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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

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Section IX. Pierce the Plowman's Crede. Constitution and character of the
four orders of mendicant friars. Wickliffe.

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S E C T. IX.

TO the VISION OF PIERCE PLOWMAN has been commonly annexed a poem called PIERCE THE PLOWMAN'S CREDE, and which may properly be considered as its appendage*. It is professedly written in imitation of our VISION, but by a different hand. The author, in the character of a plain uninformed person, pretends to be ignorant of his creed; to be instructed in the articles of which, he applies by turns to the four orders of mendicant friars. This circumstance affords an obvious occasion of exposing in lively colours the tricks of those societies. After so unexpected a disappointment, he meets one Pierce, or Peter, a plowman, who resolves his doubts, and teaches him the principles of true religion. In a copy of the CREDE lately presented to me by the bishop of Gloucester, and once belonging to Mr. Pope, the latter in his own hand has inserted the following abstract of its plan. "An ignorant plain man having learned his Pater-noster and Ave-mary, wants to learn his creed. He asks several religious men of the several orders to teach it him. First of a friar Minor, who bids him beware of the Carmelites, and assures him they can teach him nothing, describing their faults, &c. But that the friars Minors shall save him, whether he learns his creed or not.

* The first edition is by R. Wolfe, London, 1553. 4^{to}. In four sheets. It was reprinted, and added to Rogers's, or the fourth edition of the *Vision*, 1561. It was evidently written after the year 1384. Wickliffe died in that year, and he is mentioned as no longer living in Signat. C. ii.

edit. 1561. Walter Britte or Brithe, a follower of Wickliffe, is also mentioned, Signat. C. iii. Britte is placed by Bale in 1390. Cent. vi. 94. See also Fuller's Worth. p. 8. *Wales*. The reader will pardon this small anticipation for the sake of connection.

" He

“ He goes next to the friars Preachers, whose magnificent
 “ monastery he describes: there he meets a fat friar, who
 “ declaims against the Augustines. He is shocked at his
 “ pride, and goes to the Augustines. They rail at the Mi-
 “ norites. He goes to the Carmes; they abuse the Domini-
 “ cans, but promise him salvation, without the creed, for
 “ money. He leaves them with indignation, and finds an
 “ honest poor PLOWMAN in the field, and tells him how he
 “ was disappointed by the four orders. The plowman an-
 “ swers with a long invective against them.”

The language of the CREDE is less embarrassed and obscure than that of the VISION. But before I proceed to a specimen, it may not be perhaps improper to prepare the reader, by giving an outline of the constitution and character of the four orders of mendicant friars, the object of our poet's satire: an enquiry in many respects connected with the general purport of this history, and which, in this place at least, cannot be deemed a digression, as it will illustrate the main subject, and explain many particular passages, of the PLOWMAN'S CREDE ^b.

Long before the thirteenth century, the monastic orders, as we have partly seen in the preceding poem, in consequence of their ample revenues, had degenerated from their primitive austerity, and were totally given up to luxury and indolence. Hence they became both unwilling and unable to execute the purposes of their establishment: to instruct the people, to check the growth of heresies, or to promote in any respect the true interests of the church. They forsook all their religious obligations, despised the authority of their superiors, and were abandoned without shame or remorse to every species of dissipation and licentiousness. About the beginning therefore of the thirteenth century, the condition and circumstances of the church rendered it absolutely ne-

^b And of some perhaps quoted above from the VISION.

cessary

cessary to remedy these evils, by introducing a new order of religious, who being destitute of fixed possessions, by the severity of their manners, a professed contempt of riches, and an unwearied perseverance in the duties of preaching and prayer, might restore respect to the monastic institution, and recover the honours of the church. These were the four orders of mendicant or begging friars, commonly denominated the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Carmelites, and the Augustines^a.

These societies soon surpassed all the rest, not only in the purity of their lives, but in the number of their privileges, and the multitude of their members. Not to mention the success which attends all novelties, their reputation arose quickly to an amazing height. The popes, among other uncommon immunities, allowed them the liberty of travelling wherever they pleased, of conversing with persons of all ranks, of instructing the youth and the people in general, and of hearing confessions, without reserve or restriction: and as on these occasions, which gave them opportunities of appearing in public and conspicuous situations, they exhibited more striking marks of gravity and sanctity than were observable in the deportment and conduct of the members of other monasteries, they were regarded with the highest esteem and veneration throughout all the countries of Europe.

In the mean time they gained still greater respect, by cultivating the literature then in vogue, with the greatest assiduity and success. Gianoni says, that most of the theolo-

^a The Franciscans were often styled friars-minors, or minorites, and grey-friars: the Dominicans, friars-preachers, and sometimes black-friars: The Carmelites white-friars; and the Austins grey-friars. The first establishment of the Dominicans in England was at Oxford in

1221. Of the Franciscans at Canterbury. These two were the most eminent of the four orders. The Dominican friary at Oxford stood in an island on the south of the city, south-west of the Franciscan friary, the site of which is hereafter described.

gical professors in the university of Naples, newly founded in the year 1220, were chosen from the mendicants^e. They were the principal teachers of theology at Paris, the school where this science had received its origin^f. At Oxford and Cambridge respectively, all the four orders had flourishing monasteries. The most learned scholars in the university of Oxford, at the close of the thirteenth century, were Franciscan friars: and long after this period, the Franciscans appear to have been the sole support and ornament of that university^g. Hence it was that bishop Hugh de Balsham, founder of Peter-house at Cambridge, orders in his statutes given about the year 1280, that some of his scholars should annually repair to Oxford for improvement in the sciences^h. That is, to study under the Franciscan readers. Such was the eminence of the Franciscan friary at Oxford, that the learned bishop Grossthead, in the year 1253, bequeathed all

^e Hist. Nap. xvi. 3.

^f See Boul. Hist. Academ. Paris. iii. p. 138. 240. 244. 248, &c.

