailed as the people's champion, and recognized at once as a leader and commander of men. The aggrieved peasants gathered around him in thousands and tens of thousands. The cry of the men of Kent was heard in all the neighboring counties; and "the villeins and poor people" of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Sussex, and other of the eastern counties flocked to the common standard and swelled the insurgent hosts. Canterbury, in full sympathy with the rebels, threw open its gates to receive them. The rough mob element, unhappily, soon made itself manifest. The palace of the Archbishop was plundered; and John Ball, who was in the Archbishop's prison, was set at liberty. Henceforth he was the leading orator of the movement. Among his colleagues were another priest, named Jack Straw, also Jack Milner, Jack Trewman, Hob Carter, Tom Miller, and others of a kindred stamp. The cry was "On to London." On the way they fired the houses of the stewards and flung the rolls of the manor-courts into the flames. Against lawyers they were particularly enraged, declaring them to be the special enemies of freedom; and every one they met they mercilessly put to death. At a certain point the young King addressed the multitude from a boat in the river; but the Council, with Archbishop Sudbury at its head, refused to allow him to land. Sudbury, it is said, looked on the crowd with contempt, and spoke of them as "shoeless ribalds." Whether the ill-advised language was used by him is

uncertain ; but it was so reported and so believed. The words were remembered and allowed to feed and embitter revenge. Sudbury was now ranked with John of Gaunt, and declared to be an enemy of the people.

On the 12th the Kentish men, now one hundred thousand strong, assembled at Blackheath, armed with what weapons they had been able to pick up on their march. In the mean time the men of Essex and the men of Hertfordshire were approaching in strength in other directions, and were about to encamp—the former at Mile End, the latter at Highbury, and the adjoining heights. The grievances of the insurgent bands were different ; but the demands were more or less the same. They required the abolition of bondage, the liberty of buying and selling at fairs and markets, a general pardon, and the reduction of the rent of land to an equal rate. “ No acre of land,” they said, “ now held in villeinage or bondage should be held at a higher rate than four pence a year.” Such, in substance, were the demands which were afterward formulated ; and it is not at all improbable that at an earlier stage smaller concessions than these demands implied would have been accepted with gratitude. At the present moment, however, the love of justice was less potent with them than the desire for revenge.

On the 13th, after a characteristic discourse by John Ball, the Kentish men marched to the city, growling against John of Gaunt and Sudbury, the nobles, and the higher clergy generally. They had no ill feeling against King Richard ; but they would have no King John—an evident thrust at him who was still suspected by many of entertaining ambitious and treasonable designs upon the crown. As they approached, the poorer citizens within the city, finding courage, rose in a body and, flinging open the gates, welcomed the insurgents with open arms.

The work of destruction soon followed. The rebels, mixed now and less easily controlled, and many of them fired by liquor as well as by revenge, hastened the execution of their purpose by the application of the torch ; and, before evening set in, the new inn of the lawyers, at the Temple, the stately palace of the obnoxious Lancaster, at the Savoy, and the residences of the principal foreign merchants were in flames.

The King and his Council had meanwhile taken refuge in the Tower. It was desirable, if possible, to keep the rebel hosts divided ; and, with this end in view, and with a courage and an astuteness beyond his years, the King rode out on the morning of the 14th to Mile End, and reasoned not unsuccessfully with the men of Essex and the men of Hertfordshire. He promised them freedom and amnesty ; and many of them were induced to retire peacefully to their homes. While thus engaged, terrible scenes were being enacted at the Tower. Scarcely had Richard left the ancient stronghold when the Kentish men forced its gates. Disappointed at not finding the King, of whose person they were anxious to obtain possession, they wreaked their vengeance on those who happened to be there. Sudbury, who was Chancellor as well as Primate, they dragged from his sanctuary and beheaded. Richard Lyons, Chief Commissioner for the levy of the hated Poll-tax, shared the same fate. During the day and following night London was at the mercy of the mob. Negotiations had already been opened when, on the morning of the fifteenth, the King, attended by a body-guard, accidentally encountered Wat Tyler at Smithfield, at the head of some thirty thousand men. Hot words passed between some of the members of the royal train and the peasant chieftain, as the latter advanced to confer with the King. Tyler was seen to

play with the handle of his sword. Whether he meant harm or whether he was unconsciously indulging a habit with no immediate evil intent must ever remain a mystery. Rightly or wrongly, evil was apprehended. It was believed he was about to do violence to the King; and William of Walworth, Mayor of London, who was one of the royal body-guard on the occasion, plunged his short sword in Tyler's throat. As the insurgent leader fell to the ground, he was speedily despatched by another of the King's attendants. But for the presence of mind and courage of the young monarch, a bloody revenge would have been promptly taken. Amid the loud cries of "Kill! kill! they have slain our captain!" he rode forward facing the Kentish men, as he had faced the Essex men the day before. "What need ye, my masters?" he exclaimed. "I am your Captain and your King: follow me." There was a natural liking on the part of the multitude for the young sovereign. They believed he was in the hands of evil counsellors; and it was one of the objects of the rising to deliver him from what they believed to be a bondage, and to allow him to follow his own better instincts. Besides, his pluck and shrewdness in the circumstances commanded their admiration. They gathered around him with a touching loyalty and confidence, and followed him as far as Islington, where a body of troops had, in the mean time, been collected for his Majesty's protection. There he heard their complaints, and repeated all the promises he had made to the Essex men at Mile End. He then ordered them to disperse and return to their homes. Some of them went at once; but not a few remained, refusing to be satisfied until they had in their own hands his letter of pardon and emancipation.

The insurrection was virtually killed. London was

saved. Dangerous risings, however, took place in different parts of the country ; and it was not for some time, and only after much bloodshed, that general quiet was restored. The Peasant insurrection remains permanently connected with the glory and the shame of Richard. It gave him a grand opportunity, to which he proved not unequal. He had restored his heritage, as he said to his mother, when he rejoined her at the Tower. He was soon to give proof that he was unworthy of that heritage and unworthy of his people's love. With a heartlessness that redounds to his eternal infamy, he went back upon all his promises, and rode through the disturbed counties exacting a bloody, even brutal revenge. Over fifteen hundred miserable creatures, not a few of them with the King's pardon, signed by the King's own hand, in their possession, perished by the hands of the hangman. In one day Chief Justice Tressilian, the Judge Jeffreys of his day, caused nineteen persons to be hanged on the same gallows. Richard had to pay dearly in the long run for his perfidy.

These details we have deemed necessary, because, as we have said, it is impossible, without a proper appreciation of the origin and character of this Peasant revolt, to do justice to the memory of John Wycliffe. It was a political and social movement, and not in any sense religious. It aimed at the reconstruction of the State and society. It took but little account of the Church, either in its government or its doctrine. It implied, in the course of its progress, a destructive revolution, in which the Church would, of necessity, have been involved. But it was not a movement in the line of reform pursued by Wycliffe. It was religious reform which Wycliffe from the first had sought to accomplish ; but latterly he had abandoned all hope of reforming the Church from

without ; and in place of concerning himself with its political relations and its discipline, he was directing his whole strength against its cardinal beliefs. It is, nevertheless, true that the Peasants' revolt brought odium on Wycliffe and his movement, and cost the good Doctor many of his friends. It was charged and believed then—it has been charged and believed since—that Wycliffe was identified with the John Ball and Wat Tyler conspiracy. What truth is there in the charge? Let us see.

It is said that when John Ball, after the suppression of the revolt, was condemned at St. Alban's, by Chief Justice Tressilian, to be hanged and quartered, he sent for William Courtenaye, Bishop of London, and made a confession in which he declared that for two years he had been a hearer of Wycliffe, that he had learned from him all the false doctrines which he had preached, especially that concerning the Lord's Supper, and that Wycliffe, with whom were associated Nicholas Hereford, John Aston, and Lawrence Bedeman, was not only privy to and in active sympathy with the late movement, but its prime mover. The authority for this statement is a document drawn up at least forty years after the trial—the official records themselves being lost. Granting that the document gives a faithful report of Ball's confession, how does the confession accord with facts? Ball may have heard Wycliffe often ; but he could not be a disciple. As early as 1366 Simon Langham, Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a mandate against the "pretended priest," John Ball, who was "preaching many errors and scandals;" and Ball had been railing against the lords and the parish priests years before that date. It was not, as we have shown elsewhere, until 1366 that Wycliffe began to claim any public attention outside of the Uni-

versity. It was simply not possible that Ball could have learned from Wycliffe personally his views regarding the Lord's Supper ; for it was only a few months since Wycliffe's new views had been made public ; and John Ball was already in the prison from which the rebels released him. The presumption is that Ball's statement, if made at all, was made, as many such statements have been made since, in the hope of finding favor, the truth being a matter of only secondary importance. But the entire character of the movement forbids us to entertain the thought that Wycliffe had or could have any connection with the Peasants' revolt. It was a movement which was characterized by special hostility to John of Gaunt, who in the past had been Wycliffe's patron and friend, and who in the years to come, although less openly than before, was to hold over the Reformer his protecting shield. It was a movement against the aristocracy generally, whether lay or clerical, in their capacity of holders of land ; but Wycliffe had never been opposed to the landlords as such. He fought again and again with the lords as against the Church. His opposition was directed against a pampered ecclesiastical hierarchy, because he believed clerical wealth to be injurious to the interests of religion and contrary to apostolic precept and to apostolic example. If a further argument were necessary to prove that Wycliffe had no connection with the Peasants' revolt, we might find it in the sympathy which existed between the insurgents and the Mendicant Orders, with whom the Reformer was already in open conflict. It is probable that the heads of the orders were opposed to the movement. But that between the rebels and the rank and file of the Mendicants there was some sort of fellow-feeling must be admitted ; and the existence of such feeling was sufficient of itself, apart

from all other and even higher reasons, to make it impossible for Wycliffe to have any relations with the insurgents.*

Wycliffe, however, had become identified with revolutionary doctrines—doctrines which his Poor Priests were now spreading broad and wide over the land ; and it was inevitable that he should be regarded with increasing jealousy by the conservative classes, and compelled to bear a part of the odium which attached to the ill-fated and abortive rising of the peasants.

* Lechler, vol. ii., pp. 228, 229.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CLIMAX.

Effect of the Peasants' Revolt—Courtenaye, Archbishop of Canterbury—The Earthquake Synod—The Condemned Articles—The Mandates—The Royal Patent—Courtenaye's Victory—Wycliffe before Convocation—His Complaint to Parliament.

