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REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO

The Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 12, 1862.

ALSO

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MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

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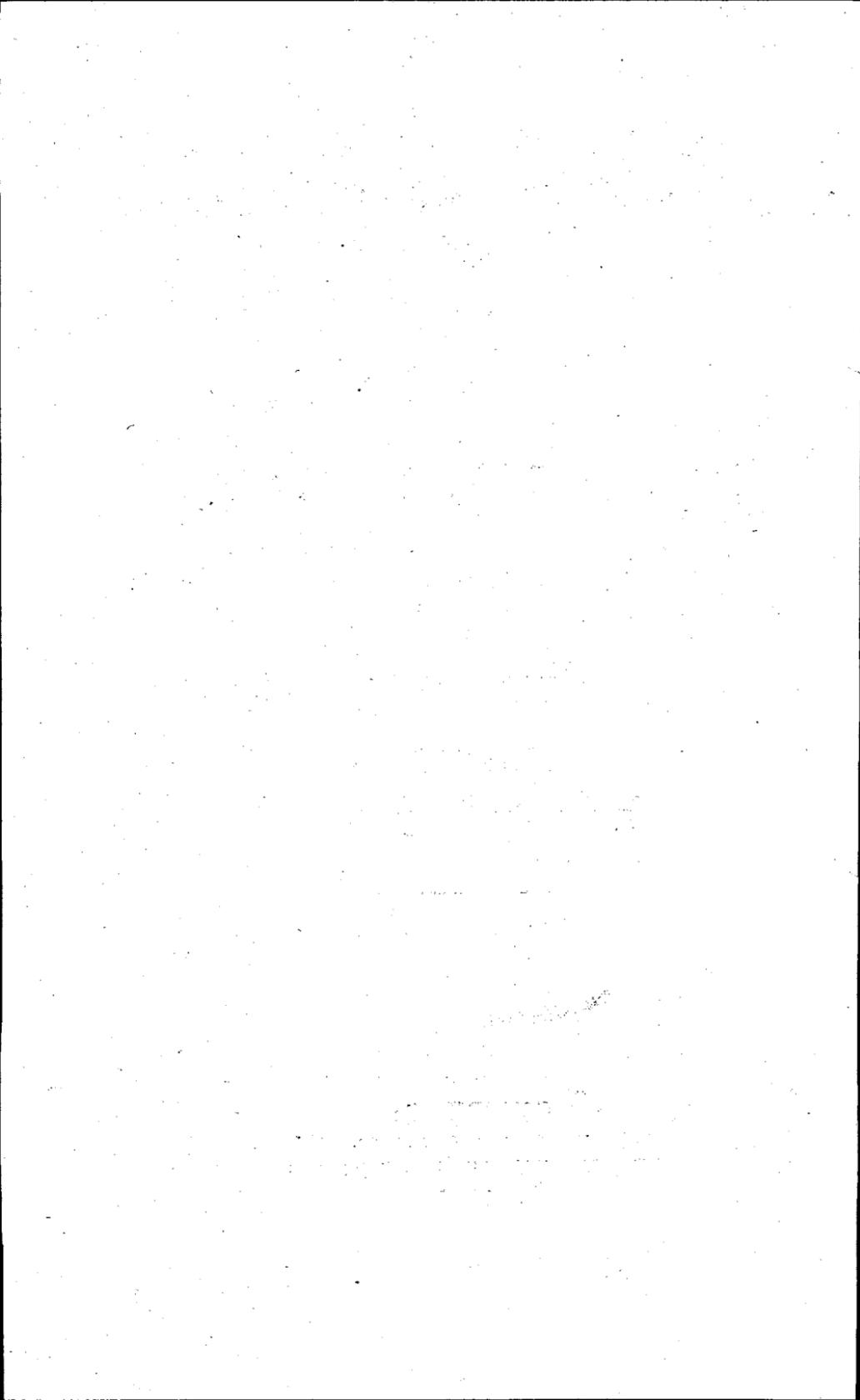
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XVI. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO DR ASHTON, MASTER OF JESUS COLLEGE, RELATIVE TO DR BENTLEY'S CANDIDATURE FOR THE REGIUS PROFESSORSHIP OF DIVINITY. COMMUNICATED BY G. E. CORRIE, D.D., MASTER OF JESUS COLLEGE.