^g This circumstance in some degree roused the monks from their indolence, and induced the greater monasteries to procure the foundation of small colleges in the universities for the education of their novices. At Oxford the monks had also schools which bore the name of their respective orders: and there were schools in that university which were appropriated to particular monasteries. Kennet's Paroch. Ant. p. 214. Wood, Hist. Ant. Univ. Oxon. i. 119. Leland says, that even in his time, at Stamford, a temporary university, the names of halls inhabited by the novices of Peterborough, Sempringham, and Vauldrey abbies, were remaining. Itin. vi. p. 21. And it appears, that the greater part of the proceeders in theology at Oxford and Cambridge, just before the reformation, were monks. But we do not find, that in consequence of all these efforts, the monks made a much greater figure in literature.

In this rivalry which subsisted between the mendicants and the monks, the latter sometimes availed themselves of their riches: and with a view to attract popularity, and to eclipse the growing lustre of the former, proceeded to their degrees in the universities with prodigious parade. In the year 1298, William de Brooke, a Benedictine of Saint Peter's abbey at Gloucester, took the degree of doctor in divinity at Oxford. He was attended on this important occasion by the abbot and whole convent of Gloucester, the abbots of Westminster, Reading, Abingdon, Evesham, and Malmesbury, with one hundred noblemen and esquires, on horses richly caparisoned. These were entertained at a sumptuous feast in the refectory of Gloucester college. But it should be observed, that he was the first of the Benedictine order that attained this dignity. Wood, Hist. Ant. Univ. Oxon. i. 25. col. 1. See also Stevens, Mon. 1. 70.

^h "De scholaribus emittendis ad universitatem Oxonie pro doctrina." Cap. xviii. his

his books to that celebrated seminary ^l. This was the house in which the renowned Roger Bacon was educated; who revived, in the midst of barbarism, and brought to a considerable degree of perfection the knowledge of mathematics in England, and greatly facilitated many modern discoveries in experimental philosophy ^k. The same fraternity is likewise said to have stored their valuable library with a multitude of Hebrew manuscripts, which they purchased of the Jews on their banishment from England ^l. Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham, author of *PHILOBIBLON*, and the founder of a library at Oxford, is prolix in his praises of the mendicants for their extraordinary diligence in collecting books ^m. Indeed it became difficult in the beginning of the fourteenth century to find any treatise in the arts, theology, or canon law, commonly exposed to sale: they were all universally bought up by the friars ⁿ. This is mentioned by Richard Fitzralph, archbishop of Armagh, in his discourse before the pope at Avignon in 1357, their bitter and professed antagonist; who adds, without any intention of paying them a compliment, that all the mendicant convents were furnished with a “*grandis et nobilis libraria*.” Sir Richard Whittington built the library of the Grey Friars in London, which was one hundred and twenty-nine

^l Leland. Script. Brit. p. 283. This house stood just without the city walls, near Little-gate. The garden called *Paradise* was their grove or orchard.

^k It is probable, that the treatises of many of Bacon's scholars and followers, collected by Thomas Allen in the reign of James the first, still remain among the manuscripts of Sir Kenelm Digby in the Bodleian library.

^l Wood, ubi sup. 1. 77. col. 2.

^m Philobibl. cap. v. This book was written, 1344.

ⁿ Yet I find a decree made at Oxford, where these orders of friars flourished so greatly, in the year 1373, to check the ex-

cessive multitude of persons selling books in the university without licence. Vet. Stat. Univ. Oxon. D. fol. 75. Archiv. Bodl.

^o MSS. Bibl. Bodl. Propositio coram papa, &c. And MSS. C. C. C. Oxon. 182. Propositio coram, &c. See a translation of this Sermon by Trevisa, MSS. Harl. 1900. fol. Pergam. 2. See f. 11. See also Browne's append. Fascic. Rer. expetend. fugiend. ii. p. 466. I believe this discourse has been printed twice or thrice at Paris. In which, says the archbishop, there were thirty thousand scholars at Oxford in my youth, but now (1357,) scarce six thousand. At Bennet in Cambridge, there is a curious manuscript of one of Fitzrauf's Sermons, in the
P p 2 first

feet long, and twelve broad, with twenty-eight desks^o. About the year 1430, one hundred marks were paid for transcribing the profound Nicholas de Lyra, in two volumes, to be chained in this library^o. Leland relates, that John Wallden, a learned Carmelite, bequeathed to the same library as many manuscripts of approved authors, written in capital roman characters, as were then estimated at more than two thousand pieces of gold^o. He adds, that this library, even in his time, exceeded all others in London for multitude of books and antiquity of copies^o. Among many other instances which might be given of the learning of the mendicants, there is one which greatly contributed to establish their literary character. In the eleventh century, Aristotle's philosophy had been condemned in the university of Paris as heretical. About a hundred years afterwards, these prejudices began to subside; and new translations of Aristotle's writings were published in Latin by our countryman Michael Scotus, and others, with more attention to the original Greek, at least without the pompous and perplexed circumlocutions which appeared in the Arabic versions hitherto used. In the mean time the mendicant orders sprung up: who happily availing themselves of these new translations, and making them the constant subject of their scholastic lectures, were the first who revived the doctrines of this philosopher, and acquired the merit of having opened a new system of science^o. The Dominicans of Spain were accomplished adepts in the

first leaf of which there is a drawing of four devils, hugging four mendicant friars, one of each of the four orders, with great familiarity and affection. MSS. L. 16. This book belonged to Adam Efton, a very learned Benedictine of Norwich, and a witness against Wickliffe at Rome, where he lived the greatest part of his life, in 1370.

^o Stowe's Surv. Lond. p. 255. edit. 1599.
^o Stowe, *ibid.* p. 256. Stevens, *Monast.*

i. 112.

^o Aurei.