CIRCUMSTANCES now shaped themselves in such a manner as to force Wycliffe's affairs to what may, without any strain of language, be called a climax. It was not only that his hands were full; and certainly they were full enough. It is important to bear in mind how events and work had been crowded during the last few years. It was in the early part of 1377 that he had been summoned to St. Paul's. It was in April of the following year that he was summoned to Lambeth. It was in the same year that Christendom experienced the shock of the Papal Schism. It was in 1379 or 1380 that he organized and set in motion his mission of Poor Priests. It was in 1381, and simultaneously with the movement of the peasants, that he published his theses, and that he endured all the pain and humiliation of condemnation by the Oxford Council. It was during the same year that he opened his attack upon the Mendicant Friars. And in the midst of these events, and alongside of all this work, he was carrying on, in something like systematic form, his translation of the Scriptures. The pressure from all these sources must have been next to intoler-

able. But as the result of the Peasants' insurrection, this pressure was to be increased.

We have referred to the effect of that rising on the conservative classes. If there was one man in England in whom the conservative element was concentrated with more than ordinary force, that man was William Courtenaye, the haughty and aristocratic Bishop of London. He was a stickler for law and order. All encroachments on the privileged classes, all departures from established rule in Church and State he regarded with disfavor. Up to a certain point Courtenaye was undoubtedly a patriotic Englishman. There was a point, however, at which the interests of England would be set aside for the interests of the Holy Catholic Church. The failure of his patriotism at that point, in theory, at least, would be the less blameworthy that, according to his views, the interests of the Holy Catholic Church could never conflict with the interests of any people or of any State or nation. The highest interests would always and necessarily be in harmony with perfect law, with the mind and will of God ; and if at any time there should be seeming conflict between the two classes of interests, it would be because the state or nation for the time being was in the wrong. His birth and training—he was, as we have seen, of one of the noblest families of the land, and intimately related to royalty—gave him a high idea of authority, its responsibilities and duties ; and he had but little patience and less respect for those who set themselves forth as lawbreakers, no matter by what name they were named. With what feelings of horror and detestation such a man would regard the late rising of the Commons we can imagine ; and with what feelings he regarded John Wycliffe, the reader at this stage requires not to be told. It was unfortunate for

Wycliffe that this man, already named by his friends "The Pillar of the Church," was about to step into the highest place of authority in the ecclesiastical establishment of England. It was the first fruit of the Peasants' revolt, so far as Wycliffe was concerned ; and it was to be bitter fruit to him.

The death of Sudbury left the Archiepiscopal See of Canterbury vacant ; and in October the chair was filled by the election of Courtenaye. He had taken no direct steps against Wycliffe since the Lambeth affair in 1378. The Schism first and then the Peasants' revolt had no doubt interfered with his plans ; and it is conjectured that he received but little encouragement from Sudbury to renew the attack upon the Reformer. Sudbury was even suspected of a certain amount of sympathy with the Wycliffite doctrines. It was soon evident that Courtenaye had never abandoned his purpose to root out the new doctrines and to compel obedience to the Church, and that he had matured his plans so as to make failure next to impossible. His was a well-concocted scheme, which showed more brain than heart. The clerical character of the man and his reverence for forms were revealed by the fact that he purposely refrained from action until he received the pallium from Rome. The pallium arrived on May 6th, 1382 ; and the work was promptly begun. On May 17th an assembly of ecclesiastical notables, summoned by the Archbishop, was held in the hall of the Dominican Monastery, Blackfriars, London. On or near the spot now stand the *Times* office, the Bible House, and the Church of St. Andrew. The notables were sixty in all, consisting of ten bishops, sixteen doctors of laws, thirty doctors of theology, and four bachelors of laws. Of course, they were all men of acknowledged Roman orthodoxy, and in known sympathy

with the views of the Archbishop. The Synod sat for three days. On the 21st, the last day of the conference, there occurred a great earthquake, which shook the city, and which filled the assembled ecclesiastics with a great fear. Some regarded it as an evil omen ; but the Archbishop was equal to the occasion, and declared it to be an emblem of the purification of the kingdom from false doctrine. "As in the interior of the earth there are enclosed foul airs and winds which break out in earthquakes, so that the earth is purged of them, though not without great violence, even so there have been many heresies hitherto shut up in the hearts of the unbelieving, but by the condemnation thereof the kingdom has been purged, though not without trouble and great agitation." "These phenomenon," he added, "which alarm you, lose all their force when they burst forth. In like manner, by rejecting the wicked from our community we shall put an end to the convulsions of the Church." Wycliffe took a different view. He often refers to the incident ; and he invariably speaks of the assembly as "The Earthquake Synod." It was in his judgment a sign of God's displeasure with error. "When Christians are silent," he says, "the earth itself cries out. A heresy had been put upon Christ and upon the saints in heaven. Nature cried out against the wrong, as at the passion of the Son of God."

Of the proceedings of the Earthquake Council we have no record. But from the Archbishop's mandates, in which were published the condemned articles, we know the conclusions at which the assembled divines arrived. From the teachings of Wycliffe himself, and from those of the itinerant preachers, they had selected or manufactured twenty-four propositions ; and of these ten were

pronounced heretical and the remaining fourteen erroneous. They were the following :

I. THE HERESIES.

1. That the substance of material bread and wine remains after consecration in the sacrament of the altar.
2. That the accidents do not remain without a subject after consecration in the same sacrament.
3. That Christ is not in the sacrament of the altar identically, verily, and really, in His proper corporal presence.
4. That if a bishop or priest be in mortal sin, he does not ordain, consecrate, or baptize.
5. That if a man be truly contrite, all exterior confession is useless and superfluous to him.
6. Pertinaciously to assert that there is no foundation in the Gospel for Christ's ordaining the mass.
7. That God ought to obey the Devil.
8. That if the Pope be a reprobate, and a wicked man, and by consequence a member of the Devil, he has no power over Christ's faithful ones, granted to him by any one, unless perchance by Cæsar.
9. That after Urban the Sixth no one is to be received for Pope, but that we are to live after the manner of the Greeks, under our own laws.
10. That it is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, that ecclesiastical men should have temporal possessions.

II. THE ERRORS.

1. That no prelate ought to excommunicate any one, unless he first know that he is excommunicated by God.
2. That he who does so excommunicate is from thenceforth an heretic, or excommunicate person.
3. That a prelate who excommunicates a clergyman who has appealed to the King and Council of the kingdom, is a traitor to God, the King, and the kingdom.
4. That they who leave off to preach, or to hear the Word of God or Gospel preached, because they are excommunicated by men, are excommunicated, and shall be accounted in the day of judgment traitors toward God.
5. That it is lawful for any deacon or presbyter to preach the Word of God without the authority of the Apostolical See, or a Catholic bishop, or any other, of which there is sufficient proof.

6. That a civil lord is no lord, a bishop no bishop, a prelate no prelate, while he is in mortal sin.

7. That temporal lords may, at their pleasure, take away temporal goods from ecclesiastics who are habitually delinquents ; or that the people may, at their pleasure, correct delinquent lords.

8. That tithes are pure alms, and that the parishioners may detain them because of the wickedness of the curates, and bestow them on others at their pleasure.

9. That special prayers, applied to a particular person by prelates or the religious, are no more profitable to that same person, than general prayers are, *ceteris paribus*.

10. That because any one enters on any private religion whatsoever, he is thereby rendered the more unfit to observe the commands of God.

11. That holy men instituting private religions, whether of those who are endowed with possessions, or of the mendicants, sinned in so doing.

12. That the religious living in private religions are not of the Christian religion. This is particularly noted to be a *pernicious error*.

13. That friars are obliged to get their living by the labor of their hands, and not by begging. This is observed to be condemned by Pope Alexander the Fourth.

14. That he who gives alms to the begging friars, or to a preaching friar, is excommunicated, and that he who receives those alms is excommunicated.

Such were the condemned articles. It will be observed that of those of the first class, the first three relate to the Lord's Supper, showing the importance which had been attached to Wycliffe's criticism of that Sacrament. The seventh article, although it cannot be said to be an unjust logical inference from Wycliffe's teaching, was hardly a fair representation of his meaning. Wycliffe was in the habit of putting in a paradoxical shape the doctrine of the divine permission of the existence of evil. It did exist ; and the government of the world was conducted accordingly. Even Christ, as he said, submitted Himself to temptation by the devil.

Two mandates were issued ; the one to Peter Stokes,

the Carmelite doctor of theology in Oxford, and the Primate's Commissary at the University; the other to the Bishop of London. In neither were the names of Wycliffe and his associates given. They simply bore that men without authority, children of perdition, had usurped the office of preachers, sometimes in churches, sometimes in other places, doctrines heretical and unchurchly—yea, and undermining the peace of the kingdom. To check this evil the Archbishop had called to his counsel men of experience and ripe ecclesiastical learning, who, after having duly weighed and examined the theses submitted to them, concluded that they were in part heretical, and, in part, at least, heretical and unecclesiastical. The Commissary at Oxford was instructed to make it known in the regular way that henceforth no man shall be allowed to set forth in lectures or to preach or defend in the University the errors now censured, and no man suffered to listen to or in any way to favor the setting forth of the same; that, on the contrary, every man must flee from and avoid the upholders of these doctrines on pain of the greater excommunication. The Bishop of London was instructed and enjoined to communicate to all his brother bishops in the province the injunction of the Archbishop, requiring that each of them should publish three times, in his own cathedral, and in the other churches of his diocese, the prohibition forbidding, on pain of the greater excommunication, any one to preach, teach, or hold the condemned theses, or to listen or show favor to any one who did so preach or teach. The mandates were issued—that to Oxford May 28th, and that to the Bishop of London three days later. It was resolved that the condemnation of the theses should be made the occasion of a grand public demonstration in the city, and with as little

delay as possible. Such demonstration was deemed the more necessary that Wycliffe's Poor Priests were now no longer strangers to the people of London. On Friday of Whitsunday week, May 30th, the members of the Synod, large numbers of the clergy, including monks and friars, with a numerous representation of the laity, all barefoot, moved in solemn procession through the streets of London to St. Paul's. A sermon on the condemned doctrines was preached by one of the most celebrated divines of the day, the Carmelite doctor of theology, John Cunningham, who at the close read the Archbishop's mandate.

