

Raphanæ, Gadara, Hippos, Dios, Pella, Gerasa, Canatha, and Damascus.

— *beyond Jordan.*] The region eastward of the Jordan was called Peræa, which has the signification of “beyond” or “across.”

[Original]

MEMOIRS OF EMINENT ENGLISH CHURCHMEN.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, LORD COBHAM :
died 1417.

The labours of Wickliffe left their traces behind them. The thunder of his eloquence and the ardency and energy of his zeal, had roused in the hearts of the laity a spirit of resistance to the tyranny of Papal Aggression ; a longing for the truth and a yearning after calmer and happier days. The good work, nevertheless, did not proceed without strong opposition. The Monks used all their efforts to prevent any further extension of the movement, and, through their influence, a bill was secretly carried through the House of Lords, which declared that all who preached without license against the Catholic faith, should be imprisoned until they justified themselves according to the law of the Church ; but as it was enacted but by one branch of the legislature, it fell to the ground chiefly through the strenuous opposition and protest of the Commons.

Notwithstanding all opposition, the Lollards increased, and, at the time of the accession of Henry the Fourth, had become so numerous and powerful, that the clergy exerted all their influence to induce him to wage war against them. This Prince, eager and anxious, on ascending a usurped throne, to conciliate so powerful a body, passed a most stringent edict by which any person suspected of heresy might be imprisoned at the discretion of the ordinary, fined, or delivered over to the secular power to be burnt to death. This was the famous ordinance called the writ *de heretico comburendo* or “for the burning of Heretics.”

The priests were not slow in availing themselves of the authority committed to them by this act. The first victim of their rage, and the first Christian martyr in Eng-

land was Sir William Sautre, rector of St. Osithes, in London, who, after a mock trial, was condemned to be burned to death—the principal ground of his condemnation being his assertion, that the sacramental bread was still bread after it had been consecrated.— This sacrifice appeased their wrath for a season. Nine years elapsed before the pile of martyrdom was relit. On this occasion the victim of the spirit of intolerance was an obscure individual, one William Badley, a tailor by trade, who was burnt to death under circumstances of peculiar atrocity.

We now turn to the subject of our memoir, the history of whose life is so mixed up with that of the Church at this period, that further separation is unnecessary, and we will retrace our steps a little, in order to give some account of the earlier years of this English martyr.

Sir John Oldcastle, often called the “good Lord Cobham,” was born in the reign of Edward the III. He obtained his peerage by marrying the heiress of Lord Cobham.— In early life he became a convert to the doctrines and a zealous supporter of the Wickliffites, and being endowed with a large amount of worldly wealth, he had the will to use it in the furtherance and promotion of his Master’s glory. Besides spending immense sums in the transcription and circulation of the great Reformer’s writings, and the maintenance of a number of his disciples as itinerant preachers throughout the country, he encouraged students at the University of Oxford by bountiful stipends to propagate these opinions in every direction. Their spread was the occasion of a commission of enquiry being instituted, which reported that in Oxford was to be found the nest of heresy, and that its growth and diffusion was mainly owing to the example and patronage of Lord Cobham. Proceedings were commenced against the noble delinquent, but on the interference of the monarch, who was sincerely attached to him as a faithful servant and friend, they were stayed for a season. Henry undertook the task of converting him from his errors, and convincing him of his high offence in separating from the Church—but in vain ; he replied to his ar-