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## ART. II.—GROSSETÊTE, BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

THE rapacity of the Court of Rome in the Middle Ages was the subject of general criticism and the ground of general complaint, and nowhere did it show itself in a bolder and more unblushing form than in England. Burdens were laid upon the monarch, upon the clergy, upon the barons, and upon the people at large. They were felt in the remotest hamlet as well as in the high places of the land. There seemed no end to the aids and subsidies demanded by the Pope to fill his exhausted treasury. Exaction followed exaction, tax succeeded tax. The rights of lay patrons were set aside, and presentations to benefices were sold to the highest bidder in the Papal market. Italian clergy were thrust into the best livings of the Church, non-residence and pluralities were carried to the shamefullest lengths. One favoured ecclesiastic is said to have held at the same time as many as seven hundred livings; interdicts and excommunications were lavishly fulminated for purely secular ends, exemptions purchased from Rome shielded the scandalous lives of canons and monks from all episcopal discipline, and everything was done to extort money from this kingdom for the benefit of the Papal exchequer. It was estimated that the benefices held by the Italian clergy in England amounted to 60,000 marks a year, "a sum," says Hume, "which excelled the annual revenue of the Crown."

At last the people, who "preferred to die rather than be ruined by the Romans," rose up in revolt against those tyrannical usurpations, perverse of Christian truth, hurtful to Christian life, and fatal to Christian liberty. "The Pope has no part in secular matters," they cried. Shakespeare makes John say that "No Italian priest shall tithe or toll in our dominions." His tax-collectors were beaten, the tithes they had gathered were seized and given to the poor, the old reverence for the Papacy began to fade away before the universal resentment at its political ambition, its insatiable cupidity, and its degradation of the most sacred ordinances into engines of secular aggrandisement. This courageous English spirit found a powerful and intrepid voice in Robert Grossetête, Bishop of Lincoln. His whole life was spent in a brave and patriotic resistance to the unjust and arbitrary claims of the Roman Pontiff.

Grossetête was born, it would seem, of humble parentage, in the village of Stradbroke, in Suffolk, about the year 1175. We know little or nothing of his early days, but in due course he appeared at Oxford, where he gave himself earnestly to study. He became a proficient in the Greek language, and made himself master of Aristotle, whose works, though exceed-

ingly popular, had up to this time been only read through the medium of translations, and of the New Testament, whose divine teaching he drank in with avidity. Here also he commenced the study of Hebrew, that he might be able to read the Old Testament in the original language. At Oxford he won the admiration of Roger Bacon, no indiscriminating eulogist, who always speaks of him with profound respect. Fra Salimbene, a Franciscan and contemporary of Grossetête, styles him "unum de majoribus clericis de mundo." The influence and example of Grossetête gave an impulse to learning, which was then cultivated with much zeal at the University. But the most renowned seminary in Europe at that time was Paris, and to it Grossetête went, and gave himself, with his usual enthusiasm and energy, to the acquisition of all the knowledge available in the schools of the day. He prosecuted his studies in the Greek and Hebrew tongues, and became, it is said, a perfect master of the French language. Knowledge was then, as may be supposed, in a backward condition. Printing had not yet been invented, nor classical literature revived. But Grossetête, notwithstanding these disadvantages, became a most distinguished scholar. In theological and philosophical learning especially he was, according to the ideas of the age, profoundly skilled. And the consequence was, that he drew on himself from some of his contemporaries the suspicion of magic, as did the famous Roger Bacon, who flourished much about the same time. The reader will remember the reference to both these men in *Hudibras*. Of Sidrophel it is said:

Yet none a deeper knowledge boasted,  
Since old Hodge Bacon and Bob Grosted.

A new era was coming upon the world. There was a yearning in the hearts of men for relief and liberty and higher life. They were looking with wistful eyes for the dawning of a better day.

