

Legend of the name of St. Thaddeus

p 29

L. Clarke.

Tradesmen's Tokens

ANTIQUARIAN COMMUNICATIONS:

Nonae Rolls.

Antiquities found at Corpus

BEING

Queens' Coll Plate 1642

Wm. Gillington

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE MEETINGS

Robt. Woodlark. 329.

Sirth Robt. Rede.

Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

Tokens p 16



VOL. I.

Cambridge:

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Catalogue

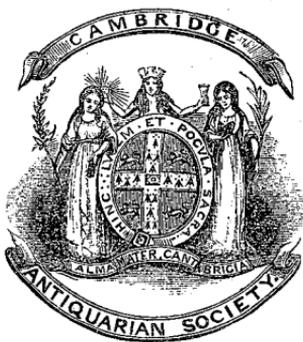
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OF THE

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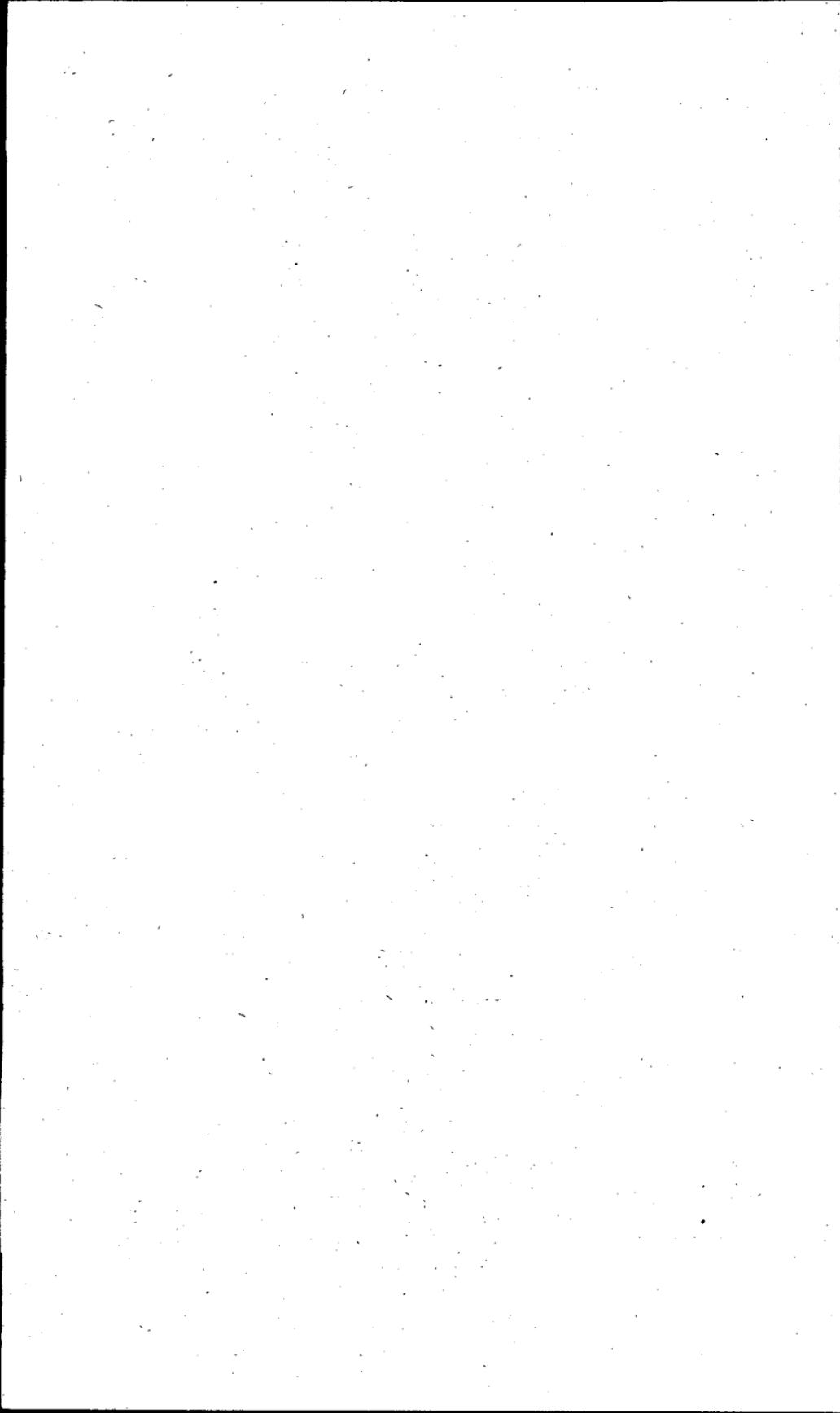
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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	AN Abstract of an Account of the Anglo-Saxon Legend of St Veronica. By C. W. GOODWIN, M.A. . . .	3
II.	Notes on some Mediæval Seals in the collection of the Society. By A. WAY, M.A.	5
III.	Results of an examination of the "Nonæ Rolls," as they relate to Cambridgeshire. By the Rev. E. VENABLES, M.A.	7
IV.	A Catalogue of Tradesmen's Tokens known to have been issued in the County of Cambridge during the latter part of the 17th century. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	15
V.	Some Account of a very scarce "Lyfe of St Radegunde." By the Rev. C. HARDWICK, M.A.	29
VI.	On Church and Parochial Libraries. By the Rev. J. J. SMITH, M.A.	33
VII.	On a Græco-Egyptian Papyrus preserved in the British Museum. By C. W. GOODWIN, M.A.	37
VIII.	On some Roman Pottery found near Foxton, Cambridgeshire, and presented to the Society by John Bendyshe, Esq. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	43
IX.	A Letter of the time of James I. addressed by St John's College to the Countess of Shrewsbury. Communicated by the Rev. JOHN RIGG, M.A.	47
X.	Suggestions towards the production of an "Athenæ Cantabrigienses." By J. O. HALLIWELL, F.R.S.	49
XI.	On some Antiquities found in Corpus Christi College in the year 1852. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	51
XII.	Notes on some Roman Buildings at Cirencester, the Roman Corinium. By C. H. NEWMARCH, Esq.	55

