

LXX.

SIR SIMON BURLEY.

THIS celebrated person, who was destined to experience both extremes of fortune, is said to have owed his elevation not less to the early and happy culture of his vigorous mind under the fostering care of a learned kinsman,¹ than to the introduction and influence of that relative, who had been almoner to queen Philippa and preceptor to her heroic son.

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According to his deposition in the Scrope and Grosvenor suit,² he was born about 1336, and, as his first military adventure, was in the fleet, commanded by the king in person, which attacked and destroyed the Spanish corsairs in 1350. He is mentioned by Froissart among Edward's attendants in the expedition of 1354, designed to assist the king of Navarre, but which proceeded no further than Guernsey.³ At what time he joined the army of the Black Prince in Aquitaine does not appear. It is stated, however, that he was present in the court at Angoulême at the visit of the king of Cyprus in 1364;⁴ and that, in 1366, he was sent by the prince, in company with sir Thomas Felton and sir Nele Loryng, to ascertain from don Pedro the extent of the aid which he required for the recovery of his dominions.⁵ He took part also, in the year following, in the expedition the object of which was accomplished by the victory at Najara.⁶ In 1369 he was compelled, after a sharp skirmish with a

¹ Walter Burley, S. T. P., author of various philosophical works, particularly of "Liber de vita ac moribus philosophorum," &c. of which the editio princeps was printed at Cologne about 1470. He had been educated at Merton College, Oxford, and in the schools of Germany; attended queen Philippa to England; and was employed, in 1327, in a mission to Rome, in order to solicit the canonization of Thomas earl of Lancaster, and

again, in 1330, on the same errand. —*Rot. Rom.* 1 *Ed.* 3, *m.* 4; and 4 *Ed.* 3, *m.* 5.

² Scrope and Grosvenor roll, p. 206.

³ Froiss (Buchon), tom. iii. p. 70. Of this expedition we have not found any corroboration in the public records.

⁴ Froiss. tom. iv. p. 176.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 311.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 367.

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French detachment in Poitou, to yield the ground to the enemy; and, being overtaken in his retreat, was made prisoner, to the great grief of the prince his master, by whom Froissart, with a warm eulogy on his conduct and valour, says he was highly loved and valued.¹ He remained in captivity until 1370,² when he was liberated upon the release of the duchess of Bourbon;³ and, in the same year, participated with the prince in the cruelty and disgrace of the sacking of Limoges.⁴

If the assertion of Stowe may be credited,⁵ that sir Simon Burley had been entrusted by prince Edward with the education of his son Richard, it is not surprising that, on the accession of the latter to the throne, our knight should have been honoured with marked distinction from his former pupil, and with an attachment interrupted only by his own violent death.

Accordingly, he obtained, immediately after that event, from Richard II. the custody of Windsor castle,⁶ and divers grants of castles and manors in fee.⁷ On 12th June 1380 he was, by the description of knight of the king's chamber, joined with others in a commission to treat for a marriage between the young king and "the lady Katharine, daughter of Lewis late emperor of the Romans."⁸

We possess no account of any proceeding under this commission: but we find sir Simon, by the description of the king's chamberlain, before the end of the same year, included in another, with the half-brother of Richard, Thomas Holand, earl of Kent, marshal, and sir Hugh Segrave, lord steward, to negotiate a union with Anne the daughter of the then lately deceased emperor Charles IV, and sister of Wenceslaus king of the Romans and Bohemia.⁹ The ambassadors found the princess at Burglehen;¹⁰ returned, after concluding a treaty of

¹ Froiss. tom. v. p. 51.

² Ibid. p. 176.

³ Froiss. old edit. tom. i. p. 359, where Burley is styled "chevalier du prince de Galles."

⁴ Froiss. (Buchon), tom. v. p. 208.

⁵ Hist. tracts, Harl. MS. 545, p. 128.

⁶ Pat. 1 Ric. 2, m. 14.

⁷ Rot. Vasc. 1 Ric. 2, m. 15; Pat.

⁸ Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 42.

⁹ Rymer, vol. vii. p. 257. It

is almost inconceivable that any daughter of the emperor Lewis Bavarus, who died in 1347, could have been in contemplation as a consort for Richard.

⁹ Rymer, vol. vii. p. 280.

¹⁰ Probably Burglehen-haag near Hoyerswerda in Upper Lusatia, whence she dates her assent and letters of procuracy on 20th Feb. 1380-1.—Rymer, vol. vii. p. 282.

friendship and alliance with her brother, to England, accompanied by her procurator the duke of Teschen; and Burley was, soon afterwards, again despatched, with other commissioners, to receive the future queen at Calais, and to conduct her to the king.

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Stowe ascribes the origin of Wat Tyler's insurrection to sir Simon Burley, who, according to his narrative,¹ appeared, on Monday after Whitsunday [3rd June] 1381, with two sergeants at arms at Gravesend, in order to arrest a person whom he challenged to be his bondman; that, being intreated by the debtor's townsmen to show him favour, he demanded three hundred pounds of silver for his manumission, and, in default, committed him to Rochester castle; that the commons of Kent began thereupon to rise, and, being joined by the Essex rebels, delivered the man of Gravesend, and set up Wat Tyler of Maidstone as their captain.