The ecclesiastical power in England, great as it was, was not yet sufficient to give full effect to the Archbishop's decrees. His high-handed measures could not be carried out without the aid of the civil authorities. Of this Courtenaye was well aware; and hence he had lost no time in bringing the matter before Parliament. Simultaneously with the action at Blackfriars he moved in the House of Lords that orders should issue from the Chancellor of the kingdom to the sheriffs and other royal officers to put in prison such preachers, as also their patrons and followers, as a bishop or prelate should indicate by name in this behalf. He enlarged upon the evils which were being done by the itinerant preachers, declaring that they sowed seeds of strife between class and class, and influenced the minds of the people to the great detriment of the whole kingdom, and showed that while it was the duty of the bishops to put down such teachers and to root out such evil, they were powerless without the aid of the State. They could not arrest—they could not fine or imprison; and their admonitions and censures were treated with contempt. The Lords were induced to give their consent; and although the

consent of the Commons was lacking, the young King, by means of some skilful management on the part of the Archbishop, was persuaded to issue a royal ordinance—which was illegally admitted among the Statutes of the kingdom—in harmony with Courtenaye's prayer and the agreement of the Lords.

The Primate's plans were so far working admirably. Unless some opposition of an effective kind should be raised, the power of the State, so far as it was in the hands of the county officials, was at the disposal of the bishops. Such a change implied quite a revolution. The Commons, however, soon became aware of the wrong which had been done ; and when Parliament met again in October of the same year, they expressed themselves as unwilling to be more dependent on the goodwill and forbearance of the prelates than their fathers had been, and demanded the annulling of the unconstitutional statute. It was annulled accordingly. But Courtenaye was not to be easily outdone. As if in anticipation of some such action being taken by the Commons, he had obtained from the King a patent dated June 26th, 1382, whereby the Archbishop and his suffragans were empowered to imprison the preachers and defenders of the condemned theses and to detain them in their own or other prisons at their pleasure—ay, and until they should repent and recant, or until the King and his Council should take action in the matter. The same patent obliged all vassals, servants, and subjects of the King, upon their allegiance and upon pain of forfeiting their estates, not to favor or support those preachers or their patrons, but, on the contrary, to assist the Archbishop, his suffragans, and their officers in the exercise of the powers committed to them. The patent was not quite so offensive as the former ordinance—it did not

place State officials at the service of the bishops ; but it was bad enough. It was a daring encroachment on the liberties of the people ; and it implied a stretch of the royal prerogative which would hardly have been tolerated had it not been for the state of feeling engendered by the late revolt.

It has already been mentioned that one of the almost immediate results of the condemnation of Wycliffe's Eucharistic propositions by the authorities of the University of Oxford was to create a sort of revolution by which the friends of the Reformer were forced to the front, and the governing power was placed in their hands. Wycliffe, although silenced on certain special subjects, and disposed for the time to occupy himself with special work of a different kind, was never a greater power at the University than at the time of which we write. It was not, therefore, an easy matter to push the policy of the Archbishop in that quarter. Dr. Stokes was already in trouble when the mandate reached him. Nicholas Hereford, an ardent friend of Wycliffe, had preached the sermon, on Ascension Day, in the cemetery of St. Frideswide, and had openly, and with much less caution than usual, declared himself of the Wycliffe party. Hereford had already, on a previous occasion, denounced the friars and proclaimed them to be the indirect cause of the Peasants' revolt. That such a man should be allowed to preach, on such an occasion, showed the feeling of the University authorities, and was accepted as an insult by the Romish party. Matters were made worse when it was made known that Philip Repington, another pronounced Wycliffite, had been appointed by Robert Rigge, the Chancellor, to preach before the University, on Corpus Christi Day, June 5th, 1382. As soon as this appointment was known, the

Archbishop was notified of the fact, and urged to have the condemnation of Wycliffe's articles published in Oxford before the arrival of the festival. There was no delay in complying with this request. The mandate, as we have seen, was sent to Stokes, with the necessary instructions, on May 28th. Two days later the Primate addressed a letter to Chancellor Rigge, couched somewhat in the language of a grand inquisitor, censuring him for having shown favor to Hereford, and for having appointed him to preach the sermon, on so important an occasion. In a similar manner he urged him to assist Dr. Stokes in the publication of the mandate, and to cause it to be read by the officer of the Theological Faculty, in the theological lecture rooms, at the lectures next ensuing. The Chancellor was indignant at the tone and bearing of the Archbishop, and refused to be intimidated. The Archbishop, he thought, was trenching on the liberties of the University; and Dr. Stokes was making himself unnecessarily and offensively officious. In place, therefore, of helping the latter he put obstacles in his way; and in view of possible disturbance, he induced the mayor of the city to hold in readiness an hundred armed men to keep the peace.

On June 4th, the day before the feast, Dr. Stokes handed to the Chancellor a copy of the mandate, with a letter from the Archbishop, addressed to him personally. Both were received; but both were practically unattended to. On the following day Repington preached as had been arranged. He spoke of Wycliffe in flattering terms, declared him to be a thoroughly sound and orthodox teacher, said that princes and lords should have honorable mention in sermons before the Pope and Bishops, spoke approvingly of Wycliffe's Poor Priests and their work, and stated that the Duke of Lancaster

was resolved to take all evangelically minded men under his protection. It was noticed that the Chancellor congratulated the preacher, and singled him out for special attention. Stokes was in such fear of his life that he could not muster up courage enough to publish the Archbishop's mandate. The Archbishop, however, was not to be driven from his purpose. He summoned Rigge to Lambeth. Brave as he was and could be at Oxford, the Chancellor was quite unequal to a personal encounter with the haughty and imperious Archbishop. He was willing to carry out the Primate's instructions as far as were possible; but when handed the letters of condemnation, he said: "I dare not publish them on fear of death." "Then," replied Courtenaye, "is your University an open *fautor* of heretics, if it suffers not the Catholic truth to be proclaimed within its walls." The royal Council supported the Archbishop's injunction; and Rigge returned to Oxford on June 14th, resolved, in a half-hearted way, to do his best to meet the requirements of his now very awkward position. His first act was toward Hereford and Repington, whom he reluctantly informed that he had no choice but to suspend them from all their University functions. The publication of the mandate, however, set Oxford on fire. The scholars rose in rebellion and threatened the friars with death, declaring that they wished to destroy the University; and the masters suspended Henry Crump for calling the Lollards heretics. But the Crown was on the side of the Archbishop; and a royal writ gave authority to all his measures. Hereford and Repington, with John Aston, were summoned to Lambeth; and after many meetings, much cross-questioning and explanation, they were all three condemned of heresy, and pronounced excommunicate. A general inquisition was ordered at

the University ; a search was made for all the books and tracts of Wycliffe and Hereford ; and all the friends of the heretics, or all who were known to have a leaning toward the condemned doctrines, were threatened with expulsion, within eight days. In carrying out these decrees the Archbishop had the assistance of the county and city authorities, and all other King's officers. By command of the Archbishop search was made for Hereford, Repington, Aston, and Bedeman, who were supposed to be in concealment in the country. The last three were apprehended during the course of the summer ; and each of them ended by submission and recantation, after having, it is said, appealed to John of Gaunt in vain. Hereford alone remained steadfast ; but of him we shall have occasion to speak again before the close. Rough measures were at the same time adopted against the itinerant preachers ; and the Mendicant Friars were everywhere willing to lend a helping hand in the persecution of the men, whom they had now come to regard as dangerous rivals.

Courtenaye's success was now all but complete. He had prosecuted his task with perseverance, with marvellous energy, and, although we cannot approve of the cause in which it was put forth, it must be admitted, with remarkable ability. It was not yet five months since the date of his installation. Yet in that brief space of time he had virtually extinguished the Wycliffe party at Oxford. Those whom he had not silenced or compelled to conform he had driven from the University, if not from the country. One man remained—the life and soul of the movement. So far as these later proceedings were concerned, Wycliffe had been left practically untouched. We are not forgetful of the fact that, about the middle of July, he and his associates were suspended from all

ecclesiastical functions ; but this was of the less consequence that Wycliffe had been already virtually silenced, and that for the past year he had been living almost exclusively at Lutterworth. Why was it that while his followers of all grades were hunted down the leader himself was left unmolested ? This question has been variously answered. Wycliffe's comparative immunity during the period referred to has been attributed to the influence of John of Gaunt. It has been attributed to the influence of the " Good Queen Anne," the young queen of Richard II., who, it was known, was greatly attached to Wycliffe and his teaching. It is not at all improbable that the Reformer was indebted somewhat, at least, to both those sources for protection ; but in seeking an explanation of this matter, we must not overlook the grandeur of Wycliffe's own reputation, and the plans of Courtenaye. It would have been dangerous to begin with Wycliffe. It might have resulted in failure, as it had done already on two previous occasions. It would be less dangerous to strike at the chief when his cause seemed ruined.

Wycliffe, however, was not to be allowed wholly to escape. It was agreed to hold a provincial Synod at Oxford, in November ; and to this Synod the Reformer was summoned. The Synod met on the 18th, and was adjourned to the 24th of the same month. It has been questioned whether Wycliffe was present in person at this assembly ; but the balance of probability is in favor of the opinion that he was so present, and that in the Church of St. Frideswide he defended his convictions with fearlessness and marked ability. He certainly put in two Confessions—one in Latin and the other in English. Both have been preserved. The Latin Confession is characterized by much scholastic subtlety. The Eng-

lish one is conceived and expressed in a more popular style. In both he vindicates his position in regard to the Sacrament of the Supper. His language is perhaps less aggressive than in some of his other documents on the same subject ; but it is clear, firm, and decided. It was said afterward by his enemies that he recanted at this meeting ; but the Confession is the best refutation of such a charge. Speaking of his Latin Confession, Dean Milnan, whose criticisms of Wycliffe are throughout impartial, but fair, admits that the Reformer allowed play to his acuteness, subtility, and logical versatility, " that he perplexed and bewildered his auditory ;" but he acquits him of " disingenuousness, insincerity, or politic art." His view of the Eucharist, he says, is " singularly consistent." It is " Christ's body and blood spiritually ; but the bread and wine are not annihilated by transmutation." The trial was a failure, like the others. No sentence was pronounced upon Wycliffe. He was already shut out from Oxford ; but he was left free to retire in peace to his rectory at Lutterworth.

