

SUDBURY COLLEGE,  
AND ARCHBISHOP THEOBALD.

About 550 years ago, in the first half of the long and eventful reign of the third Edward, there lived in the rapidly increasing woollen town of Sudbury, scarcely a stone's throw from the old church of S. Gregory, a worthy burgher, named Nigel Theobald, and Sara, his wife. Assuming the correctness of the theory of "the survival of the fittest," the name of Theobald must be an honorable one, for it has been handed on for generations, and is a common one in Sudbury, and in the border land between Suffolk and Essex, at the present day, and can be traced in the town records from the time of the famous burgher of S. Gregory. Then, as now, it was "clipped" by the commonalty, and was frequently spelt and pronounced *Tebbauld*, or *Tibbold*, or *Tebble*, and in this form it occurs in several old local documents. Nigel Theobald was evidently a person of position and influence, for his name appears several times as Commissioner on important enquiries, when he sat with members of the Waldegrave family, and other persons of note. One of these Commissions was appointed to enquire into the extent and value of the rectory and church of S. Gregory, with the chapel of S. Peter. Probably, like Robert de Quintin, his neighbour, he was a wool merchant and "clothier," and had waxed rich by the profitable manufacture and industry which King Edward, with wise foresight had encouraged, by the settlement of the industrious Flemish weavers in East Anglia, and other parts of his English territory.

Nigel and Sara Theobald had two sons, Simon, of Sudbury, and John, of Chertsey. Whether the latter gained his surname from any connection with the meadow-environed town of that name on the banks of the Thames (noted for its Saxon Abbey, where the body of the ill-fated Henry the Sixth was taken "without priest or clerk, torch or taper, singing or saying," to be buried within the sacred

precincts by the monks), is not known, but it is not unlikely that when Simon became Bishop of London, John might have acquired or occupied property at Chertsey, for the two brothers appeared to have lived on most affectionate terms, and harmoniously worked together for many good objects. The star-enamelled meads watered by the Thames, would have reminded John of the green meadows and winding Stour in front of his father's house at Sudbury. Simon's life was an eventful one, and is graphically summarized in an old parchment (a copy of a much older one) affixed to the inner side of the door of the niche in the west wall of S. Gregory's vestry, where is preserved the decapitated head of the once powerful primate and chancellor. The brief biography is as follows:—"The Head of Simon Theobald, who was born at Sudbury, and thence called Simon of Sudbury, He was sent, when but a Youth into fforeign Parts to study the Civil Law, Whereof he was made Doctor. He visited most of the Universities of ffrance, was made Chaplain to Pope Innocent, and Auditor Rotæ or Judge of the Roman Court. By the Interest of this Pope, he was made Chancellor of Salisbury. In the year 1361 he was consecrated Bishop of London, and in the Year 1375 was translated to the See of Canterbury, and made Chancellor of England while he was Bishop of London he Built the upper part of St. Gregory's in Sudbury; and where his ffather's House stood he erected a College of Secular Priests, and endowed it with the Yearly Revenue of One Hundred and Twenty-two Pounds eighteen Shillings, and was at length barbarously Beheaded upon Tower Hill, in London, by the Rabble in Wat: Tyler's Rebellion, in the Reign of Richard the 2nd, 1382."

In the borough records there is a beautifully executed Grant of land near the Croft (probably adjoining his father's house), to Simon, who is described as the "son of Nigel Thebauld and Sara his wife," from one Hugh de Dedlyn. The deed was executed on the Thursday after the Feast of S. Gregory, 1339 (14 Ed. III.). Here, on and adjoining the site of their father's house, the two brothers, Simon

and John, founded the College of S. Gregory, having received a Charter for that purpose from King Edward the Third about a year before his Jubilee, which charter was dated 21 Feb., 1375. It appears by it that leave was given the founders to make an exchange with the Prioress of Eaton nunnery, of four shops in Old Fish Street, London, for the advowson of S. Gregory's church, previously held by the nuns, which advowson was given to the newly founded College. This was only a few months before Simon was translated from London to Canterbury. In the Registry of the Diocese of Norwich (to which See Sudbury formerly belonged), there is a MS. containing an agreement between Bp. Theobald, of London, and Bp. Spencer, of Norwich, for the foundation of the College in connection with the parish church of S. Gregory. This agreement is dated 1 Novr., 1374. Another deed, dated 9 Aug., 1375, is an agreement between "Simon, late Bishop of London, and now Archbishop of Canterbury," and John of Sudbury, of the one part; and Henry, Bishop of Norwich, of the other part, for the erection of the college, with the licence and authority of the latter prelate, who covenanted for himself and his successors to give two marks annually, and for the Prior and Convent of the cathedral to give 5/- per annum. This licence and agreement was confirmed in 1381. The doughty deeds of the martial Bp. Spencer on the Continent are graphically pictured by the courtly chronicler Froissart, and in some of the copies of his *Chronicle* can be seen in the rude engravings of the period, the bishop mounted on a grey horse, robed and mitred, heading a company of spearman, his squire by his side carrying a banner emblazoned with the *Cross Keys*. At the rising of the serfs under Wat Tyler, the fight-loving prelate scoured Suffolk, "raging like a wild boar," and giving no quarter, cut down the fugitives even at the altars, and then confessed those in whom life lingered. This is a specimen of the character of one of the benefactors of Sudbury College. Among subsequent benefactors were John Guyn and John

