

ROBERT DE BRAYBROKE, BISHOP OF LONDON
1381—1404, LORD CHANCELLOR 1382—83.

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The lands of Bradebroc, in the county of Northampton, were known by that name in the time of Edward the Confessor.* In the reign of Henry II. Ivo Newmarch possessed them, and (in the partition of his property) they descended to his second daughter and coheir, Albreda, who married Ingelbart. Ingelbart afterwards assumed the name of Braibroc; † and his son, Sir Robert, who built the castle of Braibroc, ‡ was a guardian or justicier and high sheriff of the county from the 10th to the 15th of John. He was succeeded in these offices by his son Sir Henry, § and was a direct ancestor of Sir Gerard (the second), who died in 1359, and of whom the subject of the present notice was a younger son.

With this preface, I proceed to give a short account of the life of one who united the offices of Bishop of London and Lord Chancellor, at a period of English history when the citizens of London played an important part in political movements. A contemporary of Wycliffe, Chaucer, and William of Wykeham, we shall find no lack of incidents of living interest in his career.

* Domesday : Northamptonshire.

† I adopt this spelling from a beautiful family Chartulary in the Sloane collection at the British Museum, commencing with Robert the Justiciary in which the name is uniformly spelt "Braibroc." MS. Sloane 98 b.

‡ Camden, ii. 167.

§ Baker's *Northamptonshire*, i. 525.

Robert de Braybroke was born in the village* of that name, in Northamptonshire, became a licentiate in civil law at Oxford, † and entered the Church. The first preferment we hear of his obtaining gives some insight into his character.

By virtue of a "provision" from the Pope, he extorted, in 1360, the rectory of Hinton in Cambridgeshire from the Fellows of Peterhouse.‡ When it is remembered how unpopular these papal encroachments on the rights of the Crown and clergy of England were, and what sharp and penal laws were devised against them,§ we shall expect that, beginning his career by taking advantage of a "proviso," he would be found ready, for the interests of his church, of himself, or of his party, to undertake any unpopular duty. He held this extorted living till 1379, when he exchanged it for the rectory of Girton in Lincolnshire. He lived to see a series of Acts against Provisors passed in the 3rd, 7th, 12th, 13th, and 16th of Richard II. and the 2nd of Henry IV.

His other ecclesiastical preferments were successively as follows:—9 Nov. 1366, he became Prebendary of Fenton, in the church of York: this he resigned in 1370 for that of Fridaythorp, in the same church; and this latter on March 3, 1376-7, for the archdeaconry of Cornwall ¶ and prebend of Combe Prima in the church of Wells. In 1378 he was collated to the prebend of All Saints in the church of Lincoln, and in 1379 to that of Colwick in the diocese of Lichfield. In the same year, as before stated, he took the rectory of Girton; which he again exchanged, shortly after, for that of Horsenden, also in the diocese of Lincoln. On Feb. 28, 1380-81, he was made Dean of Salisbury; on July 26, he exchanged the archdeaconry of Cornwall for the rectory

* Fuller's *Worthies*, 284.

† *Fasciculi Zizuniorum*, ed. Shirley. Rolls Series, p. 286. Lord Campbell (*Lives of the Chancellors*) says Cambridge, but does not state his authority.

Wharton, *Historia de Episcopis Londinensibus*, §c., London, 1695.

§ Stephen's *Commentaries*, iv. 248, copying Blackstone.

|| Newcourt; Wharton; Browne Willis; Le Neve.

¶ Le Neve gives Nicholas Braybroke as the person who exchanged a prebend in York for the archdeaconry of Cornwall, and Robert Braybroke as his successor from 1381 to 1395.

of Bideford ; on September 9th in the same year, a Bull of Pope Urban constituted him the sixty-third Bishop of London. He received his temporalities on the 17th December, and was consecrated at Lambeth on the 5th January following by the Bishops of Exeter, Rochester, and Bangor.* His two immediate predecessors in the see of London, Simon Sudbury and William Courtenay, had both been translated to the archiepiscopal throne of Canterbury, and were the first Bishops of London so honoured. We are proud to think of the tenth and most recent instance of the kind in the person of the Most Reverend Patron of our Society, Dr. Tait.