In the same month of November he presented his Complaint to Parliament. What he wanted was to be allowed freely to prove the doctrines he had put forth ; but with characteristic skill and energy he turned the attack against his enemies by demanding that monastic vows be suppressed, that tithes be diverted to the maintenance of the poor, the clergy being left to the free alms of their flocks, that the Statutes of Provisors and Præmunire be enforced against the Papacy, that Churchmen be declared incapable of holding secular offices, and that imprisonment should no longer be a necessary accompaniment of excommunication. Nor was this all. With a full knowledge of all that the Royal Council had done, he demanded that the doctrine of the Eucharist,

as he presented it, should be freely taught. It was a manly, outspoken Complaint ; and it was well fitted to have a good effect upon the lay members of the House of Lords and upon the representatives of the Commons.

It was about this time—it could hardly have been earlier—that Wycliffe, as reported, was taken with a serious illness at Oxford, the result of his incessant labors and harassing trials. It was probably his first attack of paralysis, which is said to have happened two years before his death. For a time, it would appear, he was in imminent danger, and his life was despaired of. The Mendicants, hearing of it, sent a deputation to the sick-chamber, the object being to induce Wycliffe, if possible, to recant. It would be a great triumph if they could be instrumental in bringing him to a knowledge and recognition of his errors and in restoring him to the faith. The deputation, we are told, consisted of four regents, or doctors, representing the four Orders, and of four aldermen of the city. They found Wycliffe in bed, and very weak. After some words of sympathy, wishing him health and a speedy recovery from his malady, they entered upon the main object of their visit. The Reformer was as yet silent. They referred to the wrongs he had done them by tongue and pen, and urged him, as he was now near his end, to confess his errors, revoke the charges he had made against the brotherhoods, and to become reconciled to them. Wycliffe heard them to the close. Then, as if having recovered somewhat of his strength, he beckoned to his servants and asked them to raise him a little on his pillows. This done, he fixed his eyes upon his visitors, and said, with a loud voice : “ I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars.” The doctors and aldermen departed in confusion.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

The True Magna Charta—Anglo-Saxon Translations—Norman Translations—Wycliffe and Hereford—A Great Undertaking—The Work Completed—A Triumph.

IN the earlier pages of this book we have made repeated reference to the fact that Wycliffe, in addition to much other work of a sufficiently onerous description, was busy on a translation of the Bible into English. It would appear that this work was completed some time in 1382. It was the first whole Bible ever written out in the English language ; and for that reason, as well as for its own sake and for the sake of the translator or translators, it merits special consideration. It was certainly an important event in English history and in the history of all English-speaking people. It was, as Dr. Wylie, in his "History of Protestantism," correctly puts it, "the true Magna Charta."

As is well known, the Church, up to the period of the Reformation, was singularly averse from having the Sacred Scriptures translated into the vernacular. So much was this the case that it implied exceeding boldness on the part of any one who should attempt to act in the teeth of this dominant sentiment. This sentiment had never been more pronounced than in the times of which we are writing. It was casting the "gospel-pearl abroad" to be "trodden under foot of swine" to give the gospel to

the people in their own language. It is only fair to admit that the Church was not always equally opposed to the translation of the Scriptures into the language of the people. In the eighth and ninth centuries, when the Vulgate had ceased to be generally intelligible, translations of parts of Scripture were freely made into the vernacular languages; and the probability is that they were just as freely used in the churches. Louis the Debonair is said to have caused to be made a German version of the New Testament; and a translation of the Gospels into German verse—a work which still exists—is known to have been the production of Otfrid, in the same century. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries we find translations into French of Psalms, Job, Kings, and the Maccabees. But as heterodox opinions began to make themselves manifest, it was deemed necessary to secure the orthodox faith from lawless and irresponsible interpretation; and in 1229 the Council of Toulouse issued a decree prohibiting the laity from possessing the Scriptures—"a precaution" which, Hallan tells us, "was frequently repeated on subsequent occasions."*

In England, in Anglo-Saxon times, the people seem to have been better provided with what might be called Bible literature than their successors of a later date. They had in succession the scriptural poems of Cædmon, the Psalter of Aldhelm, and the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Gospel of St. John of the Venerable Bede. Alfred the Great is known to have entertained the design of making at least parts of Scripture accessible to his people in the mother tongue; and he is said to have been engaged on a translation of the Psalms, at his death. Toward the end of the tenth cen-

* "Middle Ages," vol. ii., p. 573.

ture the monk and priest, Aelfric, translated quite a number of the books of the Old Testament, among them the Books of Moses, with Joshua, Judges, Kings, Esther, Job, and the Apocryphal books of Maccabees and Judith ; and he left behind him eighty homilies, which could not but be helpful in the promotion of Biblical knowledge. Much of this literature must have perished during the period of the Danish incursions, and during and after the Norman conquest. This literature continued to be in use among the Saxon part of the population long after the occupation. As early as the twelfth century, only a little more than one hundred years after the invasion, the Normans possessed a prose translation of the Psalms and of the Latin Church hymns in their own Anglo-Norman speech ; and toward the middle of the thirteenth century, they had a prose translation of the whole Bible, and a Bible history in verse reaching down to the period of the Babylonish Captivity. But these Anglo-Norman translations could be of use only to the privileged classes. In proportion as the Saxon element grew in strength and began to make itself felt in population and in speech, both the old Saxon and the Norman cease to be creative.

The first form of English speech—the Old English—is generally admitted to date from about the middle of the thirteenth century ; and at a very early period thereafter we have a gospel harmony in rhyme, called the “Ormulum,” and a translation of the Psalter, also in verse. The oldest prose translations of any Bible book into Old English dates from about the year 1325. William of Shoreham, a parish priest in Kent, and Richard Rolle, of Hampole, both translated the Psalms. It appears from a careful examination of the whole subject, up to Wycliffe’s time, that, while the Psalter had

been fully translated into all the three languages—Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, and Old English—and while several books of Scripture—not to mention the Gospel of John by Bede, and certain poetical versions—had been translated partially or in select passages, a translation of the entire Bible had never been accomplished in English, and apparently not even contemplated; and that none of the translations, in the first instance, at least, were intended to make the Word of God accessible to the masses of the people, or to spread among them scriptural knowledge. Claims of a contrary kind have been made; but upon close examination these have been found to be groundless.

Such was the state of Biblical translation in England when Wycliffe undertook his great work. From what we know of the man, we can have no difficulty in regard to his motive. In his treatise on the “Meaning and Truth of Scripture” he argues that, “though there were an hundred Popes, and all the friars in the world were turned into Cardinals, yet should we learn more from the gospel than we should from all that multitude.” Elsewhere he says that “as the faith of the Church is contained in the Scriptures, the more these are known in an orthodox sense the better.” “Since secular men should understand the faith, it should be taught them in whatever language is best known to them.” “Christ and His apostles evangelized the world by making known the Scriptures in a language which was familiar to the people.” “Honest men are bound to declare the doctrine which they hold, not only in Latin, but in the vulgar tongue, that the truth may be more plainly and more fully known.” Under the influence of such convictions, Wycliffe resolved that, God helping him, the Bible should no longer be a sealed book to the ordinary Eng-

lish man and woman. And that it was in a very special sense his undertaking, although he made use of help in the execution of his task, has been placed beyond all dispute by the most unimpeachable testimony. Knighton, a chronicler of the period, in a passage which, as Lechler suggests, was probably penned before the year 1400, laments the translation of the Bible into English, and in the most unquestioning manner ascribes it to Wycliffe. "Master John Wycliffe," he says, "by translating the gospel into English has laid it more open to the laity, and to women who can read, than it was formerly to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under foot of swine; and that which was before precious to both clergy and laity is rendered, as it were, the common subject of both. The jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the people; and that which was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines is made forever common to the people." In the year 1411 the Bohemian Reformer John Huss, in a polemical tract against John Stokes, says: "It is plain from his writings that Wycliffe was not a German, but an Englishman. For the English say that he translated the whole Bible from Latin into English." In 1411, Arundel, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, and his suffragan bishops, addressed a memorial to Pope John XXIII. praying that he would pronounce sentence of condemnation on the Lollard heresy; and in this document Wycliffe is spoken of as the parent of the same, and is charged with having devised the plan of a translation of the Holy Scriptures into the mother tongue." The language of the Archbishop, let it be remarked in passing, furnishes an additional proof that before Wycliffe's time there was not an English translation of

the whole Bible in existence. The contrary opinion was held by Sir Thomas More, who claimed that he had seen older manuscripts of the English Bible; by Thomas James, the first Bodleian librarian, who claimed that he had held in his hands an English manuscript Bible, which he considered much older than the days of Wycliffe; and also by Archbishop Usher and Henry Wharton, the editor of Usher's work on the New Testament, who both claimed that older manuscripts existed. At a later date Wharton discovered his mistake, and made the necessary corrections both in his own text and in that of the Archbishop. It is now no longer doubted that the manuscripts seen by More, and afterward by James, were copies of the Wycliffe translation. It is remarkable that, if such manuscripts did exist at the times referred to, they should never since have made a reappearance.

Under what particular circumstances—what were the immediately suggestive or impelling causes of the translation—we have no means of knowing. Wycliffe has not himself, in any of his writings, thrown any light on the subject. The editors of the Wycliffe Bible are of the opinion that the germ of the work is to be found in a commentary written by the Reformer on the Revelation of St. John. Others attribute to Wycliffe certain commentaries on the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, and discover in these the origin of the whole translation. Lechler is disposed to question whether any one of these works is the production of Wycliffe, and discovers, as he thinks, a more satisfactory explanation of the origin of the English version in an English translation of the Latin Harmony of the Gospels, by Prior Clement, a production of the second half of the twelfth century. The translation of this last-named work bears unimstakable

traces of Wycliffe's hand ; and the preface throughout sparkles with Wycliffe's thoughts. "What sort of Antichrist is this," says the writer, "who, to the sorrow of Christian men, is so bold as to prohibit the laity from learning this holy lesson, which is so earnestly commanded by God? Every man is bound to learn it that he may be saved ; but every layman who shall be saved is a very priest of God's own making ; and every man is bound to be a very priest. Worldly priests cry out that Holy Scripture, in the English tongue, would set Christians by the ears, and would drive subjects into rebellion against their rulers, and, therefore, should not be suffered among the laity. Woe's me ! How can they more manifestly blaspheme God, the Author of peace and His holy law, which everywhere teaches humility, and patience, and brotherly love?" It was so, he adds, "with the false Jews, the high-priests, and Scribes and Pharisees," who "accused Christ of breeding contention among the people." Such a mode of reasoning, Lechler contends, would naturally lead to the plan of a complete English version of the Sacred Text. The contention must be admitted ; but it would just be as natural to come to the conclusion that the plan had already been formed, and the work begun.

