

## Original Documents.

### HISTORIOLA DE PIETATE REGIS HENRICI III.

NARRATIVE OF AN INCIDENT CONNECTED WITH THE VISIT OF HENRY III. TO FRANCE, A.D. 1259.

IN Dr. Smith's catalogue of the Cottonian MSS., published in the year 1696, is a description of the contents of a volume, marked Vitellius D. XIV., which appears to have been entirely destroyed in the fire which consumed or injured many other volumes of the Cottonian Library in the year 1731. Among other early historical pieces is mentioned, as No. 9 in the series, a certain "Historiola de pietate Regis Henrici III." This little narrative has been preserved to us in the unpublished collections made by Rymer, for a Supplement to the *Fœdera*, having been copied for him from the Cottonian MS., before the period of the fire.<sup>1</sup> It is a curious anecdote, very illustrative of the character of our sovereign Henry III.; and, as far as I am aware, it has not been given in detail in any published history of the period.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative evidently has been extracted from a larger work, probably a contemporary chronicle. It refers to an occurrence during the visit made by Henry to France, in the autumn of the year 1259, for the purpose of seeking from Louis IX.—Saint Louis—a restoration of Normandy and other lands in France, held by his predecessors, and conquered from his father, King John, by the French King, Philip Augustus. It is unnecessary to state more than the general result of the negotiations which ensued. Henry was induced to resign his claim to the disputed provinces, accepting in lieu of them the promise of a considerable money payment, together with certain lands in Gascony. It was also agreed that he should take rank among the peers of France, and renounce the titles of Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou.

The King, on his arrival in Paris, is stated to have been entertained for many days by King Louis in his own palace<sup>3</sup>; and he subsequently retired to the monastery of St. Denis, where he remained, engrossed in religious exercises, for more than a month. At the particular period of the incident recorded, however, he appears from the story itself to have

<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus. Additional MS. 4573, f. 57.

<sup>2</sup> The continuator of Matthew Paris shows his acquaintance with the anecdote, by the following short reference to it in his summary of Henry's character: "Contigit autem aliquando Sanctum Lodowicum, Francorum Regem, cum eo super hoc conferentem dicere quod non semper missis sed frequentius sermoni-

bus audiendis est vacandum, cui faceta urbanitate respondens ait, se malle amicum suum sæpius videre quam de eo loquentem, licet bona dicentem, audire."—Matt. Par. Opera, ed. Wats, 1640, p. 1009.

<sup>3</sup> *Gesta S. Ludovici*, per Gul. de Nangis, ed. Bouquet, vol. xxi. f. 581.

been lodged in the palace of his sister-in-law, Margaret of Provence, Queen of Louis IX., at St. Germain des Prés.

The purport of the story is to illustrate the devout character of Henry III., and his particular partiality to the office of the mass. It contrasts his taste in this respect with that of his brother monarch, Louis IX., which was equally strong in favour of sermons. We are told that, while Henry was in Paris, for the purpose already explained, he had engaged to meet the King of France and his nobles in Parliament, on the first day of the assembly. Henry, however, failed to make his appearance till very late in the day, when no time remained to enter into the proposed business. His unpunctuality was explained by his having not only attended mass at the palace of St. Germain before setting out, but having jumped off his horse at every church he passed on his way, and assisted at every mass there celebrated. The pious King Louis and his nobles were much edified by the cause of their disappointment, but were urgent with Henry to put himself earlier on his route to meet them on the morrow. The King accordingly was up by times; but the same repeated stoppages for the same holy purpose produced the same effect on the second day. To prevent a third disappointment, King Louis took the precaution of sending strict orders to the priests of all the churches between his palace and that where Henry lodged, to keep their doors closed on the following day until Henry had passed. His commands were obeyed, and Henry was one of the very first to arrive at the Parliament on the third day. After congratulations on his alacrity from Louis and his nobles, he was requested to proceed with them to the proposed business. But, with a troubled countenance, Henry assured them that he could transact no business in a place and with people under interdict, as, from the closed doors of the churches, was evidently the case with the Parisians. Louis was obliged to confess what he had done; and then inquired of Henry what he found so delightful in attending masses. Henry asked in return why Louis was so fond of sermons. Louis answered that it was a sweet and wholesome thing to hear often of his Creator. "And a sweeter and wholesomer thing it seems to me," replied Henry, "to see Him again and again, than to hear of Him." The anecdote ends with a statement that eventually the pious kings agreed to follow each his own form of devotion, and to leave their state affairs to be settled for them by their ministers.