In order to dismiss Bishop Braybroke's family relations at once, it may be mentioned here that he collated his kinsman (probably nephew) Reginald Braybroke, who had succeeded him for one day in his Lincoln stall on the 5th December 1387, to the prebendal stall of Brownswood, in the church of St. Paul, on the 18th May 1392, and to that of Holywell or Finsbury, on the 23rd July 1394. Another, Nicholas Braybroke, he made prebendary of Neasdon, on the 4th June 1395. Nicholas died in 1399.† A kinswoman, Katherine Braybroke, about this time, was the fifteenth prioress of Clerkenwell.‡ In two instances, during the Bishop's time, the fortunes of the family were advanced by marriages with heiresses of noble families:—Sir Reginald, the Bishop's nephew, marrying Joane de la Pole, grand-daughter of John the last Lord Cobham, and Sir Gerard (the fifth), his great-nephew, marrying the daughter of the Lord Grey de Wilton.§

* Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*.

† Newcourt ; Dugdale ; Le Neve. In the register of Archbishop Arundel, at Lambeth Palace, is a copy of the Will of Nicholas Braybroke, canon of Exeter and formerly rector of Bideford, made in 1399, in which he directs that he be buried in St. Paul's London, and constitutes partial executors of his goods in London, Robert prior of Marton, "simul cum venerabilissimo et carissimo semper patre in Christo domino Roberto Braybroke Dei gratiâ Londinensis episcopo." Reg. Arundel 165.

‡ Fuller.

§ I have to thank Mr. F. C. Brooke, of Ufford, for his kind assistance in disentangling the somewhat complicated pedigree of the Braybrokes, and correcting several of the errors of Weever.

We shall now glance at the aspect of political affairs when Bishop Braybroke entered upon the duties of his see. Less than three months had passed since that memorable scene in Smithfield, when Sir William Walworth, the Lord Mayor of London, executed summary justice on Wat Tyler, and the King, then a boy of fourteen, rode up alone to the excited people, saying "Sirs, what aileth you? Ye shall have no Captain but me. I am and will be your King and Captain; be you therefore quiet."* The Charters of Enfranchisement that the King had issued, however, on the 15th of June, did not long remain in effect. The disorders in the provinces led to their being rescinded on the 2nd of July; and when the Parliament met, after long adjournment, on the 2nd of November, it proceeded unanimously to confirm that revocation, and to declare the original concession a nullity. The quarrels between great nobles, which are the inevitable curse of a royal minority, were raging with virulence. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who was just now unpopular among the citizens of London, accused the Earl of Northumberland of treason. Both great peers came to the Parliament attended by a numerous following of armed men, and a collision seemed inevitable, but it was averted by the wise and conciliatory policy of the young King. The King showed an evident desire to be on friendly terms with his Parliament, and gave proof of it by removing from the chancellorship the new Archbishop of Canterbury, William Courtenay, and appointing Richard le Scrope in his place. The Parliament did not seem to return the feeling, for they proceeded to make a series of grave charges against the conduct of the young King and the management of his household.† They complained of the excessive number of his suite, the abuses of the courts of law, the exactions made for the support of the King's household, the wasteful expenditure of the subsidies that had been granted for the defence of the kingdom, and demanded a remedy; Richard assented, and a commission of inquiry was constituted, which resulted in the appointment of the Earl of Arundel and Michael de la Pole, as governors of the King's person. These details are necessary to enable us to understand what followed.

* Grafton, i. 425.

† Rot. Parl. iii. 100.

Economy was never one of Richard's virtues. He had virtues; and if he could have avoided personal extravagance, and a certain instability and facility of temper, he might (despite all the disadvantages of his long minority) have been a great king and a successful ruler.* The Parliament had exacted from him a promise to grant no gifts without the advice of his council, but this he disregarded; and Richard le Scrope, the Chancellor, at last made a stand, and refused to affix the great seal to certain letters patent issued by Richard during a parliamentary recess. The King removed him; but for three months he failed to find any one with courage enough to take the vacant place. At length, on the very eve of the opening of Parliament, September 30, 1382, the Great Seal was delivered to the Bishop of London, his appointment dating from the 9th of the same month. The King's writ was

* Ce qui précède (1395) a déjà fait voir quelle fermeté et quelle sagesse le jeune roi, rentré en possession de sa prérogative, avait apportées au gouvernement du pays.—Wallon, de l'Institut, *Richard II. episode de la rivalité de la France et de l'Angleterre*. 2 vols. Paris, 1864.