Reeveshall, 1391; Robert Middleton, 1410; and John Brown, clerk, 1411.

Archbishop Theobald was one of the noted builders in that wonderful building age. He rebuilt the unusually long chancel of S. Gregory (longer than the nave), where his priests' stalls, with their moveable *misereres*—one carved on the *sub-selia* with his cognizance, a "talbot" (afterwards introduced as the charge in the field of the borough arms); and the cornice with quaint figures of angels bearing the instruments of the Passion still remain intact. To his generosity and public spirit, the citizens of Canterbury were indebted for the West gate of their cathedral, part of the nave, and city walls. In the "goodly college" at Sudbury were placed a Warden (or Custos), who was frequently the Rector (and subsequently) the Master of the Grammar School, five secular canons, and three chaplains, who were "to perform the Divine Office daily, according to the ordinances of the said Simon and John," in the chapel or choir of the neighbouring church.

It appears that King Richard II. (the boy king whom Theobald had crowned), in the third year of his reign, by charter granted his licence to "Simon of Sudbury, and John of Chertsey," to confer on the warden and chaplains of the college, lands and tenements to the yearly value of 40 marks. Also that the founders might assign them the manors of Ballingdon and Middleton with their appurtenances, and two messuages, one toft, and 570 acres of arable land, 21 of meadow, 37 of pasture, 47 of wood held of the Crown, and 70 shillings annually, the total value being £170 9s. 0½d. a year. This charter was confirmed and enlarged by another granted in the 7th of Richard. The manor of *Neales*, in Sudbury, was included in the grant, with three messuages in Birchin Lane, London, the rectory and church of S. Gregory, the rectory and chapel of S. Peter, the advowson and patronage of the church and rectory of Brunton, the Quires of Acton and All Saints' church, Sudbury, a certain Quire in Melford, Brunton water mill and wood, a yearly rent from the chapel of S. Sepulchre,

&c. In the pasture land were included the North Meadow, the Friars' Meadow, the Tithe Acre, Places-Lake (the name now corrupted into "Splashlick"), the Church Piece, Rush Croft, Broom Hill, Chalk Mere, the Steward's Acre, the Tenants' Acre, &c., some of which plots retain their names to this day. Among the "woods, underwood, forests, and wastes," were Highwood, Broomwood, Rams-hole Wood, Highwood Croft, Ashley Wood, Warren's Wood, &c. The various manors, messuages, lands, &c., "appertayning to the Colledge," were situate in Hackney, Sudbury, Ballingdon, Great and Little Cornard, Great and Little Henny, Melford, Chilton, Acton, Brundon, Great and Little Waldingfield, Middleton, Borley, Foxearth, Bulmer, Twinstead, Pebmarsh, Lamarsh, Wickham S. Paul's, and Maplestead. The annual value at the Dissolution was £215 19s. 0 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

The Colledge was built by the two brothers on the site of their parents' house, where probably they were born, and where they had read and studied together. They had played in the garden, in the neighbouring croft, and round the old hermitage in the churchyard; had bathed in the clear stream which divided their domain from the opposite meadows, and then rippled on to the broad pool, where a creaking mossy mill-wheel had lazily turned from before the time when the Normans first came, and had rambled on the commons, natted in the woods, fished in the river, and hawked in the fields which they afterwards secured for their beloved seminary. The view from the precincts was diversified and pleasing, and the associations historic. In front were the grazing lands of the freemen, given by the lords of Clare, whose castle was but a few miles distant, opposite an old British camp. Nearly opposite, beyond the level greensward, and near the "brown hill" of Brundon, was the little church, but one "pace" long, and in the valley were the ancient hall and mill. Beyond, perched on a woody eminence, was the parish church of Borley, and not far distant that of Foxearth, both names savouring of the chase, and of the time when a great part