As to when the work of translating was commenced, how it progressed, and what difficulties were experienced, we are equally in ignorance. It is noteworthy that the New Testament was first translated, and that Luther followed the same order, one hundred and fifty years later. Unlike Luther, however, Wycliffe translated from the Latin Vulgate. In the earlier days Greek was not so well known, and, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter, was not as yet a subject of study at the Universities. The Old Testament was taken in hand,

either while the work on the New was in progress, or soon after its completion, not by Wycliffe himself, but by one of his friends. That Dr. Nicholas, of Hereford, was this friend is now universally admitted. The original manuscript is still preserved in the Bodleian Library. A second MS., a copy of the former before it had undergone correction, preserved in the same library, contains a remark which ascribes the translation to Hereford, "explicit tranlacōn nicholay herford." Both of these manuscripts, strange to say, break off in the middle of the same sentence, in one of the books of the Apocrypha, Baruch iii. 20. The inference is natural that the translator, from some cause, had been interrupted in his work. Now we know that Hereford was summoned to appear before a Provincial Synod, held in London June 18th, 1382, to give an account of a sermon preached by him on Ascension Day, May 15th, of the same year; that as the result of his examination the sentence of excommunication was passed upon him on July 1st; that he appealed to the Pope; that his appeal was pronounced insolent by the Archbishop, and his person eagerly sought for; that, according to Knighton's chronicle, he went to Rome to prosecute his appeal; that he was thrown into prison, where he remained some years; and that, in consequence of some disturbance in the Holy City, he contrived to make his escape and to return to England. If we accept the theory that Hereford was the translator so far, we are furnished with an explanation of the interruption of the work, and also with a date. It has been inferred that if Hereford had advanced so far with his translation of the Old Testament, on or about June 18th, Wycliffe must, things being as they were, have completed by that time his translation of the New Testament. The accepted theory is, there-

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hul grey / per zede to p lepulac & laien a youngly
hild w' a wip linc ole lincige at p r qthalt: per weed
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napareth a uched: he is rili / he is not per / lo p pla
cens here per leide h' linc but go ze leze ze to h' linc d' linc
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per leide ouy p' linc / per d' d' & linc roos ev' linc p' linc
per on p' wouke & aye r' linc fast to marie marie d' linc

FACSIMILE OF ST. MARK XVI., FROM A WYCLIFFE BIBLE IN THE
LIBRARY OF LAMBETH PALACE. (*Slightly reduced.*)



fore, that the New Testament translation was finished in June, 1382, and that Wycliffe immediately gave himself to Hereford's unfinished task, completing it before the end of the year.

It is noted that the styles of the two translators are marked by very different characteristics: Hereford's translation being excessively literal, and adhering with an almost pedantic closeness to the form and expression of the Latin Vulgate; Wycliffe's translation, on the other hand, being exceedingly simple and imbued with the spirit of his mother tongue. The latter is flexible and easily understood; the former is stiff and often obscure. A brief extract, in the original orthography, will show how little Wycliffe's own translation varies from modern forms of the language. It is from Romans 8 : 14-25 :

“Sothli* who euere ben lad by the spirit of God thes ben the sones of God. Forsothe ye han not taken eftsoone the spirit of seruage in drede, but ye han taken the spirit of adopcoun of sones, *that is to be sons of God by grace*, in which *spirit* we cryen, Abba, fadir. Forsoth the ilke spirit yeldith witnessyng to our spirit, that we ben the sones of God; forsoth if sones, and eyris, sothli eyris of God, trewli euene eyris of Crist; if nethelees we to gidere suffren, that and we be glorified to gidere. Trewli I deeme, that the passions of this tyme ben not euene worthi to the glorie to comynge, that schal be schewid in vs. Forwhi the abydinge of creature, *that is, man*, abidith the schewing of the sones of God. Sothli the creature is suget to vanyte, not willinge, but for him that sugetide it, *or made it suget*, in hope; for and the ilke creature schal be delyuered fro seruage of corrupcioun in to liberte of the glorie of the sones of God. Sothli we witen, that ech creature insorwith, and childith, *or worcheth with angwis*, til yit. Forsoth not only it, but and we vs silf, hauynge the firste fruytis of the spirit, and we vs silf sorwen with ynne vs for the adopcoun of Goddis sones, *that is, with greet mornynge desyren the staat of Goddis sones bi grace*, abiding the agen bygging of oure body. Sothli by hope we ben mad saaf. Forsoth the hope that is seyn is not hope, forwhy

* Soth is “truth,” sothli “truly.”

what hopith a man that thing that he seeth? Forsoth if we hopen that thing that we seen not, we abiden by pacience."

The work being completed, the next care was to render it as useful as possible, and to extend the area of its usefulness. Copies, of course, had to be multiplied; and as there was no printing-press the publication of the work was dependent entirely on the number, skill, and activity of the copyists. In addition to the reproduction of the Bible itself, a table of the portions of Scripture, read as the Epistles and Gospels of the Church Service on the Sundays, Feasts, and Fasts of the year, was framed. This table was inserted in some of the Bibles; and the passages were marked in the text, by letters placed in the margin, over against the beginning and end of the several portions. Such Gospels and Epistles as were read in the service of the Mass were also printed separately, and thus made accessible to the people at a smaller cost.

The Bible, in all the forms in which it was presented, was gladly received; and by people of all ranks and classes it was eagerly sought after. We can readily imagine how Wycliffe's heart must have been gladdened when he saw his great task so happily completed. He had good reason to be proud. He had done more for his countrymen than had ever been done before by any single man. Professor Montague Burrows does not speak too strongly when he says: "To Wycliffe we owe more than to any one person, who can be mentioned our English language, our English Bible, and our Reformed religion. How easily the words slip from the tongue! But is not this almost the very air we breathe?"

Wycliffe, however, could as little rest satisfied with work which was capable of improvement, as with work which was yet unfinished. It was not difficult for

a keen eye like his to discover in his own work where amendment was possible and even desirable; and the blemishes in the Old Testament translation were very conspicuous. To the task of revising the whole, he therefore gave himself at once. In this he was greatly aided by his associate in parochial work, John Purvey, an accomplished scholar and a trustworthy and trusted friend. The revised version, which virtually supplanted the original, was published in 1388, four years after Wycliffe's death. That copies were rapidly multiplied and widely circulated is proved by a great variety of circumstances. One hundred and seventy manuscript copies of the whole are known to be in existence. Forshall and Madden, the editors of the Wycliffite Scriptures, were able to consult no fewer than one hundred and sixty copies. Among these there are fifteen Old Testaments and eighteen New which belong to the original version. The rest of them are of Purvey's revised version; and most of them seem to have been copied between 1420 and 1450. Some of them are remarkably small—small enough to be borne about the person, and evidently for such purpose, and to be the daily companions of their owners. Some of them, again, indicate part, at least, of their own history. One belonged to Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester; another to King Henry VI., who gave it to the Charter House; another apparently to Richard III.; another, it is supposed, to Edward VI.; another to Henry VII.; and another is known to have been given to Queen Elizabeth on one of her recurring birthdays. After Wycliffe's death, in the year 1391, a bill was brought into Parliament to forbid the circulation of the English Scriptures. But John of Gaunt, who was present, and who had not forgotten his old friend or his old principles, put an extin-

guisher on the measure. "The Duke of Lancaster," we are told, "answered right sharply: 'We will not be the refuse of all other nations; for since they have God's law, which is the law of our belief, in their own language, we will have ours in English, whoever say nay.' And this he affirmed with a great oath." Archbishop Arundel, who succeeded Courtenaye in the Primacy in 1396, proved quite as resolute a persecutor of Wycliffe's followers as his predecessor had been of Wycliffe himself. Under his presidency, a Convocation was held at St. Paul's, in 1408. From this Convocation issued the famous "Arundel Constitutions," one of which forbade the translation of "any text of Scripture into English or any other tongue, by way of a book, Bible, or treatise." Under the influence of the same Prelate, the law of England was so changed as to make heresy punishable with death. But in spite of the "Arundel Constitutions," and in spite of the statute "De Comburendo Heretico," the English Scriptures were multiplied and extensively read. Dr. Eadie tells us that most of the Wycliffite Scriptures now preserved were written after the prohibition issued by Arundel and his Convocation. Many suffered imprisonment and even death for owning a Bible in their mother tongue. It was the custom for little companies to assemble at night for Bible readings. Copies were borrowed from hand to hand, and thus made serviceable for a wide circle. Portions were committed to memory, and afterward recited to relatives and friends. One Alice Collins is named as an expert in this matter. She could recite the Ten Commandments and the Epistles of Peter and James. "Poor people gathered their pennies and formed copartneries for the purchase of the sacred volume. Those who could afford it gave five marks (about \$200) for the coveted manu-

script ; and others for a few leaves of St. Peter and St. Paul would give a load of hay.”*

Persecution and the diminished number of Wycliffe's followers finally told upon the production of the book. Caxton, we know on the authority of Sir Thomas More, would have printed it but for the Arundel statute ; and when that statute was removed the versions of Tyndale and Coverdale were ready to occupy the field. There was no printed edition until the first half of the eighteenth century was well advanced, when Lewis, Wycliffe's biographer, published the New Testament—Purvey's revision. Another edition, showing considerable differences, was printed by Whittingham, in 1854, from a manuscript of about 1380. Purvey's edition was reprinted in 1810 by the Rev. H. H. Baber, and subsequently in Bagster's "Hexapla." It was not until 1850 that the Old and New Testaments, as originally issued by the Reformer and his coadjutors, were fully published. In that year four noble volumes were issued from the Clarendon Press, Oxford, containing Purvey's text and Wycliffe's original text, printed side by side, and a well-condensed and most valuable introduction. The editors, Sir Frederick Madden and the Rev. Josiah Forshall, are understood to have devoted the labors of twenty-two years to the preparation of the work.

* "English Bible," vol. i., pp. 91, 92.