In a quaint alliterative poem of the period, his extravagance is thus portrayed :

<p>“ For where was ever any christian That ye ever knew, [king, That held such an household, By the half-delle, As Richard in this realm, Through misrule of other ? That all his fines for faults, Nor his fee farms, Nor forfeitures fele That felle in his days, Nor the nownages That newed him ever, As Marche and Moubray, And many mo other, Nor all the issues of court That to the king longid, Nor all the profit of the land</p>	<p>That the prince owned, Might not a-reach, Nor his rent neither, To pay the poor people That his purveyors tooke, Without prayer at a parliament, A poundage beside, And a fifteenth, And a dime eke, And with all the custom of the cloth That cometh to fairs, And yet ne had creauce i-come At the last end, With the commons' curse That cleaved on them ever, They had been drawn to the devil For debt that they owed.”</p>
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directed to the interim keepers of the Seal, and set forth, "that we have ordained and will, that the Reverend father in God and our dear cousin the Bishop of London shall be our Chancellor, for the great confidence we have in him." He took the office, and was sworn in at St. Paul's *—though he knew how deeply the Parliament would resent an appointment made without their consent, and in order to carry out a policy directly contrary to their stipulations.

Parliament had to meet, however, and to receive from his mouth the King's message: for matters were pressing in several quarters. First, the rebellion had been scotched, but it had hardly been killed, and unless measures were taken to suppress any rising, the insurgents only required a fitting opportunity to become more troublesome than ever. Second, the truce with Scotland was nearly at an end, and preparation had to be made against the recommencement of hostilities there; the troops sent to Portugal to maintain the claim of John of Gaunt to the throne of Castile were in peril, and required reinforcement; and hostilities were shortly expected to break out in Flanders. Such, with the usual modest preamble, was the first message † which Bishop Braybroke, in his new capacity of Chancellor, had to deliver to the incensed Parliament.

The King, however, found that his new Chancellor was so unpalatable to the Commons, that he thought it better to employ the Bishop of Hereford next day to enforce his statements, and urge the demand for money. The Parliament retired to the Chapter-house of Westminster. There they voted a not illiberal provision of money, saddled with many petitions and requests for reform, most of which had to be granted, and the Parliament was in due course dissolved.

Meanwhile, Henry Spencer, the warlike Bishop of Norwich, was carrying on his crusade against the followers of the anti-pope Clement, and the King conceived a desire to go in person to the aid of the city of Ghent. Accordingly, on the 6th January 1382-83, he summoned the barons and prelates to a great council

* Rymer, vii. 362

† Rot. Parl. iii. 132.

at Westminster, and they approved the proposition. To provide funds, however, it was necessary that Parliament should be again assembled; and our Chancellor had, on the 23d February, the task of declaring to the Commons the purpose for which they had been convoked.*

It was the fate of this message also to meet with a repulse. Sir John de Pickeryng, the Speaker, said plainly to the King, "Neither you nor either of your three uncles of Lancaster, Canterbury, and Buckingham, can at present leave the kingdom;"† and the crusade was accordingly left under the control of the Bishop of Norwich.

Bishop Braybroke's tenure of the Great Seal came to an end before the close of this Parliament, having lasted only six months. He was removed on the 10th March 1383, on account of some disagreement with John of Gaunt:—though the close roll veils it under the polite expression that the Bishop desired "*cum magnâ instantiâ officio Cancellarii exonerari.*" Lord Campbell is doubtless right in treating this as a mere courteous fiction.‡ On the 13th March, Michael de la Pole was appointed Chancellor in his place. I have not succeeded in discovering any circumstance that would serve to indicate the cause of the quarrel between the Duke of Lancaster and Bishop Braybroke: it might have been religious, for John of Gaunt was a declared favourer of the Lollards, and enemy to the clergy, and had had quarrels with the previous Bishop of London, and with William of Wykeham; but, on the other hand, it is just as easy to conjecture political reasons for this disagreement.

From this period, the instances are rare in which Bishop Braybroke's name comes prominently forward in matters of civil politics; though he was a regular attendant at the Parliaments, as his name appears in the Rolls as a trier of petitions in nearly every Parliament summoned during the reign of Richard II.§

* Walsingham

† Rot. Parl. iii. 145.

‡ Lives of the Chancellors. Walsingham, 290.

§ 1382, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 90, 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 (*bis*).

