

THE FRIARS AND HOW THEY CAME TO ENGLAND

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The Friars and How They Came to England by Thomas of Eccleston & Father Cuthbert

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THOMAS OF ECCLESTON & FATHER CUTHBERT

**THE FRIARS AND
HOW THEY CAME
TO ENGLAND**

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BEING
A TRANSLATION OF THOMAS OF ECCLESTON'S
"DE ADVENTU F.F. MINORUM IN ANGLIAM"

DONE INTO ENGLISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON THE SPIRIT AND
GENIUS OF THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS

BY
FATHER CUTHBERT
OF THE ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS, CAPUCHIN

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1903

TO
V. M. G.
WHOSE DELIGHT IN
THE STORY OF THE FRIARS
SUGGESTED THIS
BOOK

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
ON THE SPIRIT AND GENIUS OF THE
FRANCISCAN FRIARS

I.

10 **T**HE Friars Minor, or Franciscan Friars, as they are popularly called, arrived in England in the year 1224. They came at a moment when events were swiftly moving towards a decisive crisis in our national history. The feudal system, assailed on the one side by the Crown, and on the other by the rising burgher class, was passing away, ending a noble history in a not altogether inglorious death; for feudalism had saved Europe from barbaric licence and had laid the foundations of civilised society, and it left behind it a legacy of noble deeds and beautiful thought which we do well to cherish. But its day was over. A new spirit

had come upon the people. The townsfolk, conscious of the power which trade had put into their hands, were lifting their heads against both baron and King. In the universities—but lately come into existence—a spirit of democratic freedom was awake, which frequently brought the students into collision with the authorities both spiritual and civil. The towns and universities were, in fact, the centres of the revolution which was irresistibly changing the face of England, and, indeed, of nearly all Europe, and converting the mediæval monarchy into the modern nation.

For a time it seemed as though State and Church must collapse. The Crown, constantly at variance with the baronage, endeavoured to secure the support of the towns by the grant of immunities and privileges which strengthened the burghers against the barons, but also put a weapon into the burghers' hands, which they were not slow to turn against the Crown when occasion arose. Bent upon achieving their own freedom, the townsfolk at one time sided with the King against the barons; at another time