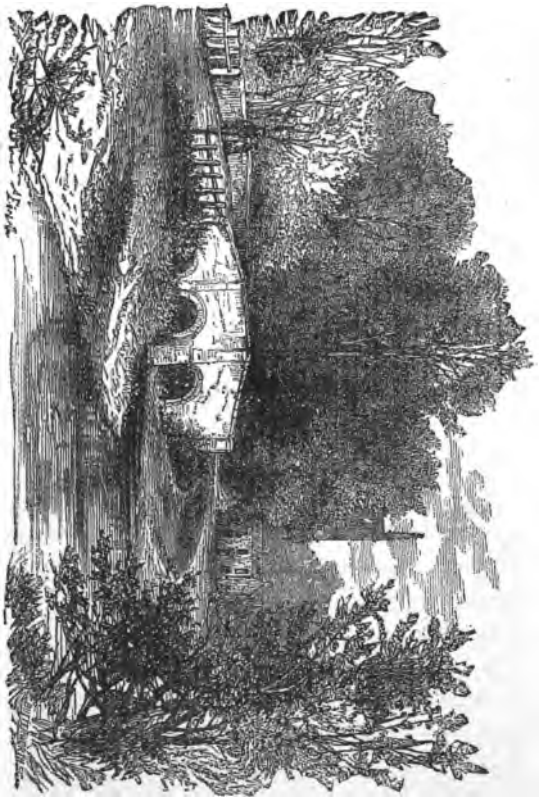
CHAPTER XVII.

LAST DAYS.

Life at Lutterworth—The Crusade—Wycliffe's "Cruciata"—The Citation to Rome—Literary Activity—The End.

WYCLIFFE is to be seen henceforward, during the brief space that yet remains, only at Lutterworth. But he is not to be idle ; nor is his influence, except in one or two directions, to be greatly limited. He is no longer to be a controlling power at Oxford ; nor shall we see him any more figuring at Conferences or directing Parliamentary debates. Public affairs, however, are not wholly to lose interest for him ; and, when occasion calls for it, his voice is still to be heard. Personally he is to have no more annoyance from Courtenaye ; and for his exclusion from Oxford he is to find something like compensation in the hearty welcome extended to his English Bible, in the work of revision, in his parochial duties, in the superintendence and direction of his itinerant preachers, and in literary activity generally.

These last two years, although the storms and tempests are past, are full of interest. In his comparative solitude, Wycliffe had the companionship of two good men—John Horn and John Purvey. Horn was his curate, or chaplain, and assisted him in his pastoral work ; Purvey was his "constant attendant and confidential messmate—a helper of kindred spirit to his own, and a fellow-worker in all his widely extended work." Next to Hereford, Purvey seems to have been the most active



THE RIVER SWIFT. (The spot where Wyckoff's cables were thrown in. Tradition relates that the arch under which they were carried has since remained dry.)



and the most useful of all Wycliffe's co-workers ; and it is to him doubtless we are indebted for the preservation of so many of the Reformer's sermons and other writings. It was his fortune to become Wycliffe's literary executor ; and there is abundant reason for saying that he performed his duties in that capacity with fidelity and skill. We can almost transport ourselves back over the centuries to that quiet Lutterworth parsonage, and see the three men at their daily tasks. Horn has the pastoral work to attend to ; Purvey is kept fully occupied at the work of revision ; Wycliffe is busy with his treatises and his tracts. We can imagine a quiet discussion over some difficult reading which Purvey has encountered, Wycliffe, ever lively and suggestive, insisting, above all things, on a scrupulous adherence to the English idiom. We can hear Wycliffe, tickled with some pungent expression, reading aloud some fresh tract, which he is about to launch forth like a thunderbolt against the Mendicant friars—the "false brethren, pseudo-brethren, hypocrites, antichrists, devils." We can see them all deeply interested from time to time by fresh reports from the itinerant preachers, or by Horn's relation of his daily experience among the people. We can see them at their daily devotions, humbly acknowledging the Source of all blessing, and asking needed help. We can follow them on Sundays to the parish church, and see the eager faces of the rustic crowd as they hang breathlessly on the lips of the preacher, while the Evangelical Doctor himself, in the terse, simple, but expressive vernacular, thunders against ungodliness and ungodly men, or in softer tones tells the story of divine love.

The period is not marked by any great event. One movement, however, belongs to this period—a move-

ment to which Wycliffe from the very outset gave much attention, and to which also he offered a most stubborn resistance. The story of the movement is easily told; and as illustrative of this period of Wycliffe's life, it deserves to be repeated. During the Peasants' revolt in 1381, Henry le Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, made himself conspicuous by placing himself at the head of a body of men, and, in a sort of knight-errant style, attacking and defeating a body of rebels at a place called North Walsh. After the battle the ringleaders were brought before the Bishop as judge, and mercilessly condemned to death. The Bishop had won for himself a military reputation. He longed for a greater cause, and for a larger field in which to operate. He is supposed to have urged Pope Urban VI. to make war against the "Clementines," the adherents of the rival Pope, and so restore the disturbed unity of Christendom. Pope Urban complied with the request, and issued several bulls, in which he empowered the Bishop of Norwich to collect and take command of an army, and wage a holy war against the so-called Clement VII., and against his abettors on the continent, especially in France. Extensive powers were conferred upon the Bishop. He was at liberty to seize estates, to suspend or depose ecclesiastics, and to assert his authority over royalty itself. The highest favors of the Church were promised to all who would in any way lend a helping hand in this latest crusade. The movement had the encouragement and approval of Archbishop Courtenaye, who, on April 10th, 1383, issued a mandate in its support, taking the ground that as the war was to be against France—the enemy of England and the chief patron of the rival Pope—it was in the interests of peace. The Mendicant Orders lent the movement all the assistance in their power.

Wycliffe, as was most natural, looked upon the whole affair with sorrow, but not less with scorn and indignation. His tongue had to a certain extent been fettered ; but happily his pen was free. In the summer, when the movement had taken practical shape, he published a pamphlet in Latin, "Cruciata ; or, Against the War of the Clergy." It is one of his longest and one of his boldest productions of the kind. He lashes both Pope and anti-Pope. He likens the Schism to the quarrel of two dogs over a bone. He declares it to be a "consequence of the moral apostasy from Christ, and His walk of poverty and purity." The setting up of the cross by Urban he denounces as an invasion of the faith ; and that Princes should submit to Papal assumption in the premises he regards as a proof of the "ascendency of the devil's party." To the Mendicants he applies the lash with unsparing severity. They had collected money for the crusade. They must make restitution, if they would obtain forgiveness of their sins. With much force of argument, intermingled with not a little stinging sarcasm and pointed rebuke, he impales the advocates of the movement on one or other of the horns of the dilemma—that either Christ or the Papacy must have made a blunder ; and he leaves them to make their choice.

The crusade, in spite of the ton of gold, which, it is said, the bishops subscribed to it, came, as might have been expected, to grief. Wycliffe's pamphlet must have had a powerful influence in withholding and withdrawing support. The Bishop of Norwich and his crusaders embarked in May, 1383. Landing at Calais, they advanced and took some towns in Flanders. But success was short-lived. The discomfited army was back in England in October ; and before the end of the month the more prominent leaders were at the bar of Parlia-

ment, and the Bishop was deprived of his temporalities, which were not restored until 1385.

Such a pamphlet as the "Cruciata" could not have the effect of recommending Wycliffe to the favor of Pope Urban. It is not wonderful, therefore, that we should learn that, about this time, the Reformer became to the Roman Pope an object of more than ordinary solicitude. The story goes that one day, while sitting in his study at his wonted occupations, he received a citation from Pope Urban to present himself at Rome and answer for his heresies, and that Wycliffe excused himself on the ground of age and increasing infirmities. In this story there is nothing inherently improbable. We can well imagine that Courtenaye was enraged at Wycliffe's interference with the crusade. But circumstances made it impossible for him to take further action against the rector of Lutterworth. Wycliffe had found a fond and enthusiastic disciple and a powerful protector in the person of the good Queen Anne. He speaks of her in his "Three Chains of Love," a work given forth at this time, as "the noble Queen of England, the sister of Cæsar," who "possesses the gospels in three languages—Bohemian, German, and Latin"—and says that any one who would insinuate that she was a heretic would be "guilty of the pride of Lucifer." Her sympathy with and affection for the English Reformer were no secret. Courtenaye could not afford to lose her good will. It would only have been natural, in the circumstances, that he should have suggested the interference of the Pope. Lechler, however, denies the truth of the story, and declares that "this alleged citation to Rome must be relegated to the category of groundless traditions." The citation itself is wanting; it is not mentioned by any of the contemporary chronicles; and the

whole story is based, not upon a letter to the Pope, but upon a document which is not a letter at all, in any sense, but only a declaration to the English people. The old story has since been revived by Buddensieg, the editor of Wycliffe's Latin works, who calls attention to the tract "On Frivolous Citations," and points to the words, "A royal prohibition hinders my journey, to wit, the injunction of the King of kings." In the same passage he speaks of himself as "a feeble and lame priest cited to Rome." It is difficult to understand what this language means, if it does not refer to some sort of citation addressed to him personally; and yet it is singular that the evidence on the subject should be so meagre.

Wycliffe's literary activity and productiveness constitute the most conspicuous feature of these last two years. Both Lechler and Buddensieg admit that the numerous English sermons which have come down to us and the half hundred English tracts are the production of this period. Speaking of the tracts, Lechler tells us that setting aside translations of portions of Scripture, these tracts may be divided into two chief groups. The one consists of explanations of single heads of the Catechism; the other of discussions of the doctrines of the Church. The latter for the most part have a polemical character, while the former are in a more positive form didactic and edifying. Some treat of the Ten Commandments, of works of mercy, of the seven mortal sins; several discuss the duties belonging to the different stations and relations of life, while others treat of prayer, and explain the *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria*. There are also tracts on the Lord's Supper and on Confession and Absolution. Some defend the itinerant preachers. Others set forth the function of preaching, the nature of pastoral work, and

the life and conversation which should characterize the priests.*

The fertility of Wycliffe's pen was something truly amazing. Bale, in his useful though inaccurate summary, † gives a list of one hundred and fifty-four writings. Professor Shirley, in his careful catalogue (1865), specifies ninety-six extant Latin works, divided into six classes.

- A. Philosophy and Systematic Theology (32).
- B. Sermons, Expositions, and Practical Theology (17).
- C. Protests, Disputations, and Epistles (12).
- D. Church Government and Endowments (15).
- E. On the Monastic Orders (15).
- F. On the Secular Clergy (5).