'Tis time  
New hopes should animate the world, new light  
Should dawn from new revealings to a race  
Weigh'd down so long, forgotten so long.

The day was at hand. The clouds were beginning to break, and the light to shine. Human thought was waking from its long sleep, and struggling to climb up some few of those great altar stairs

That slope through darkness up to God.

Human reason was grappling as it had not done for centuries with the old gray questions of life and duty and immortality and man and God. It was in this century lived William de

St. Amour, and St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Louis of France, and Joachim di Flor, and Bonaventura, and Thomas Aquinas, and Cardinal Hugo, who all, though not free from many dogmatic errors, helped forward the Kingdom of God in the earth.

After his return from France, Grossetête became Archdeacon of Leicester. And here he showed the same conscientiousness and devotion to duty as he had hitherto done. In one of his letters occurs the following passage: "Nothing that occurs in your letters ought to give me more pain than your styling me a person invested with authority, and endued with the lustre of knowledge. So far am I from thinking as you do, that I feel myself unfit even to be the disciple of a person of authority; moreover, in innumerable matters which are objects of knowledge, I perceive myself enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. But did I really possess the great qualities you ascribe to me, He alone would be worthy of the praise, and the whole of it ought to be referred unto Him, to whom we daily say: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give the glory."

In the year 1235 he was elected by the dean and chapter Bishop of Lincoln, and King Henry III. confirmed their choice. In those days the See of Lincoln was much larger than it is at the present day; and the new Bishop, with an ardour and energy almost unprecedented, entered upon his episcopal duties. He set himself at once to reform abuses; he visited the various archdeaconries and rural deaneries, addressed the clergy, and admonished the people to come together, that they might be confirmed and hear the Word of God preached, and observe the Sacraments of the Church. On these occasions, the Bishop himself usually preached to the clergy, and some friar of the Dominican or Franciscan Order addressed the people.

An eminent writer playfully characterizes the period of which we are writing: "Mankind in the thirteenth century knew not the heavens nor the earth, the sea nor the land, as men now know them. They went to sea without compass and sailed without the needle. They viewed the stars without telescopes, and measured altitudes without barometers. Learning had no printing-press. The lover was forced to send his mistress a deal board for a love-letter. The richest robes were the skins of the most formidable monsters. They carried on trade without books, and corresponded without the postman. Their merchants kept no accounts, their shop-keepers no cash-books." But the evils of the age were not only negative, they were, alas! startlingly positive. The people in general were coarse and ignorant and brutal; the clergy were vicious and ill-informed, only a grade higher in moral and mental standing than their flocks. The state of the Church was tragic, a base

self-interest pervading every class, and misery rife among the poor. The times were sorely out of joint. Roger Bacon's picture of the intellectual attainments of the clergy in his day may be interesting to the reader. He often speaks with severity and reprehension of the studies of his time: how boys were admitted into the religious orders and proceeded to theological study without having laid the groundwork of a sound grammatical education; how the original languages of Holy Scripture were neglected; how children got their knowledge of Scripture, not from the Bible itself, but from versified abridgments; how lectures on the "Sentences" were preferred to lectures on Scripture, and how Scripture was neglected on account of the faults of translation. He tells us further how young men were drawn away from the sacred writings to the study of civil law, which was then the chief source of promotion both in Church and State. Philosophy and theology were discredited, literature in its purer forms was almost extinct, so that Bacon himself, to use his own pathetic words, lived "unheard, forgotten, buried." There was no one to appreciate the greatest genius of his time.

This was the kind of material on which Grossetête had to work, and he set himself with indefatigable activity, and with a zeal that showed itself at times too intolerant, to effect a reformation of manners in his diocese as well as in the Church at large. It was in the domain of practical evils more than of doctrinal errors that the Bishop showed the strength of his mind. Here he never failed to act with sincerity and vigour: Matthew Paris styles him "*religiosorum fatigator indefessus.*" With him Christian morals were inseparable from Christian faith. He endeavoured to bring back the festivals of the Church, which had grown into disuse, or had been converted into occasions of riot and debauchery, to their sacred character. But it was against the clergy he chiefly inveighed, and them he specially sought to elevate and reform, knowing that their example would inevitably influence the morals and habits of the people. Could he inspire them with something of his own spirit, it would be, he felt, the prelude to an immediate and general improvement of the people.