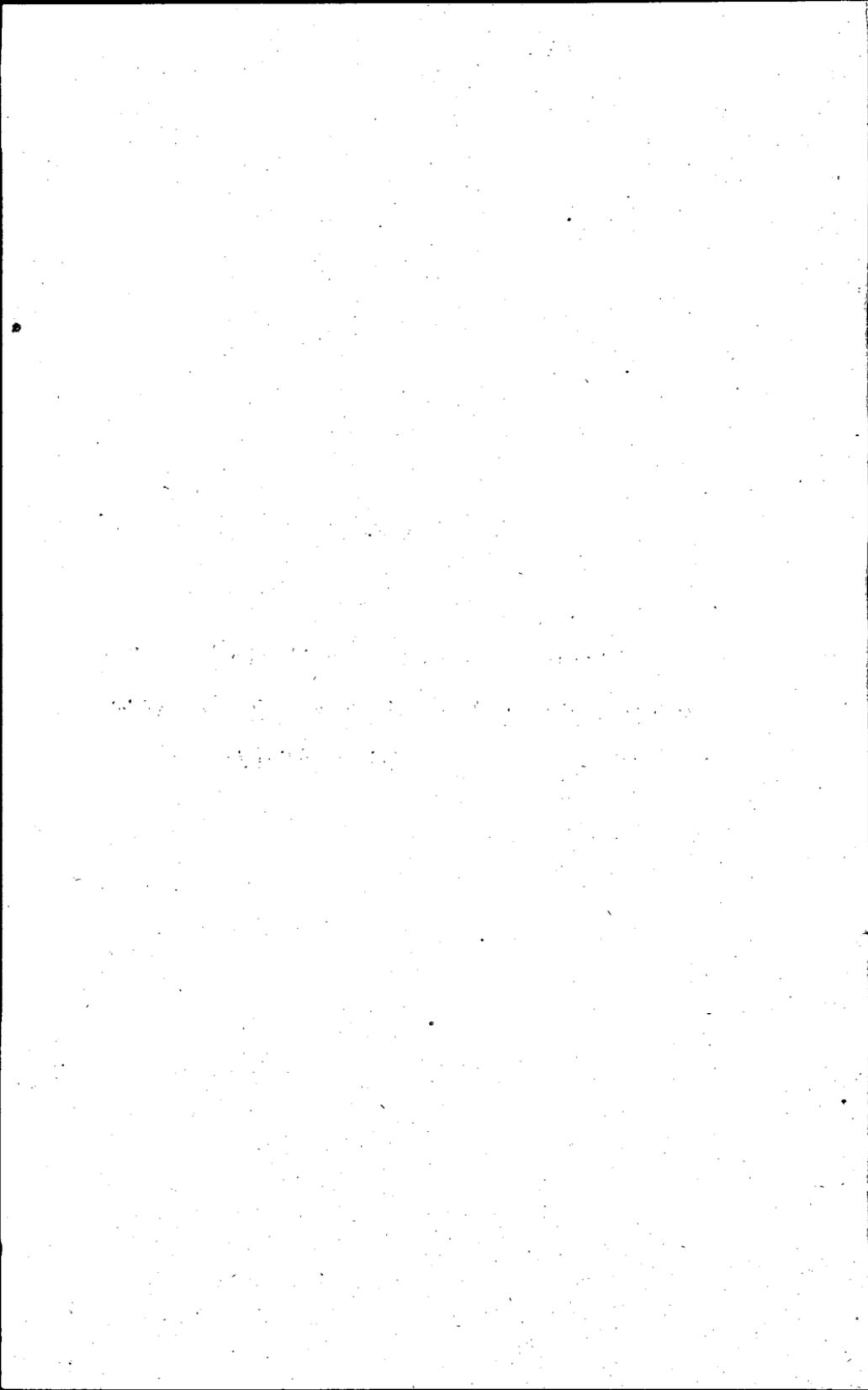
	PAGE
XIII. On the Orientation of King's College Chapel. By J. RIGG, M.A.	59
XIV. On the Origin of the name of Petty Cury, as applied to a street in Cambridge. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	63
XV. Abstract of some Suggestions towards an "Athenæ Cantabrigienses." By the Rev. J. J. SMITH, M.A.	65
XVI. MS. Notes inserted in a copy of King Edward VI. first Prayer-Book, in the Church Library at Beccles.	67
XVII. The Vow of Widowhood of Margaret Countess of Richmond and Derby (Foundress of Christ's and St John's Colleges): with Notices of similar vows in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	71
XVIII. A Letter from Oliver Cromwell to his sister Elizabeth Cromwell, with brief notes thereon. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	81
XIX. "Articuli Universitatis Cantabrigiæ:" a form of petition addressed to King Henry V., about the year 1415, in vindication of some ancient usages. Edited, with a few notes, by the Rev. C. HARDWICK, M.A.	85
XX. On the Foss, or Devil's Ditch, near Brandon, and that near Swaffham, in the county of Norfolk. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	95
XXI. Notice of two Catalogues of a Monastic Library. By the Rev. G. E. CORRIE, D.D.	97
XXII. Letters of Roger Ascham, communicated by the Rev. J. E. B. MAYOR, M.A.	99
XXIII. Mortuary Roll, sent forth by the Prior and Convent of Ely, on the death of John de Hothom, Bishop of Ely, deceased, January, A.D. 1336—7. By A. WAY, M.A.	125
XXIV. An Account of the Excavation of Tumuli, made by the Rev. J. J. Smith, near Bincombe, in Dorsetshire, in 1842, derived from his original notes in the possession of the Society. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	141
XXV. An Ancient Calendar preserved in the Library of Jesus College. By the Rev. G. E. CORRIE, D.D.	147