^o Script. Brit. p. 441. And *Collectan.*

iii. p. 52.

^o See Joann. Laun. de varia Aristotel. Fortun. in Acad. Paris. p. 78. edit. Paris. 1662.

learning

learning and language of the Arabians; and were employed by the kings of Spain in the instruction and conversion of the numerous Jews and Saracens who resided in their dominions".

The buildings of the mendicant monasteries, especially in England, were remarkably magnificent, and commonly much exceeded those of the endowed convents of the second magnitude. As these fraternities were professedly poor, and could not from their original institution receive estates, the munificence of their benefactors was employed in adorning their houses with stately refectories and churches: and for these and other purposes they did not want address to procure multitudes of patrons, which was facilitated by the notion of their superior sanctity. It was fashionable for persons of the highest rank to bequeath their bodies to be buried in the friary churches, which were consequently filled with sumptuous shrines and superb monuments". In the

* R. Simon's Lett. Chicif. tom. iii. p. 112. They studied the arts of popular entertainment. The mendicants, I believe, were the only religious in England who acted plays. The CREATION OF THE WORLD, annually performed by the Grey friars at Coventry, is still extant. See *supr.* p. 92. 243. And they seem to have been famous abroad for these exhibitions. Gualvanei de la Flamma, who flourished about the year 1340, has the following curious passage in his chronicle of the VICECOMITES of Milan, published by Muratori. In the year 1336, says he, on the feast of Epiphany, the first feast of the three kings was celebrated at Milan, by the convent of the friars preachers. The three kings appeared crowned on three great horses, richly habited, surrounded by pages, body-guards, and an innumerable retinue. A golden star was exhibited in the sky, going before them. They proceeded to the pillars of S. Lawrence, where king Herod was represented with his scribes and wise-men. The three kings ask Herod

where Christ should be born: and his wise-men having consulted their books, answer him at Bethlehem. On which, the three kings with their golden crowns, having in their hands golden cups filled with frankincense, myrrh, and gold, the star still going before, marched to the church of S. Eustorgius, with all their attendants; preceded by trumpets and horns, apes, baboons, and a great variety of animals. In the church, on one side of the high altar, there was a manger with an ox and an ass, and in it the infant Christ in the arms of his mother. Here the three kings offer their gifts, &c. The concourse of the people, of knights, ladies, and ecclesiastics, was such as never before was beheld, &c. *Rer. Italic. Scriptor. tom. xii. col. 1017. D. fol. Mediolan. 1728. Compare p. 249. *supr.* This feast in the ritual is called *the feast of the Star.* Joann. Episcop. Abrine. de Offic. Eccl. p. 30.*

* Their churches were esteemed more sacred than others.

noble

noble church of the Grey friars in London, finished in the year 1325, but long since destroyed, four queens, besides upwards of six hundred persons of quality, were buried, whose beautiful tombs remained till the dissolution*. These interments imported considerable sums of money into the mendicant societies. It is probable that they derived more benefit from casual charity, than they would have gained from a regular endowment. The Franciscans indeed enjoyed from the popes the privilege of distributing indulgences, a valuable indemnification for their voluntary poverty †.

On the whole, two of these mendicant institutions, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, for the space of near three centuries, appear to have governed the European church and state with an absolute and universal sway: they filled, during that period, the most eminent ecclesiastical and civil stations, taught in the universities with an authority which silenced all opposition, and maintained the disputed prerogative of the Roman pontiff against the united influence of prelates and kings, with a vigour only to be paralleled by its success. The Dominicans and Franciscans were, before the Reformation, exactly what the Jesuits have been since. They disregarded their monastic character and profession, and were employed, not only in spiritual matters, but in temporal affairs of the greatest consequence; in composing the differences of princes, concluding treaties of peace, and concerting alliances: they presided in cabinet councils, levied national subsidies, influenced courts, and managed the machines of every important operation and event, both in the religious and political world.

From what has been here said it is natural to suppose, that the mendicants at length became universally odious. The high esteem in which they were held, and the transcendent degree of authority which they had assumed, only served to

* Weav. Fun. Mon. p. 388.

† See Baluz. Miscellan. tom. iv. 490. vii. 392.
render

render them obnoxious to the clergy of every rank, to the monasteries of other orders, and to the universities. It was not from ignorance, but from a knowledge of mankind, that they were active in propagating superstitious notions, which they knew were calculated to captivate the multitude, and to strengthen the papal interest; yet at the same time, from the vanity of displaying an uncommon sagacity of thought, and a superior skill in theology, they affected novelties in doctrine, which introduced dangerous errors, and tended to shake the pillars of orthodoxy. Their ambition was unbounded, and their arrogance intolerable. Their increasing numbers became, in many states, an enormous and unweildy burthen to the commonwealth. They had abused the powers and privileges which had been entrusted to them; and the common sense of mankind could not long be blinded or deluded by the palpable frauds and artifices, which these rapacious zealots so notoriously practised for enriching their convents. In England, the university of Oxford resolutely resisted the perpetual encroachments of the Dominicans²; and many of our theologians attacked all the four orders with great vehemence and severity. Exclusive of the jealousies and animosities which naturally subsisted between four rival institutions, their visionary refinements, and love of disputation, introduced among them the most violent dissensions. The Dominicans aimed at popularity, by an obstinate denial of the immaculate conception. Their pretended sanctity became at length a term of reproach, and their learning fell into discredit. As polite letters and general knowledge increased, their speculative and pedantic divinity gave way to a more liberal turn of thinking, and a more perspicuous mode of writing. Bale, who was himself a Carmelite friar, says, that his order, which was eminently distinguished for scholastic erudition, began to lose their estimation about the year 1460. Some of them were impru-

² Wood, ut supr. i. 150. 154. 196.

dent

dent enough to engage openly in political controversy; and the Augustines destroyed all their repute and authority in England by seditious sermons, in which they laboured to supplant the progeny of Edward the fourth, and to establish the title of the usurper Richard^a. About the year 1530, Leland visited the Franciscan friary at Oxford, big with the hopes of finding, in their celebrated library, if not many valuable books, at least those which had been bequeathed by the learned bishop Groshead. The delays and difficulties with which he procured admittance into this venerable repository, heightened his curiosity and expectations. At length, after much ceremony, being permitted to enter, instead of an inestimable treasure, he saw little more than empty shelves covered with cobwebs and dust^b.

