

THE WHITE FRIARS AT IPSWICH.

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The following notices, chiefly derived from the MS. works of Bale, himself an ex-Carmelite of Ipswich, will supplement our otherwise meagre knowledge of this monastery.

The foundation seems to have taken place in 1278, since it was simultaneous with that of Winchester, the date of which is fully ascertained. Moreover, in 1278 a Provincial chapter was held at Norwich, and there is every probability that the foundation of the Ipswich house was then and there decided upon, and that the members of the new community were chosen from amongst those of Norwich. Otherwise Ipswich was independent of the Mother-house, the Carmelite Order acknowledging only the authority of General and Provincial chapters, and of the Generals and Provincials themselves, wholly ignoring the right of filiation so much in vogue with the Cistercians (White Monks) and some other Orders.

Ipswich was repeatedly chosen for the meetings of the Provincial chapters, whence it may be concluded that the monastery was large enough to afford accommodation for a great number of visitors. It would, of course, be easy enough to find hospitality in the other Religious establishments of the town, but it may be taken for granted that

the principal members of the Chapter would be entertained in their own monastery. Unfortunately the chronicles of the English Province of White Friars have not yet come to light, so that we are unable to give a full list of the chapters held at Ipswich, but we may mention two instances: viz. those of 1300 and 1316. The former is not without interest. It was summoned in consequence of the death of a Provincial, and elected as his successor the then Prior of Ipswich, William Ludlyngton, of Lincoln, an Oxford man, learned and eloquent, renowned both as preacher and author. During his tenure of office there occurred a split in the English Province. At the General chapter at Narbonne, Pentecost, 1303, the General, Gerard of Bologne, proposed to divide the English province, by creating a separate Irish province. For some reason, which our fragmentary sources of information do not disclose, Ludlyngton opposed this plan, having on his side a galaxy of prominent members of his province, among others Thomas de Yllea, of Ipswich, whose father, Richard de Yllea, had joined the Carmelite Order after the death of his wife, and was actually Prior of Ipswich at the time when Thomas took the habit.* *Bale states 'fratrem' 'claruit'*

1290
brother

Seeing the numerical and moral strength of his opponents, the General sent two visitors to England, William of Newenham and William Paganerus, who, however, instead of reconciling the contending parties proceeded with so much eagerness that matters, instead of improving only became worse. The case was now referred to the Pope, Benedict XI., who entrusted it to Cardinal Gentilis as supreme judge. A chapter was held in London on the feast of the Assumption, 1305, under the presidency of Gobelinus, Provincial of Germany and Conrad of St. George, with the result that Ludlyngton had to resign his office, and was sent to Paris "to fast and to read Divinity," while the other leaders of the opposition were dispersed, Yllea being sent to Bruges, likewise in the quality of lecturer. In 1307 the General himself came to England, and undoubtedly succeeded in pacifying the

minds of his subjects. Subsequently Ludlyngton was raised to the honorary dignity of Provincial of the Holy Land (whence the Order had long since been driven by the Saracens); he finally returned to England and died at Stamford.

In 1312 the Provincial chapter elected John Barkhamstead Provincial, who, among other dignities, had for some years occupied that of Prior at Ipswich. Soon after, *i.e.* in 1335, the office of Provincial fell to the lot of John Polested, friar of Ipswich, and towards the end of the century to another member of the same community, John Kynnyngton, who was elected at the chapter held at Yarmouth in 1393. About the middle of the 14th century a number of knights, attracted by the saintly lives of the friars, joined the Order, although owing to their want of learning, they were only able to occupy an inferior position. Among these we find Geoffrey Badley at Ipswich. At the beginning of the fifteenth century there sprang up the Institute of Recluses, which gradually developed into the female branch of the Order. At Ipswich there was a "devota quædam matrona" named Agnes, who gave great edification by her spirit of prayer and penance. From the Rule of these Recluses it appears that they faithfully kept many points of the rule of the Friars. They rose at midnight from Holy Rood-day (September 14th) to Easter, and at dawn in Summer. They abstained from flesh meat on all days except certain feasts; they fasted on the Fridays and Saturdays throughout the year, on Fridays their diet was bread and ale. They were "shriven and houselled" three times a year, which was then considered a great number. They wore the hairshirt, unless ill-health required a dispensation. Above all they said a prodigious number of vocal prayers.

Continuing our Annals—we notice the election of Friar John Barmyngham, probably the elder of two men of that name, as Prior of Ipswich *circa* 1440. In 1452 the monastery had the honour of entertaining no less a guest than Henry VI., together with his entire suite.

