

he must have been one of the best known men of his time, and a personality of considerable bulk. As his name indicates, he was a native of Lyra or Lyre, near Evreux in Normandy, and his whole life was spent in France. The exact date of his birth is uncertain, but it must have been about 1270, the year in which St. Louis the Crusader died. He was spared to complete his three score and ten, dying in 1340. At an early age he joined the Franciscans, then in their best days, and soon giving evidence of unusual ability, was accorded his doctor's degree and appointed to lecture on theology in Paris. He rose rapidly from one position of responsibility to another in his Order until he became Provincial General, and was held in high esteem by men of eminence throughout the whole of France. He wrote several books on theological subjects, including a polemical treatise against the Jews on the Messiah, but his great work was his *Postillae* or running commentary on the whole Bible, which soon became exceedingly popular and speedily displaced all other works of a similar character, maintaining its place almost without a rival for well nigh two hundred years. After long circulating in manuscript, it was printed at Rome in 1472 and ran through many editions before the end of the century. At the time, therefore, when Luther began to study the Bible and write upon it, Lyra practically had the whole field to

himself. It is little wonder that he gives evidence of his familiarity with the work and drew more or less from it in his own commentaries. It proves Luther's openness of mind that he did not disdain to borrow from the great Franciscan. In reality, however, the best of what he took from Lyra, in the Old Testament at least, had already been borrowed. Lyra was one of the few mediæval scholars who knew anything of Hebrew, and he made free use of the Jewish commentators, especially the celebrated Rashi. And thus it came about that Luther, who knew little Hebrew, has so much in common with the greatest of the later rabbis. Luther shows little or no dependence on Lyra in the New Testament, and struck out lines of treatment which to his predecessor would have seemed very startling. Yet, even here, Luther was more indebted to him than he knew. In a very important sense Lyra was a precursor of the Reformation. He gave it its method of exegesis.

In these modern days when the grammatico-historical method of interpretation, which simply seeks to unfold what the writer meant, is so firmly established that we have almost ceased to defend it against any other, ordinary students of the Bible have little idea of the vagaries that were gravely propounded in former times by many very learned men who enjoyed great reputation and authority in the church. Both by Jews and Chris-