After so prolix an introduction, I cannot but give a large quotation from our CREDE, the humour and tendency of which will now be easily understood: and especially as this poem is not only extremely scarce, and has almost the rarity of a manuscript, but as it is so curious and lively a picture of an order of men who once made so conspicuous a figure in the world.

For first I frayned^c the freres, and they me full tolden,
That al the fruyt of the fayth, was in her foure orders,
And the cofres of christendom, and the keie bothen
And the lock of byleve^d, lyeth locken in her hondes

Then wennede^e I to wytte, and with a whight I mette
A Minoure in amorwetide, and to this man I faide,

^a Newcourt, Reper. i. 289.

^b Leland describes this adventure with some humour. "Contigit ut copiam petere-
rem videndi bibliothecam Franciscano-
rum, ad quod obstreperunt asini aliquot,
radentes nulli prorsus mortalium tam
sanctos aditus et recessus adire, nisi Gardiano et sacris sui collegii baccalariis.
Sed ego urgebam, et principis diplomate
munitus, tantum non coegi ut sacra

illa aperirent. Tum unus e majoribus
asinis multa subrudens tandem fores ægre
referavit. Summe Jupiter quid ego illic
inveni? Pulverem autem inveni, telas
araneorum, tineas, blattas, situm denique
et squallorem. Inveni etiam et libros, sed
quos tribus obolis non emerem." Script.
Brit. p. 286.

^c Asked.

^e Thought.

^d Belief.

Sire

Sir for greate godes love, the graith ^f thou me tell,
 Of what myddel erde man myght I best lerne
 My crede, for I can it nought, my care is the more,
 And therefore for Christes love, thy counseyl I preie,
 A Carme ^s me hath yovenant, ye nede me to teche.
 But for thou knowest Carmes wel, thy counsaile I aske.

This Minour loked on me, and la ghyng he sayde
 Leve christen man, I leve ^h that thou madde.
 Whough shuld thei teche the God, that con non hemselve ?
 They ben but jugulers, and japers of kynde,
 Lorels and lechures, and lemans holden,
 Neyther in order ne out but unneth lybbeth ^l,
 And byjapeth the folk with gestes ^k of Rome.
 It is but a faynt folke, yfounded up on japes,
 They maketh hem Maries men ^l, and so thei men tellen.
 And leieth on our lady many a long tale.
 And that wicked folk wymmen betraieih,
 And begileth hem of her good with glavering wordes.
 And ther ^m with holden her hous in harlotes warkes.
 And so save me God I hold it great synne,
 To gyven hem any good, swiche glotones to fynde
 To maintaine swiche maner men the michel good destruieth
 Yet ⁿ feyn they in her futiltie, to fottes in townes
 Thei comen out of Carmeli, Christ for to folwen.
 And feyneth hem with holynesse, the yvele hem bifemeth.
 Thei lyven more in lecherie, and lieth in her tales,
 Than suen ^o any good liif, but lurken in her felles,
 But wynnen werdliche ^p good, and waften it in synne,

^f Truth. ^z Carmelite. ^h Believe.

^l Deceiveth. ^k Legends.

^l The Carmelites, sometimes called the brethren of the Blessed Virgin, were fond of boasting their familiar intercourse with the Virgin Mary. Among other things, they pretended that the Virgin assumed the Carmelite habit and profession: and that

she appeared to Simon Sturckius, general of their order, in the thirteenth century, and gave him a solemn promise, that the souls of those christians who died with the Carmelite scapulary upon their shoulders should infallibly escape damnation.

^m Their.

ⁿ Say.

^o Follow.

^p Wordly.

Q 9

And

And gif^a thei couthen^r her crede other on Christ leveden
 Thei weren nought so hardy, swyche harlotri usen,
 Sikerli I can nought fynden who hem first founded,
 But the soles foundeden hem self freres of the pye,
 And maken hem mendyans, and marre the pule,
 But what glut of the gomes may any good kachen,
 He wil kepen it hem selfe, and cofrene it faste,
 And thoiigh his felawes fayle good, for bi he mai sterue
 Her monei mai bi quest, and testament maken
 And none obedience here, but don as hym luste,
 And right as Robartes men raken aboute
 At feyres and at full ales, and fylle the cuppe^b
 And precheth al of pardon, to plesen the puple,
 But patience is al pased, and put out to ferme
 And pride is in her povertie, that litell is to preisen
 And at the lullyng of our lady^c, the wymmen to lyken
 And miracles of mydwyves, and maken wymmen to wenen
 That the lace of our lady smok lighteth hem of children.
 Thei ne prechen nought of Powel^d, ne penaunce for synne,
 But al of merci and mensk^e, that Marie may helpen,
 With sterne staves and stronge, thei overlond straketh,
 Thider as here lemans liggeth, and lurketh in townes,
 Grey grete heded quenes, with gold by the eighen,
 And feyne that her sustern thei ben that sojurneth aboute,
 And thus abouten the gon and godes folke betrayeth,
 It is the puple that Powel preched of in his tyme.
 He seyde of swiche folke that so aboute wente

^a If.^r Knew.

^b I suppose the FRIARS ROBERTINES, instituted by Robert Flower, hermit of Knaresburgh, in the reign of king John, a branch of the Trinitarians, who were a branch of the Franciscans. See Dugd. Mon. ii. 833. And Leland. Itin. i. 82. The poet cannot mean the Cistercians,

founded by Robert, abbot of Molefine in Burgundy.

