

STEPHEN LANGTON  
A.D. 1165 - 1228

Stephen Langton, Cardinal of the Roman Church, for twenty-three years Archbishop of Canterbury, the soul of the movement that led to the signing of Magna Carta<sup>1</sup>, is a figure that should be of the greatest interest to every lawyer. Yet to how many Canadian lawyers is he anything more than a name! His latest biographer<sup>2</sup>, says of him that, viewed in the light of constitutional history, he takes a place beside the great constitutional lawyers, or Somers, or Burke<sup>3</sup>. Greene places him in the front rank of English patriots<sup>4</sup>. Yet his statesmanship was only one (albeit the greatest) of his claims to remembrance. As a biblical scholar, as a theologian, as a preacher, even as a poet, his position was outstanding. It was he, for instance, who first divided the Scriptures into chapters and his divisions are still in universal use, not alone in the West, but also among Eastern Christians and even to a great extent among the Jews. And it is to him that we are indebted for the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, one of the greatest hymns of all time.

Stephen Langton was born at Langton-by-Wragby, in Lincolnshire, in 1165, the eldest son of Henry Langton. The Langtons were not distinguished, but had a standing in the neighbourhood and in the courts, and were the holders of a small manor. They were probably of Anglo-Danish stock<sup>5</sup>. Stephen was early attracted to Paris, then a great centre of learning, where, as student and professor, he spent twenty years of his life, coming to be recognized as one of the foremost theologians of the day. His "*Questiones*", or lectures on moral problems, survive and in them are to be found the principles which guided him in every action of his subsequent career. His fame as a preacher was early established and is well attested. Some five hundred of his sermons have come down to us and, strange as it may seem, after seven hundred years further research is constantly adding to the number.

<sup>1</sup> Pattison, *Life of Stephen Langton*, in *Lives of the English Saints*, quoted in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, p. 791.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Langton, being the Ford Lectures, delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term, 1927, by F. W. Powicke, Fellow of the British Academy, Professor of Mediaeval History in the University of Manchester, Clarendon Press, 1928. The author is now Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford and President of the Royal Historical Society.

<sup>3</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Greene, *History of the English People*, Sterling edition, Vol. 1, p. 239.

<sup>5</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 8.

During the early years of his sojourn at Paris, Langton won the friendship of a fellow student, Lotario de Conti di Segni (1160-1216) who, as Pope Innocent III, called him to Rome in 1206, and raised him to the Cardinalate, a dignity that soon drew him into the vortex of English politics. In 1205 Archbishop Hubert Walter died, and John, the worst king who ever disgraced the English throne<sup>6</sup>, rejoiced greatly, for he had found the Archbishop's attempts at guidance most irksome to him<sup>7</sup>. He accordingly determined that the new Archbishop must be of a different type, and selected as his candidate John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, a worthless character but a man after the King's own heart and a close personal adherent. The right of selection belonged to the Monks of Canterbury<sup>8</sup>, although the suffragans of the see also claimed a voice. To avoid the double pressure, from the King and from the bishops, some of the younger monks chose, secretly, Reginald, their subprior; but, the secret leaking out, the remainder of the brethren were induced by the King, to elect the Bishop of Norwich. Both parties appealed to Rome and Innocent III, in December 1206, set both elections aside as uncanonical. Sixteen monks of Canterbury were present in Rome, armed with full power to act for the whole chapter and also with a promise from the King that he would assent to whomever they might elect. This promise was given, as it transpired, on a condition, unknown to the other monks, that they would elect the Bishop of Norwich. Released by the Pope from their compulsory promise to the King, the delegates, at Innocent's suggestion, elected Langton, (June 1207), who is described by the Chronicler Roger of Wendover as being at that time without an equal at the Roman Court for learning and moral excellence<sup>9</sup>. The Pope wrote personally to the King urging him to accept the new Archbishop, but taking care to make it clear that the royal consent was not essential. The request met with a flat refusal<sup>10</sup>. Upon Stephen's appointment as Cardinal, John had written to congratulate him, adding that he had been on the point of inviting him to his own Court.