of East Anglia was covered by forest, marsh, and heath. Liston hall and church were in the mid-distance, due west, the manor being held by the honorable service of providing and offering five wafers at the King's coronation. To the right were the woodlands of Kentwell, and the Abbot's seat and noble church of Melford, with the extensive woods round the old "oak town" (Acton) and the famous Babergh heath, which gave its name to the "Hundred." Nearer to the spectator, stretching just beyond Places-Lake, was the much frequented high road to the famous shrine of S. Edmund at Bury, along which passed knight and palmer, troubadour and pilgrim, merchant and friar, and many a crowned head, for no less than sixteen English Sovereigns personally made offerings to the famous shrine, and probably passed along this principal highway from London to Bury and Norwich. The eye would be arrested by the conspicuous priory of S. Bartholomew, founded by the "moneyer" of Henry II., and by the equally prominent mansion of "Wodehall," a few fields distant, subsequently part of the patrimony of the unfortunate Anne Boleyn. On waste to the north of the road might be discerned over the level meadows the humble lepers' hospital of S. Leonard, built a few years before by John Colney, and now conducted under "ordinances" drawn up by Theobald. But a bow-shot further was the Holgate hop-ground, and a famous stone cross, reverently saluted by the pilgrims. Turning to the left, the two steep hills of Ballingdon could be plainly seen, and the roads over Armsey heath to the noted keep of the De Veres at Hedingham, and the stronghold of the Bouchiers at Halstead, hereditary political foes. At the former castle the young King frequently stayed with his favourite Oxford, whose subsequent banishment he so deplored, and whose funeral he attended in great state at the neighbouring hamlet of Earls Colne, being the only English monarch who was present as a mourner at a subject's burial. Still further to the south-west was the quaint little Norman church of Middleton, and the "church-acre" of Bulmer, demised for

the supply of oil for the sanctuary lamp, and for rushes for the church floor. Immediately behind the College, and connected with it by a wide-arched gateway, still standing, were the church and churchyard of S. Gregory; with the hermit's cell, where, half a century later dwelt "a true Member of Holy Cherche, and a gode gostly Levere," one Appleby, whose good character was vouched for by "the Mayor and the spiritual father of S. Gregory." Such were the pleasant surroundings and suggestive associations of Sudbury College. It covered, with its garden, &c., about three acres, and was built in the Transition style from the Decorated to the Perpendicular, which latter architectural style was just coming into fashion.

The College is mentioned in the Patent Rolls at the Record Office, in the 3rd, 4th, and 7th of Rich. II., in the 12th of Hen. IV., and the 2nd of Henry V. In the "Calendarium Inquisitionem post mortem sive Escheatarum," taken by virtue of writs directed to the Escheator of each county, when any grant of a market, fair, or other privilege or licence of alienation of lands was solicited, when enquiries were made by jury whether such alienation would be prejudicial to the King, or others, the College is mentioned, viz., in the 2nd of Rich. II., when it is stated that in the manors of Balydon, Middleton and Bolemere (Bulmer), 193 acres of land (arable), 7 acres of meadow or common, 13 of pasture, and 15 of wood, with 28s. 3d. were given by Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the College. In the 4th year of the same King the Archbishop and his brother of Chertsey held for the prior and brethren in Sudbury, Balyngdon (the name of this hamlet is differently spelt in almost every entry), Melford, Corneath (Cornard), Magna, and Parva, one messuage, one shop, 210 acres of land, 21 acres of pasture, and 72s. a year. In 1415 (2 Hy. V.) one John Roughered gave to the College one messuage and lands in Sudbury, Great Cornard, &c.

In the muniment chests of S. Alban's Abbey are several deeds relating to the College, being acquittances.

from the Master or Warden for the rent of Middleton Hall, and for a certain portion of the tithes of All Saints, Sudbury, which the Master and Chaplains let out to farm. This church was long connected with the Abbey, the charter being granted by Hen. II. There is an acquittance for £3 for rent, and 24s. for tithe, dated 20 Novr., 1397 (20 Rich. II.); and another for similar amounts dated 31 May, 1433 (11 Hen. VI.) In 1355 the Abbot of S. Alban's let out to farm to the Rector ("Roger") of S. Gregory, the tithes of several fields, on his payment of 20s. a year, but if the half-yearly payments were delayed a fortnight beyond the specified time, in part or whole, the Abbot or his attorney could "resume, collect, enjoy, and dispose the said tithes, without let or hindrance from any man." The "days of grace" were rather limited by "Lord Thomas, by Divine permission, Abbot."