THE following Letters, addressed to Dr Ashton, Master of Jesus College, will be more intelligible if it be borne in mind that for several months before they were written, the declining health of Dr James, President of Queens' College and Regius Professor of Divinity, had given Dr Bentley, Master of Trinity College, an opportunity for making it publicly known that he intended to be a Candidate for the Divinity Professorship whenever a vacancy in that office should occur. That vacancy did occur on the 15th March, 1716—17, and these letters bear testimony to the strong dislike with which, it is well known, Dr Bentley was then regarded by influential Members of the University¹.

TEMPLE, *March 16, 1716.*

Dear Sir,

I cannot help joining in the common request that y^r friends at this time have to make to you, that you w^d suffer them to prevail over y^r Inclinations for the sake of a great and publick good; tis an argument I w^d not enter into with any man of whom I had not the best opinion: I know you want neither the profit nor the honour of the place, but the University wants you, and if she has such an opinion of y^r judgement as to be desirous of seeing you in a place where matters of the greatest weight

¹ See Monk, *Life of Bentley*, pp. 342, et seq.

are to be submitted to it, you may well in return take her opinion in one case (in we^h perhaps you are not the most equal judge) I mean of yrself; and think it at least probable y^t you may be able to discharge an office for we^h all but yrself, think you to be the best qualified. Should you refuse it at this time I shall never expect to see the Credit of y^t Chair retrieved, upon w^{ch} in the general neglect or indeed contempt of the others, the credit of the University for learning & exercises seems wholly to depend. I know how easy it will be for you to turn this argument back upon my hands, and to tell me That the more depends on the office, the less proper man you. But I beg leave to say: That if vanity and modesty have the same effect, if both conspire to fill the chair with an improper man, it will be hard to say who we shall be obliged to most—the man who desires it or the man who refuses it. We stand suspected already to those who have power and will to hurt us. We want only to be despised in order to be ruined, and I am very much mistaken if we are not in a fair way, to that; should this election miscarry. Tho' I am proud of being in the number of y^r friends, yet I write not this out of a concern for you but for the University: and should the Professorship be offered you, (as I hope & believe it will) I have confidence in you y^t you will consider the offer in the same view. Having thus eased my mind, the next thing is to beg pardon for it; we^h I know you will not deny. If you refuse this place, I shall begin to think you have studied enough, and be of Dr Ffishers mind never to part wth you till eleven, for if one way won't doe, we must make the most of you another.

I am y^r affectionate friend
& humble Srv^t.

THOS. SHERLOCK,¹

To the Reverend

Dr Ashton,

at

Cambridgeshire.

Ely.

¹ Master of St Catharine's College, and of the Temple, London: afterwards successively Bishop of Salisbury and of London.

The following Letter, which is in the handwriting of Mr Warren, is without any address, but the tenor of it shews that it was intended for Dr Ashton, and enclosed the Letter which follows next in order :

The inclosed was sent me last night by y^e Master of Pembroke with directions to send it to you this day by a special messenger. Mr Martin tells me from y^e Master of Pembroke that a majority of y^e Electors into y^e vacant Professorship have agreed to make choice of you, if you are not resolved against accepting it. This is no more than y^e whole University thinks they ought to do, & there is indeed an impatience in everybody, to have y^e thing done which will be so much for y^e Credit and advantage of y^e University. I persuade myself that you will not disappoint y^e hopes of y^r friends in y^e matter of this Professorship, because you will thereby decline an honourable occasion of serving y^e Church and University in y^e most eminent manner. Providence now points out y^e way by w^{ch} you may produce y^r most excellent talents for y^e good of y^e public, and I hope I may be pardoned if I presume to say it seems a matter of duty not to slight such an opportunity.