We must remember that Grossetête held the highest hierarchical notions. Sacerdotalism was the very life of his soul. The clergy were with him God's vicegerents upon earth, invested with the tremendous prerogatives claimed by the Church of Rome for those who minister at her altars in every age. He was not a reformer in the sense of Luther or Cranmer or Knox, or even as Reuchlin, Erasmus, or Colet. He adhered to the strictest orthodoxy of his time; his views of reformation embraced only the discipline and administration of the Church,

and though he did not hesitate to speak of an individual Pope as Antichrist, he stoutly maintained that it was only through the papacy all ecclesiastics could derive their commission and spiritual power. Anselm or Becket did not assert the immunities and privileges of the priesthood with greater intrepidity and assurance than did Grossetête. Rebellion against the clergy was with him as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness under the yoke of the Church as iniquity; but those immunities, he was careful to point out, implied heavier responsibility, and those privileges demanded a holier vigilance and labours more abundant. The sacrament of "Holy Orders" was vain unless it carried with it in their lives the evidences of a holy, exemplary, and unworldly spirit. With that spirit they would be mighty through God to the pulling down of all strongholds.

By way of counteracting in some measure the abuses of the secular clergy, and making up for their lack of zeal and ability, Grossetête took the friars, Dominican and Franciscan, under his episcopal patronage, and used them as his allies in the war against evil. He addressed letters of confidence to the generals of both orders. He encouraged mendicants to hear the confessions of the laity, to enjoin them penance, and in every proper way to promote the interests of the Church. They seem to have been better educated and more zealous and active than the clergy, and the Bishop unhesitatingly used their services for the well-being of the people. Thus supported, these busy evangelists invaded parishes, derided the ministrations of the secular clergy, sought to draw the people away from their own churches. They won popularity through their diligence; their services were shorter, livelier, and more attractive than those to which men had been accustomed; they preached with more fervour, administered the Sacraments with greater reverence, and directed consciences with more scrupulosity and care than the ordinary pastors of the people. But their object was not always disinterested; in too many instances they sought only the advancement of their order, and their own enrichment at the expense of those to whom they ministered. And in the course of time the friars proved themselves to be equally venal, ambitious, dissolute, and indolent with the worst of the secular clergy, bringing upon themselves the whip of Wycliffe and Langland, the keen ridicule of Erasmus, and the heavier punishment of Henry VIII.

Before the curing of a strong disease,  
Even in the instant of repair and health,  
The fit is strongest; evils that take leave,  
On their departure most of all show evil.

The history of the friars is an illustration of these lines of the poet.

Grossetête's eyes seem to have been opened in time to the real character of his mendicant agents. In 1247 two English Franciscans were sent into England with credentials to extort money for the Pope. The words of their commission are as follows: "We charge you, that if the major part of the English prelates should make answer that they are exempt from foreign jurisdiction you demand a greater sum, and compel them by ecclesiastical censures to withdraw their appeal, any privilege or indulgence notwithstanding." This was the famous *non obstante* clause by which the Pope, in the plenitude of his sovereign authority, claimed the same dispensing power in the Church which James II. did long after in the State. His agents applied to prelates, abbots, and whomsoever they thought would be likely to replenish the Papal exchequer. England was tauntingly spoken of in that day as "the Pope's farm." Grossetête at once opposed the imperious demands. They showed him the Pope's Bull authorizing the levy to be made, and demanded six thousand marks from the diocese of Lincoln. The Bishop still refused, but in a polite manner. "Brother," answered he, as Matthew Paris tells us, "with all reverence to his Holiness be it spoken, the demand is as dishonourable as it is impracticable. The whole body of the clergy and the people are concerned in it equally with me. For me, then, to give a definite answer in an instant to such a demand, before the sense of the kingdom is taken upon it, would be rash and absurd."