^c The Carmelites pretended that their order was originally founded on Mount Carmel where Elias lived: and that their first convent was placed there, within an ancient church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, in the year 1121.

^d St. Paul.^e Mercy.

Wepyng,

Wepying, I warne you of walkers aboute,
 It beth enemies of the cros that Christ upon tholede.
 Swiche slomreers^x in slepe slaughte^y is her end.
 And glotonye is her god, with glopping of drink
 And gladnesse in gleees, and grete joye ymaked
 In the shending^z of swiche shal mychel folk lauwighe.
 Therefore frend for thy feith fond to don beter,
 Leve nought on tho losels, but let hem forth pafen,
 For thei ben fals in her faith, and feele mo other.

Alas frere, quath I tho, my purpos is yfailed,
 Now is my comfort a cast, canst ou no bote,
 Wher I might meten with a man that might me wyssen
 For to conne my crede, Christ for to folwen.

Certeyn felawe, quath the frere, withouten any fayle
 Of al men upon mold^a we Minorites most sheweth
 The pure aposteles leif, with penance on erthe,
 And suen^b hem in sanctite, and sufferen wel harde.
 We haunten not tavernes, ne hobelen^c abouten
 At marketes and miracles we medeley us never^d.
 We houlden^e no moneye, but moneliche faren^f
 And haven hunger at the mete, at ich a mel ones.
 We haven forsaken the world, and in wo libbeth^g
 In penaunce and poverte, and prechethe the puple^h.
 By ensample of our liif, foules to helpen
 And in poverte preien, for aloure parteneres
 That gyveth us any good, God to honouren
 Other bel other book, or bred to our foode,
 Other catel other cloth, to coveren with oure bonesⁱ:
 Money, other money worth, here mede is in hevenc
 For we buildeth a burugh^k, a brod and a large,

^x Slumberers. ^y Sloth. ^z Destroying. ^a Earth. ^b Follow. ^c Skip.
 Run. ^d See supr. p. 236. ^e Collect. Hide. Possess. Hoard. ^f Live like monks,
 like men dedicated to religion. Or rather, moneyless poor. ^g Live. ^h People.
ⁱ Either bells, or books, or bread, or cattel, &c. ^k A house.

A churche and a chapitle¹, with chaumbers a lofte.
 With wide wyndowes ywrought, and walles wel heye
 That mote ben portreid, and paint and pulched ful clene².
 With gay glitering glas, glowing as the sunne,
 And³ mightestou amenden us with money of thyne owen,
 Thou shouldest knely before Christ in compas of gold,
 In the wyde windowe westward wel neigh in the middell⁴;
 And saint Francis him self, shal folde the in his cope,
 And present the to the trinite, and praye for thy synnes,
 Thy name shal noblich be wryte and wrought for the nones
 And in remembraunce of the, praid therfor ever⁵,
 And brother be thou nought aferd, bythenkin thyne hert
 Though thou cone⁶ nought thy crede, care thou no more
 I shal afoilen⁷ the syr, and setten it on my soule.
 And thou may maken this good, thenke thou non other.

Sir (I sayde) in certaine I shal gon and afaie,
 And he set on me his hond, and afoiled me clene,
 And there I parted him fro, withouten any peyne,
 In covenant that I come agayn, Christ he me be taught.

Than saide I to myself, here semeth litel treuthe,
 First to blame his brother, and bakbyten hym foule,
 There as curteis Christ clerliche sayde:
 Whow might thou in thy brothers eigne a bare mote loke
 And in thyne owen eigne nought a beme toten,
 See first on thy self, and sithen on a nother,
 And clense clene thy sight, and kepe wel thyne eigne,
 And for another mannes eigne, ordeyne after
 And also I see coveitise, catel to fongen⁸,

¹ A chapter-house. *Capitulum*. "May.
 "Might."

² Painted and beautifully adorned.

³ If you would help us with your money.

⁴ Your figure kneeling to Christ shall be painted in the great west window. This was the way of representing benefactors in painted glafs. See *supr.* p. 278.

⁵ Your name shall be written in our table of benefactors for whose souls we pray. This was usually hung up in the church. Or else he means, Written in the windows, in which manner benefactors were frequently recorded.

⁶ Know.

⁷ Absolve.

⁸ Take. Receive.

That

That Christ hath clerliche forboden[†], and clenliche destruede
 And sayde to his fueres^ⁿ, for sothe on this wyse:
 Nought thy neighbors good coveyte in no tyme.
 But charite and chafite, ben chafed out clene,
 But Christ seide by her fruit, men shal hem ful knowen.
 Thannefaide I, certeine fyr, thou demest ful trewe.
 Than thought I to frayne^ᵛ the first of this foure ordres.
 And presed to the Prechoures^ˣ, to proven her wille.
 Ich highed^ʸ to her hous, to herken of more,
 And when I came to that court, I gaped about,
 Swich a bild bold ybult upon erthe heighte,
 Say I nought in certeyn fyththe a long tyme^ᶻ.
 I^ˆ semed upon that hous, and yerne^ᵇ theron loked,
 Whow the pileres weren ypaint and pulchud^ᶜ ful clene,
 And queyntly ycorven, with curious knottes,
 With wyndowes wel ywrought, wyde up alofte,
 And than I entred in, and even forthe wente,
 And all was walled that wone^ᵈ, though it wiid were
 With posternes in privityte to passen when hem liste.
 Orcheyardes, and erberes^ᵉ euesed well clene,
 And a curious cros, craftly entayled^ᶠ,
 With tabernacles ytight to toten^ᶡ al abouten.
 The pris of a ploughlond, of penies so rounde,
 To aparaile that pyler, were pure litel^ᵇ,
 Than I munte me^ᶦ forth, the mynstere^ᵏ to knowen,
 And^ᶦ awayted woon, wonderly wel ybild,
 With arches on everich half, and bellyche^ᵐ yeorven
 With crochetes on corneres, with knottes of gold.
 Wyde wyndowes ywrought ywriten ful thikke^ⁿ

† Forbidden.