<sup>6</sup> Greene quotes as a contemporary verdict—"Foul as it is, hell itself is defiled by the fouler presence of John". And he adds—"But in his inner soul, John was the worst outcome of the Angevins. He united into one mass of wickedness their insolence, their selfishness, their unbridled lust, their cruelty and tyranny, their shamelessness, their superstition, their cynical indifference to honour or truth". *Op. cit.* p. 237. See also Norgate *John Lackland* (1902) p. 236.

<sup>7</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 111; Adams, *The Political History of England* (1905) Vol. II, p. 407.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, *England under the Normans and Angevins*, 6th Ed. p. 353.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 32, p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> Adams *op. cit.* p. 409; David *op. cit.* p. 355; Norgate *op. cit.* p. 127.

Nevertheless, neither the recommendation of Innocent nor the merits of Stephen could pacify the angry King, who swore that the new Archbishop should never set foot in his dominions. Not satisfied with this, John proceeded to wreak his vengeance on the Church of Canterbury, seizing its property and revenues and expelling its monks, now unanimously in favour of Langton, champion of the independence of the Church<sup>11</sup>. This was, of course, a declaration of war against the Church and the Pope's eventual reply was the interdict (March 1208) which the King, in turn, countered by a general spoliation of church property, effected with brutal violence, and an outlawry of the clergy. Then followed the excommunication (Nov. 1209) and finally the deposition (1212)<sup>12</sup>, the latter coupled with the request to Philip, King of France, to execute the sentence. As the dates indicate, Innocent's action was far from precipitate. No step was, in fact, taken until repeated efforts to settle the dispute amicably had failed<sup>13</sup>.

At length, after six years of resistance, faced with the danger from Philip, the desertion of his barons and the general anxiety and unrest due to the interdict, and seriously alarmed at the prophecy of the religious enthusiast, Peter of Wakefield, who proclaimed that before the feast of the Ascension, (then only ten days off) John would have ceased to reign, the King decided to capitulate. On the 13th of May 1213, he met the Legate Pandulph and accepted all of the terms laid down by Innocent. These terms were the recall of Langton and the other exiles, clerical and lay, and the restoration of their lands and offices, a general amnesty to all concerned in the quarrel and full restitution for money unlawfully seized and for injuries wantonly inflicted. Two days later, the King, of his own motion and without any suggestion on the part of the legate, resigned his kingdom into the hands of the Pope's representative, receiving it back again as a fief of the Holy See<sup>14</sup>.

On the important subject of John's dispute with Rome, Professor Powicke remarks as follows<sup>15</sup> :—

“The trouble had arisen over the question of election to bishoprics. This was a wider issue than that of freedom of election; it involved also the demand of ecclesiastical reformers for canonical and valid elections. Now this question was not a matter of occasional significance, it was

<sup>11</sup> Adams op. cit. p. 410; Dict. Nat. Biog.

<sup>12</sup> What the Pope did was to release the King's subjects from their oath of allegiance and to declare a crusade against him. Greene op. cit. p. 242.

<sup>13</sup> Adams, op. cit. p. 412; Norgate, op. cit. p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Lingard, History of England (1819) 1912 Ed. Vol. II, p. 329.

<sup>15</sup> Powicke, op. cit. pp. 78-90.

present everywhere in Christendom and all the time . . . A busy man like Innocent III was advising the church on such points very frequently; his quarrel with King John would appear to him a very serious case among hundreds of cases relating to elections in all parts of Europe. I doubt if the insularity of English historical enquiry from the days of William Prynne onwards has had as misleading consequences in any matter as in its treatment of this quarrel. We must, to start with, rid our minds of any idea that the pope was only concerned to exert his authority. He was concerned to see that the law of the Church was carried out . . . The law was not imposed by the Church on the world—rather the law was the condition of life.”

Prior to his election as Archbishop, Langton had remained passive. He did not seek the office and when informed that he had been chosen, he replied that he was not his own master, but entirely at the Pope’s disposal<sup>16</sup>. During his six years of exile in France his attitude was always correct, his efforts always directed towards conciliation and peace. Soon after his election he addressed from his place of exile a letter to the English people, dignified in tone, with not a trace of personal bitterness and not a word of personal grievance<sup>17</sup>.