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Circa idem tempus erant duo catholici reges, Ludovicus in Francia et Henricus in Anglia, consanguinei, quorum alter, Ludovicus scilicet, delectabatur in audiendis sermonibus de Deo cotidie inter missarum solemnias, et alius cotidie tres missas vel plures voluit audire devotissime, delectatus pluries aspicere corpus Christi et in missarum officio, quantum potuit, occupari. Cum autem idem Henricus, Rex Angliæ, quodam tempore, tanquam Dux Aquitanniæ, ad vocationem dicti Regis Franciæ, Parisius ad Parliamentum venisset, prima die inchoationis Parliamenti, cum Rex Franciæ et omnes pares ipsum, tanquam primum et majorem parium, diutius expectassent, tandem ipse, propter occupationem diutinam missarum tam in hospicio suo apud Sanctum Germanum de Pratis, quam per ecclesias in itinere suo versus Regis palatium existentes, quarum nullam pertransire voluit dum aliquis presbyter, sacris vestibus indutus, ad missæ celebrationem inibi se pararet, set, equo desiliens, ecclesias reverenter ingressus, in eisdem

devote permansit usque ad finem omnium missarum ibidem celebratarum, adeo tarde ad Parlamentum venit quod nil fiebat illo die. Propter quod, Rex Franciæ cum cæteris paribus rogaverunt eum ut in crastino citius veniret, ad expediendum negotia in Parlamento tractanda. Quibus promisit officium divinum se tempestivius auditurum, et postea cum celeritate qua posset adventurum.

Qui, ut promiserat, etiam ante auroram surrexit, officium et missas suas more solito audiendo. Set, cum per ecclesias civitatis versus palatium Regis transitum faceret, tantam expectationem in audiendis missis ibidem fecit quod adeo tarde venit ad palatium sicut fecerat die precedenti: et sic illa die impediti fuerunt sicut prius. Quod Rex Francorum cum paribus advertentes, aliud consilium super hac re tunc invenire nesciverunt, nisi quod secreto mitteretur per civitatem Parisiensem ad omnes ecclesias per quas Rex Angliæ transitum faceret, ne, in ejus transitu, aliquis presbyter circa divinum officium inveniretur occupatus, set quod omnes illæ ecclesiæ clausæ tenerentur, donec Rex Angliæ ipsas omnes et singulas versus Parlamentum veniens transivisset. Quod sic factum est. Unde Rex Angliæ, in crastino sequenti, ad locum Parlamenti venit inter primos. Quod Rex Franciæ cum paribus perpendentes, valde applaudebant ei de tam tempestivo adventu, statim cum eo Parlamentum ingredi volentes. Set Rex Angliæ vultu turbato dixit Regi Franciæ—"Mi" [frater?] et consanguinee carissime, ego in loco interdicto nec cum interdictis intendo parlamentare." Et, cum ab eo quæreret Rex Franciæ quare hoc diceret, respondit:—"Ego, in veniendo huc, non vidi aliquam ecclesiam apertam, set, more interdicti, omnes clausas." Et, cum Rex Franciæ, ad placandum ejus animum, respondisset nullum ibi esse interdictum, set personas illas ecclesiasticas officium suum in ejus transitu aliquantulum expectando intermittere, ne Parlamentum propter ejus moram impediretur, adjiciens, quasi quærendo ab eo—"Dilecte consanguinee, quid vos delectet tot missas audire?"—Ad quod ipse respondit—"Et quid vos tot prædicationes?"—Rex Franciæ respondit—"Videtur michi valde dulce et salubre multociens audire de Creatore meo."—Et Rex Angliæ, ibi vero alludens, respondit—"Et michi valde dulcius et salubrius ipsum pluries videre quam de ipso audire." Et sic sancti Reges, nolentes devotiones suas alterutrum impedire, cum paribus ordinaverunt quod, non obstante tam sancta Regum absentia, cæteri pares facta et expeditiones regni et populi tractarent et ordinarent, et ipsis Regibus referrent, in eorum adventu, per eos in arduis approbanda.

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