The extant English works number sixty-five, reckoning each course of sermons as a single book. The sermons themselves number two hundred and ninety-seven. Lechler, in the Appendix to the "Life," gives a yet more elaborate classification. ‡

A strict chronological arrangement of these works is impossible. Shirley remarks that the tracts fall into two groups, divided by the great schism of the west. "If a tract of any length contains no protest against transubstantiation, and no reference to political events, it is almost certainly to be assigned to an earlier date." In addition to the above, Shirley gives the titles of forty-six works as now extinct or untraceable. Not a few of those works, especially the more labored and philosophical, had done service, in the form of lectures at Oxford; but there is evidence that most of the work of

* Lechler, vol. ii., pp. 274, 275.

† "Scriptores Britannicæ." Basle, 1557.

‡ Vol. ii., pp. 326-339.

rearranging, reconstructing, and putting in systematic shape was accomplished during these last years.

Such indefatigable industry, coupled as it had been for so many years with irritation, worry, and a continuously high tension of the nervous system, was bound, in the long run, to bring about disastrous consequences. Toward the close of 1382 Wycliffe, it will be remembered, was visited by a stroke of paralysis. It would appear from the testimony of John Horn, and from the phrase in the tract "On Frivolous Citations," "feeble and lame priest," that the effects of that stroke remained with the Reformer. When this is borne in mind, the activity of the last years is all the more marvellous. We feel convinced that there must have been in John Wycliffe a heroic and indomitable spirit. Finally, however, the end came. According to the testimony of Horn, given on oath in the year 1441 to Dr. Gascoigne, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Wycliffe, after having suffered two years from the previous attack, while hearing mass on Innocent's Day, of the year 1384, in the parish church at Lutterworth, and at the moment of the elevation of the host, sustained a stroke and fell upon the spot. His tongue was affected; and he remained speechless until his death, which took place on Saturday, Sylvester's Day, and the eve of the feast of Christ's Circumcision. On December 28th he received the fatal stroke; and on the 31st came the end. And so John Wycliffe, one of the truest, brightest, and bravest of men, the greatest by far of all the Reformers before the Reformation, the morning star of that better day which was soon to dawn upon the earth, passed away to his rest and his reward. Of him truly, if ever of any one, it may with truth be said that he being dead contin-

ued to speak. His work was not completed. In its main features it was hardly a success. He had not broken the power of Rome in England. He had not fully inaugurated the Reformation. But the fault was not his. The times were not ripe ; circumstances were not in his favor ; and he suffered the fate which is common to pioneers. But he laid the foundation on which others were to build—he sowed what others were to reap ; and whatever glory belongs to the great work, which brought about the religious revolution of the sixteenth century, a large portion of that glory justly attaches to the memory of John Wycliffe.

He was buried, some say, in the chancel of his own church ; others say in the churchyard, under the shadow of the church wall. But his ashes were not allowed to rest in peace. On the dead Reformer his enemies took a mean revenge. His writings were condemned at the Council of Constance in 1415 ; and a decree was issued, ordering that “ his body and bones, if they could be distinguished from those of the faithful, should be disinterred and cast away from the consecrated ground. This decree was disregarded for thirteen years, when, at the peremptory mandate of the Pope, it was executed under the personal direction of the Bishop of Lincoln. The bones were disinterred, burned, and flung into the Swift, the stream which flows past Lutterworth, and falls into the Avon. “ Thus,” says Thomas Fuller, in his “ Church History of Great Britain,” “ this brook did convey his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow sea, and this into the wide ocean. And so the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.” Wordsworth expands the thought thus :

“Wycliffe is disinhumed,
Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed,
And flung into the brook that travels near ;
Forthwith that ancient voice which streams can hear
Thus speaks (that voice which walks upon the wind,
Though seldom heard by busy human kind) :
As thou these ashes, little brook, wilt bear
Into the Avon—Avon to the tide
Of Severn—Severn to the narrow seas—
Into main ocean they,—this deed accurst,
An emblem yields to friends and enemies,
How the bold teacher's doctrine, sanctified
By truth, shall spread throughout the world dispersed.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

IN the foregoing pages we have endeavored to present Wycliffe in the light of his own teaching and of the facts of his own life. It has been our aim so to exhibit the Reformer, through his work, and in relation to his surroundings, that the reader might be enabled to come to his conclusions, and so form his own estimate of the man. Much, of course, might still be said, if we would enter upon a critical examination of Wycliffe's numerous writings. But this would be as foreign to our purpose, as it would be impossible with the space at our disposal. A brief summing up is all that can be attempted; but it shall be done in harmony with our original plan, and with a view to enabling the reader to arrive at a proper understanding as to what Wycliffe taught, and to form a proper conception of his character.

As to his teaching, we have seen what importance he attached to the Holy Scriptures. The Bible with him was the foundation of all authority. "The Holy Scripture is the faultless, most true, most perfect, and most holy law of God, which it is the duty of all men to learn, to know, to defend, and to observe, inasmuch as they are bound to serve the Lord in accordance with it, under the promise of an eternal reward." "The whole Scripture is *one Word of God*; also the whole Law of Christ is *one perfect Word* proceeding from the mouth of God; it is, therefore, not permitted to sever the Holy

Scripture, but to allege it in its integrity according to the sense of the author." "As they ought to be, the Papal Bulls will be superseded by the Holy Scriptures. The veneration of men for the laws of the Papacy, as well as for the opinions of our modern doctors, which since the loosing of Satan they have been at liberty freely to preach to the people, will be restrained within due limits. What concern have the faithful with writings of this sort, except that they are honestly deduced from the fountain of Scripture? By pursuing such a course it is not only in our power to reduce the mandates of Prelates and Popes to their just place, but the errors of these new religious orders also might be corrected and the worship of Christ well purified and elevated."

It was this love and reverence for the Holy Scriptures which gave character to all his teaching, and determined him in all his work. If he adopted new views, it was because these views were in accordance with Scripture. If he undertook special work, either of a public or of a private character, it was because he deemed such work to be a duty imposed upon him by Scripture, which to him was the law of his Master. Hence his translation of the Bible into English; and hence also the importance he attached to the preaching of the Word. "As secular men should understand the faith they profess, that faith should be taught them in whatever language it may be best known to them." As some prelates are ignorant of Holy Scripture, and as others conceal parts of it, and as the verbal instruction of priests may be defective from the same causes, "it is abundantly manifest that believers should ascertain for themselves what are the true matters of their faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which all may understand." In the most

famous of all his English tracts, the "Wicket," he says: "If God's Word is the life of the world, and every word of God is the life of the human soul, how may any Antichrist, for dread of God, take it away from us that be Christian men, and thus to suffer the people to die for hunger." The Word should be preached, and preached without money and without price. "Prayer is good, but not so good as preaching." "Charity should drive friars to come out of Cain's Castles, and to dwell among the people." Because the friars did not so come forth, and because the work of preaching was neglected by the Mendicants and by the endowed clergy, he trained and sent forth his "Poor Priests."

It has been said of Wycliffe that he did not fully grasp the famous Reformation doctrine—Justification by Faith. It is perfectly true that he did not emphasize this doctrine, as Luther emphasized it; but it seems to us to be too much to insinuate that he had not laid hold of this cardinal truth. His Bible knowledge was something marvellous; and his views of sin and of the atonement, as expressed in his various sermons and tracts, are not only sound, but in perfect harmony with the teaching of the later Reformation. All sin, according to Wycliffe, is against God. As our first parents sinned atonement must be made for sin, consistently with the righteousness of God. It is to speak lightly of God to say that He could forgive sin without an atonement having been made for it; for God is just. To pardon without an atonement would be to give to both angels and men free license to sin; and then sin were no sin, and God were no God. As man's nature trespassed, man's nature must make the atonement; and as man is not sufficient, as an angel is not sufficient, as the value must be infinite, it must be made by one who is both God and

man. Such was the Christ. "In Christ's Passion were all things which could make it the more meritorious." As to the means of salvation, he speaks with great clearness and force. In one of his Passion sermons, he illustrates the place held by faith in the scheme of Redemption, by a reference to the serpent in the wilderness. "As a right-looking on the adder of brass saved the people from the venom of the adder : so a right-looking by full belief on Christ saveth His people." He delights to expatiate on the love of Jesus. "O Thou everlasting Love ! inflame my mind to love God, that it burn not, but to His callings. O good Jesus ! who shall give to me that I feel Thee. Thou must now be felt and not seen. Enter into the inmost recesses of my soul ; come into mine heart, and fill it with Thy most clear sweetness ; make my mind to drink deeply of the fervent wine of Thy sweet love, that I, forgetting all evils, and all vain visions, and scornful imaginations, Thee only embracing, joying I may rejoice in my Lord Jesus." We are not left in ignorance, therefore, as to the kind of gospel which Wycliffe himself preached, and which was delivered to the people at the hands of his itinerant preachers.

On the subject of the Immortality of the Soul, Wycliffe writes with intelligence and beauty : "Sober men entertain no doubt that the soul of man is immortal, and since it is in the soul that we find the identity of the man, it follows that the man must be immortal. For this reason it was that the Apostles of Christ suffered death with such courage and boldness. To them the imprisonment and burden of the flesh was an irksome restraint and oppression, and they could therefore rejoice to undergo death for a just cause. But philosophers assign many reasons whereby to make good this opinion. In the first place we are taught by Aristotle, and in truth by

common experience, that there is a certain energy in the mind of man that is imperishable. But no energy or operation can have more prominence than is in its subject ; now the subject in this case is the mind of the soul, the soul therefore must be imperishable. Furthermore we place the human intellect above all animal faculties. For in those faculties the brute surpasseth man, as the poet sayeth, who showeth it from experience : ‘ the boar excelleth us in hearing, the spider in touch, the vulture in scent, the lynx in sight, the ape in the sense of tasting.’ And since man does not surpass animals in merely animal sense, we must conclude that his excellence lies in his intellect. But where would be his advantage, if at his death he must part with it ? In such case would God not seem to cast contempt on His favored offspring ? Our conclusion, therefore, is that man is possessed of an understanding which he taketh away from the body as a part of his self and which abides forever. Again, every man has within him the natural desire to live forever, and the wiser men are, the more they thus feel, and give their testimony to this truth. Now, as nature is not to be frustrated in a purpose of such moment, it is manifest that there is in man, according to nature, a certain understanding that exists forever—so man is immortal.”