Upon John’s capitulation, Langton, with other exiled prelates, returned to England (July 1213) and the Archbishop fell at once into the old constitutional position of the Primate of all England, as keeper of the King’s conscience and guardian of the national safety, temporal as well as spiritual<sup>18</sup>. His first duty was to absolve the King, which he did at the door of Winchester Cathedral following promises of amendment, a general amnesty, the restoration of ecclesiastical property and the observance of the laws of Edward the Confessor, for which latter the charter of Henry I was soon afterwards substituted. Langton, in addition, required the King to repeat the fealty to the Pope, promised two months earlier, through the legate Pandulph.

Professor Powicke, following Matthew Paris, says that Langton was disgusted at John’s surrender of his kingdom to the Holy See<sup>19</sup>. If that was so, how account for his requiring the King to renew it at Winchester? The Dictionary of National Biography takes a different view. After quoting the account given by Paris, the writer of the article remarks as follows:—

“But the writers of the day mention nothing of the kind and Matthew’s story probably represents rather his own view, coloured by the

<sup>16</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., Vol. 32, p. 123.

<sup>17</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., Vol. 32, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., Vol. 32, p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 101.

experiences of a later time, of what the Archbishop's feelings and actions ought to have been, than what they were."<sup>20</sup>

Monk though he was, and possessed of a literary gift superior to all of his rivals, Matthew Paris was nevertheless a vehement anti-papal partisan and a keen politician, rather than an impartial onlooker<sup>21</sup>. Lingard moreover shows, from contemporary records, that Paris' account of what took place is clearly inaccurate and therefore unreliable. For instance, Paris describes Pandulph, in May 1213, in Langton's presence, trampling under foot the money that he had just then received as tribute from John. But the records show that no money was paid to Pandulph, either then or at any other time. The first payment of tribute was made months later, through another channel<sup>22</sup>.

On the general subject of John's attornment to the Pope, much rhetoric has been poured out, from the famous anachronistic passage that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of King John, down to writers of our own day. This was natural enough in the Sixteenth Century; but when extravagant invective is repeated in the Twentieth, it is due, the writer ventures to suggest, to a failure to appreciate the circumstances and to view them through the eyes of Thirteenth Century Europe. Consider the following undoubted facts:—

1. In the Thirteenth Century, when the feudal system was universal, public opinion did not see anything degrading in a state of vassalage<sup>23</sup>. It was the condition of most of the princes of Christendom. The King of England was already the vassal of the King of France, for his transmarine territories. The Sovereigns of The Two Sicilies, Sweden, Denmark, Aragon and Poland had recently become vassals of the Holy See<sup>24</sup>. John's father, Henry II, had made himself the feudatory of Pope Alexander III and his brother Richard had done the same with the Emperor of Germany. John's example was, moreover, followed at a later date by the Scottish patriots, who, to defeat the claim of Edward I, acknowledged the Pope as their superior

<sup>20</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., Vol. 32, p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Norgate, *op. cit.* p. 183; McKechnie, *Magna Carta* (1905) p. 32; Thurston, *No Popery* (1930) p. 217.

<sup>22</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* p. 626.

<sup>23</sup> Greene, referring to John's surrender of his kingdom to the Pope, says—"We see little trace of such feeling (of national disgrace) in the contemporary accounts of the time. All seem rather to have regarded it as a complete settlement of the difficulties in which king and kingdom were involved". *Op. cit.* p. 244. See also Adams, *op. cit.* p. 424; Thurston *op. cit.* p. 219; and Luchaire, *Les Royautés vassals du Saint Siegé* (1908) p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, *op. cit.* p. 368; Adams, *op. cit.* p. 424.

lord and maintained that Scotland had always been a fief of the Roman Church<sup>25</sup>.

2. While, by his action, John made himself the feudatory of the Pope, at a yearly rental of one thousand marks, he nevertheless expressly reserved from the grant all of the rights and prerogatives of the Crown<sup>26</sup>.

3. The grant and acceptance are treated in the original documents, not as a national, but as a personal transaction. John binds himself and the heirs of his body by his wife, not his successors generally<sup>27</sup>.

4. The conditions imposed by Innocent, and accepted on the 13th of May by John, contained no reference whatever to feudal superiority. This was tendered voluntarily by John, two days later<sup>28</sup>.

5. The cession was made at the instance of the Great Council of Barons, John's constitutional advisers, who later claimed full credit for having suggested the plan and persuaded John to adopt it<sup>29</sup>.