	PAGE	
XXVI.	Notices of the Gift or Render of a Sore Hawk, with special reference to a Fine levied in the Town Court of Cambridge, (21 Edw. III.) By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	169
XXVII.	Lament of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, when convicted of Sorcery. Edited by the Rev. C. HARDWICK, M.A.	177
XXVIII.	On Two Fragments of the Acts of the Martyrs Chamoul and Justus, in the Sahidic dialect, on a papyrus in the British Museum. By C. W. GOODWIN, M.A.	191
XXIX.	A Letter relating to the life of Cudworth, addressed to the University of Cambridge, by J. T. Mosheim; together with the Answer of the University. Extracted from Baker's Manuscripts, and communicated by the Rev. J. E. B. MAYOR, M.A.	195
XXX.	Notes on Chantries and Free Chapels; with an account of those in the County of Cambridge; together with the foundation charter of Ansty's Chantry at Stowcum-Quy. By the Rev. E. VENTRIS, M.A.	201
XXXI.	Inventory of the Plate sent to King Charles I. by Queens' College, Cambridge, and receipt for moneys advanced for his service by the President and Fellows, 1642. With Notes. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	241
XXXII.	Materials for a Life of Dr Richard Sibbes. Communicated by the Rev. J. E. B. MAYOR, M.A.	253
XXXIII.	On the Parish Accounts of Boxford in-Suffolk, from A.D. 1529 to 1596. By the Rev. G. E. CORRIE, D.D.	265
XXXIV.	On the earlier High Stewards of the University of Cambridge. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	273
XXXV.	Notices of the King's Seals for passes given to Labourers and Servants, in accordance with the Statute passed at the Parliament of Cambridge, Sept. 12 Ric. II. A.D. 1388. By A. WAY, M.A.	281
XXXVI.	Notices of W. Millington, First Provost of King's College. By the Rev. G. WILLIAMS, B.D.	287
XXXVII.	Robert Woodlark, Founder and First Master of St Catharine's Hall. By the Rev. C. HARDWICK, M.A.	329

	PAGE
XXXVIII. On the West Mere at Wretham, near Thetford, in Norfolk. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	339
XXXIX. Letter from Rob. Booth of St John's College to Dr Claiton, Master, concerning the Second Court. By the Rev. J. E. B. MAYOR, M.A.	343
XL. The Actors in Dr Legge's Tragedy of Ricardus Tertius, performed at St John's College at the Bachelors' Commencement, 1579—80. By C. H. COOPER, F.S.A.	347
XLI. Manumissions of Serfs extracted from the records of King's College. By the Rev. G. WILLIAMS, B.D.	359
XLII. On a Bronze Falx found in the fens. By C. C. BABINGTON, M.A.	361
XLIII. Sir Robert Rede. By the Rev. T. BROCKLEBANK, M.A.	365

NOTICE.