He appears also as a witness to the charters creating John de Holland, Earl of Huntingdon; Edward, son of the Duke of York, Earl of Rutland; Robert de Vere, Marquis of Dublin; John de Beaufort, Earl of Somerset; to one granted to the Earl Marshall, and to three to the University of Cambridge, 5 and 7 Richard II. and 1 Henry IV.*

We turn therefore to the events in ecclesiastical history during the twenty years that Bishop Braybroke continued to administer the diocese of London. As Dean Milman justly says, "he was *no way negligent of his episcopal duties; and the times might seem to demand a vigorous and vigilant bishop.*" It had been his predecessor's office, in 1377, to conduct the prosecution of Wycliffe, when the Duke of Lancaster and Henry Percy escorted the accused to his trial, and attacked the Bishop violently. Then Lancaster was unpopular among the people,† who therefore took the side of the priests. But, in May 1382, when the Archbishop of Canterbury summoned a Council of his province in London, and passed strong measures against Lollardy, the case was altered, and the mayor and people of London made a demonstration against the bishops, which took the peculiar shape of a vindication of public morality. They cleared the ecclesiastical prisons of the unfortunates who were confined there, and treated them with outrage and indignity, on the ground that the priests used too much indulgence towards them.‡

Fifth in the proclamation of Statutes of the Parliament of 1381 stands an Act against preachers of heresy. This was passed before Bishop Braybroke became Chancellor:—but in the rolls for 1382§ is an entry that the Commons pray that the statute may be declared void, as not having had their assent, to which the King replies, "Y pleist au Roy." This declaration of avoidance was not proclaimed as a statute, and hereupon Lord Coke founds a charge of fraud against the Chancellor,|| whom he

* Rot. Parl. iii. 210, 251, 264, 343, 344, v. 431, 432.

† "La multitude haïssait Lancaestre plus encore qu'elle n'aimait Wicleff." Wallon.

‡ Walsingham.

§ Rot. Parl. iii. 141.

|| 3 Inst. 41,

calls "John Braibrook." So much of it as is based on the insertion of the statute of 1381 clearly falls to the ground, for le Scrope then held that office:—from the rest of the accusation the Bishop of London's successor, Edmund Gibson,* has warmly defended him, and accused Lord Coke of prejudice and uncharitableness in making it.

On the 13th July 1382, the Archbishop notified to the Bishop of London a charge of heresy against Philip Repyngdon and Nicholas Hereford, who were declared excommunicate at Paul's Cross. The first abjured on the 21st October, and was reconciled on the 24th November; the second appealed to the Pope, who confirmed the condemnation. Wycliffe himself died comfortably in his cure at Lutterworth on the 31st December, 1384; but all his followers were not equally fortunate. The Bishop of London's prison was at Bishop's Stortford:—the same old castle that in Bonner's time was "very well filled" with prisoners.† Probably it was so now, for in 1388 Bartholomew Ker and John Gregg, chaplains, gave the bishop an annual rent of three quarters of corn for the maintenance of his prisoners there. John Claydon, the Lollard, however, was confined for two years in Conway Castle, and for three years afterwards in the Fleet.‡ In 1400, the first capital sentence under the writ "de hereticis comburendis" was proclaimed at St. Paul's.

Collins § says of Courtenay archbishop of Canterbury that "he maintained a constant friendship with those great and wise men Robert Braybroke and William of Wykeham," and he compliments the three on their resistance to attempts on the part of the see of Rome to encroach on the privileges of the Church in England. In 1391 Sir William Brian was sent to the Tower for obtaining a Bull from the Pope addressed to the two Archbishops and the Bishop of London;|| and in 1396 the Bishop refused to execute a Papal Bull without the King's licence, which was granted as an exception.¶

* Codex, 327.

† Newcourt, *Repertorium*, tit. Stortford.

‡ Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 372.

§ Peerage, tit. Courtenay.

|| Rot. Parl. iii. 288.

¶ Ib. 327.

In 1390 writs were issued to him and the other Bishops, ordering them to stop the collection of new papal impositions.*

The affairs of his Cathedral church occupied much of the Bishop's attention. The secular uses it was put to, the buying and selling, shooting of arrows, throwing stones, and playing at ball in the very church itself, and other desecrations of a still worse character, excited his indignation. On Nov. 9, 1385,† he published a letter, threatening offenders with the greater excommunication, by bell-ringing, candle-lighting, and elevation of the cross. Another abuse of his time was the multiplication of chantries, many of them with insufficient revenues. Chaucer‡ says of his "persoun," that he did not

" Run to London unto St. Poule's
" To seeken him a chauntry for soules."

In 1390 Bishop Braybroke united several of these.