For some reason or other the monastic church was re-built towards the end of the 15th century; there being no mention of a fire which might have destroyed the old building, we may conclude that it had become past repair, at any rate the new church was consecrated in 1477 by Friar Thomas Bradley (Scrope), Bishop of Dromore, a most remarkable man, who is considered and frequently called "Blessed," owing to the sanctity of his life.

The last Prior of Ipswich was John Bale, born 1495, who joined the Order of Carmelites at Norwich at the age of twelve, and having taken his degrees at Cambridge, was elected Prior of Ipswich in 1533. Since he wrote some works, dated two years later, at this monastery, his marriage, generally stated to have taken place in 1534, must have been some years later. He appears to have left the Convent at Ipswich before the suppression of religious houses, following in this point the example of several others whose wisdom in this respect he extolls in his writings. But it is only fair to state that he always speaks of his Order with an amount of tenderness in an agreeable contrast with the tone of many similar writings of the same epoch.

Turning now to the more remarkable inhabitants of the Ipswich monastery we notice, in the first place, the already mentioned friar, Thomas de Yllea, who as a youth joined the Carmelite Order at Ipswich, where his own ~~father~~ ^{brother} exercised the office of Prior. He distinguished himself by strict obedience, neglecting no part, be it ever so small, of religious discipline. Hand in hand with the virtue of obedience went that of humility, so that he truly despised the vain glory of the world. Being zealous for the exaltation of the Church he unceasingly prayed for the conversion of Infidels, and prepared himself by assiduous study for the work God had appointed him. He took his degrees at Cambridge, but, as we have already pointed out, circumstances obliged him to kindle the light of his knowledge neither at the University town nor at Ipswich, but at Bruges in Flanders. He is credited with many writings,

but only of two among them have we certain knowledge : viz., one volume on the Apocalypse and another on philosophical and theological matters (Quæstiones Ordinariæ).

John Polested, of Suffolk, entered the monastery of Ipswich at an early age, and made himself remarkable for his perfect religious demeanour. He studied at Oxford, where he earned renown not only for the extent of his knowledge, but especially for the conciseness of his speech and the clearness of his demonstrations. In public disputations he was equally feared as an opponent, as he was admired as a supporter of the argument in question. In his sermons he knew how to enrapture the hearers by the sweetness of his delivery. Entrusted with the office of Vicar-General, under the General, Petrus de Casa (1330—1339), he was elected Provincial of England in 1335, which office he held until his death, 12th October, 1341. He was buried at York, in a marble sarcophagus. He had written more than twenty works, of which the following are mentioned: four books on the Sentences of Peter Lombard on Scholastic Theology; eight volumes on the Physics of Aristotle; one volume of Sermons, one volume of Indexes on St. Augustine, and one volume of Letters.

Friar John, of Bury St. Edmund's, rendered the monastery at Ipswich celebrated by his own erudition and culture. Of a keen intellect, great eloquence, and full of solicitude, and withal pious, devout, and humble, he did even more good by his exemplary life than by his teaching. Besides many commentaries on Holy Scripture, he devoted special care to the Gospel of St. Luke, and left also numerous notes on various texts. He died at Ipswich *circa* 1350.

John Paschall, of Suffolk, of a respectable family, entered the Order at Ipswich. From early youth he was given to study, and with increasing age he acquired great depth of thought. His diction was elegant, if somewhat florid. In 1333 he took the A.B. degree at Cambridge, "cum omnium applausu." It would be difficult to say whether he was held in higher esteem by the clergy for his

learning, or by the people for his preaching. Such was his renown that he was chosen twice for the episcopal dignity, namely, first as Bishop of Scutari (1344) and Suffragan to the Bishop of Norwich, and, secondly, as Bishop of Landaff (1347-61). He was buried in his Cathedral. He left a volume of 67 Sermons on the Sunday Gospels, another of 80 Sermons on Saints' days, as well as one volume of ordinary sermons, and one of lectures on Scripture. Many other works are reported lost.

Friar Richard Lavingham of Suffolk, took the habit at Ipswich. At Oxford, where he took both degrees, he acquired just repute for the lucidity of his argumentation in philosophy and theology, and the fluency of his speech. His lectures on Divinity are said to have been extremely profound and fascinating. He is supposed to have been quite unequalled in learning and ingenuity. At the same time he was so firmly convinced of the Articles of Faith, that he would willingly have staked his life at any moment, and, in fact, he brought many a heretic back to the church by force of argument. The catalogue of his works embraces not less than ninety volumes, so that Bale himself says, that such prodigious activity almost amounts to a miracle. Most of these works embody his lectures, as, for instance, the eight books on the Sentences, or the ten on Aristotle's Ethics. In fact the whole course of philosophy and theology is treated in these volumes. There are also some Scriptural Essays, such as a Dictionary of Texts, a Commentary on Isaiah and Titus, &c. Further, we find a book on the Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden, Sermons on the Sunday Gospels, and on Saints' Feasts, and also a controversial work against John Purvey.