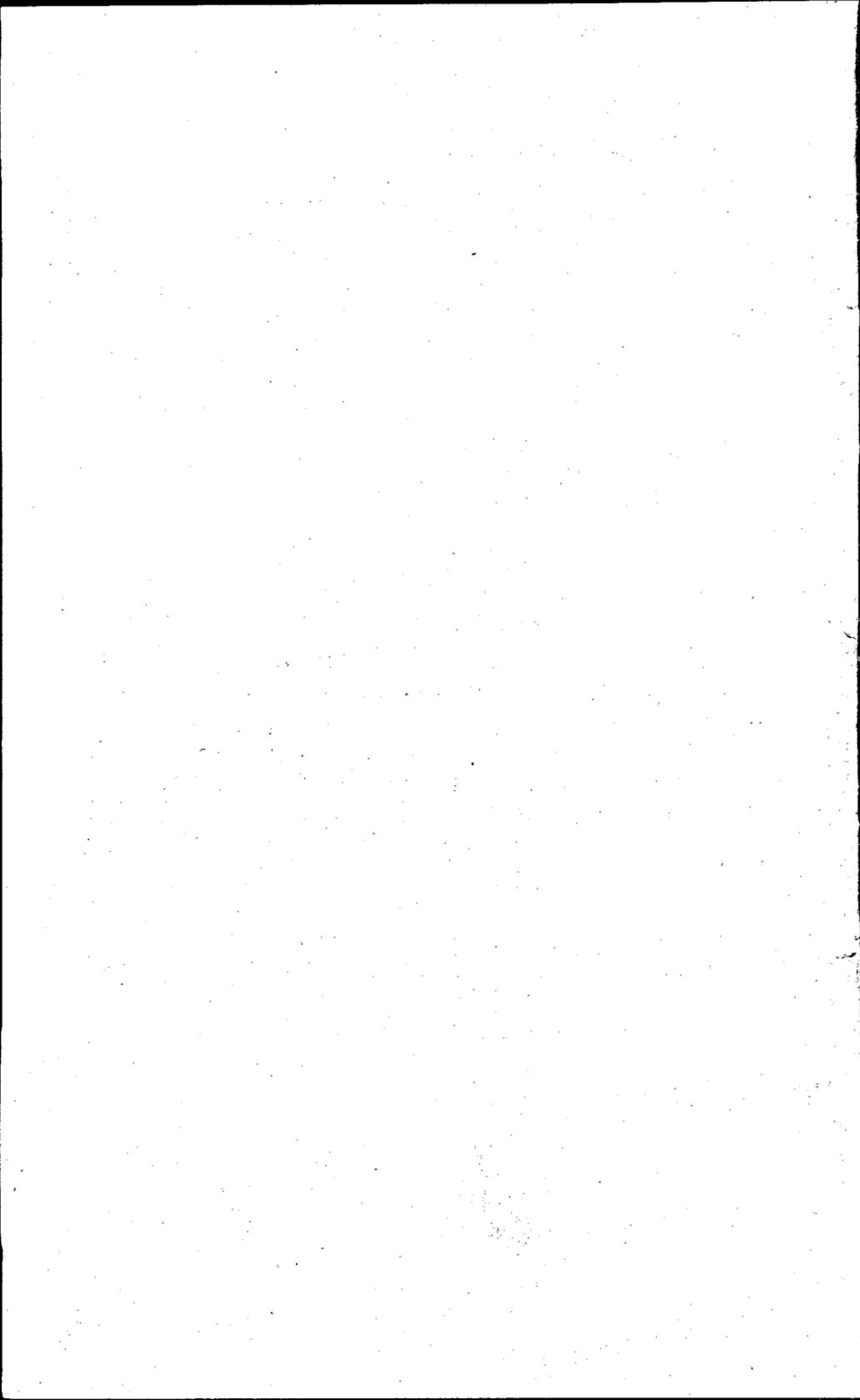
THE Society as a Body is not to be considered as responsible for any facts or opinions advanced in the several Papers, which must rest entirely on the credit of their respective Authors.



ERRATUM.

In the Catalogue of Tradesmen's Tokens at page 21, the date of No. 49, John Newton's token, ought to be 1652, not 1653.

Also may be added at page 21 a second type of the token (No. 54) issued by Thomas Powell, which bears the date of 1667, but is in other respects similar to No. 54.



XXVII. LAMENT OF ELEANOR COBHAM, Duchess of Gloucester, when convicted of sorcery¹. Edited by the Rev. C. HARDWICK, M.A. Christian Advocate.

PREFACE.

WHILE engaged in cataloguing an English MS. preserved in our University Library (Hh. iv. 12, § 15), my attention was particularly arrested by a short poem written in a hand of the xvth century, and associated with minor works of John Lydgate, the monk of Bury St Edmund's. It has no title, but internal evidence will justify me in describing it as a kind of Farewell which some contemporary put into the mouth of Eleanor Cobham, the well-known duchess of Gloucester, doomed, as it will be remembered, to perpetual imprisonment in 1441, upon the charge that she was plotting the dethronement of king Henry, and the elevation of the duke, her husband, by means of the 'black art.' We ascertain from other sources, that the poet Lydgate was himself a special favourite of the duke, and therefore, as the spirit, style, and rhythm accord with such conjecture, I think it not unlikely that the present stanzas, though anonymous, may have proceeded from his fertile pen. I am not, however, in this preface, trying to determine the precise authorship of the poem. My wish is rather to append a few observations on the incidents which it will serve to illustrate, and more particularly on the fortunes of the lady in whose name it was composed.

¹ It should be stated that the substance of the following paper was read before the historical section of the *Archæological Institute*, at the meeting held in Cambridge, July, 1854.