In the following year he obtained at great expense letters from Innocent IV. empowering him to reform the religious orders. He saw with pain the waste of large revenues made by those orders, and he resolved to take into his own hands the rents of the religious houses, and apply them to the moral elevation of the people. But the monks appealed to the Pope, and Grossetête was obliged in self defence to plead his cause in person before the Pontiff at Lyons. It was an age of chicanery and venality; the monks purchased the interest of the Pope, and his Holiness, who seems to have been always ready to sell himself to the highest bidder, decided the cause against the Bishop. Grossetête was indignant at so unexpected a decision, and he spoke sharply to his superior. "I relied on your letters and promises," said he, "but am entirely disappointed." "What is that to you," answered the Pope; "you have done your part, and we are disposed to favour them. *Is your eye evil because I am good?*" A sense of responsibility evidently sat lightly upon the head of the Church. No wonder that the Bishop murmured, but so as to be heard by those

around: "O money, how great is thy power, especially at the Court of Rome!" "You English," retorted the Pontiff, "are always grinding and impoverishing one another. How many religious men, persons of prayer and hospitality, are you striving to depress that you may sacrifice to your own tyranny and avarice!" On this occasion the "tyranny and avarice" were certainly on the side of his Holiness. It was this Pope who represented with cynical frankness how lucrative England was to them in Italy, when he said, according to Matthew Paris: "Vere hortus noster deliciarum est Anglia et puteus inexhaustus; et ubi multa abundant de multis multa sumere licet." The Bishop came away from the interview depressed and disheartened, leaving, however, behind him a strong testimony against the evils of the Papacy in the shape of a sermon, a copy of which he delivered into the hands of the Pope. In this discourse he "sketches with satiric salt," to use the language of Erasmus, the flagitious practices of the Court of Rome, and the evil doings of the monks, characterizing the clergy of the time as "wolves and bears." It was with a heart full of sadness that Grossetête returned to his diocese; and "even his firm mind," as Dean Milman remarks, "was shaken by the difficulties of his position." He formed the intention of resigning his bishopric and retiring from the intractable world. Renan observes: "A feature which characterizes great European men is at certain times that they admit the wisdom of Epicurus, by being taken with disgust while working with ardour, and, after having succeeded, by doubting if the cause they have served was worth so many sacrifices." Grossetête never "doubted" that the cause he had taken up was the cause of God, and therefore worth all possible sacrifices; but he was depressed and heart-sick at the enormous evils that were around him, and the base and unjust conduct of those who should have sympathized with him in his efforts to purge the house of God and advance His kingdom, and under the influence of this feeling he meditated retirement. However, it was only for a moment that this unworthy thought swayed his mind. He could not forget that he was a

Sworn liegeman of the Cross and thorny crown;

and he shook off the ignoble sloth, and commenced a visitation of his diocese which was unprecedented in its stern severity.

The present time's so sick,  
That present medicine must be minister'd,  
Or overthrow incurable ensues.

The contumacious clergy were compelled to submit and accept his conditions. The monasteries opened their reluctant