There are, at the British Museum, some writings of Richard Lavingham, not mentioned by Bale. The MS., Harl. 211, formerly in the possession of the aforesaid saintly Friar, Thomas Bradley, Bishop of Dromore, contains, among other things a Treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, by our author, as well as one on the Com-

mandments, and practical instructions on pastoral duties, all in English. Thus:—

Heer mayst ye lerne to visyte the sek man or woman and how ye shalt comforte hem in her seknesse. And ziff they drawe to the deth what thow shalt seyn to hem.

Richard Lavyngham died at Bristol in 1383. It is probable that some of the writings attributed by Bale to *Richard L.*, are really the work of *Thomas Lavyngham*, whom he passes over unnoticed.

John Kynyngham, of Suffolk, Carmelite at Ipswich, was highly renowned for his learning. The Provincial chapter held in 1393 at Yarmouth elected him to the office of Provincial for England and Ireland, which he held six years. This venerable man distinguished himself by learning, purity of life, meekness and cheerfulness which rendered his government particularly fruitful. He was greatly in favour with John, Duke of Lancaster, whose confessor he was for some years. He was the first to rise against Wicliff with whom he frequently disputed at Oxford, opposing to the biting sarcasms of the latter his own modesty and moderation. He died at York on 12th May, 1399. He wrote among other works four books on the Sentences, 13 on Metaphysics, Commentaries on the Scripture, Treatises on the Incarnation and the Passion of Our Lord, on the Holy Ghost, sermons, and also a controversial work against Wicliff.

Friar John Barmyngham. There were two men of this name, one who exercised the office of Prior at Ipswich and died in 1449, the other, probably a relative of the first, who died there 22nd January, 1458. Bale speaks of the former in these terms: Friar J. B., Doctor at Oxford and Paris, was universally considered one of the most excellent scholars who enlightened England and France by his learning. He was held in such repute that hardly anyone could be compared to him, whether with regard to his own profession or in respect of other sciences. For he could speak so learnedly, accurately, and withal elegantly on almost every subject as if he alone had mastered all

branches of Divine and human lore. Among other works he wrote four volumes on the Sentences, Sermons, and also on the grievousness of sin.

The last Ipswichian with whom I have to deal for the present—for I am no more satisfied with these few notes than was Oliver with his dole—is Friar Nicholas Kenton, of Suffolk, who received his early education in our monastery, and was afterwards sent to Cambridge, where he graduated after a comparatively short time, being endowed with remarkable talent, and bestowing all his spare time on study so that he outstripped his fellow students. Passing from the study of philosophy to that of theology he equally distinguished himself in every branch of that sacred science, and showed himself imbued with true apostolical spirit. In short, he shone as a historian, a poet, a philosopher, theologian, and an orator, so that he was appointed chancellor of the University for the year 1445.

At a chapter held at Stamford in 1444, the then Provincial resigned his office, being called to higher dignities, and Nicholas Kenton was elected in his place. He rendered himself most useful, and endeared himself to his subjects by means of his pleasant way of governing, and had it not been for some changes in the Constitutions of the Order he would have remained in office until death. As it was, he resigned in 1456, and died in London on 4th September, 1468. The books he wrote give a clear idea of the kind of work he was called upon to perform :—

Exhortations to the Clergy, Capitular Speeches, Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, Theological Questions, On Feasts, Prayers to the Saints, Questions on the Gospels, Exposition of the Canticle of Canticles, Addresses to the Clergy, Exhortations in General, The Life of St. Cyril of Constantinople (a Carmelite Saint), a volume of 212 Letters, further letters to the Cardinal Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Exeter and other prelates, and to the Duke of Norfolk and other Peers against the heretics and also exhorting them to deal mercifully with penitents.

These were some of the men who rendered the friary of Ipswich illustrious.

The following persons are stated to have been buried in the monastic church :—

Sir Thomas de Loudham, his son, and John de Loudham, Esq.

Margaret Coldvyle, Gilbert Denham, Esq., and Margaret his wife, who was a daughter of Edward Hastings.

Friar John Wilbe (2nd December, 1335), Friar John Hawle, Papal Chaplain (15th May, 1433), the two Friars John Barmyngham (see above), Friar Richard Hadley (1st April, 1461), and Friar John Balsham, born *circa* 1357, ordained Deacon at Cambridge on 18th February, 1379—80, who became Bishop of Argyll, but resigned this dignity in 1420, and died at Ipswich in 1425 (not 1530 as erroneously stated by Weever).