6. The Pope stood too high above earthly monarchs, his claims were too spiritual, too remote from the immediate business and interests of the day, to make the owning of his suzerainty any very practical burden<sup>30</sup>.

7. The transaction was of immense value to John, immediately, in his dispute with Philip and, later, in his dealings with his rebellious subjects<sup>31</sup>. Greene says that as a political measure its success was immediate and complete<sup>32</sup>.

8. The cession of his kingdom to the Pope no doubt appeared to John to constitute a literal fulfilment (though without dire consequences) of the prophecy of Peter of Wakefield, that before the feast of the Ascension John would have ceased to reign, a prediction which had made a deep impression on the weak and superstitious mind of the King<sup>33</sup>.

It is far from the present writer's intention to endeavour to exculpate John from all blame for what he did. His act should,

<sup>25</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* pp. 332 and 627.

<sup>26</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* p. 625.

<sup>27</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* p. 626.

<sup>28</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* p. 624; Norgate, *op. cit.* pp. 182-183; Adams, *op. cit.* p. 424.

<sup>29</sup> Lingard, *op. cit.* p. 333; McKechnie, *op. cit.* p. 32; Norgate, *op. cit.* p. 183; Adams, *op. cit.* p. 424.

<sup>30</sup> Greene, *op. cit.* p. 244.

<sup>31</sup> Davis, *op. cit.* p. 368.

<sup>32</sup> Greene, *op. cit.* p. 244; Norgate, *op. cit.* pp. 183-184.

<sup>33</sup> Norgate, *op. cit.* p. 184.

however, be viewed in its proper historical setting and, when so viewed, it is not so black as it has usually been painted. The mildest term usually applied to it is "disgraceful". It was an act of cunning, prompted by fear and selfishness and in that sense it may be said to have been disgraceful, but not the least suggestion of ignominy was at that time attached to feudal dependence on the Holy See<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, whatever may be thought of John's conduct in voluntarily surrendering his kingdom to the Pope, no blame can reasonably be attributed to Innocent for accepting the surrender<sup>35</sup>. The acceptance was not due to papal ambition. Innocent was too great a man for that. The Pope's object was to place himself in a better position to compel John to do justice to his subjects, temporally as well as spiritually.

After the ceremony at Winchester, Langton proceeded to London, where he addressed, at St. Paul's, a great assembly of clergy and barons. His sermon, on the text *In Deo Speravi Cor Meum*, has recently been unearthed and published<sup>36</sup>. The discourse is remarkable for the skill with which it is put together and for the blunt honesty of the English Cardinal, talking to his fellow countrymen a language they could not misunderstand. There is not a word of personal triumph in the whole sermon.

After the address, Langton called the barons aside, read to them the Charter of Henry I and commented upon its provisions. They answered by loud acclamations, and the Archbishop, taking advantage of their enthusiasm, administered to them an oath by which they bound themselves to conquer or die in the defence of their liberties<sup>37</sup>. The continuity between the group of barons thus addressed by Langton and the assemblage at Runnymede two years later, was never broken<sup>38</sup>.

Upon Langton's arrival in England three objects called for attainment; the full restoration of the ecclesiastical property seized by the King, the observance of canonical elections and the establishment of sound government. He compromised on the question of restitution and he had his way in the matter of elections. But the establishment of sound government presented much greater difficulty<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, as Anselm had withstood William Rufus, as Theobald had withstood Stephen, as

<sup>34</sup> Luchaire, op. cit. p. 57; Thurston, op. cit. p. 219.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, op. cit. p. 368.

<sup>36</sup> Catholic Historical Review, January 1930, p. 408.

<sup>37</sup> Lingard, op. cit. p. 337.

<sup>38</sup> Powicke, op. cit. p. 127.

<sup>39</sup> Powicke, op. cit. p. 104.

St. Thomas had withstood Henry II, so Langton prepared to withstand and rescue the country from the tyranny of John<sup>40</sup>. Notwithstanding the oath that he had administered to the barons, the Archbishop hoped for a peaceful solution and that civil war might be avoided<sup>41</sup>. He worked hard for two years to attain that end and he very nearly succeeded. But John's violent reaction after his concessions, his vascillations, his evil conduct and his mistrust of the Archbishop, ruined Langton's hopes<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless he continued his efforts towards peace, and was, throughout, the intermediary between the King and the barons. While he acted as the King's representative, it was universally known that he supported the reforms that were demanded<sup>43</sup>.