The reader need not be reminded that she figures in the second part of Shakespeare's Henry VI. where duke Humphrey, her husband, is made to call her, half in play,

'Presumptuous dame, ill-nurtured Eleanor;'

adding that she was then the *second* woman in the realm. If we correct the slight anachronism with reference to the date of Henry's marriage, she ought rather to be styled, at this period, the *first* woman in the realm. She was the daughter of Sir Reginald Cobham, a knight in humble circumstances, but connected with lady Cobham, wife of Sir John Oldcastle, who incurred the royal vengeance at the opening of the same century, by standing forward as the champion of the English Lollards. Her own husband, the duke Humphrey, is thought to have already manifested a leaning in the same direction (Fox calls him '*good duke Humphrey*'); and therefore it is not improbable that Eleanor Cobham shared his disaffection to the church-system as then administered, if not to some of its peculiar doctrines. At any rate, it is quite certain, from the history of the times, that Gloucester was the head and soul of a political party (the '*war-party*' of the day), which stood in direct antagonism to the superior ecclesiastics, and particularly to his uncle, the cardinal Beaufort.

I mention these affinities to shew that some at least of the prevailing hostility against Eleanor Cobham might be due to other causes than were openly alleged upon her trial. Nor is it likely that a person of her exalted rank, the wife of the heir presumptive, would be persecuted and impeached by any one whose acts were unsupported in high quarters. And the strong presumption thus excited is made stronger by the subsequent behaviour of the English people. Much as they abhorred all forms of witchcraft, keen and bitter as their prejudices were in reference to this subject, they could never be persuaded to withdraw their sympathy entirely from the duke of Gloucester; and even after his death, attempts were made to rescue Eleanor Cobham, and avenge some portion of her husband's wrong.

But while it is made probable that other motives, besides the suspicion of unnatural arts, impelled both civil and ecclesiastical

authorities to humble Gloucester by the prosecution of the duchess, we should contradict the testimony of the chroniclers, if we ventured to absolve her altogether from the charge of sorcery. In this respect the present poem is a valuable witness, both because it is contemporaneous, and because it does not emanate from an unfriendly quarter. Yet the crime of working against 'all course of kynd,' *i. e.* of practising unnatural arts for treasonable objects, is admitted unequivocally.

What, then, was the popular belief as to the nature of the crime committed? The duchess, we are told, was seeking 'to consume the king's person by way of nigromancie.' She fancied that by evoking some unearthly agents she might gradually reduce his strength, and ultimately, on his dissolution, raise her husband to the throne. In judging of her conduct, we must remember that she lived in the first half of the xvth century. It was an age when, more perhaps than ever, men were smitten with a passionate thirst for the recondite and the transcendental, when they pried, as they had scarcely ever pried before, into all kinds of interdicted questions, and especially lost their way among the mysteries of physical science. In this country royal licences were granted most profusely to transmute all metals into gold and silver; and a host of enterprising spirits went in search of 'that precious medium, which some call the mother of philosophers, and the empress medicine, others the inestimable glory, others the quintessence, others the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of immortality.'

At such a juncture, dabblers in the black art were equally abundant, some of them having perhaps satisfied themselves that the phenomena of magic, as then practised, were *bona fide*,—either the result of diabolic agency, or due to psychological causes, whose operation had not been hitherto ascertained.

All sorcerers of the xvth century laid claim to something more than gifts of second sight. They pledged themselves to forecast the future, and hold converse with the tenants of the world invisible; but this was only a small item in the list of their pretensions. They professed, in virtue of some compact with the Evil Spirit,—a compact sealed, it is contended, in many

cases, by their blood,—to gain an almost diabolic measure of malignity: they could (at least they *said* they could) inflict a series of most deadly evils on the life, the limb, the property of others.

In that age, accordingly, we find proceedings instituted with peculiar frequency against the malice of the sorcerers, the majority of whom appear to have been females, clerics, monks, and friars. For example, only nine years before the present prosecution, a very notable case occurred, when Thomas Northfelde, a Dominican of Worcester, was brought up for trial, on the charge of dealing in 'sortilegous pravity,' and other like matters, heresy included,—this, indeed, being then treated as the twin-sister of witchcraft, and equally obnoxious to the surveillance alike of church and state police. In 1484 a papal bull was issued, in the hope of checking the enormous growth of sorcery, but its only operation was to multiply the number of witch-hunters, and so multiply their prey. And the same phenomenon continued to be visible in England during the xvth and xvith centuries.

A 'wicked' man is properly, or rather etymologically, speaking 'a man who has been bewitched' (*wick* standing in the same relation to *bewitch*, as *seek* does to *beseech*): and according to the ideas of that period, a wicked man was in the first instance sinned against, was specially enticed to the commission of a crime, was made the victim of 'Satanic agency.' This fearful power could, in like manner, be inherited and wielded by the human instruments whom Satan had peculiarly possessed: and manifold were the forms which he and they adopted for giving effect to their malignity. Volumes have been filled with the minute description of those artifices: but I know of none more curious in itself, and I might add, less suited to promote the special object for which it was invoked, than that which has been furnished by the case before us.