After the dissolution, on 3 Feby., 1544 (36 Hen. VIII), "King Henry ye 8th in consideracon of the good service done by Sir Thomas Paston, Knt. (of Paston, Norfolk), one of the Gentlemen of his Privy Chamber, and for £1,280, did grant to Sir Thomas Paston, the seat, circuit, capitall house, or late the College of S. Gregory in Sudbury, commonly called Sudbury College, and all churches, chappells, churchyards, mansions, houses, barns, stables, dove houses, of as well within or without the circuit." The King was given "admission" to the College by "the Warden or Keeper and Chaplain" a month before the date of this grant. In the same year Sir Thomas conveyed "the site of the manor and the capital farm of Balidon," with several parcels of land, being part of the College estate, to Thomas Eden, Clerk of the Star Chamber, who married the eldest daughter of Ed. Waldegrave, of this town, and in whose family the property continued for many generations. Thomas Eden resided at the Priory, but two of his sons, who were knighted, lived at Ballingdon Hall, where indeed the Edens were long seated, as Fuller states, in "a worshipful degree." Two parts of the College property were held by Henry Paston in chief in the 5th of



Edward VI. (1552). As appears by a memorandum in the Remembrance Office of the Exchequer, De Edward Fitzgarret (*Qu.* Fitzgerald), Knt., and Lady Anna Paston, his wife, held the College, &c., with other lands and tenements in Norfolk, in the 3rd and 4th of Philip and Mary. In the 17th Elizabeth (1575), Edward Paston, as brother and heir to the above-named Henry, lived at Livery, and held the estate in Capito. On 1 May, 1634 (10 Car. I.) by indenture made between William Paston, Esquire, and Agnes his wife, of the 1st part, Sir Edward Waldegrave and others of the 2nd part, and John Andrew and Oliver Andrew, of Sudbury, of the 3rd part, the said William Paston bargained, aliened and sold, granted and confirmed to John and Oliver Andrew, and their heirs (*inter alia*) "the scite of the late dissolved Colledge in Sudbury and two Tenements in the Churchyard of Saint Gregory aforesaid." The purchase money was £3,468, of which £728 was to be paid down, £800 within six months, and £1,940 on a lease for 40 years. By Indenture dated 7 Novr., 1642 (18 Car. I.), made between the said Oliver Andrew, of the first part, Ann, the widow of the said John Andrew, of the second part, and Robert Warren, D.D., and others of the third part, Oliver Andrew did grant, release, and confirm certain of the College messuages to Dr. Robert Warren, Thomas Buxton, London, and Alderman Robt. Buxton, of Colchester, certain rent charges being made on the property. Six years afterwards the same grantor, Oliver Andrew, released to Ann, widow of John Andrew, and afterwards wife of Robert Vesey, "all his estate and interest in the same property." On the 16th of the same month, Mrs. Ann Vesey, demised certain of her property to Edward Bacon and his heirs, part of which was a yard, a garden, and moiety of a well, thereto adjoining and belonging to the College, for a term of 900 years." By an Indenture dated 3 Novr., 1662 (13 Car. II.), "a parcell of the site of the said Colledge of Sudbury, and the rest of the land contained in the Indenture of 7 Nov., 1662," were declared to be to the

use of Anthony Wingfield, and his heirs and assigns for ever. On the 16th Oct., 1664, "the Capitall Messuage called the Colledge," other property, were granted to Samuel Pannell, his heirs, &c., and on 5th March, 1665, the College Barn, &c., were regranted and confirmed to Samuel Hasell and his heirs. The family of the Hasells was an influential one for several generations in the town, and many of the members were buried in All Saints' church, and others in S. Gregory's churchyard. Samuel, mentioned above, was alderman and mayor, and died 25 Octr., 1686, aged 69, and was buried in the north aisle of All Saints. His wife died only a month later, aged 77.

Among the Wardens of the College were Thomas, rector of Bocking, 1397; Thos. Gooday, 1442; Henry Sething, Robert Spelman, B.A., priest, 1462; Wm. Wood, founder of the Grammar School, 1491; and Rich. Edon or Eden, 1535. Roger Martyn, of Melford Place, left a garden to the last named Warden for the use of the College, the brethren being bound to say a yearly obit for the benefactor, and to give five poor people a penny a piece. In 1549, in the will of Rd. Edon (then Archdeacon of Middlesex), this land is mentioned as the "garden of the late College of Sudbury."

Alice de Bryenne, or Bryan (heiress of Sir Robert de Bures, whose beautiful canopied memorial brass in Acton church has been often visited and admired, together with the fine unique military brass of Sir Robert, directed (1434) that her Will was to remain in the custody of the Warden of the College and his successors.

After various vicissitudes the principal rooms of the College, after being roofed in and repaired, were used as a workhouse by the Court of Guardians appointed under the Local Act of Queen Anne. In 1836 the last remains of the building were pulled down, and the present Union House erected on their site. The old restored gateway, opposite the west tower of S. Gregeory, is the sole relic now remaining of the "goodly Colledge," built and endowed 500 years ago by Simon of Sudbury, and his brother John. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*