gates and acknowledged his authority, and some show of improvement seems to have taken place in the general aspect of the diocese. But the evils and abuses were so great and deep-seated, and of such long standing, that they foiled even the genius and energy of Grossetête; the attempt to deal single-handed with them reminds us of the fabled labours of Hercules in the Augean stable. But he did all that one man could do. He resolutely took his stand on his right of refusing institution to unworthy clergy. He refused to admit to benefices pluralists, boys, persons employed in civil offices, and in many cases foreigners. He "resisted alike Churchmen, the Chancellor of Exeter; nobles, he would not admit a son of the Earl of Ferrars as under age; the King, whose indignation knew no bounds; he resisted the cardinal legates—the Pope himself." He "defied the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" to shake him from his solid base, or turn him aside from the path of duty. It would seem as if the Master with a scourge of cords had again appeared in the temple. Grossetête knew no fear in the discharge of his episcopal functions. Conscience governed him. He was a kind of Knox before the days of Knox, with "the same inflexibility, intolerance, rigid, narrow-looking adherence to God's truth, stern rebuke in the name of God to all that forsake truth."

In 1253 the Bishop received command to confer a canonry of Lincoln on the nephew of Innocent, Frederick of Lavagna, a mere boy, who knew nothing of English, and was altogether unfit for the sacred office. The Pope wrote to his agents in England, ordering them to complete the appointment, with his usual clause of *non obstante*, which was the great engine, as we have already intimated, of the Papal dispensing power. Grossetête firmly refused, and wrote an epistle on the occasion full of that bold honesty which has made his name immortal.

It was said that when this letter reached the Pope it drew from him the most passionate exclamations of anger: "Who is this dotard," he cried, "who presumes to judge my actions? By St. Peter and St. Paul, if I were not restrained by my generosity, I would make him an example and a spectacle to all mankind. Is not the King of England my vassal, rather my slave? Would he not at a word from me throw this Bishop into prison, and cover him with infamy and disgrace?" The Cardinals, who saw the danger of giving way to the Pope's blind fury, reasoned long and earnestly with him, and at length were enabled to moderate his resentment. They pointed out the inexpediency of resorting to violent measures, pleaded the irreproachable life of Grossetête, and, in words, admitted the truth of the charges which he had brought against the Holy See. "He is a holy man," said they, "more so than we

ourselves are ; a man of excellent genius and of the best morals ; no prelate in Christendom is thought to excel him." They went on to say that his learning and high character were known to all the clergy, both of France and England, for " he is held to be a great philosopher, an accomplished scholar in Greek and Latin literature, zealous in the administration of justice, a reader of theology in the schools, a devout preacher, a lover of chastity and an enemy of simony." Moderate counsels prevailed. Innocent, recognising that " discretion is the better part of valour," yielded to the exigencies of the time. Letters were issued which mitigated to some extent the abuses of these Papal provisions. It was set forth that all who possessed such benefices were to be guaranteed in their free enjoyment, and that they were not to go down, as it were, by hereditary descent from Italian to Italian; on decease or vacancy, the patron, prelate, monastery, or layman might at once present.

Grossetête was as fearless in dealing with the King's nominees as with the Pope's. A favourite of Henry, Robert de Passelewe, had been elected by the Chapter of Chichester as their Bishop. And when Boniface, the Archbishop of Canterbury, insisted on testing his fitness for the office, Grossetête undertook the part of examiner, and set him aside on the ground of ignorance. Neither Pope nor King could turn aside from the path of integrity and right-doing him who lived

As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye.

The " *Lyra Apostolica* " says :

There are two ways to aid the Ark,  
As patrons and as sons,

Grossetête never forgot that he was a loyal son of the Church of England ; and in the exercise of patronage, or in dealing with patronage, his great aim was " to aid the Ark." He made himself enemies, but that was a small matter to a man whose

Brazen bulwark of defence

was

Still to maintain his conscious innocence.

In the end of the summer of 1253 Grossetête was seized with a mortal disease, the nature of which does not seem to have come to light. And as he lay on his sick-bed, his mind often dwelt upon the evil state of the Church and the miseries of these last days. He sent for Friar John de St. Giles to talk over the affairs of the diocese and of the Church at large with him. To him he spoke of the conduct of the monks, both Franciscan and Dominican, with much severity, because, though their Orders were founded in voluntary poverty, they did not rebuke, but rather pandered to, the vices of the great.