Eleanor Cobham, we are told, when she conceived her treasonable project, secured the help of four confederates. One of these was Roger Bolingbroke, the duke's chaplain, a perfect master of the black art ('*clericus famosissimus unus illorum in toto mundo in astronomia et arte nigromantica*'). Another of

her accomplices was Thomas Southwell, canon of St Stephen's chapel, Westminster; a third was John Hume, chaplain to the duchess; and the fourth, the famous witch of Eye, Margaret Jourdemayne, who had been already compromised on the trial of Thomas Northfelde. It seems that of these four conspirators Bolingbroke and Southwell were most active and determined. 'The same Roger,' so the compact runs in *Stow*, 'should labour to consume the king's person by way of nigromancie; and the said Thomas should say masses in the lodge of Harnsey parke beside London, upon certain instruments with which the said Roger should use his craft of nigromancie against the faith; and was assenting to the said Roger in all his workes.' 'And,' it is added on his apprehension, 'the five and twentieth day of July [1441], being Sunday, Roger Bolingbroke with all his instruments of nigromancie, that is to say, a chayre paynted wherein he was wont to sit, upon the four corners of which chayre stode foure swords, and upon every sword an image of copper hanging, with many other instruments'—'he stood on a high scaffold in Paules churchyard, before the crosse, holding a sword in his right hand and a sceptre in his left, arrayed in a mervellous attire; and after the sermon was ended by maister Low, bishop of Rochester, he abjured all articles longing to the crafte of nigromancie or missowning to the faith.' Bolingbroke was then examined at some length before the royal council, and during his examination confessed that he had wrought his magical arts 'at the stirring and procurement of dame Eleanor, to know what should befall of her, and to what estate she should come.' In spite, however, of this confession, he was sentenced on the 18th of the following November by Sir John Hody, the chief Justice, and on the same day was drawn from the tower to Tyborne, and there hanged and quartered. 'When the said Roger should suffer, he said that he was never guilty of any treason against the king's person, but he had presumed too far in his cunning, whereof he cried God mercy: and the Justice,' it is finally stated, 'that gave on him judgement lived not long after.'

As I said before it is not my business to determine whether the charge of Lollardism was mingled in this case with that of

nigromancy, nor how far the statements made respecting Bolingbroke and his confederates may have been all exaggerated by writers of the period. This much is certain, that the outward apparatus he employed was no new thing; it had for centuries been quite familiar to magicians. The idea of the operator seemed to be, that as a waxen image, which he had constructed to represent the king, was melted by exposure to a gentle fire, the substance of the king's body would in like manner be gradually dissolved. The same fanciful connexion is traceable in Ovid (*Ep.* vi. v. 91):

Devovet absentes, simulachraque cerea figit
Et miserum tenues in jecur urget acus:

The devil, as King James expressed it, (*Dæmonol.* bk. II. ch. 5.) thus 'teaching how to make pictures of wax or clay, that by roasting thereof, the persons that they bear the name of may be continually melted, or dried away by continual sickness.' Or to fetch another illustration from Hudibras:

Cannot the learned council there
Make laws in any shape appear?
Mould 'em as witches do their clay
When they make pictures to destroy?

A second example of this practice, which occurred some years before the trial of Eleanor Cobham, is preserved among the records of the Southern Convocation (Wilkins, III. 394). In 1419, one Richard Walker, a chaplain in the diocese of Worcester, had been apprehended during the vacancy of the see on the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury, and brought up for judgment to the synod of the province. In proof of Walker's guilt the archbishop displayed 'two books, found in the possession of the accused, in which were written and depicted certain forms of conjuring and figures savouring, it was thought, of the art magic and of sorcery: also a box ('pixidem'), in which were contained a beryll stone, artfully suspended in black leather, three small schedules and two small images of *saffron-coloured wax*.' In further illustration of the same point, I subjoin one more extract from Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584. The passage is headed, 'A charme teaching how to hurt whom you list

with images of wax,' &c. It begins as follows: 'Make an image in his name, whom you would hurt or kill, of new virgine wax; under the right arme-poke whereof place a swallowes hart and the liver under the left: then hang about the neck thereof a new needle pricked into the member which you would have hurt, with the rehearsall of certain words, which for the avoiding of foolish superstition and credulitie on this behalfe is to be omitted. And if they were inserted, I dare undertake they would doo no harme, were it not to make fooles and catch gudgins.' He then fortifies himself in this conclusion by quoting a curious determination made by a synod held in Paris: 'To affirme,' it says, 'that images of brasse, lead, gold, of white or red wax, or of any other stuffe (conjured, baptised, consecrated, or rather execrated through these magicall arts at certaine daies) have wonderfull virtues, or such as are avowed in their bookes or assertions, is error in faith, naturall philosophie and true astronomie; yea it is concluded in the 22nd article of that councell, that it is as great an error to believe those things as to doo them.' Such, then, was the manner in which Bolingbroke, the head of the conspiracy, presumed too far in his cunning.

Meanwhile his fair accomplice had taken refuge in the sanctuary at Westminster. The evidence of Bolingbroke involved her in the twofold charge of sorcery and treason, and she was accordingly cited to appear before Chichely, archbishop of Canterbury, cardinal Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, Kempe, cardinal archbishop of York, and other prelates (*seven* in number, says our poem). The articles against her amounted in all to twenty-eight. When reasons had been urged for instituting further proceedings, she was committed by her judges to the custody of certain knights, who conveyed her to the castle of Leeds. There she was detained until three weeks after Michaelmas. Bolingbroke and Southwell were then formally indicted as the principals in a conspiracy, and the impeachment of 'dame Eleanor,' as one who had been accessory to the crime of treason, followed very shortly after.