ⁿ Followers.

ᶜ House · Habitation.

ᵉ Arbours.

ᵛ To ask.

ᶠ Carved. See Spenser, ii. 3. 27. 6. 29.

ˣ I hastened to the friars preachers.

ᶡ To look.

ʸ I went to their monastery.

ᶻ It is long since I have seen so fine a building.

ᵇ The price of a carucate of land would not raise such another building.

ᶦ Gazed.

ᵇ Earnestly.

ᶜ Polished.

ᶦ Went.

ᵏ Church.

ᶦ I saw one.

ᵐ Beautifully.

ⁿ With texts, or names.

Shynen

Shynen^o with shapen sheldes, to shewen aboute,
 With^p merkes of merchauntes, ymedeled betwene,
 Mo than twentie and two, twyse ynoumbbred;
 Ther is non heraud that hath half swich a rolle^q
 Right as a rageman hath rekned hem newe
 Tombes upon tabernacles, tylde upon losfe^r,
 Houfed^s in hornes, harde set abouten^t
 Of armede alabaufre, clad for the nones,
 Maad upon marbel in many manner wyse
 Knyghtes in ther conifante^u clad for the nones
 Alle it femed feyntes, yfaced opou erthe,
 And lovely ladies ywrought, leyen by her fydes
 In many gay garnemens, that weren gold beten,
 Though the tax often yere were trewely gadered,
 Nolde it nought maken that hous, half as I trowe.
 Than cam I to that cloystre, and gaped abouten,

^o That is, coats of arms of benefactors painted in the glass. So in an antient roll in verse, exhibiting the descent of the family of the lords of Clare in Suffolk, preserved in the Austin friary at Clare, and written in the year 1356.

Dame Mault, a lady full honorable,
 Borne of the Ulsters, as sheweth ryfe
 Hir *armes of glasse* in the eastern gable.—

— So conjoynd be
 Ulstris armes and Glocestris thurgh and
 thurgh,

As shewith our *Wyndowes* in houses thre,
 Dortur, chapitre-houise, and fraitour, which
 she

Made out the grounde both plancher and
 wall.

Dugdale cites this roll, *Mon. Angl.* i. p. 535. As does Weaver, who dates it in 1460. *Fun. Mon.* p. 734. But I could prove this fashion to have been of much higher antiquity.

^p Imagery brought from foreign countries. *Marke* is used for image in Chaucer, *Frank. T.* v. 2426. Urr.

Sin mankinde is so faire parte of thy
 worke.

That thou it madiist like to thine owne
merke.

And *Prol. W. B.* v. 696. See *P. Plowm. Vif. f. 42. a. edit. 1550.* These were *ymedeled* between, that is, intermixed, intersperled. ^q Such a roll. ^r Set up on high. ^s Surrounded with iron rails. *Horns* seems to be *irons*.

^t Placed very close or thick about the church.

^u In their proper habiliments. In their *cognisances*, or furcoats of arms. So again, *Signat. C. ii. b.*

For though a man in her minstre a masse
 wolde heren,
 His sight shall also byset on sondrye
 workes,

The pennons, and the poinells, and pointes
 of sheldes

Withdrawen his devotion and dusken his
 harte.

That is, the banners, atchievements, and other armorial ornaments, hanging over the tombs.

Whough

Whough it was pilered and peynt, and portreyd well clene
 Alhyled^w with leed, lowe to the stones,
 And ypaved, with poynttyl^x, ich point after other
 With cundites of clene tyn clofed al aboute^y,
 With lavoures of lattin^z, loveliche ygreithed^a
 I trowe the gaynage of the ground, in a gret shyre
 Nold aparaile that place, oo poynt tyl other ende^b.
 Thane was the chapitre house wrought as a greet chirch
 Corven and covered, ant queytelyche entayled^c
 With femliche felure yfeet on lofte^d
 As a parlement hous ypeynted aboute^e.

^w Covered.

^x *Point en point* is a French phrase for *in order*, exactly. This explains the latter part of the line. Or *poynttyl* may mean tiles in squares or dies, in checker-work. See Skinner in POINT, and Du Fresnoie in PUNCTURA. And then *ich POINT after other* will be *one SQUARE after another*. So late as the reign of Henry the eighth, so magnificent a structure as the refectory of Christ-church at Oxford was, at its first building, paved with green and yellow tiles. The whole number was two thousand six hundred, and each hundred cost three shillings and six-pence. MSS. Br. Twyne, Archiv. Oxon. 8 p. 352. Wolfey's great hall at Hampton Court, evidently built in every respect on the model of this at Christ-church, was very probably paved in the same manner. See OBSERVAT. ON SPENS. vol. ii. §. p. 232.

^y Spouts. Or channels for conveying the water into the Lavatory, which was usually placed in the cloyster.

^z Laten, a metal so called.

^a Prepared. Adorned.

^b From one end to the other.

^c The chapter-house was magnificently constructed in the style of church-architecture, finely vaulted, and richly carved.

^d A seemly cieling, or roof, very lofty.

^e That they painted the walls of rooms, before tapestry became fashionable, I have before given instances, OBSERVAT. SPENS. vol. ii. §. p. 232. I will here add other

proofs. In an old French romance on the MIRACLES OF THE VIRGIN, liv. i. Carpent. Suppl. Lat. Gl. Du Cang. V. LAMBROISSARE.

Lors moustiers tiennent ors et fals,
 Et lor cambres, et lor grans sales,
 Font lambroissier, painare, et pourtraire.