In 1394 the *College of Petty Canons* was founded. Wharton and Newcourt tell of an ill custom which had prevailed in St. Paul's for many years :—"the Canons residentiary would admit no Canon to residence unless he would expend 1000, 800, or 700 marks in the first year after his admission in eating and drinking and other excessive and superfluous expenses."§ The Bishop at last succeeded in inducing the Canons to consent to abide by the decision of the King, which was given on the 16th April, 1399, in favour of a reform; but King Henry afterwards set it aside.

In 1386, the Bishop ordered that the days of the Conversion and Commemoration of St. Paul should be celebrated throughout his diocese equally with the highest festivals, and in 1393 that all the clergy of the diocese should be present in their priestly ornaments in procession on those days. He also issued a hortatory letter to his clergy, to obtain contributions for the work of rebuilding St. Paul's Cross, "ubi verbum Dei consuevit populo prædicari;"|| though it was left to one of his successors to com-

* Rot. Parl. 405.

† Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 194. Dugdale's *History of St. Paul's*, 16.

‡ Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*.

§ Wharton, *de Episcopis Londinensibus*.

|| Dugdale, 88.

plete it. He granted in 1387 an indulgence of forty days (a copy of which, transcribed from the original document in the archives of St. Paul's Cathedral by the Rev. W. Sparrow Simpson, is appended to Dean Milman's *Annals of St. Paul's*,) for the same purpose.

It was the Bishop's misfortune on one occasion to fall under the displeasure of the King. After the famous consultation with the Judges at Nottingham, Richard made a solemn entry into London on Sunday, Nov. 10, 1387, and went in procession, first to St. Paul's, then to Westminster. At this service Bishop Braybroke was not present. The next day the Duke of Gloucester and the Earls of Arundel and Warwick (the swan, the horse, and the bear of Gower), appeared in arms at the gate of the city. Gloucester had sworn before the Bishop of London, that he was in arms merely to seek satisfaction from Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland; the Bishop went to the King with this protestation and excuse; and being a person (according to the writer in Kennet) both prudent, learned and eloquent, was making some impression, when Michael de la Pole interposed. The Bishop retorted with a bitter reproach. "Be silent; you, who, having been condemned by the Parliament, only exist by the sufferance of the King." The King, it is said, was so highly displeased at this, that he ordered the Bishop to depart from his presence.* That his disgrace was not lasting, however, is shown by an extraordinary entry in the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer for the year 1394,† where occurs a payment of 461*l.* 10*s.* for two diamonds, one given to the Bishop of London, and the other to the Earl of Arundel.

Bishop Braybroke's relations with the citizens of London appear to have been friendly. In 1392, King Richard demanded of the citizens a loan of a thousand pounds, which they refused. Not content with a simple refusal, they nearly killed the Rothschild of the day, a Lombard merchant, who offered to negotiate it. The King arrested the mayor, sheriffs, and principal citizens; placed London under the government of an officer of his own;

* Wharton, 140. Walsingham, 320.

† Ed. Devon.

and removed the courts for six months from London to York. The Duke of Gloucester, however, interfered on behalf of the city, and brought the king to a reconciliation, on payment by the citizens of ten thousand pounds. Fabyan attributes this reconciliation to the Bishop of London, whom he absurdly calls Dr. Gravesende; Stephen Gravesend having been Bishop from 1319 to 1338.* Whether the Bishop had a share in causing it or not, he joined in celebrating it: on the 29th August, there was a grand procession from Sheen in Surrey to London, and 400 citizens on horseback rode to meet the King and Queen at Wandsworth, and offer their submission. At St. George's church in Southwark the Bishop of London and his clergy met the procession, and conducted it through the city. At the gate of St. Paul's was a splendid fountain, and the whole instrumental resources of the Cathedral were employed to celebrate the occasion. A solemn mass was performed:

“ Occurrent pariter primas et episcopus urbis,
Obviat et clerus illius ecclesiæ,”

says Richard of Maidstone,† who puts into the mouth of the King a declaration against Lollardy:—

“ Antiquam servate fidem, nova dogmata semper
Spernite, quæ veteres non didicere patres.
Ecclesiam quoque catholicam defendite totam,
Non habet illa gradum, quin colat ipse Deum.”

In 1398, again, occasion arose for the citizens to avail them-

* Fabyan also gives (and Rastell after him) a statement of ceremonies supposed to be performed at the tomb of this Bishop by the mayor and citizens to show their gratitude: and the blunder is copied by the author of the Life of Richard the Second in Kennet, though Grafton had detected it long before. These ceremonies, which took place on the day the mayor was sworn in at the Exchequer, were really in honour of Bishop William, who had obtained privileges for the citizens of London from William the Conqueror. An interesting account of them is given in the *Liber Albus*, book i. chapter 7. Fabyan, 537, 538. Grafton, 460.