At the expiration of the time of respite she was brought again into the presence of her judges. On the 21st of October, when Molins, clerk of the king's council, read certain articles objected

against her of sorcery and nigromancy, she is said to have granted some, while absolutely denying others. But two days later, when the business was resumed, she found that further opposition would prove entirely ineffectual, and ultimately threw herself without reserve on the compassion of her judges.

Bolingbroke was lying under sentence of death; Southwell, verifying one of his own prophecies, to the effect that he should never die by justice of the law, had breathed his last a prisoner in the Tower; Hume, the chaplain of the duchess, had been pardoned; and the witch of Eye, the fourth accomplice, had been burnt at Smithfield on the 27th of October, the day after Southwell's death,—when, at the instigation of Beaufort, Eleanor Cobham, the remaining culprit, was commanded to do penance in the public streets of London. On the 13th of November she went down the river from Westminster and landed at Temple Bar. Barefoot and 'hoodless save a kercheff,' bearing also in her hand a taper that weighed two pounds, she passed amid a crowd of citizens, including the mayor, the sheriffs, and the crafts of the metropolis, through Fleet Street to St Paul's, and there, according to the terms prescribed, she offered up her light at the high altar. This was Monday; her penance had, however, been extended to three days, and on the following Wednesday we find her landing at the Swan in Thames Street, passing through Bridge Street, Gracechurch Street to Leaden Hall, and ending her perambulations at Christ Church, near Aldegate. On Friday, being the day preceding Bolingbroke's execution, the series of humiliations was completed. Her progress was from Queen Hive through Cheap to St Michael's in Cornhill.

We have no means of ascertaining the precise feelings of the duke of Gloucester in such trying circumstances. Hall and Holingshed tell us only that he 'bare all these things patientlie and said little;' and Shakespeare seems to have had their testimony in his mind when he was painting the last scene connected with our subject:

Thy greatest help is quiet, gentle Nell:
I pray thee sort thy heart to patience;
These few days' wonder will be quickly worn.

His hopes, however, of reunion with his consort were not destined to be realised. The 'peace-party,' headed by the cardinals of York and Winchester, was now in the ascendant, and in summoning a parliament to meet at Cambridge in the February of the following year, the fate of Gloucester had been sealed. His enemies excited the people of those parts to 'give attendance upon the king in their most defensible arms,' and then transferred the parliament from Cambridge to Bury St Edmund's, which appeared to have been thought more suited for the carrying out of their designs. Gloucester came thither with only two and thirty of his attendants, was immediately arrested, and, on the morning of February 23, 1442, was found lifeless in his bed.

The duchess had meanwhile been handed over to the charge of Sir Thomas Stanley, who was authorised to hold her prisoner for life with an annuity of one hundred marks. The present poem says that she retired to Liverpool; other writers have mentioned Chester castle; others the Isle of Man; but it is highly probable that as the memory of the duke was warmly cherished by the English populace the government would deem it politic to change the scene of her captivity. As early as Oct. 26, 1443, I find a royal mandate addressed to the constable of Chester, calling upon him to conduct 'Alianore Cobeham' to Kenilworth Castle; and there, it seems, she ended her career in gloom and widowhood.

THE POEM.

Thorow out a paly as I gan passe,
 I herd a lady make gret mone;
 And euer she syghyd, and said, Alas
 All erthly ioy is fro me gone,
 For I am left my self alone,
 And all my frendes fro me thei flee:
 Alas, I am full well of wone¹:
 All women may be ware by me.

All women that in thys world art² wroght,
 By me they may ensample take,
 For I that was browght up of noght
 A prince me chese to be hys make³.
 My souerayn lord thus to forsake
 It was a dulfull desteny;
 Alas, to syght [?:syghe] how shold I slake:
 All women may be ware by me.

I was so hygh upon the whele,
 Myn owne astate I coud not know;
 The Gospell accordeth there to ful well
 Who wyll be hygh he shall be lowe.
 Who may the whele of fortune trowe?
 It is but vayne and vanite:
 The flowrys of my medow ben downe mowe:—
 All women may be ware by me.

¹ *i. e.* (ironically) 'I have a large retinue': for, in all likelihood, *wone* is to be connected with the A. S. *wunian* and S. S. *wonen* (= 'habitare' 'frequentare'); and is here used in the sense of 'company': cf. Chaucer's *Legende of Ariadne*, v. 276, where we have

'And of his countre folke a ful gret wone.'

² *i. e.* 'art magic.'

³ consort: A. S. *maca* and *gemaca*. In Swedish *maka* (fem.) simply means 'a woman.' *Make* is still current in the form of *match*.

With welth, wele and worthinesse
 I was be sett on euery syde;
 Of Glowcestre I was duchesse,
 Of all men I [?was] magnified;
 As Lucifer fell downe for pride
 So fell I from felicite;
 I had no grace my self to gwyde;
 All women may be ware by me.

Sum tyme I was in riche aray,
 Ther myght no princes be my pere;
 In clothys of glod [*sic*] and garmentes gay
 Me thowght ther was no thyng to dere.
 I purchast fast from yere to yere,
 Of poore man I had no pite;
 Now ar my wittes all in were¹;
 All women may be ware by me.