Gervasius Dorobernensis, in his account of the burning of Canterbury Cathedral in the year 1174, says, that not only the beam-work was destroyed, but the cieling underneath it, or concameration called *coelum*, being of wood beautifully painted, was also consumed. "*Cœlum inferius egregie depictum, &c.*" p. 1289. Dec. Script. Lond. 1652. And Stubbes, *Actus Pontif. Eboracensium*, says, that archbishop Aldred, about 1060, built the whole church of York from the Presbytery to the Tower, and "*superius opere pictorio quod Cœlum vocant auro multiformiter intermixto, mirabili arte construxit.*" p. 1704. Dec. Script. ut supr. There are many instances in the pipe-rolls, not yet printed. The roof of the church of Cassino in Italy is ordered to be painted in 1319, like that of St. John Lateran at Rome. Hist. Cassin. tom. ii. p. 545. col. 1. Dugdale has printed an ancient French record, by which it appears that there was a hall in the castle of Dover called *Arthur's hall*, and a chamber called *Geneura's chamber*. Monast. ii. 2. I suppose, because the walls of these apartments were respectively adorned with paintings of each. Geneura is Arthur's queen.

Thanne ferd I into fraytoure^l, and fond there a nother,
 An halle for an hygh kynge, an houshold to holden,
 With brod bordes abouten, ybenched wel clene,
 With wyndowes of glafs, wrought as a chirche^k.
 Than walkede I ferrer^h, and went al abouten
 And feigh^l halles ful heygh, and houfes ful noble,
 Chambres with chymneys, and chapels gaye,
 And kychenes for an high kynge, in castels to holden,
 And her dortoure^k ydight, with dores ful stronge
 Fermerye and fraitur^l, with fele mo houfes^m
 And al strong ston wal sterne opon heithe
 With gaye garites, and grete, and iche hole glased.
 And other houfes ynowe, to hereberwe the queeneⁿ,
 And yet these bilderes wiln beggen a bagge ful of whete
 Of a pure pore man, that may onethe paye^o
 Half his rent in a yere, and half ben byhynde.
 Than turned I apen whan I hadde al ytoted^p
 And fond in a freitoure a frere on a benche,

queen. In the pipe-rolls of Henry the third we have this notice, A. D. 1259. "Infra
 " portam castri et birbecanam, etc. ab exitu
 " CAMERÆ ROSAMUNDÆ usque capel-
 " lam sancti Thomæ in Castro Wynton."
 Rot. Pip. Henr. iii. an. 43. This I once
 supposed to be a chamber in Winchester
 castle, so called because it was painted with
 the figure or some history of fair Rosamond.
 But a ROSAMUND-CHAMBER was a com-
 mon apartment in the royal castles, per-
 haps in imitation of her BOWER at Wood-
 stock, literally nothing more than a cham-
 ber, which yet was curiously constructed
 and decorated, at least in memory of it.
 The old prose paraphrast of the Chronicle
 of Robert of Gloucester says, "BOURES
 " hadde the Rosamonde a bout in Enge-
 " londe, which this kynge [Hen. ii.] for
 " hir sake made: atte Waltham bishope's,
 " in the castelle of Wynchester, atte park
 " of Fremantel, atte Marteleston, atte
 " Woodestoke, and other fele [many]

" places." Chron. edit. Hearne, 479.
 This passage indeed seems to imply, that
 Henry the second himself provided for his
 fair concubine a BOWER, or chamber of
 peculiar construction, not only at Wood-
 stock, but in all the royal palaces; which,
 as may be concluded from the pipe-roll just
 cited, was called by her name. Leland
 says, that in the stately castle of Pickering
 in Yorkshire, "in the first court be a foure
 " Toures, of the which one is caullid Ro-
 " samundes Toure." Itin. fol. 71. Prob-
 ably because it contained one of these bow-
 ers or chambers. Or, perhaps we should
 read ROSAMUNDES BOURE. Compare
 Walpole's Anecd. Paint. i. p. 10. 11.

^l Pratty.

^z A series of stately Gothic windows.

^h Further.

ⁱ Saw.

^k Dormitory. ^l Infirmary, &c.

^m Many other apartments.

ⁿ To lodge the queen.

^o Scarcely.

^p Observed.

A greet

A greet churl and a grym, growen as a tonne,
 With a face so fat, as a ful bleddere',
 Blowne Bretful of breth, and as a bagge honged.
 On bothen his chekes, and his chyn, with a chol lollede
 So greet a gos ey, growen al of grece.
 That al wagged his fleish, as a quick mire',
 His cope' that biclypped him, wel clene was it folden
 Of double worstede ydyght, doun to the hele.
 His kyrtel of clene whiit, clenlyche ysewed
 Hit was good ynow of ground, greyn for to baren.
 I haylsede that thirdman, and hendliche I sayde,
 Gode fire for godes love, canst on me graith tellen,
 To any worthely wiight, that wiffen me couthe,
 Whom I shuld conne my crede, Christ for to folwe,
 That lenede lelliche" hym selfe, and lyved ther after,
 That feynede no falshe, but fully Christ suwede,
 Forfith a certeyn man syker wold I trosten
 That he wold tell me the trewth, and turn to none other.
 And an Austyn this ender day, egged * me faste
 That he wold techen me wel, he plyght me his treuthe
 And seyde me certeyn, fighten Christ deyed
 Oure ordre was evels, and erst yfounde.

Firft felawe quath he, fy on his pylthe
 He is but abortiif, eked with cloutes.
 He holdeth his ordinaunce with hores and theves,
 And purchafeth hem privileges, with penyes so rounde.
 It is a pure pardoners craft, prove and afay
 For have they thy money, a moneth thereafter
 Certes theigh thou come agen, he wil ye nought knowen.
 But felawe oure fundament was firft of the other
 And we ben founded fulliche, withouten fayntise
 And we ben clerkes renowen, cunning in schole
 Proued in proceffion by proceffe of lawe.

' Bladder. * Quag-mire. † Covered. † Truly. † Moved.