His views on the Lord’s Supper have been set forth in the course of the narrative. One or two fresh quotations may here be given. “ Many are the errors into which we have fallen with regard to the nature of the Lord’s Supper. Some, for example, say that it is a quality without a substance. Others say that it is a nonentity, since it is an aggregate of many qualities which are not all of one genus. Against these opinions I have many a time inveighed, both in the language of the schools and of the

common people.” “As the words of Holy Scripture tell us that this sacrament *is* the body of Christ, not that it *will be*, or that it is sacramentally a figure of the body of Christ—so accordingly, we must admit without reserve, on this authority, that the bread which is the sacrament *is* truly the body of Christ. But the simplest layman will see that it follows that, inasmuch as this bread is the body of Christ, it is therefore bread, and remains bread—being *at once* both bread *and* the body of Christ. The nature of the bread is not destroyed by what is done by the priest, it is only elevated so as to become a substance more honored. Do we believe that John the Baptist, when made by the word of Christ to be Elias, ceased to be John?—or ceased to be anything that he was in substance before? In the same manner, the bread while becoming by virtue of Christ’s words the body of Christ, does not cease to be bread. When it has become *sacramentally* the body of Christ, it remains bread *substantially*. Further Christ says, ‘*This is my body,*’ and these words must be taken as, *i.e.*, in the same sense as, the words referring to the Baptist. If bread consecrated and unconsecrated be mixed together, the heretic cannot tell the difference between the natural bread, and his supposed quality without a substance, any more than any of us can distinguish in such case between the bread which has been consecrated and that which has not. Mice, however, have an innate knowledge of the fact. They *know* that the substance of the bread is retained as at first. But our unbelievers have not even such knowledge. They never know what bread or what wine has been consecrated, except as they see it consecrated. But what, I ask, can be supposed to have moved the Lord Jesus Christ thus to confound and destroy all natural discernment in the senses and minds of the worshippers?

It is as if the devil had been scheming to this effect saying, 'This is, as the professor says, the very doctrine of the Church of England. If I can by my vicar Antichrist so far seduce the believers in the Church, as to bring them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and to believe it a contemptible quality without a substance, I may after that, and in the same manner, lead them to believe whatever I may wish, inasmuch as the opposite of such a doctrine is plainly taught, both by the language of Scripture, and by the very senses of mankind.' "

Wycliffe's views of the sacrament are not materially different from those which have generally prevailed in the Church of England. Christ is present in the sacrament, according to him, not substantially, corporeally, locally or quantitatively, but effectually, spiritually, sacramentally. "This is neither Lutheranism, nor Calvinism, nor Zwinglianism," says Professor Burrows. "It neither denies the presence nor explains the mode." "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, *only* after a heavenly and spiritual manner."

The Reformer was equally plain-spoken in regard to Saint Worship, Monastic Vows, Confession, Absolution, and Indulgences. "Whoever entreats a saint should direct his prayer to Christ as God, not to the saint specially, but to Christ. Nor doth the celebration or festival of a saint avail anything, except in so far as it may tend to the magnifying of Christ, inciting us to honor Him, and increasing our love to Him. If there be any celebration in honor of the saints which is not kept within these limits, it is not to be doubted that cupidity or some other evil cause has given rise to such services. Hence not a few think it would be well for the Church if all festivals of that nature were abolished, and those only retained which stand in immediate rela-

tion to Christ. Further they say, the memory of Christ would be kept more freshly in our mind, and the devotions of the common people could not be unduly scattered among the members of Christ. But, however this may be, it is certain that the service paid to any saint must be useless, except as it incites to the love of Christ, and is of a nature to secure the benefit of His mediation. For as the Scripture assureth us, *Christ is the only mediator between God and man*. Hence many hold that, if prayer were directed only to that middle person of the Trinity for spiritual help, the Church would be more flourishing, and would make greater advances than she now does, when many new intercessors have been found out and introduced."

"If men foolishly make a vow to go to Rome, or Jerusalem, or Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, that we deem of greater weight than the vow made at our christening, to keep God's commandments, to forsake the fiend and all his works. But though men break the highest commandments of God, the rudest parish priest anon shall absolve him. But of the vows made of our own heed, though many times against God's will, no man shall absolve, but some great worldly bishop, or the most worldly priest of Rome, the fellow of God and the Deity on earth." "If a man vow a thing, and he find after that it were better to leave it [undone], then he shall leave it, and have sorrow of his folly beside, but him needeth not to go to Rome to perform his medeful deed. And here many be deceived by the power of their rulers; they ween that they need to have leave of them to do as they should do!"

"The confession that is made to man has oftentimes been varied in the varying of the Church. For first men confessed to God and to the common people, and

this confession was used in the time of the apostles. Afterward men were confessed more especially to priests, and made them judges and counsellors of their sinful life. But in the third time since the fiend was loosed, Pope Innocent ordained a law of confession that each man of discretion should once in the year be privily confessed of his own priest, and added much to this law that he could not ground. And although this Pope's ordinance do much good to many men, nevertheless many men think that it harmeth the Church."

Regarding Absolution and Indulgences, we find often such statements as the following: "There is no greater heresy for a man than to believe that he is absolved from sin if he give money, or because a priest layeth his hand on his head and saith, 'I absolve thee;' *for thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, else God does not absolve thee.*"

"It is plain to me that our Prelates in granting indulgences do commonly blaspheme the wisdom of God, pretending in their avarice and folly that they understand what they really know not. They chatter on the subject of grace as if it were a thing to be bought and sold like an ass or an ox; by so doing they learn to make a merchandise of selling pardons, the devil having availed himself of an error in the schools to introduce after this manner heresies in morals. I confess that the indulgences of the Pope, if they are what they are pretended to be, are a manifest blasphemy, inasmuch as he claims a power to save men almost without limit, and not only to mitigate the penalties of those who have sinned by granting them the aid of absolutions and indulgences, that they should never come to purgatory, but to give command to the holy angels that, when the soul is separated from the body, they may carry it without delay to its everlasting rest."

To the doctrine of Purgatory, Wycliffe clung almost to the last. It is only in his latest Latin polemical works that we find him first doubting it, and then using language which implies distinct and positive denial.* Of Mariolatry he never shook himself wholly free. Yet toward the end, his language is greatly qualified in this particular. In his very latest discourses, the most that he urges is that it is possible to "please our Lady," and that good Christians should endeavor to do so. In the majority of instances, however, he contents himself with recommending her as an object worthy of imitation, because of her purity and humility.† A little more time would have emancipated him even from this bondage.

Of Wycliffe as a philosopher much has already been said. He was undoubtedly master of such knowledge as then existed; and as a trained intellectualist he was ahead of the men of his time. His theory of Divine Dominion, which, as has been mentioned, lies at the basis of his whole philosophical system, does not seem to differ essentially from the kingdom of God, or kingdom of the Saints of a later development. In his own time, Wycliffe found it necessary, in many particulars, to qualify his principles in practice. But of his philosophy as a whole, it seems to us wise that judgment should be suspended, until all his Latin works, including his "Summa in Theologia," shall have been given to the world.

The judgments pronounced upon him have been various; but they have for the most part been qualified either by friendship or by hatred. Of the latter class, the

* Polemical Works, i., pp. 46-48.

† This brief summary of the views and opinions of the Reformer has been drawn chiefly from the "Tracts and Treatises," by Vaughan, and from the "Select English Works," by Arnold.

following by Walsingham, the chronicler, is a specimen :
“ On the feast of the passion of St. Thomas of Canterbury, John Wycliffe—that organ of the devil, that enemy of the Church, that author of confusion to the common people, that idol of heretics, that image of hypocrites, that restorer of schism, that storehouse of lies, that sink of flattery—being struck by the horrible judgment of God, was struck with palsy, and continued to live in that condition until St. Sylvester’s Day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness.”

Much more appreciative is the testimony borne to him by his Alma Mater, the University of Oxford, two-and-twenty years after his death. “ With one heart, voice, and testimony we witness all his conduct throughout his whole life to have been praiseworthy ; whose honest manners, profound scholarship, and redolent fame and sweetness we earnestly desire to be known to all the faithful ; for we hold his ripe conversation and assiduous labors to tend to the praise of God, the salvation of others, and the benefit of the Church. We therefore signify unto you by these presents that his conversation, from tender years up to the time of his death, was so excellent and honest, that never was there any annoyance or sinister suspicion or infamy reported of him ; but in answering, reading, preaching, he behaved himself laudably, as a strong champion of the faith, vanquishing those who by voluntary beggary blasphemed Christ’s religion, by Catholic sentences out of Holy Scripture. Nor was the aforesaid doctor convicted of heresy, nor burned of our prelates after burial. God forbid that by our prelates a man of such probity should be condemned for a heretic, who wrote in logic, philosophy, divinity,

morality and the speculative sciences without his peer, as we believe, in all our University." *

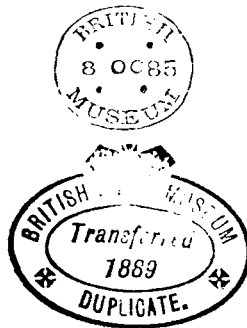
Wycliffe was a many-sided man ; and success attended him in all, or almost all, that he undertook to perform. He was great as a scholar, great as a legist and publicist, and indefatigable as a writer, the first and, in some senses, the greatest of the pamphleteers ; but numerous as were the spheres of his activity, and great as was his success in most of them, it is as a Reformer that he is destined to keep his place in history. " In the collective history of the Church of Christ, Wycliffe marks an epoch chiefly on the ground that he was the earliest *personal embodiment* of the evangelical reformer. Before him, it is true, many ideas of reform, and many efforts in the direction of it, crop up here and there, which even led to conflicts of opinion and collisions of parties, and gathered themselves up in the formation of whole reformed societies. But Wycliffe is the first important personality in history who devotes himself to the work of Church reform with the entire thought-power of a master mind, and with the full force of will and joyful self-sacrifice of a man in Christ. To that work he devoted the labors of a life, in obedience to the earnest pressure of conscience, and in confident trust that his labor was not in vain in the Lord. He did not conceal from himself that the labors of evangelical men would in the first instance be opposed and persecuted and driven back. Nevertheless, he consoled himself with the assurance that the ultimate issue would be a renovation of the Church upon the apostolic model. It was only after

* Cotton MS., c. vii., fol. 125, and Foxe's " Acts and Monuments," pp. 111-157.

Wycliffe that other living embodiments of the spirit of Church reform, a Huss, a Savonarola, and others, appeared upon the field—a succession which issued at length in the Reformation of the sixteenth century.” *

* Lechler, vol. ii., p. 317.

THE END.



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