Alas, what was myn auenture,
 So sodaynly downe for to fall,
 That had all thyng vndyr my cure,
 Encline and croke when I wold call.
 Fadyr of heuyn celestiall,
 Of my complaint haf thow pite,
 For now am I worst of all;
 All women may be ware by me.

All women that ar ware of wark,
 My mischeuce may 3e haf in mynd
 To gef credence to any clerk,
 For so dyd I and that I find.

¹ confusion. Perhaps a softened form of the A. S. *werg* = 'a curse.' Or more probably, the same as *werre*, *weore*, which are at the root of our *war* and *worry* (cf. *herizen* and *harry*). Another instance of this use occurs in the Camb. MS. Ff. ii. 38, fol. 20 b;

And thus he wandreth in a weere,
 As man blynde that may not see.

I wrought agayne all course of kynd
 And lost my crede for cuelte [²cruelte];
 Ther may no blys my baly¹ vnbynd;
 All women may be ware by me.

My clerkes callyd up and downe,
 All was but mischeue that they ment;
 Owre souerayn lord and kyng with crowne
 Hym to destroye was owre entent;
 All myghty God omnipotent
 He wyst full well owr cruelte;
 Loo, for suche harmys I am now schente²;
 All women may be ware by me.

Alas that euer I wrought tresoun;
 But cursyd counsell euer worth³ it woo;
 I was mekyll agayne the crowne,
 Alas the while that I dyd soo;
 My best frend now is my foo;
 Myn owne dere lord I dar not see;
 Alas that we shuld twynne⁴ in too;
 All women may be ware by me.

By fore the counsell of thys lond,
 At Westmynster vpon a day,
 Full carefully there gan I stond;
 A word for me durst noo man say;

¹ misery, misdeed: A. S. *balew*; Goth. *balvs*: cf. *bale-ful*.

² abashed, disgraced: A. S. *scendan*.

³ be: A. S. *weorð* (*pr. subj.*). This verb still lingers in the dialect of the north of England. It was in general use in the 16th century; e. g. 'Woe worth the time that ever thou camest into the world': *Homilies*, p. 426, Camb. ed.

⁴ divide, part. The A. S. *twynian* and *tweogan* simply mean 'to doubt': but the idea of *parting* is at the root of the expression (*twa*, *twegen*, *twyn*); just indeed as the Latin *dubitare* is from *duo*, and the German *zweifeln* from *zwei*. In the *Wycliffite Bible* (III. 1. Oxf. 1850) we have: 'The chartre twynne not, whom the loue of Crist knytteth.'

Owre leche lord withowtyn delay
 Was there he myght both here and see;
 And hys in grace I put me ay;
 All women may be ware by me.

Hys grace to me was euermore gayne¹,
 All thow I had done gret offence;
 The law wold I had ben slayne,
 And sum men dyd ther diligence;
 That worthi prynce of hys prudence
 Of my persone had pyte;
 Honour to hym with all reuerence;
 All women may be ware by me.

I cam by fore the spirituante,
 Two cardinalles and bisshoppys fwe;
 And other clerkes of gret degree
 Examynd me of all my lyffe,
 And opynly I dyd me shryffe,
 That I had dalt with sorcery;
 They put me to my penance belyve²;
 All women may be ware by me.

Thorow owt London in many a strete
 Of tho that were most principall,
 I went barefote upon my fete,
 That sum tyme rode there full royall.
 Kyng of heuen and lord of all,
 At thyn owne wyll so mut it be:
 The synne of pride wyl haf a falle:
 All women may be ware by me.

Fare well London and hafte good day,
 At the I take my leve thys tyde.

¹ propitious. It generally means *near, towards*; hence, *towardly*: cf. Germ. *gegen*, A. S. *on-gean*, the modern *a-gain, un-gain-ly*.

² forthwith.

Fare well Grenewyche for euer and ay,
 Fare well fayre place upon Temys syde.
 Fare well all welth in world so wyde ;
 I am sygnd where I shall be ;
 At Lerpole there must I nede byde ;
 All women may be ware by me.

Fare well damaske and clothys of gold :
 Fare well velwette and clothys in grayne :
 Fare well my clothys so manyfold :
 Fare well I se 3ow neuer agayne.
 Fare well my lord and souerayne ;
 Fare well it may no bettyr be ;
 Owre partyng is a priuy payne ;
 All women may be ware by me.

Fare well all mynstralcy and song ;
 Fare well all worldly daliance :
 Fare well, I wote I haf do wrong,
 And all I wyte¹ mysgouernance.
 Now list me nedyr prike ne prawnce² ;
 My pride is put to pouerte,
 That both in Englund and in Fraunce
 All women may be ware by me.

Fare well now all lustinesse :
 All worldly joy I here forsake :
 I am so full of heuynesse,
 I wot not to whom complaynt to make.
 But to HIM I wyll me take,
 That for us was put upon a tree,
 And in prayers wyll I wache and wake :
 All women may be ware by me.

¹ know: A. S. *witan*, the same as *wote* and *wot*.

² The meaning seems to be, that she found no more pleasure in the pricking and prancing of mettlesome steeds.