From the very beginning, John made every effort to prejudice Langton in the eyes of the Pope. The King's emissaries complained bitterly of the Archbishop's independent attitude and of his refusal to take strong measures against the barons. These complaints brought down upon Langton the urgent reproaches of Innocent<sup>44</sup>. The Pope was preparing for the great Council of the Lateran. To his mind, social disturbance at such a time must have seemed petty and inopportune and the countenance of it by a prelate of the Church, peculiarly disloyal. He was, naturally, more in sympathy with authority than with those in apparent rebellion. He could not know, or at least appreciate, the legal issues involved in the dispute or understand, the justice and urgency of the demands of the barons. He could act only upon the information laid before him. He was told that a party of barons had formed an illegal confederacy and taken up arms against the King, a vassal of the Holy See, and that the Archbishop was aiding and abetting the rebels. He wrote letters of remonstrance, but while he was debating further action, London was entered and the Charter granted<sup>45</sup>. Innocent declared it null and void (August 26th, 1215) and directed the Archbishop to excommunicate the disturbers of the peace of the kingdom. When Langton, though consenting to one general issue of the sentence, declined to repeat it individually, he was rebuked and suspended<sup>46</sup>. The Archbishop felt that Innocent had been misled as to the facts and wished to set

<sup>40</sup> Greene, *op. cit.* p. 246.

<sup>41</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 125; McKechnie, *op. cit.* p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Adams, *op. cit.* p. 435.

<sup>44</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, p. 793.

matters right in a personal interview. He however, submitted with good grace though a sad heart<sup>47</sup>, accepted the deposition and begged to be absolved<sup>48</sup>.

It must not be thought that Langton's refusal to carry out Innocent's instructions was due to any lack of appreciation of the Pope's position as head of the Universal Church. The contrary is clear from many passages in his *Questions*. For instance, in discussing a decree on fasting, he says:—

“We say that the decree was lawful and that respect must be paid to the supreme pontiff, because who resists him resists the ordinance of God.”<sup>49</sup>

And, to give another example, in discussing the power of the Pope to dispense from the payment of tithes, he says:—

“I am at liberty to believe (*credibile est*) that the lord pope cannot dispense laymen from the payment of tithes . . . but if the pope decreed otherwise, I should say that I was in error” (*me fuisse deceptum*).<sup>50</sup>

On this subject, Professor Powicke remarks:—

“As an old teacher at Paris and a cardinal, he appreciated as well as any man the conception of a united Church, bound together under the headship of the pope, by a common law inspired by the law of God.”<sup>51</sup>

This “common law” was not of course either the common law of England or the Roman law; nor was it the canon law, for the canon law was the creation of the Church, which the Church could at any time amend or repeal. It was the universal belief of the Western Church in Medieval Europe, as it is the belief of Catholics today, that the unity of the Church and the supremacy of the Pope as its earthly head, rested on a Divine law, which no authority on earth had power to alter<sup>52</sup>.

Innocent's annulment of the Charter has, like the King's attornment to the Holy See, been the subject of much anti-papal eloquence. Here again, however, the action, of the Pope, when viewed in its proper historical setting, is seen not to be open to the aspersions that have been cast upon it. Innocent, as overlord, was entirely within his legal rights in acting as he did<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 132.

<sup>48</sup> *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, Vol. 32, p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted by Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 139.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted by Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 140.

<sup>51</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 151.

<sup>52</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, (1225-1274), *Summa Theologica*, Tomus Tertius, Secunda secundae, *Questio XXXIX*; Robinson, *History of Western Europe* (1903) p. 201 et seq.; Belloc, *Europe and the Faith* (1920) p. 255. Martindale, *The Faith of the Roman Church* (1927) 2nd ed. p. 43 et seq.

<sup>53</sup> Adams, *op. cit.* p. 441.