† Edited by T. Wright for the Camden Society, and again for the Rolls Series in his *Political Poems and Songs*.

selves of the good offices of Bishop Braybroke and Archbishop Walden in making their peace with the King.*

On the day of the dissolution of the "wonderful Parliament" of 1388, there was a remarkable ceremony in Westminster Abbey, in which the Bishop of London took part (3rd June). The King, Queen, Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons went in state to the Abbey, where the Bishop said mass, and the Archbishop of Canterbury preached. The King then renewed his oath of consecration:—the spiritual lords swore fealty to him, and the temporal lords did him homage; and then Lords and Commons swore never, in any time to come, to consent or suffer any Acts passed by that Parliament to be repealed or annulled, and that they would maintain, so far as in them lay, the laws, customs, and peace of the kingdom. The Archbishop then passed sentence of excommunication on all who should attempt to disapprove or contravene the acts of the Parliament.†

During the King's first expedition to Ireland, in 1394-5, the Lollards had become so emboldened that they ventured to affix their protestations on the walls of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and even to send them to the Parliament. Thomas Arundel, who was then Archbishop of York, with the Bishop of London, went to Ireland to urge the King to return, which he did.

On the King's second and ill-fated expedition to Ireland, he took with him the Bishop of London and seven other bishops, with other lords and gentlemen (among them, a Reginald Braybroke) presumably for the purpose of holding a parliament in Dublin.

The Bishop had probably left Richard, however, before his return to England, for the only bishops mentioned by Creton as being with the King on his return to Milford Haven are St.

* Fabyan, 545.

† "And now let England rejoice in Christ, for that net which was laid so cunningly for our destruction is broken asunder, and we are delivered. To God be the praise of all!" Fannant, temp. Car. I. quoted by Professor Wallon.

David's, Carlisle ("the best of them"), and Lincoln (afterwards Cardinal Beaufort). When Richard was taken at Flint, the Bishop of Carlisle alone was left.

We now come to a part of our Bishop's history from which I have some shrinking. One would have been glad to have been able to say that he joined Robert Merks, Bishop of Carlisle, in that noble protest which is so familiar to us in the words of Shakespeare.

"What subject can give sentence on his King?
And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?"

* * * *

Shall the figure of God's majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy elect,
Anointed, crowned, planted many years,
Be judged by subject and inferior breath?"*

I thank Mr. Williams, the editor of the MS. St. Victor, for having rescued this bold speech from the regions of historic doubt. It is not to be wondered at that the speaker was at once sent to prison; nor, on the other hand, as both sides in this contest were Englishmen, is it to be wondered at that his sacred character and his noble bravery saved his life when the axe was doing its deadly work by wholesale. I wish it could be said of the Bishop of London that he joined his brother of Carlisle in protesting against Henry's usurpation. The facts are otherwise. He was present in the Parliament, assenting to all that was done. He carried the host and officiated at Henry the Fourth's coronation. At the dinner, King Henry placed himself in his seat, Arundel (the restored Archbishop of Canterbury), the Bishops of London, Winchester and others on the right-hand side of the King's seat, sitting at the same high table; York, Durham, and other bishops at the same table on the other side.† We may wonder what views Canterbury, London, and Winchester would exchange as to the sermon the former had lately preached from the text

* Richard II. Act iv. sc. 1.

† MS. Bodl. 2376, tr. Webb. Archæologia, xx.

“Habuit Jacob benedictionem a patre suo,” &c.* According to Froissart,† Bishop Braybroke shortly after accompanied Sir Thomas Percy on a mission to Bordeaux, to reconcile the Bordelais to the change of Kings.

