

**THE LOLLARDS OF THE
CHILTERN HILLS, GLIMPSES
OF ENGLISH DISSENT IN
THE MIDDLE AGES**

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The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills, glimpses of English dissent in the Middle Ages by W. H. Summers

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W. H. SUMMERS

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THE LOLLARDS OF THE CHILTERN HILLS

Glimpses of English Dissent in the Middle Ages

By

W. H. SUMMERS

Author of "Our Lollard Ancestors," "Memories of Jordans
and the Chalfonts," &c.

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PREFACE

IN the following pages, an attempt has been made to illustrate from the records of a single county the course of a religious movement the influence of which upon the story of the English people has been much more deep and far-reaching than is usually supposed.

The writer was first led to take up the subject by the interest he felt in listening to curious local traditions of the Lollard times, still extant in the old abodes of the "Known Men" in Buckinghamshire, while he was for several years a resident in the district. In the year 1888, a series of articles from his pen, upon the "Lollards of Bucks," appeared in a local paper, the *South Bucks Free Press*. But he was then under the great disadvantage of being dependent for nearly all his facts upon the statements of that much discredited writer, John Foxe, and was not aware to what a remarkable extent Foxe's statements, with regard to Buckinghamshire at any rate, are confirmed and illustrated by independent authorities.

A very large number of writers have been consulted in the preparation of the work; and in most cases the names of these are given. But

as the work is intended for popular use, extracts from the Latin are given in an English translation, and old English is modernised where it is likely to present a difficulty. The references to books and documents, however, will enable those who wish to do so to consult the original text for themselves.

Some of the matter contained in the earlier chapters may at first sight seem somewhat irrelevant, as relating to North Bucks, where Lollardy never appears to have gained a footing; but it will be found that these passages often refer to institutions and localities to which allusion is made in the later chapters.

In conclusion, the writer desires to express his obligation to a number of gentlemen who have assisted him with valuable information and suggestions. Among these he may mention Mr. C. Guthrie, K.C., Procurator of the United Free Church of Scotland; the late Rev. P. W. Phipps, M.A., rector of Chalfont St. Giles; Mr. J. Cheese, of Amersham; and especially Dr. F. J. Furnivall, who has allowed him to make use of some "confessions of heresy," copied for the use of the Early English Text Society, though unfortunately not yet published in a complete form, owing to the scanty support accorded by the public to that excellent organisation.

The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills

CHAPTER I

SAINTLY LEGENDS

"Now it is no small praise to Buckinghamshire, that being one of the lesser counties of England, it had more martyrs and confessors in it before the time of Luther than all the kingdom besides."

So says Thomas Fuller (*Church History*, book v., chap. i.); and though his statement is perhaps not literally correct, it may fitly serve to introduce the story of the Buckinghamshire Lollards. Before entering on that story, however, it may be well to sketch the earlier conditions of religious life among which they arose.

Scarcely any traditions survive of the introduction of the faith of Christ into this part of England. Some have seen a memorial of Saxon, if not of Celtic, piety, in the crosses cut out in the turf of the Chiltern Hills at Whiteleaf and Bledlow, above the ancient British road of the Icknield Way. But these are probably of far