This charge against our knight, founded doubtless either upon a case of arrest on some other occasion, or, more probably, in the prevailing odium against the king's favourites, has been adopted by historians² without a due comparison of dates, by which it may be satisfactorily disproved. It is clear that Burley was absent from England, and engaged in the transactions incident to his embassy, during the short period of the popular commotion, which raged about a fortnight, and was appeased by the death of Tyler on the 15th June 1381. The ambassadors, who had embarked on their mission to Wenceslaus and his sister after the 26th December 1380, received the procuratory letters from the princess, dated 20th February following; concluded the treaty of alliance with Wenceslaus at Nuremberg on the 10th May; and, allowing for the difficulties of a sumptuous journey of state in those days, could not have been returned to England until towards the autumn of 1381; after which Burley was joined in another commission³ to receive the queen at Calais.⁴

¹ Chron. p. 284.

² Lastly by Lingard, vol. iv. p. 237.

³ Commission to John Holand, John de Montacute, and Simon Burley, dated 1st December 1381. —Rymer, vol. vii. p. 336.

⁴ The issue roll of Exchr. Mich. 5 Ric. 2, (1381,) contains an entry, 17th December, of a payment to sir Simon Burley of 10*l.* 9*s.* 4*d.* for certain charges of his embassy in two voyages to treat for the mar-

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The auspicious conclusion of a negotiation so interesting personally to the sovereign was, at this time, rewarded with the Order of the Garter, with which sir Simon Burley was invested upon a vacancy created by the death of Latimer.

He was present with the king at Westminster, in 1382, at the reception of the deputies from Ghent and the other towns of Flanders.¹ On 24th January 1383 he was appointed constable of Dover castle and warden of the Cinque ports; and the king, being in person at Dover, did him the high honour of delivering to him the keys of the fortress.²

His name occurs frequently in the rolls of the subsequent years as grantee from the crown of considerable estates.

The efforts of the duke of Gloucester, the king's uncle, long directed against the obnoxious councillors of Richard, were at length successful; but, although much blood had been spilt by the so-called "merciless" parliament, the duke insisted upon the further sacrifice of several of the monarch's earliest and most revered friends, and particularly of sir Simon Burley. Towards the close of the year 1387 our unfortunate knight was conveyed from London to Nottingham castle;³ and, having been again brought to the metropolis, was impeached upon several vague and unsubstantiated charges. The king offered to respond for his innocence, and even intreated Gloucester to spare his life; and the queen is said to have on her knees⁴ seconded the prayer of her husband. But the duke was inexorable, and inhumanly replied, that, if his nephew would remain king, he must consent to the execution;⁵ and, having availed himself of a temporary relaxation of the intercessions of the king and his supporters, Burley was condemned, and suffered on the same day, the 15th May 1388. The sentence recorded against him was that he should be drawn, hanged, and beheaded; that he and his heirs should be disinherited for ever; and his lands and goods forfeited to the king. But, considering that he had served

riage.—*Issue rolls of Exchr. by F. Devon*, p. 218.

¹ Froiss. tom. viii. p. 249.

² Pat. 9 Ric. 2, m. 26.

³ Payment, 20th Dec. 11 Ric. 2, (1387,) to the sergeants of arms for

taking sir Simon Burley and sir William Elingham to Nottingham castle and bringing them back.—*Issue rolls, by F. Devon*, p. 234.

⁴ Leland, Coll. vol. i. p. 384.

⁵ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 431.

the prince, the king's father, and also the king in his youth, and that he was of the *Company of the Garter*, the execution of the sentence as to the drawing and hanging was remitted, and the marshal of England was commanded to behead him near the Tower of London.¹ Stowe says,² that he was led, with his hands bound behind him, through the city and beheaded on Tower-hill.³ His lands were, in 1398, restored to Roger Burley, his nephew and heir; and the attainder was reversed in 1400.⁴

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Sir Simon Burley died without issue, and does not appear to have been married. From an erroneous inscription, on a tablet, formerly affixed to the north wall of the choir of St. Paul's cathedral, it has hitherto been presumed that his body was there deposited; but the tomb beneath the tablet was undoubtedly intended to commemorate his nephew, sir Richard Burley.⁵

ARMS.

Barry of six, Sable and Or, a chief of the last charged with two pallets of the first; on an inscocheon Gules three bars Ermine.

LXXI.

SIR BRYAN STAPLETON.

THE long and meritorious services of this brave warrior were, in his declining age, rewarded with the Order, after an interval of nearly forty years since it had been conferred on his elder brother, sir Miles Stapleton,⁶ at the period of the foundation.

SIR
BRYAN
STAPLETON.

These distinguished individuals were the sons of sir Gilbert Stapleton of Bedale, in the county of York, by Agnes, daugh-

¹ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 243.

² Chron. p. 302.

³ Lel. Col. vol. i. p. 694.

⁴ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 464^a.

⁵ See p. 293.

⁶ See No. XVII.