Such being the case, the annulment followed naturally on the condemnation of Langton and was based on the same misunderstanding. Moreover, there was much in the facts that appeared to justify the Pope's action. For one thing, John's signature had obviously been extracted by force. For another, the conduct of the twenty-five barons, appointed as "executors", under Chapter 61 of the Charter, was from the very first so arbitrary and illegal as to throw discredit upon the whole transaction<sup>54</sup>. They had adopted, in the name of God and the Church, the programme that Langton had outlined for them, but once in power, they showed no disposition to follow ecclesiastical guidance, and acted as though they considered themselves as above the law<sup>55</sup>. These circumstances were promptly reported by John's agents to the Pope and, doubtless, lost nothing in the telling. When, in the next reign, the Charter was re-enacted, it was with the full approval of the Papal Legate, but it is not without significance that, on that occasion, Chapter 61 was omitted<sup>56</sup>.

In the following spring (1216) the sentence of suspension was revoked, but upon the condition that the Archbishop should not, during pleasure, return to his diocese. Two years later, when Innocent and John were both dead, the condition was withdrawn and Langton went back, with the full favour of the Roman Court<sup>57</sup>. When, in the spring of 1218, he arrived in England, he found a country purged of civil strife, the charter confirmed as part of the law of the land and the affairs of the new boy King, Henry III, in capable hands<sup>58</sup>. In 1220 he represented to the Holy See that, England being now at peace, there was no reason why the Archbishop of Canterbury should continue to be subordinate to a resident legate and his representations resulted in the legate's recall. Of this incident Professor Powicke says:—

"It would be a mistake to regard the change in the Archbishop's position as a victory for an insular policy. There is no evidence that the papacy ever regarded the surrender of the kingdom by John to Rome as in itself involving the right to keep a legate permanently in England. A legate was sent on Ecclesiastical business when particular conditions required his presence . . . If a papal legate were not required to maintain the papal *dominium* over England, he was still less necessary to maintain ecclesiastical dependence upon Rome. Here the issues raised by John's surrender of his kingdom did not arise.

<sup>54</sup> Norgate, op. cit. p. 58; McKechnie, op. cit. p. 52; Davis, op. cit. p. 554; Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol. VI, p. 248.

<sup>55</sup> Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol. VI, p. 246.

<sup>56</sup> Thurston, op. cit. p. 224.

<sup>57</sup> Dict. Nat. Biog., Vol. 32, p. 125.

<sup>58</sup> Powicke, op. cit. p. 134.

John's submission had removed an external obstacle to the smooth working of the canonical system; it had done nothing to establish it."<sup>59</sup>

Following upon the withdrawal of the legate, Langton called an ecclesiastical council with the object of framing canons for the local application of the decrees of the Council of Lateran (1215), which he had himself attended. This provincial Council met at Olney, in April 1222, and is to the ecclesiastical history of England what the assembly at Runnymede is to its secular history. Its decrees, known as the Constitutions of Stephen Langton, are the earliest canons still binding in English ecclesiastical courts.<sup>60</sup> On this subject Professor Powicke, however, remarks:—

“Historians of the English Church tend to overlook the fact that this was no insular movement, but a general attempt to give force to the decrees of a great council. And these decrees were not councils of perfection issuing from the brain of a great pope; they summed up the work of previous councils, of a generation of papal legislation, and of ceaseless discussion by theologians, of whom Langton had been one . . . ”<sup>61</sup>.

In 1225, Langton arranged for a solemn reissue of the Charter, granted ten years before; but whereas, in 1215, it had been forced on a reluctant King as the result of civil war, it was now held in the highest esteem by a King and his united people. The great Archbishop had lived to see his ideal of kingship fully realized<sup>62</sup>. The ceremony formed a fitting climax to his public career, now rapidly nearing its close. He died peacefully, at his manor of Slindon, in Sussex, on the 9th of July 1228 and was buried in his own cathedral of Canterbury.

Stephen Langton was truly a great man, with a clear penetrating mind and a large fund of good practical common sense. He had a high ideal of duty, to which he constantly adhered and his courage and moderation were respected by all<sup>63</sup>. If a man may be judged by the magnitude of the work he has accomplished, it may safely be said that he was the greatest Englishman who ever sat in the chair of St. Augustine<sup>64</sup>. In the words of the writer in the Dictionary of National Biography, the land of his birth needs no other proof of his loyalty to her than the great charter of her freedom.

W. L. SCOTT.

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<sup>59</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* pp. 147-150.

<sup>60</sup> *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, Vol. 32, p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 151.

<sup>62</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* p. 157.

<sup>63</sup> Powicke, *op. cit.* *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, p. 791.