I am, Honour'd S^r with y^e greatest respect,
Y^r most obliged and obedient Serv^t,

RICH^d. WARREN.¹

PEMB. HALL, March y^e 20th, 1716.

Dear Master,

Your last would have put me to y^e utmost difficulty if I had not been removed from all publick power in the election of a Professor by the Vice-chance^{llors} return to Cambridge, w^{ch} proved to be absolutely necessary, because he had made no deputation in form, and Dr Bentley would not allow of my acting wth those disputed powers I had. But I can assure you the Vice-

¹ Fellow of Jesus College, afterwards rector of Cavendish and Arch-deacon of Suffolk.

chancellor comes resolved to do justice to your pretensions if you will make them, so that need not be any discouragement to you; and if credit is to be given to what men solemnly say, it is as firmly the opinion of those electors, I have freely conversed wth, that Dr B. is not capable of being a candidate by the letter as well as the reason of the Statute for this foundation.

So that I shall only beg leave to lay before you the consequences of your refusal at this juncture, and then you may judge whether it will be proper for you to insist on it. For as to what you say of your unfitness for it, your friends must be allowed the best judges of that, and I dare say no one of us would have mentioned it to you if we could not have answered for you against any man that can appear tho' Dr B. were not to be excluded. Now if you do persist in this refusall the election will either devolve to y^e Archbishop of Cantebury, or else Dr Leng¹ or Mr Waterland will be chosen. And I will appeal even to your own modesty, whether the University will be better sheltered from disgrace by either of these ways than by your acceptance of this office. Besides it will be out of the power of your best friends to vindicate you from doing a very cruel thing to y^e University, for if you would appear you would put the matter out of all contest: in all other steps that can be taken the electors will be put to innumerable difficulties and at last end in a disgracefull choice, or w^{ch} will be full as bad a shamefull devolution.

Pray Master let me beg of you to consider the eyes of all the University are upon you. Your enemies will triumph in your refusall; your friends will be put to difficulties and the whole thing puzzled and it may be baffled at last for want of your appearance; for Dr Stubbes² will come down for nobody but you, and for you he will venture the severity of any weather; and all this hardship comes upon us for no other reason than your thinking yourself unqualified when all that know you besides as well enemies as friends acknowledge you to be the fittest man we could have pitch'd upon; and, in short, let me and any other of y^r

¹ Fellow of St Catharine's College, afterwards Bishop of Norwich.

² Wolfran Stubbe, D.D., senior fellow of Trinity College, Regius Professor of Hebrew.

friends say what we can you will be thought to be wanting in your endeavour to serve the University, w^{ch} is an imputation I am sure you'd be very unwilling to be thought to have deserved.

I know popularity will be no motion to you upon any affair and especially not in this, but should you comply with your friends expectations & requests you will if possible add to that respect the best of us can have for you, and wthall lay a lasting foundation for the esteem & affection of all that ever knew or have heard of your character. It is you and you only that can rescue the University from disgrace or slavery in this election, for if Dr B. should carry his point, nobody out of Trinity College must hereafter expect any of the three Professorships. I hope to see you to-morrow either [at] Jesus College or Pembroke Hall. Mr Bedford¹, Mr Poley² and Mr Martyn³ are to be with me in the Evening, to-morrow being Thursday: so I shall adjourn all further thoughts of this matter till then. In the meanwhile I assure myself my friendship won't be thought the less for the freedom I have taken in this matter.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend & Bro^r,

EDW^d. LANY^t.

These, for the Rev. Dr Ashton,
at Ely.

Post paid.

¹ Probably Timothy Bedford of Pembroke, afterwards Fellow of Queens'.

² Fellow of Jesus College.

³ Probably Edward Martyn, fellow of King's College.

⁴ Master of Pembroke College.