R r

Of

Of oure order ther beth bichopes wel manye,
 Seyntes on fundry stedes, that suffreden harde
 And we ben proved the priis of popes at Rome
 And of grettest degre, as gospels telleth.

I must not quit our Ploughman without observing, that some other satirical pieces anterior to the Reformation, bear the adopted name of PIERS THE PLOWMAN. Under the character of a plowman the religious are likewise lashed, in a poem written in apparent imitation of Longland's VISION, and attributed to Chaucer. I mean the PLOWMAN'S TALE^x. The measure is different, and it is in rhyme. But it has Longland's alliteration of initials: as if his example had, as it were, appropriated that mode of versification to the subject, and the supposed character which supports the satire^y. All these poems were, for the most part, founded on the doctrines newly broached by Wickliffe^z: who main-

^x Perhaps falsely. Unless Chaucer wrote the *Crede*, which I cannot believe. For in Chaucer's PLOWMAN'S TALE this *Crede* is alluded to. v. 3005.

And of *Freres* I have before
 Told in a making of a *Crede*;
 And yet I could tell worse and more.

This passage at least brings the PLOWMAN'S TALE below the CREDE in time. But some have thought, very improbably, that this *Crede* is *Jack Upland*.

^y It is extraordinary that we should find in this poem one of the absurd arguments of the puritans against ecclesiastical establishments. v. 2253. Urr. edit.

For Christ made no cathedralls,
 Ne with him was no Cardinalls.

But see what follows, concerning Wickliffe.

^z It is remarkable, that they touch on the very topics which Wickliffe had just published in his OBJECTIONS OF FRERES charging them with *fifty heresies*. As in the following. "Also Freres buildin many
 " great churches, and costly wast houses

" and cloisteres, as it wern castles, and that
 " withouten nede, &c." Lewis's WICKLIFFE, p. 22. I will here add a passage from Wickliffe's tract entitled WHY POOR PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES. Lewis, App. Num. xix. p. 289. "And yet they
 " [lords] wolen not present a clerk able
 " of kunning of god's law, but a kitchen
 " clerk, or a penny clerk, or *wise in build-*
 " *ing castles*, or worldly doing, though he
 " kunne not reade well his fauter, &c." Here is a manifest piece of satire on Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, Wickliffe's cotemporary; who is supposed to have recommended himself to Edward the third by rebuilding the castle of Windsor. This was a recent and notorious instance. But in this appointment the king probably paid a compliment to that prelate's singular talents for business, his activity, circumspection, and management, rather than to any scientific and professed skill in architecture which he might have possessed. It seems to me that he was only a supervisor or comptroller on this occasion. It was common to depute churchmen to this department, from an
 idea

tained, among other things, that the clergy should not possess estates, that the ecclesiastical ceremonies obstructed true devotion, and that mendicant friars, the particular object of our Plowman's CREDE, were a public and insupportable grievance. But Wickliffe, whom Mr. Hume pronounces to have been an enthusiast, like many other reformers, carried his ideas of purity too far; and, as at least it appears from the two first of these opinions, under the design of destroying superstition, his undistinguishing zeal attacked even the necessary aids of religion. It was certainly a lucky circumstance, that Wickliffe quarrelled with the pope. His attacks on superstition at first probably proceeded from resentment. Wickliffe, who was professor of divinity at Oxford, finding on many occasions not only his own province invaded, but even the privileges of the university frequently violated by the pretensions of the mendicants, gratified his warmth of temper by throwing out some slight censures against all the four orders, and the popes their principal patrons and abettors. Soon afterwards he was deprived of the wardenhip of Canterbury hall, by the archbishop of Canterbury, who substituted a monk in his place. Upon this he appealed to the pope, who confirmed the archiepiscopal sentence, by way of rebuke for the freedom with which he had treated the monastic profession. Wickliffe, highly exasperated at this usage, immediately gave a loose to his indignation, and without restraint or distinction attacked

idea of their superior prudence and probity. Thus John, the prior of St. Swithin's at Winchester in 1280, is commissioned by brief from the king, to supervise large repairs done by the sheriff in the castle of Winchester, and the royal manor of Wolmer. MS. Registr. Priorat. Quat. 19. fol. 3. The bishop of S. David's was master of the works at building King's College. Hearne's Elmh. p. 353. Alcock, bishop of Ely, was comptroller of the royal buildings under

Henry the seventh. Parker Hist. Cambr. p. 119. He, like Wykeham, was a great builder, but not therefore an architect. Richard Williams, dean of Litchfield and chaplain to Henry the eighth, bore the same office. MSS. Wood, Litchfield. D. 7. Ashmol. Nicholas Townley clerk, was master of the works at Cardinal College. MS. Twyne, 8. f. 351. See also Walpole, i. Anecd. Paint. p. 40.

R 1 2

in

in numerous sermons and treatises, not only the scandalous enormities of the whole body of monks, but even the usurpations of the pontifical power itself, with other ecclesiastical corruptions. Having exposed these palpable abuses with a just abhorrence, he ventured still farther, and proceeded to examine and refute with great learning and penetration the absurd doctrines which prevailed in the religious system of his age: he not only exhorted the laity to study the scriptures, but translated the bible into English for general use and popular inspection. Whatever were his motives, it is certain that these efforts enlarged the notions of mankind, and sowed those seeds of a revolution in religion, which were quickened at length and brought to maturity by a favourable coincidence of circumstances, in an age when the encreasing growth of literature and curiosity naturally led the way to innovation and improvement. But a visible diminution of the authority of the ecclesiastics, in England at least, had been long growing from other causes. The disgust which the laity had contracted from the numerous and arbitrary encroachments both of the court of Rome, and of their own clergy, had greatly weaned the kingdom from superstition; and conspicuous symptoms had appeared, on various occasions, of a general desire to shake off the intolerable bondage of papal oppression.

S E C T.