Of that melancholy document, the sentence of perpetual imprisonment against Richard passed by the Secret Committee of the Lords, the Bishop of London was one of the signers. I am ready to believe, for their own sakes, the disclaimer by the new King and the Lords of their having contemplated the tragic end which followed so soon; but this sentence was, in point of fact, the death warrant of the unhappy Richard. The names of the Bishops of Bath, Carlisle, Coventry, Hereford, Worcester, and Winchester are absent from it.‡

The controversy carried on in the Society of Antiquaries with excellent temper in the year 1819 between Mr. Amyot and the Rev. John Webb (who has just been lost to us at the ripe age of ninety-three), leaves the precise manner of Richard's death still a matter of historic doubt. The theory of violent assault by Piers Exton, as vividly described by Shakespeare, is very weakly supported: that of slow starvation has greater probability. “Men sayde forhungered he was,” says Hardyng, the contemporary chronicler.§ But whether this starvation was an act of murder by Henry's orders, or an act of voluntary suicide, is uncertain. The secrets of the dreadful prison-house at Pomfret have never been revealed; and the documentary evidence, when allowance is made for the partialities of the writers, is about equal on either side. There remains, however, another alternative, for which there is no documentary evidence whatever, but which may, after all, afford the true explanation—that Richard's death was natural; that the few short steps between the prisons and the graves of princes were traversed the sooner by the natural effect of his recent sad experiences on a constitution weakened by indulgence. Not a single testimony rests upon any personal knowledge, and

* Creton.

† Ed. Johnes, iv. 646. Chron. Wavrin, (Rolls Series) p. 13.

‡ Rot. Parl. iii. 426.

§ c.c.c.

the tongues of rumour are always busy when the great ones of the earth die suddenly.

Richard's remains lay for two days (the 12 and 13 March 1399-1400) in St. Paul's Cathedral "in the state of a gentleman, to show him to the people of London, that they might believe for certain that he was dead."*

"At Poules his masse was done and diryge."†

St. Paul's was soon after the theatre of the *Te Deum* intoned by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the reception in London of the bloody remains of Sir Thomas Blount and Sir Benedict Seely, after their endurance, with wonderful constancy, of tortures too horrible to describe.

On two or three occasions after this we find in the proceedings of the privy council a record of the Bishop of London's attendance at its meetings;‡ and in 1402 he was one of the Lords named, at the request of the Commons, to assist in their deliberations;§ but his public services were now very near an end. On the first of May 1404, Sir Gerard Braybroke (the fifth) knight, Edmund Hampden, esq., John Boys, esq., and Roger Albrighton clerk, treasurer of the Cathedral,|| founded a chantry under letters patent from the King, and endowed it with lands worth 12*l.* 17*s.* 8*d.* a year, for one chaplain daily to say mass at the altar of the Blessed Virgin in St. Paul's Cathedral, adjoining the Bishop's palace, for the welfare of the venerable father in Christ and lord, Robert, by the grace of God, Bishop of London, as long as he shall live, and for his soul when he has departed this life, also for the soul of Master Nicholas Braybroke, late Canon of St. Paul's, and for the souls of all faithful departed.¶ Thomas King

* MS. St. Victor.

† Hardyng, c.cc.

‡ *Ordinances of Privy Council*, ed. Sir N. H. Nicolas, vol. i. Rymer, viii. 126. § Rot. Parl. iii. 486.

|| Probate of Bishop Braybroke's will was granted to these gentlemen by Archbishop Arundel on Feb. 20, 1404-5. The probate is preserved in the archives of St. Paul's Cathedral, with an inventory of the Bishop's goods and debts, the *Summa totalis* of which is 2131*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

¶ The charter is extant. Harl. MS. 47 b 14. See Dugdale's *History of St. Paul's*, 94, 357, and Weever's *Fun. Mon.* 381, 382.

was appointed first chaplain, but he had not long to exercise his functions on behalf of a living Bishop, for Robert de Braybroke died on the 27th August following,—exactly one month before his more illustrious brother of Winchester, and predecessor and successor with the great seal, William of Wykeham, whose will contains a bequest to Bishop Braybroke, of his large silk bed and furniture in the best chamber of his palace at Winchester, with the whole suite of tapestry hangings in the same apartment.*

A curious letter to the Pope, as to the succession to the vacant see of London, occurs among the collection of "Royal Letters:"† it was settled on the 10th of December, by the appointment of Roger de Walden, who had temporarily supplanted Thomas Arundel as Archbishop of Canterbury, on his conviction as a rebel to Richard the Second, but was now made Bishop of London at the generous solicitation of Arundel.