"I am convinced," said the old man, "that both the Pope, unless he amend his errors, and the friars, except they endeavour to restrain him, will be deservedly exposed to everlasting death."

Grossetête died at his palace at Buckden on October 9, 1253. And at the time of his death, it was believed that music was heard in the air, church bells tolled of their own accord, miracles were wrought at his grave and in his church at Lincoln. The Pope heard of his death with pleasure, and said, "I rejoice; and let every true son of the Roman Church rejoice with me that my great enemy is removed." The inexorable Pontiff even entertained the design of having his body cast out of the church and his bones scattered, and wrote a letter to the King of England to that effect. The Cardinals, however, opposed the tyrant, and the letter was never sent.

The chief design of Grossetête, as we have intimated, was to remedy the practical evils of the Church. In his episcopal career he never forgot that aim. He put forth the most vigorous efforts to carry out that ameliorative policy.

Thy spirit in thee strove  
To cleanse and set in beauty free  
The ancient shrines.

He visited his diocese, preached in the churches, and sought to purge away error and elevate the moral tone of society. And to the labours of the episcopal office he united those of the pen. His scholarly attainments were of a high order, and when he could spare time from the more active duties of the episcopate, he employed it in congenial literary pursuits. He translated into Latin "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," a Jewish writing of about the end of the first century, which has come down to us with extensive Christian interpolations belonging to the second or third century. Renan tells us that it only became known to the Latins through the translation of Robert of Lincoln, made about 1242. He also translated the works of John Damascene, and of Dionysius the Areopagite, and illustrated them with commentaries.

From his early years Grossetête was always busy. He loved work, and the only recreation he seems to have taken was to vary his work. He wrote many letters and sermons which are still extant in manuscript, and which throw much light upon the political and ecclesiastical life of the time. Through the crust of error which environed him in that age of intellectual darkness and thralldom, there shone ever the soft light of a holy and beautiful piety. What his lips spoke his heart believed, and what his heart believed his life reflected. And ever, as he grew older, his heart was drawn nearer to God. He belonged to that elect company which Browning describes as

Soldier-saints, that row on row  
Burn upward each to his point of bliss.

Conscience was to him the voice of God in his soul, and his ear was ever attuned to its music. Duty was the "stern daughter of the voice of God," and for him she wore "the Godhead's most benignant grace." It was his devout allegiance to Duty that constrained him at times to employ such strict measures in dealing with the abuses around him. Like a surgeon, he had to use knife and cautery.

A distinguished living Cambridge professor tells us that we ought to cherish the memory of the good and wise, for the implacable effect of research is to diminish their number. To us it seems clear that the name of Grossetête can never be removed from that honoured band—the good and the wise! He was endowed with great mental gifts, and he used them for the noblest purposes, and in his life illustrated the beauty of goodness and truth, showing an example to his whole diocese of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

WILLIAM COWAN.



### ART. III.—THE POPE'S ENCYCLICAL.

ON St. Peter's Day the Bishop of Rome issued an encyclical letter on the subject of the unity of the Church. It is addressed to "our venerable brethren, the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and other ordinaries in peace and communion with the Apostolic See." Translations of it, or of large portions of it, appeared on the following day in our principal English papers.

For such documents to be issued from time to time by the ecclesiastical head of a Christian community for the guidance of its members is but a natural procedure, and for members of another body ordinarily to canvass and examine them might properly be considered uncalled for. But we venture to think that the avowed object of this particular manifesto renders some public notice of it by English Church-people perfectly justifiable. For, though formally addressed to the hierarchy of the Roman Church, it is intended specially for the perusal of non-Roman communities. Thus it opens: "It is sufficiently well known to you that no small share of our thoughts and of our care is devoted to our endeavour to bring back to the fold, placed under the guardianship of Jesus Christ, the chief Pastor of souls, sheep that have strayed. Bent upon this, we have