Bishop Braybroke was buried in the middle of the Lady Chapel, under a marble stone, "inlaid with letters made every one of a several piece of brass,"‡ with his effigy in brass, and the arms of his family. The inscription was: "Orate pro animâ Roberti Braybroke, quondam episcopi istius ecclesiæ, cujus corpus hic tumulatur, qui obiit vicesimo septimo die mensis Augusti, anno gratiæ millesimo quadringentesimo quarto, cujus animæ et omnium fidelium defunctorum propicietur Deus. Amen. Amen." An engraving of the monument is given in Dugdale's History of St. Paul's, and a rough sketch, copied from Dingley's "History from Marble,"§ illustrates this paper. Newcourt mentions it as remarkable that the puritans left this tomb untouched, notwithstanding it was one of the costliest and the most conspicuous of any, "the Lord Mayor and his brethren passing over it every Sunday as they came to hear sermons there, after it was made a preaching place for the saints of those times, who entered not in at the door, but, like thieves and robbers, came in at the window, when they had made one."||

* Bp. Lowth's *Life of William of Wykeham*, 262.

† Edit. Hingeston for Rolls Series, i. 415.

‡ Godwin's *Cat. of Bishops* (1601) p. 150.

§ Part ii. plate cccciv.

|| Repertorium, s. v. Braybrook.



A. Gawan, delt. et lith.

J. Emslie & Sons, imp.

Monument of Bishop Braybroke in Old St. Paul's Cathedral,

[Copied, by permission of the Camden Society, from the rough sketch by T. Dingley.]

The monument awaited, however, the exercise of a more destructive agent than even religious fanaticism, and it was the singular fate of Bishop Braybroke to be associated in a remarkable manner with an event that took place 262 years after his death,—the Great Fire of London. His remains (with those of two other persons) were discovered uninjured, so entire, says Dingley, “as to have teeth in the head, red* hair on the head, beard, &c., skin and nails on the toes and fingers, without circloath, embalming spices, or any other condite.” They were taken to the Chapter-house of St. Paul’s, and (with an indecorum which is difficult to understand) exposed to public view for several years—until, as I suppose, the new buildings were ready to receive them. Pepys saw them on the 12th Nov. 1666, Lord Coleraine on the 10th December 1675, and the toughness and mutual support of the parts had not even then been impaired. The learned Dugdale says, “Some attributed the preservation of the body to the sanctity of the person, offering much money for it; but herein was nothing supernatural; for that which caused the flesh, skin, and sinews to become thus hard and tough, was the dryness and heat of the dust wherein these bodies lay, which was for the most part of rubbish lime mixed with a sandy earth.” Newcourt saw the body and handled it; it was very light, he says, and had hair on the face. Lord Coleraine’s narrative supplies the weight—about nine pounds, and adds the particular that it had sustained some accidental injuries in being exhumed, viz., a breach in the skull on the left side, and another on the same side into the breast.† Pepys compares the object to spongy dry leather or touchwood, and says the head was turned aside. He adds the very apposite comment:—“A great man in his time and Lord Chancellor; and his skeleton now exposed to be handled and

* It does not follow that this was the natural colour; for it has been observed that human hair often changes to red after long interment.

† This narrative may be found in Addl. MS. B. Mus. 5833, 120; in the *Antiquarian Repertory*, i. 74, and in *Notes and Queries*, 2nd s. iii. 185; but it contains some revolting particulars which I have spared my readers. See also Camden, *Britannia*, ii. 17.

derided by some, though admired for its duration by others, many flocking to see it.”*

In due time these unfortunate remains were restored to earth, and reinterred beneath Sir Christopher Wren's vast monument, though I am not aware that any inscription marks the Bishop's present resting-place. Long may he rest there in peace! I trust it will not be thought a waste of labour on my part to have supplied for the first time a complete biography† of one who led, so long ago, a prominent, an active, and an honoured life.

Supplementary Note.

The Will of Sir Gerard Braybroke (the fourth) knight, made 12 March 1427, and a codicil thereto, made 2 April 1429, were proved 20 July 1429, and are copied in the Registry of Archbishop Chicheley at Lambeth Palace (fol. 411 to 413). He was nephew to the Bishop. After a bequest of “x li. a year to the work of Poule's cherche in London,” the codicil proceeds: “and I wol that v li. be paid yerely to y^e preest of Horsyndon which singeth in the churche of horsyndon in Buckynghmshir for maister Robt Braybroke sowle sumtyme Bisshop of London, his fader and moðer sowles, and his auncestres sowles, and for all cristen sowles.”

* *Diary*, iii. 334.

† No disrespect is meant to Lord Campbell, Mr. Foss, Wharton, Newcourt, Dugdale, Godwin, Le Neve, Fuller, and (last not least) Dean Milman, each of whom gives a brief notice of the Bishop.